

**CATHOLIC PARISH OF HEALESVILLE, INCORPORATING HEALESVILLE (ST BRIGID'S),
YARRA GLEN (ST ALOYSIUS) & MARYSVILLE (OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS)**



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TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Year A) 27th September 2020

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading: Ezekiel 18:25-28

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel

The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows: 'You object, "What the Lord does is unjust." Listen, you House of Israel: is what I do unjust? Is it not what you do that is unjust? When the upright man renounces his integrity to commit sin and dies because of this, he dies because of the evil that he himself has committed. When the sinner renounces sin to become law-abiding and honest, he deserves to live. He has chosen to renounce all his previous sins; he shall certainly live; he shall not die.'

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 24:4-9

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Lord, make me know your ways.

Lord, teach me your paths.

Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:

for you are God my saviour. **R.**

Remember your mercy, Lord,
and the love you have shown from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth.

In your love remember me,

because of your goodness, O Lord. **R.**

The Lord is good and upright.

He shows the path to those who stray,

he guides the humble in the right path;

he teaches his way to the poor. **R.**

Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-11

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians

If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the Spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind. That is the one thing which would make me completely happy. There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead. In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus: His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation: John 10:27

Alleluia, alleluia!
My sheep listen to my voice, says the Lord;
I know them, and they follow me.
Alleluia!

Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not go", but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, sir", but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' 'The first' they said. Jesus said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.'

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



FROM FR FRANCIS

What is Prayer? Part 4: Learning to speak the language of Love

This is the fourth and final part of these weekly reflections on prayer. So far we have observed that: 1) prayer is a fundamentally inter-personal relationship with God, 2) prayer requires an interior disposition, and, 3) coming to know God in prayer both requires and facilitates self-knowledge. This last reflection will focus on the relationship between prayer and charity (love).

When Jesus is asked ‘What is the first and greatest commandment?’ he responds: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.” (Mt 22:37-38). Here is an interesting question for our personal reflection: “Do I love God?” Our instinct is to say, ‘yes, of course I love God’. But how do we *know* that we love God? It is so easy for us to say that we love someone, yet as with all relationships actions speak louder than words. St Paul’s great panegyric on love begins: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” (1 Cor 13:1-2). Here St Paul is observing that love is the end goal, the ‘telos’ towards which the whole Christian life is oriented.

It therefore makes sense that all prayer should be oriented towards love – both love of God and love of neighbour. St Vincent de Paul offers this very practical advice: “*If a needy person requires medicine or other help during prayer time, do whatever has to be done with peace of mind. Offer the deed to God as your prayer. Do not become upset or feel guilty because you interrupted your prayer to serve the poor. God is not neglected if you leave him for such service.*” On the other hand, if after spending hours in prayer we were to snap at the first person we encounter we would be forced to examine what was ‘going on’ during our time of prayer. There is a direct relationship between the interior life and the exterior life. By allowing an encounter with Christ in our ‘interior room’ through prayer, we are better able to step out of ourselves and encounter Christ in the exterior world. There are few more powerful examples of this in modern times than St Teresa of Calcutta. Every day she and her fellow ‘Missionaries of Charity’ would go out to the streets to serve Christ in the poor, the sick and the dying. But this heroic labour of charity was only made possible by a deep interior life of prayer. Every morning the Missionaries of Charity throughout the world begin with Mass and an hour of silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Every evening they return to the convent to pray in common. The work of the Missionaries of Charity begins and ends in prayer, and would be impossible to sustain without it. We see in the lives of the saints the dynamism between faith and works, between belief and practice, between love of God and love of neighbour. For the Christian prayer animates our good works, and good works animate our prayer.

In 1Thessalonians St Paul exhorts us to “pray constantly” (1Thes 5:17). Christians of every generation have puzzled over what it might mean to “pray constantly.” In the Eastern (Greek) monastic tradition going back to the 6th century there arose the method of the “Jesus Prayer.” This was developed and promoted by the 14th Century Greek Orthodox monk, Gregory of Palamas, who encouraged his fellow monks to prayer the mantra: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” The idea was to repeat the prayer continuously almost like a mental ‘background track’ during work, meals, and even conversations. No doubt many faithful Christians have had success with this approach to prayer, although I suspect it is better suited to those living a life of monastic contemplation. Personally (as someone who struggles with multi-tasking!) I would find it incredibly mentally fatiguing, especially with the fast-paced and complicated demands of modern life and ministry. I suspect most Catholics busy with work

and family life would also struggle to put this into practice. Most struggle enough with the repetition of the rosary. But in both cases the words are merely the means by which the heart and the mind are directed to the contemplation of God. In its essence *prayer is nothing more or less than a desire of the heart for God*. The great mystics and contemplatives show us that as we ascend the mountain of prayer and enter the cloudy summit of contemplation the words dissipate into a sigh of the heart. St Paul was no doubt drawing from personal experience when he wrote: “the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Romans 8:26). The words we speak are of secondary importance to the movement of the human heart seeking the very heart of God. I’m reminded of the episcopal motto of St John Henry Newman: *Cor ad cor loquitur* – ‘heart speaks to heart’ which he adopted from St Francis de Sales’ *Treatise on the Love of God*. “Heart speaks to heart” - it’s a beautifully evocative description of Christian prayer. True prayer is a language of love that transcends the limits of human language. This surely is what St Paul means when he counsels us to “pray without ceasing”? It is less a matter of words repeated *ad nauseam*, and more a matter of the constancy of a heart that beats for the love of God. The heart that is filled with God lacks nothing. The soul’s union with God in prayer means it already experiences a foretaste of heaven. If only we could all experience prayer this way, we would hardly need to goad ourselves as we do to eke out a daily rosary, poor vessels of clay that we are!

When it comes to prayer practice makes perfect. We shouldn’t feel discouraged if we are not mystics after our first 15 minutes of prayer. Cultivating a prayer life is a labour of love, and invariably requires great self-discipline. In fact, most acts of human love are ritualised and habitual. We see this in the care that a mother shows for her child. The mother ensures that the child gets up, eats, plays, and goes to bed in much the same way every day. The ritual provides stability and familiarity but through these moments the mother communicates her love for her child. Sometimes discipline is required and that too is an expression of her love for her child. If we wish to have a vigorous prayer life routine and habit is indispensable. Those who resolve to pray ‘when I can find the time’ are probably like those who resolve to do exercise ‘when I can find the time’ – namely it rarely if ever happens! Every serious athlete understands the self-discipline involved in following a strict training regimen to stay in peak condition. Popular podcaster Fr Mike Schmitz often says that “when it comes to prayer consistency wins over intensity every time.” That is very sound, practical advice, because it understands that true love is a commitment not a feeling. Whether we ‘feel’ anything in prayer is almost irrelevant; the most important thing is that we remain faithful to God. Mother Teresa left behind an entire treasury of quotable aphorisms, but perhaps my favourite is this: “God didn’t ask us to be successful, he asked us to be faithful.” We can apply that infinitely wise distinction to prayer. If we want to know whether we love God, the answer lies in our fidelity to prayer. The soul that loves God will never consider time spent in prayer to be ‘time wasted’. Prayer is our way of practicing for eternity when we will dwell in the embrace of Divine Love for ever.

If all this seems too abstract, perhaps consider this modern-day example of a soul who found Christ, and in doing so found herself.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0LKZm2BqZo>

WEEKLY MASSES ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR ST BRIGID’S YOU TUBE CHANNEL

A reminder that Fr Francis’ Sunday Masses are recorded each weekend and are available on St Brigid’s You Tube Channel each Sunday morning. The link is accessible through St Brigid’s Healesville’s website, or by searching St Brigid’s Healesville on You Tube, or using the link:

<https://bit.ly/StBsHville> This week’s Mass comes from St Brigid’s.

MIGRANT AND REFUGEE SUNDAY

This weekend we celebrate Migrant and Refugee Sunday, which we have greatly enjoyed over the past few years. We have listened to the moving stories of our own parishioners' immigration to Australia, and heard about the real-life struggles of our refugee brothers and sisters. We have enjoyed a yummy shared meal following Mass, reflecting our varied cultures of origin. Our current lock down prevents us from gathering for a similar celebration this year, but our prayers go out to all those who are experiencing challenges as newcomers to our land, and to all around the world who have been displaced from their homes, both voluntarily and involuntarily. May God bless each struggle to belong, and inspire generosity in those who have the opportunity to make a newcomer welcome.

KEEPING US CONNECTED

Please email the office if you would like to participate in:

- **The Parish Grapevine** which advises of deaths, funerals or other parish news.
- **A regular Bible Study/Faith Reflection Group led by Fr Francis** via video chat on a phone, ipad or computer.

Don't forget to check out **the Living Faith page on St Brigid's website!** Once you have read the bulletin on our website, stay on to have a look around. Elissa keeps us up to date with the latest news and provides us with awesome resources to assist our prayer life and enhance our reflection time with the Lord. Thanks Elissa!

SOME THOUGHTS FROM DEBBIE

A few lines from one of my very favourite Psalms popped up again during the Sunday readings recently: 'The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, rich in mercy', Psalm 103. Thankfully, we hear the words of this Psalm again and again during our weekly Masses, along with countless other messages of hope and comfort. We are repeatedly assured of God's mercy and love. No matter who we may think we are, we can be sure of who God is. Psalm 103 goes on to remind us that "Yahweh's faithful love for those who fear him is from eternity and forever; and his saving justice to their children's children." Now *that* is a wonderful inheritance. Throughout his ministry, Jesus goes to great effort to stress that the guilt and consequent punishment due to the sins of a father are not inherited by his children, or by his grandchildren's children, and so on, a common belief in his day. The concept that a big bad act committed by someone in a family line would be punished through subsequent generations explained misfortune, illness and deformity for the Jews of his generation, as it had done for their ancestors before them. Jesus repeatedly revealed to us that our relationship with God, be it whole or fractured, is a personal, one on one experience. We live our love for God through our community, certainly, but it is important to recognise that God knows exactly who we are as individuals, and loves us for who we are, not for who others think we may be. We are never just part of a crowd in God's eyes.

Inviting those he met to grow in their personal relationship with God, Jesus reinforced to those he forgave that God will always forgive our sins if we sincerely turn to him with contrition and a firm resolve to avoid recommitting that sin as best we can. The parable of the Prodigal Son, also called the Forgiving Father, speaks of God's yearning for us to turn to him with sorrow for our sin, to receive forgiveness and reinstatement of sonship, even when we ourselves feel unworthy to be called his child. Jesus assures us that when we fail, often again and again, and turn our eyes to God in our distress, he will be waiting with justice, but justice that is,

thankfully, tempered by his loving mercy. He waits to welcome us back. God is just without limitation, and infinitely merciful, and our personal relationship with him is precious and has great dignity and value. Each of us is loved into being by God, who faithfully accompanies us as we negotiate life, intimately interested in each thought that crosses our mind. Like the father in the parable, our heavenly Father waits for us at the end of our journey home to him, yearning for us to join him in the fullness of eternal life. The hope and surety that God loves each of us for ourselves, for who we are, not for who we could be, should provide each of us with infinite comfort, and inspire us to grow to our full potential.

Our love for God and his love for us will shine out in our face to face encounter with him, reflecting our awe in the fullness of his presence, and his desire to forgive us, tempering the consequences that we truly deserve with his limitless mercy for us, his beloved children. His will not be a judgement coloured by the injustice of inheriting personal punishment for something your ancestor chose to do, or the obscured truth of our imperfect legal system, or our often-prejudiced personal judgements. Our meeting with God at the end of our days is fulfilment of our creation. Our entry into eternity should be anticipated with comfort, reassured by the generosity of the Forgiving Father, the hope of the resurrection of Jesus, and the infinite, perfect, lavish love of the Holy Spirit.

[RIDE ON MOWER REQUIRED](#)

If anyone can assist us to source a second hand ride-on mower, please contact Debbie. We would greatly appreciate advice from someone in the trade, or an offer to sell or donate a ride-on mower in good condition.

[THANKSGIVING TOTAL TO 14TH SEPTEMBER](#)

St Brigid's: Church: \$165 Presbytery: \$110 Thank you!!

[PLEASE PRAY: FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED RECENTLY](#)

Albert Slawinski, Maureen Fogarty, Bob Barclay

[FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK](#)

Babies Emmett, Noah Glen Christie, Tedi and Santi; Roman, Blake Smith, Trish Leahy, John Snell, Abby Sharp, Peter Munro, Megan, Bernie Jansen, Andrew Sharp, John, Glenn, Lyn Francis, Dorothy Barber, Fiona, Annie Preuss, Michelle Ryan, Damian, John, Alison, Heather, Julie Bates, Garry Dettman, Bradley Jordan, Jeanette Henkel, Richard Galbraith, Debbie Huby, Geoff Lucas, Sandra Donkin, Dorothy Fraser, Glen, Fred Bullas, Fred Coullas, Evie Gleeson, Indy Dawes, Rade Krstic, Megan Williams, Michael Wood, Bill Howie, Jennie, Michael, Margo & Stephen Youngberry, Marie Hammond, John Mulholland, Rhiannon Days, Val Savitt, Ron Garland, Jaz Nueber, James Cooney, Robert, Mary & Gerard Bariola, Tilly Van der Zee, Lydia, Joyce Slattery, Lawrie Field, Annie, Bob Ireland, Val & Michael Christie, Ted & Peter Bowling, Natasha, Mia, James, Richard Adams, Mitchell & Wynn Wilson, Carina Warton, Anne Bateman.

[FOR THOSE WHOSE ANNIVERSARIES ARE IN SEPTEMBER](#)

Patricia Carey (02.09.13), Michael Scowen (03.09.05), Bernard Jansen (05.09.04), Frieddy Laszozewski (10.09.82), Moyra Donchi (10.09.15), Bruce Jarvis (14.09.11), Dorothy Amarant (19.09.08), Michael O'Dwyer (20.09.97), Les Humphries (20.09.13), Greta Dame (28.09.96), Betty Ireland (28.09.97), Henriette Sallay (29.09.13), Justin Perry, Sr Mary Fran Coburn (2008), Peter Barnett, Laurie Fromholtz, John Duffy, Clare Lyons, Ashley Warton

