

And there is further reason for hope. This is the first truly global generation – with internet blogs and chat rooms, with unparalleled opportunities and means to travel.

And Catholic Christianity, embracing the huge range of ethnic diversity, is the perfect vehicle for the expression of the spiritual dimension of their common humanity. A global church for global citizens!

How do we maintain unity and identity amongst such diversity? By listening for the voice of the Good Shepherd, Our Lord Jesus Christ. That is what today's Gospel tells us.

For Australians, this is hard to visualise correctly. We think of a large mob of sheep with no individuality being herded by whips and dogs.

By contrast, the flock in Jesus' time was quite small – 20-30 animals – and the shepherd in Jesus' time, and still today around the hills of Jerusalem, calls each sheep by name and leads from the front – they follow his voice to the pastures which will nourish them. - Fr Michael Tate

### **ST PAUL, HARD-HEADED BUT NOT HARD-HEARTED**

Pope Francis invited Christians to be docile to the voice of the Lord, after the model of St. Paul. Taking his cue from the conversion of St. Paul on the road to Damascus, Pope Francis said the Apostle to the Gentiles was 'hard-headed' but not 'hard-hearted'. The moment of his conversion "marked a change in the course of Salvation History". It exposed the Church's universality and its openness to "pagans, Gentiles, and those who were not Israelites", which, the Pope said, the Lord permitted because "it was important".

**Consistency and zeal** Reflecting on St. Paul's character, Pope Francis called him "a forceful man" who was "enamored with the purity of the law", saying he was "honest" and "consistent", though he had "a difficult character".

**Docility and openness to God's voice** Pope Francis pointed out that, even though he was stubborn, St. Paul was not hard-hearted. He was "open to God's indications". He had incarcerated and killed Christians "with a fire inside him", but "as soon as he heard the voice of the Lord, he became like a child, letting himself be led."

*"All his convictions stayed silent, waiting for the voice of the Lord: 'What must I do, Lord?' And he went to that encounter at Damascus, to meet that other docile man, and let himself be catechized like a child and be baptized like a child. Then he regains his strength, and what does he do? He is silent. He leaves for Arabia to pray, for how long we don't know. Maybe years, we don't know. Docility. Openness to the voice of God and docility. His is an example for our life."*

**Christian charism of the great and small** The Pope said there are numerous courageous men and women today who risk their lives to find new paths for the Church.

*"Let us seek new paths; it will do us all good. As long as they are the paths of the Lord. But charge forward in the depth of prayer, of docility and a heart open to God. This is how true change takes place in the Church, with people who know how to fight in the great and in the small."*

The Christian must have the charism of the great and of the small. And he prayed "for the grace to be docile to the voice of the Lord and for a heart open to the Lord; for the grace not to be afraid to do great things and the sensitivity to pay attention to the small things."

### **RAMADAN URGES UNIVERSAL FRATERNITY**

In a message for Islam's holy month of Ramadan and Id al-Fitr, the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has released a message, urging Christians and Muslims worldwide to build bridges of brotherhood and promote the culture of dialogue to promote human fraternity and harmonious existence by building bridges of friendship and promoting a culture of dialogue where violence is rejected and the human person is respected. *By Robin Gomes*

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) made the invitation in a message to wish Muslims worldwide a peaceful and fruitful celebration of the fasting month Ramadan that ends with Id al-Fitr. "The month of Ramadan with its dedication to fasting, prayer and almsgiving, is also a month for

strengthening the spiritual bonds we share in Muslim-Christian friendship," notes the message entitled, "**Christians and Muslims: Promoting Universal Fraternity**", signed by PCID Secretary, Bishop Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot.

Quoting the document signed by Pope Francis and the Gran Iman Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb of Al-Azhar in Abu Dhabi on February 4, Bishop Ayuso invites Christians and Muslims to "remain rooted in the values of peace; to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity and harmonious coexistence; to re-establish wisdom, justice and love."

### **Pope & Grand Imam: Historic declaration of peace, freedom, women's rights Building bridges for common good**

The message reminds Muslims and Christians that by opening themselves to others, knowing and recognizing them as brothers and sisters, they can "tear down walls raised out of fear and ignorance and seek together to build bridges of friendship that are fundamental for the good of all humanity." This way, they can cultivate a new way of life in their political, civil and religious institutions where violence is rejected, and the human person is respected. The message encourages the followers of both communities to continue promoting the "culture of dialogue as a means of cooperation and as a method of growing in the knowledge of one another".

**Respect for diversity and freedoms** In this regard, the PCID cites the three fundamental guidelines that Pope Francis proposes for the promotion of dialogue and knowledge among people of different religions, namely, "the duty of identity, the courage of otherness and the sincerity of intentions".

### **POPE TO ROME DIOCESE: "LISTEN TO THE CITY"**

Pope Francis met with the clergy of Rome in the Basilica of St. John Lateran on Thursday, inviting them to go forward in their ministry "listening to the city". During the evening meeting, Pope Francis focused on two themes that concern its pastoral journey: **learn the lessons of the past and be open to reconciliation.**

The Pope said his appeal to them is: "listen to the city".

He encouraged those present to "follow the Holy Spirit" who does not necessarily "love balance and straight-forwardness", warning them against the temptation of wanting to "settle things, putting everything right".

After telling the clergy that "we cannot be evangelical if we are afraid of rocking the boat", he warned against clericalism and reminded them that the Beatitudes are a main course to be offered to the faithful in order to allow them to grow.

Pope Francis concluded his talk reminding his priests they have two main tasks: the first is "to exercise a contemplative gaze on the life of the people who live in the city, trying in each parish to understand how people live, what they feel, what they think". The second, he said, is "to take a contemplative look at the new cultures that are generated in the metropolis".

### **WHO GOES TO HELL AND WHO DOESN'T?**

Hell is never a nasty surprise waiting for a basically happy person. Nor is it necessarily a predicable ending for an unhappy, bitter person. Can a happy, warm-hearted person go to hell? Can an unhappy, bitter person go to heaven? That's all contingent upon how we understand hell and how we read the human heart. A person who is struggling honestly to be happy cannot go to hell since hell is the antithesis of an honest struggle to be happy. Hell, in Pope Francis' words, "is wanting to be distant from God's love." Anyone who sincerely wants love and happiness will never be condemned to an eternity of alienation, emptiness, bitterness, anger, and hatred (which are what constitute the fires of hell) because *hell is wanting not to be in heaven*. Thus there's no one in hell who's sincerely longing for another chance to mend things so as to go to heaven. If there's anyone in hell, it's because that person truly wants to be distant from love.

But can someone really want to be distant from God's love and from human love? The answer is complex because we're complex: What does it mean to want something? Can we want something and not want it all at the same time? Yes, because

there are different levels to the human psyche and consequently the same desire can be in conflict with itself.

We can want something and not want it all at the same time. That's a common experience. For instance, take a young child who has just been disciplined by his mother. At that moment, the child can bitterly hate his mother, even as at another, more inchoate, level what he most desperately wants is in fact his mother's embrace. But until his sulk ends he wants to be distant from his mother, even as his deepest want is to be with his mother. We know the feeling.

Hatred, as we know, is not opposite of love but simply one modality of love's grieving and so this type of dynamic perennially plays itself out in the befuddling, complex, paradoxical relationship that millions of us have with God, the church, with each other, and with love itself. Our wounds are mostly not our own fault but the result of an abuse, a violation, a betrayal, or some traumatic negligence within the circle of love. However this doesn't preclude them doing funny things to us. When we're wounded in love, then, like a reprimanded, sulking child who wants distance from his mother, we too can for a time, perhaps for a lifetime, not want heaven because we feel that we've been unfairly treated by it. It's natural for many people to want to be distant from God. The child bullied on the playground who identifies his or her bullies with the inner circle of "the accepted ones" will understandably want to be distant from that circle – or perhaps even do violence to it.

However that's at one level of soul. At a deeper level, our ultimate longing is still to be inside of that circle of love which we at that moment seemingly hate, hate because we feel that we've been unfairly excluded from it or violated by it and hence deem it to be something we want no part of. Thus someone can be very sincere of soul and yet because of deep wounds to her soul go through life and die wanting to be distant what she perceives as God, love, and heaven. But we may not make a simplistic judgment here.

We need to distinguish between what at a given moment we *explicitly* want and what, at that same moment, we *implicitly* (really) want. They're often not the same. The reprimanded child seemingly wants distance from his mother, even as at another level he desperately wants it.

Many people want distance from God and the churches, even as at another level they don't. But God reads the heart, recognizes the untruth hiding inside a sulk or a pout, and judges accordingly. That's why we shouldn't be so quick to fill up hell with everyone who appears to want distance from love, faith, church, and God. God's love can encompass, empathize with, melt down, and heal that hatred. Our love should too.

Christian hope asks us to believe things that go against our natural instincts and emotions and one of these is that God's love is so powerful that, just as it did at Jesus' death, it can descend into hell itself and there breathe love and forgiveness into both the most wounded and most hardened of souls. Hope asks us to believe that the final triumph of God's love will be when the Lucifer himself converts, returns to heaven, and hell is finally empty. Fanciful? No. That's Christian hope; it's what many of our great saints believed. Yes, there's a hell and, given human freedom, it's always a radical possibility for everyone; but, given God's love, perhaps sometime it will be completely empty.

**Ascending, Descending, and Just Keeping Steady** Where should we be casting our eyes? Upward, downward, or just on the road that we're walking? Well there are different kinds of spiritualities: *Spiritualities of the Ascent*, *Spiritualities of the Descent*, and *Spiritualities of Maintenance*, and each Satis important. *Spiritualities of the Ascent* are spiritualities that invite us to strive always for what's higher, for what's more noble, for what stretches us and takes us (figuratively) upward beyond the humdrum moral and spiritual ruts within which we habitually find ourselves. They tell us that we can be more, that we can transcend the ordinary and break through the old ceilings that have

up now constituted our horizon. They tell us that if we stretch ourselves enough we will be able to walk on water, be great saints, be enflamed with the Spirit, and experience already now the deep joys of God's Kingdom. These spiritualities tell us that sanctity lies in the ascent and that we should be habitually stretching ourselves towards higher goals. These spiritualities have a secular counterpart and that counterpart is what we often hear from academic commencement speakers who are forever challenging those graduating to dream big dreams, to reach for the stars. There's a lot to be said for this kind of an invitation. Much of Gospels are exactly that kind of a challenge: Keep your eyes trained upward: Think with your big mind; feel with your big heart; imagine yourself as God's child and mirror that greatness; let Jesus' teachings stretch you; let Jesus' spirit fill you; let high ideals enlarge you.

But the Gospels also invite us to a *Spirituality of the Descent*.

They tell us to make friends with the desert, the cross, with ashes, with self-renunciation, with humiliation, with our shadow, and with death itself. They tell us that we grow not just be moving upward but also by descending downward. We grow too by letting the desert work us over, by renouncing cherished dreams to accept the cross, by letting the humiliations that befall us deepen our character, by having the courage to face our own deep chaos, and by making peace with our own mortality. These spiritualities tell us that sometimes our task, spiritual and psychological, is not to raise our eyes to the heavens, but to look down upon the earth, to sit in the ashes of loneliness and humiliation, to stare down the restless desert inside us, and to make peace with our human limits and our mortality. There aren't a lot of secular counterparts to this spirituality (though you do see this in what's best in psychology and anthropology). The challenge of the descent is not one you will often hear from a commencement speaker.

But there is still another genre of spiritualities, a very important kind, namely, *Spiritualities of Maintenance*. These spiritualities invite us to proper self-care, to factor in that the journey of discipleship is a marathon, not a sprint, and so to take heed of our limits. We aren't all spiritual athletes and tiredness, depression, loneliness, and fragile health, mental or physical, can, if we are not careful with ourselves, break us. These spiritualities invite us to be cautious about both an over-enthusiastic ascent and a naive descent. They tell us that dullness, boredom, and ennui will meet us along the road and so we should have a glass of wine when needed and let our weariness dictate that on a given night it might be healthier for us spiritually to watch a mindless sitcom or a sports event than to spend that time watching a religious program. They also tell us to respect the fact that, given our mental fragility at times, there descents that we should stay away from. They don't deny that we need to push ourselves to new heights and that we need to have the courage, at times, to face the chaos and desert inside us; but they caution that we must also always take into account what we can handle at a given time in our lives and what we can't handle just then. Good spiritualities don't put you on a universal conveyor-belt, the same road for everyone, but take reckon what you need to do to maintain your energy and sanity on a marathon journey. *Spiritualities of Maintenance* have a secular counterpart and we can learn things here from our culture's stress on maintaining one's physical health through proper exercise, proper diet, and proper health habits. Sometimes in our culture this becomes one-sided and obsessive, but it is still something for spiritualities to learn from, namely, that the task in life isn't just to grow and to courageously face your shadow and mortality. Sometimes, many times, the more urgent task is simply to stay healthy, sane, and buoyant.

Different spiritualities stress one or the other of these: *the ascent*, *the descent*, or (less commonly) *maintenance*, but a good spirituality will stress all three: Train your eyes upward, don't forget to look downward, and keep your feet planted firmly on the ground.

# The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading Acts 13:14, 43-52

**A reading from the Acts of the Apostles**

Paul and Barnabas carried on from Perga till they reached Antioch in Pisidia. Here they went to synagogue on the sabbath and took their seats.

When the meeting broke up, many Jews and devout converts joined Paul and Barnabas, and in their talks with them Paul and Barnabas urged them to remain faithful to the grace God had given them. The next sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God.

When they saw the crowds, the Jews, prompted by jealousy, used blasphemies and contradicted everything Paul said. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, 'We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, we must turn to the pagans.

For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said:

*I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.'*

It made the pagans very happy to hear this and they thanked the Lord for his message; all who were destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread through the whole countryside. But the Jews worked upon some of the devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city and persuaded them to turn against Paul and Barnabas and expel them from their territory. So they 'shook the dust from their feet in defiance' and went off to Iconium; but the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 99:1-3. 5. R. v.3

**(R.) We are his people, the sheep of his flock.**

1. Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness.

Come before him, singing for joy. (R.)

2. Know that he, the Lord, is God.

He made us, we belong to him, we are his people, the sheep of his flock. (R.)

3. Indeed, how good is the Lord, eternal his merciful love.

He is faithful from age to age. (R.)

Second Reading **Rv 7:9, 14-17**

**A reading from the book of the Apocalypse**

I, John, saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands. One of the elders said to me, 'These are the people

who have been through the great persecution, and because they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb, they now stand in front of God's throne and serve him day and night in his sanctuary; and the One who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the sun nor scorching wind will ever plague them, because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

Gospel Acclamation Jn 10:14

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;

I know my sheep, and mine know me.

**Alleluia!**

Gospel Jn 10:27-30

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John**

Jesus said:

'The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice;

I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life;

they will never be lost

and no one will ever steal them from me.

The Father who gave them to me is greater than anyone,

and no one can steal from the Father.

The Father and I are one.'



**Meant for emptying** "Commit your fate to Yahweh; trust in God and God will act; making your virtue clear as the light; your integrity as bright as noon," Psalm 37 prays.

It is a lesson designed to make long nights short, and days hard as cement soft around the edges. If God does bring an end to darkness, then the darkness is bearable. If God does turn our little ignominies into virtues, then no cost is too high, no effort is too much, no discipline is too demanding. The problem is that we do not always see God act, at least not in ways that we understand or want. So, we are inclined to crawl into the tombs of our failures and waste away. It is just then that the resurrection becomes most real in our lives.

It is just then that we can see, if we will only look, that tombs are meant for emptying. The temptation, of course, is the same for us as it was for the women in the garden: to give ourselves over to tending our tombs rather than to expect to find new life there.

In every life something good fails, something great ends, something righteous is taken unjustly away, something looms like an abandonment by God and is counted as abandonment by God and is felt like abandonment by God. But that is exactly when we must remember the Jesus of the Cross who rose from the dead as sign to us that every little death died for some good reason is life become new all over again. Everyone rises over and over again in anticipation of that moment when the last resurrection comes and the light never dims again.

The Jesus of the Resurrection stands as stark, illumined sign that life is a process of dying and rising that someday will bring us all to wholeness, if we only allow it.

—Reflection from "Mary of Nazareth," an eCourse by Joan Chittister, available on the Monasteries of the Heart website.

## SACRED HEART PARISH

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Principal: Mrs Noelene O'Neill

**Carroll College** Principal: Mrs Jacqui Heffernan

**Easter Week 4** Today, there are three special celebrations we are making: it's the fourth week of Easter, it's Mother's Day and it's Good Shepherd Sunday (for vocations to the priesthood and religious life)!



So as for Easter Week 4, firstly, we acknowledge that Easter for us church people is a Season, not just a day! After the 6 Easter Sundays, we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord on June 2, and the following weekend, June 9, we will conclude the Easter Season as church with Pentecost Sunday. Our readings call us to be people who prioritise the ways of God over human ways. All too often, while the former promotes unity, the latter does division'

**Mother's Day**

**Good Shepherd Sunday**

**MOTHERS DAY:** This is one of occasions in which God's ways and our ways are substantially in agreement! We don't disagree about everything! So, a special welcome to all mothers today. thanks to Pat Anderson for the Tuross Mothers' Day presentations and to Jan Morris for the Moruya ones. We are united as a parish in rejoicing in the part each of us has, our own personal part, in God's overall plan of creation. During Announcements, we will call mothers present to come to the sanctuary to receive a Special Blessing

**GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY APPEAL— Special Collection for Formation of our Seminarians:**

Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 26. Our Archdiocese has four young men who have answered God's call to serve as priests and are currently studying at the Good Shepherd Seminary in Sydney. Formation of men for the priesthood requires the support of the entire Church community – please pray for the future of the priesthood in our Archdiocese and contribute financially towards the many years of academic training and seminary formation they will receive. (Note: Donations are no longer tax deductible. Please give generously.

**PARISH BBQ** Thanks to Pat Anderson and all workers and participants for making this an important event last Sunday for the present and future life of this parish across its various towns. We all had a good time, indicated by the frequency of random smiling!

**ST MARY'S** Congratulations to the whole school community for the very successful events over the past week, including Confirmation enrolments, Open Day and the Special Mothers' Day breakfast!

**BULLETIN ADS:** If you would like to **advertise your business** in this bulletin, please let me know. The Bay has a good model, and we'd be following a similar pattern. We can do variety re size, colour, etc, for varying rates. Please send your response to me via [stephen.astill@cg.org.au](mailto:stephen.astill@cg.org.au). Thank you in anticipation!

### VOICE FOLLOWERS

If you have a look at a map of the world and look for Cyprus and then go across the Mediteranean Sea to the Turkish coast and then travel 100 miles over mountains, one comes to Antioch in Psidia – the setting for today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles. If Paul had never gone there, we might never be here! But Paul did go there, and we are here!

What do I mean? Paul and Barnabas, being of Jewish stock, spoke about the gospel in the Synagogue at Antioch. They got such a rough reception – such abuse and slander – that they said this to their Jewish audience:

'It was necessary to speak the Word of God to you first. Since you are rejecting it... we are turning to the Gentiles'!

'Gentiles' is simply the word for non-Jews. You and I are Gentiles – part of the non-Jewish world. We are the sort of Christians we are, precisely because of Paul. He became the strongest advocate of the grace that the early Christian community should be inclusive of all nations and tribes and ethnic groups on the face of the earth.

Christianity could have remained a Jewish sect, but because of Paul your identity as a Christian does not depend on being Jewish. We are 'Catholic' Christians precisely because of Paul. Catholic is simply the word for universal. Clearly, the Catholic Church is universal in terms of geographical reach, but is it truly universal?

We have all heard of Médecins sans Frontières – Doctors without Borders.

We should be the same in the Catholic Church. We have the potential. But at the moment we are too Euro-centric. What riches of intellectual traditions, cultural expressions, and organisational structure are we still to receive from the Chinese, the Korean, the Indonesians, the Africans, the Indian Catholics who are part of our 'Church without Borders'?

And now we have a non-European Pope! Pope Francis comes from South America which has its own way to celebrate and understand and live the Gospel.

(PTO)