

Risen



Christ

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

22 & 23 February 2025 - Year C

The Catholic Communities of Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham & St Francis Xavier, Montmorency



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation who are the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respect to the elders past, present and emerging.

Gospel: Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from the man who robs you. Treat others as you would like them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks can you expect? For even sinners do that much. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back.'

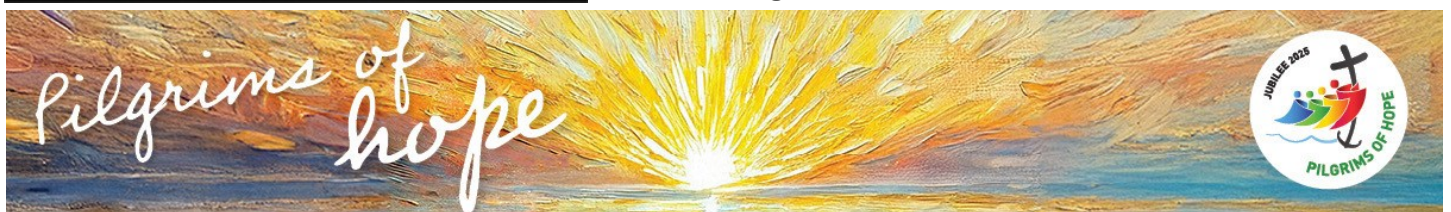
Reflection - Break Open the Word 2025

The words are well-known, but they should be read in such a way as to preserve their original shock value. The instructions are extreme and certainly counter-cultural. The harsh challenge of the opening lines are softened a little when it comes to, *Treat others as you would like them to treat you*.

But it is then that we are asked to go the extra mile. It's easy to love those who love us! Christ asks us to do more. If we reflect on the intractable examples of war in the world today, we realise at once that the cycle can only be broken through drastic action. A 'proportionate response' to violence will not achieve true peace.

The reading concludes with an extraordinary image of the abundance of God's grace and compassion: *a full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over*. This assurance calls for a warm and generous proclamation to contrast with the more determined tone of earlier challenges.





EMBARK ON A TRANSFORMATIONAL & SPIRITUAL JOURNEY IN THIS YEAR OF JUBILEE

melbournecatholic.org/jubilee

This parish has a commitment to ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable people in our community. We support the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional abuse and pray for all the survivors.



PARISH TEAM & INFORMATION

OUR PEOPLE & OUR CONTACT DETAILS



Parish Priest

Michael Sierakowski - **Moderator**

Michael.Sierakowski@cam.org.au

Parish Office

all correspondence to:
86 Mayona Road,
Montmorency Vic 3094
9435 4742

RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au

Kate Kogler:

Parish Secretary
Tue-Fri 9am-3pm

Peter Williams:

Safeguarding Officer
RisenChrist.ChildSafety@cam.org.au

Kerry Mash:

Volunteer
Wed & Fri 10am-3pm

New Website:

www.melbcatholic.org/risenchristparish

Facebook: [Risen Christ Parish](https://www.facebook.com/RisenChristParish)

Risen Christ Parish Bulletin items:

RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au

Schools

St Francis Xavier Primary School

Principal: Philip Cachia: 9435 8474

principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

Holy Trinity Primary School

Principal: Vince Bumpstead: 9431 0888

principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School

Principal: Rudy Vail: 9439 7824

school@olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

www.olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

RECONCILIATION

available half an hour before
any weekday or weekend Parish Mass.

Collections: 9 & 16 Feb 2025

		OLHC	SFX
Thanksgiving	Cash Electronic	\$267.00	\$547.00
Presbytery	Cash Electronic	\$597.05	\$910.75

Thanksgiving / Stewardship Offering

Month	OLHC	SFX	Total
November	\$6,538.34	\$8,768.75	\$15,307.09
December	\$9,129.67	\$10,865.50	\$19,995.17
January	\$6,878.43	\$8,984.50	\$15,862.93

Risen Christ Parish Calendar of Events

Saturday 22

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 23

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

Tuesday 25

9:30am Mass & SFX Yr 5

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

7:00pm Jordan Small Church Community

Montmorency

Wednesday 26

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Eltham

Thursday 27

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Montmorency

10:00am Emmaus Small Church Community

Montmorency

10:30am ASRC Food Collection

Montmorency

Friday 28

9:30am Mass

Eltham

Saturday 1 March

12:00pm Baptisms: Ella, Molly

Montmorency

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 2

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

12:00pm Baptisms: Nicholas, Charli

Eltham

Monday 3

2:00pm Mass

St Vincent's Aged Care

Tuesday 4

9:30am Mass & SFX Yr 6

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

10:00am Craft Group

Montmorency

11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry

Eltham

2:00pm Bethany Small Church Community

Montmorency

Wednesday 5 - Ash Wednesday

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency

9:30am Mass - Ash Wednesday

Eltham

1:00pm Kairos Small Church Community

Montmorency

Thursday 6

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Montmorency

10:30am ASRC Food Collection

Montmorency

Friday 7

9:30am Mass

Eltham

Saturday 8

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 9

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

Tuesday 11

9:30am Mass

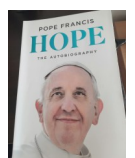
Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency



I'm putting my copy of Pope Francis's wonderful autobiography "Hope", on the top shelf on Sunday.
Blessings, Trish





*Let us pray for all those who have gone
before us marked with the sign of faith ...*

Montmorency

For those in need of **healing**, remembering especially:
*Regina Roszczenko (mother of Liz Gray), Siobhan Lappin,
Cindy & Ed Morrissey, Barney Steward, Skye Stojanov*

For those whose **anniversaries** are at this time:
*Carmelina Alberti, Antonio Chincarini Snr, Jan Collins,
Madge McDonell, Vernon & Ena Rodrigo*

Eltham

For those in need of **healing**, remembering especially:
Penny Boyce, Ruth Decker, Bernard Murray

For those whose **anniversaries** are at this time:
Neil Donahoo

To include an anniversary please contact Parish Office
9435 4742 or RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au.

An Afternoon with David Tacey & Michael Sierakowski



Date:
Sunday, 23rd February, 2025

Time:
2:00pm to 4:00pm

Place:
Gathering Area,
Our Lady Help of Christians,
Eltham



Programme:

2:00pm-2:45pm 'Spirituality and Secularity in Australia'. (David)
3:40pm-4:00pm 'Questions and Discussion'. (Michael & David)

Roster for week ending 23 Feb 2025

Boyd, Mary	PRYR
Capuana, Marisa	LoW-01 Thu
Castellanos, Rodrigo	E10:00
Cotter, Anne	CLNR
Donnellan, Denise	E10:00
Dunell, Linda	E10:00
Fitzgerald, Susan	H10:00
Furtado, Lorraine	C10:00
Haines, Geoff	E10:00
Hall, Vali	ASE
Kenny, Michael	W6:00
Kulkens, Mark	W6:00
McKinley, Michael	W8:30
Nolan, Kathleen	H10:00
Nolan, Mike	H10:00
Ramsdale, John	W8:30
Reardon, Peter	E10:00
Reischel, Marita	H10:00
Rough Family	PRSE
Williams, Peter	R10:00
Wood, Gerard	CLNR

Roster for week ending 2 Mar 2025

Armstrong, Miranda	E10:00
Armstrong, Miranda	R10:00
Bacani, Brian	W6:00
Bowyer, Darrell	ASRC
Bowyer, Rosemary	ASRC
Cseh, Ferenc	E10:00
Davidson, John	PRYR
Dopheide, Marlis	C10:00
Dunell, Linda	ASE
Edwards, Elisabeth	E10:00
Gerritsen, Jenine	H10:00
Goodison, Pauline	CLNR
Haines, Jan-Marie	E10:00
Lyons, Maria	H10:00
Maynes, Phil	W6:00
Reardon, Kathy	E10:00
Ryan Family	PRSE
Sullivan, Frances	W8:30
Witten, Janine	LoW-01 Thu
Wood, Marie	CLNR
Wood, Marie	W8:30

ASE = Altar Society @ Eltham;

C = Commentator;

CLKR = Powerpoint Clicker @ SFX;

CLNR = Cleaner @ SFX; **R** = Reader;

E = Eucharistic Minister;

H = Hospitality;

LoW-01 = Liturgy of the Word with
Communion @ SFX;

PRSE = Pilgrim Rosary Statue @ Eltham;

M = Music; **W** = Minister of the Word

Thanksgiving

Dear Parishioners,

Thank you for your amazing ongoing support of our Parish.

This is a small reminder of the many ways you can
give to support Risen Christ Parish:

- scan the QR code which will take you to our
website giving page (<https://bit.ly/45ifhRp>)
where you can donate to any Parish finance
campaign including Thanksgiving, Presbytery
Offerings, baptisms etc.
- set up payments from credit/debit cards
- thanksgiving envelopes
- cash/coins in the collection baskets at each
church
- EFTPOS terminals



Thank you for your generous support, Michael



The sexual abuse crisis and the wider background of rapid social change are leading to a transformation in the way young people encounter Catholicism which has lessons for parents, schools and universities / **By Gerard Lemos**

Growing up Catholic

It's a tough time to be young. Families are smaller. Children are much less likely to grow up among uncles, aunts, grandparents and a sprawling extended family. They are more likely to have a single sibling or half-sibling, busy parents or a stepmum or stepdad, and to spend most of their time with carers and transitory friends. Older children are often beset by anxieties, peer group pressures and fragmented concepts of gender and identity and are swamped by wildly inaccurate and frightening messages on social media. Apocalyptic and ever more real fears about war and climate catastrophe hang over them. Professional and material "success" is continually touted as the only socially acceptable measure of a good life. The cumulative result is an epidemic of alienation and loneliness among young people.

Against this disturbing backdrop, does "growing up Catholic" matter any more? Does a "Catholic education" still offer something distinctive? What are young people's attitudes to core Catholic beliefs such as the Eucharist? Do they still pray - individually or in families? What value if any do they attach to sacred objects such as rosaries or medals? Do the saints have any resonance? What about religious festivals or pilgrimages? Does religious art or music have spiritual or transcendental meaning for them? Are Catholic teachings on social and moral issues helping or hindering them in the practice of their faith?

I experienced sexual abuse as a child, and have, like all victims, thought deeply about its effects since. Has the abuse crisis torn up the roots of Catholicism? I felt compelled to investigate wider questions about being a young Catholic today. I arranged online interviews with Catholic priests, nuns, teachers, catechists, youth works, doctors, psychologists and others - not only in the UK, but around the world. I listened to people working with young Indians, North Americans and South Africans. I met Salesian priests running schools in Spain, trainers on safeguarding in Brazil and a Benedictine monk in Jerusalem. Good Shepherd Sisters in Nepal and Democratic Republic of Congo told me about their work with young women on the margins of society. But above all, I wanted to listen to children and young people themselves. I had conversations online with young people in Malawi. I



PHOTO: ALAMY/GODONG

Young Catholics at World Youth Day in Portugal in 2023; a new generation is more questioning

visited Indian, Belgium, Italy, France, the US and Israel and met and spoke to hundreds of children and young people. The results of my inquiry are set out in *Childhood and Contemporary Catholicism*. I found that while Catholicism is still at the centre of many children's lives, belief and practice has become radically more individual in societies where religious affiliation is not taken for granted. The unquestioning acceptance of religious authority has been set aside almost everywhere. The values of personal exploration and choice underpin the beliefs and practices of young people today, particularly in relation to sexual identity and personal relationships. Young Catholics are no exception. Faith only firmly takes root when a young person can square his or her sense of themselves and who they are with their sense of the truth about the outside world. And I learnt too that a personal faith can remain strong and firmly rooted even in the face of abuse and trauma, as it has for me.

I discovered that for most young people, God is no longer thought of as an authoritarian figure. Instead, God is more likely to be considered as the

empowering embodiment of love and mercy when faced with confusing and contradictory postmodern assertions about ethics and morality: who has human rights and what are they? Do species have rights? Does Planet Earth have rights? God is not the problem. Problems arise when powerful adults try to force children to subscribe to false certainties and adults fail to *listen* to children. The abuse crisis exposed the shameful truth that, in some circumstances, Catholic priests have used their power and authority to destroy the lives of children.

Adults - parents, teachers, priests or professionals - passing on the faith can no longer be purely prescriptive. They must encourage and support questioning, exploration and dissent. They need the humility and open-mindedness to question their own religious convictions in the light of their encounters and experiences with children. Responding to an individual child, at a specific time, in a singular place, for a particular reason, always requires the possibility of thinking and doing something new and different. The insights of a child might bring about an adult's change of heart,

perhaps even about their own faith. Adults must protect an unsuspecting child from harm while facilitating the safe exploration of their values and identity and religious beliefs. How best to balance protection and freedom is the enduring conundrum in the relationship between adults and children. It varies depending on the individual child, the adult, the society, the time, the place and the issue at hand.

Where do young people stand now on Catholic faith and practice? One 12-year-old girl in Malawi told me: "When you receive the Eucharist you receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It helps me to be one with Jesus Christ. It's important because when I attend Mass, there's a lot of blessings from the Mass. I hear the Word of God, and I feel the Word of God strengthens me." First Communion is a rite of passage into being a Catholic in its highest meaning, by participating fully in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Although up to half of First Communicants do not graduate to Confirmation, it is still an important sign of entry into adulthood, for the young person themselves and in the eyes of the world. Like parallel rites in other faiths, the Sacrament of Confirmation is not a parental imposition but a freely made commitment to the life of faith. And prayer gradually becomes more personal, a flexible, quiet, often spontaneous, individual encounter with God, a relationship unique to each person, much more than the mere repetition of phrases learned by heart.

For many of the young people all around the world I listened to, sacred objects are still talismans of blessings, hope, protection, memory and grace, particularly when they were sick or isolated or feeling vulnerable. "The rosary is there for my prayers. I pray when I feel all alone," one young prisoner told me. "Keeping religious objects makes me feel secure that God is watching over my cell; I feel that he

watches over me in all the things I do." Lives of the saints still inspire young people, though perhaps are less relied on for their intercessory powers. Some deride these spiritual practices and traditions as arcane or irrelevant, but how else might a young person begin to contemplate metaphysical questions, even though they are now likely to be tempered by individual scrutiny and choice?

I also found that encounters with monastic life are growing in popularity. In a spiritually and intellectually chaotic, unpredictable world, a spiritual retreat, even if brief, can offer a space for contemplation and reflection, access to ancient rituals of prayer and immersion in a world of silence. Above all, it can be a chance for a young person to join, even if only for a few days, a contemplative community in its mission to devote their lives to prayer, not just for themselves, but for the whole world: perhaps the highest imaginable expression of charity. Sacred art elucidates our deepest, most exhilarating and most troubling experiences. Ordinary people like us can see in these images the entire range of human intellectual and emotional inquiry and wisdom. Even in Catholic countries, these deeply established traditions of religious art have been almost drained of their religious meaning by secular education. The possibility that a painting might tell a story that sparks a shifting of perspective, a revelation, an epiphany in the viewer's mind, seems to have been lost. As Neil MacGregor, the former director of the Nation Gallery and of the British Museum, told me: "Our education system doesn't privilege the reading and engaging with the pictures as a mechanism of changing you. The figure of Jesus becomes the emblem of supreme love and every offence against charity, against love, causes suffering." The growing appeal of pilgrimages goes with the flow of modernity. Young

people typically see their faith as a personal spiritual journey. That is given physical form in a pilgrimage. The pilgrim's destination, whether Santiago de Compostela, Jerusalem, Rome, Lourdes or Valenkanni, makes physically real God's presence among us as a shifting community of pilgrims.

Education has always been central to the Church's global mission. Do the many thousands of Catholic schools, colleges and universities around the world simply seek to prepare a child for the communal, social life, which in the contemporary context means the professional labour market; or is their primary purpose to help each child in their care define a path suited to his or her temperament and values? I want to help build a world in which Catholic children grow up in families and communities with a relaxed, loving immersion in the sacraments, rituals, festivals and traditions of the faithful community, as well as respect for their individual autonomy and freedom. And I also imagine a world in which Catholic schools and colleges everywhere are committed to educating young people - of every faith and none - first and foremost in the personal virtues of courage and humility, the communal virtues of compassion and empathy and the social virtues of charity and justice.

Perhaps the most important lesson I learnt from my conversations with young people around the world is that the constant renewal of those same virtues is also urgently needed within the Church itself.

Gerard Lemos has been chair of English Heritage, National Savings & Investments, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and the British Council and has held many appointments in government, financial services, universities and the voluntary sector. It was announced last month that he is to join the House of Lords. Childhood and Contemporary Catholicism is available free at www.lemosandcrane.co.uk.

Parish Pastoral Leadership Team Member Profile

Introducing: John McKenna

John with wife, Margaret and their children joined the Montmorency parish in 1984.

Why did you join the Parish Leadership Team and what do you hope to achieve?

I was nominated by one of the previous members of the Transition team and I wish to support both Eltham and Montmorency communities as they live as one vibrant 'Risen Christ' parish.

What's one thing you think would surprise people about yourself?

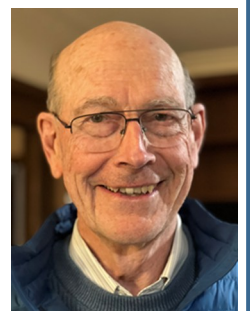
I can play the piano accordion (and piano) by ear (I can clear a room in seconds). I was too lazy to learn to read music in the past and reckon I'm now too old to start.

What do you do with yourself?

I am blessed with 10 grandchildren who live close by and so have some grandparent duties regularly, I love making wooden toys, am a member of our local St Vincent de Paul conference, organise 'Project Kenya' to support a Catholic school in Kenya, and am on a Refugee Services Board. But more importantly, I love my golf, which I play poorly most Wednesday mornings.

What is one thing on your bucket list that people might be surprised to learn?

I hope to walk the 'Camino' to Santiago de Compostela later this year, though I've got orthotics for both feet, have one bad hip and both knees are shot, (a recent visit to Specsavers also informed me I have the beginnings of cataracts and hearing loss so I hope to get the Camino in before everything in my body collapses).



Prayers of the Faithful for 22 & 23 Feb 2025 - Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Leader: Let us gather and pray before the loving presence of our Lord.

David paused, recognised the Lord, and showed restraint and mercy. May we reflect and recognise God's presence in our lives, spreading mercy and love in our homes and community.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

"The Lord is kind and merciful." We pray for the courage to let go, to forgive long held grievances and dispel old prejudices. We pray for those who are judged daily, by appearance or circumstance. May we be compassionate and non-judgmental, always remembering the presence of Jesus in each of us.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

"Love one another as I have loved you". May this be the guiding rule of our lives. We pray for those who feel unloved, through separation, war or isolation. May they feel the gentleness and warmth of God in their lives.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

"Give to everyone who asks of you." We pray for the courage to say yes, to give without wanting a return, to trust in God's path for us. We pray for our world leaders. May they recognise their responsibilities to human rights and show compassion and generosity to struggling nations and peoples.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who are sick. May they feel comfort in the knowledge of Jesus' presence and love.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have died, and those whose anniversaries occur around this time, including *Carmelina Alberti, Antonio Chincarini Snr, Jan Collins, Neil Donahoo, Madge McDonell and Vernon & Ena Rodrigo*. We pray for Jesus' love and peace.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Dear friends, may we feel the warmth and compassion of Jesus' message alive in our hearts. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen**

Loving other stories

The Cosmic Egg: My Story and Our Story

Father Richard Rohr uses the metaphor of a "cosmic egg" to explain how stories offer us meaningful connections to ourselves, one another, and the divine:

If we are going to be the rebuilders of society, we need to be rebuilt ourselves. A healthy psyche lives within at least four containers of meaning. Imagine four nested domes. The first is called *my story*, the second is *our story*, the third is *other stories*, and the fourth is *the story*. This is what I call the cosmic egg. It's the unique and almost unconscious gift of healthy religion. Much of the genius of the biblical revelation is that it honours and integrates all four, while much of the weakness of our deconstructed society is that it often honours only one level at best. The whole/healed/saintly person lives happily inside of all of them.

The smallest dome of meaning is *my story*. The modern world is the first period of history where a large number of people have been allowed to take their private lives and identities seriously. There is a wonderful movement into individuation here, but there's also a diminishment and fragility if that's all we have. This first dome contains my private life. "I" and my feelings and opinions are the reference point for everything. This dome is the little stage where I do my dance and where the questions are usually, "How do I feel? What do I believe? What makes me unique?"

My story isn't big enough or true enough to create large or meaningful patterns by itself, but many people live their whole lives at this level of anecdote and nurtured self-image, without ever connecting with the larger domes of meaning. They are what they have done and what has been done to them - nothing more. This self becomes fragile and unprotected, and therefore constantly striving, easily offended, and fearful.

The second dome of meaning is *our story*. This is the dome of our group, our community, our country, our church - perhaps our nationality or ethnic group. We seem to need this to contain our identity and security as social beings. It's the good and necessary training ground for belonging, attaching, trusting, and loving. If we don't have a supportive family, group or community with which we can bond, we create people who struggle to bond. Fortunately, most of us have multiple memberships: family, neighbourhood, religious affiliation, country. These are schools for relationship, connection, and almost all virtue as we know it.

This second dome of meaning gives us myth, cultural heroes, group symbols, flags, special foods, ethnicity, and patriotism. These tell us that we're not alone; we're also connected to a larger story. We might understand that it's fanciful, but it is *shared* meaning and that is important. Regrettably, a lot of people stop at the level of this shared meaning because it gives more consolation and security to the small self. In fact, loyalties at this level have driven most of human history up to now.

<https://cac.org/daily-meditations/the-cosmic-egg-my-story-and-our-story/>



Fr Paul Couturier developed a vision of unity not through searching for what was held in common but by encouraging every Christian to live their faith as fully as possible / **By Mark Woodruff**

‘That we may all be one’

Just over 100 years ago in Lyon, a conventional priest and science teacher was encouraged by Fr Albert Valensin SJ, a disciple of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ, to bring his gift for friendship to help some of the 10,000 displaced people living in the poorer quarters and camps around the city. Most were Russian refugees from the fallen Romanov empire. Their churches and livelihoods were destroyed, and the Soviets had condemned them to an alien land. Paul Couturier discovered among them not only his life’s work but the purpose of his priesthood. Amid them he encountered Orthodox Christianity for the first time, and was even astonished to learn that there were such things as Ukrainian and Russian Greek Catholics.

Fr Couturier realised that the Church needed to speak of Christ to the world to give people hope and light in place of secular ideologies evacuated of Catholic truth and meaning. He would not offer them a fortress of orthodoxy correct to the letter but devoid of the warmth and wisdom of a Gospel intended for all. Instead he explored the social teaching of Leo XIII, the philosophy of Maurice Blondel, and Teilhard’s imaginative Catholic account of the created universe and the resolution of all things in the person of Christ. He found that all this resonated with the spiritual world he was encountering among the Eastern Christians.

Inspired by a retreat at the monastery at Amay-sur-Meuse (now at Chevetogne) in Belgium founded by Dom Lambert Beauduin, where two choirs of monks, each Catholic, one of the Latin Rite, the other of the Byzantine Rite, prayed together, Couturier convinced his archbishop to permit a triduum of prayer and talks about unity for the Church Unity Octave in January 1933. There was no prayer in common and the liturgical chants of the Orthodox and Catholics in the cathedral were presented in the form of a concert. The Easter Christians recognised they had been accepted into a new home by other Christians in the city where the Greek St Irenaeus has been bishop. And the impression the triduum made on Lyon’s Catholics

confirmed to Couturier that encountering other forms of Christianity was key to a fresh presentation of Christ in the world.

Instead of regarding the challenge of Christian unity as a question of organisation and negotiation, Couturier drew on Irenaeus and Teilhard to find its principles in the original purpose of humanity’s creation, with its end in Christ. Couturier saw, first, Christian disunity as an affront to the sovereignty of the Father who had created but one world and one Church to manifest humanity: those who are faithful must break down the barriers erected through human sin and pride. Second, he recalled that Christ on the night before he died had asked the Father that we may all be one - not in general harmony but formed from the very unity of Father and Son. Thus, even when divided, Couturier believed Christians are united with one another in Christ’s agony in the garden, that all enter into the pain caused by the damage of sin, and pray his own prayer of redemption if the Resurrection and restoration are to be fulfilled. If Christians persist in separation while claiming to be one in Christ, “we fail to give a convincing account of the hope that lies within us”. Third, Couturier was struck by a saying of Metropolitan Platon Gorodetsky of Kyiv, a conciliatory nineteenth-century Orthodox figure, that “the walls of separation do not rise as far as heaven”. Couturier envisaged an “invisible monastery” as the ever-present spiritual trajectory to unity in Christ, constantly before the throne of the Father.

Couturier wanted the Church Unity Octave, first observed in January 1908, to do more than simply pray for “the return of the separated brethren”. He wanted it to do justice to all he had witnessed in the manifest holiness of other Christians. From 1934 he reconceived the Octave as a “Universal Week of Prayer for the Unity of Christians in the charity and truth of Christ”. He was careful to focus not on Church structures, but on the spiritual understanding of individuals. Unity was to be conceived not through demands and

force but in Christ, “according to his will, according to his means”. He was to stress several conditions: “that the Father will forgive the sin which maintains divisions among us”; “that the Spirit will penetrate all our souls”; “that the Lord give us and all Christians together, an ever greater holiness”; and that “the Lord will lead us all along his path, to the unity of all humanity in the charity and truth of Christ”.

During the wartime occupation of Lyon, because of his contacts with the Confessing Church in Germany and with Anglicans in England, Couturier was arrested by the Gestapo. Prison broke his health, but he saw it as the fulfilment of his prayer to feel the consequence of sin, enter the passion of Christ for the reconciliation of the world, and strain with Christ for the visible unity of Christians. Only their “truthful love”, he believed, would convince the world that Christ is all in all. Couturier died in Lyon on 24 March 1953. At his funeral, the Archbishop of Lyon hailed him as the Apostle of Christian Unity.

Towards the close of the Byzantine Divine Liturgy, the priest’s doxology hails God as our sanctification and our glory. At the close of this Week of Prayer, can we say that the glory of God is truly to be detected in the holiness of Christians? It is impossible to ignore that in January 2025 Christians are politically poles apart. Some spiritual traditions are even aligned with tyrannous objectives and cruel means. In these circumstances, is a Week of Prayer for Unity even honest? Was Couturier’s vision of unity for the renewed creation in Christ, by winning hearts, minds and body into the Church’s one living organ of Christ’s truth, love and justice ever feasible?

The alternative would be worse. If the Church is to deliver the blessedness of the Kingdom on earth as in heaven, it must redouble its prayer for the unity of humanity.

Mark Woodruff is a priest of the Diocese of Westminster and Chairman of the Society of St John Chrysostom.

POPE'S CONDITION IMPROVES BUT LENGTHY HOSPITAL STAY LIKELY



Pope Francis continues to improve and the 88-year-old pontiff remains without fever and with a well-functioning heart, as he carries on his

hospital recovery from double pneumonia.

Source: *NCR Online*.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/02/21/popess-condition-improves-but-lengthy-hospital-stay-likely/>

VICTORIA TO REMOVE 'GAG CLAUSE' FROM EUTHANASIA LAWS



The Victorian Government will move to bring its euthanasia laws in line with other states by scrapping a "gag clause" that prevents doctors from initiating

conversations about the option with their patients.

Source: *CNA*.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/02/21/victoria-to-remove-gag-clause-from-euthanasia-laws/>

SYSTEMIC CHANGES NEEDED TO HELP THE SICK AND SUFFERING



In his message for World Day of the Sick, Pope Francis touches on one of the most difficult topics that I, and many Christians, struggle with - the

role of suffering, writes Brigid Meney.

Source: *The Catholic Weekly*.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/02/21/systemic-changes-needed-to-help-the-sick-and-suffering/>

CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM CALL FOR COMPASSION FOR THE PEOPLE OF GAZA



Caritas Australia has received a statement from the Churches of Jerusalem that calls attention to the responsibilities of Christians to extend their

compassion to people in the Holy Land.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/02/21/churches-of-jerusalem-call-for-compassion-for-the-people-of-gaza/>

MOST CHILDREN UNDER 16 STILL USING SOCIAL MEDIA DESPITE WORLD-FIRST BAN



Almost all children under 16 are still using social media despite the federal Government's controversial

world-first ban, according to an

eSafety Commission report.

Source: *9news.com.au*.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/02/21/most-children-under-16-still-using-social-media-despite-world-first-ban/>

REVEALING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY AND ECO-SPIRITUALITY



Two Benedictine Sisters from the United States have arrived in Australia for a month-long visit during which they will give a series of retreats and

workshops, focusing on the connection between Benedictine spirituality and eco-spirituality.

Source: *The Good Oil*.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/02/21/revealing-the-connection-between-benedictine-spirituality-and-eco-spirituality/>

'Custodians of the Beatitudes'

In his message for the Jubilee of Artists, which comes to a close today (last Tuesday), Pope Francis calls artists to be 'custodians of the Beatitudes', embracing their vocation to create beauty, reveal truth and inspire hope in a troubled world. 'Art is not a luxury, but a necessity of the spirit,' he writes. 'It is not an escape, but a responsibility, an invitation to action, a call, a cry.'



Canadian Sculptor Timothy Schmalz wholeheartedly embraces this call, bringing Jesus' words movingly to life with works such as *Homeless Jesus* and *Angels Unawares*. He recently shared with us his insights into the deep

connections between prayer, Scripture and artistic practice.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/im-just-the-instrument-in-conversation-with-sculptor-timothy-schmalz>



Through the years, the neo-Goth splendour of St Mary Star of the Sea in West Melbourne has helped draw generations of Melburnians closer to God. As it celebrates its 125th anniversary today, we

learn more about the rich history, unique mission and vibrant community life of this strikingly beautiful church, which was recently designated an official Pilgrim Place for the Jubilee Year.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/gothic-revival-masterpiece-throws-ope-its-door-to-jubilee-pilgrims>



On Friday, as Church and civic leaders from around Australia and beyond came together with the faithful at Melbourne's Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul to celebrate Cardinal Mykola Bychok's elevation to the 'Sacred Purple',

Australia's new cardinal reflected on the Beatitudes, describing them as 'the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts', and calling on those present to embrace Christ's teachings as a way to bring hope and peace to a world in need.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/for-the-glory-of-god-and-his-church-liturgies-in-melbourne-celebrates-cardinal-bychoks-raising-to-the-sacred-purple>

Pope's therapy adjusted again after tests reveal 'polymicrobial infection'....



On his fourth day in Rome's Gemelli hospital, Pope Francis was without fever and devoted some time to work, the Vatican said in an evening bulletin on 17 February. The bulletin also said that tests indicated 'a

complex clinical picture that will require an appropriate hospital stay', but that his condition is stationary and he is in good spirits as he continues his prescribed therapy.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/popess-therapy-adjusted-again-after-tests-reveal-polymicrobial-infection>

Growing up together: Matt and Cameron Fradd on the sacred vocation of marriage



The Knights of the Southern Cross recently hosted special guest speakers Matt and Cameron Fradd at ACU's Melbourne campus. About 650 people gathered to hear the Fradds speak about the secrets of a strong marriage, including the importance of vulnerability, good communication and trusting God 'above all else'.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/navigating-the-sacred-vocation-of-marriage-insights-from-matt-and-cameron-fradd>

<https://melbournecatholic.org/events>

For more information: www.melbournecatholic.org or www.facebook.com/CatholicArchdioceseofMelbourne