

able to contemplate and feel genuine gratitude for all those ways we have experienced God's love, generosity, solidarity and trust, as well as his forgiveness, patience, forbearance and compassion, will we allow the Spirit to grant us the freshness that can renew (and not simply patch up) our life and mission."

Pope Francis also thanks his brother priests "for their fidelity to their commitments". It is "truly significant" - he observes - that in an "ephemeral" society and culture, there are people who discover the joy of giving life. He says "thank you" for the daily celebration of the Eucharist and for the ministry of the sacrament of reconciliation, lived "without rigor or laxity", taking charge of people and "accompanying them on the path of conversion". He thanks them for the proclamation of the Gospel made "to all, with ardor":

Thank you for the times when, with great emotion, you embraced sinners, healed wounds... Nothing is more necessary than this: accessibility, closeness, readiness to draw near to the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters."

The heart of a pastor - says the Pope - is one "who has developed a spiritual taste for being one with his people, a pastor who never forgets that he has come from them...this in turn will lead to adopting a simple and austere way of life, rejecting privileges that have nothing to do with the Gospel." But the Pope also thanks and invites priests to give thanks "for the holiness of the faithful people of God", expressed "in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile."

**ENCOURAGEMENT** The third word is "encouragement". The Pope wants to encourage priests: "The mission to which we are called does not exempt us from suffering, pain and even misunderstanding. Rather, it requires us to face them squarely and to accept them, so that the Lord can transform them and conform us more closely to himself."

A good test for knowing how to find the shepherd's heart," writes Pope Francis, "is to ask ourselves how we are dealing with pain. Sometimes, in fact, it can happen that we behave like the Levite or the priest of the parable of the Good Samaritan, who ignore the man who lies on the ground, other times we approach pain intellectually, and taking refuge in clichés ("life is like that, we can do nothing"), ending up giving space to fatalism. " Or else we can draw near with a kind of aloofness that brings only isolation and exclusion."

The Pope also warns against what Bernanos called "the most precious of the devil's potions", that is "the sweet sadness that the Fathers of the East called acedia. The sadness that paralyzes the courage to continue in work, in prayer", which "makes sterile all attempts at transformation and conversion, spreading resentment and animosity". Pope Francis invites them to ask "the Spirit to come and awaken us", to "shake our torpor", to challenge habituality and "let us rethink our usual way of doing things; let us open our eyes and ears, and above all our hearts, so as not to be complacent about things as they are, but unsettled by the living and effective word of the risen Lord". -Editor's highlight!

"During our lives, we have been able to contemplate how joy is always reborn with Jesus Christ. A joy, the Pontiff points out, that "does not arise from voluntary or intellectual efforts but from the confidence to know that the words of Jesus to

Peter continue to act".

It is in prayer - the Pope explains - that "we experience our blessed precariousness which reminds us of our being disciples in need of the Lord's help and frees us from the Promethean tendency of those who ultimately rely solely on their own strengths". The pastor's prayer "is nourished and incarnated in the heart of God's people. It bears the signs of the wounds and joys of its people".

An entrustment that " sets us free from looking for quick, easy, ready-made answers; it allows the Lord to be the one – not our own recipes and goals – to point out a path of hope. So "we recognize our frailty, yes; but we allow Jesus to transform it and project us continuously towards the mission". The Pope observes that for one's heart to be encouraged, that two constitutive bonds must not be neglected. The first is the relationship with Jesus: It is the invitation not to neglect "spiritual accompaniment, having a brother with whom to speak, discuss, and discern one's own path". The second link is with people: "Do not withdraw from your people, your presbyterates and your communities, much less seek refuge in closed and elitist groups...a courageous minister is a minister always on the move".

The Pope asks priests to "be close to those who suffer, to be, without shame, close to human misery and, and indeed to make all these experiences our own, as eucharist.". To be "builders of relationships and communion, open, trusting and awaiting in hope the newness that the kingdom of God wishes to bring about even today."

**PRAISE** The last word proposed in the letter is "praise". It is impossible to speak of gratitude and encouragement without contemplating Mary who "teaches us the praise capable of lifting our gaze to the future and restoring hope to the present. ". Because "to look at Mary is to go back to believing in the revolutionary power of tenderness and affection". For this reason - concludes the Pope – "if at times we can feel tempted to withdraw into ourselves and our own affairs, safe from the dusty paths of daily life. Or regrets, complaints, criticism and sarcasm gain the upper hand and make us lose our desire to keep fighting, hoping and loving. At those times, let us look to Mary so that she can free our gaze of all the "clutter" that prevents us from being attentive and alert, and thus capable of seeing and celebrating Christ alive in the midst of his people."

"Brothers - these are the final words of the letter - once again, I continually give thanks for you... May we allow our gratitude to awaken praise and renewed enthusiasm for our ministry of anointing our brothers and sisters with hope. May we be men whose lives bear witness to the compassion and mercy that Jesus alone can bestow on us."

#### **PLENARY COUNCIL ROCKET SCIENCE: A MATTER OF TRUST**

Politicians vying for office and churches planning plenary councils sing from the same handbooks. As with rocket launches, where the early stage rockets fall away leaving the manned capsule to go into orbit, political parties put great time and energy into the preparation of policies, running focus groups, and attracting good candidates. When the election campaign begins they drop these activities. Candidates cross the nation offering goodies, shooting down rivals and trying to get the party across the line. The election won, the trimmed ship of state sails on unencumbered.

This is commonly true also of church synods and councils. In the case of the 2020 Catholic Plenary Council, a facilitation team was empowered to seek submissions, design processes of reflection, encourage individuals and congregations to take part, and analyse the results. At the next stage it has invited interested people to help prepare working papers on the key themes. These papers will inform the agenda of the council and its deliberations.

In both political and church processes, as with launching rockets, the focus of the process is placed on the final goal of winning power or making wise decisions. The preliminary processes are seen and evaluated through this lens. What is valuable at each stage is gathered into the next and the initial processes are then dropped. From the point of view of the executive committees this tightness of focus is both logical and necessary.

From the perspective of rocket riders, lay Catholics or citizens, however, the effectiveness of the process depends on the trust in which government, bishops or management are held. In rocketry, if trust is lacking in the competence or understanding of people working at any level of the project, no one will sign off on or sit in the final stage rocket without revisiting the earlier stages. Similarly, if people do not trust the wisdom, honesty or courage of political leaders or bishops, they will not trust the processes or people managing them unless they are completely transparent.

In current Australian and Catholic public life at the moment that kind of trust appears to be lacking. Disengagement from politics and cynicism about politicians' honesty attend the political environment in many nations. In the Catholic Church, too, the crimes of sexual abuse and its cover up have weakened trust in the governance at a time when it faces challenges from diminished numbers, ageing and institutional arthritis. In such situations any narrow focus on the final result of the process will dismay those attracted by the initial promises of consultation. The initial stages of consultation must be part of a wider commitment to consult those affected by the decisions finally made. In Australian federal politics few signs of this are evident. In response, state and local government and business groups have taken initiatives of their own to address aspects of climate change and Indigenous neglect.

In the Catholic Church the inclusive and consultative processes in the early stages of preparation for the Plenary Council are a vast improvement on previous practice. They express the desire to involve Catholics in the council. If these processes are simply dropped on completion and not kept alive in the church, however, the trust they have engendered will be lost. Space must be made for groups of Catholics to meet at local levels to continue conversation about the issues raised in the submissions. This demands a commitment by the Catholic Church.

"In a world where trust has been lost, transparency and encouragement of free conversation are necessary for its recovery.

That is true both of the federal government and of the Catholic Church." In the present climate transparency is also essential. At a minimum all the Catholics who were encouraged to take part in the process should be able to read the submissions and have available a broad analysis of the frequency with which

particular recommendations are made, particularly those that raise controversial theological questions.

The bureaucratic temptation is always to minimise conflict by using generalised language. Support for the ordination of woman, for example, can be described as support for women to have a stronger place in the church. Such specific issues can then be allowed to disappear in the working documents presented to the delegates to the council. Transparency demands that the working documents be open to comparison with the submissions.

Bishops, priests and church officials will form a large majority of delegates to the council. That is understandable, given the distinctive place of bishops in the Catholic Church, and the international as well as local significance of the council. But the imbalance between lay and clerical, between men and women, has also generated mistrust and disengagement by many Catholics. This makes it all the more important that the Council be seen clearly as a step in a continuing reform of the Catholic Church through encouraging the local initiatives that were part of its preparation.

In a world where trust has been lost, transparency and encouragement of free conversation are necessary for its recovery. That is true both of the federal government and of the Catholic Church.

*Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ is consulting editor of Eureka Street.*

#### **SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT**

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2019 – 2020, *Making it Real: Genuine human encounter in our digital world*, affirms the positive possibilities for encounter and solidarity offered by new digital media, while warning of those elements of our digital world that may be harmful. These include information overload; social isolation; marginalisation of the vulnerable; consumerism and fake news.

The Statement reminds us that the new digital media cannot be seen as neutral or 'unaffected by any moral considerations'. While many users do not realise it, the core business of social media platforms is to sell advertising and maximise profits. People's personal lives may be reduced to data that is traded for profit or power, and it is used to target and influence us in ways previously unthinkable. Pushing users to more extreme positions and promoting fake news and conspiracy theories sells, but this is at odds with human solidarity.

The Statement amplifies Pope Francis' call to us to 'boldly become citizens of the digital world', with the image of the Good Samaritan as our inspiration. We are called not only to love our neighbour, but to bring the love of God to the new global neighbourhood. The Statement points out that we are called not just to be inhabitants of this new digital world, but active citizens shaping it. All of us – whether we are users, communities, industrial or political leaders – have a role to play in rejecting hatred, divisions and falsehoods.

We have a duty to foster a neighbourhood that promotes those human attributes and social values that lend themselves to genuine human encounter – love, understanding, beauty, goodness, truth and trustworthiness, joy and hope.

**Follow the Office for Social Justice of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference**

**Facebook: @socialjusticeACBC Twitter: @JusticeCatholic**

**A reading from the book of Wisdom (18:6-9)**

That night had been foretold to our ancestors, so that, once they saw what kind of oaths they had put their trust in, they would joyfully take courage. This was the expectation of your people, the saving of the virtuous and the ruin of their enemies; for by the same act with which you took vengeance on our foes you made us glorious by calling us to you. The devout children of worthy men offered sacrifice in secret and this divine pact they struck with one accord: that the saints would share the same blessings and dangers alike; and forthwith they had begun to chant the hymns of the fathers.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 32:1. 12. 18-20. 22. R. v.12

**(R.) Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.**

1. Ring out your joy to the Lord, O you just; for praise is fitting for loyal hearts. They are happy, whose God is the Lord, the people he has chosen as his own. (R.)
2. The Lord looks on those who revere him, on those who hope in his love, to rescue their souls from death, to keep them alive in famine. (R.)
3. Our soul is waiting for the Lord. The Lord is our help and our shield. May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you. (R.)



**A reading from the letter to the Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19**

Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen. It was by faith that our ancestors were commended. It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going. By faith he arrived, as a foreigner, in the Promised Land, and lived there as if in a strange country, with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. They lived there in tents while he looked forward to a city founded, designed and built by God. It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who was already as good as dead himself, more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore. All these died in faith, before receiving any of the things that had been promised, but they saw them in the far distance and welcomed them, recognising that they were only strangers and nomads on earth. People who use such terms about themselves make it quite plain that they are in search of their real homeland. They can hardly have meant the country they came from, since they had the opportunity to go back to it; but in fact they were longing for a better homeland, their heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, since he has founded the city for them. It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered to sacrifice his only son even though the promises had been made to him and he had been told:

*It is through Isaac that your name will be carried on.*

He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead, and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead.

# THE LITURGY OF THE WORD



Gospel Acclamation Mt 24:42. 44

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

Be watchful and ready:

You know not when the Son of Man is coming.

**Alleluia!**

Gospel Lk 12:32-48

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.

'Sell your possessions and give alms. Get yourselves purses that do not wear out, treasure that will not fail you, in heaven where no thief can reach it and no moth destroy it. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* 'See that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit. Be like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks. Happy those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. I tell you solemnly, he will put on an apron, sit them down at table and wait on them. It may be in the second watch he comes, or in the third, but happy those servants if he finds them ready. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what hour the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. You too must stand ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

Peter said, 'Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone?' The Lord replied, 'What sort of steward, then, is faithful and wise enough for the master to place him over his household to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? Happy that servant if his master's arrival finds him at this employment. I tell you truly, he will place him over everything he owns. But as for the servant who says to himself, "My master is taking his time coming", and sets about beating the menservants and the maids, and eating and drinking and getting drunk, his master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the unfaithful. 'The servant who knows what his master wants, but has not even started to carry out those wishes, will receive very many strokes of the lash. The one who did not know, but deserves to be beaten for what he has done, will receive fewer strokes. When a man has had a great deal given him, a great deal will be demanded of him; when a man has had a great deal given him on trust, even more will be expected of him.'

## SACRED HEART PARISH

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**Deacon Emeritus** Rev. Paul Rummery;

**Youth Minister:** Juliette Pierre 0424 257 102

**Cleaner:** Mrs Sue Fawcett

**Tuross Caring Group:** 0497 315 534

**Moruya Caring Group:** 0431 354 993

**PARISH SCHOOLS:** St Mary's Parish Primary School

Principal: Mrs Noelene O'Neill

..... **Carroll College** Principal: Mrs Jacqui Heffernan .....

### HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION

#### THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Thursday this week is the 15th of August! This is a dramatic date in the church calendar, and hence a holy day of obligation, otherwise known as a day of holy obligation. By either term, the church wants all Catholics, loyal and disloyal, faithful and unfaithful, old and young, rich and poor, local residents/stayers and visitors/nomads, all of us are welcome together at 9.15am or 6pm for Mass.

#### 'POPE TO PRIESTS' LETTER 2019

[NOTE: I am putting this summary, etc, prominently in the bulletin so that if you only read page one, you'll get this!

The letter is meant to give priests, many of whom feel disheartened because of the horrendous crimes of abuse committed by a small percentage of their fellow priests, hope in these times of tribulation when they are so often blamed or treated with suspicion, distrust, contempt or ridicule. He speaks to all priests because he is well aware and deeply concerned that in many countries, including the US, Australia, Ireland, the UK, Germany and Chile, the morale of priests has suffered greatly because of the abuse scandal. Francis addresses his letter to all those priests who have given their lives to Jesus and "are working in the trenches" exposed to countless difficulties, and says he wants to be close to them. "I want to say a word to each of you who, often without fanfare and at personal cost, amid weariness, infirmity and sorrow, carry out your mission of service to God and to your people," he says. He tells them that "despite the hardships of the journey, you are writing the finest pages of the priestly life." Writing "as an older brother and a father," he says he wants "to thank you in the name of the holy and faithful People of God for all that you do for them" and "to encourage you never to forget the words that the Lord spoke to us with great love on our ordination day: 'I no longer call you servants ... I call you friends.'"

#### Pope to priests: "Thank you for your service"

Pope Francis' letter on the 160th anniversary of the death of the Curé of Ars, St John Vianney: support, closeness and encouragement to all priests who, despite their hard work and disappointments, celebrate the sacraments every day and accompany the people of God.

-By Sergio Centofanti

## Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C) 11/8/2019

**Weekend Masses:** Saturday Vigil 6pm Moruya;

Sunday at 'The Pines', Tuross 8am; Moruya 10am

**Weekday Masses:** Monday Communion Service 9.15am;

Weekday Masses: Tues 5.30pm, Wed, Thurs & Fri 9.15am.

-Rosary after Mass

**Reconciliation:** Saturday 10—10.30am

**Baptisms, Anointings, Weddings & Funerals** by appointment.

**For the sick:** Fr Kevin Murphy. (Note: other names have been cleared deliberately, due to confusions having arisen in the past, sometimes offensively to the family members. All are welcome to report by email the names of those who are in continuing need of our prayers. They will be back in next week, depending on that communication)

**For the deceased:**

Pope Francis has written to priests recalling the 160th anniversary of the death of the Curé of Ars, Patron Saint of parish priests around the world. It is a letter that expresses encouragement and closeness to "brother priests, who without making noise" leave everything to engage in the daily life of communities; those who work in the "trenches"; those who confront an endless variety of situations in your effort "to care for and accompany God's people. I want to say a word to each of you, writes the Pope, who, often without fanfare and at personal cost, amid weariness, infirmity and sorrow, carry out your mission of service to God and to your people. Despite the hardships of the journey, you are writing the finest pages of the priestly life."

**PAIN** The papal letter opens with a look at the abuse scandal: "In these years, we have become more attentive to the cry, often silent and suppressed, of our brothers and sisters who were victims of the abuse of power, the abuse of conscience and sexual abuse on the part of ordained ministers." But, Pope Francis explains, even without "denying or dismissing the harm caused by some of our brothers, it would be unfair not to express our gratitude to all those priests who faithfully and generously spend their lives in the service of others. Countless priests make of their lives a work of mercy in areas or situations that are often hostile, isolated or ignored, even at the risk of their lives." The Pope thanked them "for their courageous and constant example" and writes that "in these times of turbulence, shame and pain, you demonstrate that you have joyfully put your lives on the line for the sake of the Gospel". He invites them not to be discouraged, because "The Lord is purifying his Bride and converting all of us to himself. He is letting us be put to the test in order to make us realize that without him we are simply dust."

**GRATITUDE** The second key word is "gratitude". Pope Francis recalls that "vocation, more than our choice, is a response to a free call from the Lord". The Pope exhorts priests to "return to those luminous moments" in which we have experienced the call of the Lord to consecrate all our lives to his service, to "that "yes" born and developed in the heart of the Christian community." In moments of difficulty, fragility, weakness, "the worst temptation of all is to keep brooding over our troubles". It is crucial - explains the Pontiff - "to cherish the memory of the Lord's presence in our lives and his merciful gaze, which inspired us to put our lives on the line for him and for his People. Gratitude "is always a powerful weapon. Only if we are