

Reflection - The Word Encountered

Postponement and Repentance

As a child, I thought that Advent was an artificial thing. It seemed a forced time of year, a concoction to get us excited about the coming of Christmas. It felt fake. After all, the birth of Christ had happened a long time ago. What was the point of pretending that it hadn't? It was like going through the motions of contrived expectancy when we knew the outcome in advance.

Now I am beginning to see Advent differently. The cycle of the seasons that we as a worshipping people live through each year is not an exercise in "let's pretend" at all. It is an ongoing journey into deeper reality. It is a recognition that the entry of God into our lives, while ontologically accomplished, is still psychologically unfinished.

As long as we breathe, there is more of our lives to open, to unbar, to unlock. There is always more of us that we might let God enter. There is no end to the ways that the Word of God can more fully take on our flesh.

This is especially true of our need to acknowledge how utterly we rely on God's healing power for our salvation. We so much want to be whole and finished that our greatest temptation is to think and hope the task is done. Oh, if this conversion could only be our last. If this long journey of faith could be neat, final, and complete. Embarrassed as we all are at the wounds we bear and the scars hidden at the bottom of our being, we only reluctantly admit our vulnerability. We would rather not be reminded, once again, of our need for redemption. Far more tempting is escape. Far more appealing is the prospect that we can sleep-walk through life and not address the pain.

The words of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark may be read not only as a warning about the end times, but as a challenge for us to live in the present, to engage life now, to be attentive to the moment at hand. It is the call of Advent itself. **Be awake.** Do not put off the opening of your life to God.

Denial and postponement are especially true in the matter of our sins, those wounds that we somehow inflict upon ourselves and others. Repression of the truth is common. Admission and reform are rare. We project, we accuse, we complain, we evade, we distract ourselves. We are not as adept at confession.

In our own place and time, we have made a science of escape and sleep. Rather than live at that sharp edge of life, awake and alert, we pretend that we have no sin. There is nothing wrong with me, no change required of us. Others need the help. My co-workers, my friends and community, my family are to blame. "Evil empires," "warlords" and "endless enemies" are the source of our problems. Bishops or feminists, conservatives or leftists, liberation theologians or curial despots are the favourite demons of choice.

We in the church are not especially noted for our willingness to confess our own sins and welcome repentance. At best, one part of the church will attack the other. But how uncommon it is to hear theologians acknowledge the sinfulness of the theologian—unless it is a theologian of the opposite persuasion. How scarce is the hierarchy's confession of guilt. How unusual it is to hear the right wing warn us of conservatives' sins. How rare is the liberal who admits the possible disorders of liberalism.

**Every Eucharist, like every Advent, begins with a call for repentance and a plea for mercy.** But how real is it for us? How awake, how open are we to the truth of our inadequacy and the entrance of God into our lives? How willing are we to make the words of Isaiah our own? "Why do you let us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so that we fear you not? We are sinful, unclean people, our good deeds like polluted rags. We have been delivered up to guilt."

What a hierarchy, what a priesthood, what a people of God we would be if we allowed such sentiments to be our own. But we recoil from the implications. They would have us change. They would make a difference in the way we look at the world. They would unmask too many of the pretences and postures we have assumed.

The theme of Advent is not "let's pretend." It is "get real." Here. Now. Make real the need for God. Make real God's entry. Make real the Word—not just as a text or a story, but as a disclosure of truth. Not only is God revealed to us. You and I, here and now, are revealed to ourselves.

Thus, every Advent is an opportunity. Together, we might once again experience the Word of God taking flesh in us. And having allowed God such profound entry, we may find ourselves giving birth anew to the Word in our world.

John Kavanaugh, SJ

A parishioner's reflection on Fratelli Tutti "Brothers and Sisters all"

Continuation.....

Chp 4: *A Heart Open to the Whole World* focuses on practical responses to issues such as migration and refugees, citizenship, cultural giftedness shared decision making, tension between globalisation and localisation

Chp 6: *Dialogue and Friendship in Society* - in talking about 'recovering kindness', consensus and truth, Pope Francis quotes the Australian bishops who wrote 'We cannot accept a digital world designed to exploit our weaknesses and bring out the worst in people'.

Chp 7: *Paths to Renewed Encounter* - peacemakers, the Art and Architecture of peace, Forgiveness and reconciliation, social peace, legitimate and inevitable conflict and very clear teachings on war and the death penalty.

(A copy of Fratelli Tutti is currently available for loan in Parish Office)

St Thomas Aquinas Parish Bulletin



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St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Community Springwood

Parish Priest:

Fr Paul Slyney - 4754 1052 **Emergency ONLY:** 0418 461 316

Assistant Priest:

Fr Michael Gathuku - 4754 1052 **Emergency ONLY:** 0474 272 605

Parish Pastoral Council:

Email - [springwoodppc@gmail.com](mailto:springwoodppc@gmail.com)

Parish Office Hours:

Tuesday to Friday 8.30 am - 3.30 pm

Weekend Masses:

Saturday Vigil Mass 5.00 pm, Sunday 8.00 am and 9.30 am

Weekday Mass:

Tuesday - Saturday 9.30 am

Rosary & Devotions:

Tuesday - Saturday 9.00 am

Adoration, Rosary & Chaplet:

2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 7.30 - 8.30 pm

Intercession & Adoration:

None until further notice

Baptisms:

2nd and 4th Sundays of every month - 10.30am and by appointment

Reconciliation:

By appointment

Weddings:

By appointment - restricted numbers

Funerals:

By appointment - restricted numbers

THE GOSPEL

Mark 13:33-37

What I say to you, I say to all: "Watch!"

Rough mountains,  
steep pathways,  
rugged trails with ruts,  
or sometimes,  
cool trails,  
running streams.

Whether  
rough roads or sunny streets  
let us never stop watching  
for you,  
O Lord.

Come to us as we walk with one another  
on the pathway of time.

We look for you in all things,  
all creation, every event,  
every love, every  
one we meet,  
along the way.

A Poem to sit with

Christ our Earth

As fish live  
only  
in water

we live  
only  
in Christ

this is Truth

anything  
less  
is delusion

yet the lie  
is  
made Truth

and Truth  
is  
made the lie.

J. Janda

Anne M. Osdieck

Today's Readings: *FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, Year B* Is 63:16-17, 64:1, 3-8; 1 Cor 1:3-9; Mk 13:33-37

Entrance Antiphon: To you, I life up my soul, O my God. In you, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame.  
Nor let my enemies exult over me; and let none who hope in you be put to shame.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 79:2-3, 15-16, 18-19. R. v. 4

R. Lord, make us turn to you, let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, Alleluia! Lord, show us your mercy and love, and grant us your salvation.  
Alleluia!

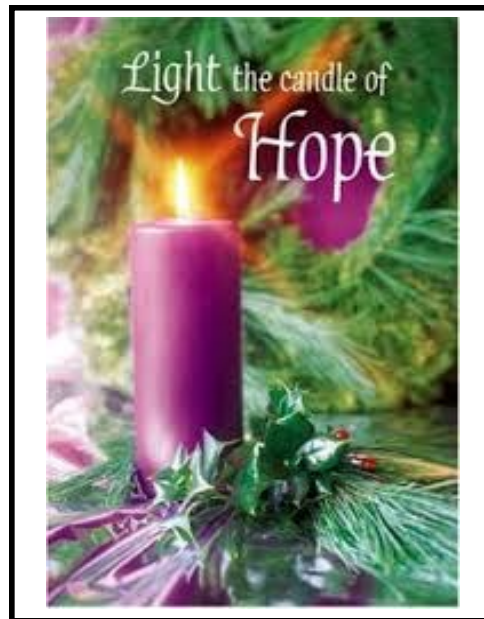
Communion Antiphon: The Lord will bestow his bounty, and our earth shall yield its increase.

Next Week: Is 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Pet 3:8-14; Mk 1:1-8



**Sick:** Victor Gresser (aged 2), Michael Mercieca, Diana Donnelly, Pamela Pereira, Melissa Baxter, Mary Ellen Schell, Sue Downes, Joan Eastwood, Gwen Daly, Kerry Aitken, Anthony O'Connell, Wal & Anne Knoke, Angela Brown, Lea Dardenne, Francisco Robles, Teresita Robles, Susie Ziino, Patricia Duffy, Sarah Walke, Jackie Davies, Kimberly Cusack, Margaret Healy, Colleen Lusty, Lorna Lyons, Christopher Coombs, Lucinda Goodwin, Angela Coombs, Leila Baker, Mary Coombs, Slawcia Pisarska, Luca Hurley, Joan Lohrey, Sarah & Thomas McGoram, Frances Hinder, Shirley Anderson, Peter Doherty, Val Hardy, Emile Amine, Janice Glassington, Helen Meville, Susan Solomon, Thomas Glavas **and all Private Intentions.**

*Due to the strict privacy laws, names of the deceased and sick can only be included in the Bulletin with the express permission of the immediate family. Thank you.*



### FAREWELL

*This weekend we farewell Christine Tapsell-Timbs, Terry Timbs and John Timbs as they leave our Parish and move north to be closer to their families.*

*We wish them well on their new and exciting adventure.*

***Good bye, good luck and God speed.***

*From all your friends at Springwood and Lawson Parish.*



**THE WEARING OF MASKS** - On consideration of the most recent NSW Health advice, the Diocese of Parramatta **STRONGLY recommends all worshippers at Masses** in the Diocese to wear a mask to, during and from Mass and other services. We understand the inconvenience masks may pose, but the health of our parishioners and the wider community is our highest concern. We sincerely thank you for your understanding, and for playing your part in keeping our community safe. **We request that as we move to larger Masses, that you please bring along your own mask to Mass. Thank you.**

**THANK YOU** - Noreen Taylor, and the lovely Parishioners from Glenbrook, would like to express their kindest thanks to our Parish for welcoming them to our weekday Masses while they were without a Priest. They really felt like they were part of our community and were incredibly grateful.

**BISHOP'S CHRISTMAS APPEAL** - This Christmas, let us unite in demonstrating God's unconditional love and keep families together. Your compassionate gifts and prayers will help CatholicCare's Project Elizabeth to support vulnerable families to build strong, loving relationships. You can help give people the emotional and practical support they need to live their lives in love and hope. Please give generously to the Bishop's Christmas Appeal: [yourcatholicfoundation.org.au/appeal](http://yourcatholicfoundation.org.au/appeal)

*Envelopes are available at the back of the church. Please place into the first collection box if you wish to donate. Thank you.*

***Travel light, live light, spread the light, be the light***

## CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES 2020:

	Springwood	Lawson (OLN)
Christmas Eve, Thurs 24th Dec	5.00pm Children's Mass 8.00pm VIGIL	5.00pm Children's Mass 8.00pm VIGIL
Christmas Day, Fri 25th Dec	8.00am, 9.30am	8.00am, 9.00am
Boxing Day, Sat 26 Dec	No Mass	No Mass
Sun 27th December	8.00am, 9.30am	8.30am
Tues 29th, Wed 30th Dec	9.30am	5.00pm
Thurs 31st Dec	9.30am	9.00am
Fri 1st January	9.30am	

### Booking for Christmas Masses:

We have started to take bookings for all Christmas Masses as we are anticipating large numbers. Please either ring or email the Parish as soon as possible to guarantee your place.

Ph: 4754 1052 / E: [springwood@parracatholic.org](mailto:springwood@parracatholic.org)

The 2nd Rite of Reconciliation has been scheduled for Tuesday, 22nd December at 7:00 PM

Fr Paul and Fr Shinto will be present on the evening

*The Sacrament of Penance, at this time during Advent, is an ideal way of remaining focused on the beautiful spirituality of Christmas.*

## Houses to Homes

### St Thomas Aquinas Parish Christmas Appeal

In partnership with **CatholicCare** we are appealing to our Parishioners to help support young mothers and babies through the Houses to Home program.

This amazing service is for pregnant girls or parent-ing young women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The demand for this program has grown and we would like to be able to present Houses to Homes with practical gifts i.e. nappies, wipes, baby clothes, small children's toys (please not used toys due to COVID-19 regulations), toiletry items for women etc.

**Please place your items under the Christmas Tree from Advent. Thank you.**



**St Vincent de Paul Society NSW**  
*Support Services* good works

This is the time of year when the **St. Vincent de Paul**

**Society** members ask Parishioners to support families in need by providing Christmas Hampers or cash to purchase fruit and vegetable vouchers. We are aware that our Mass attendee numbers are well down, and that everyone has in some way been affected by COVID-19, so conference members have decided that this year our main area of support will be **vouchers for food, fruit, vegetables and meat or fish**. Envelopes for your donations are available on the table near Our Lady's statue at the entrance to our church and conference members will be at all Masses **from this weekend until Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December to accept all donations.**

**If your family feels able to provide a hamper that would be wonderful.** Please make it suitable for a family of 2 adults and 2 children. We have a priority list of families which, with your support, we will endeavour to fill. Many thanks for your ongoing support to Vinnies and the people we support. Any inquiries may be made to Margaret on 4753 1031.