

Into the Deep

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The Closeness of God

Pope Francis, Angelus address 18-06-2023

Today, in the Gospel, Jesus ... sends out the twelve Apostles. As he was sending them out, he asks them to proclaim just one thing: "Preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt 10:7). It is the same proclamation with which Jesus began his preaching: the kingdom of God, that is, his lordship of love, has come near; it comes in our midst. And this is not just one piece of news among others, no, but the fundamental reality of life: the closeness of God, the closeness of Jesus.

Indeed, if the God of heaven is close, we are not alone on earth, and even in difficulty, we do not lose faith. Here is the first thing to say to people: God is not far away, but rather he is a Father. God is not distant, he is a Father, he knows you and he loves you; he wants to take you by the hand, even when you travel on steep and rugged paths, even when you fall and struggle to get up again and get back on track. He, the Lord, is there with you. Indeed, often in moments when you are at your weakest, you can feel his presence all the more strongly. He knows the path, he is with you, he is your Father! He is my Father! He is our Father! Let us linger on this image because proclaiming that God is close is an invitation to think of oneself as a child, who walks hand in hand with his father: everything seems different. The large and mysterious world becomes familiar and secure because the child knows he is protected. ...

At this point, let us ask a few questions: Do we, who believe in God who is close, confide in him? Do we know how to look forward trustfully, like a child who knows he is held in his father's arms? Do we know how to sit in the Father's lap with prayer, by listening to the Word, partaking of the Sacraments? And finally, close to him, do we know how to instil courage in others, to make ourselves close to those who suffer and are alone, to those who are distant and even those who are hostile to us? This is the substance of faith. This is what counts.

Vatican.va

Taking Flesh

St John Damascene

You ask how the bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine...the Blood of Christ I shall tell you: the Holy Spirit comes upon them and accomplishes what surpasses every word and thought ...

Let it be enough for you to understand that it is by the Holy Spirit, just as it was of the Holy Virgin and by the Holy Spirit that the Lord, through and in himself, took flesh.

(Quoted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, para 1106)

The Road

St Gregory the Great

No matter what obstacles we encounter, we must not allow them to turn us aside from the joy of that heavenly feast. Anyone who is determined to reach his destination is not deterred by the roughness of the road that leads to it. Nor must we allow the charm of success to seduce us, or we shall be like a foolish traveller who is so distracted by the pleasant meadows through which he is passing that he forgets where he is going.

All issues of *Into the Deep* are at www.stoneswillshout.com

Fr Speekman's Book Delivered!

Fr John Speekman's book, *Things Serious, Silly, and Sublime*, is now well and truly out and available for delivery! Thank you to all for your patience. The backorders have been filled and we have plenty of books available to sell. Let the orders roll in!

The book costs only \$15, and there are a few postage options available, starting at only \$3. Contact me for further details and to place your order.

For more information about *Things Serious, Silly and Sublime* and for excerpts from the book, see Jan/Feb ITD p.10, and page 3 of the March, April, May and June/July issues of ITD.

Proceeds from the sale of the book at this stage go to ITD, thanks to Fr Speekman, so you have twice the reason to buy the book! Thanks for your support.

Get One Free!

During July and August, anyone who writes a review of *Things Serious, Silly, and Sublime*, will go into a draw to win a free copy of the book. The winner will be announced in the September issue of ITD. Reviews don't have to be long and formal, but can simply be a comment or a paragraph or a recommendation.

Ed.

Get Out!

From the book, *Things Serious, Silly, and Sublime* by Fr John Speekman, p.24

In intensive care there were a couple of rooms for single patients. In one of those rooms was a woman listed as a Catholic and so I gowned up with mask and gown and opened the door. She raised her hand and showed me her palm in an unmistakable message: *Stop! Get out!*

Of course that's what I did and passed by that room for about a week without attempting to go in.

Then one day I thought I might try again. I gowned up and walked in closing the door behind me. I said hello but again that hand came up: *Get out!*

I responded: *Why won't you talk to me? You are a Catholic and I'm a priest. Who put you down as a Catholic? I don't want to talk, I want to die*, she let fly at me.

Words failed me and I stood silently by her bed.

After some moments I asked if she had been to Confession recently. She admitted she had not been for many, many years. I asked: *Have you ever thought that maybe the Lord is waiting for you to do that before he will allow you to die?*

Immediately she said: *Okay, if that's what it takes, let's do it!*

The room was empty when I returned two days later and I learned she had passed away peacefully. God is so good!

Back-of-the-Book Blurb:

Things Serious, Silly and Sublime is a collection of Fr Speekman's thoughts and reflections from his time as a hospital chaplain and parish priest. It gives readers an over-the-shoulder look at encounters in the life of a priest, where each interaction becomes a source of deeper reflection, even those moments that seem, at first glance, ordinary or routine.

Fr Speekman's pithy recollections and personal insights not only reveal a quirky sense of humour and obvious love of people, but give readers a sense of his deep Catholic faith. This engaging little book will entertain, challenge, invite, and console; and ultimately draw readers closer to the heart of Christ.

Trust the Arrows

The Kings Canyon Rim walk takes "3-4 hours". It's a magnificent walk along the north and south rim of the top of Kings Canyon in the Northern Territory. But of course to get to the top in the first place, is, well, an uphill walk. A lot of uphill. A lot of steps. Rocky, uneven steps, winding paths, and many twists and turns where you think you're at the top, but it's just a twist or a turn, and there is more uphill ahead.

All the way up, all the way across, and all the way down, you're following little arrow markers to show where to go next. Once you pass an arrow, you look ahead for where the next one is so that you know in which direction to head. You rely on the arrows. You trust the arrows. Sometimes the arrow seems impossible. You see the arrow up ahead, pointing forward, but there is no way forward that you can see – just rockface, or sheer drop, or pure sky. But as you plod along towards the arrow, the way opens up, and you see that the arrow was correct – there is indeed a way forward, or up, or down, in safety. You just couldn't see it from a distance. So on you go, heading towards the next arrow, trusting that however unlikely it appears, as you get closer you will see that's it is the right way. The path was chosen by someone who knows, and the arrows placed at perfect distance and in perfect position to serve their purpose of guiding you safely along the easiest paths to the best view points, and finally all the way back down to your car.

They weren't exaggerating when they said 3 to 4 hours. It was a long, tiring walk. But it was the best! Absolutely wonderful views! Spectacular rockfaces. Beautiful scenes. And all you had to do was put one foot in front of the other, and trust the arrows.

There was plenty of time to mull over the significance of this in the spiritual life. How often do we doubt the road ahead because we can't see further than the next arrow, and it doesn't seem possible. How often do we take it upon ourselves to look for an 'easier' path, or 'more direct' route, or give up altogether thinking it's beyond us. Yet all we have to do is keep putting one foot in front of the other, and trust the arrows. Jesus has taken responsibility for laying out the path and keeping us safe, showing us the beauty and splendour, and challenging us only as far as he knows we can handle it. He knows the best route for us, and has given his Church a wealth of arrows to place along our way, so that we always know which direction to head in. And as we walk, the path will open itself up before us and we will see that we had every reason to trust.

Ed.

Pray a Hail Mary

Pope Francis, to children with cancer, 29-05-2023

If anyone finds him or herself alone and feels abandoned, let us not forget that Our Lady is always near us, especially when we feel the weight of illness, with all its problems. She is there, close, the way she was next to her Son Jesus when everyone had abandoned him. Mary is always there, beside us, with her maternal tenderness. Let us think often of Our Lady, praying a Hail Mary.

Vatican.va

"Faith is a treasure of life which is enriched by being shared."

Catechism of the Catholic Church, para 949

Thank You

Just a small contribution enclosed in support of ITD. Always a great read. Keep up the good work.

C.G., Narre Warren, Victoria

Enclosed a cheque for a copy of Fr Speekman's book and a donation to ITD. Many thanks – we do enjoy reading ITD. May God bless you for all your wonderful work.

E.C., Gordonvale, Queensland

Thank you for sending Fr Speekman's book. I've been closely reading it and deriving deep benefit from it and also the chuckle or two. I hope he will write other books that speak to the questing soul.

C.H., London, U.K.

Rediscover Adoration

Pope Francis, 19-06-2023, to the organising committee of the U.S. National Eucharistic Congress

All of us are familiar with the account of the multiplication of the loaves recorded in the Gospel of John. The people who witnessed this miracle came back to the Lord on the following day in hopes of seeing him perform another sign.

Yet Christ desired to transform their hunger for material bread into a hunger for the bread of eternal life. For this reason, Jesus spoke of himself as the living bread which came down from heaven, the true bread that gives life to the world.

I thought a great deal about this while I was celebrating Mass this morning because it is this bread that gives us life. Indeed, the Eucharist is God's response to the deepest hunger of the human heart, the hunger for authentic life, for in the Eucharist Christ himself is truly in our midst, to nourish, console and sustain us on our journey.

Sadly nowadays, there are those among the Catholic faithful who believe that the Eucharist is more a symbol than the reality of the Lord's presence and love. It is more than a symbol; it is the real and loving presence of the Lord.

It is my hope, then, that the Eucharistic Congress will inspire Catholics throughout the country to discover anew the sense of wonder and awe at the Lord's great gift of himself and to spend time with him in the celebration of the Holy Mass and in personal prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. I believe that we have lost the sense of adoration in our day. We must rediscover the sense of adoration in silence. It is a form of prayer that we have lost. Too few people know what it is. It is up to the Bishops to catechize the faithful about praying through adoration. The Eucharist requires it of us. In this regard, I cannot fail to mention the need for fostering vocations to the priesthood, for as Saint John Paul II said, "There can be no Eucharist without the priesthood". We need priests to celebrate the Holy Eucharist.

I likewise trust that the Congress will be an occasion for the faithful to commit themselves with ever greater zeal to being missionary disciples of the Lord Jesus in the world. In the Eucharist, we encounter the One who gave everything for us, who sacrificed himself in order to give us life, who loved us to the end. We become credible witnesses to the joy and transforming beauty of the Gospel only when we recognize that the love we celebrate in this sacrament cannot be kept to ourselves but demands to be shared with all. This is the sense of a missionary spirit. You go to the celebration of Mass, receive communion, adore the Lord and then what do you do after? You go out and evangelize. Jesus asks this of us.

Vatican.va

Since the Beginning

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1355 In the communion, preceded by the Lord's prayer and the breaking of the bread, the faithful receive "the bread of heaven" and "the cup of salvation," the body and blood of Christ who offered himself "for the life of the world":

Because this bread and wine have been made Eucharist ("eucharisted," according to an ancient expression), "we call this food Eucharist, and no one may take part in it unless he believes that what we teach is true, has received baptism for the forgiveness of sins and new birth, and lives in keeping with what Christ taught."

St. Justin [c. 100–165AD]

Celibacy

Vatican News, 26-05-2023

In an interview with Telemundo, Pope Francis addresses the issues of migration, abortion and celibacy, and explains that he always asks people to pray for him because when the faithful pray for their pastor "it is as if he wears a suit of armour". ...

On priestly celibacy and the alleged connection with child abuse in the Church, Pope Francis responded by quoting statistics: "32%, in other countries 36%, of abuse takes place in the family, uncle, grandfather, and all married, or with neighbours. After that, in sports venues, after that, in schools..." He added, "it has nothing to do" therefore with the question of celibacy.

Vaticannews.va

Sr Lucia Declared Venerable

By Christopher Wells, Vatican News 22-06-2023

Carmelite Sister Lucia de Jesus Rosa dos Santos, who, along with her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto witnessed a series of apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Fatima, has been declared Venerable by the Church. The decree recognizing Sr Lucia's heroic virtues was promulgated on [22 June] with the approval of Pope Francis.

In 1916, Lucia and her two cousins reported being visited by an Angel in the area of Fatima, Portugal. The following year, beginning on 13 May, the children claimed to receive a series of apparitions from the Blessed Virgin Mary, which culminated six months later with the famous "Miracle of the Sun" that was witnessed by tens of thousands of people.

After the untimely death of her cousins, who died a few years later due to Spanish flu, Sister Lucia remained the sole custodian of the message entrusted to her by Our Lady, which she transcribed, at the instigation of the Bishop of Leiria, José Alves Correia da Silva, into four documents between 1935 and 1941. A later document, dated 1944, contained the so-called "third secret," was sent to Rome and opened for the first time in 1960. St John Paul II, who had a special devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, allowed the secret to be published in 2000.

Sister Lucia spent her whole life devoted to the message she had received in Fatima. At first she entered the college of the Dorothean Sisters in Vilar; later she became a Carmelite in Coimbra, where she died on 13 February 2005. The distinction between her life and the apparitions, the Decree says, "is also difficult because much of her suffering was due to them: she was always kept hidden, protected, guarded. One can see in her all the difficulty of keeping together the exceptionality of the events of which she was a spectator and the ordinariness of a monastic life like that of Carmel."

The apparitions have been endorsed by various Popes, while the Church observes May 13th as an optional memorial of Our Lady of Fatima. Pope Francis visited Fatima in 2017 for the 100th anniversary of the apparitions, during which he canonized Francisco and Jacinta. With [this] decree, Venerable Lucia's cause for canonization continues to advance.

Vaticannews.va

Most Precious Gift

St Gregory of Nazianzus

Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift ...

We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift.

It is called *gift* because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own;

grace since it is given even to the guilty;

Baptism because sin is buried in the water;

anointing for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed;

enlightenment because it radiates light;

clothing since it veils our shame;

bath because it washes;

and *seal* as it is our guard and the sign of God's Lordship.

(Quoted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, para 1216)

Believing

Pope Benedict XVI, 15-08-2006

Believing is not adding one opinion to others.

And the conviction, the belief, that God exists is not information like any other.

Regarding most information, it makes no difference to us whether it is true or false; it does not change our lives. But if God does not exist, life is empty, the future is empty. And if God exists, everything changes, life is light, our future is light and we have guidance for how to live.

Therefore, believing constitutes the fundamental orientation of our life. To believe, to say: "Yes, I believe that you are God, I believe that you are present among us in the Incarnate Son", gives my life a direction, impels me to be attached to God, to unite with God and so to find my dwelling place, and the way to live.

Vatican.va

Refusal to Acknowledge God

Cantalamessa 2nd Lenten Sermon 2023

Anyone who has travelled by plane will have heard once the announcement: "Fasten your seatbelts because we are about to enter an area of turbulence." The same warning should be addressed to those who are about to read the following words of Paul:

The wrath of God is indeed being revealed from heaven against every impiety and wickedness of those who suppress the truth by their wickedness. For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse; for although they knew God they did not accord him glory as God or give him thanks. Instead, they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened. While claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of an image of mortal man or of birds or of four-legged animals or of snakes.

(Rom1:18-23)

The fundamental sin, the primary object of divine wrath, is identified, as can be seen, in...impiety. In what exactly does this impiety consist? The Apostle immediately explains, saying that it consists of the refusal to "glorify" and "thank" God. Strange enough! This fact of not glorifying and thanking God doesn't seem to us such a terrible and mortal sin. We need to understand what is hidden behind it: the refusal to recognize God as God, not giving him the consideration that is his due. It consists, we could say, in "ignoring" God, where ignoring does not mean so much "not knowing that he exists" as "acting as if he did not exist."

In the Old Testament we hear Moses cry out to the people: "Know that God is God!" (cf Dt 7:9) and the psalmist takes up this cry, saying: "Recognize that the Lord is God: he made us and we belong to him!" (Ps 100:3). Reduced to its germinal nucleus, to sin is to deny this "recognition;" it is the creature's attempt to erase, on its own initiative, almost by arrogance, the infinite difference that exists between it and God. ...

This refusal has taken shape, we have heard, in idolatry, by which the creature is worshiped instead of the Creator. In idolatry people do not "accept" God, but make a god by themselves; it is they who decide about God, not vice versa. The roles are reversed: man becomes the potter and God the vessel which man moulds as he pleases. Today this ancient attempt has taken on a new form. It does not consist in putting something – not even oneself – in the place of God, but in abolishing, purely and simply, the role indicated by the word "God." Nihilism! Nothing in place of God. ...

Where, in all this, is the topicality of the Apostle's message that I was talking about? It lies in the remedy that the Gospel proposes for this situation. It does not consist in engaging in a struggle for the moral reform of society and the correction of its vices. For Paul, it would be like wanting to uproot a tree by starting to remove the leaves or the most protruding branches, or worrying about eliminating the fever, rather than curing the evil that causes it. Translated into current language, this means that evangelization does not begin with morals, but with the kerygma; in the language of the New Testament, not with the Law, but with the Gospel. And what is its content and core? What does Paul mean by "Gospel" when he says it "is the power of God to everyone who believes?" Believe in what? "God's righteousness has been revealed!" (Rom 3:21): this is what is new. It's not men who suddenly changed their lives and customs and started doing good. The new fact is that, in the fullness of time, God acted; he broke the silence; he was the first to extend his hand to sinful man. ...

... The remedy is not over us or behind us; it is in front of us and consists in believing in "the redemption wrought by Christ Jesus."

Paul does nothing but take up, adapting it to the situation of the moment, the inaugural proclamation of Jesus: "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Convert and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15). On his lips "repent" did not mean, as in the ancient prophets and in John the Baptist: Go back, observe the Law and the commandments! Rather it means: Take a leap forward; enter the Kingdom that has come

Continued on p.7

freely among you! Believe the Gospel! To convert is to believe. "The first conversion consists in believing," wrote Saint Thomas Aquinas: ...

The secular world does its best (and unfortunately it succeeds!) to keep the name of Jesus apart, or silenced, in every discourse about the Church. We must do everything to always let his name resound. Not to hide behind it, because it is the strength and life of the Church. At the beginning of *Evangelii gaudium*, we read these words:

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her (EG,3). ...

Let us try to understand what this famous "personal encounter" with Christ actually consists of. I say it's like meeting a person live, after having known him or her for years only through a photo. One can know books about Jesus, doctrines, heresies about Jesus, and concepts about Jesus, but not know him alive and present. (I insist on these two adjectives: a living Jesus and a present Jesus!). For many, even baptized believers, Jesus is a character from the past, a personality, not a living person.

It helps to understand the difference to look at what happens in the human sphere when you go from knowing a person to falling in love with him or her. One can know everything about a woman or a man: their name, how old they are, what studies they have done, what family they belong to... Then one day a spark is kindled and one falls in love with that woman or that man. Everything changes. They want to be with that person, have him or her for themselves, afraid of displeasing or of not being worthy of him or her.

What can we do to let this spark for the person of Jesus be kindled in the heart of many? It will not be kindled in whoever listens to the Gospel message unless it burns – at least as a desire and as a resolution – in whoever is proclaiming it.

Cantalamesa.org

Large Families

Pope Francis to Italian Large Families Association, 28-12-2014

You have come with the most beautiful fruit of your love. Motherhood and fatherhood are a gift of God, but to accept the gift, to be astounded by its beauty and to make it shine in society, this is your task. Each of your children is a unique creature that will never be duplicated in the history of humanity. When one understands this, or that God wanted each one, we are astounded by how great a miracle a child is! A child changes your life! ... A son or daughter is a miracle that changes life.

You, boys and girls, are exactly this: each one of you is the unique fruit of love, you come from love and you grow in love. You are *unique*, but not *alone*! And the fact of having brothers and sisters is good for you: the sons and daughters of a large family are more capable of fraternal communion even from early childhood. In a world often marked by selfishness, a large family is a school of solidarity and sharing; and this attitude is to the benefit of society as a whole. ...

The presence of large families is a hope for society. And this is why the presence of grandparents is very important: a precious presence both for practical help, and above all for their educational contribution. Grandparents preserve in themselves the values of a people, of a family, and they help parents pass them on to the children. ...

Dear parents, I am grateful for your example of the love of life, which you guard from conception until the natural end, even with all of life's difficulties and burdens, which unfortunately public institutions do not always help you to bear. ...

I always thank the Lord in seeing mothers and fathers of large families, together with their children, committed to the life of the Church and of society. For my part I am close to you in prayer, and I place you under the protection of the Holy Family of Jesus, Joseph and Mary.

Vatican.va

Time for a Spiritual Audit

The Catechism in a Year with Fr Mike Schmitz is currently dealing with the Sacraments of the Church, which is the second pillar of the Catechism. Although I had a solid understanding of the seven sacraments, listening to Fr Mike has deepened and enriched this knowledge and understanding.

At the end of each daily podcast, I always feel like my wife and I have just had a personal tutorial on growing our faith, and the primacy of grace in the new life of Christ; other times, it feels like we have just 'lectio-ed' some paragraphs, because like the Scriptures, every line in every paragraph is there for a purpose; none of it is accidental; and none of it is meant to be glanced over or left unconsidered, because together all of the lines give us a sacramental theology through which we can come to a better understanding of the Church as an extension of Christ.

Either way, listening to his podcasts is itself a real blessing and grace, because we are able to reflect and be fed firsthand by the Church's teaching on her Sacraments, not to mention growing in our knowledge and love of the Holy Trinity.

Sacraments, which are the beating heart of the Church's life and mission, are the actions of Christ who administer them through his hierarchy. They are crucial for understanding the Church and her Faith, and more importantly, essential for salvation, holiness and changing us into effective witnesses of Christ. Through them, by power of the Holy Spirit, the divine grace of Christ in Baptism, the Mass, Confirmation, Confession, in Marriage, in Holy Orders, and in the Anointing of the sick, really and truly enters us and our world.

All too often, after the sacraments of initiation, especially Confirmation, we think our faith and spiritual life is 'finished business' and if not, then it would simply be cultivated, grown and maintained automatically, like all we have to do is go to Mass, say our prayers and go to Confession whenever we can!

By listening to Fr Mike, I have learned that as a 'mature' Catholic, I have to regularly do an ordering of my soul, a 'spiritual audit' so to speak, of my discipleship and adoptive sonship.

Listening to him has made me ask some serious questions about being a child of God. Like, do I strive daily to be worthy of my new life in Christ and my adoptive sonship? And daily, how committed am I in fighting and rejecting everything that is opposed to this? Especially when I consider that as his child, and follower of his Son, I am called and commissioned by Him to 'go and bear fruit, fruit that would last'.

Since listening to Fr Mike, I have become acutely aware that I need to learn what the fruits of the sacraments of my own initiation are, so that I can take practical steps to grow in understanding of them, and what I need to do in order for them to be realized.

Gregory Kingman, Morwell, Victoria

St Thérèse and Missionaries

Pope Francis, General Audience 07-06-2023

Here before us are the relics of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, universal patroness of missions. ...

Missionaries, in fact are not only those who travel long distances, learn new languages, do good works, and are good at proclamation; no, a missionary is also anyone who lives as an instrument of God's love where they are. Missionaries are those who do everything so that, through their witness, their prayer, their intercession, *Jesus might pass by*.

This is the apostolic zeal that, let us always remember, never works by proselytism – never – or constraint, – never – but *by attraction*. Faith is born by attraction. One does not become Christian because they are forced by someone, but because they have been touched by love. More than having many available means, methods, and structures, which sometimes distract from what is essential, the Church needs hearts like Thérèse's, hearts that draw people to love and bring people closer to God. And let us ask the saint for the grace to overcome our selfishness and let us ask for the passion to intercede so that this attraction can be greater in people and so that Jesus might be known and loved.

Vatican.va

God's Dwelling Place

Pope Benedict XVI, Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 15-08-2006

In the Magnificat, the great hymn of Our Lady that we have just heard in the Gospel, we find some surprising words. Mary says: "Henceforth all generations will call me blessed". The Mother of the Lord prophesies the Marian praises of the Church for all of the future, the Marian devotion of the People of God until the end of time. In praising Mary, the Church did not invent something "adjacent" to Scripture: she responded to this prophecy which Mary made at that moment of grace.

And Mary's words were not only personal, perhaps arbitrary words. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit as St Luke said, exclaimed with a loud cry: "Blessed is she who believed...". And Mary, also filled with the Holy Spirit, continues and completes what Elizabeth said, affirming: "all generations will call me blessed". It is a real prophesy, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and in venerating Mary, the Church responds to a command of the Holy Spirit; she does what she has to do.

We do not praise God sufficiently by keeping silent about his saints, especially Mary, "the Holy One" who became his dwelling place on earth. The simple and multiform light of God appears to us exactly in its variety and richness only in the countenance of the saints, who are the true mirrors of his light. And it is precisely by looking at Mary's face that we can see more clearly than in any other way the beauty, goodness and mercy of God. In her face we can truly perceive the divine light.

"All generations will call me blessed". We can praise Mary, we can venerate Mary for she is "blessed", she is blessed for ever. And this is the subject of this Feast. She is blessed because she is united to God, she lives with God and in God.

On the eve of his Passion, taking leave of his disciples, the Lord said: "In my Father's house are many rooms... I go to prepare a place for you".

By saying, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word", Mary prepared God's dwelling here on earth; with her body and soul, she became his dwelling place and thereby opened the earth to heaven.

In the Gospel we have just heard, St Luke, with various allusions, makes us understand that Mary is the true Ark of the Covenant, that the mystery of the Temple – God's dwelling place here on earth – is fulfilled in Mary. God, who became present here on earth, truly dwells in Mary. Mary becomes his tent. What all the cultures desire – that God dwell among us – is brought about here.

St Augustine says: "Before conceiving the Lord in her body she had already conceived him in her soul". She had made room for the Lord in her soul and thus really became the true Temple where God made himself incarnate, where he became present on this earth.

Thus, being God's dwelling place on earth, in her the eternal dwelling place has already been prepared, it has already been prepared for ever. And this constitutes the whole content of the Dogma of the Assumption of Mary, body and soul, into heavenly glory, expressed here in these words. Mary is "blessed" because – totally, in body and soul and for ever – she became the Lord's dwelling place. If this is true, Mary does not merely invite our admiration and veneration, but she guides us, shows us the way of life, shows us how we can become blessed, how to find the path of happiness.

Vatican.va

The Remedy

"Take pains to refrain from sharp words. If they escape your lips, do not be ashamed to let your lips produce the remedy, since they have caused the wounds."

St Francis of Paola

Temptation

"As the pilot of a vessel is tried in the storm, as the wrestler is tried in the ring, the soldier in the battle, and the hero in adversity, so is the Christian tried in temptation."

St Basil the Great

The Garden of Eden

Some parishes recite the Last Gospel at the end of Mass. This was once the normal custom at many churches for the benefit of those people wondering how it all began. "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him." (John 1:1-3).

Genesis provides further details of this early creation for God created light to overcome the darkness. Then God created heaven and earth, land and sea: "and God saw that it was good". The earth began to produce vegetation and seed-bearing plants. Once again God saw that it was good. Then came lights, creatures, and man. "God created man in the image of himself ... God saw all he had made was good, and indeed it was very good." As part of this goodness, "God planted a garden in Eden which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned to cultivate and take care of it." Then God gave the man this admonition, "You may eat indeed of all the trees in the garden. Nevertheless of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat." Having settled the man in the garden, God decided, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate." So God made a woman. However, God's work that he had assessed as being very good was disrupted by the serpent who tempted the woman to ignore God's admonition about eating some of the fruit of the garden. So God expelled them from the garden of Eden.

Clearly, the Garden of Eden, and its cultivation and care by man, had been a part of God's plan for creation; but Satan succeeded in frustrating this plan, by making full use of intellectual pride, "God knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods". Even so, God decided that creation should continue. Accordingly, "the man had intercourse with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain". So God placed responsibility for the continuation of creation with the family, even though the family had been driven from Eden. Indeed, Cain also made a satanic response to family responsibility, and the assault on God's creation continued. Noah's flood was a clear indication that God's annoyance came very close to complete destruction of his creation. However, God relented and decided "never again will I strike down every living thing as I have done". Indeed it was from Noah's sons that "the whole earth was peopled". The next time God saw the need to challenge the poor response to his plan for creation, he came himself. Moreover, he made his entry to his creation by becoming part of a family, as the son of Mary. Once again Satan exercised his malice and Jesus was crucified; but Jesus defeated Satan and established his Church to redeem God's creation. The Church provides this redemption by means of the seven sacraments, two of which are vocational. The sacrament of Orders empowers a priest to counter Satan by providing personal contact with Jesus; and to forgive personal responses made to Satan's malice. The sacrament of Marriage provides continuation of God's chosen means of fulfilling his plan for creation. And for sharing his joy.

John H. Cooney, Cowwarr, Victoria

Vocation to Divine Worship

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1121 The three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders confer, in addition to grace, a sacramental *character* or "seal" by which the Christian shares in Christ's priesthood and is made a member of the Church according to different states and functions. This configuration to Christ and to the Church, brought about by the Spirit, is indelible, it remains for ever in the Christian as a positive disposition for grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church. Therefore these sacraments can never be repeated.

1123 The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to give worship to God. Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called 'sacraments of *faith*'.

1125 ...[N]o sacramental rite may be modified ... or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community.

Road Trip News

So I'm back on deck after a wonderful month away. We did a road trip up through Central Australia and down through outback Queensland and New South Wales. Magnificent! Loved every minute of it. My husband and I make a great traveling team – he does all the driving and the carrying of luggage, and I do all the planning and the bookings and the photos and activities along the way. We couldn't have asked for anything better, and love the country and the country hospitality!

It's always a blessing to be able to find Sunday Mass wherever we go, and to meet fellow Catholics from all walks of life. We had an amazing underground Mass in Coober Pedy, with Fr Paul Crotty – wonderfully simple, prayerful and reverent Mass. Father led the rosary before Mass – such a simple thing to do, but such a powerful image to see a priest on his knees leading his congregation in the rosary. Loved it.

Early morning Mass in Alice Springs was wonderful too. There were so many Sunday Mass times to choose from! Seems like a vibrant parish there. It was the feast of Corpus Christi, and the young Indian priest preached so well, with such faith and awe and joy. A delight. Also Missionary of Charity sisters there who were so friendly and who exude joy.

Then in Tennant Creek we were surprised to find the little historic church open on a Monday morning. And even more surprised to go in and find Father setting up for Mass! What a treat! We joined the one-man congregation for a very special Mass, celebrated gently and reverently by the lovely priest who may have been old enough to have been retired. God bless him! We were interested to see that the parish is dedicated to St Teresa of Calcutta, who visited and prayed there at some stage. Father and his one-man congregation invited us to stay and join them for the rosary after Mass, and we were sad to have to decline. We would have loved to have stayed to pray and have a chat with them afterwards, but we had a long drive to Mount Isa and had intended being on the road already. Still, it's a special feeling to be welcomed and to feel such a bond with fellow Catholics that you don't even know.

In Longreach the church was filled with busloads of students from a Catholic school in Brisbane, on a school trip of some sort. Sad to see no one knowing when to kneel at Mass or what to say. In Dubbo we had a good Vietnamese priest say 7.30am Sunday Mass. And in Mildura we were just grateful to have Mass, in spite of the priest's ad-libbing and casual attitude.

All in all, I couldn't imagine not being Catholic. Traveling, whether, in Australia or overseas, gives you such an amazing sense of the catholicity of being Catholic (so to speak). One big incredible family, one belief in one Jesus, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, and one universal Mass. God is so good! And I am so blessed!

Ed.

Prayer for Priests

Saint John Vianney

God, please give your Church today many more priests after your own heart. May they be worthy representatives of Christ the Good Shepherd.

May they wholeheartedly devote themselves to prayer and penance; being examples of humility and poverty; shining models of holiness; tireless and powerful preachers of the Word of God; zealous dispensers of your grace in the sacraments.

May their loving devotion to your Son Jesus in the Eucharist and to Mary his Mother be the twin fountains of fruitfulness for their ministry. Amen.

St John Vianney, Curé of Ars

Feast day 4 August

"A good shepherd, a pastor after God's heart, is the greatest treasure which the good Lord can grant to a parish, and one of the most precious gifts of divine mercy".

"The priest is not a priest for himself, he is a priest for you."

"One need not say much to pray well. We know that Jesus is there in the Tabernacle. Let us open our hearts to him, let us rejoice in his sacred presence. That is the best prayer".

Eucharistic Adoration in Gippsland, Victoria

Bass	Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Bairnsdale	1 st Friday after 9.10am Mass
Heyfield	1 st Fridays 10am – 4.30pm
Cowwarr Ord.	Wednesday (Mass 10am) – 11am 1 st Saturday (Mass 10am) – 11am
Churchill	Saturday (9.30am Mass) – 11am
Cranbourne	Fri & Sat in church: (9.30 Mass) – 11am
Drouin	Thursday 10am – 11am 1 st Friday 4pm–8pm (every 2 nd month, Dec. on)
Lakes Entrance	Friday 9.30am – 11am
Maffra	Wednesday (5pm Mass) – 6pm
Moe	Wednesday (9am Mass) – 10.30am
Morwell	Friday 10am-11am (Sacred Heart Church)
Orbost	Wednesday (9.30am Mass) – 11am
Rosedale	First Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Sale	Friday 10am - 11am
Trafalgar	Wed & 1st Sat: (9.30am Mass) – 10.45am
Traralgon	Wednesday 11am – 12 noon
Warragul	Saturday 10am – 11am 1 st Fri 4pm–8pm (every 2 nd month, Jan. on)
Wonthaggi	2 nd Friday (9.30am Mass) – 10.30am

Truth Himself Speaks Truly

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1381 "That in this sacrament are the true Body of Christ and his true Blood is something that 'cannot be apprehended by the senses,' says St. Thomas, 'but *only by faith*, which relies on divine authority.' For this reason, in a commentary on *Luke 22:19* ('This is my body which is given for you.'). St. Cyril says: 'Do not doubt whether this is true, but rather receive the words of the Savior in faith, for since he is the truth, he cannot lie.'"

Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore
Masked by these bare shadows, shape and
nothing more,
See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.

Seeing, touching, tasting are in thee deceived;
How says trusty hearing? that shall be believed;
What God's Son has told me, take for truth I do;
Truth himself speaks truly or there's nothing true.

St. Thomas Aquinas (attr.), *Adoro te devote*;
tr. Gerard Manley Hopkins

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

- no longer have a voice in 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