

In Exile - Searching for God Among Many Voices

We are surrounded by many voices.

There's rarely a moment within our waking lives that someone or something isn't calling out to us and - even in our sleep - dreams and nightmares ask for our attention. And each voice has its own particular cadence and message.

Some voices invite us in, promising us life if we do this or that or buy a certain product or idea; others threaten us. Some voices beckon us towards hatred, bitterness, and anger, while others challenge us towards love, graciousness, and forgiveness. Some voices tell us that they are playful and humorous, not to be taken seriously, even as others trumpet that they are urgent and weighty, the voice of non-negotiable truth, God's voice.

Within all of these, which is the voice of God? How do we recognize God's voice among and within all of these voices? **That's not easy to answer.**

God, as the scriptures tell us, is the author of everything that's good, whether it bears a religious label or not. Hence, God's voice is inside of many things that are not explicitly connected to faith and religion, just as God's voice is also not in everything that masquerades as religious. **But how do we discern that?**

Jesus leaves us a wonderful metaphor to work with, but it's precisely only a metaphor. He tells us that he is the "Good Shepherd" and that his sheep will recognise his voice among all other voices.

In sharing this metaphor, he is drawing upon a practice that was common among shepherds at the time. At night, for protection and companionship, shepherds would put their flocks together into a common enclosure. They would then separate the sheep in the morning by using their voices. Each shepherd had trained his sheep to be attuned to his voice and his voice only. The shepherd would walk away from the enclosure calling his sheep, often times by their individual names, and they would follow him. His sheep were so attuned to his voice that they would not follow the voice of another shepherd, even if that shepherd tried to trick them by imitating the voice of their own shepherd - shepherds often did this to try to steal someone else's sheep!

Like a baby who, at a point, will no longer be cuddled by the voice of a babysitter but wants and needs the voice of the mother, each sheep recognised intimately the voice that was safeguarding them and would not follow another voice. **So too with us!**

Among all the voices that surround and beckon us, how do we discern the unique cadence of God's voice? Which one is the voice of the Good Shepherd?

There's no easy answer and sometimes the best we can do is to trust our gut-feeling about right and wrong.

But we have a number of principles that come to us from Jesus, from scripture, and from the deep wells of our Christian tradition that can help us.

What follows is a series of principles to help us discern God's voice among the multitude of voices that beckon us. What is the unique cadence of the voice of the Good Shepherd?

- ◆ The voice of God is recognised both in whispers and in soft tones, even as it is recognised in thunder and in storm.
- ◆ The voice of God is recognised wherever one sees life, joy, health, colour, and humour, even as it is recognised wherever one sees suffering, poverty, and a beaten-down spirit.
- ◆ The voice of God is recognised in what calls us to what's higher, sets us apart, and invites us to holiness, even as it is recognised in what calls us to humility, submergence into humanity, and in that which refuses to denigrate our humanity.
- ◆ The voice of God is the one that most challenges and stretches us, even as it is the only voice that ultimately soothes and comforts us.
- ◆ The voice of God enters our lives as the greatest of all powers, even as it forever lies in vulnerability, like a helpless baby in the straw.
- ◆ The voice of God is heard inside the gifts of the Holy Spirit, even as it invites us never to deny the complexities of our world and our own lives.
- ◆ The voice of God is always heard wherever there is genuine enjoyment and gratitude, even as it asks us to deny ourselves, and freely relativise all the things of this world.

The voice of God, it would seem, is forever found in paradox.

Ron Rolheiser

Fr Rolheiser is serving as President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas

St Thomas Aquinas Parish Bulletin



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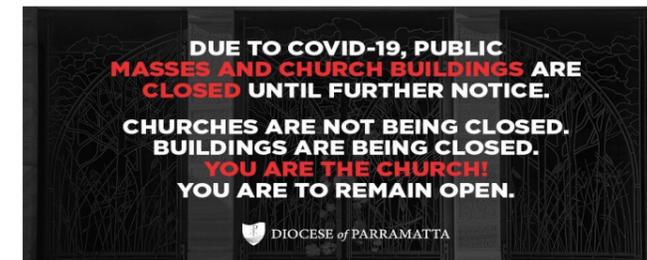
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Tuesday to Friday 8.30 am - 3.30 pm



A Poem to Sit With

The Light

You cannot
change
others, **no**

but you
can
see them
with
new eyes

Christ eyes

who sees
all
with respect
and
understanding.

J. Janda

THE GOSPEL

Mark 6:30-34

His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Sent on a mission.

This is why we are here.

Lord, help us.

Let us take
your healing love
to all our neighbours.
Down all our back-streets.
To the borders and the ends
of this earth and beyond.
To the environment
you lovingly give to us.

No money in our belts,
no clean socks,
no backpack, no food.

Give to us this day,
complete and total trust in you.

Anne Osdieck

Today's Readings: *Jer 23:1-6; Eph 2:13-18; Mk 6:30-34*

Entrance Antiphon: See, I have God for my help. The Lord sustains my soul. I will sacrifice to you with willing heart, and praise your name, O Lord, for it is good.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22

R. The Lord is my Shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

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

Communion Antiphon: The Lord, the gracious, the merciful, has made a memorial of his wonders; he gives food to those who fear him.

Next Week: *2 Kg 4:42-44; Eph 4:1-6; Jn 6:1-15*



Recently Deceased: Margaret Lalor

Sick: Lisa Vaughan, Susie Ziino, James Wallace, Mischa Damaguc and family, Margaret Day, Adam McCully, Christopher Coombs, Kate Moore, Luca Hurley **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.

Parish and Local Community News

MASS FOR YOU AT HOME: Many people who are isolated, in hospital or do not have the internet, rely on Mass For You at Home. The Catholic Mass is broadcast free-to-air each Sunday morning on Channel 10 and WIN at 6.00am. Find some familiar faces from the Diocese of Parramatta celebrating Mass over the coming weeks. Find out more at www.massforyou.com.au.

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT WEEKEND: Worldwide Marriage Encounter are offering an opportunity for you to learn to become the best version of yourselves together and live your best life in love! You are welcome to join on August 21-22, 2021 at a Live-Out Marriage Encounter Weekend at St John Bosco Parish, Engadine. Book online at www.wmme.org.au or contact Christine & Terry Mahony on 0490 774 419 or nswbookings@wmme.org.au.

SPRINGWOOD COMMUNITY GARDEN: The Community Garden needs small round 10mm pots. If anyone has some spare, please call Elizabeth Farrar on 0409 849 186. Thank you.

ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL LIVESTREAMED MASS: Mass will be livestreamed daily from St Patrick's Cathedral via their Facebook page and YouTube channel. Copy the link to join on YouTube. <https://tinyurl.com/stpatsyoutube>. Livestreamed Mass Times: Monday to Friday 6.30am and 12.30pm, Saturday 6.00pm and Sunday 11.00am.

THE WELL: 'The Well' offers spiritual nourishment during lockdown. If you need some inspiration and spiritual encouragement check out The Well. The Diocese's 'on demand' streaming site has a tonne of video and prayer resources for you to explore and engage with during this difficult time. Check it out on www.thewell.org.au.

CATHOLIC CARE BLACKTOWN: Blacktown Neighbourhood Aid, a program with CatholicCare, is looking for volunteers to support our senior clients in the Blacktown area to remain living in their own home. If you feel you would like to make a positive difference to other's lives in this way, please contact the Manager, Deb Woolacot on 0418 114 055 or email deb.woolacott@ccss.org.au.

PASTORAL COUNCIL FORMATION AND TRAINING SESSION: The next Parish, Deanery and Diocesan pastoral council formation and training session will be held on Wednesday, 28th July from 7.30pm to 9.00pm via Zoom. This session will be on 'Listening to the Heart of our Faith' and presented by Donnie Velasco from the Diocese Formation for Mission Team. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/326esvk6>. For any further information, please contact Tanya Quinn on tanya.quinn@parracatholic.org or phone 0459 133 665.

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE THANK YOU: Members wish to sincerely thank all those very generous parishioners who kindly cooked and made many beautiful items for our recent street stall, making it possible for us to raise the wonderful sum of over \$1,300. This is a wonderful response given these most difficult times we are experiencing at present. **Once again we sincerely thank you one and all.**

**Accept what is, let go of what was,
And have faith in what will be.**

Feast of St Mary Magdalene - Thursday, 22nd July 2021

St Mary Magdalene is one of the greatest Saints of the Bible and a legendary example of God's mercy and grace.

"Mary Magdalene stands firm. She does not run; she does not betray or lie about her commitment; she witnesses. Hers is clearly a demonstration of either the deepest human love or the highest spiritual understanding of what Jesus was teaching, perhaps both"

- Cynthia Bourgeault

CONFIRMATION 2021

We are pleased to announce that we have moved our Confirmation Program to the following dates, with restrictions:

First and only meeting: Tuesday, 17th August, 7pm in the Church. If you can not make this meeting, then you will have to undertake this Sacrament next year.

You are to bring along a COPY your Child's Baptism Certificate to this night along with the Confirmation Enrolment form. (Either completed prior or on the evening – see website for enrolment form).

Commitment of the Candidates will take place at any of the Parish Masses on Saturday 21st August or Sunday 22nd August.

Groups will be formed on the evening and group leaders will be required for each group for this Sacrament to proceed.

Weekly meetings will commence the week thereafter, a maximum of 45-60 minutes duration and undertaken via zoom. These meetings will run for a period of 4 weeks.

The Sacrament of Confirmation will be on the evening of Wednesday, 22nd September. There will be number restrictions per family. These numbers will be confirmed once candidate numbers are established.

The Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the Serenity
To accept the things I cannot change...
Courage to change the things I can,
And Wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it.
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His will.
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.

Amen.



*The struggle you're in today is developing the strength you need
for tomorrow.*



JULY DATES:

Thursday, 15th July: Memorial of St Bonaventure

Friday, 16th July: Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Thursday, 22nd July: Feast of St Mary Magdalene

Sunday, 25th July: World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

Monday, 26th July: Feast Day of Saints Joachim and Anne (the Grandparents of Jesus)