

Into the Deep

Issue 177

Newsletter of orthodox Catholics of Gippsland

November 2017

The Reality of Death

Pope Francis, General Audience 18-10-2017

Today I would like to compare Christian hope with the reality of death, a reality that our modern civilization tends more and more to erase. ...

Other civilizations, before our own, had the courage to look it in the eye. It was an event recounted by the elders to the young generations as an inescapable reality which obliged man to live for an absolute ideal. Psalm 90[89]:12 states: "teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom".

Numbering one's days makes the heart become wise! The words bring us back to a healthy realism, driving away the delusion of omnipotence. What are we? We are "essentially in vain", says another Psalm (cf. 89[88]:47); our days go by quickly: even if we lived 100 years, in the end it would seem that it was all a breath. So often I have heard the elderly say: "my life has passed by as a breath...".

Thus death lays our life bare. It makes us discover that our acts of pride, of anger and of hate have been in vain: totally in vain. We realize with regret that we have not loved enough and have not sought what was essential. And, on the other hand, we see what we have sown that was truly good: the loved ones for whom we sacrificed ourselves and who now take us by the hand. ...

[Jesus] counters Martha's weeping at the loss of her brother Lazarus, with the light of a dogma: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (Jn 11:25-26).

That is what Jesus repeats to each one of us, each time that death comes to shred the fabric of life and of our loved ones. Our entire existence is at stake here, between the gradient of faith and the precipice of fear. Jesus says: "I am not death; I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this? Do you believe this?". We who are here today in the Square, do we believe this?

We are all small and defenceless before the mystery of death. However, what a grace if at that moment we safeguard in our heart the little flame of faith! Jesus takes us by the hand, as he took Jairus' daughter by the hand, and repeats once again: "*Talitha cum!*"; "Little girl, arise!". He will say this to us, to each one of us: "Arise, rise again!". ... There, hope will end and reality will abide, the reality of life. Think hard: Jesus himself will come to each of us and take us by the hand, with his tenderness, his meekness, his love. ...

This is our hope in the face of death. For those who believe, it is a door that is thrust open wide; for those who doubt it is a glimmer of light that filters through an exit that is not quite completely closed. But for all of us it will be a grace, when this light, of the encounter with Jesus, illuminates us.

w2.vatican.va

"The most beautiful act of faith is the one made in darkness, in sacrificing, and with extreme effort."

St Pio of Pietrelcina

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Cutting to the Chase

I recently had a conversation with a priest who was hurt by the fact that he was mentioned in a previous Letter to the Editor in ITD and felt that he was unjustly accused of trashing a church when he was simply reducing the part of the church reserved for pews. He explained that the beautiful old church was seldom used, never full, and was high maintenance for a small group of aging faithful; instead of having to close it, it made sense to give part of the church to the school in exchange for their contribution to its upkeep. I encouraged him to write a Letter to the Editor to have his say, but he didn't seem very enthusiastic about that option.

Regardless, when I was relaying parts of this conversation to my husband later, his first (exasperated) comment was, "Why doesn't he fill the church instead?" It struck me in its simplicity, and in its truth. It's easy to lose sight of the fact that we need to evangelise, catechise, and fill our churches, not close them or 'downsize' them because they're not being used much anymore. Easier said than done? No doubt! But that's not the point.

A few days later I was reading Pope Francis' letter on the 100th anniversary of Pope Benedict XV's *Maximum Illud*, on the missionary task of proclaiming the Gospel. Pope Francis quotes the command of Jesus to "go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature", and adds:

Obeying this mandate of the Lord is not an option for the Church: in the words of the Second Vatican Council, it is her "essential task," for the Church is "missionary by nature." "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity; she exists in order to evangelize."

We think of missionary work in foreign lands, or in remote areas, in areas of other faiths or no faith. But our biggest missionary ground is our Catholic schools. Priests have vast masses of unevangelised children and their families on their immediate doorsteps. And yet their churches are empty. They baptise, they hear First Confessions, give First Holy Communions, arrange Confirmations, and officiate at weddings. They've become accustomed to being priests of Firsts-only, and expect little more. As long as people turn up for their 'First' sacraments, and the numbers on paper grow, there is little more to be done, and no use for the extra pews during all the other weeks and months and years. They then reduce the number of Sunday Masses, limit the hours for Confession, merge parishes, and look at ways to preserve neglected, run-down churches that were built through the faith, love, sacrifice and labour of previous generations of faithful Catholics. Churches that were built to accommodate growing parishes, growing families, growing faith, become silent witnesses to our ongoing lack of evangelisation. Surely parish priests haven't given up altogether?

Ed.

Thank You For Donations and Support

Please find enclosed a donation for the good work you do with Into the Deep. I look forward to it each month. I pass on copies to friends who also love to read it. God bless you. - **Linda Hill, Woree, Queensland**

Herewith a small donation to assist in a wonderful cause. I read ITD from start to finish upon its arrival in my letter-box and would still enjoy to do so. - **Moya Morrissey, Sandringham, Victoria**

Happy 15th birthday – and thank you! Please keep keeping on with Into the Deep – we need you! Pax et bonum! Galatians 6:9 "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." - **Unsigned birthday card**

I enjoy reading Into the Deep each month. Keep up the good work. Enclosed is a small donation to help your work. Please keep my name and address as private. May God bless you and keep you always in his care. - **Retired priest**

Thank you to these and to all others who have donated recently. You have kept ITD afloat for another few months and I am very grateful. Unfortunately funding is an ongoing need, so for those who haven't donated for a while, please consider it in future. Thanks! - **Ed.**

A Challenge As Urgent As Ever

Pope Francis in a letter to Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, on the upcoming 100th anniversary of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* by Pope Benedict XV, 22-10-2017

Even now, as in the past, "the Church, sent by Christ to reveal and to communicate the love of God to all men and nations, is aware that there still remains an enormous missionary task for her to accomplish."

In this regard, Saint John Paul II noted that "the mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion," and indeed, "an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service."

As a result, in words that I would now draw once more to everyone's attention, Saint John Paul exhorted the Church to undertake a "*renewed missionary commitment*"; in the conviction that missionary activity "renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. *Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!* It is in commitment to the Church's universal mission that the new evangelization of Christian peoples will find inspiration and support." ...

I am convinced that this challenge remains as urgent as ever. "[It] has a programmatic significance and important consequences. I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion that cannot leave things as they presently are. 'Mere administration' can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission.'" Let us not fear to undertake, with trust in God and great courage, "a missionary option capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. ... As John Paul II told the Bishops of Oceania, 'all renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion.'" ...

May the approaching centenary of that Letter [*Maximum Illud*] serve as an incentive to combat the recurring temptation lurking beneath every form of ecclesial introversion, self-referential retreat into comfort zones, pastoral pessimism and sterile nostalgia for the past. Instead, may we be open to the joyful newness of the Gospel. In these, our troubled times, rent by the tragedies of war and menaced by the baneful tendency to accentuate differences and to incite conflict, may the Good News that in Jesus forgiveness triumphs over sin, life defeats death and love conquers fear, be proclaimed to the world with renewed fervour, and instil trust and hope in everyone.

Zenit.org 22-10-2017

Youth and Old Age

Pope Francis, to members of the Pontifical Academy for Life, 05-10-2017

We exalt the inspiring possibilities of youth, but who guides the young to the fulfilment of adult life? The adult condition is a life capable of responsibility and love, both towards the future generation and towards the past. The life of fathers and mothers in advanced age should be honoured for what it has generously given, not discarded for what it no longer has.

Zenit.org 05-10-2017

"Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them."

St John Chrysostom

Heads in the Sand

Have all the world's bishops got their heads in the sand? No, not all. Cardinal Burke and Bishop Porteous of Tasmania and many others long for the day when all their brother bishops will join together on the one day, in unison with Pope Francis, to consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Otherwise, as Jesus said to Lucy in 1931, look what happened to the king of France who failed to consecrate France to the Sacred Heart as St Margaret Mary asked. They will follow him into misfortune.

In this special year, many priests in Melbourne have consecrated their parishes to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Don Kempster, Monbulk, Victoria

Hit and Hit to Kill

I will begin by supporting the editor's comments regarding ITD in the last issue requesting donations. No one likes talking about money or asking for it but it becomes a necessary evil. More about that later.

If you look around the world today you'll see that it's in a complete mess, everything's been turned upside down. Isaiah prophesied many centuries ago that light will be called darkness, and darkness light, evil will be called good, and good evil, bitter will be called sweet, and sweet bitter. How right he was. Would anyone argue with him?

Unfortunately today the world is in a mess because the Church is in a mess. We have no shepherds, or very few, our bishops and leaders have abandoned the flock and as a result the flock has been scattered, many people have lost the faith, no one talks about sin anymore, Confession has become a dead sacrament. The bishops have taken an approach which you can rightly call softly-softly. They don't want to upset anyone. My philosophy is the most charitable thing you can do to someone at any time when they're going down the wrong path is to hit them square between the eyes with a bit of four-by-two. Metaphorically speaking.

I remember years ago a young priest, who became bishop then archbishop, saying, in the battle of ideas you hit and hit to kill and attack and take no bloody prisoners. And that again is metaphorically speaking. The best defence is attack, and make no mistake the Catholic faith is under extreme attack. You only have to watch some of the news to realise how palpable that hatred is.

One day our shepherds, like you and me, are going to have to answer for what they did, and more importantly, for what they didn't do. Your prayers are very, very important. After all, we know that more things in this world are wrought by prayer than man dreams of. The greatest prayer we can offer is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Our Lady has told us often in her various appearances, to pray, and to pray the rosary. She has described the rosary as the weapon, and the scapular as the armour. How many of us wear the scapular these days? It's good to remember that our shepherds need prayers too and our prayers should be that they receive the grace to be holy, courageous leaders that will lead the flock out of the wilderness. There has been some criticism of ITD as being too critical of our bishops and priests, but I counter that argument by saying that by their inaction and even by their actions, they invite that criticism. And don't forget that Christ is with us always even to the end of the world and he has promised that the gates of hell will not prevail. Don't get the impression that I'm a good Catholic, whatever that means, because all I can tell you is that I am a sinful man and have been for most of my life.

I believe that ITD is a very important publication that informs us of what is going on and gives us the spiritual writings of our popes and various saints, which strengthens us. I don't believe in talking about money or in asking for money, but there comes a time when you've got no option. Now you either believe ITD is worthwhile, a necessary tool in this spiritual battle, or you don't. If you do, you support it not only with your prayers and your good intentions, but financially. We have some people, and they are regulars, who've contributed over the years to the finances of ITD. Just to publish ITD and to post it costs a substantial amount each month and for a publication like ITD which is run by volunteers, this is no mean feat. I'd like to congratulate the editor who puts in I don't know how many hours a month but I know they're substantial; she deserves our full support. To those donors (large and small) over the years, we can only say a big, big thank you, for by your contributions, ITD has been able to go on for the past 15 years. I realise that many of you are in the last years of your life and undoubtedly will be struggling financially and to give that financial support to ITD under your circumstances is a big effort. And I'd just like to request that you consider a bequest to ITD before you enter into eternal life.

A wholehearted thank you once again for all your support over the years, and I thank the editor for the time, the effort and the research she has done in keeping this publication in the forefront of this spiritual battle. I'll just finish by saying that our Special Correspondent (S.C.) over many years, God have mercy on his soul, said to me once that he considered ITD the best Catholic publication in the country. And I'm sure by the grace of God, ITD will continue to operate for many years to come. Thank you one and all.

John Henderson, Morwell, Victoria

Love and Marriage

Marriage is not created by governments: it is older than Australia, and much older, even, than 'the Church'. It has existed in every known human society, and it always has had something to do with bringing men and women together, enabling societies to constantly generate new generations.

Can gays be good fathers? Certainly! Two men might each be a good father, but neither can ever be a mother! Children are always seeking the love and attention of both parents: marriage is about giving children the ideal home – something no same-sex couple can provide.

These past few months the word "love" has often been heard in the context of same-sex marriage; however, "love" is not an excuse for adults to do whatever they want, while assuming that if there are any kids, they will adjust. Genuine love would first and foremost consider the welfare of any children.

One major goal of marriage is to remind men and women that we have an obligation to do the best we can, which means giving our children the protection of a married home in which they can know and love both a mother and a father.

Henk Verhoeven, Beacon Hill, New South Wales

ITD History

I remember saying at our first ITD meeting that we should not have a subscription for ITD as it would succeed if it was worthwhile and achieving its objective. It has certainly done that over the past 15 years. Unfortunately, it did not succeed in changing the direction our diocese was heading. It certainly highlighted the problems but did not change the people that mattered.

It is amazing that it is still going and you have done a great job but we are all getting older and talking to an ever diminishing audience. So I do not have any suggestions, but agree that it takes a lot of effort on your part to keep going. So I will leave it up to you. May the Holy Spirit guide your decision.

Pat O'Brien, Sale, Victoria

Making the World a Better Place

Fr Ken Clark, Parish Priest of Most Holy Family Ordinariate Parish, Gippsland, in his parish bulletin of 08-10-2017

It has been a hectic week this week. Lots going on in the church and in the world. I have been hearing people say that 'the world has gone mad' or 'what is wrong with the world?' or 'people are crazy'. One way to think of these things is to consider what St Paul said were the fruits of the Spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; (Gal 5:22-23a)

In the world today we are seeing the opposite. Look around the world and you can see that people do not love, there is no peace, people are impatient, there is little kindness, there is little goodness, no faithfulness, no gentleness, and no self-control.

The world, and people of the world, are given into self-absorption, and selfishness. The spirit of the world is the exact opposite of what we are called to be as Catholics who are filled with the Spirit. We are struggling not against our friends, and neighbours, and those who wish us ill. We are struggling against Satan and all his minions.

One weapon we have, and it is a powerful weapon, is the most Holy Rosary. If all Catholics prayed the rosary I am convinced that our world would not be in its present predicament.

The Key is to Repent

Pope Francis, Homily, Bologna 01-10-2017

The key word is to *repent*: it's repentance that enables one not to become stiff, to transform the *no* to God into *yes*, and the *yes* to sin into *no*, out of love for the Lord. The will of the Father, who speaks delicately every day to our conscience, is fulfilled only in the form of repentance and continual conversion.

Zenit.org 02-10-2017

"Give me an army saying the Rosary and I will conquer the world."

Blessed Pope Pius IX

The Perfect Prayer for Advent

By Jared Dees, author of *Praying the Angelus* (2017), and founder of The Religion Teacher website and the AdventAngelus.com initiative

This Advent hundreds of people have joined together in a commitment to praying the Angelus as special preparation for the coming of Christmas. In many ways, the Angelus is the perfect Advent prayer. Its words focus our minds and hearts on the Incarnation and take us on a journey with Mary from the Annunciation to the Nativity. What better way to celebrate Advent each day than in praying the Angelus?

Yet, the Angelus is a new devotion to so many young Catholics today, including me. Years ago, almost every Catholic knew of and prayed the Angelus. Bells would ring at dawn, noon, and dusk at the nearby church and people would stop everything and begin praying, "The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary . . . and she conceived of the Holy Spirit."

My first encounter with the Angelus came on a pilgrimage to Rome ten years ago just a week before the start of Advent. After a long, overnight flight to Rome, we attended Mass at St. Peter's Basilica then joined a crowd of thousands gathered in the square to listen to the Pope's Angelus address and pray together. When the Holy Father finished his message and began the prayer, I had no idea what to do. I was teaching theology at a Catholic high school at the time, but I am sad to admit that I had never in my life prayed the Angelus.

It wasn't until a few years later as a 3rd grade catechist that I began to pray this wonderful devotion myself. Our associate pastor at the time came in at the beginning of Advent in 2012 to teach my students about praying the Angelus. He made the case for it being the perfect prayer for the season of Advent. I decided to try it out and four years later it has become the cornerstone of my devotional life and something I do along with my family every day. My hope is that it will become essential to the days of all Catholics worldwide once again as it was in centuries past.

An Angelus History

The history of the Angelus is a little difficult to trace. We know for sure that the origins of the prayer were fairly simple. It was popular among lay Catholics in the Middle Ages to pray three Hail Marys each day. This triple Hail Mary has been recommended by many different saints throughout history including St. Bonaventure, St. Louis de Montfort, St. Alphonsus Liguori, and St. Josemaría Escrivá.

In the fourteenth century the three Hail Marys became the common way for lay people to participate in evening prayer. Since people were mostly illiterate and unable to follow along with the Divine Office, they could say the Hail Mary three times to end their days. At some point during the next two centuries the three Hail Marys were supplemented by the words of the Angelus prayer which we have today. Bells rang from the church towers to remind all people to join in praying the Angelus to remember the Annunciation and to celebrate Christ's presence among us.

Why Pray the Angelus during Advent?

This year I started an initiative at AdventAngelus.com as a part of a dream to spread the Angelus worldwide once again. My mission has been to invite people to join me and hundreds others who have made particular commitment to praying the Angelus during Advent.

It is, of course, more than just an Advent prayer. We pray the Angelus throughout the entire year (except for the season of Easter when it is replaced in our daily devotion by the *Regina Caeli*). Yet, praying it now during this season of preparation for the coming of the Lord at Christmas gives it a special meaning in our lives.

There are a lot of ways to prepare for Christmas. There are Advent devotional books and now many daily Advent video series. There is the Jesse Tree to help us retell the stories of Jesus' ancestors. And there is, of course, the Advent wreath that helps us mark each new Sunday leading up to Christmas. For me and many others, though, the Angelus has been a very important devotion during Advent as well.

The Angelus pinpoints some essential moments in Salvation History just as the weekly and daily Advent

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readings do. The words of the prayer remind us of the Annunciation and Mary's "yes" to the Angel Gabriel, which undid Eve's "no" to God in the Garden of Eden. We remember the Incarnation and end the prayer with a reminder of Christ's Death and Resurrection.

In the Angelus we look to Mary as the supreme example of holiness. We echo her words and take on her holy disposition as "handmaid of the Lord" with an openness to letting God's will be done in our lives. We recognize just as we do in the season of Christmas that Jesus is *Emmanuel*, God-is-with-us, present here on earth. God is not far off and uninvolved. He is here among us even today.

The words of the Angelus orient us toward the Incarnation. They help us recognize and reflect on the importance of Christ's presence on earth and in our hearts. Yet, they do more than just remind us of these important truths. In praying the Angelus we realize the Lord's presence in our hearts at this very moment in the very place that we pray. In a sense we enact through our prayer what we are called to reflect on during our Advent journeys. We stop everything three times each day and proclaim that God is here, present among us even today.

As the journey of Advent continues and we look toward Bethlehem and the Nativity of Christ, may we prepare our hearts in a special way to walk with the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, through this prayer. May we, through praying the Angelus during this Advent season, truly recognize the importance of the coming of Christ into the world and into our lives.

Zenit.org 16-12-2017

The Angelus Prayer

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with Thee;
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death. Amen

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary. . .

V. And the Word was made flesh.
R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary. . .

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Tell Him You Love Him

Pope Francis, Homily, 15-10-2017

We can ask ourselves if at least once a day we tell the Lord that we love him; if we remember, among everything else we say, to tell him daily, "Lord, I love you; you are my life".

Because once love is lost, the Christian life becomes empty. It becomes a body without a soul, an impossible ethic, a collection of rules and laws to obey for no good reason.

The God of life, however, awaits a response of life. The Lord of love awaits a response of love. Speaking to one of the Churches in the Book of Revelation, God makes an explicit reproach: "You have abandoned your first love" (cf. Rev 2:4). This is the danger – a Christian life that becomes routine, content with "normality", without drive or enthusiasm, and with a short memory. Instead, let us fan into flame the memory of our first love.

Zenit.org 15-10-2017

Ashamed

Pope Francis, Morning Mass, 05-10-2017

When the almighty Lord sees us ashamed of what we have done, and we humbly ask pardon, He embraces and forgives us.

Resist the Evil and Heresy

Currently the Catholic Church in this country is in a state of chaos and confusion over what she teaches and what she does not. The overriding reason for this is because bishops, clergy, teachers and parents have failed in their duties to hand on the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic faith to successive generations. Generations of Catholics simply do not accept, believe, or practice anymore, and many who do, are simply not interested or couldn't be bothered making the time and effort to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the faith.

Tragically, many of the hierarchy primarily entrusted with the teaching authority and this duty are not saying or doing anything about the current crisis in the Church. As a matter fact, many of them in this country have either retreated from, or stopped declaring divinely revealed Truths, while others have publicly contradicted and dissented from it.

Be assured, we have not arrived at this place in history by accident. There is an intelligent evil being behind all of this chaos and confusion currently in the Church, hell-bent on our destruction and the destruction of our Lord's Mystical Body.

In order to counter this evil we as faithful orthodox members incorporate of the Mystical Body of Christ, especially parents, must dedicate ourselves to knowing and studying our faith. We must learn the Catholic faith that we so casually say we believe in every Sunday. We must stand up for the doctrine that the Bride of Christ has wonderfully taught for over 2,000 years and practise it wholeheartedly. This way, we can resist and fight with all our might against the evil and the heresy that has plagued the faith and infiltrated the Church for far too long.

There is no way to fight against the Devil other than to love God more, and by living holy lives anchored in his Word and Sacraments. And we cannot love what we do not know. Knowledge of the Faith is absolutely crucial for any spiritual growth and for being engaged in on-going personal conversion. A deeper knowledge of the Church's doctrines grounds us in our Catholic identity and helps us understand what we are called to be through the grace of Christ's sacraments in his Church and in the world.

Gregory Kingman, Morwell, Victoria

Catholic Families Conference

From 29 September to 1 October, the NACF (National Association of Catholic Families) held their third annual conference, this time in Belgrave Victoria. There were about 40 families in attendance.

I was privileged to serve at the opening Mass (complete with candles and incense), celebrated by Bishop Peter Elliott. He gave a brilliant homily on St Jerome (whose feast day it was) and also on the family, explaining how families should be in one sense monastic; fortresses against the attacks of the world, and safe places to learn the Faith, while also being like yeast; working to bring the Truth of the Gospel to the world in which they live by their witness.

The Blessed Sacrament was present in a makeshift chapel, allowing for the possibility of overnight adoration. I and a few friends filled the midnight till 1am slot, with parents and other young adults taking turns throughout the night.

While there were many great talks and activities throughout the course of the conference, I'm sure that those who attended would agree that the highlight was the opportunity to meet up with other like-minded families. In this day and age, when the family is almost constantly under attack from all sides, it is very important for Catholic families to support each other in their Faith, and in regard to the challenges posed by our secular culture, for as St John Paul II said; "the future of humanity passes through the family."
- *Familiaris Consortio*.

The NACF Conference was a beautiful reminder that the foundation and heartbeat of society, despite all the challenges it faces, is still beating strong.

Andrew Murphy, Bunyip, Victoria

Warm-Up Period Before the Main Event

Monsignor Harry Entwistle, Ordinary of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Musings, November 2016

When the Celtic Christian monks evangelised pagan tribes and countries, rather than expunging pagan festivals from the life of the new Christian communities, they 'christianised' them. They gave the festivals new meaning and used them as teaching vehicles in their evangelistic outreach.

Our current liberal atheistic culture is reversing the process. Christian festivals are being paganised, cut off from their Christian meaning and offered to the god of consumerism. Valentine's Day, Shrove Tuesday, St Patrick's Day and Halloween are examples of this trend. The anticipation of Good Friday by marketing fruit buns with a cross, is another example, but pales alongside the anticipation of Christmas which begins in September. The usurping of these festivals is part of the atheistic campaign to destroy or totally neutralise the Christian Faith in the world.

Sadly, some Christians have colluded with this de-Christianisation process, deluding themselves that they are trying to counter the attack, when in fact they are diluting the Christian faith and so exacerbating its demise. ... One notable casualty in the de-Christianisation process, is the virtual disappearance of the season of Advent in anything by name. In order to 'Put Christ back into Christmas,' Christians place Christmas cribs in church on the first Sunday of Advent and gradually fill them with animals and shepherds over the four weeks of Advent, until the Christ child arrives on Christmas eve. There are endless variations on this theme, some of which border on the ridiculous.

The Gospels describe the nativity of Jesus as an emergency, rather than a carefully planned affair. The presence of Christmas trees and singing Christmas carols in church well before the feast of the nativity has the effect of turning the Season of Advent into nothing more than a 'warm up' period before the main event. The liturgical colour used in Advent may well be penitential purple, but the anticipatory atmosphere of celebration turns it into a period of focus on Love, Joy, Hope and Peace rather than its previous focus on Heaven, Hell, Death and Judgement.

Advent has ceased to breathe with its two lungs of the First and Second coming of Christ and so is a shadow of what the Church intends it to be. It is the season when we reflect on our salvation history and how God interacts with his people on this continuing journey until Jesus comes again to judge the living and the dead before the Heavenly Banquet. If we only focus on the first coming of Christ in Bethlehem we are in danger of falling into the heresy of regarding Jesus to be only a human being through whom God gave us some good advice about the importance of loving each other. If that is true, then Advent really is simply a preparation period for a celebratory party and the world has got it right because there will be no second coming of Jesus.

If the Church has got it right, and Jesus is true God and true Man through whom heaven and earth have been reconciled, then Advent is a time we recall the story leading to his birth and a call to review how we live and exercise our discipleship in this 'in-between' period before the Last Judgement.

If we want to 'Christianise' Christmas, then we must restore Advent to what it is meant to be. We know that the Patriarchs, Prophets, John the Baptist and Our Lady are part of our salvation story and they trusted God without fully knowing how our salvation would be achieved. Advent should be the season when we journey with them, listening to their voices of trust and hope. We should listen to their call for us to change direction in our lives as we are led to the expectations expressed in the words of the hymn 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,' which are voices calling for Jesus to return in glory.

If Advent is to be truly Christian we should avoid placing Christmas symbols in our churches sooner than Advent 4. Without these distractions we are more likely to hear the still small voice of God born in Bethlehem, proclaimed by Jesus in his ministry, in his dying breath on the Cross, in triumph on Easter Day and in his promise to be with us until he returns again in judgement.

If we wish to really celebrate Christmas then we must ensure Advent is what it is meant to be.

www.ordinariate.org.au

We're All Vulnerable

Pope Francis, at a conference on Catechesis and Persons with Disabilities, 21-10-17

We know the great development that throughout recent decades has taken place in relation to disability. The growth in awareness of the dignity of every person, especially the weakest, has led to courageous positions being taken for the inclusion of those who live with various forms of handicap, so that no-one need feel like an outsider in their own home. However, at a cultural level there persist expressions that harm the dignity of these people through the prevalence of a false concept of life.

A vision that is often narcissistic and utilitarian unfortunately leads many to consider as marginal people with disabilities, without recognizing in them the multiform human and spiritual wealth. *An attitude of denying this condition*, as if it prevented happiness and the realization of the self, is still too strong in the common mentality. This is shown by the eugenic tendency to suppress unborn children when they are shown to have some form of imperfection.

In reality, we all know many people who, with their fragility, even in serious cases, have found the path of a good life rich in meaning, if with some hardship. Just as, on the other hand, we know people who are apparently perfect and desperate! Besides, it is a dangerous deceit to think we are invulnerable. ...

The answer is love. Not the false kind, overly sentimental and pietistic, but the true kind, concrete and respectful. To the extent in which we are welcomed and loved, included in the community and accompanied to look to the future with trust, the true path of life is developed and we experience lasting happiness. This, we know, is valid to all, but the most fragile are the proof. ...

Zenit.org 21-10-2017

"The Rosary is a powerful weapon

to put the demons to flight and to keep oneself from sin... If you desire peace in your hearts, in your homes, and in your country, assemble each evening to recite the Rosary. Let not even one day pass without saying it, no matter how burdened you may be with many cares and labours."

Pope Pius XI

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

People are enthralled by the rapid advances in technology and the future possibilities on offer from science, as nature's secrets continue to be revealed.

At the same time however, people are becoming increasingly aware and concerned that something is seriously amiss, for as science and technology progress, so too at a seemingly greater rate are injustice, confusion, division, acrimony and violence. While rightly seeking to remedy the situation under the appeal of certain themes, varying in name of course, but common to people throughout history, are people willing to learn from history?

For example, in Australia we are familiar with themes concerning freedom, equality and the desire to live in a peaceful loving community. When we add to this the notion that Australia should become a republic in preference to having a non-resident monarch, plus society's attitude towards religion, compounded by clerical sexual abuse and terrorism, it is not hard to see some parallel with aspects of the French Revolution including its themes of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity".

However the French Revolution led directly to the Napoleonic wars, so "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" did not blossom in the revolution's aftermath. For them to have blossomed into a Culture of Life, "it would have been necessary", wrote Professor of Philosophy Donald De Marco, "for them to have been planted in the soil of truth, humility and paternity. We need truth to make us free, humility to acknowledge our equality and fatherhood to teach us we are brothers." (Architects of the Culture of Death, p.203)

Our above-mentioned themes cannot produce a Culture of Life, for our society rejects the notion of objective truth in matters moral and ethical – so no one can be truly free. We refuse to acknowledge our equality because not everyone who possesses human DNA is considered human – so we forfeit the right to seek equality in anything. By rejecting the fatherhood of God, our Absolute monarch, respecting fellow human beings becomes impossible.

Should education cultivate the art of learning but neglect to cultivate the art of thinking (Chesterton) it will fail both individuals and the society to which they belong.

John Royal, Bundaberg West, Queensland

Yeah, Yeah, In a Minute

Fr John Speekman, 1st Sunday of Advent - Year B, at homiliesfromaustralia.blogspot.com.au

If we have been attentive to the Gospel readings over the last three weeks we will have noticed a certain pattern emerging.

Firstly, they all speak about a certain 'time' that will undoubtedly come - the time of the return of someone important who has been absent. Three weeks ago it was the time of the arrival of the bridegroom. Two weeks ago it was the time of the return of the master. Last week it was the time of the coming of the Son of Man. This week it is the time of the return of a man from abroad.

Secondly, we notice that in each of these Gospels there are those who are waiting for this return. Three weeks ago it was the bridesmaids. Two weeks ago it was the servants with the talents. One week ago it was 'all the nations' - the sheep and the goats. This week it is the servants and the doorkeeper.

Thirdly, we notice that the exact time of this moment of return is uncertain. Those who are waiting for it do not know when it will happen - evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn - who knows?

Fourthly, each of these Gospels sees this moment of return as a decisive moment for those who are waiting. In fact, it is a moment of judgment for them.

And so, finally, these Gospels, either explicitly or implicitly, offer us a warning - *So stay awake! Be on your guard! Stand ready!*

Now all that is simple enough.

- Jesus is the absent Master.
- We are the waiting servants.
- Jesus will return unexpectedly.
- We will be finally judged.

Of course we are powerless to stop any of this happening. There is only one part of it that depends on us and that is - the decision to be ready or not, to be awake or asleep.

The prophet Isaiah makes the difficulty very clear. Left to ourselves, waiting for the Lord, we all tend to face the same temptation - to start amusing ourselves while we wait.

Little Red Riding Hood couldn't resist picking the flowers on her way to grandma's house and got herself lost. Our temptations are not much different. It's hard to keep working while the boss is away - the servants give themselves all kinds of liberties until finally they forget the boss completely.

Isaiah cannot understand why the Lord is so slow in appearing. *Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways and harden our hearts against fearing you?* Isn't that well put ... *to harden our hearts against fearing you?* That's exactly what happens when the thought of God goes out of our minds - bit by bit we lose our remembrance and our 'fear' of him and so we stray from his ways.

No one invoked your name or roused himself to catch hold of you. Isn't that the truth? It is prayer, invoking the name of God, which keeps the remembrance of God alive in us. Faithfulness to Sunday Mass, the family rosary, Lectio Divina - all make God real in our life and strengthen our faith.

And isn't it true that so often we have to 'rouse ourselves' to pray. Life can be so comfortable or we can be so tired. We have to make a decision .. Get up! Stay awake! Pray! It really is like 'catching hold of God!' The prophet can see it happening all around him just as we can see it happening today. People forgetting God and straying from the path - old people, young people, of all kinds.

And so Isaiah prays that beautiful, anguished prayer: *Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down.* As the antiphon to the psalm says today: *Let us see your face and we shall be saved.*

Let me leave you with one final thought implied in this Gospel. If we do not know what time Jesus will come then he may come at any moment - even now. This means that we must be ready NOW! Are you?

This is the message of Advent - prepare yourselves for his coming - be ready now because 'yeah-yeah-in-a-minute' may be too late.

Hours of Eucharistic Adoration

in Gippsland

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Bass | Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am |
| Bairnsdale | 1 st Friday after 9.10am Mass |
| Cowwarr-Heyfield | 1 st Friday alternately: Cwr 7.30pm–8.30pm Heyfield 10.00am – 4.30pm |
| Cowwarr Ord. | Wednesday (Low Mass 10am) 10.30 – 11.00am |
| Churchill Saturday | (9.30am Mass) 10.00am – 11.00am |
| Cranbourne | Fri & Sat in church: (9.30 Mass) 10am – 11am Adoration Chapel accessible 24 hours by PIN available at parish office. |
| Drouin | Thursday 10am – 11.00am First Fri 4pm–8pm (every 2 nd month, Dec on) |
| Lakes Entrance | Friday 9.30am – 11am |
| Maffra | Wednesday (5pm Mass) – 6pm |
| Moe | Wednesday (9am Mass) 9.30am – 10.30am |
| Morwell | Friday 2pm – 6pm (Sacred Heart Church) |
| Orbost | Wednesday (9.30am Mass) 10am – 11am |
| Rosedale | First Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am |
| Sale | Friday 11.30am – 12pm First Friday 11.30am – 4pm |
| Trafalgar | Wed & First Sat: (9.30am Mass) – 10.45am |
| Traralgon | Wednesday 11am – 12 noon |
| Warragul | Saturday 10.00am – 11.00am First Fri 4pm–8pm (every 2 nd month, Jan on) |
| Wonthaggi | First Friday 7.00pm – 8.00pm |

“The deepest and most authentic meaning of life is that of being a gift which is fully realised in the giving of self.”

Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, n.49

Let Him Reach You

Pope Francis, in a video message to Canadian youth, 22-10-2017

Young people, let Christ reach you. Let Him speak to you, embrace you, console you, heal your wounds, dissolve your doubts and fears – and you shall be ready for the fascinating adventure of life, that precious and inestimable gift that God places every day in your hands. Go to meet Jesus, be with Him in prayer, entrust yourselves to Him, give your whole life over to His merciful love, and your faith will be the luminous witness of generosity and of the joy there is in following Him, wherever He should lead you. ... Jesus watches you and awaits a “Here I am!” from each of you.

Zenit.org 23-10-2017

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ITD is released on or around the first day of each month by email and on the blog; printed copies about a week later. Deadline for contributions is one week before the end of the month (but preferably by the 15th of the month).

Editor: Janet Kingman

Subscription is free. We rely on donations.

Cheques to be made out to Janet Kingman.

ITD's bank details for **Direct Deposits:**

Account name: Janet Kingman

BSB: 013-745 (ANZ)

Account number: 2901-63632

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The purpose of ITD is to provide a forum for those who:

- no longer have a voice in Catholic Life, and other diocesan newspapers,
- wish to understand and defend the teachings of the Catholic Church,
- wish to support and defend those who are unjustly treated by Church bureaucrats and organisations,
- wish to campaign for the renewal of our Catholic schools,
- wish to promote Eucharistic adoration in all parishes,
- wish to have a means of support and contact for one another in remaining true to our Catholic faith.

Letters to the Editor:

Readers are encouraged to contribute letters. There is no guarantee that every letter will be published, and we reserve the right to edit letters. Name and contact details must accompany letters, however, if there is sufficient reason, anonymity will be preserved when publishing. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of ITD.

Mary, our Mother

And Mother of the Redeemer,
Gate of heaven and Star of the sea,
Come to the aid of your people,
Who have sinned, yet also yearn to rise again!
Come to the Church's aid,
Enlighten your devoted children,
Strengthen the faithful throughout the world,
Let those who have drifted hear your call,
And may they who live as prisoners of evil
Be converted!

Pope John Paul II