



The Good Shepherd
c. 300–350, at the Catacombs of Domitilla, Rome

In the parish church of *Stella Maris*, Maroochydore parish, Church of Brisbane, there is a similar replica image of *Jesus, The Good Shepherd*. I remember when Maroochydore's Pastor Emeritus, Fr. Joe Duffy, procured this fine replica for the church. I was struck at the time, *How different is this?* This experience taught me the value of having an open mind to the multiple ways Jesus is depicted not only in the gospels and the New Testament but across the history of art.

We, the people of Boonah Catholic parish,
acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our parish is located
and where we conduct our mission and ministry.

We pay our respects to ancestors and elders, past and present.

As a local community of faith within the Church of Brisbane,
we are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'
unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas
and their rich contribution to society.

Warm greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the 4th Sunday of Easter.

1. REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY WORD.

The **first** reflection is by **Br. Julian McDonald, a Christian Brother, from Sydney.**

While we are all familiar with the metaphor of Jesus as shepherd and ourselves as his sheep, it is not necessarily a metaphor that sits comfortably with us. After all, sheep are not regarded as the smartest of animals. They easily wander off and are brought into line by dogs snapping at their heels. They have to be led by the nose or pulled into line by the shepherd's deft use of his crook. Most of us resent being pulled into line or being led by the nose.

Yet in today's gospel-reading, John presents Jesus attributing to himself the metaphor of shepherd. Moreover, it is a metaphor that occurs repeatedly in the Bible. As early as the Book of Genesis, Joseph, in asking God to bless his two sons, was presented as giving praise to God "who has been my shepherd from my birth to this day" (Genesis 48:15). Psalm 78 refers to God's shepherding the Israelites as they wandered through the desert: "But his people he led forth like sheep and guided them

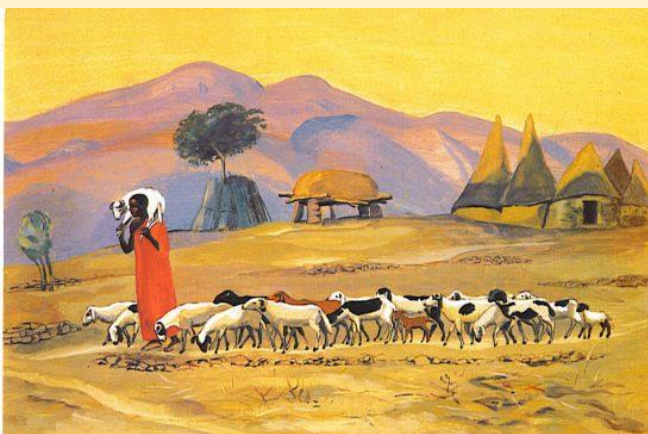


*Shepherd in a landscape with goats, Iran, Safavid period.
Image courtesy of Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M.
Sackler Gallery.*

like a herd in the desert" (Psalm 78:53). In his Gospel, John makes multiple references to Jesus as both shepherd and sacrificial lamb. Moreover, in an extended metaphor, Ezekiel contrasts God's faithful caring with so-called shepherd leaders who abandoned their sheep in times of threat and danger: *Thus says the Lord God: 'Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves! Should not shepherds, rather,*

pasture sheep? You have fed of their milk, worn their wool, and slaughtered the fatlings, but the sheep you have not pastured... You did not bring back the strayed nor seek the lost, but you lorded it over them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and became food for all the wild beasts' (Ezekiel 34:2-5).

A lot of the language in the Bible consists of image, symbol and metaphor. It impacts on us much like the way in which art and music, poetry and ballet touch us. We would do well to allow ourselves to soak it up rather than try to engage with it via intellectual analysis. I suggest that there is value in calling to mind that, even today, shepherds in Palestine tend only about ten or a dozen sheep. They keep sheep principally for milk and wool, sit with them all day long and, if the weather is really cold, they shelter them in the family home at night. They can distinguish each sheep from the others and almost know them by name. They are the kinds of shepherds and flocks with which Jesus would have been familiar. That's the sort of image and metaphor that Scripture writers apply to Jesus, and it's that which we would do well to allow to work on us.



The quality which epitomises Jesus the good shepherd is the care he extends to every member of his flock, without exception, without favour. That care he most clearly demonstrated in his becoming one with us, in the fullness of our humanity. The incarnation means that, instead of leaving us to ourselves,

he embraced our flesh and grew into it; in that same flesh he encountered temptation as we do; in flesh like ours, he died in an act of love of the kind that humanity has not seen either before him or since. That act of love extended not only to sheep like us who have tried to follow him, but to every single one who has wandered away from him. Moreover, he doesn't beat back into place any who wander. Instead, he lays them on his shoulders and brings them to be at home with him.

This same Shepherd knows just how difficult it is for us to make our way along life's journey as women and men of flesh and blood, of passion and spirit, of intellect, spirit and free will. No matter how we wander and roam, this Shepherd goes out to track us down, cradle us in his arms and bring us safely home on his shoulders. It's this image of our Shepherd that Biblical writers have woven throughout the Scriptures.

Written into this extended metaphor is an invitation to us to open ourselves to his care and, in our turn, to care for others as he cares for us. Our influence as shepherds will be effective only to the extent that we resemble him, reaching out in care, compassion and love to those crying out for attention. But this is not as easy or as simple as it sounds. To appreciate the full significance of today's gospel-reading, it is important, yet again, to look at context. Immediately before referring to those who listen to him as his sheep and, therefore, dear to his Father, Jesus was being badgered by his critics to openly declare whether or not he was the Messiah: "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you really are the Messiah, tell us so in plain words" (John 10:24). At the very end of the section chosen for today's gospel-reading, Jesus declared that, because he was involved in doing God's will, "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30). That was too much for the Jews badgering him, so they took up stones to kill him.

So, attempts to shepherd others in imitation of Jesus, will be bound to bring with them dangers to life and limb. While most of us know that we have been free of persecution on account of the faith we profess, we don't have to look far for evidence of our sisters and brothers being led like lambs to the slaughter. They, too, are dear to the Good Shepherd as they are devoured by engines of injustice, brutality and war. We have seen them and their children go to their deaths on the waters of the Mediterranean in their efforts to find refuge, asylum and welcome. We are seeing similar brutality repeated in the Ukraine and in the brutality of Boko Haram in Nigeria. We pray that the Good Shepherd and the God with whom he identified will somehow bring an end to such violence. In so praying, we may need to ask ourselves if our actions and protests are as fervent as our prayers.

On this Fourth Sunday of Easter, as we gather for and participate in worship, as we reflect on Jesus as shepherd and as ourselves as dear to him, we will very likely sing a version of Psalm 23 "The Lord is my shepherd..." probably the most memorised text of the entire Bible, after

the Lord's Prayer. Psalm 23 initially looks like an idyllic, pastoral prayer of trust and confidence in God as shepherd. But then comes mention of valleys filled with darkness and the shadows of death. The "sheep" in the psalm trust in God's providence, but still have eyes wide open to the dangers that they risk as they travel the way of justice and righteousness. Not as trauma-free as we like to think!

Finally, it is worth noting, that as Jesus engaged with the Jews who were badgering him, he was not just explaining his actions, but, at the same time, challenging their approach to leading their people. Their leadership style was directed at bringing benefit to themselves rather than to those they claimed to lead. In modelling a different way of leading and loving, Jesus was challenging them to imagine their lives revolving around something different from that to which they had grown accustomed. Perhaps there's a similar challenge for us! He did not promise life free of pain, struggle and challenge, but rather his abiding presence through all that kind of experience. That's something to fill us with hope and trust.

Safe in your hand, O God,
is the flock you shepherd
through Jesus your Son.

Lead us always to the living waters
where you promise respite and refreshment,
that we may be counted among those
who know and follow you.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

(4th Sunday of Easter, Alternative Opening Prayer)

A [second reflection](#) is from the *Catholic Women Preach* website. The preacher is Sister Jane Nesmith who is a native of Philadelphia, PA, and a 58-year member of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She holds a Master's Degree in Education with a concentration in Religious Studies and a Certification in Youth Ministry from Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, WI.



(Song) *"When he calls me, I will answer (3x's); I'll be somewhere listening for my name . . ."*

Our gospel reading today, from the tenth Chapter of John, reminds us, as Jesus' disciples, that our Lord, The Good Shepherd knows us by name and reminds us of the importance of listening to His voice.

After the crucifixion and death of Jesus, the Christians were suffering hardships and persecution. Not only did they have to deal with the customary distresses of life, but they faced questions such as, "Would they be arrested? And if so, how would they die?" So, John reached out to minister to the temptations and insecurities of the people of his day by helping them to remember some of the words that Jesus spoke to them long before He was crucified.

"Jesus," says John, "is the Good Shepherd." He is the trustworthy one who is willing to lay down his life for his sheep. So, we are challenged to trust Jesus to shepherd us safely through life. Yes we can follow the voice of Jesus into the green pastures, for he says, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

The call of our Lord, however, is very often "hidden" in a whole chorus of worldly voices that call out to us. Other "would-be" shepherds seek to call us **away** from the Good Shepherd, **away** from the joy of his forgiveness and **away** from the security of his love.

I am reminded of the story of an American tourist who was traveling in the Mid-East. He came upon several shepherds whose flocks had intermingled while drinking water from a brook. After an exchange of greetings, one of the shepherds turned toward the sheep and called out, "Manah, Manah, Manah." (Manah means "follow me" in Arabic.)

Immediately his sheep separated themselves from the rest and followed him.

Another shepherd called out in the same way and his sheep left the common flock to follow him. The traveler then said to the third shepherd, "I would like to try that. Let me put on your cloak and turban and see if I can get your sheep to follow me."

The shepherd smiled knowingly as the traveler wrapped himself in the cloak, put the turban on his head and called out to the remaining sheep to no avail. Not one of them moved toward him.

"Will the sheep ever follow someone other than you?" The traveler asked.

The shepherd replied, "Sometimes a sheep gets sick, and then it will follow anyone."

Many of us, young and old, experience the sickness of being battered by the storms of life, and distracted by voices urging us to go in various directions that can very often lead to a sense of hopelessness, despair, or emotional or spiritual trauma that urges the following of anyone or anything that promises a moment of happiness, or a brief feeling of peace.

Some have resorted to abandoning the church and therefore forfeiting the warmth of fellowship, the power of forgiveness and the gifts of grace. The false gods leave them feeling deserted, lost, and bewildered.

Our very lives depend on our choosing the option of following the Good Shepherd, and to declare with our lips and our lives that he is indeed the Way, the Truth and the Life. This one and only Good Shepherd calls out to us in our heartbreak and our loneliness. He calls out to us in our frustration and our guilt.

This Good Shepherd brings **His love** to our lovelessness. This Good Shepherd brings **His power** to our powerlessness. This Good Shepherd stands by **His promise**, *I give you life eternal and nothing in all creation will ever be able to snatch you out of my hand.*

It is true that coping with our fears is a terrific battle; sometimes it seems overwhelming. I don't know about you, but I need a Shepherd who will tower over my life so that I can rest, knowing his mighty power will sustain me through it all.

There is no other Way! There is no more liberating Truth! There is no greater strength for Life!

My sisters and my brothers, it is my privilege today to invite you to listen to the call of the Good Shepherd, to accept his invitation to let him be your God. Listen to him.

- Listen to Him in the transforming words of the Bible. The Bible is full of illustrations of how God uses people to communicate His love, His mercy and His grace.
- Listen to Him through the words of others who love and care about us.
- Listen to Him in that small tiny voice in your heart that makes us feel sorry for the wrong that we've done.
- Listen to Him in the events of our lives (Difficulties and hurdles in our path are very often there to build our character and strengthen our faith).
- Listen to Him in the events of our lives (Difficulties and hurdles in our path are very often there to build our character and strengthen our faith).
- Listen to Him! He comes declaring his love and promising to be our God forever.

It is always interesting for me to note that the miracles that propelled St. Katharine Drexel, the foundress of my religious community, to canonization on October 1, 2000 were both miracles of hearing.

Both miracles invite us all to listen more and perhaps to talk less. In fact, I recall someone saying once that it has to be significant that God gave us only one mouth and two ears.

My sisters and brothers, on this Fourth Sunday of Easter, let us remember that we belong to Jesus, who loves us far more than we can ever hope for or imagine. His only purpose is to be the Good Shepherd Who promises us safe passage through the uncertainties of life. That is the only good news I have for you today. We have nothing to lose in following Him-but everything to gain. He is the **Way of salvation**. He is the **Truth that endures forever**. He is the **Life that never ends**.

Song: Yes, I'll be somewhere listening. I'll be somewhere, listening. I'll be somewhere listening for my name."

[CLICK HERE](#) for video of homily . . . (it includes the songs)

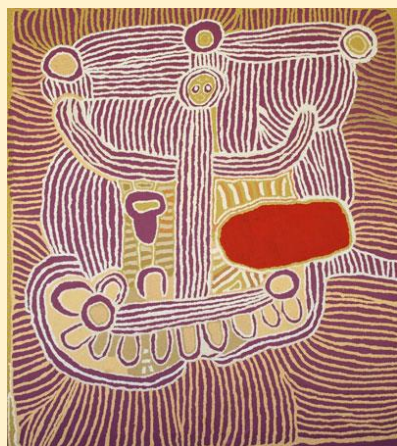
2. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

from commands to invitations,
from laws to ideals,
from threats to persuasion,
from coercion to conscience,
from monologue to conversation,
from ruling to serving,
from withdrawn to integrated,
from vertical and top-down to horizontal,
from exclusion to inclusion,
from hostility to friendship,
from static to changing,
from passive acceptance to active engagement,
from prescriptive to principled,
from defined to open-ended,
from behaviour-modification to conversion of heart,
from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,
from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.

When these elements are taken in the aggregate, they indicate a model of spirituality. This, they say, is what good Catholics should look like and this is how they should behave. That means the elements indicate what the Church should look like and how it should behave. This is a significant model-shift. This is a teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

- Fr. John O'Malley SJ, 2006

Our **SUNDAY EUCHARIST** schedule is:



Desert Eucharist,
Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

Saturday

5.00pm

Boonah church

Sunday

7.30am

1st and 3rd Sunday: Harrisville church

2nd and 4th Sunday: Peak Crossing church

9.30am

Boonah church

(5th Sunday of the month: 6pm Sat night Harrisville church & 9.30am Sun morning Boonah church)

Our **WEEKDAY EUCHARIST** schedule for this week, the 4th Week of Easter:

Tuesday	10 th May	10.00 am Funeral for Patricia Ilka nee Gordon, (known as Trish), <i>Warrill Park chapel and cemetery</i>
		5.30pm Boonah church
Wednesday	11 th May	6.00pm Peak Crossing church followed by dinner at <i>The Peak Pub</i>
Thursday	12 th May	9.15am Boonah church
Friday	13 th May	9.15am Boonah church

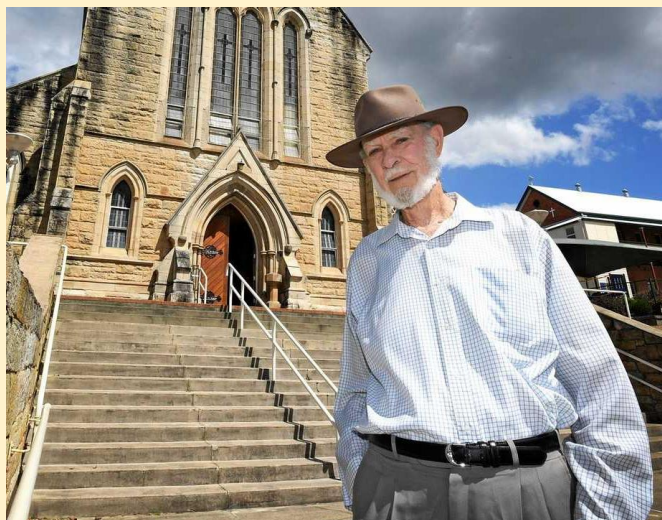
We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond: all across the globe infected with COVID-19; Chris Healy, Paul White, Arthur Devin, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Marko Babic, Max Gardiner, Trish Merlehan, Bernadette Pinchin, Simon Greatrex, Cate Mitten, Bernice Brault, Paula Ebrington, Fletcher Casey, Jill Archer, Louisa, David Mitchell, and sick members of parish families and those beyond our parish boundaries.



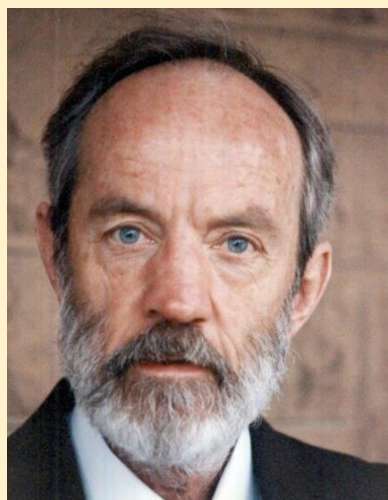
From a homily on the gospels by Gregory the Great (540-604 CE)

Beloved brothers and sisters, let us set out for these pastures where we shall keep joyful festival with so many of our fellow citizens. May the thought of their happiness urge us on! Let us stir up our hearts, rekindle our faith, and long eagerly for what heaven has in store for us. To love thus is to be already on our way. No matter what obstacles we encounter, we must not allow them to turn us aside from the joy of that heavenly feast. Any who are determined to reach their destination are not deterred by the roughness of the road that leads to it. Nor must we allow the charm of success to seduce us, or we shall be like foolish travellers who are so distracted by the pleasant meadows through which they are passing that they forget where they are going.

Let us also remember two priests who died recently and who both served in the Church of Brisbane for many years: **Fr. Pat Cassidy** and **Fr. Ian Howells SJ**.



Pat Cassidy



Ian Howells SJ

The above pictures of these two priests are accurate images. Both Pat and Ian made themselves available in many ways to parishes, the life of the local Church, and the Provincial Seminary at Banyo.

May they rest in peace.

- **EVERY SUNDAY** when we gather for the Sunday eucharist, there are baskets (of some kind or another) at the entrances of our churches.

We are invited to bring a gift of **non-perishable food or goods** for people seeking help from our local St. Vincent de Paul.

The local conference very much appreciates our weekly support.



- **THANK YOU** to all who support the weekly Sunday collection. Your gifts enable the parish to meet its expenses and to function like an everyday household. If you would like to give weekly or monthly in a planned way (electronic giving), please see me.

- **CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION.** The 1st Rite for Reconciliation (formerly known as Confession) may be celebrated anytime. Please phone 5463 1057 to make a suitable time. Alternatively see me before Mass (if there is plenty of time) or after Mass (once the majority of people have left the church).

- **OUR PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER.** Leigh Muller has kindly agreed to continue as our local Safeguarding Officer. *Thanks so much Leigh.*

WORK SAFETY



▪ Last Friday, Angela O’Dea from the Archdiocese conducted our **WORK PLACE, HEALTH AND SAFETY** audit. The last one was conducted in November 2017 when Fr. Peter was our pastor. The 2022 process was exhaustive – five hours! We also visited all of our properties including our cemetery at Kalbar.

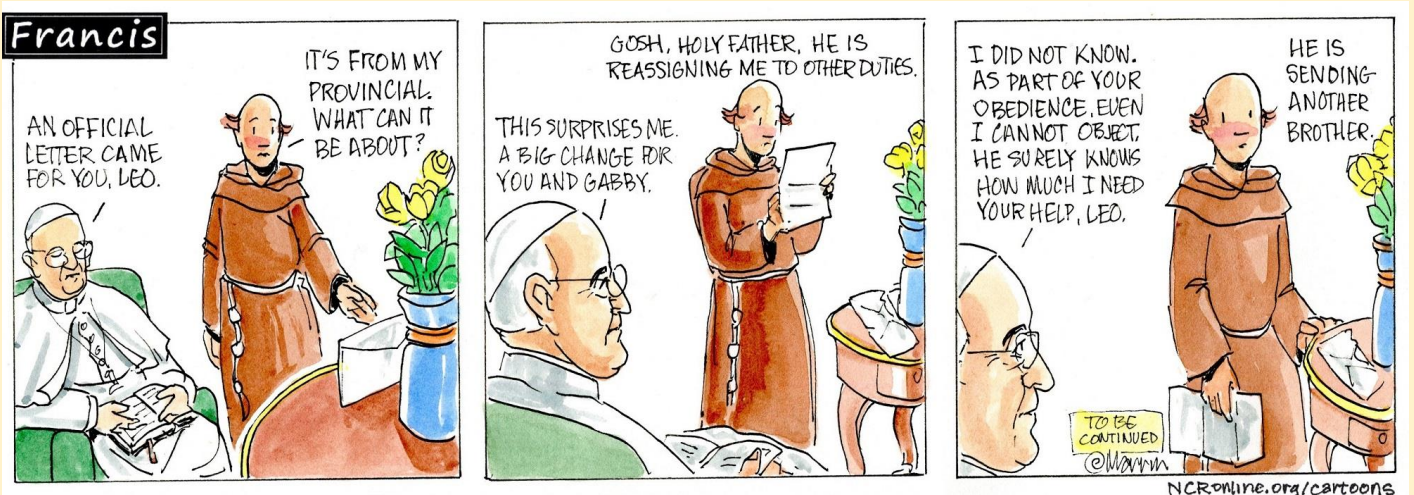
As we would expect there are opportunities to improve some areas on our properties. A few of these will be *high action* items. Two places in and around the Boonah church are very obvious: 1. the outside area between the church and hall *and* 2. the lectern/ambo. We will be taking prompt action to ensure the future safety of all in these two places. There no other major concerns with our other properties.

Thanks to Ange for her time and diligence. The audit was an excellent process.



NCRonline.org/cartoons

3rd May 2022



TO BE CONTINUED

NCRonline.org/cartoons

5th May 2022

3. The Fourth Sunday of Easter is also *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*. This Sunday is sometimes called *Good Shepherd Sunday*.

2022 marks the 59th anniversary of this special day of prayer and is set by The Holy See. Pope Francis sends a message titled *Called to Build the Human Family*.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the time when the cold winds of war and oppression are blowing and when we frequently encounter signs of polarization, we as a Church have undertaken a synodal process: we sense the urgent need to journey together, cultivating the spirit of listening, participation and sharing. Together with all men and women of good will, we want to help build the human family, heal its wounds and guide it to a better future. On this 59th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, I would like to reflect with you on the broader meaning of “vocation” within the context of a synodal Church, a Church that listens to God and to the world.

Called to be protagonists together of the Church's mission

Synodality, journeying together, is a vocation fundamental to the Church. Only against this horizon is it possible to discern and esteem the various vocations, charisms and ministries. We know that the Church exists to evangelize, to go forth and to sow the seed of the Gospel in history. This mission can only be carried out if all areas of pastoral activity work together and, even more importantly, involve all the Lord's disciples. For “in virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization” (Evangelii Gaudium, 120). We must beware of the mentality that would separate priests and laity, considering the former as protagonists and the latter as executors, and together carry forward the Christian mission as the one People of God, laity and pastors. The Church as a whole is an evangelizing community.

Called to be guardians of one another and of creation

The word “vocation” should not be understood restrictively, as referring simply to those who follow the Lord through a life of special consecration. All of us are called to share in Christ's mission to reunite a fragmented humanity and to reconcile it with God. Each man and woman, even before encountering Christ and embracing the Christian faith, receives with the gift of life a fundamental calling: each of us is a creature willed and loved by God; each of us has a unique and special place in the mind of God. At every moment of our lives, we are called to foster this divine spark, present in the heart of every man and woman, and thus contribute to the growth of a humanity inspired by love and mutual acceptance. We are called to be guardians of one another, to strengthen the bonds of harmony and sharing, and to heal the wounds of creation lest its beauty be destroyed. In a word, we are called to become a single family in the marvellous common home of creation, in the reconciled diversity of its elements. In this broad sense, not only individuals have a “vocation”, but peoples, communities and groups of various kinds as well.

Called to welcome God's gaze

Within this great common vocation, God addresses a particular call to each of us. He touches our lives by his love and directs them to our ultimate goal, to a fulfilment that transcends the very threshold of death. That is how God wanted to see our lives and how he sees them still.

Michelangelo Buonarroti is said to have maintained that every block of stone contains a statue within it, and it is up to the sculptor to uncover it. If that is true of an artist, how much more is it true of God! In the young woman of Nazareth he saw the Mother of God. In Simon the fisherman he saw Peter, the rock on which he would build his Church. In the publican Levi he recognized the apostle and evangelist Matthew, and in Saul, a harsh persecutor of Christians, he saw Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. God's loving gaze always meets us, touches us, sets us free and transforms us, making us into new persons.

That is what happens in every vocation: we are met by the gaze of God, who calls us. Vocation, like holiness, is not an extraordinary experience reserved for a few. Just as there is a "holiness of the saints next door" (cf. *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 6-9), so too there is a vocation for everyone, for God's gaze and call is directed to every person.

According to a proverb from the Far East, "a wise person, looking at the egg can see an eagle; looking at the seed he glimpses a great tree; looking at the sinner he glimpses a saint". That is how God looks at us: in each of us, he sees a certain potential, at times unbeknownst to ourselves, and throughout our lives he works tirelessly so that we can place this potential at the service of the common good.

Vocation arises in this way, thanks to the art of the divine Sculptor who uses his "hands" to make us go forth from ourselves and become the masterpiece that we are called to be. The word of God, which frees us from self-absorption, is especially able to purify, enlighten and recreate us. So let us listen to that word, in order to become ever more open to the vocation that God entrusts to us! And let us learn to listen also to our brothers and sisters in the faith, for their advice and example may help disclose the plan of God, who shows us ever new paths to pursue.

Called to respond to God's gaze

God's loving and creative gaze met us in an entirely unique way in Jesus. The evangelist Mark tells us that, in speaking with the rich young man, "Jesus looking upon him, loved him" (10:21). This gaze of Jesus, full of love, rests upon each of us. Brothers and sisters, let us allow ourselves to be moved by this gaze to allow him to lead us outside of ourselves! Let us also learn to look at one another in such a way that all those with whom we live and encounter – whoever they may be – will feel welcomed and discover that there is Someone who looks at them with love and invites them to develop their full potential.

Our lives change when we welcome this gaze. Everything becomes a vocational dialogue between ourselves and the Lord, but also between ourselves and others. A dialogue that, experienced in depth, makes us become ever more who we are. In the vocation to the ordained priesthood, to be instruments of Christ's grace and mercy. In the vocation to the consecrated life, to be the praise of God and the prophecy of a new humanity. In the vocation to marriage, to be mutual gift and givers and teachers of life. In every ecclesial vocation and ministry that calls us to see others and the world through God's eyes, to serve goodness and to spread love with our works and words.

Here I would like to mention the experience of Dr José Gregorio Hernández Cisneros. While working as a physician in Caracas, Venezuela, he wanted to become a Third Order Franciscan. Later, he thought of becoming a monk and a priest, but his health did not allow it. He came to understand that his calling was the medical profession, in which he spent himself above all in service to the poor. He devoted himself unreservedly to those who had contracted the worldwide epidemic known as the "Spanish flu". He died, hit by a car, as he was leaving a pharmacy after purchasing medicine for one of his elderly patients. An exemplary witness of what it means to accept the call of the Lord and embrace it fully, he was beatified a year ago.

Called to build a brotherly and sisterly world

As Christians, we do not only receive a vocation individually; we are also called together. We are like the tiles of a mosaic. Each is lovely in itself, but only when they are put together do they form a picture. Each of us shines like a star in the heart of God and in the firmament of the universe. At the same time, though, we are called to form constellations that can guide and light up the path of humanity, beginning with the places in which we live. This is the mystery of the Church: a celebration of differences, a sign and instrument of all that humanity is called to be. For this reason, the Church must become increasingly synodal: capable of walking together, united in harmonious diversity, where everyone can actively participate and where everyone has something to contribute.

When we speak of “vocation”, then, it is not just about choosing this or that way of life, devoting one’s life to a certain ministry or being attracted by the charism of a religious family, movement or ecclesial community. It is about making God’s dream come true, the great vision of fraternity that Jesus cherished when he prayed to the Father “that they may all be one” (John 17:21). Each vocation in the Church, and in a broader sense in society, contributes to a common objective: to celebrate among men and women that harmony of manifold gifts that can only be brought about by the Holy Spirit. Priests, consecrated men and women, lay faithful: let us journey and work together in bearing witness to the truth that one great human family united in love is no utopian vision, but the very purpose for which God created us.

Let us pray, brothers and sisters, that the People of God, amid the dramatic events of history, may increasingly respond to this call. Let us implore the light of the Holy Spirit, so that all of us may find our proper place and give the very best of ourselves in this great divine plan!

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 8 May 2022, Fourth Sunday of Easter.

4. Sr. Patty Fawkner is a Sister of the Good Samaritan and currently serves as their Congregational Leader. Her recent reflection for Anzac Day is in their bulletin *The Good Oil*.

It is called “On Anzac Day there is a time for poetry, a time to speak, and a time to keep silent”.

“Rivers of blood and tears are flowing in Ukraine,” says Pope Francis. “War is madness, please stop!” But the war doesn’t stop. We cannot make sense of such idiocy and are left feeling utterly powerless. How to cope? What to do?

It occurs to me that three components of Anzac Day celebrations in which many of us will participate next Monday, offer some practices that comfort, connect, and offer a prelude to action, in the face of the tragedy of war, indeed when confronted by any form of suffering. These elements of the Dawn Service are a minute’s silence, the *Last Post*, and four lines of poetry.

We can end up with too many words in relation to war. Even now in Ukraine we have endless words of analysis and justification, demonisation and condemnation, not to mention the inevitable propaganda, disinformation and fake news.



*It is necessary to hear the stories, to try to understand the complex roots of the conflict,
and to hold perpetrators to account.*

There is a time to speak, and often in the wake of horror, the most apt and telling words and images come from the pen of the poet. Poets tussle with words that play on our thinking, imagination and feeling. Their words can comfort and confront in equal measure.

Alicia Ostriker, a Jewish feminist described as “America’s most fiercely honest poet”, says, *Writing is what poets do about trauma. We try to come to grips with what threatens to make us crazy by surrounding it with language ... It has always seemed to me that to fall silent in the aftermath of the Holocaust is to surrender to it. How can one write poetry after Auschwitz? How can one not?*

The four lines of poetry, simply known as the Ode, from the Anzac Day service are familiar:

*They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We shall remember them.*

This is the fourth verse of a poem called *For the Fallen* written by Laurence Binyon and published just a few weeks into the First World War – a war that killed more than nine million service men and countless civilians.

How important it is to honour those sacrificed as ‘collateral damage’ by power-hungry despots.

Wilfred Owen, killed in action during the Great War famously said, *My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity.* His later poems expressed his contempt for old men – government bureaucrats – who blithely sent young men to inevitable maiming or death.

Kenneth Slessor’s *Beach Burial* says that it is death that finally reconciles opposing Second World War combatants in their shared shallow sandy graves. The elegiac *Homecoming* by Bruce Dawe testifies to the futility of the Vietnam War and the countless young soldiers returned in body bags to an ignominious welcome.

Already, the poets are employing their craft in response to the war in Ukraine. Young American poet, Amanda Gorman, who famously spoke at Joe Biden’s inauguration, has recently published a poem, *War: what, is it good? In this long poem she notes that war Create(s) competitors from comrades, Make(s) monsters out of men ... Soft war does not exist, she says. There is no peace; it cannot be put aside. Our only enemy is the one who make us enemies of each other.* And British Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage, begins his poem *Resistance* with *It’s war again ...*

*The banal familiarity of war –
yet again.
When will we learn?*

In the Anzac Day service there is a time for poetry, a time to speak, and there is a time to keep silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Silence can be a consoling companion in response to suffering. If we don't leave room for silence, we don't leave room for the germination of understanding, compassion and empathy.

There is a tokenistic silence of 'thoughts and prayers', so often called upon in the face of war, and in the aftermath of tragedies such as those brought about by gun violence or climate change. Such silent thoughts and prayers can be a mockery if they serve as an excuse for inaction.

But in a moment of intentional silence, I can choose to stand with the victims of war, with any victim. I honour them and their experience. The silence allows me to become present to the sacred space of their suffering.

*Silence and poetry honour the fallen,
as does the lone bugler playing the Last Post, the distinctive Anzac Day sound.*

Eerie and evocative, the [Last Post](#) is a musical lament, encapsulating the pity and tragedy of war.

The Judeo-Christian tradition knows full well the value of lament. Biblical lament is no mere venting of anguish. The psalms of lament are prayers which implore God to act, to show mercy, to hear the cries of those who suffer.

As Christians, we concur with Scripture scholar and Anglican Bishop Tom Wright, that *God is praying with us for the pain around us*. We pray to the listening God of all pain. Lament is a prayer in the "meantime" Wright says - the meantime between suffering and deliverance. In silence and lament I also ask forgiveness for the times I have betrayed peace and been the cause of another's pain.

As he dies on the Cross, Jesus shouts a primal prayer of lament from Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Yet, our faith tells us that Good Friday is not the end. The story does not end in sorrow and death. Light follows darkness. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and lavishly showers his Easter gifts of peace and forgiveness with all of God's people.

As the sombre notes of the *Last Post* sound this Anzac Day, we lament those who suffered and who died in all wars. We lament and remember those who have fallen on Flanders' fields, at Gallipoli, Tobruk, Long Tan, Tarin Kowt, and now Mariupol and Kyiv.

As we wait in hope in this meantime, *we keep silent, we listen to the poets, and we lament with our God.*

PRAYER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN UKRAINE

God of peace and justice,
who change the hardened heart
and break the power of violence,
we entrust the people of Ukraine to you.

Protect them in this time of peril;
let them know not death but life,
not slavery but freedom.

You are Father of all;
we are brothers and sisters.

Give us the strength
to live that truth in love,
choosing peace not war.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



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Thanks to a reader who gave me permission to share this!

*John,
pastor,
Boonah Catholic community*