



8th April, 2022

Greetings,

Holy Week

Palm (Passion) Sunday



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This Good Friday we encourage groups to share '**Stations of the Cross**' at a time that is convenient. A script will be available in the plastic box outside the garages down the community driveway. One group will begin at the first station (just past the community carport) at **10.00am**.

The Solemn Commemoration of the Passion will be at **3.00pm**. If the weather is suitable, this will be held as it was last year, 'among the trees'.

There will be two liturgies on **Easter Sunday**

6.00am in the St Gabriel Shrine followed by breakfast in the dining room (Donation for breakfast requested please). You are welcome to drive down the community driveway and park around the back.

10.00am in the chapel

Sister's Chapter

The Cross and Passion sisters (including Brigid and Karen) complete their Chapter on Sunday. What will Brigid and Karen do next week between 8.00pm and midnight (no longer waiting to begin a Zoom session) and after 2.00am? The Chapter is 'leaning into' a new future, so your continued prayers are appreciated.

The Holy Cross Centre

It has been good to have groups back at Holy Cross, and it has kept Mayrose and her team on their toes.

Catholic Charity Aid to the Church in Need

Catholic Charity Aid to the Church in Need is conducting an emergency appeal to support the Church in Ukraine. Funds are being sent direct to clergy and religious on the ground assisting people. Please visit: www.aidtochurch.org/ukraine
There will be some donation forms at the back of the chapel on Sunday.

Palm Sunday...the Passion according to Luke



Every Good Friday we hear the same version of gospel. It is John's account. On Passion (or Palm) Sunday this year we will hear Luke's version. Luke and John have many differences. In fact each of the four gospels describes how Jesus died, in a different way.

In **Mark**, Jesus "screamed in a loud voice and breathed his last" and the text says that "hearing his cry and seeing how he died" the Roman Centurion said "Indeed this man was the Son of God".

In **Matthew**, Jesus cries out with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. Then he breathed his last". the Roman Centurion: "seeing the earthquake and all these things he exclaimed, "Surely he was the song of God"

In **Luke**, Jesus says, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit" and the text says that "following all these events," The Roman Centurion says This man was truly righteous".

In **John**, "Jesus says, "It is accomplished, and bowing his head he gave up his spirit". There is no Roman Centurion mentioned, and it is the only gospel that mentions Mary was there at the cross.

The ending of Jesus' life according to Luke as we will hear this Sunday is linked to Jesus giving over his Spirit. In Luke's second book, the Acts of the Apostles, it is the early followers of Jesus who are given this spirit. In the Easter appearance stories Jesus breathes his spirit (his life force) on the apostles.

The message of Luke's Passion is a call to follow Jesus and to live with his spirit. Pope Francis has reminded us that it is not enough to say we are followers of Jesus; we have to put our following into practice, and act with Jesus spirit – of forgiveness, mercy, compassion, welcome, and inclusion.

As we enter Holy Week, let us recommit ourselves not to be like the fickle crowds who showered Jesus with praise, but to be like those women and men who follow him faithfully day after day.



God and religion: Part 8



As we know, the gospels were written in Greek and Greek thinking greatly influenced Christianity, as did the Hebrew worldview, shaped by its mythical stories. The Christian story attributed the expectant liberator or messiah role to Jesus. Early Christian preaching presented Jesus as fulfilling God's plan for creation and promising a new creation. When the expectation that Jesus would return to complete this work did not come about, the emphasis on a 'new heaven and new earth' became eternal life in heaven. Instead of being the liberator, Jesus came in time, to be seen more as the redeemer carrying the guilt of all (fallen) humanity. Life on earth became a trial, with heaven was the reward for passing the test.

Initially the apostle Paul tried using Greek philosophy but he abandoned this for the 'illogic' of the cross. Paul's greatest influence became his message of inclusion. The Christian Church (the new Israel) became welcoming of anyone. The gradual breakaway from Jewish synagogue life was forced upon some Christians, because their claims about Jesus were deemed subversive (towards Rome) or incompatible with Jewish belief. Certainly, all of the Christian communities believed that Jesus was the anointed 'One', the messiah, but it was to be some time before there would be specific claims of divinity.



Throughout the fourth century there were ongoing attempts to explain how Christians were monotheists, because their belief in the Trinity seemed to deny this. Christian belief proclaimed that there was one 'wholly other' God who was creator and redeemer, and that God was revealed through three persona (or masks), Father, Son and Spirit. Many did not understand the true

nature of Jesus. Was Jesus divine or human? There was difference of opinion, and one movement led by Bishop Arius of Alexandria (250–336 CE) suggested Jesus was not co-eternal with the Father. His teaching was condemned as heresy.

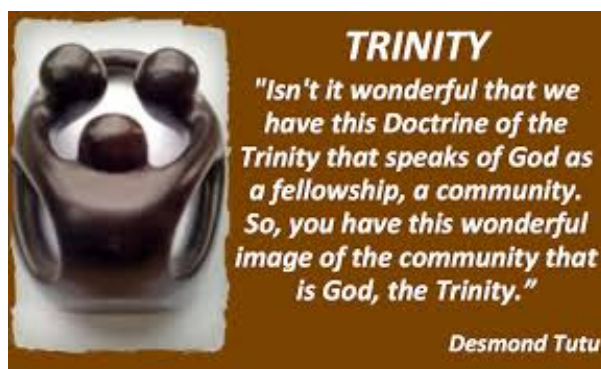
The early Christian communities were persecuted by Roman Emperors, but under the Emperor Constantine there was a remarkable turnaround. Christians now became official patrons of the Empire! Recognising that there were differences of opinion among various Christian groups, Constantine demanded that there be common agreement about what Christians believed.



Difference gave way to doctrine following the statement of belief that came from the Council of Nicea, which declared Jesus was fully divine. This doctrine declared that God the creator and Jesus the Redeemer were one and the same (of the same substance – consubstantial!)

The Greek church was keen to avoid creating the impression that Christians had more than one god. They differed from the Latin church in how they explained the Trinity. They recognized that any language is inadequate, and no rational explanation is possible. The Latins tried to explain this mystery and in seeking to explain Jesus' role, the Western church introduced the doctrine of original sin, and expanded it under the teaching of Augustine. This doctrine taught that God had damned all humanity because of Adam's sin and Jesus had come to save humanity. The Greek church suggested God would have revealed Godself in the form of a human, regardless of Adam's failure.

Understanding and appreciating the Trinity is perhaps more difficult today than ever, because we live in a rationalist scientific age. Everything we say to describe God leads only to greater wordlessness.



The Trinity does communicate a vital aspect of Christian belief – that God is relational and 'in' communion. God is not a remote or isolated 'being', rather God is a living active 'word', experienced in our own humanity and in the spirit that creates and sustains life. It isn't the fact that God the Father or Creator is God, and others (Son and Spirit) are subordinate. They are three expressions or persona of God, but not persons as we understand persons.



Throughout the Christian centuries the church rarely escaped from being triumphant, and God was presented in the same way – distant, aloof, punishing and demanding - a far cry from the baby in the Bethlehem manger or the rejected man hung on a cross. The trappings of the Roman empire became influential in church life. Clergy became elite, and rules, order and domination were primary characteristics of everyday faith. Christians took over pagan temples and simple home worship became impersonal and latinized. God was no longer close.



Many Popes lost all religious authority and often people's allegiance to their faith was determined by the protection they needed from an emperor or king.

Various rites became widespread as different attitudes were adopted on theological points. The belief in the Trinity was one such

issue. Owing to accusations that Christians had more than one God, the churches in different places formulated different theologies (Greek, Roman, Syrian, Armenian, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Coptic etc).

By the 400's the Roman Empire was divided into many kingdoms. Invasions by Muslims in Spain and the Middle East, and the spread of the Byzantine Empire in south east, greatly changed Europe. The Byzantine Empire protected much of Europe from the attacks of Barbarian, Arab and Turkish invaders. Christianity, Greek culture, and Roman customs flourished in the Byzantine empire, providing a link between ancient and modern European civilization. Muhammad conquered Mecca in 630 and many tribes and clans in Arabia submitted to his authority. Expansion was rapid after his death in 634. By the mid-700's, Muslims had built an empire that stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the borders of China.



Charlemagne (742-814) conquered much of western Europe and united it under a great empire and revived the political and cultural life of Europe. In 800 he was crowned Emperor of Rome by the Pope and he became protector of the church. Under his rule refusal of Baptism carried the death penalty! The power of the church became a great force because it touched almost everyone's life in many important ways. Clergy baptized, performed wedding blessings and conducted burial services. Many feudal lords gave lands to the church in return for services performed by the clergy who often controlled the lords with threats of

excommunication.

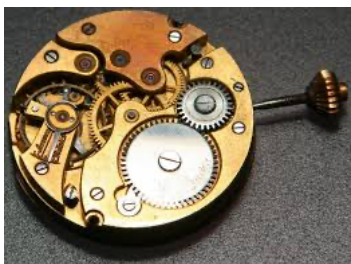
While no single event ever leads on its own to a new worldview, the Black Death in 1347 certainly had a major influence that has lasted until our own time. The plague killed one quarter of the people in Europe - twenty-five million people died.



Outbreaks continued for three hundred years.

It makes COVID seem mild in comparison. Popular preachers of the time, just like fundamentalists of our own era, were convinced that the plague was a punishment from God, and the fear of hell became 'popular' in art and preaching. People looked to heaven 'in the next life', for relief from their tragic sufferings in this 'vale of tears'. People were encouraged to 'buy' God's favour and clergy handed out salvation for a 'price' by selling indulgences.

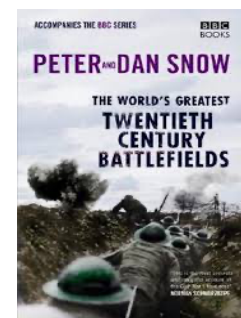
Collections for cathedrals and palaces including St Peter's Basilica were principally funded by donations for which people were granted indulgences. Superstition and piety resulted in practices and beliefs aimed at avoiding eternal damnation. Over two hundred Gothic cathedrals were built to better 'reach God'. Whatever the worldview, there was little or no hope offered in this life. God was out of reach. Much of this thinking was still evident when Vatican 2 was called.



Following the influence of the Renaissance, religion and science became separated and many Christians came to see God like a clockmaker, who, having fashioned and completed creation, now sat back and observed, occasionally interacting to fix 'mechanical' problems.

This view led to a belief that the laws pertaining to nature could be identified and even controlled. Issac Newton's mechanistic view of the world coincided with the rise of massive economic growth including mass literacy and urbanization. There was a conviction that science, technology and reason would overcome all human problems and religion would fade away.

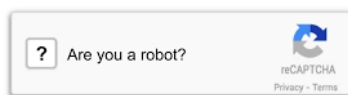
This new age saw the English civil war, the French, American and Russian Revolutions and the first and second World Wars, the death camps and atomic bombs of World War 2. Violence on such a grand scale could not be reconciled with human progress. Today we have a new war in Ukraine but ongoing wars, persecution, torture, poverty, hunger, tens of millions of refugees, enormous suffering and near ecological disaster. Where can we look for an answer at a time when church credibility is perhaps at an all-time low?



As God was gradually sidelined over the past two hundred years, believers hoped that God was still watching from a distance, but many felt God was absent. Prayers encouraged or even begged God to intervene, but the previous belief that God could be discovered at all times in all things had virtually disappeared from most people's

experience.

At the same time, with the rise of industry, humans began to see the planet, not as a sacred creation but as a resource separate from themselves, that could be manipulated and plundered for profit.



The Christian God of the early twentieth century was male, remote and living in the sky. This God was the creator of everything and was to be feared and appeased. Popular piety combined with authoritarian Church teaching meant normal belief and practice was little different from hundreds of years earlier.

Homo Sapiens today is different and becoming more so. We live thirty years longer than 100 years ago and we are a globalized community, with increasingly multi-faith and multi-racial people living side by side. Cyborg technology and artificial Intelligence (AI) are still early sciences, but they promise amazing things, perhaps similar to the Newtonian promise. We have learned an incredible amount and achieved amazing things, but we still know only 4% of what is actually in the universe. We do know that God is not above the clouds. We know that God has not finished creating but we believe God is shaping all life through emergence.



A sky god, a fertility god, a male god or warrior god is inadequate for our times. For many Catholics raised with the fear of hell as a place of eternal torment, it was never expected that a Pope (John Paul 2nd) would say in 1999, *"Heaven, or the happiness in which we will find ourselves, is neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a personal relation [with God].....This final condition*

can be anticipated in a certain sense now on earth. Moreover, the pictures of Hell given to us in Sacred Scripture must be correctly interpreted. They express the total frustration and emptiness of a life without God. More than a place, Hell is the state of the one who freely and finally removes oneself from God, the source of life and joy".

We must acknowledge that God is God of all life, not just 'the human', and God cannot be 'known'. Images and words are inadequate. God's creativity evokes awe and wonder. What we have to somehow explore and appreciate is that life seeks life (life wants to live), that death and transformation is a pattern throughout the entire universe and its story, and that there is a divine presence revealed in every aspect of nature.



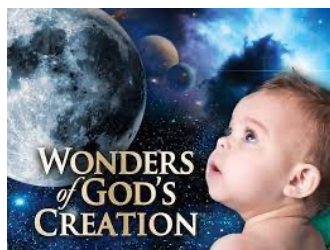
Often when people say “I don’t believe in God”, we need to ask what kind of God they don't believe in. Most often we would agree. We do not believe in the God that others have abandoned. At the same time, we need to reflect on what we can say about God that makes sense to us and what might make sense to our family and friends. What do you believe and how can you express it? Albert Einstein claimed that *“the scientists’ religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection”*.



Karl Rahner the Jesuit theologian claimed that *“the Christian of the 21st century will be a mystic or nothing”*. It is a challenge to point our younger generation beyond the rational and scientific facts, to the incredible mystery of life, the wonders of

creation and at our inability at times to do anything but be in awe of God.

Just as we have had to learn that the earth is not ‘the centre’ of the universe, so we have to learn that humans are not the centre or the apex of the earth or of earth’s creation. God is not just the creator. God is still creating. “Evolution presupposes the creation of beings that evolve.” (Pope Francis).



There is a sense of the sacred revealed in nature that primitive peoples have known and respected. We are being encouraged to recapture this. We must have respect for all life. What we do to the earth we do to ourselves! New realities we are discovering about life and the universe are changing our view of God and helping us appreciate our connectedness with all life.

It is said that there are two great God books – the Bible and Nature. For too long the book of Nature has not been listened to. It is a book of creativity, wonder, evolution, repair, abundance and so much more. It is from that book that we need to read more, and whatever else we struggle to understand, we must remember the simplicity of 1 John 4:8, ‘God is love’! What does that look and feel like? Jesus!

A history of religions (in 90 seconds)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VJzoGvGYcI>

A year by year history of Europe from 400BCE (in 12 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY9P0QSxlnI>

Humour

Paddy found a sandwich with two wires sticking out of it. He phoned the police and said, "Officer, I've just found a sandwich dat looks like a bomb".

The operator asked. "Is it tickin?"

Paddy replied, "No I think it's beef"

Milk is also the fastest liquid on earth – its pasteurised before you even see it.

Q What was the first animal in space?

A The cow that jumped over the moon.

Q What type of key opens a banana?

A A mon-key.

Q What makes a sick lemon feel better?

A Lemon-aid.

Q What animal dresses up and howls?

A A wearwolf.

Q What do you get if you dip a baby cat in chocolate?

A A Kitty-Kat Bar!

Q Why did the farmer jump on his potato plants?

A Because he wanted mash potatoes.

Q What food is never on time?

A Chocolate-late!

Q What's red and bad for your teeth?

A A brick.

Question: If you could live forever, would you and why?

Answer: "I would not live forever, because we should not live forever, because if we were supposed to live forever, then we would live forever, but we cannot live forever, which is why I would not live forever,"

--Miss Alabama in the 1994 Miss USA contest.

"Whenever I watch TV and see those poor starving kids all over the world, I can't help but cry. I mean I'd love to be skinny like that, but not with all those flies and death and stuff." - Famous singer (name withheld)

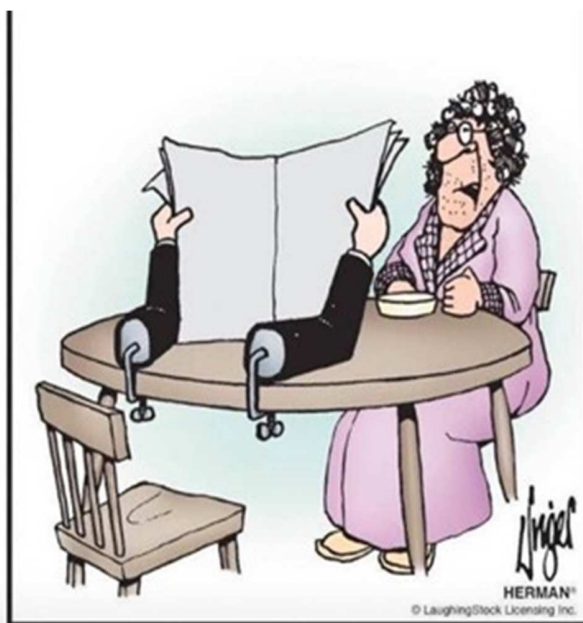
"Half this game is ninety percent mental." (Football manager)

"I love California. I practically grew up in Phoenix .." (Aspiring US President)

In the fifth century B.C., Alcibiades debated his uncle, the Greek orator Pericles.

"When I was your age, Alcibiades, I talked just the way you are now talking," Pericles said, "If only I had known you, Pericles," Alcibiades replied, "when you were at your best!"

Playwright George Bernard Shaw invited Winston Churchill to the first night of his newest play, enclosing two tickets: "One for yourself and one for a friend – if you have one." Churchill wrote back, saying he couldn't make it, but could he have tickets for the second night – "if there is one."



"I sometimes wonder if you
hear one word I say!"

**A police recruit
was asked during
an exam, "What
would you do if you**

**had to arrest your
own mother?' The
reply, " Call for
backup".**

Quotes

"Turn your face the sun and the shadows fall behind you" (*Maori proverb*)

"Be positive, patient and persistent"

The link for **Mass** for Palm Sunday will be sent on Saturday afternoon:

Crowding at the doors

There has been a release please, for as much as possible, the exit doors be free from crowding after Mass. Thank you.

'Come Away Day'

Just a date claimer for Tuesday 26th April. More details about this day will be provided, but you are welcome to set the time aside to 'come away' and rest a while so you can be renewed in the Easter spirit.

Prayers

You will have noticed that for both the recorded Mass and 10.00am Mass, the list of those we want to remember in our prayer is being displayed rather than spoken.

This weekend we remember:

Helen Norman, Di Baker, Gerry Bond, Maree Bartoli, Jacki Tomm, Peter Owen, Barry Wong, Errol Lovett, Pam Grehan, Mary Corcoran, Rex Cambry, Brenda Rodrigues, Margaret Titteringcom, Bronwyn Burke, Mary Coburn, Mary Hackett, Graham Hille, Angelo Vigilante, Patricia Keeghan, Peter McNamara, Pam Gartland, Anne Jenkins, Michael & Mardi Doyle, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Jim Monaghan, Maeve and John Reardon, Olive Murphy, Pam Stretch, (NZ), Carmel King, Dominic Isgro, Kate and Mary Dunn, Ray Sanchez and all who seek or need our prayers.



I thank my God
every time I
remember you.
In all of my prayers
for all of you,
I always pray with joy.

Philippians 1:3-4

God bless and have a good weekend.

Brian