



# St Peter Julian's Newsletter

November 2017

Volume 10 Issue 11

## NO LONGER AFRAID OF DYING

### 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



### Blessed Sacrament Congregation

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Back copies also available.

"It was not happiness, Tony; it was . . . beatitude – blessedness!"

My fellow religious, Fr Cornelius Dings (known as Cor), was sharing an experience he had while his body lay lifeless on the operating table in an Austrian hospital. Critically injured in a motor accident in the mountains, he had been rushed to the Klagenfurt hospital. The medical team had done their best to save him but after twenty long minutes with instruments registering no sign of life, it was over. The chief surgeon had begun certifying his death

He, meanwhile, had been travelling through an exquisitely beautiful land. Many people were there. Joy was in the air, a happiness beyond anything he had ever dreamed of. Though he had no wish to return to his body he was given to understand that he must go back. There were still things for him to do.

A young American doctor turned to the chief surgeon with a request to be allowed to make one last effort to revive him. Consenting, he warned her that, even if life returned, Cor would most likely have suffered irreparable brain damage.

Three surprises were in store for them!

First, she succeeded; second, once awake after a protracted coma, he gave little evidence of brain impairment; third, what he told them about being 'dead' amazed them.

So impressed were they that he was invited to recount his experience to the university medical faculty and later on Austrian television.

Are near-death experiences (NDEs) real?

Such experiences have been an object of much international scientific research since Dr Raymond Moody's 1975 book, *Life after Life*. I personally have known four people who have had them.

With the Feast of All Saints and All Souls (Commemoration of the Faithful Departed) it is a timely theme for our November reflection. At an era when religion is in sharp decline in the Western world, NDEs offer an intriguing challenge to today's increasing unbelief.

That they are real can no longer be de-

nied, given that so many – thousands in fact – have been verified and have been the object of scientific study. What the experiencers saw and heard while 'dead' has been found again and again to be exact and precise. Let me give some examples.

Both a lifelong friend (M) and a woman I meet regularly in a discussion group (E) found themselves looking down on their own bodies from a corner of the ceiling while medical staff worked desperately to save their lives. They saw and heard everything while feeling no pain or distress at all – on the contrary, as E described it, only "peace, bliss."



"Not long afterwards," she told us, "I began my journey down a tunnel. I was drawn to it. I felt as if I was on my next adventure. However it was quite soon after being in the tunnel that I was told: 'No, this is not your time. You must go back.' So there I was, back in the corner of the ceiling, once again looking down on my body and watching the people in the room."

When two nurses hurried away to get some oxygen cylinders, "I went through the walls and followed them." She heard them discussing what to do. On their return they urged her to breathe. "Seeing how desperate they were, and how agitated my husband was, I tried again and again, only to be back in the corner of the ceiling. It was very hard work." Eventually she returned to her body.

"I don't fear death," she told us. "Life after death is very peaceful. We experience bliss."

Though what she, a highly qualified person, had to say about the matter is most interesting, space does not permit me to share it all with you here. So let me sum-

marize a few of the most striking facts from the large body of scientific research now available.

Some common features of NDEs.

Commonly, people who experience NDEs are lucidly conscious. They can see and hear what is happening and even reflect and choose. They pass through walls. They vividly remember every detail. Despite the state of their organism, they feel no pain – only love and peace, even “bliss.”

Many traverse a tunnel into a land of light and joy. Meetings often occur – with a mysterious “Being of light,” angelic figures or loved ones, still living or dead family members (often said to appear “transformed, spirit-like, and beautiful”). Some learn things they could never have known and later check out and find to be true.

Fear of dying is no more – even for very small children (85% of cases) who have had the experience.

Perhaps most astonishing of all is that people born blind actually see during their out-of-body experience, only to lapse back into blindness on their return to the body.

Despite attempts to explain the phenomena medically and scientifically – comprising some twenty different theories – NDEs remain resistant to physical or physiological theories.

NDEs appear to be independent of people’s prior beliefs. But, of course, for the religious-minded they are confirmatory. As the lady quoted earlier told us, “I was taught the elements of a spiritual life quite early in life. My NDE was a seamless fit with what I had been taught.”

From a scientific point of view (and so apart from faith), writes Jesuit thinker, Fr Robert Spitzer, “it is highly probable that human consciousness can and does survive physical death. This evidence corroborates the reality of post-physical existence, but it goes even further—it corroborates some of Jesus’ claims about life after physical death.”

It also makes Jesus’ resurrection appearances – enter-

ing the room while the doors are closed – seem far less weird than they might to an unbeliever.

He mentions especially how the frequently experienced “overwhelming love of ‘the bright white light’ reported by many patients” supports “Jesus’ teaching about the unconditional love of God and the unconditional love and joy of eternal life.” In fact, an astonishing “99 % of patients who have and recall a near-death experience unreservedly indicate that it is filled with love.” Let me close with just one more example:

“I became very weak, and I fell down. I began to feel a sort of drifting, a movement of my real being in and out of my body, and to hear beautiful music. I floated on down the hall and out the door onto the screened-in porch. There, it almost seemed that clouds, a pink mist really, began to gather around me, and then I floated right straight on through the screen, just as though it weren't there, and up into this pure crystal clear light, an illuminating white light. It was beautiful and so bright, so radiant, but it didn't hurt my eyes. It's not any kind of light you can describe on earth. I didn't actually see a person in this light, and yet it has a special identity, it definitely does. It is a light of perfect understanding and perfect love.... And all during this time, I felt as though I was surrounded by an overwhelming love and compassion.”



**Fr Anthony McSweeney SSS**

**MONTHLY MASSES & EVENTS**



**Catholic Indonesian Community Mass**, 1st & 3rd Saturdays (**4 & 18 Nov**) at **2.15pm**  
Harry Liong 0425 918 925.

**Chinese Community Mass (Cantonese) Mass every Sunday at 11.00am.** Simon Liu 0411 377 618.

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

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

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

**Mass of Anointing** every 1st Saturday (**4 Nov**) (**Feb-Dec**) at **12.10pm.**

**Associates of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation**, 2nd Saturday (**11 Nov**) at **12.10pm** Mass followed by meeting. Fr Marcellus Glynn SSS (02) 9211 4100 or (02) 9270 6900.

**Life in the Eucharist (LITE) (Next meeting 18 Nov)** in the Hall at **2.15pm.**

**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).

## Fr John Thomas Magill SSS (1931 - 2017)



**Fr John Magill** was a New Zealander who made a significant contribution to the Blessed Sacrament Congregation in Australia, and to the wider Catholic Church on both sides of the Tasman.

As a young priest at St Francis' Church, Melbourne in the early 1960s, John became well known to many as director of the Catholic Youth Adoration (CYA) society, which was the Congregation's eucharistic apostolate for teenagers.

Under John's inspirational leadership, CYA comprised about 2500 members and student leaders. St Francis' Church was invariably full of young people at CYA holy hours and other devotions.

He founded the Eymard Society in 1960 to maintain the values of CYA in a form more suited to young adults over the age of nineteen (when CYA membership ceased).

During the 1960s and 1970s, John held appointments as community leader at St Francis' Church in Melbourne and at St Peter Julian's Church, Sydney. As provincial consultor between 1981 and 1984, he was one of the leaders of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation's Australian province.

He also served the Congregation as retreat master at Bowral, NSW (1965-68); national director of vocations (mid 1960s); house treasurer and house consultor in Sydney (1970s); and as a parish priest in Perth, WA (1983-86).

Between 1973 and 1977, while on study leave in the United States, he obtained tertiary qualifications in psychology and pastoral counselling. Later, as a rostered counsellor at St Peter Julian's Church and other places, he was able to employ his professional skills in the service of the Congregation's apostolate.

In 1997-98, the Australian province supported his re-

quest to collaborate with the Sisters of St Joseph in ministering to a marginalised community at Claymore, near Campbelltown, on the southwestern outskirts of Sydney.

During a visit to New Zealand in 1998, he was asked by Bishop Denis Browne if he could help with the 'critical shortage of priests' in the Diocese of Hamilton. On return to Australia, he made an 'agonising decision' to respond.

With the Congregation's endorsement, John was granted temporary leave which eventually became ongoing. Bishop Browne posted him to Waihi in 1999, and later to Opotiki and Mount Maunganui.

Writing in December 2000 about Opotiki, John said that there were four churches in the parish: 'Three are Maori communities – great people – and all are responding to the regular instruction and experience of the Eucharist'. Numbers had nearly doubled since his arrival.

'I feel so enriched,' he wrote.

In addition to parish ministry, John assisted with preparation of candidates for the priesthood and he regularly travelled the diocese to minister the sacraments, where needed. He wrote with some pleasure in 2005 that he had celebrated and preached at thirty-one of the thirty-seven churches in the Diocese of Hamilton.

His later years were spent at the Mary MacKillop Centre at Mission Bay, Auckland, where the Sisters of St Joseph ran a nursing home and retirement complex.

At the age of eighty-six, on 13 October 2017, Fr John Magill SSS died peacefully in the care of the Sisters of St Joseph at Mission Bay, after sixty-one years of religious profession and fifty-nine years of priesthood.

May he rest in peace.

*This text is a shortened version of a more detailed biography of Fr John Magill by archivist Damien Cash that may be viewed on the Blessed Sacrament Congregation website ([www.blessedsacrament.com.au](http://www.blessedsacrament.com.au)).*

### **SINGERS—SOLOISTS—SOPRANOS**

*Available for Weddings, Special Occasions, Funerals, Memorial Services.*

*For details, please contact our Receptionist.*

### **'OF LIFE AND LOVE' MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSES**

Also, as some of you may be aware, the Life, Marriage and Family Centre is facilitating the marriage preparation courses previously run by the CAEC. The remaining dates for the 2017 courses are **11 & 18 Nov.**

### **GRIEF TO GRACE—Healing the Wounds of Abuse—**

is a spiritual retreat for anyone who has suffered degradation or violation through physical, emotional, sexual or spiritual abuse. The retreat will be held 8-13 April 2018. To request an application contact Anne by emailing [info@griefftoGrace.org.au](mailto:info@griefftoGrace.org.au) or phone 0407 704 539. For more information visit [www.griefftoGrace.org](http://www.griefftoGrace.org).



## **"DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME"**

*Fr Ed Wood SSS*

It was ever so quiet in Jerusalem, the moon was riding high and in every home Passover was being celebrated. A feast in which all Jews both remembered and were one with the long-past liberation from slavery in Egypt.

In the Upper Room the companions of Jesus, the Apostles, had gathered to celebrate this special occasion. The usual ritual was followed but with breath-taking differences. Jesus, their undoubted leader and shepherd, washed the feet of the Apostles. This was a lesson, by example, of how humble service was to be the essence of discipleship. The Lord Jesus then spoke at length to them, prayed with them and next came the unexpected. Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to the Apostles saying: *"Take and eat, this is my Body which will be given up for you."* Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them saying: *"This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant that will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins."*

A moment of profound impact - even if scarcely perceived at that instant. A gift of self to those close to Jesus...yet he knew one was to betray him, another to deny him and the rest to desert him the following day. What love, what compassion, what selfless giving in love on the part of Jesus! One needs to ponder deeply this love. Jesus then said about the whole event, *"Do this in memory of Me."* What do these words mean?

Let's recall the sequence of events...

*They gathered as a COMMUNITY with Jesus.  
They experienced his humble act of SERVICE.  
They listened to the WORDS of Jesus.  
They PRAYED TOGETHER.  
They shared in the BREAD and the CUP.*

All these elements were intended in the words, *"Do this in memory of Me."*

Jesus then went to Gethsemane and so began his passion, death and resurrection and in this manner revealed the link between the Last Supper Event and his suffering, death and resurrection.

After Jesus has returned to his heavenly Father we find the Apostles gathering in the name of Jesus, praying together, listening to the Word of God and breaking bread together. All this in memory of Jesus, coupled with a firm belief and understanding that they were one with the unique events of the death and resurrection of Christ. They shared in his very Body and Blood in the breaking of the bread, namely, the Eucharist/Mass. These gatherings and celebrations of the first Christian Community are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and other New Testament texts.

Catholics and Orthodox Christians gather each Sunday as communities in the name of Jesus, they pray together, listen to the Word of God and receive Communion . . . the Body and Blood of the Lord. Once strengthened by the Eucharist, Christians are sent forth to give humble and loving service to all and to proclaim by their lives the Good News. They proclaim the passing by of the Lord until he comes again in glory and majesty.

The Lord at the Last Supper gave himself as the Bread and Cup of eternal life. Ancient Christians eagerly celebrated the Eucharist and it strengthened them to proclaim the Gospel - even when facing persecution and death. One wonders, then, why so many who claim to be Catholic rarely, if ever, come to join in this great event and carry out the Lord's wish, *"DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME."*

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