



St Paul Apostle Catholic Community

One Family

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Third Sunday of LENT Year B, 2-3 March, 2024

SUPERIOR GENERAL'S LENTEN MESSAGE AND REFLECTION 2024

My dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends in the Passionist Family,

Greetings of peace and hope of God's closeness to you all!

Once again, we are confronted by the special season of Lent, during which we hear the call to ongoing conversion (metanoia), by which we are challenged to turn away from sin and choose to grow closer to God by loving Him and loving our neighbor as ourselves. The Gospel passage which is given at the beginning of Lent each year as a roadmap for our Lenten journey, places before our attention: **prayer, almsgiving, and fasting** as means by which we can love God and our neighbor as ourselves (cf. Mt. 6:1-6,16-18). This season is filled with the promise of new opportunities and new beginnings, powered by God's grace and presence. Let us seize this precious moment. As St. Paul urges: "...we urge you not to let your acceptance of God's grace come to nothing. As God said, 'At the time of my favor, I have answered you; on the day of salvation, I have helped you'. Well, now is the real time of favor; now the day of salvation is here." (2Cor. 6:1-2).

In this Lenten message, I would like to focus and share some reflections with you on the subject of **PRAYER**, particularly since Pope Francis has announced this year to be a **Year of Prayer**, in preparation for the Jubilee Year next year (2025).

Lent is an opportunity for our spiritual formation and discipline. To seize this opportunity, we need to be led and guided by the Spirit who facilitates our encounter with God. Like Jesus, we want to respond by accepting the call to go into the 'desert', driven by the Spirit (Mt. 4:1-13; Lk. 4:1-11). God is waiting for us, expecting us, offering us a time of restoration...a time of **RETREAT**...the chance for a fresh start in

the spiritual life (cf. Hosea 2:16-17). The goal of this time is to seek and find the will of God over and beyond all the movements of our heart. St. Ignatius of Loyola says that two things are needed for this: i) **magnanimity**, i.e. a wide and open mind which is not confined to narrow horizons of small interests, and ii) **generosity**, i.e. the readiness to give without conditions and limits.

"Lent is an occasion, not so much for increased time given to prayer, as for a different prayer:

a prayer with that distinctive flavor which arises from a realization of who I am 'in Christ', the unlimited potential in me for growth into Christ, and the possibility of achieving it because of his power as risen Lord."

~ Gregory Manly, CP/Anneliese Reinhard, MSC

Driven by the Spirit, God's intention in the 'desert' is not to punish us but to purify us. In the desert, God will want to purify us of any excessive attachment we may have to consolation in prayer. If in prayer God blesses us with a lot of consolation ("spiritual highs"), there is a danger that we may seek and love *"the consolations of our God more than the God of our consolations"*, said St Teresa of Avila. In general, prayer in the desert will become less of us, and more of God.

The following are good indicators that our experience of 'spiritual desert' (dryness in prayer) is the purifying work of God:

- If during the time of dryness, we remain faithful to prayer.
- If our prayer is honest and flowing from the real stuff of our lives.
- If we are trying to integrate prayer and life.
- If we are trying to live a life of charity.
- If our prayer is helping us to be more loving.

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Masses

Monday
9am

Tuesday
9am Mass

Wednesday
7pm Mass

Thursday
9am Mass

Friday
9am Mass

Saturday
6pm Mass

Sunday
9am, 11am, 6pm

Please note Sunday 11am is also
ONLINE

Please click on this link to follow
<https://youtube.com/live/XOYQZkv-KdE?feature=share>

Reconciliation
Saturdays
10am—10.30am

Priests:
Fr Brendan Connell CP (PP)
Fr Luke Bulley CP

Parish Staff:
Gillian Velupillay (Bursar)
Didi Karkas (Secretary)

Passionist Community
Fr Brendan Connell CP
Fr Kevin Hennessy CP
Fr Luke Bulley CP
Dcn Tuan Paul Anh-Do CP

St Paul Apostle North
Primary School
Ph. 9700 6068
Principal
Mrs Mary Lucas

St Paul Apostle South
Primary School
Ph. 9700 3663
Principal
Mr Paul Gleeson

St John's
Regional College
Ph. 9791 3366
Principal
Mr Tim Hogan

Readings for Next Week

Fourth Sunday of LENT Year B

First Reading

2 Chronicles 36:14-17, 19-23

All the leading priests and the people also were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of the Lord that he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord against his people became so great that there was no remedy.

Therefore, he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their youths with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or young woman, the aged or the feeble; he gave them all into his hand.

They burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious vessels. He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had made up for its sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him! Let him go up."

Psalm

By the rivers of Babylon—
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there we hung up our harps.

For there our captors
asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

How could we sing the Lord's song
in a foreign land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,

let my right hand wither!

Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy

Second Reading

Ephesians 2:4-10

God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved and God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come God might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. This is not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life

Gospel acclamation

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life

Gospel

John 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

"Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. The one who believes in him is not condemned; but the one who does not believe is condemned already, for not having believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God

Questions:

Can we share the light of Christ and be "one good person" in the world today? .

We are committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all children and vulnerable adults

NEW SETS OF THANKSGIVING ENVELOPES

If you are on 'WEEKLY' program, your NEW sets of envelopes are now ready in the Gathering Space. They are arranged in alphabetical order of STREET NAME (not surname) Please don't forget to pick it up on your way out today.

If you are not in our thank-giving program and wishes to be part of it, please feel free to pick up one of our census card and thanksgiving card (in the foyer or gathering space) and once you completed both, please return them to the parish office. Also do not hesitate to contact us if you have any query

PREPARING FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION

(for grade 4 or above)

The last Family night is on Tuesday, 12th March at 7pm Service is on Tuesday, 19th March at (Time to be advised) For those who attend NON PARISH SCHOOLS are your next After School Religious Education (ASRE) class is on Tuesday 5 March at 4pm to 5pm in the Parish office. Please ensure that you sign them in as you drop them of and sign them out when you pick them up

ALL OTHER 2024 SACRAMENT PROGRAMS

Our 2024 Sacrament Programs has now begun. Only those baptised as Catholic can be registered in this program. Registration forms are available on our website or at the Parish Office.

CHILDREN'S LITURGY (Reminder)

We welcome all primary school children and younger to our Children's Liturgy program at 11am Mass each week. We ask that children under 4 or with special needs be accompanied by a parent or older sibling. Our leaders will be easily identifiable, if your child has any allergies, a serious medical condition or special needs, please alert the leader on the day. Due to possible allergic responses we ask that you refrain from bringing any food into the Children's Liturgy space. When the children are returning to their seats after the session please ensure they are aware of where you are seated. We have provided labels for you to write your child's name if you wish. If you have any questions or feedback please feel free to chat to one of our Children's Liturgy volunteers or someone on the parish team

THANK YOU FROM JUSTICE GROUP

Justice group thank you for your generosity in supporting their

special collection at all Masses last weekend. Total of \$....was generated from the collection which will be used to provide eggs to the asylum seekers

PARISH YOUTH GROUPS

YOUTH 4:12 (our Parish Youth) Grade 5 - Year 9 age group
Next gathering is on **FRIDAY, 8 March**, at 7pm in the Annexe

YOUNG ADULT GROUP

The next gathering will be on **SUNDAY, 10 March at 7pm** in the Annexe. Leading the Good Friday Station of the Cross may be part of the discussion on this night

PARISH BINGO

Our next parish Bingo will be on **FRIDAY, 15 March** at 7.30pm in the Annexe. You can come on your own or as a group.

For more information please contact Louis 0419 008 173, Vianney 0438 700 675 or Joe 0419 385 441. Please note that this activity is strictly adults only (18 years or over). Unfortunately, we are bound

to a strict policy which states that anyone under this age is not permitted inside the hall during Bingo

DEANERY DINNER

Every year the Dandenong Deanery Council runs few talk and dinner. Each event is open to anyone in the deanery. Some will involve cost and some is free event.

The first for this year is Deanery Dinner on the theme of "Year of Prayer". It will be on **WEDNESDAY, 20th March** at The Graduate Restaurant (inside St John's Regional College) Caroline Street. Cost is \$48 per person (incl. 3 course meal and wine/beer & talk)

starts at 5.30pm. Payment is either CASH, CHEQUE or BANK TRANSFER (no card facilities) If you wish to join RSVP is necessary to dandenongdeanery@live.com.au



PROJECT COMPASSION BOX

Project Compassion Boxes are available at both gathering space and the foyer. Please feel free to take one home.

This weekend we pray for:

Those who are sick

Piper Anne Spriggs, Ronella Tyrell, Annette Evans, Meti Pereira-VanEijk, Danny Sugunasekera, Agnes Fernandez, Shirley C. Esteban, Joaquina Braz, Norah Ekanayake, Grace Sprigg, Lara Moyle, Michael D' Silva, Lina Jom, Giorgia Vella, Lucia Lay, Bernardo Cabrera, Anne Ghatt, June Enright, Leang Diep, Roger Gray, Anthona Henderson, Nimal Pandithakoralage, Cecil Harper, Nicole Pinto, Toni Celona, Shinead Kralj, Carlos Aquino, Jamie Cabrera, Angela Schink, Roy Conyers, Annette Perera, Ronald Peters, Godfrey Joseph, Camilla D'Rozario, Esric Jackson, Emily Broadbent **and All those in aged care or homebound with chronic health issues**

Those who have died

Alice Money, Mofiz Ahmad, Olivia D'Silva, Domenico Serra, Colleen Foran, Jonas Hoareau, Sandra D'Costa, Sheila Mary Holloway, Nigel Macleod, Luigi Rea, Antonio Sangalang, Fred Hall, Theresa Cousa, Domingo Pereira, Isabel Da Costa, Manuel Duarte **and all who are named in our church memorial book**

May they rest in peace

Readings:

Third Sunday of LENT Year B

Exodus 20:1-17 ;
1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-25 ;
John 2:13-25

Fourth Sunday of LENT Year B

2 Chronicles 36:14-17. 19-23;
Ephesians 2:4-10 ;
John 3:14-21

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- If we are genuinely trying to avoid sin and live our lives according to God's Word.
- If we thirst, yearn, and have a desire for God as we walk in the desert.

As Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit (Mt. 4:1) to face the great issues of his life and mission before he entered into his ministry, so also, we too enter into this Lenten time to face the great issues of our life – God's invitations and the evil attractions and allurements. In the **solitude** of the desert, we are meant to find the clarity and firmness which we shall need in the turmoil of actual life.

We read in all the gospels that Jesus would withdraw to deserted places and pray. While prayer was a common practice of his culture, Jesus nevertheless sought times of quiet, times of solitude. For any Christian who aspires toward union with God, SOLITUDE holds an extremely important place in life in that it is a pre-requisite for the communion one must keep both with God and with other people. Christian solitude is never a solitude from people, but a solitude for people.

"The desert does not mean the absence of people, it means the presence of God." ~ Carlo Carretto

The Trappist monk, Thomas Merton said: *"It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brothers...Solitude and silence teach me to love my brothers for what they are, not for what they say."* ~ The Sign of Jonas

As Passionists, we know that one of the pillars upon which our Congregation is founded by St. Paul of the Cross, is **solitude**. For Paul, solitude was a cyclic journey *into his human heart (self), to the Divine Heart (God), to every human heart (others)*. It is linked to a call to community and evangelization. In a letter written to Canon Felice Pagliari in 1768, Paul of the Cross wrote:

"Our Congregation is established on this foundation... the vocation which God has given to her...our Rule obliges us after missions, retreats etc. to withdraw immediately into the Retreats of our solitude in order to recollect our spirit in prayer and fasting. Believe me, an evangelical worker who is a man of prayer, a friend of solitude and detached from all created things accomplishes more than a thousand others who are not such men..."

~ L III, 13 February 1768

Lent gives us the opportunity to **re-encounter prayer** which brings us face-to-face with God who already delights in us. Prayer is an **encounter with God**. The goal and mentality of prayer is not success or conquest, but **surrender**. The goal is to give oneself away completely and to remember how much the Lord will love you when you fail and try again. I offer you this Prayer for Lent composed by St. Ambrose of Milan (339 - 397):

O Lord, who has mercy upon all,
take away from me my sins,
and mercifully kindle in me
the fire of Thy Holy Spirit.
Take away from me the heart of stone,
and give me a heart of flesh,
a heart to love and adore Thee,
a heart to delight in Thee,
to follow and enjoy Thee,
for Christ's sake. Amen.

May these reflections assist your Lenten journey and enrich your preparation and participation in the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ. May the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ be always in your heart.

~ Fr. Joachim Rego, C.P.
Superior General

Lenten Station of the Cross
Every Friday evening
at 7pm in the Church
Follow by cuppa

