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Working for Love, Hope & Justice

Pew Reflections REFLECTIONS ABM

2 February – 30 April 2023

Readings from
An Australian Lectionary 2023
(Year A)

Written by members of
St John's Cathedral,
Brisbane

When you examine the Word of God, the Word of God examines you.
– Jack Wellman

It is a pleasure to present the February to April set of
ABM's *Pew Reflections* for 2022.

This set has been written by a mix of clergy and laity, all of
whom are members of St John's Cathedral, Brisbane.

We hope that these reflections will stimulate you to ponder
more deeply as you read or hear what God is saying to the
Church, and to you, through the Sunday and feast day
readings. We hope that they will be a springboard for you to
delve more deeply into the Holy Scriptures.

*By reading the scriptures I am so renewed that all nature seems renewed
around me and with me. The sky seems to be a pure, a cooler blue, the trees
a deeper green. The whole world is charged with the glory of God and I feel
fire and music under my feet.* – Thomas Merton

In Christ,

Robert McLean

St John's Cathedral, Brisbane

We are delighted that this set of reflections has been written by clergy and lay people from St John's Cathedral in Brisbane. As we continue on through the Church year, you'll hear a variety of voices exploring the sacred texts that are read in services on Sundays and on other feast days. We hope that they will stimulate you to explore the Bible more deeply, and that they will encourage and focus your prayers.

The cathedral contains a number of works of religious art – sculptures, paintings, and, of course, stained glass. Here we see a painting of the elderly Temple priest, Simeon, praising God that at last the day had come for him to see Jesus, the 'Light to lighten the Gentiles' and 'the glory of God's people, Israel'. The work is part of a triptych at the altar in the Chapel of our Lady and the Holy Innocents and was painted by William Bustard (1894-1973). You can read about him at <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bustard-william-5443>

Candlemas, otherwise known as the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, or the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is on 2 February and it begins this set of reflections.



How to use ABM's *Pew Reflections*

ABM's *Pew Reflections* are designed for you to be able to easily cut and paste them into your pew bulletins and apply your own formatting. As every parish bulletin has its own house style it is important that you use a typeface that fits into yours but as a general guide they can be formatted like the two examples below. We try to ensure that they take up about half of an A5 sheet, though some writers are more concise than others.

Example 1



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Working for Love, Hope & Justice

Pew Reflections

Good Friday

– Friday 3 April 2015

- Isaiah 52.13 – 53.12; Psalm 22
1 Corinthians 1.18-31 or Hebrews 10.16-25
John 18.1 – 19. 42

Good Friday could be called 'Where is God day?' so often is that question posed by the various texts offered today. The answer, where it is given, is in suffering, disfigurement, on a cross, wherever we would not like to look.

- Pray for the lost and the dying. Pray too for ecumenical and interfaith relationships.
- Pray for ABM's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, giving thanks for the work they do to further God's mission in the world.

Text: The Very Rev. John Roundhill, Dean of Bendigo
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Example 2

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Text: The Very Rev. John Roundhill, Dean of Bendigo
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Pew Reflections – February to April 2023

The Presentation

– Thursday 2 February 2023

- Malachi 3.1-4; Psalm 24 *or* 84;
Hebrews 2.14-18; Luke 2.22-40

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple is to help us see that Christ is the centre of all our activities. That we see there is inclusion and justice for all.

- We pray that we worship together with all people and have combined service with the First Nation People one day. Amen.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of NATSIAC, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council.

Text: The Rev Eleanor Mancini
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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Ordinary Sunday 5

– Sunday 5 February 2023

- Isaiah 58.1-9a, [9b-12]; Psalm 112;
1 Corinthians 2.1-13, [14-16]; Matthew 5.13-20

These readings present a call to authenticity, to live our own lives not a copy of others. Trying to meet the points of the law will not help because there is always more on the list; neither will wisdom nor learning do the trick. It is God's gift in each of us that allows us to be authentic: be your authentic self, be one of God's gifts to the world.

- Pray that you might recognise the shimmering diversity of God's people and use that to light a path in unity, not as an opportunity to judge and divide.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of Myanmar.

Text: Dr Roderick Rogers
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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Ordinary Sunday 6

– Sunday 12 February 2023

[Epiphany 6]

- Deuteronomy 10.12-22 *or* Sirach 15.15-20; Psalm 119.1-8;
1 Corinthians 3.1-9; Matthew 5.21-26

God gives us a choice – life or death. Choosing 'life' comes through obeying his commandments – in the words of the Psalmist, "Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk [in] the law of the Lord." Far from judgmental, these readings all assure us of 'life', of the benefits of following God's will. First among these benefits is the emphasis on our good relationships, specifically reconciliation. In Deuteronomy is the assurance that we have been chosen in mercy, and we should therefore show mercy to others. Paul implores the Corinthians to work together for God, and in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew), Christ teaches the importance of making our relationships peaceful ones, with emphasis on working together to achieve reconciliation with others.

Here, the message is that when we work to have 'right' relationships with others, when we work towards reconciliation, this is an act of worship, a demonstration of God's love lived through our lives.

- Give thanks to God for his righteous judgments which challenge us to reflect his love.
- Pray God will conform each of us to God's will, so that we may truly reconcile with all others, and work together as God's people.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of South-East Asia.

Text: Dr Helen Lancaster
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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EITHER –

**The Last Sunday after the Epiphany
– Sunday 19 February 2023**

- Exodus 24.12-18; Psalm 2;
2 Peter 1.16-21; Matthew 17.1-9

At God's command, Moses and Joshua went up into the mountain of God. It appears, however, that only Moses entered the cloud, where he remained for forty days and nights. His vision is recalled at Jesus' Transfiguration, accompanied by Peter, James and John, the "eyewitnesses of his majesty." Years later, Peter would recall this momentous experience in his second Epistle.

In Epiphany, we followed the Magi, who also saw the glory of God – this time in the person of a small child.

Like many others who were not granted these life-changing encounters, we don't need to go climb a mountain or make an arduous journey to find God in his glory.

As you move to the altar rail this morning to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, recognise that here YOU are participating in an AWE-some event in which God is truly present to you and the other members of your congregation. You, too, may be transfigured, to show God's glory and goodness to others.

- Give thanks that, despite Covid, the privilege of freely being a communicant is given to us.
- Pray for those in countries where Christian worship is a crime; where Christians still die for their faith; and pray that we more fortunate people of God may "Serve the Lord with awe" and thanksgiving.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Church of Pakistan.

Text: Delroy Oberg
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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OR –

**Ordinary Sunday 7
– Sunday 19 February 2023**

[Epiphany 7]

- Leviticus 19.1-2, 9-18; Psalm 119.33-40;
1 Corinthians 3.10-17; Matthew 5.38-48

Sometimes, as Christians, we are asked to do what seems to be impossible. At least, what is impossible at first glance. Today, Jesus appears to do just that when at the end of our Gospel reading He says – 'be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect'.

Fortunately, the other readings for today, give us some context about being perfect as God is perfect and that context the impossible becomes possible. Leviticus urges us to be holy as God is holy by opening space for the poor and the alien. In Corinthians we are urged to build our lives on the foundation that is Christ and making our life work consistent with that foundation. The Gospel goes on to urge us to recognise that none are to be hated for who they are – for God makes his sun rise on the evil and the good.

Being perfect doesn't mean every action and thought is fully heavenly and pure. Rather, in being willing to love our neighbours as God loves them, we take on the perfection that is our heavenly Father

- Pray that we will recognise the face of Christ in those who irk us the most.
- Pray that we will incline ourselves to God's commands to give rather than seek personal gain.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Church of Pakistan.

Text: Robert King
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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**Ash Wednesday
– Wednesday 22 February 2023**

- Joel 2.1-2, 12-17 *or* Isaiah 58.1-12; Psalm 51.1-17;
2 Corinthians 5.20b – 6.10; Matthew 6.1-6, [7-15], 16-21

How is it that we share God's great love for all? A quiet and gracious commitment to our Lord can help enrich our own faith. And when we do raise our voices in celebration, make our praise about God's presence in those people and places around us, appreciating how the gracious commitment of each contributes to making a difference in our fragile world.

- Loving God, help us to share the joy of your great love for all – and let our actions speak louder than our words.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of Ceylon.

Text: Helen
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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St Matthias, Apostle and Martyr
– Friday 24 February 2023

Acts 1.14-17, 20-26; Psalm 113 or 84;
Philippians 3.13-21; John 15.9-17

It is up to God to choose me, so did he? is the question I ask when reading the fifteenth chapter of St John's Gospel. If he did, then why is it so difficult to abide in Christ's commandment to love others?

But the disciples' mission was made no less difficult by the fact that Christ chose them. To fulfil it required a sacrifice in the way of Christ's own, one they often struggled to make, a laying down of life for others even to their death. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine that the Christian mission to abide in Christ's love by loving others would be any easier for us, or require any less sacrifice.

- God of love, help me to always chose love when interacting with others.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

Text: Nicholas Hughes
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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The First Sunday in Lent
– Sunday 26 February 2023

- Genesis 2.15-17; 3. 1-7; Psalm 32;
Romans 5.12-21; Matthew 4.1-11

The fall of humanity into the sin of disobedience was engineered by Satan through the temptation to acquire the forbidden power of knowledge and wisdom. The psalmist tells us that the burden of sin is relieved by prayer and trust in God, accepting instruction and counselling obediently, but humanity is still doomed to live as sinners. The gift of grace is offered by the one man who was able to resist the temptation to power and whose obedience to God's will ensured that death no longer had dominion.

- Pray for the humility to live in obedience to God's will, and to accept with gratitude the gift of grace offered by our Saviour.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Melanesia.

Text: S Z Hadgraft
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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The Second Sunday in Lent – Sunday 5 March 2023

- Genesis 12.1-4a; Psalm 121;
Romans 4.1-5, [6-12], 13-17; John 3.1-17 or Matthew 17.1-9

One can feel for Nicodemus seeking out Jesus for enlightenment, understanding, only to be confronted with the idea of being 'born again'? Today we'd ask Google only to be given thousands of options to choose from. My choice of explaining Born Again, would be *Kintsugi* – the Japanese art of repairing a broken pot by joining the pieces together with gold, with us as the pot, and the Spirit of God being the gold that holds us together.

- Pray for understanding and welcoming being born again – the Holy Spirit into our lives.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Japan, the *Nippon Sei Ko Kai*.

Text: Bob Randle
Holy Hermits Online
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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The Third Sunday in Lent – Sunday 12 March 2023

- Exodus 17.1-7; Psalm 95;
Romans 5.1-11; John 4.5-42

Like the Israelites in today's first reading, we can sometimes lack trust and faith in God when we wander despairingly in the difficult times and, "wildernesses," of our lives. Like them we can also fail to learn from or remember previous times in our lives when God's unending providence, mercy and love did sustain us in challenging times.

I pray that we treasure and learn from the times God freely gave us the life giving, "water," of his love and mercy and have unerring faith and trust that he always shall.

- Pray that we can trust God and believe, even in times of wandering despair.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan.

Text: Dr Julie Lewis
Holy Hermits Online
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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The Fourth Sunday in Lent – Sunday 19 March 2023

- 1 Samuel 16.1-13; Psalm 23;
Ephesians 5.8-14; John 9.1-41

A few weeks ago, I got off the tram to walk down to the shops, in his usual spot was a homeless man, whose name I'm ashamed to say I don't know.

While I gave what change I had I was reminded of Psalm 23 "The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need ..." (GNB) is, at times difficult to reconcile when confronted with the problem of homelessness endemic in many large cities.

For me, Psalm 23 reminds me that God's love is for all, pulling me out of the self-absorption and apathy that's all too easy for us to fall into this time of year and to try to find ways to love my neighbour practically.

For me this reading reminds me that while I'm loved by God, 'he' loves all of his creation, and calls on us to act with love for all our neighbours helping them and acting with love and charity for those most in need.

- Give thanks for the love of God, the protection and guidance provided by 'him', even if not always obvious and pray that we as a society and church can do more to help those in need
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Kenya.

Text: Jeremy Fraser
Holy Hermits Online
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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St Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Monday 20 March 2023

- 2 Samuel 7.4-16 or Joel 2.27-32; Psalm 89.19-30 or Psalm 1; Romans 4.13-22 or Ephesians 6.1-4; Matthew 1.18-25

Today's gospel reading is about St Joseph, husband of the blessed virgin Mary. We find Joseph in a quandary, what is he to do about his pregnant betrothed? His plan is to hide her away until a time deemed more appropriate. However, this was never going to happen as an angel appears to him in a dream and presents a different course of action.

There seems to be two elements to this story: the call, the dream of the angel; and the response, obedience to that call. And this promoted me to consider whether I would recognise a calling from the usual array of otherworldly dreams that besiege the night? Would I recognise an angel in that forbidding nocturnal realm? And even more worryingly would I have the discernment and fortitude to be obedient to this calling? Did Joseph have misgivings? Did he wake the next morning shaking his head and thinking what was all that about? We are not informed of this, we do know however that he "did as the angel of the Lord commanded".

- Lord, help me to recognise your calling whenever and wherever you come to me. May I not be hesitant, cautious or indifferent to your calling but optimistically obedient to all that you require of me, and with integrity and calm reach toward the opportunities that you have presented to me. Grant me discernment in recognising your calling knowing that it is that which I most crucially need to hear.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea.

Text: Barry Growden
Holy Hermits Online
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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The Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary – Saturday 25 March 2023

- Isaiah 7.10-14; Psalm 40.6-13;
Hebrews 10.4-10; Luke 1.26-38

Before the Angel told Mary that she would have a child, he told her that she had found favour with God. We each have a call from God on our lives, but sometimes rather than feeling blessed or favoured, we can feel overwhelmed and anxious. Time spent with other Christians, or in quiet contemplation, can sometimes help. How do you find the encouragement from God and from community that allows you to say, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word"?

- Pray for openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Mothers' Union throughout the world.

Text: The Rev Canon Julia Van Den Bos
Canon Pastor
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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The Fifth Sunday in Lent – Sunday 26 March 2023

- Ezekiel 37.1-14; Psalm 130;
Romans 8.6-11; John 11.1-45

John 11: 1-45 includes two noteworthy things that may be overlooked. First, Jesus was compassionate. He felt deeply for those affected and acted decisively to help. Second, Jesus interacted with a woman who recognised that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, as Peter did in an exchange with Jesus reported in the synoptic gospels. A study of the earliest available Greek text and pertinent early literature by Elizabeth Schrader indicated that the woman was not Martha, but actually Mary Magdalene, the first witness to Jesus' resurrection (*Harvard Theological Review*, 110, 3, July 2017, pp. 360-392; reviewed and summarised by Diana Butler Bass at <https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/mary-the-tower>).

- Let's pray for God's gift of compassion and give thanks for His conferment of equal standing on all people.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Korea, the *Daehan Seong Gong Hoe*.

Text: Ken Willett
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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Palm Sunday

– Sunday 2 April 2023

- *The Liturgy of the Palms*
Psalm 118.1-2, 19-29; Matthew 21.1-11
- *The Liturgy of the Passion*
Isaiah 50.4-9a; Psalm 31.9-18;
Philippians 2.5-11;
Matthew 26.14 – 27.66 or Matthew 27.11-54

We have probably all met someone who, like the unpleasant Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield* claims to be 'the 'umblest person going'. Jesus, on the other hand, is a wonderful example of genuine humility not because He hides His gifts but because unlike Heep He is not falsely humble.

Reflect on your life right now. Are you someone who sees others as equals no matter their circumstance?

- Pray that you can see and treat everyone as an equal.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East

Text: Carol da Costa Roque
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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Holy Monday – Monday 3 April 2023

- Isaiah 42.1-9; Psalm 36.5-11;
Philippians 2.5-11; John 12.1-11

Today begins what some Christians see as the most difficult week of the Liturgical Year – Holy Week. Yesterday we were shouting with joy 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!' Now we see the road ahead – Jesus of Nazareth will be anointed as if he was already dead; share a final earthly meal with those closest to him, one of whom will hand him over to be tried, sentenced, and crucified; and then dead by sundown on Friday. It is a brutal week – yet, we know also what comes on Sunday – Easter Day – Resurrection and New Life!

The Psalmist and the writer of Isaiah give us hope for these dark days ahead, the Beloved Creator will care for us and give us the One who will be with us at the most desperate times.

Paul of Tarsus asks quite simply that we act always as Christ Jesus acted – even in the face of anger, fear and danger – with compassion, integrity and love.

- Pray that we may always be drawn to live together in the same mind as of Christ Jesus and when fear or turmoil threatens to engulf us, we know we have someone who has been there before us, knowing the pain and suffering we feel, and enabling us to conquer all things through perfect love. Amen.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of North India

Text: Blair Martin
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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Holy Tuesday – Tuesday 4 April 2023

- Isaiah 49.1-7; Psalm 71.1-14;
1 Corinthians 1.18-31; John 12.20-36

Life's purpose can be clear – like the seed becoming its designated plant. Or elusive – more like a dark maze than an illuminated straight path. Either way, purpose can be understood in terms of its impact on others. At times we need refuge to build strength to take the next step. Giving (and accepting) encouragement builds community. Saying (and accepting) thank-you can mean more than we will ever know.

- Give thanks for those that encourage you on your way and consider who you could thank and praise today.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of Bangladesh

Text: Sandra, chorister
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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Holy Wednesday – Wednesday 5 April 2023

- Isaiah 50.4-9a; Psalm 70;
Hebrews 12.1-3; John 13.21-32

Sometimes, the consequence of speaking truth to power is the sort of suffering we see in today's readings. Are we, as Christians, prepared to be advocates for the truly marginalised and oppressed, when that might cost us personally? Or do we use our position of privilege to claim "victim status" ourselves, thereby perpetuating the systems that cause inequality?

- Lord, open our ears to hear your message of love for all people, and our mouths to advocate for your justice and mercy
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of South India

Text: Karen Walters
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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Maundy Thursday – Thursday 6 April 2023

- Exodus 12.1-4 (5-10) 11-14; Psalm 116.1-2, 11-18;
1 Corinthians 11.23-26; John 13.1-17, 31b-35

In our readings today, the authors explore the topic of peoples' relationships with God. The author of Exodus delves into the notion that God requires a blood sacrifice. This is subverted in the epistle as God's blood is willingly given to us.

The writer of the psalm seems to view the relationship with God as transactional; that God needs to be repaid. But again, Jesus subverts this. He teaches his disciples to participate in the overflowing acts of love and kindness of God. Even to those, who the gospel author wants us to believe, don't deserve it.

- Give thanks for the opportunities we have to participate in acts of love and kindness.
- Pray for those people who feel like they are not worthy of God's love, that they might see that they are.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines.

Text: Tom Finn
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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+ Good Friday
– Friday 7 April 2023

- Isaiah 52.13 – 53.12; Psalm 22;
1 Corinthians 1.18-31 or Hebrews 10.16-25; John 18.1– 19.42

Paul reminds the congregation in Corinth that it is *God's* power and wisdom, not their own which creates and sustains saving faith. Many have thought the Gospel story to be counterintuitive and I have been one of those who lived life with the folly of self-reliance, however I came to believe that relying on my own strength and wisdom was not a virtue.

Paul still speaks to us today with words of encouragement, to make us bold; not self-confident, but confident in the message that Jesus is the wisdom and power of God.

During this Good Friday, take some time to listen with the ear of your heart, as you reflect on Jesus as the Power and Wisdom of God and the great suffering that Jesus endured for us.

- Pray for the healing of the wounded women and children who have experienced domestic and family abuse.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Pray for all pilgrims and locals who worship there this year. Remember those Palestinian Christians who are unable to gain official permission to be able to attend services there.

Text: Glynis Jenkins
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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The Easter Vigil
– Saturday 8 April 2023

- *Readings and their corresponding psalms or canticles*

Genesis 1.1 – 2.4a	Psalm 136.1-9, 23-26
Genesis 7.1-5, 11-18; 8.6-18; 9.8-13	Psalm 46
Genesis 22.1-18	Psalm 16
Exodus 14.10-31; 15.20-21	Exodus 15.1b-13, 17-18
Isaiah 54.9-14	Psalm 30
Isaiah 55.1-11	Isaiah 12.2-6
Proverbs 8.1-8, 19-21; 9.4b-6 or Baruch 3.9-15, 32 – 4.4	Psalm 19
Ezekiel 36.24-28	Psalms 42 & 43
Zephaniah 3.14-20	Psalm 98
Romans 6.3-11	Psalm 114
Matthew 28.1-10	

Both the Old Testament and New Testament readings for this Easter Vigil speak of God's people being delivered from slavery, and their newfound freedom in living for God. In Chapter 6 of Romans, Paul reminds us that we are not only baptised into the mystical body of the risen and living Christ by grace through faith, but we are also baptised into Christ's death. In a mystical sense we died with Christ, and to our sin, when Christ overcame all sin and death on the cross. Every slave to sin is set free and extended God's grace through Christ's death and resurrection, every one of us is free to live a life that pleases God because we have been transformed with Christ from death to life. Paul wants us to remember to exercise that freedom, so that we may glorify God and be renewed by our faith.

- Reflect on what parts of yourself may need to be put to rest or raised to new life in Christ.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, the Philippine Independent Church

Text: Arian Christopher Miller
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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Easter Day
– Sunday 9 April 2023

- Acts 10.34-43 or Jeremiah 31.1-6;
Psalm 118.1-2, 14-24 or the *Hymn to the Risen Christ* (the Easter Anthems);
Colossians 3.1-4; Matthew 28.1-10

On Easter morning when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb, the angel of the Lord appeared. The guards shook and became like dead men but despite being afraid the women listened to what the angel said and did what they were told to do. Why do some of us listen and respond when others simply cannot?

- Pray all who are visited by angels that they may hear, listen and respond.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Cathedral Church of St George in Jerusalem.
- Give thanks for all churches and institutions dedicated to the Risen Christ, remembering especially the Cathedral Church of the Resurrection in Popondetta, Papua New Guinea.

Text: The Rev Dr Ann Solari
Deacon
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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The Second Sunday of Easter
– Sunday 16 April 2023

- Acts 2.14a, 22-32; Psalm 16;
1 Peter 1.1-12; John 20.19-31

In this Gospel reading, it's interesting to note that Thomas wasn't present when Jesus first visited the disciples. He has often been referred to as doubting Thomas, but we see in this reading that the other disciples believed only after Jesus showed them His hands and His side. I wonder why Thomas has been signalled out as the doubter? Questioning is an important part of the faith journey.

Brian McLaren shared how doubt has often been a tool of love, drawing him ever closer to the heart of God.

- We pray that our doubts will draw us ever closer to God.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of Wontulp-Bi-Buya College in Cairns and Nungalinia College in Darwin.

Text: Judy Fay
St John's Cathedral, Brisbane
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The Third Sunday of Easter
– Sunday 23 April 2023

- Acts 2.14a, 36-41; Psalm 116.1-4, 11-18;
1 Peter 1.13-25; Luke 24.13-35 or Matthew 28.8-15a

The Gospel of Matthew's account of the resurrection juxtaposes the disciples' response of fear and joy (when Jesus reassures them in their fear) with that of the chief priests' scheming and manipulation. Those who trust in the resurrection have a hope that transcends worldly power machinations; there is nothing to defend or protect, only a life to be joyfully lived. We need not be troubled by those who seek to control, for they have no authentic power.

Notice what fears still seek to control you; gently place them in the care of Christ, who invites us beyond our fear, to lasting joy.

- Pray for the Anglican Church of Melanesia as it seeks to address displacement of the communities in the Solomon Islands from the impacts of climate change.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Melanesian Brotherhood, the Melanesian Sisterhood, the Society of St Francis and the Sisters of the Church who minister throughout the Pacific Islands.

Text: Richard Fay
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St Mark, Evangelist and Martyr
– Tuesday 25 April 2023

- Isaiah 62.6-12; Psalm 89.1-9;
Ephesians 4.7-16 or 1 Peter 5.5b-14;
Mark 16.1-15 or Mark 16.16-20

Ephesians 4.7-16: *But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people."* (NIV)

I am certain every single one of us has sat in church, felt a little lost and thought does God really care. I think these verses help us see how God does care. The Message translation states 'But that doesn't mean you should all look and speak (and think) and act the same. Out of generosity of Christ, each of us is given their own gift'. The word gift is important – it's not an opinion, nor a judgement, nor a gun, and only becomes a gift when it is shared. A gift from God has his nature, but he bestowed them on us so they will take on the individuality of the giver. The verse also reads that there are many gifts, that all his people received multiple, so take time and see the gifts (however weird and wonderful and not what you expect) that are abundantly given to us daily.

- Thank you, gracious God, for the gifts you have given me.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of St Mark's National Theological Centre in Canberra.

Text: Elizabeth Stanmore
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The Fourth Sunday of Easter
– Sunday 30 April 2023

- Acts 2.42-27; Psalm 23;
1 Peter 2.1-10; John 10.1-10

Sheep and stones. Selling everything you have and holding all things in common. Today's readings share a thread of the communal, of collectivity, of connection. They are reminders that we are more than individuals, that we are each precious and part of a larger whole at the same time. There is not one stone in the temple that isn't important, but its importance lies in being part of the whole structure. One stone is not a cathedral. One sheep is not a flock. Together we make up the whole, and we make the whole by sharing. Like sheep, like bricks, we are made for being with each other.

- Pray that we can allow ourselves to be shepherded, so that we might feel supported and tended. Pray that we can allow ourselves to be hewn, so that we can better support others.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the *Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui*, the Anglican Church of Hong Kong.

Text: Joshua Catt
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