

Into the Deep

Issue 242

Newsletter of orthodox Catholics of Gippsland

December 2023

The Nativity Scene

Pope Francis, 03-12-2022

And so we come to the Nativity scene, which speaks to us of the birth of the Son of God who became man to be close to each one of us. In its genuine poverty, the Nativity scene helps us rediscover the true richness of Christmas, and purify ourselves of the many aspects that pollute the Christmas landscape.

Simple and familiar, the Nativity scene recalls a Christmas that is different from the consumerist and commercial Christmas: it is something else. It reminds us how good it is for us to cherish moments of silence and prayer during our days, which are often overwhelmed by frenzy.

Silence fosters contemplation of the Child Jesus, helps us to become intimate with God, with the fragile simplicity of a tiny newborn, with the meekness of his being laid down, with the tender affection of the swaddling clothes that envelop him. ...

And if we truly want to celebrate Christmas, let us rediscover through the Nativity scene the surprise and amazement of smallness, the smallness of God, who makes himself small, who is not born in the splendour of appearances, but in the poverty of a stable. And to meet him one must reach him there, where he is. One must lower oneself, one must make oneself small, leave all vanity behind, to arrive where he is.

And prayer is the best way to say thank you before this gift of free love, to say thank you to Jesus who wishes to enter our homes and our hearts. Yes, God loves us so much that he shares our humanity and our lives. He never leaves us by ourselves, he is at our side in all circumstances, in joy as in sorrow. Even in the worst moments, he is there, because he is the Emmanuel, the God with us, the light that illuminates darkness and the tender presence that accompanies us on our journey.

Vatican.va

The Courage to Repent

St John Chrysostom

Be ashamed when you sin. Do not be ashamed when you repent. Pay attention to what the devil did to you. These are two things: sin and repentance. Sin is a wound; repentance is a medicine.

Just as there are for the body wounds and medicines, so for the soul are sins and repentance.

However, sin has the shame; repentance possesses the courage.

No Other Reason

St Teresa of Calcutta

God loved the world so much that he gave Jesus his Son to come among us, to give us that good news, that God loves us. And that he wants us to love one another as he loves each of us. That he has created us for that one reason: to love and to be loved. No other reason. We are not just a number in the world. We are children of God.

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

Fr Speekman's Book

Thank you to all who have purchased Fr Speekman's book so far. I trust you have enjoyed it! Please let me know your thoughts after having read it – I would love to share your impressions with others.

Things Serious, Silly, and Sublime costs only \$15, and postage starts 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 2 or 3 of all issues of ITD since March 2023.

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.

Ed.

The Blurb

From the back of the book

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.

Christmas Presents Sorted! – Be Quick!

During November and December, if you **buy 3 or more copies** of Fr Speekman's book, *Things Serious, Silly, and Sublime*, you get **free postage** anywhere in Australia! Take advantage of this special offer to stock up on your Christmas presents! *Things Serious, Silly, and Sublime* would make a perfect Christmas gift for friends, family, fellow parishioners, or parish priests. You may also want to donate one to your local hospital library trolley, street library, parish library, piety stall or local Catholic bookshop.

Ed.

I'm Going to Hell

Things Silly, Serious and Sublime, by Fr John Speekman, p.31

He told me he was a sinner, a big sinner, and I congratulated him on his honesty.

You have committed sins so big and so often you burn with shame at the very thought of them. You tell me you deserve hell. You tell me you are going to hell – but I say, hang on, there is one sin you haven't committed yet and that sin is the only sin that can send you to hell.

He turned his eyes back to me.

Only when you reject the hand of mercy the Lord is holding out to you, only then do you deserve hell; only then will you go to hell because to reject the mercy of God is the ultimate sin.

So take his hand, it is there before you. Go to Confession. Tell him all those sins. Bite the bullet. Just do it!

Jesus himself told St Faustina: *The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy.*

footprints

Things Silly, Serious and Sublime, by Fr John Speekman, p.46

discovered in my heart
a set of footprints
not mine
but my size
exactly
and walking in these footprints
I am most myself
thank you, Jesus
for walking in my heart

Preparation

Pope Francis, Angelus address 12-11-2023

Today's Gospel offers us a story regarding the meaning of life of each person. It is the parable of the ten virgins, called to go out to meet the bridegroom (cf. Mt 25:1-13). Living is this: a grand preparation for the day when we will be called to go to Jesus! However, in the parable of the ten virgins, five are wise and five foolish. Let us see what constitutes wisdom and foolishness. Wisdom in life, and foolishness in life.

All those bridesmaids are there to welcome the bridegroom, that is, they want to meet him, just as we too desire a happy fulfilment of life: the difference between wisdom and foolishness is therefore not in goodwill. Nor does it lie in the punctuality with which they arrive at the meeting: they were all there. The difference between the wise and the foolish is another: preparation. The text says: the wise "*took flasks of oil with their lamps*"; the foolish, on the other hand, did not. Here is the difference: the oil. And what is one of the characteristics of the oil? That it cannot be seen: it is inside the lamps, it is not conspicuous, but without it the lamps have no light.

Let us look at ourselves, and we will see that our life runs the same risk: many times, we are very careful about our appearance – the important thing is to take good care of one's image, to make a good impression in front of others. But Jesus says that the wisdom of life lies elsewhere: in taking care of what cannot be seen, but which is more important, taking care of the heart. *Nurturing the inner life*. This means knowing how to stop and listen to one's heart, to keep watch over one's own thoughts and feelings. How many times are we unaware of what has happened in our heart in that day? What happens within each one of us? Wisdom means knowing how to make room for silence, so as to be capable of listening to ourselves and others. It means knowing how to give up some of the time passed in front of the phone screen to look at the light in the eyes of others, in one's own heart, in God's gaze upon us. It means not falling into the trap of activism, but devoting time to the Lord, to listening to His Word.

And the Gospel gives us the right advice so not to neglect the oil of inner life, the "oil of the soul": it tells us that it is important to *prepare it*. And in the account, we see, in fact, that the virgins already possess the lamps, but they must prepare the oil: they must go to the sellers, buy it, put it in the lamps. It is the same for us: the inner life cannot be improvised, it is not a matter of a moment, of once in a while, of once and for all; the inner life must be prepared by dedicating a little time every day, with constancy, as one does for every important thing.

So, we can ask ourselves: what am I preparing at this moment in life? Within myself, what am I preparing? Perhaps I am trying to put aside some savings, I am thinking about a house or a new car, concrete plans. They are good things; they are not bad things. They are good things. But am I also thinking about dedicating time to the care of the heart, to prayer, to service to others, to the Lord who is the destination of life.

Vatican.va

IN MEMORIAM

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Bert van Galen, late of Launceston, Tasmania, who died recently. Bert was a great supporter of ITD over the years. Many readers will remember his most recent series of letters to the editor during 2020 and 2021, on "Getting Older".

Eternal rest, grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen.

Ed.

No January Issue

There will be no January issue of ITD, but instead the usual combined January/February issue of ITD coming out by 1st of February.

I wish all ITD readers and families a prayerful Advent, a very merry Christmas, and a happy New Year! And let's remember to pray for those who are alone, and those who are unable to get to Mass. May they find comfort in the tiny Baby Jesus lying in his manger near our Mother.

Ed.

Entirely Fictional

I would like to comment on the article/excerpt, "A Fictional Account of History" in last month's ITD (Nov ITD, p.8). I agree fully with your application of the word 'fictional' with regard to Mr Patrick Morgan's brief summary of the problems I experienced with Bishop Jeremiah Coffey, in his book "A MASS-KIT IN THE SADDLE BAG: The Gippsland Catholic Church and Community".

Mr Morgan does get one thing right. I certainly am a "traditionalist" priest. I stand proudly with St Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 when he exhorts us to – "hold fast to the traditions you were taught...".

From this point on, however, Mr Morgan descends into the realm of the preposterous. Whoever informed him that Fr Speekman "physically divided his congregation in church and publicly queried those approaching Communion on their religious disposition", did him a serious disservice. Not only is this accusation in no way true, it is absurd, if not libellous.

I spent countless hours defending myself to Rome against Bishop Coffey's accusations and in no part of those accusations did anything like Mr Morgan's claims appear. If I had been guilty of such silly and divisive pastoral practices, why was I never, at any stage over all the years of the dispute, suspended from priestly duties? And why were Cardinal George Pell of Sydney and Bishop Gerard Hanna of Wagga Wagga ready to accept me into their dioceses, as were two other bishops who offered to give me a place? And why did the apostolic Nuncio at the time concede that I had been badly treated?

Mr Morgan also claims that "the Australian hierarchy intervened and transferred Fr Speekman to the conservative Wagga diocese to end the impasse. Bishop Coffey was upset by this outcome as the matter had been taken out of his hands." What?

Aside from the fact that my choice to move to Wagga was 6 years *after Bishop Coffey's retirement*, no one, not even the "Australian hierarchy", has the canonical power to intervene in a diocese lawfully governed by another bishop, much less to transfer a priest out of his diocese against the will of the bishop. This is an absurd fabrication – and it leads me to ask the question, *did Mr Morgan simply make all this up?* He offers no evidence for his narrative, and his bias against me is all too obvious, even to the point of associating me with the gradual deterioration of Bishop Coffey's health.

It has not been my habit to write in my own defence, but since this book purports to be a 'history' of the diocese of Sale and has been widely distributed there I felt it was my duty to challenge the entirely fictional account Mr Morgan has given.

Fr John Speekman, Old Junee, New South Wales

Like Ping Pong

Pope Francis to priests, 16-11-2023

I remembered the words the Lord said to Saint Teresa of Jesus when they took away the books she trusted: "I will give you a living book". Christ is the book I highly recommend.

But we must seek Him, in Scripture and the Gospel, in silent adoration, because we have lost the sense of adoration a little; we must find the Lord in the silence of adoration. ...

In the United States, a National Eucharistic Congress is being prepared for next year, and Blessed Carlo Acutis and Saint Manuel González have been chosen as its patrons, both of whom excelled – like so many saints of the Church – in the art of reading this living book, before the Tabernacle, in the silent, kneeling school. ...

Do not leave those who suffer alone, do not leave the Lord of the Tabernacle alone, convince yourselves that you cannot do anything with your hands if you do not do it with your knees.

Adoration, Eucharistic silence and intercession before the Tabernacle. And then yes, service. But it is like ping-pong, one thing leads to another, one thing leads to another.

Vatican.va

Disgusting Attack

I write in response to the fictional account of history, an excerpt from the book "A MASS-KIT IN THE SADDLE BAG" by Patrick Morgan (Nov ITD, p.8). It would seem anyone can get a 'factual book' published without being fact-checked!

Yes, the sad situation placed on Fr Speekman did get drawn out unnecessarily, and it was no fault of Fr Speekman's. The Congregation for the Clergy confirmed that Fr Speekman is an orthodox priest, faithful to the Magisterium and dedicated to the Parish, and that his ministry had been effective.

Bishop Coffey was unable to provide any evidence to the Congregation to sustain his claim that Fr Speekman's ministry was harmful or ineffective. Fr Speekman's first two appeals were successful and the Bishop was directed to reinstate him to Morwell Parish – but refused. I would believe in my opinion that Bishop Coffey was disobedient by not complying, and he did everything he could to remove a good priest from the Parish of Morwell, which was the true cause of the division. The matter was entirely in the Bishop's hands. To blame this situation for the Bishop's ill health is so wrong.

In the same excerpt, Patrick Morgan refers to another priest whose "licence was terminated" (I've never heard that terminology before) by Bishop Coffey, and how Bishop Coffey was "shocked and annoyed" that he returned to ministry in his home country. How come his name wasn't mentioned? The late Fr Spiteri had returned to Malta and perhaps he had confessed his sins to his local archbishop, and had therefore been allowed to continue his priestly duties, who knows? According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church 1550, the "The power of the Holy Spirit does not guarantee all acts of ministers in the same way [but] this guarantee extends to the sacraments, so that even the minister's sin cannot impede the fruit of grace...". So even the sin of the minister doesn't get in the way of the Sacrament. Jesus is still present when a priest is saying Mass or giving absolution.

The actions of Fr Spiteri were his own personal actions, there is no comparison to Fr Speekman's case. The attack on Fr Speekman was disgusting to say the least.

Josie Vitale, Morwell, Victoria

Getting it Wrong

Upon reading "A Fictional Account of History" in the November 2023 issue of Into the Deep (p.8), I was appalled by Patrick Morgan's take on the events relating to events in Morwell Catholic Parish (2003-2011). My question to him is: Did you do any research at all?

I was a member of the Parish Council over those years, including two terms as Chairperson. I can honestly say he has no idea about what actually happened over those years.

To most parishioners Father Speekman was an outstanding Catholic Priest who gave his all in his duty to bring us closer to God. We were devastated when he left us.

There are so many inconsistencies in Morgan's book in that short account regarding Morwell Parish, that one has to wonder what else in his "history" has he got so wrong. I don't intend to buy the book to find out.

Helen Palma, Morwell, Victoria

The Christian Family: Domestic Church

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2204 The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a *domestic church*. It is a community of faith, hope, and charity; it assumes singular importance in the Church, as is evident in the New Testament.

2205 The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation.

It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity.

The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task.

Candles in the Wind

When Fr Mike Schmitz, in the Catechism in a Year podcast, was explaining the Fourth Commandment [Honour your father and your mother], he highlighted and emphasized the sanctity of marriage and the family as the domestic church, and the fundamental importance of their evangelizing duty and task in culture, society and the world.

A Catholic marriage is the basic cell of the domestic church. Marriage and the family were both founded by God and are intimately related by His design and plan of salvation for the whole world. The saints, who themselves were profoundly evangelized, especially the married ones, were acutely aware of this. They built up their families as little domestic churches where the Bible was read and where they all prayed together with a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, our spiritual mother. In the family, as the first school of faith and evangelization, they made sure that the basic truths of the faith, as well as the commandments of God and the sacraments of the Church, were taught and explained to their children. They knew that this was the way for Catholic families to initiate the next generation into the Christian way of life and give them a strong Catholic identity.

The Church, as God's great universal family, is made up of individual families, and has entrusted these families with the duty and tasks of carrying out her evangelizing mission. It is important to remember that the well-being and vitality of one, affects the health and vitality of the other. If the majority these families, as domestic churches, are not themselves evangelized and are spiritually and morally weak, then it stands to reason that the Church militant likewise will be weakened and much less effective in fulfilling her divine mission to convert all nations.

This is why it is imperative that all the hierarchy in the Church, who are the primary evangelizers and only administrators of the sacraments, ensure that people are adequately, genuinely and sincerely attached and converted to Jesus Christ and his Gospel, before the sacrament of Baptism is administered. This is the basis, the foundation of the spiritual life, and Baptism is a sign and pledge of one's commitment to engage in an ongoing and life-long process of conversion.

Without this personal conversion, all other forms of catechesis are futile, and people who have been sacramentalized are set up as 'candles in the wind' so to speak, especially when it comes to the sacrament of marriage, and fulfilling the Church's all-important mission to convert all nations.

Gregory Kingman, Morwell, Victoria

Most sweet Jesus, Redeemer

of the human race, look down upon us humbly prostrate before you. We are yours, and yours we wish to be; but to be more surely united with you, behold each one of us freely consecrates himself today to your Most Sacred Heart.

Many indeed have never known you; many, too, despising your precepts, have rejected you. Have mercy on them all, most merciful Jesus, and draw them to your Sacred Heart.

Be King, O Lord, not only of the faithful who have never forsaken you, but also of the prodigal children who have abandoned you; grant that they may quickly return to their Father's house, lest they die of wretchedness and hunger.

Be King of those who are deceived by erroneous opinions, or whom discord keeps aloof, and call them back to the harbor of truth and the unity of faith, so that soon there may be but one flock and one Shepherd.

Grant, O Lord, to your Church assurance of freedom and immunity from harm; give tranquillity of order to all nations; make the earth resound from pole to pole with one cry: Praise to the divine Heart that wrought our salvation; to it be glory and honour for ever. Amen.

A partial indulgence is granted to the faithful who piously recite the above Act of Dedication of the Human Race to Jesus Christ King.

The Enchiridion of Indulgences, n.27

Mary's Virginity

Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus address, 18-12-2011

I would like to reflect briefly on the importance of Mary's virginity, namely that she conceived Jesus while remaining a virgin.

Against the background of the event of Nazareth is the prophecy of Isaiah: "Behold, a young virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel". This ancient promise found superabundant fulfilment in the Incarnation of the Son of God. Indeed, not only did the Virgin Mary conceive, but she did so through the work of the Holy Spirit, that is, God himself.

The human being who came to life in her womb took Mary's flesh, but his existence derived totally from God. He is fully man, made of clay – to use the biblical symbol – but comes from on high, from Heaven. The fact that Mary conceived while remaining a virgin is thus essential to the knowledge of Jesus and to our faith, because it testifies that it was God's initiative and, above all, it reveals *who* the conceived being *was*.

As the Gospel says: "the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God". In this sense, the *virginity* of Mary and the *divinity* of Jesus guarantees each other. This is what makes that single question so important that Mary, "greatly troubled", asks the Angel: "How can this be, since I have no husband?". Mary was very wise in her simplicity. She did not doubt God's power, but she wanted to better understand his will, in order to conform herself completely to this will. Mary was infinitely overcome by the Mystery, yet she occupied perfectly the place which, in its centre had been assigned to her. Her heart and her mind are fully humble and precisely because of her unique humility, God awaits this young woman's "yes" in order to carry out his plan. He respects her dignity and her freedom. Mary's "yes" entailed motherhood and virginity as a whole. She wanted everything in her to glorify God and he wanted the Son, born of her, to be totally a gift of grace.

Dear friends, Mary's virginity is unique and unrepeatable; but its spiritual meaning concerns every Christian, who is essentially linked to faith. In fact, those who put deep trust in God's love welcome Jesus and his divine life within them through the action of the Holy Spirit. This is the mystery of Christmas! I hope that you will all experience it with deep joy.

Vatican.va

Desiring to Heal Wounds of Division

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, in its Decree approving the publication of the missal for the Personal Ordinariates, begins with the sentence: "Desiring to heal wounds of division in the Body of Christ, Pope Benedict XVI approved the erection of Personal Ordinariates for Anglicans wishing to enter into the full communion of the Catholic Church." There was recognition that some Anglican customs and traditions were acceptable within Catholic practice. The erection of Ordinariates clearly demonstrated that very bitter past animosity could be healed. The Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross here in Australia is directed towards this healing.

The possibility of bitter past practice is also evident in the Sale diocese. In the past Catholic schools were provided by members of religious orders. Members of an order devoted their lives to following the spirit of a founder who had achieved sainthood by devoted service to the Church. However, many religious orders are no longer able to provide staff for Catholic schools and lay staff have taken their place. These lay staff require access to some government funding in order to achieve viable Catholic schools. This funding has resulted in some government regulation of schools so that school staff that once served according to spiritual guidance from a founder, now find that they also need university degrees to achieve access to government funding. These different pressures can cause conflict and division within the Body of Christ.

The Personal Ordinariate is a firm reminder that 'desiring to heal the wounds of division in the Body of Christ' has a long history and a very clear encouraging outcome.

John Cooney, Cowwarr, Victoria

Pro-Life Update in Australia

The following points are from my personal notes taken at the Right to Life Conference, Melbourne, 11-11-23 - Ed.

Dr Joanna Howe (Professor of Law): Re-imagining a prolife Australia; why we have lost and how we can win

- Abortion on demand for any reason and at any age, is now legal across every state and territory in Australia. Can it get any worse?
- The political take-over started with Emily's List, established 1996, which put pro-abortion women into parliament. There are currently 312 Labor women in government; our state and federal parliaments are far more extreme than the general public. Emily's List women are in the Liberal Party too.
- The pro-life movement has allowed itself to be intimidated by the 'gatekeepers' i.e. those that threaten outspoken people with the loss of their jobs, make people retract comments etc.
- We need to see abortion as a human rights issue, not just a Christian issue. In Victoria, one baby is born alive after abortion every 10 days, and left to die without medical care. 88,000 Australian children every year lose their life to abortion. It is the leading cause of death.
- We need to take over politics through grassroots organising.
- We need to create pro-life secular professional peak bodies.
- We must have courage and perseverance. Truth will prevail.

Richard Egan (researcher, author): Fighting back against legalised euthanasia and assisted suicide

- Euthanasia and assisted suicide is legal in all 6 Australian states.
- It abandons the suicide prevention campaign – we want zero suicide – but not for some people. It's saying that some people are right to think they are better off dead.
- It is abandonment of the lonely, mentally ill, disabled, homeless.
- It is discriminatory – someone has to agree/decide that you're better off dead.
- Healthcare centres that are resisting euthanasia are being persecuted.
- A "peaceful death" is illusory. 7% complications, like seizures, regurgitation, delayed death.
- Assisted suicide doesn't decrease the overall suicide rate – in some cases unassisted suicide increases.

Dr Marion Harris (academic researcher and oncologist): VAD – a state, national and international perspective

- Voluntary Assisted Dying is unnecessary from a medical perspective. And it is unsafe.
- VAD creates a need to ask for care instead of expecting care.
- There is division in palliative care units – it's a polarising issue.
- In Canada, VAD constitutes 4% of all deaths.

Angela Shanahan (author and columnist): VAD in the ACT

- Canberra's social agenda is the template for the rest of Australia. It's the new public morality.

Dr Elvis Seman (Professor, Medical Director): Medical complications of abortion

- Safety information is not given to women prior to abortion. Informed consent for other procedures includes detailed information on the nature of the condition, the proposed approach, expected outcome, risks etc. Politicisation of abortion is a barrier to patient consent and care.
- Longterm complications include higher risk of mental health issues, preterm birth, breast cancer, suicide, depression, anxiety, substance abuse.

Monica Doumit (Director Public Affairs, Archdiocese of Sydney): The Rallying Cry

- The battle is important. We must fight even if we're losing. The battle unites us.
- This is the work of generations – we are relay runners.
- We stand on the shoulders of giants – we don't have the right to give up.
- Persistence is formative – we need to resist the laws so that future generations can see what's wrong.
- We will win. It's only a matter of time. Every day of drought is one day closer to rain. The culture of death itself will wither and die.

The Source of Joy

Pope Francis, General Audience 15-11-2023

The Christian message, as we have heard from the angel's words to the shepherds, is the proclamation of "a great joy". And the reason? Good news, a surprise, a beautiful event? Much more, a Person: Jesus! He is the God made man who came to us. The question, dear brothers and sisters, is therefore not whether to proclaim it, but how to proclaim it, and this "how" is joy. Either we proclaim Jesus with joy, or we do not proclaim him, because another way of proclaiming him is not capable of bringing the true reality of Jesus. This is why a Christian who is discontented, a sad Christian, a dissatisfied, or worse still, resentful or rancorous Christian, is not credible. ... [T]he Gospel is a proclamation, a proclamation of joy. Ideologies are cold, all of them. The Gospel has the warmth of joy. Ideologies do not know how to smile; the Gospel is a smile, it makes you smile because it touches the soul with the Good News.

The birth of Jesus, in history as in life, is the source of joy: think of what happened to the disciples of Emmaus, who could not believe their joy, and the others, then, the disciples all together, when Jesus goes to the Upper Room, could not believe their joy. The joy of having the risen Jesus. An encounter with Jesus always brings you joy, and if this does not happen to you, it is not a true encounter with Jesus. ...

The first who need to be evangelized are us: we Christians. And this is very important. Immersed in today's fast-pace and confused environment, we too indeed may find ourselves living our faith with a subtle sense of renunciation, persuaded that the Gospel is no longer heard and no longer worth striving to proclaim. We might even be tempted by the idea of letting "others" go their own way. Instead, this is precisely the time to return to the Gospel to discover that Christ "is forever young, he is forever a constant source of newness" (cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 11).

Thus, like the two at Emmaus, one returns to daily life with the enthusiasm of one who has found treasure: they were joyful, those two, because they had found Jesus, and he changed their life. And one discovers that humanity abounds with brothers and sisters waiting for a word of hope. The Gospel is awaited even today. People of today are like people of all times: they need it. Even the civilization of programmed unbelief and institutionalized secularity; indeed, especially the society that leaves the spaces of religious meaning deserted, needs Jesus. This is the right moment for the proclamation of Jesus.

Therefore, I would like to say again to everyone: "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew". Do not forget this. ... I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed...encounter with Jesus Christ. Each one of you, take a little time and think: "Jesus, you are within me. I want to encounter you every day. You are a Person, you are not an idea; you are a travelling companion, you are not a programme. You, Jesus, are the source of joy. You are the beginning of evangelization. You, Jesus, are the source of joy!". Amen.

Vatican.va

Wise

Admirabile Signum, n.9

As the feast of Epiphany approaches, we place the statues of the Three Kings in the Christmas crèche. Observing the star, those wise men from the East set out for Bethlehem, in order to find Jesus and to offer him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These costly gifts have an allegorical meaning: gold honours Jesus' kingship, incense his divinity, myrrh his sacred humanity that was to experience death and burial. ...

Great joy comes over them in the presence of the Infant King. They are not scandalized by the poor surroundings, but immediately fall to their knees to worship him. Kneeling before him, they understand that the God who with sovereign wisdom guides the course of the stars also guides the course of history, casting down the mighty and raising up the lowly. Upon their return home, they would certainly have told others of this amazing encounter with the Messiah, thus initiating the spread of the Gospel among the nations.

Beyond the Pretty Lights

Pope Francis, Homily 24-12-2021

Brothers and sisters, standing before the crib, we contemplate what is central, beyond all the pretty lights and decorations. We contemplate the child. In his *littleness*, God is completely present. Let us acknowledge this: "Baby Jesus, you are God, the God who becomes a child". Let us be amazed by this scandalous truth. The One who embraces the universe needs to be held in another's arms. The One who created the sun needs to be warmed. Tenderness incarnate needs to be cuddled. Infinite love has a miniscule heart that beats softly. The eternal Word is an "infant", a speechless child. The Bread of life needs to be nourished. The Creator of the world has no home. Today, all is turned upside down: God comes into the world in littleness. His grandeur appears in *littleness*.

Vatican.va

Christmas Commitments

Pope Benedict XVI, 11-12-2011

Preparing for Christmas is very difficult today. I know there are so many commitments. But preparing for Christmas is not only buying, preparing and thinking, it is also keeping in touch with the Lord, going to meet him. And it seems to me very important not to forget this dimension. ... St Paul said: "pray constantly", in other words do not lose your contact with God. And this is not a burden in addition to all the others but rather the strength that helps us to do all that is necessary. In this regard, I wish you an enduring contact with Jesus, hence all his joy and his strength in order to live in this world. Have a good Advent and a Happy Christmas!

Vatican.va

A Special Instrument in God's Hands

St Teresa of Calcutta

The family is a special instrument in God's hands, for it is chiefly through the family that God wants to tell us that we are created for greater things: to love and to be loved.

As our families are, so will our relations with our neighbours be, and so will our towns, cities and our whole country appear.

If the family becomes a place of love and peace and holiness, then our nations and our world too will live in love, in peace, and in unity with God and each other.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta: A personal portrait,
by Fr Leo Maasburg, 2010, Ch 10, p.17

Masonic Membership (Still) Forbidden

**Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, November 1983,
signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, approved by Pope John Paul II**

Therefore the Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic association remains unchanged since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and therefore membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion.

**Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, November 2023,
signed by Cardinal Victor Fernandez, approved by Pope Francis**

On the doctrinal level, it should be remembered that active membership in Freemasonry by a member of the faithful is forbidden because of the irreconcilability between Catholic doctrine and Freemasonry (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Declaration on Masonic Associations" [1983]...). Therefore, those who are formally and knowingly enrolled in Masonic Lodges and have embraced Masonic principles fall under the provisions in the above-mentioned Declaration.

Vatican.va

A New and Wondrous Reality

St John Chrysostom

Behold on Christmas a new and wondrous reality. The angels sing and the archangels blend their voices in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt Christ's glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth and man in heaven.

He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below, and we who are lowly, are by divine mercy raised up.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven, hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices.

Ask not how. For where God wills, nature yields. For He willed. He had the power. He descended. He redeemed. All things move in obedience to God. This day He Who is born, and He Who is, becomes what He is not.

He is God become man, yet not departing from His Godhead.

Worship in Unity

Pope Francis, Ecumenical prayer vigil, 30-09-2023

Let us ask that we may know how, like the Magi, to worship in unity and in silence the mystery of God made man, certain that the closer we are to Christ, the more united we will be among ourselves.

And as the wise men from the East were led to Bethlehem by a star, so may the heavenly light guide us to our one Lord and to the unity for which he prayed. Brothers and sisters, let us set out together, eager to meet him, worship him and proclaim him, "so that the world may believe".

Vatican.va

Patron Saints Quiz

By request of a reader, I will attempt putting together a little quiz on patron saints. Please send me your favourite saint and what you pray to them for. Any stories of how your devotion to that saint came about will also be welcome. Apparently there are more than 10,000 saints recognised in the Catholic Church, so your input would help to narrow things down a bit! Thanks. **Ed.**

God's Love Doesn't Depend on Us

Pope Francis, Christmas Eve Homily 2020

Tonight, the great prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given".

To us a son is given. We often hear it said that the greatest joy in life is the birth of a child. It is something extraordinary and it changes everything. It brings an excitement that makes us think nothing of weariness, discomfort, and sleepless nights, for it fills us with indescribable and incomparable happiness.

That is what Christmas is: the birth of Jesus is the "newness" that enables us to be reborn each year and to find, in him, the strength needed to face every trial. Why? Because his birth is for us – for me, for you, for everyone. ...

Yet what do those words – *for us* – really mean? They mean that the Son of God, the one who is holy by nature, came to make us, as God's children, holy by grace. Yes, God came into the world as a child to make us children of God. What a magnificent gift! This day, God amazes us and says to each of us: "You are amazing".

Dear sister, dear brother, never be discouraged. Are you tempted to feel you were a mistake? God tells you, "No, you are my child!" Do you have a feeling of failure or inadequacy, the fear that you will never emerge from the dark tunnel of trial? God says to you, "Have courage, I am with you".

He does this not in words, but by making himself a child with you and for you. In this way, he reminds you that the starting point of all rebirth is the recognition that we are children of God. This is the undying heart of our hope, the incandescent core that gives warmth and meaning to our life.

Underlying all our strengths and weaknesses, stronger than all our past hurts and failures, or our fears and concerns about the future, there is this great truth: we are beloved sons and daughters. God's love for us does not, and never will, depend upon us. It is *completely free love*, pure grace.

Vatican.va

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 Mass
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

Let Us Enter

St Alphonsus Liguori

Arise, all ye nobles and peasants; Mary invites all, rich and poor, just and sinners, to enter the cave of Bethlehem, to adore and to kiss the feet of her new-born Son.

Go in, then, all ye devout souls; go and see the Creator of heaven and earth on a little hay, under the form of a little Infant; but so beautiful that he sheds all around rays of light.

Now that he is born and is lying on the straw, the cave is no longer horrible, but is become a paradise. Let us enter; let us not be afraid.

The Great Event

Pope Francis, Urbi et Orbi message, Christmas 2022

Like the shepherds of Bethlehem, surrounded by light, may we set out to see the sign that God has given us. May we overcome our spiritual drowsiness and the shallow holiday glitter that makes us forget the One whose birth we are celebrating. Let us leave behind the hue and din that deadens our hearts and makes us spend more time in preparing decorations and gifts than in contemplating the great event: the Son of God born for us.

Vatican.va

Contact *Into the Deep*

www.stoneswillshout.com

stoneswillshout@bigpond.com

12 Vincent Road, Morwell, Vic, 3840, Australia

 **find us on**  **facebook**

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

Donate via Ritchies Supermarkets Community Benefit program by nominating Into the Deep, CB number 81799.

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