



St Peter Julian's Newsletter

March 2017

Volume 10 Issue 3

FORTY DAYS OR FORTY YEARS?

Mass Times

Saturday Vigil:

5.30pm

Sunday:

9.30, 11.00am (Chinese),
12.30, 3.30, 5.00pm (Korean)

1st Sunday:

1.30pm (Filipino)

1st & 3rd Saturday:

2.15pm (Indonesian)

Monday to Friday:

7.30am, 12.10, 5.30pm

Saturday:

12.10pm & Vigil at 5.30pm

Public Holidays:

12.10pm



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www.stpeterjulianhaymarket.org.au

Back copies also available.

Let's start with a little numbers game. When are the forty days of Lent? Easy – from Ash Wednesday to Holy Thursday. That's forty-four days, not forty. Alright, let's try leaving out the Sundays (in times past they weren't counted for the Lenten fast). Alas, that gives us thirty-eight, not forty. There *is* a way to get forty – by counting from the first Sunday of Lent instead of Ash Wednesday – but that means pretending that Ash Wednesday and the days after it aren't part of Lent. Not the way to go.

So where does this leave us? With the realisation that we aren't meant to take the forty days of Lent literally. The Bible uses the number forty over and over again to symbolise a time of trial or an interval between two eras. Here's a few examples. The great flood in Noah's day lasted forty days; the Israelites spent forty years in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land; Moses spent forty days and forty nights in God's presence on Mt Sinai; the prophet Jonah spent forty days warning the people of Nineveh to repent; Elijah fasted for forty days on Mt Horeb; Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert; and in Luke's gospel forty days elapsed between the resurrection of Jesus and his ascension.

So much for the past. Right now the number forty has a double meaning for the Catholic community in Australia. In the first place it evokes the season of repentance and renewal that is just beginning. For forty days and more we, the already baptised along with those preparing for baptism, travel together towards the freedom and peace of Easter. That's why the first Preface of Lent calls it a "joyful season."

In the second place it suggests the much longer journey that we as church will have to make to become again a credible and trustworthy sign of the gospel. A journey perhaps of forty years rather than forty days, once the Royal Commission into child sexual abuse hands down its findings. Putting the two together suggests that we need to make the most of Lent this year to prepare for the long haul. Can we approach the next four decades of church life in a joyful Lenten spirit?

The gospel for Ash Wednesday puts the proven strategies of conversion on the table for us: prayer, fasting, almsgiving. Each of these traditional practices can be put in contemporary terms. Prayer is the habit of attending to the heart where God's wise Spirit dwells; fasting is the discipline of dieting from the toxic foods of our addictions; almsgiving is the exercise of justice, the hands-on work of ensuring that all human beings have the opportunity to truly live. Being creatures of our culture we may be prone to think of these as individual and short-term exercises. We can't do this anymore. We must see them now as permanent features of our life together as church. We the church are in constant need of reform.

Let's take a fresh look at these Lenten practices with the help of some thoughtful guides. Here's a fragment of what Thomas Merton wrote about prayer and its role in church renewal:



"For forty days and more we, the already baptised along with those preparing for baptism, travel together towards the freedom and peace of Easter. That's why the first Preface of Lent calls it a "joyful season."

The real purpose of prayer (in the fully personal sense as well as in the Christian assembly) is the deepening of personal realisation in love, the awareness of God (even if sometimes this awareness may amount to a negative factor, a seeming "absence"). The real purpose of meditation . . . is the exploration and discovery of new dimensions in freedom, illumination and love, in deepening our awareness of our life in Christ.

. . . prayer and meditation have an important part to play in opening up new ways and new horizons. If our prayer is the expression of a deep and grace-inspired desire for newness of life – and not the mere blind attachment to what has always been familiar and "safe" – God will act in us and through us to renew the Church by preparing, in prayer, what we cannot yet imagine or understand.ⁱ

There's no doubt that the Catholic community in Australia will have to leave behind "what has been familiar and 'safe'" in the decades to come. Prayer, for Merton, opens up the path to the future.

"The annual Project Compassion appeal in Australia during Lent is much more than an exercise in almsgiving. It's a means of educating us in the ways of justice. It's an annual call to conversion."

What about fasting? One way of looking at it is through the lens of hospitality. To make room for others is to fast from the insistent claims of the self. This kind of fasting means letting go of what we hold on to and defend for our sense of self – our independence, space, time, resources, priorities – in order to free up a place for others. Dorothy Day was a prophetic practitioner of hospitality. Catholic convert, pacifist, social activist, journalist and woman of prayer, she co-founded the House of Hospitality movement with Peter Maurin in America after the Great Depression. Here is something she wrote:

When Peter Maurin talked about the necessity of practising the Works of Mercy, he meant all of them. He envisioned Houses of Hospitality in poor parishes in every city of the country, where

these precepts of the Lord could be put into effect. . . . The Works of Mercy are a wonderful stimulus to our growth in faith as well as love. It is pruned again and again, and springs up bearing much fruit. For anyone starting to live literally the words of the Fathers of the Church – "The bread you retain belongs to the hungry, the dress you lock up is the property of the naked;" "What is superfluous for one's need is to be regarded as plunder if one retains it for one's self" – there is always a trial ahead.ⁱⁱ

We do not have to wait for trial. The testing time is already upon us and it will persist. But it is heartening to know that there are communities and parishes across Australia freeing up space to offer hospitality to refugees, asylum seekers and their families. This is the sort of thing that the prophet Isaiah called a fast pleasing to the Lord (58: 6-7).

The annual Project Compassion appeal in Australia during Lent is much more than an exercise in almsgiving. It's a means of educating us in the ways of justice. It's an annual call to conversion. This can take many forms. What is becoming more and more urgent is the need for an ecological conversion, a new consciousness about our relationship with creation. Theologian Elizabeth Johnson has written eloquently about this:

A flourishing humanity on a thriving Earth in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God: such is the global vision of creation we are called to in this critical age of Earth's distress. The immediate aim is to establish and protect healthy ecosystems where all creatures, including poor human beings, can thrive. The long-term goal is a socially just and environmentally sustainable society in which the needs of all people are met and species in the natural environment can prosper, onward to an evolutionary future that will still surprise.ⁱⁱⁱ

At its best the Catholic tradition has honoured creation and embraced created things as capable of bearing God's grace for us. Bread, wine, water, oil. Eating, drinking, touching, kissing, processing. Speaking, singing, vowing, remaining silent. This great sacramental tradition can serve as the wellspring for a new conversion to creation.

Prayer, fasting, almsgiving – these are habits for the long haul. May our prayer help us to imagine and become a new church (Merton). May our fasting make us a church of welcome and hospitality (Day). And may our almsgiving support “a flourishing humanity on a thriving Earth” (Johnson).

- i Christine Bochen, *Thomas Merton: Essential Writings* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 87.
- ii Robert Ellsberg, *Dorothy Day: Selected Writings* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983 & 1992), 98-99.
- iii Elizabeth Johnson, *Abounding in Kindness* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2015), 122.



MONTHLY MASSES & EVENTS

Indonesian Mass, 1st & 3rd Saturdays at **2.15pm (4 & 18 March)**. James Christian 0416 637 236.

Cantonese Mass, every Sunday at **11.00am**. Simon Liu 0411 377 618.

Korean Mass, every Sunday at **5.00pm**. Lucian Jin Young Noh 0451 465 857.

Filipino Mass, 1st Sunday at **1.30pm (5 March)**. Juliet Byrne 0437 045 945.

Holy Trinity Prayer Community, Eucharistic Adoration **2nd & 4th Saturdays (11 & 25 March)** at **3.00pm**. Jence Oesman 0414 506 770.

Mass of Anointing, Every 1st Saturday at **12.10pm (4 March)**.

Associates of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation, 2nd Saturday at **12.10pm (11 March)**. Mass followed by meeting. Fr Marcellus Glynn SSS (02) 9211 4100.

Life in the Eucharist (LITE), Every 4th Saturday in Hall at **2.15pm**. Next meeting **25 March**.

St Peter Julian's Altar Auxiliary. The **12.10pm Thursday** Eucharist is offered for members of the St Peter Julian's Altar Auxiliary. (For information on becoming a member please speak to the Receptionist.)

**CONGRATULATIONS
Fr Philip Watkins SSS**



Community Leader at St Peter Julian's Church in Sydney, Vicar and member of the Provincial Leadership Team, Fr Philip Watkins SSS, celebrated the 30th Anniversary of his first Profession on 4 February 2017.

Originally from New Zealand, Fr Philip has spent most of his religious life in Sydney.

Congratulations, Fr Philip!

NOTICES

HOME HELP SERVICES

For Gloria, home help services meant she could have company even when housebound after a fall. Our compassionate staff help ageing people all across Sydney manage housework and enjoy a social life. To find out more about **CatholicCare** call **13 18 19**, email connect@catholiccare.org or visit www.catholiccare.org.

AGEING AND DYING WITH DIGNITY

These are a part of life. How do we manage the emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual questions about our own ageing and mortality and that of loved ones. What is available to us to assist in such difficult and confusing times? Hear professional palliative, pastoral and health carers All are welcome to this free event. St Joseph's Catholic Church Newtown. Saturday, **18 March 2017**. Time: 3-5 pm. Details: newtown-faith.blogspot.com.au.

**CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY
- THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

This program offers a reflective insight into the Gospel with a view to living its message in our daily lives. It will focus particularly on how the Church had traditionally approached the reading of the Scriptures. **DATES:** Tuesday Nights – 28 Feb, **07, 21 & 28 March & 04 April**. **TIME:** 7:00pm. **COURSE COST:** \$10 per night. **Presenter:** Bishop David Walker DD, Emeritus Bishop of Broken Bay. **To register ring or email:** Sally 9398 2211 or sally@thecentre.com.au.

**CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY
- JOHN OF THE CROSS**

is one of the greatest spiritual guides in our tradition. In the Spiritual Canticle he reflects on the journey to God from the beginning to its fulfilment in heaven. His wisdom for the spiritual journey has caused him to be made a Doctor of the Church. **DATES:** Wednesday Nights – **01, 08, 22, 29 March & 05 April** **TIME:** 7:00 – 8:30pm **COURSE COST:** \$10 per night. **To register ring or email:** Sally 9398 2211 or sally@thecentre.com.au.

The Sermon on the Mount, as in *Matthew 5: 1-12*, is well known and has guided Christian living over the ages. To hyphenate the word spells out more clearly the stances or attitudes we are called to practice. In effect, they may be considered as a practical application of the two great commandments, namely to love God above all and our neighbour as ourselves. Let us glance anew at this charter for Christian living.

How blest are the poor in spirit.

Who are blest? Those who know, accept and believe that all they are and all they have comes as a gift from God. God is first; no status, wealth, pride of life supplants God in the believer's heart. Talents are meant to be used; however, no matter how great they are, a Christian remembers all is gift. This is another way of saying "poor in spirit."

How blest are those who mourn.

These are the sensitive people who are deeply saddened by all the evil in the world. This causes them great distress. In response to this sorrow they reach out in compassion to all who suffer because of one evil or another: injustice, killings, sickness, poverty and more. Their positive response to their sadness is true compassion for sufferers.

How blest are the gentle.

One hopes we have all encountered gentle people in our lives. They have learnt from Jesus who is gentle and humble in heart. This is a positive gift and is in no sense a weakness. It has a power and strength that defies understanding.

How blest are the just.

These are those who hunger and thirst for justice at every level of society. They are prepared to work and suffer to make justice a reality wherever they discern injustice. The promise of the Beatitude is that eventually they will be satisfied, a gracious gift of God.

How blest are the merciful

A forgiving heart is a treasure yet many struggle with a desire to forgive. If hurt, then have the intention to forgive, pray for that grace; forgiveness is in the will and intention. Emotions may be contrary to the desire to forgive. No need to panic, the will is correct, you are forgiving even if your feelings are running in opposite directions. If you will to forgive, then you are on the right path despite contrary emotions.

How blest are the upright.

This is to do with integrity of life, making a firm decision to remain wholly committed to the Lord and to be a person of absolute integrity in daily living.

How blest are the peacemakers.

All of us love peace. Those who work for peace are called to suffer much in life. Many struggle with inner peace, peace in families, peace in society. Peacemakers are likewise needed on an international level, as all will agree. Peacemakers will be called children of God!

How blest are those who suffer for the Kingdom of God.

They are persons who follow Christ in all circumstances of life. In our world today many Christians live out this Beatitude due to unjust persecution. Courage is needed to live as a Christian in our modern societies.



Blest are the humble.
 Blest are the compassionate.
 Blest are the gentle.
 Blest are the just.
 Blest are the upright.
 Blest are the peacemakers.
 Blest are the courageous.