

Risen



Christ

First Sunday of Lent

8 & 9 March 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 4:1-13

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.' But Jesus replied, 'Scripture says: *Man Does not live on bread alone.*'

Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, 'I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours.' But Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says: *You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.*'

Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said to him, 'throw yourself down from here, for Scripture says: *He will put his angels in charge of you to guard you, and again: They will hold you up on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.*'

But Jesus answered him, 'It has been said: *You must not put the Lord your God to the test.*'

Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him to return at the appointed time.

Prayers for the people in the line of this awful cyclone Alfred

RCIA Candidates for Easter 2025: During Lent, please pray for them:



Graham Coupe



Boh Coupe



Melanie Cricco



Peyman Imani

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](#)

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: 23 Feb & 2 Mar 2025

		OLHC	SFX
Thanksgiving	Cash	\$672.00	\$988.00
	Electronic	\$3,254.00	\$2,579.00
Presbytery	Cash	\$946.15	\$818.35
	Electronic	\$250.00	\$170.00

Thanksgiving / Stewardship Offering

Month	OLHC	SFX	Total
December	\$9,129.67	\$10,865.50	\$19,995.17
January	\$6,878.43	\$8,984.50	\$15,862.93
February	\$8,426.67	\$8,121.50	\$16,548.17

Risen Christ Parish Calendar of Events

Saturday 8

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 9 - First Sunday of Lent

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

Tuesday 11

9:30am Mass & SFX Yr 4

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

7:00pm Jordan Small Church Community

Montmorency

Wednesday 12

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Eltham

Thursday 13

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Montmorency

10:00am Emmaus Small Church Community

Montmorency

10:30am ASRC Food Collection

Montmorency

Friday 14

9:30am Mass

Eltham

Saturday 15

12:00pm Baptisms: Mietta, Aria,
Lottie, Lucas & August

Montmorency

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

7:00pm St Francis Xavier School Trivia Night

Montmorency

Sunday 16 - Second Sunday of Lent

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

12:00pm Baptisms: Sadie, Nora, Emmeline
Evelyn & Edward

Eltham

Tuesday 18

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

10:00am Craft Group

Montmorency

11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry

Eltham

2:00pm Bethany Small Church Community

Montmorency

Wednesday 19

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the word with Communion

Eltham

1:00pm Kairos Small Church Community

Montmorency

Thursday 20

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Montmorency

10:30am ASRC Food Collection

Montmorency

Friday 21

9:30am Mass

Eltham

Saturday 22

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 23 - Third Sunday of Lent

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

Monday 24

2:00pm Mass

St Vincent's Care, Eltham

Tuesday 25

9:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

7:00pm Jordan Small Church Community

Montmorency

Wednesday 26

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency



*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 the recently **deceased**:
Lorraine McEvoy
(funeral: 11am Mon 17 March, Heidelberg Golf Club, Lower Plenty)

For those whose **anniversaries** are at this time:
Joyce Arundell, Joyce Jakubik, Remi Vulich, Denise Wraight

Eltham

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

For the recently **deceased**:
Betty Scully

For those whose **anniversaries** are at this time:
Angelina & Antonio Cassonato

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

First Sunday of Lent - 8th & 9th March 2025

This Lent, we're invited to *Unite Against Poverty* with Caritas Australia's Project Compassion. This year is especially significant as we celebrate the Jubilee Year - *a time of renewal and solidarity*.

Project Compassion 2025 shares three stories from around the world. We'll meet **Toefuata'iga** (Toy-foo-ah-tah-ing-ah) a young student from Samoa, **Lam** from Vietnam and **Irene** from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

You can support Project Compassion 2025 through the donation boxes, envelopes or by scanning the QR code.

Or online at: caritas.org.au/project-compassion

Or by calling: 1800 024 413

Thank you for standing with us,
as we *Unite Against Poverty* this Lent.



Roster for week ending 9 Mar 2025

Beckford, Peter	PRYR
Capuana, Marisa	CLNR
Capuana, Marisa	W6:00
Cotter, Anne	W8:30
Davidson, John	W8:30
Donnellan, Denise	E10:00
Dopheide, Marlis	E10:00
Dunell, Linda	H10:00
Dunell, Rick	H10:00
Edwards, Elisabeth	E10:00
Hannon, Genni	ASRC
Hannon, Kevin	ASRC
Kenny, Michael	W6:00
McKenna, John	CLNR
Nolan, Kathleen	C10:00
Reardon, Kathy	ASE
Scannell Family	PRSE
Scully, Greg	E10:00
Smith, Neil	E10:00
Taylor, Trish	R10:00
Turnbull, Mark	H10:00
Turnbull, Pauline	H10:00
Wood, Marie	LoW-01 Thu

Roster for week ending 16 Mar 2025

Andreatta, Brenda	CLNR
Ballenger, Nima	E10:00
Dunell, Linda	E10:00
French, Jossie	W8:30
Furtado, Lorraine	C10:00
Hall, Vali	ASE
Kulkens, Mark	W6:00
Lodi, Lidvina	H10:00
Love, Philip	W8:30
Mallia, Anthony	E10:00
Maynes, Phil	W6:00
McEwen, Christine	H10:00
Reardon, Kathy	E10:00
Reardon, Peter	E10:00
Said, Marie	ASRC
Said, Mike	ASRC
Scully, Greg	R10:00
Skipper, Patsy	LoW-01 Thu
Stewart Family	PRSE
Williams, Anne	PRYR
Williams, Peter	PRYR

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

PRESENTED BY R & S AUTO:

**SO YOU
THINK
YOU
KNOW
TRIVIA**

**TRIVIA NIGHT AT
SFX MONTY HALL**

SAT 15 MAR
7PM - 11PM

SFX MONTY HALL
90 MAYONA RD

TIX \$35 PP OR
\$320 TABLE OF 10



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ASSOCIATION**

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The cuts in overseas aid being made by developed countries across the world are having devastating human consequences. But the former head of one of the world's largest aid agencies argues that the real targets of the attack on aid are the shared values of human rights and dignity that have underpinned Europe and America since the Second World War / **by Kevin Watkins**

The assault on solidarity

In the gospels, according to J.D. Vance, the US Vice-President, God commands us to love in concentric circles. Citing the Catholic concept of *ordo amoris*, or the "order of love", developed in the fourth century by St Augustine, he told Fox News: "You love your family, and then you love your neighbour, and then you love your community, and then you love your fellow citizens in your own country. And after that you can focus and prioritise the rest of the world." In other words, the love you direct beyond your borders should be a residual international side-dish to the local and national main course.

Vance's sliver of scriptural misrepresentation provided an ethical veneer for the devastating onslaught launched against America's aid programme. The Trump administration's chief Jacobin, Elon Musk, selected the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the federal body overseeing around two-thirds of America's \$68bn foreign assistance budget, as the primary target for an early dose of the revolutionary terror overseen by his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Declaring USAID a "vipers' nest of radical-left Marxists" and a "criminal enterprise", Musk has acted on his pledge to "feed USAID to the woodchipper", freezing aid, laying off staff and closing offices around the world.

Musk is the richest man in the world. His estimated net worth, recently inflated by the spoils of political office, is roughly equivalent to the combined income of the 692 million people in the world who survive on less than \$2.15 a day - the World Bank's extreme poverty threshold. The cuts to aid being gloated over by this unelected billionaire are already having a shocking impact on some of the world's poorest people. Over the past week, I've spoken to staff from agencies forced to cut therapeutic feeding programmes for malnourished children in South Sudan and Nigeria, maternal health programmes in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, and education programmes for girls in Afghanistan. Humanitarian agencies like Catholic Relief Services, World Vision and Save the Children are

facing losses of income that will have catastrophic effects.

US State Department waivers for some "life-saving" aid introduced as an afterthought have manifestly failed. With USAID staff locked out of work and delivery systems paralysed, the money is not flowing. PEPFAR, the world's largest anti-HIV/Aids programme, is perhaps the ultimate life-saving initiative. Established in 2003 under George W. Bush (not a name commonly associated with "radical-left Marxism"), it is credited with averting 25 million deaths and preventing 1,000 babies daily being born with the HIV virus. It was providing treatment for more than 20m people, including some 566,000 children. With the clinics needed to deliver treatment closed or unable to provide drugs, PEPFAR's role in preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission is under threat, as are the lives of many children.

Last week, the UK joined the assault on international aid. Ahead of his meeting with President Trump, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer announced that a rise in defence spending would be funded by cutting the development assistance budget from 0.5 per cent to 0.3 percent of gross national income. This was the coup de grace delivered to the bipartisan consensus on aid already wounded by Boris Johnson's crass decision to fold the Department for International Development (DfID) into the Foreign Office and cut the UK development budget from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of national income.

So much for manifesto commitments. The Labour government was elected on a programme including a pledge to restore the 0.7 per cent target to help create a "world free of poverty on a liveable planet". Instead, it has - quite literally - taken a leaf out of the playbook of Reform UK, adopting its proposal to fund defence spending through a substantial aid cut.

There were alternatives. Increased defence spending could have been financed by an emergency levy applied on the top rates of income tax or higher bands of property tax, capping unjustified exemptions for pension wealth or reforming capital gains tax. Instead, the government has chosen to divert funds from the world's poor.

PHOTO: ALAMY, RAFAL CICHAWA



Women suffer from catastrophic losses of aid

The spectacle of a Labour prime minister, flanked by Union Jacks, announcing deep aid cuts provides its own indictment of the current vacuum in political values. To his credit, Sir Keir has not had the gall to quote St Augustine in support of the devastating onslaught he has launched against the UK's overseas aid programme. Showing a degree of contrition foreign to the Trump administration, David Lammy, the Foreign Secretary, proclaimed that cutting aid was "extremely difficult", adding, perhaps unnecessarily, "We are a government of pragmatists." Those weasel words brush too much under the carpet. The real difficulties posed by the UK's aid cuts will be counted in terms of children without vaccination, mothers denied access to health care, and less humanitarian aid for vulnerable families on the front lines of the climate crisis. And surely there is a "pragmatism" that looks beyond arriving in Washington DC with a gift-wrapped aid sacrifice to lay at the feet of Donald Trump.

A lethal mix of fiscal stress, slow economic growth, defence imperatives and right-wing populism is eroding support for aid across Europe. Germany, the world's second largest aid donor, has already made deep cuts. France has announced plans to cut its foreign aid budget by one-third this year. The Netherlands has eviscerated its aid programme. While public debt shrinks the fiscal space for aid, right-

wing populists are shrinking the political space and dragging mainstream parties in their political wake. Alternative for Germany (AfD), now the country's second largest party, the National Rally in France and Reform UK among others have poisoned national aid debates with narratives linking development assistance to concerns over migration and the state of public services, while drip-feeding media stories suggesting that most aid is squandered through corruption and waste. National selfishness in the guise of what Nigel Farage, the leader of Reform UK, presents as the principle that "charity should begin at home" has been elevated into a moral virtue.

It is hard to overstate the human consequences of the assault on aid. The US alone accounts for around 40 per cent of humanitarian assistance - the closest thing we have to a global safety net for people coping with droughts, floods and conflict-related displacement. Already desperately under-funded, with less than half of the UN's 2024 appeal financed, the loss of USAID support and the severe cutbacks in aid from Britain, France and Germany will cost lives. Famine in the Sudan, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and Gaza is now a real and present danger. Gavi, the global vaccines alliance, is in the middle of a financial replenishment exercise aimed at saving 8 million lives by 2030. This public-private initiative has vaccinated more than a billion children and helped build more self-reliant health systems in countries across the world. With support pledged under the previous US administration now in question and governments across Europe slashing aid, children's lives are under threat.

But there is something more at stake here than the immediate human suffering that will come with aid cuts, distressing as that may be. Development assistance is more than a transfer of money. It is an expression of moral principle and civic values. What donor societies do through aid is a measure of their capacity for kindness, empathy and what Adam Smith, the great philosopher-economist of the Enlightenment, memorably described as a "fellow feeling for the suffering of others". That sense of shared humanity and the moral responsibilities that come with it is the real target of the attack on overseas aid.

USAID is a deeply symbolic target. Doubtless Elon Musk will present its severed head to the MAGA faithful and claim a triumph for fiscal responsibility. That proposition is absurd. USAID spending is a

rounding-error in the federal budget: it represents just 0.7 percent of overall expenditure. The cut to aid is not about saving money. It's about values and signalling a collapse of the bipartisan political settlement that has been maintained in the US and Europe since the Second World War.

Most of what we think of as today's multi-lateral system for development emerged under US leadership after the war. Embedded in the idea of a universal human rights, it emerged as a response to the extreme nationalism, beggar-your-neighbour protectionism, and the rise of political extremism that marked the interwar years - a world that is now re-emerging. UN agencies and the Bretton Woods system - the World Bank and the IMF - were created to underpin the creation of a new moral order built, in the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on freedom from fear and want. When President John F. Kennedy asked Congress to establish USAID in 1961 he presented it as an expression of the US's "moral obligation (to act) as a wise leader and good neighbour". Compare and contrast that with Vance's perversion of the *ordo amoris* doctrine.

As Pope Francis went out of his way to remind us in the extraordinary letter he sent to the US bishops a few days before he was taken into hospital in mid February, "Christian love is not a concentric expansion of interests that little by little extend to other persons and groups". The "true *ordo amoris* that must be promoted", he writes, in an explicit challenge to the Vice President, "is that which we discover by meditating on the parable of the Good Samaritan, that is, by meditating on the love that builds a fraternity open to all, without exception". In the Trump administration's version of the parable, perhaps the most powerfully subversive of all Jesus' stories, Vance and Musk walk on past the stranger in need, Musk pausing only to deliver a parting kick.

Over the past few weeks two things have become clear. The first is that the Trump administration is not isolationist, but overtly hostile to multilateralism, democracy, and the very idea that the US has any moral responsibility to alleviate suffering. The second is that, both in the US and Europe, defenders of international aid are being overwhelmed by a populist onslaught that has entered the political mainstream.

Some prominent Democrats in the US have already raised the white flag. "You don't fight every fight," declared Rahm Emanuel, the Obama-era strategist; USAID is "not the hill I'm going to die on". But every hill lost makes the next one harder to defend:

the same values now dismembering US aid are visible in budget plans for slashing medical aid for low-income families, cutting taxes for billionaires, and in the exploitation of public office to build private wealth.

What can be done to turn the tide? Europe has a critical role to play. The European Union and Britain still have formidable assets at their disposal. They are the biggest shareholders in the World Bank. Diminished as they may be, they already provide more aid globally than the US. Working with emerging markets, a European strategy could unlock new finance and support new coalitions for poverty reduction. The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty led by Brazil is a case in point.

The current crisis also provides an opportunity to address long-standing inefficiencies in the international aid system. Far too much aid is delivered through fragmented bilateral projects lacking strategic direction. The humanitarian system is compromised by fund-raising turf battles between UN agencies, weak coordination, an over-reliance on food aid (transferring cash to poor families is more effective), and a failure to direct aid to actors in the global south. With stronger cooperation and a sense of shared moral purpose, European countries could help recast international cooperation.

Aid charities also have to face hard truths. We are no longer in the heyday of Make Poverty History. Surveys of public attitudes in Europe and North America show that most people see global poverty and hunger as a problem to be addressed; moral concern does not respect national boundaries. However, concerns over inflation, the state of public services, marginalisation, migration and conflict run far deeper, providing rocket fuel for political grievances. There is also a widespread view that aid is ineffective. Charities, faith leaders and politicians have not won the battle for hearts and minds. Against this backdrop, development assistance for "foreigners" - especially those with a different skin colour - has become a soft target for right-wing populists and for governments under fiscal stress.

The aid fightback has to start by winning the argument in a public square now dominated by divisive political extremists. Addressing the grievances off which populism feeds is hard. Populist movements specialise in creating hostility towards "the other" and offering simple answers to complex questions. Solve the Middle East crisis? Expel the Palestinians and turn Gaza into coastal real estate. (cont... p6)

(cont...from p5)

Raise living standards? Start a trade war and withdraw from globalism. Make your country great again? Demonise migrants and slash-and-burn “inefficient” aid budgets.

Charities could - and should - do more to communicate the human faces behind aid success stories. The claim that aid doesn't work is fake news on stilts. Since 2000, child death rates linked to poverty-related killer diseases like diarrhoea and pneumonia have halved, cutting deaths by 5 million. Extreme poverty has fallen by two-thirds. Millions

more girls have entered education. Aid has been part of an extraordinary human development success story. Try telling the girls I met in a UK-funded primary school in South Sudan that aid doesn't work.

Too often the case for aid is wrapped up in narratives custom-made to turn off public engagement. Answering populist arguments with hubristic claims about aid effectiveness and appeals to national self-interest is a fool's errand. Perhaps it is time to go back to basics and talk about aid as a helping hand provided by a good neighbour in times of crisis - a simple

act of human solidarity grounded in kindness and a sense of justice. The moral case for helping strangers in need is deeply embedded in shared values that transcend political, religious, and social divides. Those values represent the seedbed for recovery. In our globalised world, as Pope Francis reminded us, everyone is our neighbour - and walking away from human suffering diminishes us all.

Kevin Watkins is a Visiting Professor of Practice in the Firoz Lalji Institute Africa at the London School of Economics and a former CEO of Save the Children UK.

Prayers of the Faithful for 8 & 9 March 2025 - First Sunday of Lent

Leader: God our Father, you are ever attentive to the misfortunes of humanity. With faith and love, we entrust to your care our sisters and brothers who are in distress.

For the Church: that during Lent the Church will be with Her people in times of trouble or temptation, giving us a home in times of distress.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For our Parish communities: Loving God, we give thanks for the strength of our Parish communities, bearing us up and witnessing our faith together.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the world: we pray that in the coming weeks of penance and reflection, our leaders will listen to the small still voice of peace. Grant them the wisdom to pursue harmony, to seek the grace to meet rivals and enemies in a spirit of goodwill.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the faithful: Lord, we hope in your mercy to be faithful and true and not to yield to the temptations of this world.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We remember all those who are sick, including those named in our bulletin. May God lift them up and grant them the strength to bear their troubles. We pray too for all carers, family and friends who help those who are in ill health.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We remember in love and fellowship those who have died, especially *Lorraine McEvoy and Betty Scully*, and those whose anniversaries we recall at this time, including *Joyce Arundell, Angelina & Antonio Cassonato, Joyce Jakubik, Remi Vulich and Denise Wraight*. May the Lord bless them. May they rest in the light of His face.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Ever loving God, give relief to those suffering and burdened, granting them the comfort of your love, and attend to those whose prayers rise up to you.

All: **Amen**

Parish Pastoral Leadership Team - Member Profile

Introducing: Elisha O'Dowd

A bit about me, my family, and the Mass I attend:

I was raised in Eltham North, baptised at Our Lady Help of Christians, was one of the first preppies at Holy Trinity Primary School and I attended Mass regularly at St Francis Xavier, making me a long-standing member of the Risen Christ faith community. My husband, Mark, and I met through the Antioch youth group at SFX. Together with our sons - Edan (18), Dominic (16), and Lachie (15) - we were regulars at the old 10:30am Montmorency Mass and now attend the 6:00pm Mass most often.

I've been involved in music ministry at SFX since primary school. Now, I sing monthly with an incredible team.

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

Being active in parish life has always mattered to me. I've served on the Parish Pastoral Council, the Transition Leadership Community, and now on the Pastoral Leadership Team. I enjoy meeting others in the parish, sharing ideas, and making change happen. Our community has evolved, and I believe staying engaged helps us embrace these changes rather than resist them.

What do you do with yourself?

I'm a Registered Nurse specialising in critical care (Emergency). During the pandemic, I focused on COVID management. Now, I work in Digital Health, combining my healthcare experience with innovative technology.

I also enjoy jogging, exercising, going for long walks before dawn, and a Mark would say, taking on big new projects...

Something that might surprise you about me:

I was once a vocalist for a Christian music band, "Cornerstone Music".



In the second of a Lenten series, a forensic psychiatrist explores the sound of silence / **by Gwen Adshead**

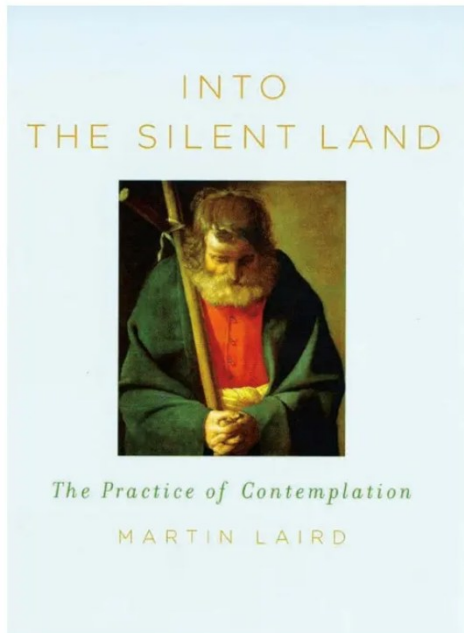
No words needed

I suspect I'm not the only person wonder whether some of the recipients of St Paul's Epistles slightly dreaded the arrival of his next missive ("Paul's written again!", "Oh" [pause, then with some effort] "Great!"). Did they necessarily share St Paul's enthusiasms? Did they worry about their capacity to be always rejoicing, not worrying about anything, and to be giving thanks at all times and in all places?

As I squint fearfully at my email inbox, St Paul's exhortation to "Pray without ceasing" seems especially hard. I want to pray at all times because it's the ground of my living relationship with God, and so I also *want* to want to pray this way. But sometimes all my good intentions to pray without ceasing face away as soon as I've turned on the radio, the computer and the coffee machine. Of course, the problem I'm describing is an ancient and perhaps an inevitable one. The workaday human world has so many distractions (albeit often intertwined with useful and beneficial activities). And then there are the challenges of everyday human suffering: grief at loss, fear and worry about the future or the past, unresolved anger (which often masks grief and fear), not to mention the barrage of distressing information about other people and places across the world.

Thankfully, we are blessed and supported by the wisdom of many writers on prayer, who recognise our human limitations and have helpful advice about how to work with them, not against them. I am thinking of Dom John Chapman's great advice, "Pray as you can, not as you can't", and also that saying attributed to St Francis: "Preach at all times; use words only if necessary." Which is a reminder that the most effective prayers may be non-verbal and include compassionate and loving actions; like making that call to a friend who is dying, visiting lonely elderly relatives, and even sitting down and doing the wretched diocesan safeguarding training for the umpteenth time.

But of course, the other way to pray without words is to use the prayer of silence, and one of the best books I know about silent prayer is Fr Martin Laird's



Into the Silent Land. It is a short book, packed with wisdom and kindness; an excellent introduction to silent prayer and a book to reread whenever the practice of silent prayer is challenging. Fr Laird is a member of the Order of St Augustine, and also professor of theology and religious studies. His book has been in print for nearly 20 years and retreats, based on his book, are famously popular (there is one coming up at Cuddesdon in September).

I first came across this book after I had finished my training in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) in Oxford. I was looking for ways that we might introduce some kinds of silent meditation into the hospital where I work because I wondered if this might be helpful for people with chronic depression. This is a problem that afflicts many patients in secure hospitals, and I hoped we might be able to ease their pain. We did introduce mindfulness practices for both staff and patients, although I am not sure it made the impact I had hoped for.

But reading Martin Laird's book made a big impact on me. It played a big part in helping me get curious about the experience of silent prayer and the nature of the silence within me. Fr Laird starts by reminding us that "God is our

homeland"; that we are made to contemplate our "home" in Christ and are restless until we do so. He notes that there are two aspects to contemplative silence, namely stillness and awareness, and he gives practical advice about how to attend to both of these in the practice of silence. It was this advice which helped me open up to experiencing silence, and also invited me to relate to time in a different way with its emphasis on attentive awareness of the present moment.

Laird is clear: the most important thing is to practise silent prayer whenever we can, perhaps *especially* when we don't feel like it. We need to sit in silent stillness every day for as long as we can; and then longer too. Laird's advice on how to struggle with the painful thoughts and feelings that inevitably arise is especially wise and kind. He is honest about the fact that the practice of silent prayer is not easy. Silent prayer does not solve the problem of the distractions of the human experience: the ceaseless radio chatter of the conscious mind, or the problem of pain, both psychological and physical. Instead, it invites the person praying to be present to all those experiences and surrender to them as real in the presence of the God who listens and loves, who accepts us as we are - distractions, pains and all. The practice of silent prayer is an embodiment of Christ's invitation to put on his "yoke" and, in so doing, connect to him, and find rest there: rest for our weary souls.

But Laird's book says that we may also find ourselves in the silence. One of the richest sections of the book is the Epilogue which is the story of a person who decides to enter a monastery, in the search to know themselves better. In these last pages, Laird tells us a parable about the challenge to know who we are, and to know the vastness of the living silence within us. Like all parables, it has a puzzling quality, which I enjoy being puzzled by, again and again.

Gwen Adshead is a psychiatrist who runs psychotherapeutic groups for offenders at Broadmoor Hospital. In November 2024 she delivered the BBC's annual Reith Lectures. *Into the Silent Land* is published by Darton, Longman and Todd.

Lent & Easter

The Montmorency conference of SVDP has some booklets that may be of interest to parishioners that may assist them in their preparations for Lent and Easter season. Pamphlets are in the front foyer near the entrance doors. Some of the pamphlets include: Stations of the Cross for Married Couples; Family Meal Prayers for Lent; Calvary - a Lenten Rosary Reflection; Lenten Family Graces - A Treasury of Prayers for Lenten Meals

We hope that you enjoy the selection. A gold coin donation in the poor boxes located at the front and side entrances will help defray costs.



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

POPE ISSUES AUDIO MESSAGE THANKING THOSE PRAYING FOR HIS HEALTH



Pope Francis has remained stable for another day as he recovers from double pneumonia, releasing an audio message thanking those praying for him, as Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP has joined prayer vigils at St Peter's Square. Source: *Vatican News/NCR/7 News*.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/03/07/pope-issues-audio-message-thanking-those-praying-for-his-health/>

CATHEDRAL, CHURCHES CLOSED AS ALFRED DRAWS CLOSER TO LANDFALL



Churches and schools across South East Queensland and Northern New South Wales are cancelling Masses and events ahead of the landfall of Cyclone Alfred expected today or Saturday. Source: *Catholic Leader*.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/02/27/tests-show-popes-further-slight-improvement/>

INEQUALITY CLIMBS TO HIGHEST POINT IN MORE THAN TWO DECADES



Inequality across the nation has climbed to its highest point in more than two decades as the incomes of high-paid Australians grow faster than those on lower wages and homeownership levels among young people collapse. Source: *SMH*.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/03/07/inequality-climbs-to-highest-point-in-more-than-two-decades/>

MARONITES CONDEMN MARDI GRAS DEPICTION OF JESUS, CALL FOR MUTUAL RESPECT



The Maronite Catholic Church has expressed concern over recent footage and images of a drag performer at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, which many interpreted as mocking Jesus Christ and His crucifixion.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/03/07/maronites-condemn-mardi-gras-depiction-of-jesus-call-for-mutual-respect/>

CANDIDATES FORUM HIGHLIGHTS 'PRESSING NEED' FOR INTERNATIONAL AID



Caritas Australia has joined other aid agencies and faith-based organisations to hold a candidates' forum in western Sydney ahead of the federal election to highlight the pressing need for international aid in the current global climate.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/03/07/candidates-forum-highlights-pressing-need-for-international-aid/>

WA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS SEE LARGEST 12-MONTH GROWTH IN 10 YEARS



More families in Western Australia than ever before are choosing a quality, Catholic education for their child as latest census data confirms enrolments at the state's Catholic schools grew by 1.9 per cent - the largest 12-month growth in 10 years. Source: *CEWA*.

<https://cathnews.com/2025/03/07/wa-catholic-schools-see-largest-12-month-growth-in-10-years/>



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

Seeking the sacred

The human yearning for meaning and purpose - the deep, hopeful hunger we have for God - is expressed in many ways: in the media and stories we seek out, in the art and architecture we create, in the communities we build and care we give, in the prayers we offer up, and in the journeys we make.



This week, we are excited to announce that a venue has been secured for the Australian Catholic Youth Festival 2025 as Melbourne prepares to welcome thousands of young pilgrims from around the country in November to participate in a three-day festival that promises to feed the deepest spiritual hunger. <https://melbournecatholic.org/news/venue-secured-for-2025-australian-catholic-youth-festival>



We hear from three exciting Catholic communicators who shared their insights and tips on how to fan the flames of faith at the recent Jubilee of Communications in Rome.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/hooks-rabbit-holes-and-prayerscapes-finding-ways-to-lead-people-to-jesus>



Associate Professor Natasha Michael shares some highlights of a recent Catholic leaders' pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi, a unique opportunity for 29 'pilgrims of hope' to share a profound journey and 'seek the sacred' together.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/seeking-the-sacred-catholic-leaders-on-pilgrimage>



And as we prepare for Ash Wednesday, Pope Francis' Lenten message invites us to 'journey together in hope', reminding us that 'Lent is a time to confront both personal and collective struggles with faith and compassion.'

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/compare-your-life-to-a-migrants-pope-says-in-his-message-for-lent>

Project Compassion 2025: uniting against poverty... Catholic aid agency Caritas Australia has launched its annual Lenten fundraiser, Project Compassion, with a call to open our hearts to others in need. Archbishop Peter A Comensoli encouraged the hundreds of school students who came together today at the launch at Emmaus College in Vermont to 'reach out in love and acceptance, recognizing that every single person has dignity, value and worth'.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/project-compassion-2025-uniting-against-poverty>

Pope suffers respiratory crises after writing about 'blessing' hidden in frailty... Pope Francis suffered 'two episodes of acute respiratory insufficiency' on 3 March but remained alert, the Vatican said, giving cause for concern after two days in which his condition was described as 'stable'. The day before suffering the crises and receiving medical treatment, the Pope wrote of 'the "blessing" that is hidden within frailty', saying that 'it is precisely in these moments that we learn even more to trust in the Lord'.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/pope-writes-of-blessing-hidden-in-frailty-before-suffering-respiratory-crisis>

<https://melbournecatholic.org/events>

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