

Risen Christ



Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

17 & 18 January 2026 - Year A

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: John 1:29-34

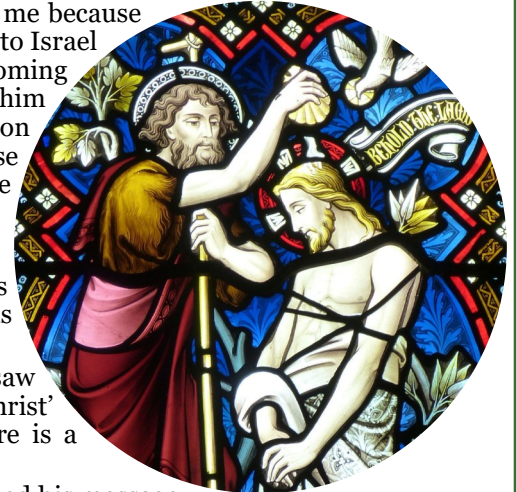
Seeing Jesus coming towards him, John said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This is the one I spoke of when I said: A man is coming after me who ranks before me because he existed before me. I did not know him myself, and yet it was to reveal him to Israel that I came baptising with water'. John also declared, 'I saw the Spirit coming down on him from heaven like a dove and resting on him. I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to baptize with water had said to me, "the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit." Yes, I have seen and I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God.'

Reflection - Break Open the Word 2026:

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! These words prepare us for communion each time we celebrate the Eucharist. These words of John invite us to recognise Jesus Christ and to encounter him.

John acknowledges that he did not know him at first, but then tells how he saw the Christ being anointed with the Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove). 'Christ' means 'the anointed one'. Here, John says he has seen this and therefore is a witness to the reality that Jesus is the saviour sent by God.

That Christ will 'baptise with the Spirit' encourages us to engage with Christ and his message of God's love. At his last supper, Jesus promises to remain with the disciples in the gift of the Holy Spirit. We look forward to the glorious paschal mystery of Jesus' death, resurrection and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.



Radical Resilience - To Live Is to Change

In this New Year's homily from 2020, Fr Richard Rohr preached on the biblical call to change:

The Greek word for "repent" (*metanoia*) means to change your mind. I'd like to emphasise change, because that's *not* something we humans as a species are attracted to. We're much like animals in this regard. Animals are creatures of habit. Those of us with a dog or a cat know their behaviour is predictable. If we change some daily routine, they'll get upset. I'm afraid to say that we're much the same. We like things the way we like things. And yet the first words out of Jesus' mouth tell us that he's come to give us a philosophy of change: "Repent," - *change your mind* - "for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matthew 3:2).

Psychologist Robert Wicks suggests part of resilience is making a decision to remain open to ongoing growth and change:

Each of us has a range of resilience (the ability to meet, learn from, and not be crushed by the challenges and stresses of life)... Of even more import than the different resiliency ranges people have is their conscious decision to maximise the ways in which they can become as hardy as possible. They may not call this resilience, but it is their ability to be open to life's experiences, and so to learn.

Richard continues:

St John Henry Newman (1801-1890) said, "here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often." That's a very different philosophy than most of us have. Our natural approach is to keep in cruise control. The way we do it is the way we do it, and any change is considered dangerous, heretical, and new. But here in this Gospel we were given a program of change and growth from the beginning. If we don't grow, if we don't change, we end up the same at 70 as we were at 17. We all know people like that, and we may even be one of them. Such people aren't very fun to live with. They want to pick and win fights. It's what a lot of politics is today. The important thing is not the truth or what's good for the whole, but what's good for the small part of which I'm a part.

If people refuse to change, what my mother used to call "bull-headedness," the world will only get worse. We have to learn how to dialogue, how to forgive, and how to trust, and how to give people the benefit of the doubt. In the United States, our country has become very cynical about truth and love. We hear politicians take oaths to be fair and just leaders and we all know it doesn't mean anything. We expect everybody to be for the truth of their group and their "kingdoms". But Jesus tells us to change our minds and accept the kingdom of God, which is what's good for the whole.

<https://cac.org/daily-meditations/to-live-is-to-change/>

*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.*



In the fourth part of our series about how busy people pray, the meditations of a teacher who has come close to death are filled with transcendent gratitude / by **Jacob Lund**

In my end is my beginning

After a critical illness, there can be a period of expansion, its impulse a starkly renewed sense of mortality. Such a time began for me in the autumn of 2022 when, without warning, I suffered a major heart attack and a few hours later underwent emergency surgery.

In the year that followed, a successful recovery gave me the opportunity, against much well-meant advice, to take on more in life, though at the time I was already some distance from being inactive: I had a career as a teacher of sixth-form English literature combined with writing poetry for journals and magazines, freelance academic writing and occasional work as a book reviewer. Family life had its particular demands too: my eldest son was heading towards finals in history and my daughter was subject to the impending cruelties of the GCSE system. Sensing, perhaps irrationally, that all this was not quite enough, I finished and had published a debut poetry collection and began doctoral research in Jacobean drama. Professional and family life have continued in much the same ways as these ever since.

Accompanying all of this was a kind of pressing gratitude for survival that seemed, more or less explicitly, beyond the human. Being close to death had afforded me no great spiritual awakening, but instead took its slow effect on a lifetime of wavering atheism, so that eventually I found myself occasionally attending Mass at St Bartholomew's in Brighton, a rather grand Church of England parish church with Anglo-Catholic tradition and liturgy. Initially, I was not much more than an observer, feeling that I was revisiting something like the weekly communion at Manchester Cathedral: although not brought up a Christian, I had been a pupil at Chetham's, the music school next door.

Perhaps it was the familiarity of ritual that echoed, comfortingly, a part of my early life, or some less well-defined sense of consolation, but anyway I began to take blessings from the priest. Some weeks of

meetings with him followed, and I converted in the summer of 2023. As a child of dedicated socialists, who had seen Attlee as saviour and Lenin as analogue to the intangibly divine, this conversion was the crossing of a narrow gap between two sets of differing yet somehow related uncertainties. In some inchoate sense I had begun to internalise a state that called somewhat mockingly to mind the relationship of the communist Mayor and Monsignor Quixote in Graham Greene's novel.

While my conversion seems to be in some ways comic, rickety even, there is a seriousness for me about prayer, though its formal practice is no easy matter within the demands of career and family life. Solemn Mass at St Bartholomew's frequently finds itself in competition with my youngest son's footballing fixtures on a Sunday morning, while those services during the week are generally occluded by teaching commitments. Yet what I am able to do regularly, I find I prefer: St Bartholomew's holds Mass in its Marian chapel on a Tuesday evening and, if I leave my college promptly, always with things undone, I can attend. What I find there is a quietness and an intimacy, perhaps particularly in the darkness of autumn and winter, where the contemplative and the meditative become less unreal. In my own life, where there seems to be such little time, these moments for prayer speak not so much to calendars and appointments but to *Kairos*: it seems both strange and wonderful that acts that are so fleeting sometimes acquire a sense of permanency.

A large part of what motivates me in terms of informal prayer is an attempt to recreate this qualitative state of a deep yet timeless connection to God, though, even as I say this, I am aware that such a form of expression seems too grand for the reality of the thing: this way of thinking is rather new to me. All the same, I seek out moments in daily life, sometimes impelled by moments of stress or anxiety,

sometimes by the apparently inexplicable.

There is no chapel where I work, and while a designated, multi-faith prayer room does exist, it sits uneasily with what I suppose is my English reticence. Instead, then, I will from time to time lock my classroom door during a lunch break and offer something spontaneous, in silence. Like most people in middle age, those around me are gradually beginning to suffer setbacks, both physical and emotional, and their difficulties often form the basis of what takes place at those times. Praying like this can bring a strange incongruity with what goes on, perhaps only a few minutes later, when my students arrive, even when the focus of their study is religious: my Upper Sixth, for example, embark on Donne's *Divine Meditations* at this time of year. Sometimes, though, prayers can reach uncomfortably into the class: my recent concern for an old friend who is seriously ill meant that I could not read aloud Holy Sonnet VI, "This is my play's last scene."

It is easier, of course, for the busyness of life to be suspended at night, for prayer to find its place beyond the competing elements of the day. A Roman Catholic priest gave me a small missal some months ago and from that I draw silent prayer of a different kind: those "for protection during night refer me idiosyncratically back to that sense of mortality which began the journey I seem only just to have started.

In thinking of endings, then, I am reminded of beginnings, and something approaching the transcendent occurs. Perhaps the apprehension of St Augustine's eternal present is something unattainable, and yet I do what I can to remain hopeful of it: when I pray I am not, as Eliot expresses it in *Four Quartets*, "At the still point of the turning world", but then there is time

Jacob Lund's debut poetry collection, *Acoustic Mirrors*, is published by Spectral Pixels Press.