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Working for Love, Hope & Justice

Pew Reflections REFLECTIONS ABM

1 November 2023
– 28 January 2024

Readings from
An Australian Lectionary 2023
(Years A and B)

Written by
Fr Matthew Smedley

Chair of the
ABM Perth Committee

The chief means for attaining wisdom, and suitable gifts for the ministry, are the Holy Scriptures, and prayer. – John Newton

It is a pleasure to present the November to January set of ABM's *Pew Reflections* for 2023-4.

This set has been written by Fr Matthew Smedley, the Rector of St Luke's, Mosman Park, in the Diocese of Perth.

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.

The amount of time we spend with Jesus – meditating on His Word and His majesty, seeking His face – establishes our fruitfulness in the kingdom. – Charles Stanley

In Christ,

Robert McLean

The Rev Matthew Smedley



Fr Matthew Smedley is Rector of St Luke's Mosman Park in the Diocese of Perth and is Chair of the ABM Perth Committee. Fr Matthew was ordained Priest in the Diocese of Bathurst in 2010 after completing theological studies at Trinity College Theological School, Melbourne. He has served in the parishes of Mudgee and Dubbo in the Diocese of Bathurst and Banglow in the Diocese of Grafton. Fr Matthew is currently an Archbishop's Appointment to St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls Council and Treasurer of the Diocese of Perth Family and Domestic Violence Working Group.

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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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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Pew Reflections – November 2023 to January 2024

All Saints' Day

– Wednesday 1 November 2023

- Revelation 7.9-17; Psalm 34.1-10, 22;
1 John 3.1-3; Matthew 5.1-12

All of humanity is blessed by God and many are called saints. The readings for today give some of their characteristics: purity, persistence in the trials of life, worship of God; and the Gospel expands this to include those who are poor, who mourn, are meek, hungry, merciful, peacemakers and persecuted. All of us are children of God and live in God's love now. Yet there is more to come!

- God, grant me a foretaste of what I am to expect in the fullness of life with you.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of Province of South-East Asia

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All Souls' Day

– Thursday 2 November 2023

- Job 14.1-14; Psalm 29;
John 5.19-29

To give thanks for those who have died is to acknowledge their life. In God, this life continues after death in a way that we do not yet fully understand. The psalmist describes some of the powers of God, forceful and gentle, and attempts to place God in a realm over us. Jesus knows more intimately life with his Father, and draws us all with him to this intimacy with God in the resurrection life.

- God, I wish to live more fully with you. Hasten that day when I may rise to resurrection life.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of Pakistan.

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Ordinary Sunday 31 A

[Pentecost 23]

– Sunday 5 November 2023

- Joshua 3.7-17; Psalm 107.1-7, 33-37;
Either 1 Thessalonians 3.5-13 *or* 4.1-8;
Matthew 23.1-12 [37-39]

Jesus warns us from falsehood and inauthenticity, and asks us to be humble and serve others. Jesus goes on to describe the great love he has for all people, as a hen gathers all her little ones under her wings. With Jesus we have safety and security if we follow him. Then we have boldness and strength to love others, even those we do not like.

- God, I want to be a faithful follower of Jesus. Grant me wisdom and strength.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Japan, the *Nippon Sei Ko Kai*.

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Ordinary Sunday 32 A

[Pentecost 24]

– Sunday 12 November 2023

- Joshua 24.1-3a, 14-5; Psalm 78.1-7;
1 Thessalonians 4.9-18; Matthew 25.1-13

We do not know what the kingdom of heaven is like and Jesus has given us many parables as clues to what it may be like. It might be hard for us to understand about oil for lamps when we easily turn on a switch for light. Jesus' teaching is more than simply what we need; it points us to be prepared for what may come our way. We are to be ready for when he meets us, that we may have enough light to shine on the One we love.

- God, life can easily distract me. May I keep focus on you and be ready for your coming.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea.

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Ordinary Sunday 33 A
– Sunday 19 November 2023

[Pentecost 25]

- Judges 4.1-10; Psalm 123;
1 Thessalonians 5.1-11; Matthew 25.14-30

God has endowed us with many gifts, we each have something that is useful in God's service. How we use what has been given to us is all important. There is always more that we can do, for God wishes us to be fruitful and multiply, not that we may have more wealth, but that we expand God's kingdom and reign here and now.

- God, you have blessed me with many gifts. May I use them to the best of my ability and for your service.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Korea, the *Daehan Seong Gong Hoc*.

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Ordinary Sunday 34 A
– Sunday 26 November 2023

[Christ the King]

- Ezekiel 34.11-16, 20-24; *either* Psalm 100 or 95.1-7;
Ephesians 1.15-23; Matthew 25.31-46

The image of Christ as King can seem antithetical to how we see and understand Jesus. He is not concerned about power and status but rather caring for all with food, drink, clothing and welcome. This image is replicated by the prophet Ezekiel with God as shepherd searching for and seeking out the sheep. When we are gathered together in the presence of God we share in what has been prepared for us and we are blessed.

- God, bring me with the angels into the presence of your glory.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East

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St Andrew, Apostle and Martyr
– Thursday 30 November 2023

- Deuteronomy 30.11-14; Psalm 19.1-6;
Romans 10.8-18; Matthew 4.18-22

The Andrew is often called the 'first disciple' and his day is one when the Church ordains clergy to follow in his footsteps. As a fisherman, he is used to preparation, hard work, time on rough seas, and bountiful catches. Jesus uses these gifts and transforms them to seek for people. Jesus seeks all of us to show and tell others about him and the good news he proclaims.

- God, you call me to use my gifts and abilities to bring people to know you.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of Gawura School within St Andrew's Cathedral School in Sydney

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LITURGICAL YEAR B BEGINS TODAY IN THE WESTERN CHURCH

Advent 1 B
– Sunday 3 December 2023

- Isaiah 64.1-9; Psalm 80.1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1.1-9;
Mark 13.24-37

Advent is the season of waiting and preparation. There will be many signs for us, sometimes as obvious as eclipses and new growth on fig trees, other times more abstract in clouds and angels. We do not know exactly when. Jesus reminds us always to be ready and prepared. Keep awake!

- God, may I always be ready for your coming.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines.

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Advent 2 B

– Sunday 10 December 2023

- Isaiah 40.1-11; Psalm 85.1-2, 8-13;
2 Peter 3.8-15a; Mark 1.1-8

John the Baptist is an important figure in Advent for he prepares the way for the coming of our Lord. He appears odd and acts differently to most, calling people to repentance and making paths straight. Yet, people are drawn to him, they confess their sins, and he is busy baptising them in the river Jordan. There is still more to come and he promises the Holy Spirit.

- God, I confess my sins and in my repentance straighten my path to holiness and truth.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of Central Africa.

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Advent 3 B

– Sunday 17 December 2023

- Isaiah 61.1-4, 8-11; *either* Psalm 126 or *Song of Mary*;
1 Thessalonians 5.12-28; John 1.6-8, 19-28

The Gospel of John gives us an alternative view of John the Baptist: a man of God and a witness testifying to the light. Some are confused about who he really is, so they ask him and he gives many answers of who he is not. John the Baptist again affirms that he is preparing by making the path straight for the coming of the Lord.

- God, may I be bold to affirm who I am and testify to the light of Jesus Christ.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of NATSIAC, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council

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Advent 4 B

– Sunday 24 December 2023

- 2 Samuel 7.1-11, 16; *either* Psalm 89.1-4, 19-27 *or* Song of Mary; Romans 16.25-27; Luke 1.26-38

Today we hear how Mary prepared for the coming of the Lord and her 'yes' to God. She is a vital part of our salvation and she wonders how she can be a part of it. Her questions become ours when we consider how we give birth to the Incarnation. Only with the Holy Spirit and willingness to be part of God's saving work among us is the impossible made possible.

- God, I say yes to you: may your salvific presence be born in me.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Kenya.

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Christmas Day I

– Monday 25 December 2023

- Isaiah 9.2-7; Psalm 96;
Titus 2.11-14; Luke 2.1-14 [15-20]

We hear again our favourite account of the Nativity from the Gospel of Luke on this holy day. There is order and process, named people and places, animals, darkness and angels. What all the prophets and generations of Jews had been hoping and waiting for is born. Many witness God's act of salvation, even if they do not realise it. The light has come. God becomes one with our humanity in the birth of Jesus and we praise God.

- God, with the angels I praise you. Glory to God in the highest.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Melanesia.

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Christmas Day II

– Monday 25 December 2023

- Isaiah 62.6-12; Psalm 97;
Titus 3.4-8a; Luke 2. [1-7] 8-20

The prophet Isaiah exhorts us to announce this great birth from every place we have been stationed as we wait and watch. What God intends for all people is brought about; we are sought out, we have not been forsaken. Jesus will redeem us, we will be made holy, our salvation is come. This is a day of celebration. Rejoice and be glad!

- God, today you have come to us! I will not rest until you are known throughout the world.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of Province of Myanmar

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Christmas Day III

– Monday 25 December 2023

- Isaiah 52.7-10; Psalm 98;
Hebrews 1.1-4 [5-12]; John 1.1-14

The prologue from the Gospel of John does not give us a description of how the birth of Jesus takes place. Rather, we go back to creation where the Word is present with God, and we hear how together the Word and God create. Today the Word is made flesh and lives among us. We see the glory of God.

- God, may I reveal grace and truth so that your glory may be seen.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, the Philippine Independent Church

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St Stephen, Deacon and Martyr
– Tuesday 26 December 2023

- 2 Chronicles 24.17-22; Psalm 31.1-8; Acts 6.8-10; 7.54-60; Matthew 10.17-22

We move so quickly from birth to the death of the first martyr Stephen. A man who is full of grace and power, and who does great wonders and signs among the people. Jesus has warned of the trials and persecutions we will face, the hatred thrown at us because we are his disciples. Stephen is the first of many to be killed. Jesus asks us to endure this hardship so that we might be saved.

- God, empower me by your Holy Spirit that I may be faithful to you and testify to the truth.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of deacons throughout the world.

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St John, Evangelist
– Wednesday 27 December 2023

- Proverbs 8.22-32; Psalm 97;
1 John 1.1-5; John 20.2-8

The beloved disciple throughout the Gospel of John is a faithful witness to Jesus Christ and when he sees the empty tomb on the day of resurrection, he believes. It all makes sense now: what he has heard, what he has touched. His joy is complete. May we, like John, run to witness to God's new life possible in resurrection.

- God, I rejoice that you created me and I am your delight.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of Ceylon.

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Holy Innocents' Day
– Thursday 28 December 2023

- Jeremiah 31.15-20; Psalm 124;
1 John 1.5-2.2; Matthew 2.13-18

This is a Feast that often makes us uncomfortable. Death of innocent ones, especially children, is horrific. There is wailing, there is weeping, and there are tears. The Holy Family must flee as refugees to a strange land where God protects them. They wait for safety until they can return. There is hope for their future and ours.

- God, may I listen to your angel, and may you protect me when I am in danger.
- Give thanks for all who work with or otherwise support refugees and asylum seekers around the world.
- Give thanks for all who support children who have been abused, neglected or maltreated around the globe.

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Christmas I B
– Sunday 31 December 2023

- Isaiah 61.10 – 62.3; Psalm 148;
Galatians 4.4-7; Luke 2.22-40

Today we read of how Simeon and Anna greet the baby Jesus and his family as he was presented to God in the Temple, a Jewish rite at the time. Simeon has been waiting his whole life for this moment to come. Anna recognises the importance of Jesus, give thanks to God, and tells others who look for the redemption of Jerusalem about him.

- God, I rejoice in the gift of Jesus, my Redeemer.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of Anglican Religious Orders throughout the world.

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The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus
– Monday 1 January 2024

- Numbers 6.22-27; Psalm 8;
Galatians 4.4-7; Luke 2.15-21

Mary and Joseph are faithful Jews and in obedience to the Law, they circumcise and give their son the name the angel declared, Jesus. So much has happened, they have had many visitors, they are tired after their journey, they have a young baby. Mary knows the great treasure and reflects on the words that have been said. This is indeed a great blessing!

- God, may I hear what you say to me and may I treasure your words.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the *Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui*, the Anglican Church of Hong Kong.

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The Epiphany of our Lord
– Saturday 6 January 2024

- Isaiah 60.1-6; Psalm 72.1-7, 10-14;
Ephesians 3.1-12; Matthew 2.1-12

Unexpected visitors from a strange land are full of joy when they see the child Jesus with his mother Mary. They have been following a star and it has arrived at this house. They know the child is the *King of the Jews*. Their treasure chests are full of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They kneel and worship. The light has come and they see they glory of God.

- God, I worship you, may I see your glory.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of Wontulp-Bi-Buya College in Cairns and Nungalinya College in Darwin.

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Ordinary Sunday 1 B
Baptism of our Lord
– Sunday 7 January 2024

[Epiphany 1]

- Genesis 1.1-5; Psalm 29;
Acts 19.1-7; Mark 1.4-11

John the Baptist prophesied that one after him would come and baptise with the Holy Spirit. Today, Jesus comes so that John may baptise him. This baptism in the Jordan is like no other, the heavens are torn apart, the Holy Spirit descends like a dove, and God declares that this is indeed the Son, the Beloved, and God is very pleased with him.

- God, may my baptism with the Holy Spirit transform me that you may be well pleased.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

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Ordinary Sunday 2 B
– Sunday 14 January 2024

[Epiphany 2]

- 1 Samuel 3.1-10 [11-20]; Psalm 139.1-5, 12-18;
1 Corinthians 6.12-20; John 1.43-51

As Ordinary Time has commenced, Jesus continues to call his disciples to follow him. When Jesus calls us by name to follow him, the invitation is to “come and see.” Come and see what life with Jesus is like, for he knows who we are. As we continue our discipleship with Jesus, we will learn more and more about him, we will see more of heaven and God’s interaction with us.

- God, may I declare who Jesus is as I follow him and you open heaven to me.
- 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.

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Ordinary Sunday 3 B
– Sunday 21 January 2024

[Epiphany 3]

- Jonah 3.1-10; Psalm 62.5-12;
1 Corinthians 7.29-31; Mark 1.14-20

John the Baptist has been arrested and Jesus continues the Baptist’s proclamation of good news (the Gospel), calling us to repentance and belief. The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near. Jesus continues to call disciples to follow him and to increase the kingdom of God by bringing more to belief in Jesus Christ.

- God, you are always near to me, may I bring others to belief with your good news.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Mothers’ Union throughout the world.

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The Conversion of St Paul
– Thursday 25 January 2024

- *Either* Acts 22.3-16 *or* Acts 9.1-22; Psalm 117;
Galatians 1.11-24; Luke 24.44-48

Jesus meets the zealous Jew and comes in a great light. When Saul hears his name, he knows who it is and Jesus is direct with his answer as the one whom ‘you are persecuting’. Paul will recount this experience many times, emphasising conversion/metanoia/repentance and a complete change of character, for now he proclaims Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah.

- God, continue to change me that I may boldly declare Jesus as Messiah.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of CAPA, the Council of the Anglican Provinces of Africa.

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Australia Day

– Friday 26 January 2024

- Deuteronomy 28.1-9; Psalm 145.1-9;
Romans 13.1-8; Mark 12.13-17

The observance of Australia Day will be difficult for many as we are challenged by our past and the recognition of the First Nations who have been in this land for thousands of years. Paul's admonition is for us to control our anger, to respect those whom respect is due, to honour those whom honour is due. We are not to resist what God has appointed and not to put God to the test. Jesus asks us to give to God the things that are God's. If we obey God, blessings shall come and overtake us.

- God, may I walk in your ways that I may be your holy person.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia, the Most Rev Geoff Smith

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Ordinary Sunday 4 B

[Epiphany 4]

– Sunday 28 January 2024

- Deuteronomy 18.15-20; Psalm III;
1 Corinthians 8.1-13; Mark 1.21-28

As we follow Jesus, we go with him to the synagogue to hear his teaching as he reveals wisdom and authority. We see Jesus answer cries to be made whole as unclean spirits depart obeying the Holy One of God. We walk with Jesus and continue to grow in knowledge that we may speak the words of God.

- God, your works are great and glorious, raise me up to proclaim your name.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church in South Sudan.

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