

NINE SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS:
YEAR A 2023

A Short History of Happiness: Lent to Easter



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www.columban.org.au/media-and-publications/liturgical-resources/



From the beginning of church history, the forty days of Lent have prepared adults for Christian baptism at Easter. Scriptural stories provide the God-given backdrop to help catechumens reflect on the *human drama*. Wonderfully, each gets to embark on a personal and communal journey *seeking meaning and happiness*, hence the title of this resource.

Believers already baptised also join with the catechumens in the last stage of their *conversion voyage*. They repent of their sins and pray to renew their baptismal union with God and his followers in heart and mind. All in the community fast to discipline their bodies. In self-denial, they give alms to curb their self-indulgence.

In the Northern Hemisphere, the new life bursting forth in spring is taken as the earthly sign of New Life in Christ Risen. In the Southern Hemisphere, believers can look to the gifts of a rich autumn harvest as their local sign of God-given gifts that sustain New Life.

The liturgical season of Lent begins on Ash

Wednesday and ends with the Holy Week of Easter. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), every pope has written on the mission of the baptised and all church communities to proclaim the Gospel in *word and deed*. But the task forever changes. Every year, the earth's ecological and human social systems evolve, raising new situations. During Lent, Christians around the globe ask themselves: *What is God asking of me this year?* Pope Francis focused on this question when in 2015 he wrote of the need to listen to a *'twin cry': the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*.

Where is the earth crying? Who are the poor that cry? Where am I crying? Taking seriously the insights of ecological and social scientists, we can better understand the *joys and pains identified by modern movements* and better experience the presence of God revealed in the cries they name. We better enter our Christian calling to happiness.

A selection of nine sets of Scripture readings from the Lent/Easter liturgy underpins this



Scripture and life. The Scripture for Lent and Easter is set, but it arose out of social or ecological realities – hunger, slavery, liberation. Scriptural stories capture how, led by God, believers responded to the realities of life on Earth. In our Lenten prayer, we benefit from naming current social and ecological realities. For example: creation revealing God and environmental abuse; bodily human existence as earthly beings; migration and welcoming the stranger; lands stolen or shared; cultural belonging and diversity; unjust structures and leadership for reform; personal responsibility and cooperation; human fickleness and conversion; consumerism and lies; people lacking hope and full of doubt; trauma and sickness; fear of death and the future; friendship and commitment; and more. These ground our prayer in the reality of life on this planet, lived as an evolving human journey, a drama filled with anxieties and dreams of happiness.

resource. Each of the nine sets matches an issue emerging from the *twin cries in modern movements*. For example, the Peace Movement points to aggressive ego-driven dictators and our own aggressive behaviour. The Ecological Challenge links the readings with biodiversity loss, climate extremes and pollution. The Feminist Movement helps reflect on male dominance in society and religion. The Human Happiness Movement looks for new measures of success. Movements for economist reform help believers to search for alternative ways of living that reject the lies of financial dictators who fuel consumerism and manipulate information technology.

Reflection works best when *the insights of modern movements and Scripture bounce off each other*.

Poland went into crisis after it won freedom from Soviet Russia. Why? While the people were at last 'free from', they were ill-prepared to be 'free to ...'. They did not know how to use their God-given talents and the gifts of the earth to bring

about renewal. Even believers struggled to apply their power of baptism in Christ Jesus to reshape their nation. They forgot what St Irenaeus wrote: *The glory of God is the human fully alive*. God is manifest as good and present with us when believers apply and live out God's gifts. Poland was not unique. Over forty days, Lent leads us to be 'free to ...'.

From my youth, I learnt to bring my life and thoughts to prayer and talk them over with God. In this spirit, I offer you these nine Scripture-based reflections for Lent. This resource offers individuals and groups a short introduction to happiness through scriptural texts about *creation and the human journey*. Between Ash Wednesday and Easter, we can reflect together on our baptismal vocation with the hope and confidence that God is with us all in the process. Remembering the promise of Jesus at the Last Supper to send the Holy Spirit, some call this period *Ashes to Fire*.

A Short History of Happiness: LENT TO EASTER

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9. **EASTER SUNDAY** – Creation Completed in Christ as Risen Lord

Format for nine Lent-to-Easter Reflections

- Title
- Name of the grace to celebrate
- Excerpts from Lent/Triduum Scripture and Prayers
- Intercessions – Prayers of the Faithful
- Thanksgiving Prayer (theology of God's gifts)
- Lent-related commentary
- Heroes and saints
- Papal quotes

Notes on nine Lent-to-Easter Reflections

1. This resource of nine reflections draws from the Liturgy of Lent and Easter. It runs like a mini catechism on salvation history, carrying a blunt message that calls for obedience to God's ways revealed in cosmic creation and human history. It also carries a message of hope focused on New Life gifted to us in the Risen Christ. Through belief and obedience to following his ways, Jesus brings us into a journey to the happiness of union with God.
2. The schema collects scriptural stories that play back and forth between God's initiatives and human responses – awe and indifference,

lament and forgiveness, hope and despair, pain and happiness. Remembering God's saving actions transforms the human journey, turning it into a drama filled with meaning and acts of courage.

3. The Thanksgiving Prayers proclaim acts of faith drawn from the Scriptural readings. The Prayers of the Faithful ask for healing and liberation. They first remember what God has already done, then ask God to act again as we present our needs and the needs expressed in the twin cries of the earth and the poor (LS 64).
4. Other paragraphs in the resource reinforce the scriptural readings. They range from explanations to remembering the lives of saintly or heroic people. Relevant quotations from recent papal writings ground is in the Catholic tradition.
5. Pictures with water images feature in this resource. Baptism with water is the recurring image during Lent, leading to rebirth in the Risen Christ at Easter. Water supports all life on Earth. Water dictates where cultures will flourish. Water is a spiritual image.

1. ASH WEDNESDAY

Return to God with Heart and Mind

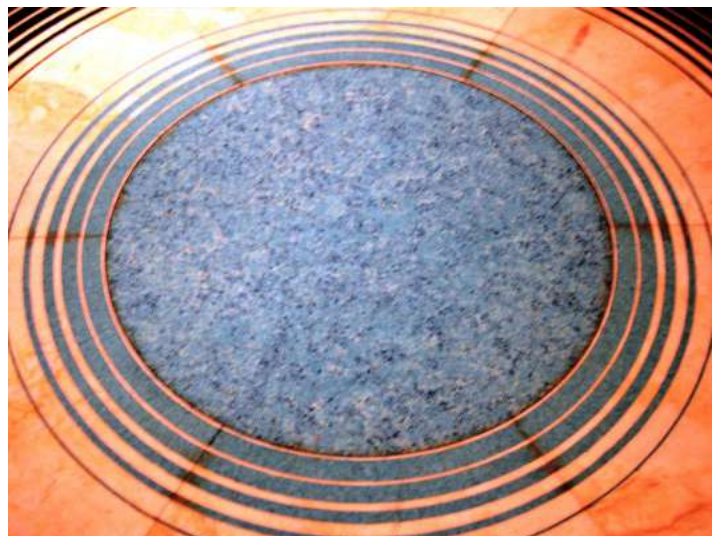
Grace to Celebrate

Let us celebrate that a faithful God always gives us new chances. Today's readings tell of our heritage as chosen ambassadors for Christ. We may have hardened our hearts or grown fickle, but God calls us back, washes us clean of our sins, and sets us on pathways to integrity.

Scriptural Phrases

Joel 2:12–18; Ps 52; 2 Cor 5:20–6:2; Mt 6:1–6, 16–18

*Return to me with your whole heart
rend your hearts, not your garments
proclaim a fast, call an assembly
be merciful, Lord, for we have sinned
in your goodness wipe out my offense
O Lord, open my lips
my mouth shall proclaim your praise
we are ambassadors for Christ
be reconciled to God
now is a very acceptable time
do not do good deeds for others to see
do not appear to be fasting.*



Intercessions

1. Conversion – God forgives the repentant heart. That we humbly admit our mistakes, asking forgiveness of God and others while resolving to be open to conversion to Christ's Gospel. We pray ...
2. Resolve – God understands doubt and strengthens our fickle resolve. That we discipline ourselves with regular acts of service to others, knowing that God gives us courage and light through them. We pray ...
3. Fasting – God created us as part of the material fabric of the earth. That in deliberately denying ourselves the pleasures of food and shopping, we can focus on how we care for our planet. We pray ...
4. Calamities – God orders the earth's rhythms from the arctic to the tropics. That we aid those suffering from natural disasters while listening to the land and designing more respectful ways of living where we live. We pray ...
5. Secret place – God has created many secret worlds, from the life of a plant to the human birth. That we shun seeking praise but are true to ourselves, living with integrity before God. We pray ...

Thanksgiving Prayer

God, Father and Mother to us,
journeying with all peoples in human history,
it is right to give you thanks through your Son.
God called the people to return
to reclaim integrity with fasting and good deeds.
Recalling the heritage of God's promises
the people revived their call as ambassadors.
So, washed clean of sin and with changed hearts,
we join with the choirs of heaven,
people of good will and
Earth itself as we sing, Holy, holy ...

... recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change ... experience a conversion.

– Pope Francis Laudato Si' #218



Life's Realities. The scripture and prayers of Lent purposely help us *take a hard look at the realities of life*. Happiness begins with the earth. As creatures, we depend on the earth's life support systems for the air we breathe and the food we eat. Raised in multiple communities, we depend on them to flourish. While we make mistakes and sin, we carry the hope of forgiveness and starting again. God has given us the freedom to choose between life and death. The Pope spells out the choices in his 2015 encyclical. Breaking down silos of ecology, economics, politics, cultures and even faiths, he says all people are destined in God to choose lives of integrity. In Lent, church communities return to mission in Christ.

Heroes and Saints. Shawn M Fletcher is a biogeographer, lecturer and writer. His Aboriginal heritage informs a scientific understanding of a wondrous world, the patterns in nature, and the processes that have led to them. More specifically, he explores the long-term interaction between humans, climate, disturbance (such as fire) and vegetation. This has led him to question some ideas about *wilderness*. People in Australia have always lived with country. <https://michaelsresearch.wordpress.com/about/>

[Mary Mother of God] grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power.

– Pope Francis Laudato Si' #241

2. FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Tempted to Stray, We Stay on God's Pathway

Grace to Celebrate

Let us celebrate that God graces our human journey, guiding us to think as God thinks. Temptations do not overcome us when we choose to search for the voice of God in every crisis, even if it means suffering for what is right.

Scriptural Phrases

Gn 2:7–9; 3:1–7; Ps 32; Rom 5:12–19; Mt 4:1–11

*God formed the human out of the clay
blew into his nostrils the breath of life.*

*God planted a garden in Eden
delightful to look at, fruit*

*tree of life ... knowledge of good and evil
the woman ate it ... gave to her husband.*

Lord, we have sinned

a clean heart create for me

my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

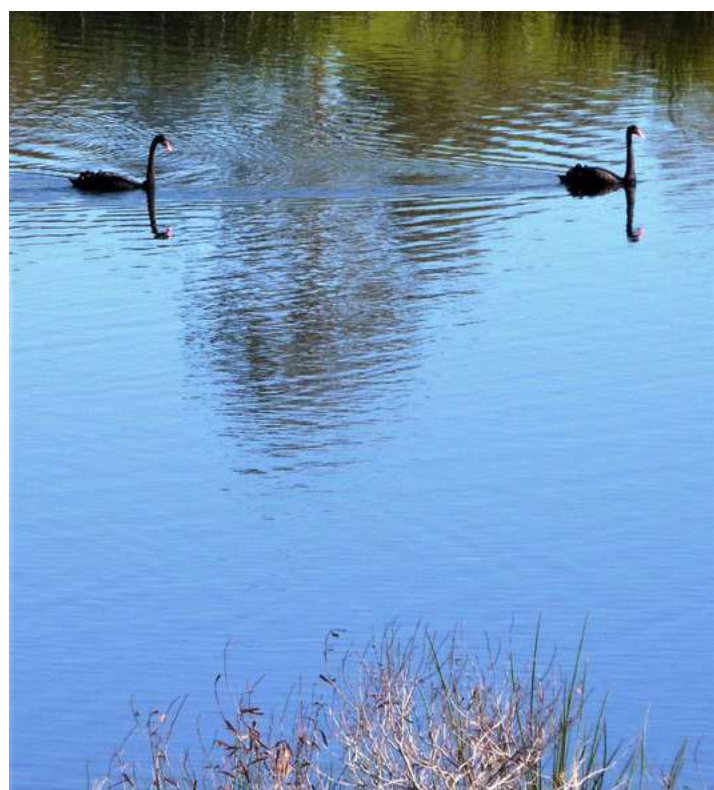
Jesus Christ ... the obedience of the one.

*Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert
tempted by the devil*

One does not live on bread alone

do not put your God to the test

God, shall you worship alone and serve.



Intercessions

1. Renewal of Baptism – Jesus invited women and men to follow him. That we deepen our baptismal gifts of the Holy Spirit, growing more united with our community as the Body of Christ. We pray ...
2. Adult Baptismal Candidates – Jesus preached and called people to conversion. That our parish thank the organisers of a program for adult catechumens worthy of this age. We pray ...
3. Counter Cultural – Jesus preached about the sins of religious and secular leaders. That we not be taken in by the devil's great lie that the more we consume, the better person we become. We pray ...
4. God's Thinking – Jesus prayed to do his Father's will. That we willingly submit to the ways of God to be happy within life's rhythms, and demand that our national leaders focus on the common good. We pray ...
5. Desert – Jesus was tempted in the desert over forty nights and days. That we seek a place outside our ordinary routine to put our deepest questions to God and be prepared for unsettling answers. We pray ...



The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.

– Pope Francis *Laudato Si'* #2

Thanksgiving Prayer

God, Father and Mother to us,
journeying with people in human history,
it is right to give you thanks through your Son.
Jesus was tempted to seek wealth and acclaim.
Led by the Spirit,
he rejected pathways of pride to submit to God,
obeying his calling as the New Adam.
The gifts of life and knowledge belong to God
but are given to those who put God first.
So with eyes re-opened by God
we join with the choirs of heaven,
people of good will and
Earth itself as we sing, Holy, holy ...

Obedience and Submission. The Arabic word 'Islam' means 'submission to God', to surrender unconditionally to God's will. Jesus was obedient to His Father's will and calls his followers to live on Earth in humble obedience to its rhythms. The ways of the seasons and oceans, the ways of evolving plants and animals, the way of enterprise in human civilisations, the ways of meaning expressed in religion and the arts – these form the context of a life of faith seeking union with God. Our God is merciful as we struggle to obey the ways of evolving creation. In nature and Scripture, God guides us. *Lent invites us to review our Catholic vocation to happiness in God.* <https://connectusfund.org/30-transcendent-bible-scriptures-on-submission-to-god>.

Heroes and Saints. The Society of Missionaries of Africa (priests, Brothers, Sisters) was founded in North Africa in the mid-18th century by the Archbishop of Algiers, Charles Lavigerie. Working within predominantly Islamic populations, they preached as much by action as words, many giving their lives in traumatic situations. After the 1960s Vatican II Council, formal Islamic-Christian inter-religious dialogue centres were set up to foster relationships of mutual understanding and cooperation. The Columban-sponsored Sydney centre publishes the *Bridges* newsletter about its work. <https://www.columban.org.au/media-and-publications/newsletters-and-bulletins/bridges/>

The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume.
– Pope Francis *Laudato Si'* #204

3. SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

God with Us on Our Migrant Journey

Grace to Celebrate

Let us celebrate that God has launched us on an adventure into happiness. In its twists and turns, we find the presence of God if we travel in faith. Scripture reminds us that we will find refreshment for ourselves and become messengers of peace for others.

Scriptural Phrases

Gn 12:1–4a; Ps 33; 2Tm 1:8b–10. Mt 17:1–9

*Abram, Go to a land that I will show you
communities of the earth find blessing in you
loves justice and right;*

of the kindness of God fills the earth.

preserves them in spite of famine

bear your share of hardship for the gospel

*God saved us and called us to a holy life
according to his own design*

grace bestowed on us before time began,

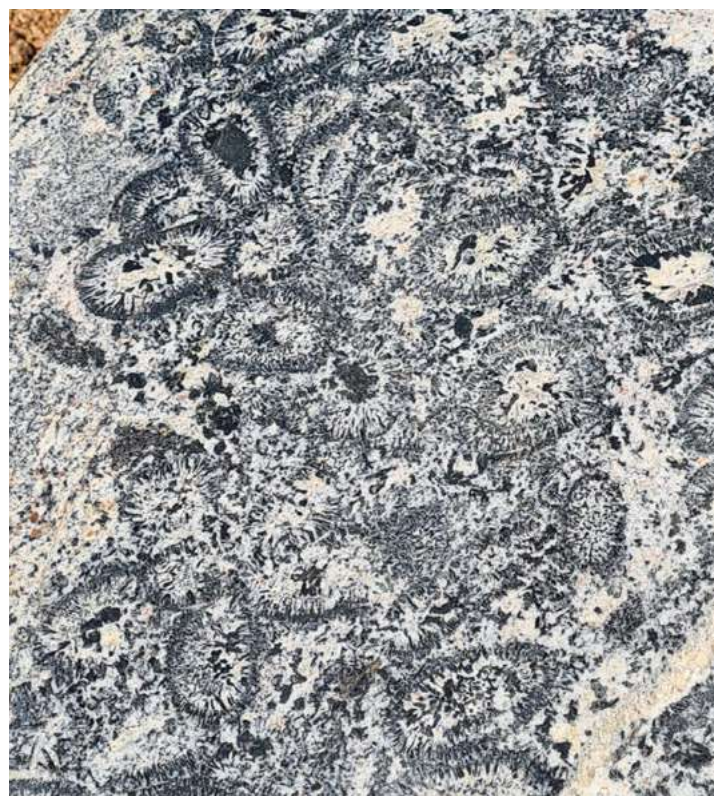
Christ Jesus destroyed death and brought life

Jesus was transfigured before them

Lord, it is good that we are here

my beloved Son, listen to him.

Rise, and do not be afraid.



Intercessions

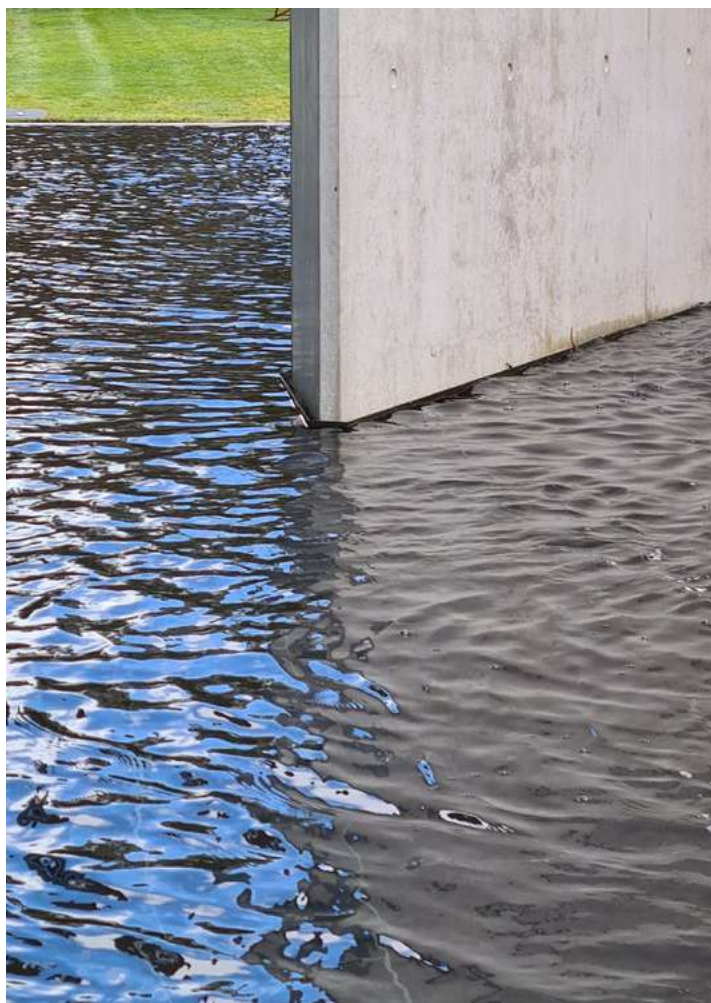
1. Migration – God called Abram and his family to leave their home in Ur. That we understand and welcome people who come to our land as refugees or seek a better life for their children. We pray ...
2. The Land – God said the land belonged to him. That we ask forgiveness for lands stolen or abused, remembering that we belong to the land and are called to treat it with respect and care. We pray ...
3. Stardust – God is present in cosmic history. That we know and love the Big History story of us belonging within an evolving cosmic journey, with particles of stardust within our very bones. We pray ...
4. Cultures – God reveals wisdom and beauty in diverse cultures. That the hopes and dreams, pains and anxieties of every culture flower in a fuller humanity, alive to the glory of God. We pray ...
5. Colonialism – God guided the People of Israel to a new land. That we hear the voice of Australia’s first peoples and commit to healing the impacts of colonialism that abused people, country and ocean. We pray ...

Thanksgiving Prayer

God, Father and Mother to us,
journeying with people in human history,
it is right to give you thanks through your Son.
God called Abram to leave his home in Ur.
In a new land, his family would grow and
find protection from famine.
They became a blessing for others
for the kindness and justice of God
is ultimately revealed in Jesus the Christ.
He transforms the world, so we join
with the choirs of heaven, people of good will
and Earth itself as we sing, Holy, holy ...

*Migration is affected by the loss of that sense
of responsibility for our brothers and sisters on
which every civil society is based.*

– Pope Francis Lumen Fidei #40



Siblings All. The 2020 encyclical of Pope Francis calls us to be *siblings all*. Not ‘I’ but ‘we’ becomes the Christian motto, *Fratelli Tutti* (FT). Lent gives Catholic communities a framework to pray and reflect, share and act on our fraternal human vocation. We talk to God and each other. We open ourselves to shunning war, supplying energy and food for all nations, and striving to dismantle structures of financial manipulation and misinformation. We dream of a loving global family that carries each other in times of trauma. Spirit-led, with hungry minds and hearts, we act and do not delay. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.htm

Heroes and Saints. Celia Deane-Drummond is Director of the *Laudato Si’ Research Institute* (LSRI) at the Jesuit Campion Hall, Oxford. She began her academic life in the natural sciences, leading to a doctorate in plant physiology. Married with children, she gained a doctorate in theology. She lectured at Notre Dame USA, was elected Chair of the European Forum for the Study of Religion and Environment from 2011 to 2018, published widely and served as an editor and trustee. LSRI combines an *active spirituality of Earth care* with justice in education. It offers a modern eco-theology library free online. <https://lsri.campion.ox.ac.uk/>

*... to guarantee the protection of the
environment and to regulate migration ... need
of a true world political authority.*

– Pope Francis Laudato Si’ #175

4. THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Samaritan Woman proclaims the Messiah

Grace to Celebrate

Let us celebrate that the God of loving kindness cares for each of us, despite our grumbling. Jesus, as the Son of God, quenches our inner spiritual thirst and guides us in our journey with the life-giving Spirit of Peace.

Scriptural Phrases

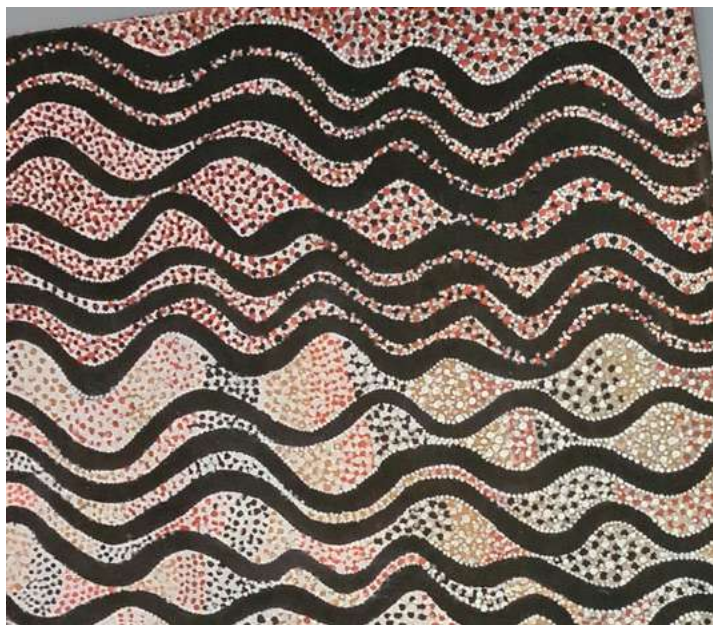
Ex 17:3–7; Ps 95; Rom 5:1–2, 5-8; Jn 4:5–42

*The people grumbled against Moses,
strike the rock, water will flow from it
acclaim the Rock of our salvation
harden not your hearts as at Meribah
tempted me though they saw my works.
peace with God through Jesus Christ
love of God poured out into our hearts
Christ died for the ungodly
Jesus tired, sat at the well
Samaritan woman came to draw water
drink the water I give and never thirst
worship the Father in Spirit and truth
amazed, Jesus talking with a woman
to do the will of the one who sent me
see the fields ripe for the harvest.
now believe, have heard for ourselves.*



Intercessions

1. Grumble – God listened to his people newly freed from Egypt. That our hearts not grow hard nor our spirits develop a sense of entitlement but that we be happy in the gifts surrounding us. We pray ...
2. Structures – God freed his people from the bonds of slavery. That we not test God by structuring global finance and patenting law that reduces people and nations to modern-day slaves. We pray ...
3. Women Preaching – God made the Samaritan woman at the well a preacher of the Good News. That we listen to the women in our church who show us new spiritual insights into faith and worship. We pray ...
4. Water – God promised those drinking the water his Son gave would never thirst again. That, enlightened by baptismal waters, we help civic planners respect water in its natural cycles. We pray ...
5. Worship – God looks for worship in spirit and truth. That we shun ideas of worship as magical rituals to manipulate God, contributing instead to our communal celebrations with sincerity. We pray ...



The light of autonomous reason is not enough to illumine the future.

– Pope Francis Lumen Fidei #3

Thanksgiving Prayer

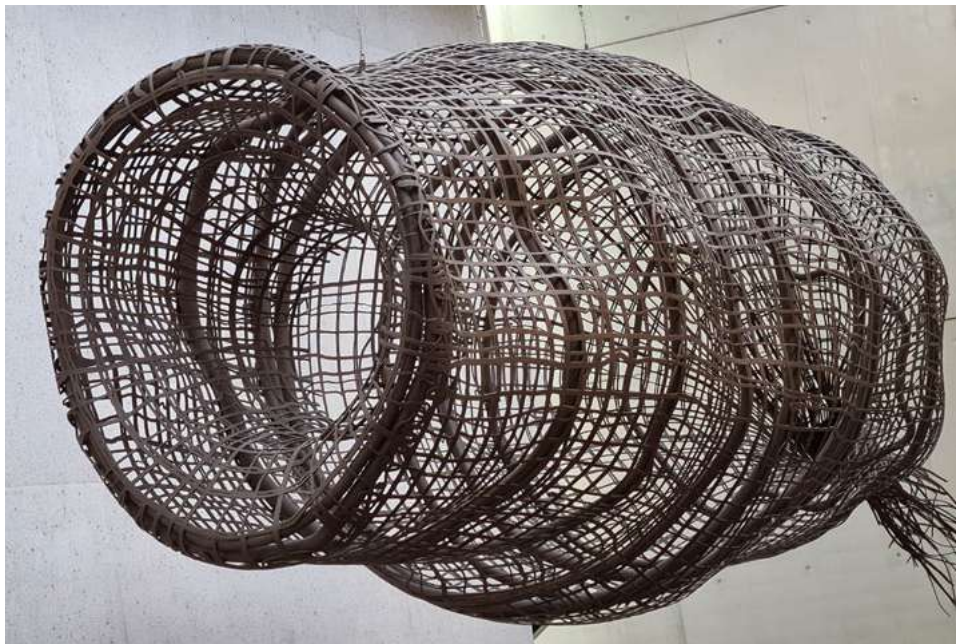
God, Father and Mother to us,
journeying with people in human history,
it is right to give you thanks through your Son.
Moses led rebels wanting water in the desert.
As a teacher and prophet, Jesus told parables
used water to speak about God-given life.
Jesus broke down barriers with the Samaritan
woman
by asking for a drink at Jacob's well.
The Spirit made baptism flow as living water,
growing life in the communities of disciples.
So we join with the choirs of heaven,
people of good will
and Earth itself as we sing, Holy, holy ...

Faith. The first encyclical Pope Francis wrote in 2013 was Light of Faith (LF). In it, he praises the marvels of human intelligence that continually open new levels of knowledge, but he states that faith uncovers the full meaning of human existence. Rather than stripping life of novelty and adventure, faith gives new light. It has a role in public debate about pathways to human happiness. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html

Heroes and Saints. Volodymyr Zelenskyy was elected President of Ukrainian in 2018, a member of the *Servants of the People* party. Born in 1978 into a Jewish family, he is married and has two children. He graduated in law from the Kyiv National Economic University in 2000 but formed a comedy troupe that, from 2003, produced TV programs. In 2015, Zelenskyy played the role of a teacher whose rant against corrupt politicians went viral and catapulted him into the presidency. Fiction became reality in 2018. The demands on his communication skills and leadership expanded after the Russian invasion of 2022.

The word spoken to Abraham contains both a call and a promise.

– Pope Francis Lumen Fidei #9



5. FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Light for the Blind of Spirit

Grace to Celebrate

Let us celebrate that God has given us faith, our light of life in Christ Jesus. He shepherded us so we fear no evil, curing our blindness of spirit as we seek God's ways, journeying through doubt to deeper levels of faith and happiness.

Scriptural Phrases

1 Sm 16:1b–13a; Ps 23; Eph 5:8–14; Jn 9:1–41

*I have chosen my king
not as man sees does God see
Samuel, anointed David
the spirit of God rushed upon David
the Lord is my shepherd
beside restful waters he leads me
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
dwell in the house of the Lord
live as children of light,
follow me, have the light of life
neither he nor his parents sinned
made clay and anointed his eyes
came so, who do not see might see
who do see might become blind.*



Intercessions

1. Leaders – Jesus warned the leaders that lack of faith would end in blindness. That both society and church leaders look to the needs of those they lead, humbly searching for ways to serve them better. We pray ...
2. The blind – Jesus healed the eyes of the man born blind. That we thank doctors and nurses who care for the physically blind locally and globally and take care of our own God-given sight. We pray ...
3. Faith – Jesus used physical blindness to teach about valuing the light of faith. That we let God shepherd our decisions, from giving birth to nurturing our children, from caring for our bodies to care for the dying. We pray ...
4. Educators – Jesus taught about seeing as God sees. That we thank teachers who open the minds and hearts of the young, and pledge to keep seeking new ways as revelations of God. We pray ...
5. Sacraments – Jesus used mud to show God's healing power. That we use the physical elements of the sacraments with respect for their earthly meaning to better display divine realities. We pray ...

... profess faith in God's tangible and powerful love which acts in history and determines its final destiny.

– Pope Francis Lumen Fidei #17

Thanksgiving Prayer

God, Father and Mother to us,
journeying with people in human history,
it is right to give you thanks through your Son.
Jesus is the anointed new David,
sent by God to shepherd his people
The blind will see new ways
while the proud will be exposed as blind.
Following the light of Jesus resolves doubt
leads on pathways of life, not death.
So we join with the choirs of heaven,
people of good will and
Earth itself as we sing, Holy, holy ...



The Risk of Journeying. Pope Francis preached at the 2023 Epiphany Mass that followers of Christ should *live in restless questioning* to help us put aside our apathy and confront life's important questions. *A probing mind challenges us to yearn for the infinite* and set out on a quest for the transcendent. This *inspires the progress of civilizations*. It helps us examine seriously our relationships with others, as well as our own dreams and fears. *It shuns tranquilizers of the soul* that drown out questions to turn our attention to promises of pleasure, non-stop news coverage, and even the idolatry of fitness. 7 January 2023 <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/46264>

Heroes and Saints. António Guterres, ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations, took office in 2017. Born in Lisbon in 1949, he graduated in engineering, married and has two children. For twenty years, he worked in government and public service and was prime minister of Portugal from 1995 to 2002. He was active in resolving the crisis in East Timor. Having witnessed the suffering of vulnerable people around the globe, in refugee camps and war zones, he centred his UN efforts on growing human dignity for all. He, like the CSIRO in 2022, has spoken strongly on the global climate emergency. <https://www.csiro.au/en/research/environmental-impacts/climate-change/state-of-the-climate>

God's gift of faith, a supernatural infused virtue.

– Pope Francis Lumen Fidei #7

6. FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Lazarus, Beloved Friend Even in Death

Grace to Celebrate

Let us remember and celebrate that God is with us in our humanity. Jesus was sad at the death of his friend Lazarus and visited his sisters to comfort them. At the tomb, he lifted their spirits with words of faith, then raised his friend from the dead as a witness to the power of God.

Scriptural Phrases

Ez 37:12–14; Ps 130; Rom 8:8–11; Jn 11:1–45

I open your graves

I will put my spirit in you to live

I will settle you upon your land

mercy and fullness of redemption

with you is forgiveness

trust in his word, the Lord is kind

the body is dead because of sin

the spirit alive because of goodness

Jesus loved Martha, Mary, Lazarus

Jesus said, your brother will rise

I am the resurrection and the life

whoever believes will never die

many saw and began to believe.



Intercessions

1. Kindness of God – God has many names in Scripture. That we go beyond a single word for God to name many divine qualities – loving kindness, mercy, justice, goodness, saviour and lover. We pray ...
2. Death – Jesus was condemned to death in the prime of life. That we give over to God the mystery of death, especially of the young, trusting in divine healing and courage for our journey. We pray ...
3. Comfort – Jesus reached out to the sick in families and society. That we go out of ourselves to visit and aid the sick, comfort the perturbed, and join groups like St Vincent de Paul. We pray ...
4. Friends – Jesus was a friend of Lazarus and his sisters. That we value the happy gift of friendship, responding with affection and honesty, listening and sharing, always loyal. We pray ...
5. Growing belief – Jesus helped Martha and Mary to grow in faith as he talked with them about their brother. That funeral rituals focus on the work of God in the ups-and-downs of the faith journey. We pray ...



... human fraternity and social friendship have always been a concern of mine.

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #6

Thanksgiving Prayer

God, Father and Mother to us,
 journeying with people in human history,
 it is right to give you thanks through your Son.
 In bringing forth Lazarus from the tomb,
 Jesus foreshadowed his death and rising.
 God has the power to open graves and
 puts a new spirit in those who trust.
 They experience fullness of redemption
 and walk in the light.
 So we join with the choirs of heaven,
 people of good will and
 Earth itself as we sing, Holy, holy ...

Friendship. Son of a line of priests in the Middle Age Celtic Catholic tradition, St Aelred became a monk, then abbot of Rievaulx Cistercian Abbey. Gifted as a spiritual director, Bernard of Clairvaux had him write a handbook, *On Spiritual Friendship*. His advice still applies – the human need for intimacy, for deep human relationships based on self-disclosure and mutual acceptance. A Christ-centred love of each other and love of God mimics the mutual love between the three persons of the Trinity. Aelred defines friendship as agreement on things sacred and profane, accompanied by good will and love marked by loyalty, discretion, right-intention and patience – an adult relationship akin to a mature marriage. <https://www.catholicireland.net/aelred-of-rievaulx-on-spiritual-friendship/>

Heroes and Saints. Mid-19th century England was a time of struggle and industrial transition. The Crimean War (1853–56) inflicted suffering but led to Florence Nightingale’s call for the nation to care for the sick and dying. Into this world, Mary Potter was born on 22nd November 1847. The following year, Mary’s father sailed for Australia never to return. Growing up sickly herself, she felt called by God to pray for the dying. Eventually, a group of laywomen formed, and Nottingham’s bishop permitted Mary Potter to start the Little Company of Mary (LCM) in July 1877. It is now global. Their work was simple – visit the sick, the poor and the dying in their homes. <https://www.lcm.org.au/>

... [digital media can] lack the physical gestures, facial expressions, moments of silence, body language and even the smells, the trembling of hands, the blushes and perspiration that speak to us.

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #43

7. PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Death Conquered by the Son of God

Grace to Celebrate

Like the people of Jerusalem, we celebrate the arrival of Jesus as a king with song and waving palms. But also like them, we are fickle. We easily turn to focus on ourselves and cry out to crucify our Saviour. We remember and repent.

Scriptural Phrases

Mt 21:1–11; Is 50:4–7; Phil 2:6–11; Mt 26:14–27:66

Your king comes riding on an ass

spread cloaks, cut branches

Hosanna to the Son of David

Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth

did not grasp equality with God

he emptied himself, like a slave

humble, obedient to death

Jesus Christ is Lord

Jesus stood before Pilate

Are you a king? You said so

the crowd cried, let him be crucified

I am innocent of this man's blood

scourged, to be crucified

a cloak, a crown of thorns, a reed

they mocked him

Simon pressed to carry his cross

on Golgotha they crucified him

the charge: Jesus, King of the Jews

Jesus cried out in a loud voice

My God, my God,

why have you forsaken me?

and gave up his spirit

the earth quaked, rocks split

the centurion and soldiers said

Truly, this was the Son of God!



Intercessions

1. Ridicule – God gave courage to his prophets when being mocked. That we object when comedy descends into destructive ridicule, and not be silent when torture becomes accepted interrogation. We pray ...
2. Feel abandoned – God heard the cry of Jesus. That we trust God, family and friends enough to reach out to them in times of personal anguish and ask for their help. We pray ...
3. Deny responsibility – God saw Pilate wash-his-hands of responsibility. That we set our face like flint as Jesus did when faced with difficult responsibilities, trusting in God and neighbours. We pray ...
4. Outsiders – God upheld the integrity of the centurion soldier. That we praise non-Christian people and secular peace procession organisers when they stand for what is right and just. We pray ...
5. Natural signs – God used an earthquake to signal his Son's death. That we read the earthly signs of catastrophic climate change that impact every continent and nation more severely and more frequently. We pray ...

Thanksgiving Prayer

God, Father and Mother to us,
journeying with people in human history,
it is right to give you thanks through your Son.
He preached about his Father, a forgiving God
who cares for those on the margins of society.
Jesus showed the depth of his commitment
going to his death on the Cross of Calvary.
He was subject to the fickle cries of a crowd
the arbitrary rulings of authorities
endured mockery, willingly giving his life.
Even the earth knew this and cried out.
The soldiers saw and declared,
truly this was a Son of God.
And so we join with the choirs of heaven,
people of good will
and Earth itself as we sing, Holy, holy ...

War, terrorist attacks, racial or religious persecution ... judged differently depending on how convenient it proves for certain, primarily economic, interests.

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #25



Peace. Pope Francis ends many teachings with *Prayer with Mary the Mother of Peace*. Four encyclicals – *Light of Faith* (LF), *Joy of the Gospel* (EG), *Care for Earth* (LS), and *Siblings All* (FT) – suggest *Pathways to Peace*. God acts in the cycles of earth and human history. The Pope’s writings support Peace Movements. He links peace with issues as diverse as respect for biodiversity and the hubris of male dominance. As a cause of war, he strongly condemns global financial manipulation with its roots in consumerism, purposely cultivated by wealthy elites well versed in the use of technology. Lent makes us ask: *Do our superannuation funds or offshore investments make us complicit in a dictatorship of economics that undermines peace?*

Heroes and Saints. The Josephites (Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart, founded in Penola, South Australia, in 1866 by Mary MacKillop and Fr Julia Woods) from their beginnings shared the day-to-day lives and concerns of the people to whom they ministered. They entered places of violence, fear and insecurity, learning and working in small groups, often part of isolated communities. With growing professional capacities, in the 21st century they relate with people on multiple fronts – from helping in the emerging nation of East Timor to engaging with structural reform of investment choices. They are no strangers in agencies exploring ways to invest in low-carbon-emitting industries, or to implement tax reform, as in the Henry model. <https://www.sosj.org.au/our-story/who-we-are/>

War, frequently fuelled by a breakdown in relations, hegemonic ambitions, abuses of power, fear of others and a tendency to see diversity as an obstacle.

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #237

8. HOLY THURSDAY

Jesus Serves His Friends at the Last Supper

Grace to Celebrate

Let us celebrate with Jesus who calls us friends. Jesus gave deeper meaning to the traditional ritual meal of the Passover, declaring that God's liberating love flows to every level of life. This is symbolised by Jesus' Last Supper, the Church Community's Eucharist.

Scriptural Phrases

Ex 12:1–8, 11–14; Ps 116; 1 Cor 11:23–26; Jn 13:1–15

Anointed messenger of God

Alpha and Omega

lamb, unleavened bread, herbs

It is the Passover of the Lord

a memorial feast for you

Precious the death of his faithful

my body given for you

the cup, new covenant in blood

love as I have loved you

he washed the disciples' feet

realise what I have done for you

as I have done you should also do.



Intercessions

1. Holy Meal – Jesus ate the Last Supper with his disciples. That each of us use our talents in service to our local community of believers, to worship with meaning and happiness. We pray ...
2. Sacrifice of Praise – Jesus gave his life in obedience to his Father's mission. That when we remember him in worship, we offer a sacrifice of praise by committing to actions as his disciples. We pray ...
3. Service – Jesus washed the disciples' feet and told them to do likewise. That we serve each other and in the wider society as a sign of God's abiding care for every fragment of creation. We pray ...
4. Poor and Hungry – Jesus shared money with the hungry from the Passover table. That through local and international agencies we give to alleviate hunger, and campaign to address its root causes. We pray ...
5. Freedom – Jesus gave new meaning to the Passover Meal. That we live happily in the fullness of God-given freedom and commit to break the chains of virtual slavery created by the jobs market. We pray ...



Thanksgiving Prayer

God, Father and Mother to us,
journeying with people in human history,
it is right to give you thanks through your Son.
At the Last Supper with his disciples
Jesus showed God's liberation,
more than being free of slavery
it meant a new way of living.
Jesus washed the disciples' feet
an example for followers as servants.
The Spirit would teach new ways.
Rituals of sacrifice became a holy meal
remembering God's ongoing actions
offering praise and thanksgiving.
So we join with the choirs of heaven,
people of good will and
Earth itself as we sing, Holy, holy ...



Universal fraternity and social friendship are two inseparable and equally vital poles.
– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #42

A path and praxis leading to the fullness of love.
– Pope Francis Lumen Fidei #51

Formation. Being active members of the YCW formed many church community leaders. Using the Cardijn method of group action, members apply their belief to their working world. Transformed as individuals and groups, they could confidently enter into the world around them. The method describes their reality, moves to reflective prayer, then decides on action. It rolls on like a ball. Pope Francis uses the Cardijn method in his writings, warning against a sterile faith that does not change our ways. Like rain, God's graces do not return without impact. Formation is needed for believers to apply their talents in a shared human journey. It educates on decisive living, how to grasp our role to do good, feeling good and happy in the process. https://youtu.be/6o6_u7NR2VM

Heroes and Saints. The St Louis Jesuits began as a group of student friends who composed music for worship in English. Inspired by the liturgical reform of Vatican II in 1962, they drew inspiration from the scriptural revival in Catholic universities. They wrote in a popular singable style, publishing multiple CDs. Their heyday was the 1970s and 80s, and the North American Liturgy Resources remastered much of their work. *Earthen Vessels* sold over one million albums. The group of friends did much to bring Scripture and real life to retreats and parishes. Marking their contributions over six decades, St Louis University granted five members honorary doctorates in 2021.

9. EASTER VIGIL

Creation Completed in Christ as Risen Lord

Grace to Celebrate

Let us celebrate that God journeys with us to create life to the full, placing us within an evolving cosmos, made in his likeness, free but responsible stewards of Earth as our home, to be good and happy. We live in Jesus as God, brother and friend who always sustains and renews us.



Scriptural Phrases

Gn 1:1–2:2; Ex 14:15–15; Is 54:5–14; Is 55:1–11; Bar 3:9–15, 32–4:4; Ez 36:16–17a, 18–28; Rom 6:3–11; Mt 28:1–10

[Morning – Acts 10:34a, 37–43; Col 3:1-4; Jn 20:1–9]

*God created the heavens and earth
two great lights, govern day and night
living creatures, birds, wild animals
in our likeness male and female,
have dominion*

*God found it very good
rested on the seventh day
Spirit renews the face of the earth.
God put Abraham to the test
descendants as the stars
nations will find blessing
because you obeyed my command
Moses, water to right and left
horse and chariot cast into the sea
the mountain, your inheritance*

*your Maker become your husband
covenant of peace not shaken
changed my mourning into dancing
all who are thirsty, come to the water
seek the Lord while may be found
my thoughts are not your thoughts
my word shall not return to me void
but shall do my will
to nations make known his deeds
prudence treasure
wisdom, book of God's precepts
wisdom to the simple
land, defiled with idols
I will cleanse you from all your idols
give you a new heart a new spirit
be my people, I will be your God
deer longs for running streams
process to the house of God
buried with him through baptism
old self was crucified with him
no longer be in slavery to sin
living for God in Christ Jesus
give thanks to God, good
declare the works of the Lord.
first day of the week, earthquake
an angel rolled back the stone
do not be afraid
he has been raised just
go and tell his disciples.
Peter, we are witnesses
put to death hanging on a tree
God raised on the third day
ate with him after he rose
God's mercy endures forever
seek what is above
the Prince of life reigns
to Galilee he goes before you
did not understand the Scripture
that he had to rise from the dead.*

Intercessions

Re-read the scriptural excerpts above, one line at a time. Let a prayer or image emerge in your mind. God will hear and nourish your spirit in this alternative style of creating Prayers of the Faithful. It is modelled on the Easter Vigil.

Thanksgiving Prayer

God, Father and Mother to us,
journeying with people in human history,
it is right to give you thanks through your Son.
God reveals divine life since creation's dawn
men and women given divine likeness.
God called Abraham to obey
guiding his descendants to bless all nations.
Even when they bowed before idols
God washed them clean
hearing their cries of pain as foreign slaves,
sending leaders of justice and compassion.
Lastly, God sent the Son to conquer death.
Baptised into new life in the Risen Christ,
we join with the choirs of heaven,
people of good will and
Earth itself as we sing, Holy, holy ...

Faith does not merely gaze at Jesus but sees things as Jesus himself sees them.

– Pope Francis Lumen Fidei #18

Re-conversion. At Easter, the community of the faithful together *renew baptismal promises* as a major part of the celebrations. It is modelled on the Rite of Catholic Initiation of Adults (RCIA). In that rite, adult converts are baptised – both professing their faith in Jesus as their Saviour and becoming part of a living Catholic community, the Church. Scripture has led them thorough the story of Salvation History to a new way of life in the Risen Christ Jesus. They are reborn. Their journey has led them to a happy place of contentment. For old Catholics, Lent to Easter is a concentrated few-week process of re-conversion and reclaiming their baptismal happiness.

Vatican II was a Council on faith, inasmuch as it asked us to restore the primacy of God in Christ to the centre of our lives, both as a Church and as individuals.

– Pope Francis Lumen Fidei #6



Hymns with Feeling

Liturgical singing is a shared experience - 'We' not 'I'.

The Ministry of Music promotes participation by the congregation. Performance is rare, even if at times the assembly can benefit from a rest or a quality reflective piece.

Singing links the assembly to human emotion, prayer with feeling – pensive and awe, sad or joyful, anger and lament, restless or content, anxious and afraid, liberated and happy, loving, empathetic and thankful.

We ask of every hymn, does it link Gospel to a human feeling? Christian worship could benefit from knowing some Aboriginal and Torres Strait hymns as an act of solidarity in Listening to the Voice. As there is no one language, maybe each diocese could commission a local hymn in consultation with local NATSICC reps. <https://www.natsicc.org.au/liturgy-resources.html>



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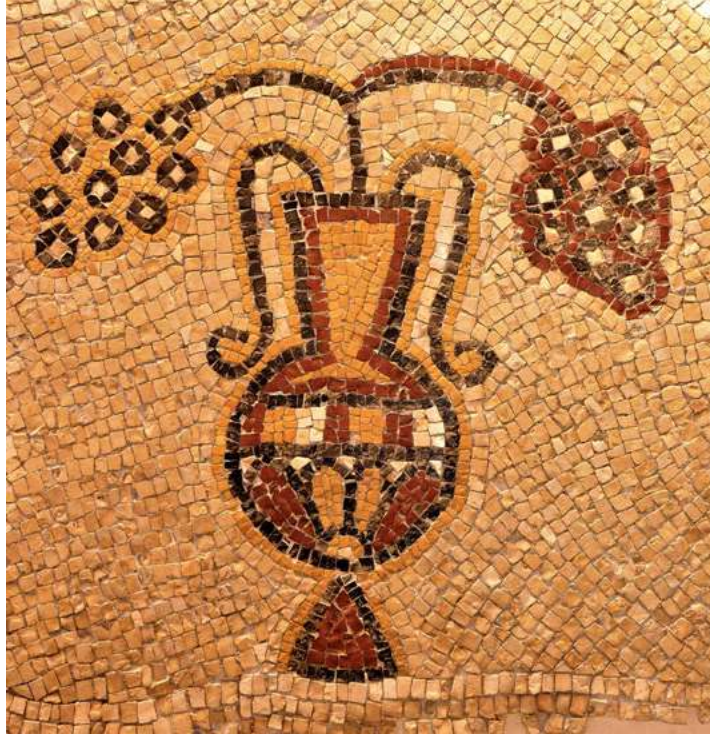
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Charles Rue was raised in Canowindra, NSW, educated at the local St Edward's School and St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill. A farmer for four years, he was president of the local Young Farmers before joining the Missionary Society of St Columban. Ordained in 1968, he was appointed to South Korea. After language school, he worked in parishes. From 1980, he taught liturgy at the Institute for Theology in Seoul after studies at Berkeley. During mission education work in Australia from 1984 to 1990, he completed a master's degree in environmental planning. Again going overseas, he worked as a parish priest in Jamaica, West Indies, 1990–95. Returning to Australia, he headed the Regional Columban History Project and was granted a doctorate for his work. He was a member of the Columban Mission Institute Sydney and now lives in retirement in Canberra. charlesrue@columban.org.au

<https://www.columban.org.au/media-and-publications/liturgical-resources/>



An Ecumenical Christian Prayer

*O God, Trinity of love,
from the profound communion of your divine life ...
Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel,
discovering Christ in each human being,
recognising Jesus Christ crucified
in the sufferings of the abandoned
and forgotten of our world,
and risen in each brother or sister
who makes a new start ...
different faces of the one humanity
that God so loves. Amen*

– Pope Francis 3 October 2020