

## Glancing Thoughts - Trying to be First

*True humility lies in understanding that everything is gift; and everything is meant to be given back, in service of others*

In the Gospel Reading, Jesus rebukes his disciples for arguing about who among them was first and greatest. But how do we suppose their argument went?

There are two possibilities.

*First Possibility:* Each disciple was saying, "I am the greatest!" while the others were saying, "Oh no, you're not! I am!"

*Second Possibility:* Each disciple was saying to one of the others, "You are the greatest among us!" and that person was saying, "Oh no, I'm not. You are."

On the first possibility, each disciple is trying to put himself ahead of all the others. On the second possibility, each disciple is trying to be small by putting some other disciple ahead of himself.

We are naturally inclined to think that the right possibility must be the first one. That is because Jesus rebukes the disciples, and we unreflectively suppose that Jesus wouldn't want to rebuke them if each one was trying to be small.

But notice that if we adopt the first possibility, then Jesus' rebuke doesn't make sense. On the first possibility, what is wrong with the disciples is that each one is trying to be first. And so Jesus should rebuke them for trying to be first.

But that is not what Jesus rebukes the disciples for. On the contrary, Jesus gives the disciples a short instruction manual for how to get to be first. If you want to be first, he tells them, you have to be the servant of all. Would Jesus have explained to them how to get to be first if he thought that trying to be first was wrong?

So the second possibility is the right one. Each disciple was trying to be small in order to seem humble. But there is no true humility in trying to be small.

As the parable about the talents (cf. Mt.25:24-28) shows, each person is called to strive for greatness by accepting the gifts God gives him and using them to the full. True humility lies in understanding that everything is gift; and everything is meant to be given back, in service of others.

When each person strives for greatness in this way, there is no competition. No one is ahead of the others, no matter how much greatness he achieves. Rather, all together are one in the Lord, and he is Lord over all (Rom. 9:5). This is the way in which being the servant of all makes you first.



*Eleonore Stump*  
Eleonore Stump is a Professor of Philosophy, Saint Louis University

# SEPTEMBER

Tuesday, 21st September - *Feast of St Matthew*

Thursday, 23rd September - *Memorial of St Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)*

Saturday, 25th September - *Feast of St Finbar*

Sunday, 26th September - *Migrant and Refugee Sunday*

Monday, 27th September - *Memorial of St Vincent de Paul*

Wednesday, 29th September - *Feasts of Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael - Archangels*

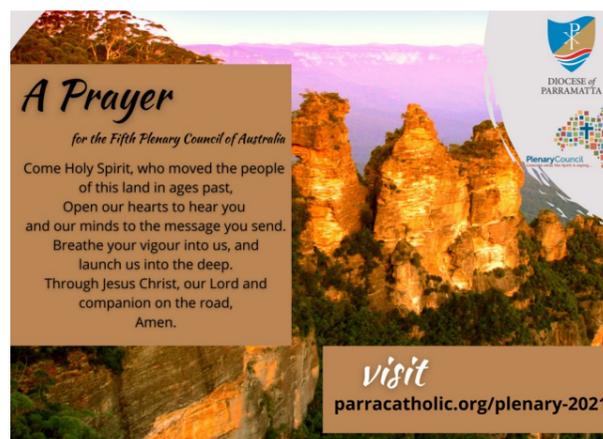
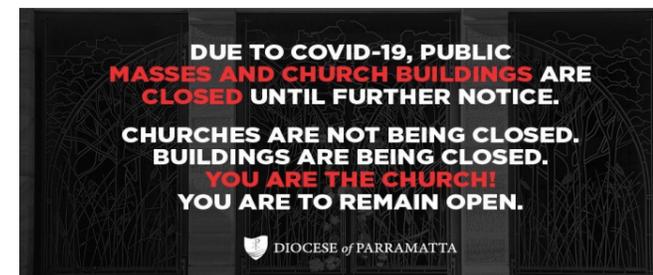


## St Thomas Aquinas Parish Bulletin



Parish Website:  
Parish Facebook Page:  
Parish Priest:  
Assistant Priest:  
Parish Pastoral Council:  
Parish Office Hours:

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[www.stachurchspringwood.org.au](http://www.stachurchspringwood.org.au)  
**St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Community Springwood**  
Fr Paul Slyney - 4754 1052 *Emergency ONLY:* 0418 461 316  
Fr Shinto Francis - 4754 1052 *Emergency ONLY:* 0415 077 969  
Email - [springwoodppc@gmail.com](mailto:springwoodppc@gmail.com)  
Tuesday to Friday 8.30 am - 3.30 pm



The countdown for the upcoming first assembly of the Plenary Council is on. It is a time of celebrating our Church and listening to *What the Spirit is Saying* as we continue this extraordinary journey for the Catholic Church in Australia.

*Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv*  
Bishop of Parramatta

### THE SECOND READING

*James 3:16 - 4:3*

*And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.*

Lord,  
please help us to  
care for your garden of peace,  
cleaving only to your holy teachings:

to

- ◆ feed them with love.
  - ◆ sprinkle them with truth.
  - ◆ weed them every day.
  - ◆ make room for them to grow.
    - ◆ sow some seeds  
*(hardy ones, like mercy and forgiveness)*
    - ◆ And wait
- Then, finally  
to share his goodness  
*(with everyone we know).*

*Anne Osdieck*

**Today's Readings:** *Wis 2:12, 17-20; James 3:16 - 4:3; Mk 9:30-37*

**Entrance Antiphon:** I am the salvation of the people, says the Lord. Should they cry to me in my distress, I will hear them, and I will be their Lord for ever.

**Responsorial Psalm:** *Psalm 53:3-6, 8*

**R. The Lord upholds my life.**

**Gospel Acclamation:** Alleluia, alleluia! God has called us with the gospel to share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia!

**Communion Antiphon:** You have laid down your precepts to be carefully kept; may my ways be firm in keeping your statutes.

**Next Week:** *Num 11:25-29; James 5:1-6; Mk 9:38-43, 45, 47-48*

*We acknowledge the Darug and Gundugarra people, the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to elders both past and present.*



Recently Deceased: Valerie Weekes

Sick: Evelyn Robinson, 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

**POSITION VACANT: Human Resources Partner - Catholic Diocese of Parramatta Services Ltd.** CDPSL is a not-for-profit charity of the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta. Its mission is to support families and children within our communities by developing quality development and learning experiences for children in our care. This role would be reporting to the HR Manager, working closely with Senior Managers. Please contact Nevine Piperides at Reach Human Resources on 0418 698 327 or [nevine@reachhr.com.au](mailto:nevine@reachhr.com.au) or [catholicoutlook.org](http://catholicoutlook.org) for further information. **Human Resources Manager - Catholic Diocese of Parramatta Services Ltd.** Reporting to the CEO, responsible for all phases of employment lifecycle, leading strategy etc. Please contact Anthony Spata at Reach Human Resources on 0402 210 055 or [anthony@reachhr.com.au](mailto:anthony@reachhr.com.au) or [catholicoutlook.org](http://catholicoutlook.org) for further information.

**CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIRST COLLECTION while in lockdown:** With the continued lockdown of our Church, you may wish to make an EFT contribution to support your Clergy, i.e. what you would normally place on the first collection. To do so, please go directly to **our website on [www.stachurchspringwood.org.au](http://www.stachurchspringwood.org.au)** and follow the links. This will enable us to credit your donation to your parish. **Thank you for your contributions – they are much appreciated.**

**VINNIES SUPPORT CENTRES ARE STILL AVAILABLE TO THOSE IN NEED:** St Vincent de Paul Support Centres across Greater Sydney are still available and taking calls to arrange for food vouchers or other items to be provided to those in need. If you need assistance, call the Support Centres in Blacktown on (02) 8861 9777, Harris Park on (02) 8861 9757 and Penrith on (02) 8861 9770. To find out more about what support is available, visit <http://vinnies.org.au/covidsupportnsw>.

**ST THOMAS AQUINAS RECORDED MASS:** Fr Paul would be honoured if you could join him each week - Every week since March 2020, Fr Paul has recorded Mass at Lawson and it is uploaded onto our Website and Facebook pages every Saturday morning. You are able to view at any time. **Web:** [www.stachurchspringwood.org.au](http://www.stachurchspringwood.org.au) or **Facebook:** St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Community Springwood.

**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.

**JRS / HoW DONATIONS:** Due to the current lockdown, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and the House of Welcome (HoW) cannot receive physical food and toiletry donations. However, many Refugee families are still relying on their foodbanks or the provision of food vouchers. In this difficult time, please support JRS and HoW with a cash donation if you can. Please go to our Parish Website on: <https://stachurchspringwood.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/HoW-Cash-donations-during-lockdown.pdf>.

**WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR CREATION:** Pope Francis has designated the 1st September as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. Join Pope Francis and Christians around the globe in praying for and taking action for our common home on the 1st September and during the Season of Creation (1 Sept - 4 Oct). For more information, resources, and activities in the Diocese of Parramatta, visit [parracatholic.org/seasonofcreation](http://parracatholic.org/seasonofcreation)

**OFFICE FOR SAFEGUARDING:** The Office for Safeguarding is providing an opportunity for all of us to develop our awareness and skills in ensuring our parishes are safe and welcoming places for all. The team are currently offering accompanied online training courses throughout September and October. If you are interested or have any questions about the Safeguarding Training, please email our Safeguarding office on [safeguardingtraining@parracatholic.org](mailto:safeguardingtraining@parracatholic.org) or [maria.kervin@parracatholic.org](mailto:maria.kervin@parracatholic.org).

**MIGRANT AND REFUGEE SUNDAY:** On Sunday, 26th September, the Catholic Church around the world celebrates the World Day of Migrants and Refugees (also known as Migrant and Refugee Sunday). Pope Francis invites us to work *Towards an ever wider "we"* and embrace the resilience and contribution of Migrants and Refugees to the church and society. The "Diocesan Journey... Walking with Refugees" team invites you to a **Virtual Diocesan Conversation with Refugees** on 26 September from 3pm to 4.15pm. RSVP via [www.bit.do/diocesan-refugee](http://www.bit.do/diocesan-refugee). Find more information and resources at [migrants-refugees.va](http://migrants-refugees.va) and [acmro.catholic.org.au](http://acmro.catholic.org.au).



**"I am with you always"** – Matthew 28:20. The Diocese has launched a new website in response to the mental health crisis impacting our young people. The website [parracatholic.org/withyou](http://parracatholic.org/withyou) contains links and information about services that can help young people whose wellbeing is suffering. Please share widely with young people and their families.

## The Closeness of God

Growing up in a Middle Eastern/Italian family in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, my treasured book at school was the religion textbook *My Way To God*. English was not my first language, even though I was born in Australia, so my favourite part was tracing the images. The books came with some beautifully written and scripted prayers, which grew with every book (Book 1 for Grade 1 & 2, Book 2 for Grade 3 & 4 and so on). However, now as an adult, as a Catholic nun, I have been blessed with faith formation of all kinds being made available – my own, as well as being involved in the faith formation of children, parents and adults.

If I look to the title of my treasured religion textbook, I think it might have got it a little distorted. Is it really MY way to God? Or is God already with me, all the time?

I often ask parents of sacramental aged children to give themselves a score out of 10 (one being the lowest and 10 being the highest) to the following two questions. 1. How close are you to God? 2. How close is God to you? The overwhelming response is that the answer to how close God is to them is always higher. Why? Because God is 10 out of 10 close to us.

It's not like the song made famous by Bette Midler, 'From A Distance', where the lyrics 'God is watching us from a distance', doesn't make sense to us.

### God is in our world

God is involved in our world and in God's creation. I don't have to struggle to get to God. I don't have to win God's approval or do anything to be worthy of God's love. I grew up thinking that God is like Father Christmas and they God kept a naughty and nice list. It's not a pathway to seek God, but the pathway is to discover God in all things. This is my spiritual journey. This is our spiritual journey.

Our pathway is to discover God in all things, and our stepping stones are sharing what we know about God (evangelisation) as well as loving and serving others (mission).

Undeniably for me, the journey to discover God in all things, led me to enter the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart. The charism of the Sisters is to be women of healing and hope in all situations. This journey has taken me to places where I would not have imagined. The path to teaching primary aged students, and working in secondary Catholic schools, combining the aspect of the love of my faith and the acts of service.

What continues to inspire me and compel me to continue this journey to discover God in all things? The foundational scripture passage of Micah 6:8: to live justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God.

### Long, loving look

One of the most important aspects of discovering God in all things, is the time spent in reflection and prayer. A way of prayer that works for me, is the Ignatian theme of having a "long, loving look". That could be a long loving look at experiences in my life, or have had in the day, or a conversation with a friend, or just time spent in nature. Most of the time, I take these experiences to a deeper place in my being, the place where God is within me.

To become a better person, I take these experiences and explore them with a spiritual director, who enables me to walk around the experience, and to discover what God's call is for me within them.

So, my way to God these days is through being the best person that I am called to be. Remembering that I am created in the image and likeness of God (*imago dei*).

In the encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis expands this thinking and takes us back to the image that we are all brothers and sisters, to each other and to all creation.

We are all interconnected, interrelated and interdependent. Through our actions we can diminish or strengthen the other.

We are called to respect the unique dignity of the other, and do what we can to change our own world and form a new humanity, and a new creation. I discover God in all things.

The challenge is for the foundational passage of Micah to become the guide and inspiration for our contemporary lives: live justly, love tenderly and to walk humbly with our God.

By Sr Rita Malavisi rsj.  
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