

GOD AT WORK

THIRTEEN SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS:
Ordinary Sundays 22–34 Year B



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Pope Francis wears his heart on his face – often a smile, sometimes quizzical and on rare occasions, stern. It is never bland or neutral. His face shows the varied ways he is relating with people.

Relationship is key to understanding the Pope’s style and writings. A long paragraph in his encyclical *Laudato Si’* details its importance. The Pope writes that there is an unbreakable bond between God, Earth and Humanity #LS 66 – God in relationship. The word ‘relationship’ in English is often vague, not emotive or punchy. Bond and link, tie and union, kin and affinity are stronger words but with a similar meaning.

Every Sunday Catholics celebrate the Lord’s Supper to both express and deepen the bond between God, Earth and Humanity. The community of believers gather at the Lord’s Table, remember the works of God and pray in thanksgiving. As the creative Father, incarnated saving Son and abiding Spirit, God is present among each worshipping community, the Church, united in Communion.

Communities proclaiming Scripture as the story of God at work forms the bedrock of worship. From the first work of God in creating the Cosmos to the saving work of God in the person of Jesus,

believers proclaim this message of God at work. But the Good News does not stop there. The loving kindness of God continues, ever active in earth’s evolution and human history. God is ever at work upholding and healing, transforming and giving hope for life’s journey. God is active in day-to-day life – in the work place and at home, in times of stress and times of rest.

The daily joys and hopes, anxieties and pain of believers and their world become their prayer. They celebrate the good with joy, ask forgiveness for the bad and petition God to carry them forward with strength and in hope. Worship leaders gather these stories of God at work and bring them to the holy table of the Lord. The Eucharistic community unite and bond together in Thanksgiving. They reinforce their kinship with peoples of every nation and species on Earth as many parts of the one family of God. The unbreakable relationship between God, Earth and Humanity is made real and complete.

The word WORK is key in this liturgical resource. Firstly, it invites worshippers to remember the ongoing works of God. Second, it invites us to look for the active presence of God in the varied works of our daily lives. These two sets of works are the source of liturgical prayer, bubbling up in

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celebration. In a type of counterpoint, the works of God and the works of our daily lives bounce off each other. Just as music can have varied moods, liturgical worship embraces every emotion from sad lament to full-throated joy.

This resource is a second part that continues what started with the God in the Streets series. As in the first part, it offers liturgical suggestions for Year B Ordinary Sunday Masses, running from the September Season of Creation until the Feast of Christ the King. It uses the official readings of the Lectionary to suggest various graces active in the God.Earth.Humanity relationship. God always reaching out in works of loving kindness; humanity always searching for the presence of God in various places of work and commitment – hence its title God at Work.

Accelerating Climate Change is a cloud that hangs over every celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Destructive floods, uncontrolled wildfires and life-sapping droughts are ever-present impacts of climate change. Mindless escape and lies dominate arrogant human responses. King Canute had his throne placed in the waves on

the seashore to see it washed away. He wanted to image human arrogance to the people. Pope Francis wrote Laudate Deum in the lead up to COP28 in 2023 saying, stop.learn.act now. No true worshipping community can ignore climate change. It challenges, not unlike the apocalyptic Scripture read around the feast of Christ the King.

The simple aim of this resource is to help believing communities pray about their lives in the here and now. It can help liturgical teams and priests prepare Sunday celebrations of the Lord’s Supper by suggesting Prayers of the Faithful that reinforce connections between the Sunday Scriptural and the Work of God in the working life of the faithful.

Like God in the Streets, this resource can be freely adapted to local needs. As every liturgical context is unique, so must its liturgical reflections and prayers. Adaptations however need to preserve the principle of counter-point, bouncing the real life situations of believers off the designated Sunday Readings. This principle helps preserve a genuine Catholic tradition of continuity.

1. 22nd SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Planted in God's Truth

Life Realities

Worry about what teaching to follow, deception and misinformation, worldly-wise temptations, power of family and cultural traditions, trying to live with integrity, respecting one's own heart.

Grace to Celebrate

Today's Scripture reminds us that we are called to live planted in the truth of God, and warned against offering just lip service to God's commands. Evil does not come from outside but from within our own hearts. So, we celebrate that nourished by God's truth we can live with integrity and compassion, finding God present in a world of confusion.

Scriptural Excerpts

Dt 4: 1-2, 6-8; Ps 14; Jm 1: 17-18, 21b-22, 27; Mk 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

hear my teachings

act on them so you may live

do justice, live in God's presence

no deceit of tongue

no usury, no bribes, for

God Father of light, unaltered

birthed us by the word of truth

with meekness receive saving words

be doers, not only hearers

help the orphans and widows

the first fruits of God's creation.

disciples ate with unwashed hands

why not walk according to tradition?

Jesus said: you hypocrites

honouring me only with lip service

putting aside the commands of God

understand, nothing from outside defiles

what comes from inside defiles

evil thoughts, pride and foolishness.

Jesus took biblical faith in God the Creator, emphasizing a fundamental truth: God is Father ... recognize the paternal relationship God has with all creatures

– Pope Francis *Laudato Si'* #96

Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Traditions - God guides us through the teachings of our forebears. That we walk together with our church communities, listening and guided into ways of living God's truth. We pray ...
2. Liturgy - We remember the great works of God by liturgical prayer. That our worship never become lip service but, challenge and nurture us to grow as missionary disciples. We pray ...
3. Journey in Truth – God began the evolutionary journey of the Universe. That our parish help Catholic Earthcare discover the Cosmic Christ in this land ... we pray
4. Integrity - God never gave up on the People of Israel. That as a nation and individuals, we not fall into despair but embrace our times by living lives of justice and compassion ... we pray
5. Season of Creation – The Cosmos is God's first revelation. That we join with Pope Francis and ecumenical leaders proclaiming God present in creation as our common home. We pray ...

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. Your Son was born in truth and justice
The first fruit of a new creation
Bringing the light of wisdom and caring love
Challenging those who offer mere lip service
Fulfilling traditions by renewal from within
Birthing us into the ways of truth in your presence.
So we join the messengers of God
the saints and all people of good will
and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...



liberated from our narrowness ... let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being

– Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #8

Covenants - God Faithful and True

God shows an ongoing 'Covenant of Presence' in all its closeness when Jesus ate the Last Supper with his friends. God stayed close to the Chosen People; leading them as a pillar of fire to a new land; guiding them through Moses' Decalogue. God blessed town and country, soil and livestock, households; their comings and goings living amid other tribes (Dt 28:3-6). God liberated the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt and Babylon. There is joy living daily in God's presence, in whom we live and move and exist, inviting us to share a holy memorial meal of liberation (Ac 17:24-28).

Sing Truth with Feeling

From Luke's Magnificat to St Thomas Aquinas's Eucharistic poems, from Charles Wesley hymns to Eleanor Farjeon's 'Morning has Broken', singing nourishes Christian life. Hymns move our hearts and minds to feel the presence of God. Australians McAuley and Connolly's hymns of Cosmic Praise put God the Creator within our ecologically aware modern world, even naming the ocean's obscure diatom plankton. Sing a New Song is one with Thomas Berry's New Story of Cosmic Salvation.

Human Goals and Social Media

UN delegates formed eight Millennium Development Goals for nations to work towards by 2030. Poverty, health, education, biodiversity and the challenges of climate change form a framework for choices. But the reality of setting goals for young people is complicated by the manipulating power of social media where issues around well-being predominate. Peers set agendas – desire to belong, relate closely with other young people, be entertained - each adds pressure. Seeking goals in life grounded in truth is a difficult task, taking time and personal awareness.

Evolution of God Given Life

U-Tube clips on the evolution of cosmos vividly show the gradual flowering of life on Earth - sometimes dramatic with asteroid showers, volcanoes and life extinctions. Scientists love the story. It is exciting. Looking with the eyes of faith, the clips lead believers to fall in love with God's Earth, to respect scientific insights and accept the reality of evolutionary processes in all facets of life. Importantly, science gives us a method to help unravel the mystery of life. Nature has its own time scales and challenges narrow human centred Anthropocentric thinking.

together we can seek the truth in dialogue, in relaxed conversation or in passionate debate

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #51



love's openness to truth protects it from a fideism that deprives it of its human and universal breadth

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #184

2. 23rd SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Free the Enslaved

Life Realities

The physically impaired, the socially shunned, the self-important, people clamoring after fashion, organisers to free the downtrodden, opening the hope of a new vision.

Grace to Celebrate

Today's Scripture reminds us that God's grace combines justice and compassion, confronting the powerful to reach out to those on the fringes of life, to heal and sow hope. So, we celebrate that baptised into Christ Jesus we are graced to act as God acts.

Scriptural Excerpts

Is 35: 4-7; Ps 145; Jm 2: 1-5; Mk 7: 31-37

*fainthearted: take courage
the eyes of the blind are opened
the lame leap like a deer
the tongue of the dumb set free
desert waters, wilderness streams
God keeps faith forever
frees the enslaved, the cast down
cares for stranger, orphan and widow
demolishes the ways of sinners
praise the Lord my soul
Christ takes no note of prestige
do not judge with unjust thoughts
God chooses the humble rich in faith
heirs of those who love
they brought a deaf-mute to Jesus
he prayed Ephphetha, be opened
tell no one but they proclaimed
he has done all things well.*



Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Proclaim Goodness – People proclaimed the works of Jesus. That we congratulate Catholic Earthcare, and ask Catholic newspapers to report works of eco-faith ... we pray ...
2. Complacent - Justice and mercy meet in God. That we not be lame in fighting abuse of land or people, nor blind to tyrannical economic structures ... we pray
3. Carers – Care for the blind, deaf and lame are signs of God's Reign. That we financially and physically support carers for less-abled people ... we pray
4. Web of Life – God is the author of billions of years of cosmic evolution. That Church leaders encourage us to join in secular groups promoting the evolving web of life ... we pray
5. Water - God gave water to the Chosen People in the desert. That Australia generously aid all nations to provide clean water for their peoples ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. Jesus showed a special love for the outsider Reaching out to free widow and orphan Healing the blind, deaf and lame Uniting himself with the cycles of Earth, and Calling his followers to do all things well As signs of God's freeing presence To grow peace on earth. So we join the messengers of God the saints and all people of good will and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

Freeing Modern Slaves

Consumers demanding cheaper restaurant meals and home delivery services often close their eyes to the employment conditions and wages of workers. The ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans) network focuses on legal advocacy and direct help with trafficked persons. They apply the words of Jesus

[committed] help so many people to be healed ... present to those enslaved by different addictions ... devote themselves to education – Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #76

I have come that all may have life and have it to the full (Jn10:10) and Article 4 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the supply chain, ships enslave crews at sea for their entire employment to supply cheap fish imports to Australia. The Gospel proclaims God given Freedom. Acting with integrity is a way of life for believers.

Denis Edwards

An Adelaide diocesan priest, Denis Edwards opened Christians globally to the Cosmic dimension of faith. *We are made from stardust* he wrote, each of us descend over aeons from the cosmic evolution of the stars. Geological science paints a source of wonder and reasons for human belonging on Earth. Edwards gave a vision of hope in spite of the stark realisation that human actions are altering the very biochemistry of the planet. Cosmic spirituality leads to both lament mistakes and embrace lifestyles that free humanity for the journey.

brother or sister who is enslaved ... clandestine warehouses, in prostitution ... undocumented labour – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #211

Scientific Method

Exploring the unknown in a methodical way is at the heart of science. It requires humility to systematically explore hypotheses and test them to replicate the results. Its way is not afraid of uncertainty, knowing that results are always provisional. Even the great story of how photosynthesis transforms inanimate matter into organic cells has not exhausted Earth's ways of nurturing life. Learning what Earth has to say frees the mind to expand and grow. It brings humility and joy before *God the Creator of Surprises*.

[Israel] remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt – Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #61



New Sunday Lectionary

Officially including a Season of Creation within the liturgical year is but one bold step in the task of compiling a new Sunday Lectionary. New readings would lead worshippers to face modern social challenges, opening expanding circles of relationships with Earth and diverse people - give better voice to women in the Church; cooperate with science to the benefit of both; deepen inter-faith and ecumenical dialogue; welcome 'inculturated' expressions of faith; correct 'clunky' liturgical language. The Pope's phrase *integral ecology* gives a guide and *synodal walking together* shows a way. They free believers to live and pray united with the Christ of Cosmos and Human History.

exclusion ... avoid every temptation to fall into a nominalism that would salve our consciences ... ensure institutions are effective in the struggle – Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #188

3. 24th SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

The Way God Thinks

Life Realities

Called to a difficult pathway in life, challenged by the worlds suffering billions, fear of suffering, feeling aimless and alone, and paradox of giving one's life for a cause.

Grace to Celebrate

The Scripture today reminds us that we are graced to think as God thinks. Joys and hopes, anxiety and pain immerse us in the human journey. Jesus corrected Peter's ideas, preaching the way of suffering to bring new life through word and action. Baptism gives us power to change and even suffer for God's way so we can celebrate.

Scriptural Excerpts

Is 50: 5-9; Ps 114; Jm 2: 14-18; M 8: 27-35

God has opened my ear

I do not resist those who spit on me

the Lord God is my helper

walk before God in the land of the living

when death encompasses me

brother or sister wanting clothes and food

faith without works is dead

boast in the cross of our Lord

Jesus asked, whom do they say I am?

The Baptist, Elias, one of the prophets?

Peter, you are the Christ

the Son of Man must suffer

be killed and rise again - Peter objected

get behind me Satan

this not of God but of humans

take up your cross and follow me

lose his life for my sake and the gospel

you will save it.

Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Church Leaders – God's prophets corrected Israel's leaders. That Church leaders preach care for Earth as the common home of all peoples in the spirit of Laudato Si' ... we pray
2. God's Thinking – God's way of thinking is not that of humans. That our national leaders set bold goals for citizens to walk together, co-creating the common good ... we pray
3. The Cross - Jesus transformed the meaning of suffering. That our parish members not fly from suffering but freely choose it when part of serving God, Earth and people ... we pray
4. Science – Humans are created in the likeness of God. That we learn scientific arguments to respect Earth's eco-systems and manage Earth's resources for the long-term ... we pray
5. Big History – God is present in cosmic and human history. That we be open to new ways of understanding a bigger story of God present in an evolving universe ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives.

Jesus opened up new thinking to his disciples
Gave deeper meaning to suffering in Scripture
Correcting proud ambition

Showing a new way by taking up a cross

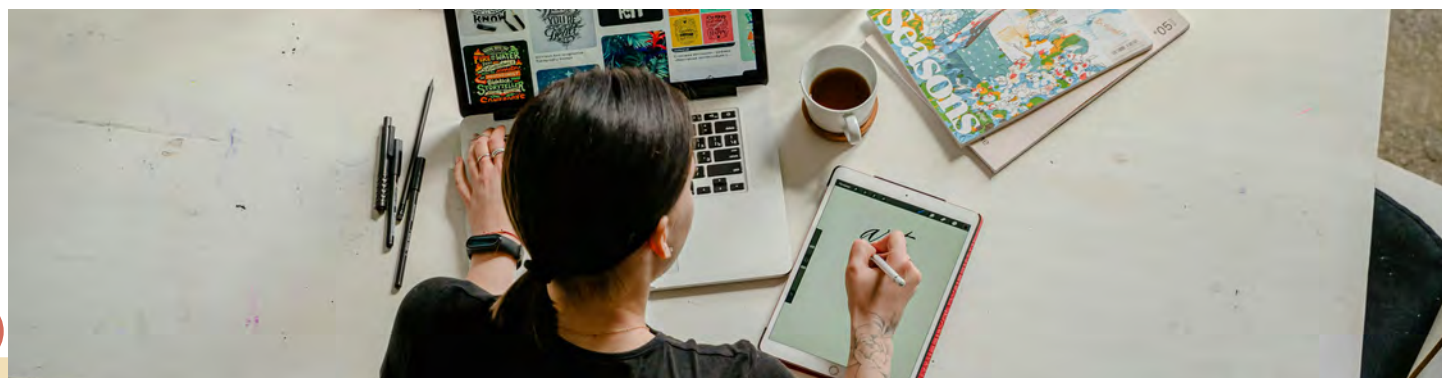
To grow as active co-creators with God

Leading all to new life here and for eternity.

So, we join the messengers of God

the saints and all people of good will

and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...



a certain way of understanding human life and activity has gone awry to the serious detriment of the world around us – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #101

Humble Servants of a Creator God

Creation Time focuses on the human vocation to be humble servants within all creation (Mk 10:41-45). Think as God thinks - working with people and Earth-processes. Our vocation rejects the narrow mindset of industry's captains exploiting natural resources and making workers into slaves. Jesus corrected Peter - leaders are called to serve. Humility calls humanity to learn from tech-innovators and economists, to design investment options as co-creators with the Spirit of God leading them.

Truth contends with Lies

Seeking the truth has been a spiritual pathway in every religious tradition – from Jewish Scriptures to Buddhist Sutras. But denial and lies contend with truth (Jn 8:44). Misinformation coming from lobbyists and social informers create victims to hysterical fad-think. Even economists and political leaders can be fooled. Truth and logical thinking have to be taught. It is a spiritual calling for parents to form their children to be truthful. It begins with respect for the systems of a God given earth that embody the physics and chemistry of truth.

insidious worldliness ... preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine ... without concern for Gospel ... needs of the present time ... Church turns into a museum piece – Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #95

Aboriginal Ventures

Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, a Ngan'gityemerri woman, asked for baptism as a Catholic in 1965. Starting as a teaching assistant, she used her painting skills to create unique Catholic imagery. Later as a lecturer, she integrated traditional and western education,

encouraging Aboriginal teachers to work among non-Aboriginal students. The ALPA-Cooperative story began in 1972 by setting up stores to provide reliable source of nutritious food in Arnhem Land. Since 2014 it has grown to foster job creation and economic independence. Planning and effective spending were key. Now its cooperatives employ over a 1,000 people in retail, services and business – growing justified pride.

point of departure must be God's way of seeing ... even if they are atheists, his love is the same – Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti # 281



Teilhard de Chardin and Charles Birch

Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was the first Catholic in modern times to theologically link Earth sciences and faith. As a scientist he explored the wonder of God's cosmos. As believer in the Cosmic Christ and poet, he helped grow a *theology of infatuation with God's Earth*. Quoted by Pope Francis, he celebrated Eucharist on the altar of the Earth. He was not unlike Australian ecologist and theologian Charles Birch. He valued dialogue on sensitive issues such as over population and the Vietnam war but humbly served fragile people at the Wayside Chapel. Often maligned, both Teilhard and Birch suffered to reveal a fuller human vocation.

self-improvement ... prey to an unethical consumerism bereft of social or ecological awareness – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #219

4. 25th SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Striving for the Good

Life Realities

Opposition to the common good; seeking the good that preserves life; striving for wisdom to live by; surrounded by greed and envy, aggression and obsession to win; afraid to reach out for help, wary of joining with others

Grace to Celebrate

Today's readings help us to understand the struggle for goodness on our human journey. A provident God is with us in our doubts, gracing us to be confident. Jesus reaches out to his disciples showing new ways, so we celebrate God present with us in every step of life.

Scriptural Excerpts

Ws 2: 12, 17-20; Ps 53; Jm 3: 16 – 4: 3; Mk 9: 30-37

*let us ambush the just
who admonishes our sinful ways
if of God, God will save
torture, test just one's meekness
condemn to shameful death
hear my prayer: words of my mouth
strangers have risen against me
God is my helper, protector
the Lord upholds my life
the wisdom, that is from above
the fruit of justice is peace
wars and contentions come from within
coveting, killing and envy
you pray amiss, evil desires
Jesus said to his disciples
the Son of man shall be betrayed
but rise again on the third day
not understanding they were afraid
they argued about who is the greatest
Jesus said, the first will be last
whoever receives a child in my name
receives me, and the one who sent me.*

subcultures exist side by side, often practise segregation and violence. The Church is called to be at the service of a difficult dialogue – Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #76

Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Goodness - God's truth subverts mere human ambition. That our Church communities not be swayed by status but choose to serve a good life for every Earth community ... we pray
2. Self-Doubt – God colours minds with light and hearts with courage. That we be free from the darkness of ignorance and self-doubt, daily living out the Gospel in confidence ...we pray
3. Ridicule – The God of Wisdom corrected the people of Israel. That we stop ridiculing campaigners for good, glad for women as prophets in changing times ... we pray
4. Animals – God told Job to find wisdom in a diversity of animals. That we enjoy the company of nature and help preserve the habitat of threatened animals ... we pray
5. Equinox – God gives Spring and Autumn as seasons of new blessings. That believers monitor the rhythm of their lives by reading the Pope's message on 'integral ecology' ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. You saved your people suffering hunger and exile Testing them with ridicule and betrayal Teaching the ways of justice that lead to peace Reassuring them as God's blessed children Sending your Son as the Suffering Servant The Way, the Truth and the Life. So we join the messengers of God the saints and all people of good will and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...



[Scripture] summons us so forcefully to brotherly love, to humble and generous service, to justice and mercy towards the poor

– Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #194

Communities Walking Together

Synodal walking together under the Holy Spirit is the way of church reform in a new epoch. Freed from fear of sin and frequenting sacraments as the core of salvation, the synodal way invites Catholics to revive their gifts in baptism. It wants their *active voice in their faith community*. With others, they can grow new ways of listening to God and belonging. Australian politics is going through a similar process. Communities at the grass roots, such as CI Project, are gathering to identify issues to address through political decisions. They want to be free of two party self-serving wrangling and return *politics to serve expressed community needs*. Independent parliamentarians, skilled in negotiating, continue to emerge from organised local communities. Serving the goodness of God has varied paths.

Telling of the Goodness of Nature

Rachel Carson (1907-1964) marine biologist developed her skills as writer to popularize the emerging science of ecology (*Romance Under the Waters*). Her poems captured wonder and beauty. By 1962 a hidden poison, synthetic pesticides, began to cover land and oceans. As birds died she published *Silent Spring*, helping launch the environmental movement. Reports on climate disaster increase, speeded by arrogant human actions. Human control pushes evolution into a new epoch called the *Antrophesne*. A question for believers: is this push according to the will of God for the flourishing of life on Earth?

Dangers of Poking Fun

Australians have a tradition of poking fun at themselves and others, evident in popular literature and TV shows. But parody can grow dark as ridicule and mockery pervade social commentary, undermining civil debate. Stories

and cartoons in the *Bulletin* magazine offer an early example. Its style was elitist and the tradition continues today. It corrodes social values and common discourse when adopted by pop-culture. It takes courage to be mocked for telling alternative stories that build up others in life-promoting language.

politics or the economy ... foster what is good and place ourselves at its service

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #77

Mantra Prayer

Repeating short mantra-prayers is a style of spiritual practice. We can celebrate 'belonging in place' as a mantra - trees, flowers, breaking waves. Each recalls the presence of a creator God. St Francis of Assisi prayed this way – sister moon, brother donkey. Every place around us is sacred because it is a revelation of God's presence. Such mantras become a prayer of joy and reassurance. They are a prayer of thanksgiving for the many works of God. Composing mantras can embrace every species and place on the planet, human diversity and remarkable events. Each helps us to find God.



the complexities of local problems .. demand the active participation of all members of the community – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #144

5. 26th SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Jesus the Radical Prophet

Life Realities

Workers for good are often not church people, wisdom and goodness arise in unlikely places, riches seem to corrupt people, unjust wages and working conditions cry for change, feeling confronted by radical teachers and activists, changing a way of life and lifestyle is not easy.

Grace to Celebrate

Radical people and ideas make us uncomfortable. Today's readings speak of Jesus as a radical prophet. He challenged the rich to care for their workers, and the privileged to evaluate their personal behaviour. We can celebrate that God graces us in baptism with power to turn our lives around, and help create the reign of a loving God, on Earth as it is in heaven.

Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #10

Scriptural Excerpts

Nm 11: 25-29; P 18; Jm 5: 1-6; Mk 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48

*God's spirit rested on the seventy
they prophesied ceaselessly
Oh that all the people prophesy
Lord's precepts give joy to the heart
gives wisdom to little ones
God's judgments are true
keeping them is a great reward
I shall be cleansed
riches are corrupted, rusted
withholding the labourer's wages
fraud comes to the Lord's ears
nourish your hearts with what is right
whoever is not against me is for me
whoever gives a cup of water in my name
shall not lose a reward
whoever scandalize little ones
better for that one to cast into the sea
hand scandalizes, cut it off
eye scandalizes, pluck it out
enter the kingdom of God
be not cast into hell.*

Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Prophets – God's prophets challenged Israel. That we listen to ecological scientists, economists and social reformers, naming them as prophets of truth in our times ... we pray
2. Saint Francis – The radical lifestyle of Francis of Assisi tells of God's love for the material world. That our community plan celebrations of the Season of Creation ... we pray
3. Rejoice – God wills that we fly on eagle's wings. That our Church never stop proclaiming a prophetic wisdom that rejoices in the goodness of every being living on Earth as kin ... we pray
4. Consumerism – God has led people in every culture to avoid the distractions of wealth. That our nation reject the allure of consumerism and believers model a new life of simple dignity ...we pray
5. Birds and Animals – God created all that lives on Earth. That we join in the happiness of those who love animals of land and sea, affirming their research and care ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. Jesus challenged his listeners not to oppress. Not to be a scandal by the way they chose to live. In the tradition of prophets of Israel Your Son called people to return to God's ways Praised those who were not against him Promising new life, now and eternally An inheritance for each generation. So we join the messengers of God the saints and all people of good will and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

Fathers of the Church helped create a prophetic, counter-cultural resistance to the self-centred hedonism of paganism – Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #193

Vocational Journey of Love

Following one's vocation is a spiritual journey when embraced with love. It is a call from God to love unreservedly – covenant-giving love. Marriage in Catholic ritual is a covenant of mutual giving and accepting. Similarly, to be a nurse or teacher, a labourer or professional, is a God given call to dedicate one's talents to create and nurture. People find happiness and fulfilment in following their vocation. While the journey can be difficult with no apparent end, but upheld by God's grace, it is pursued in love. In an environmentally aware age, God gives an *ecological vocation* to many. It is in the order of love writes Pope Francis (LS#77).

Integral Ecology

Pope Francis introduces a new phrase in to Church teaching and prayer, *integral ecology*. It connects ecological insights with faith exemplified by the radical life of St Francis of Assisi. The newness of the Pope's vision stretches moral imaginations. It is revolutionary. *Integral Ecology* embraces a bundle of connected spheres - ecology, human fulfilment, care for the poor, economics, politics and lifestyle. Pope Francis affirms church ministries linking Justice, Peace and Care for Earth (JPIC). It forms a new spiritual package to inform our Sunday Mass, set diocesan agendas and guide daily living.

Thomas Berry (1914-2009)

Passionist priest, cultural historian and 'geologist', his priestly mission was to preach God active in the evolving cosmos. Deep understanding of the functioning of the evolving universe inspired him to write of 'The Great Work of God': *The Dream of the Earth; The Universe Story; Earth as Sacred Community*. Paralleled in the secular world, David Christian developed the *Big History Project* to help Macquarie university students put their studies within the wider context of an unfolding universe. Berry in the 1980s mentored Fr Sean McDonagh who in 1986 wrote ground-breaking theology in *To Care for the Earth*.

beat their swords into ploughshares ... this prophecy took flesh in Christ Jesus ... all who take the sword will perish by the sword
– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #270



Researching and Planning Hope

Appreciation of the diverse gifts of the natural world is the aim of UN Environmental Programs - the life cycles of species and the climate cycles needed for them to flourish. Preserving biodiversity is key as it forms the basis for growing healthy ecosystems that support all life. From air to water, human existence depends on Earth's natural services. Schools, Landcare and costal-care groups apply UN programs locally. Focusing applied science Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) helps the nation respond to environmental issues, shaping a future in hope. For believers, this is co-creating with God.

the prophets invite us to find renewed strength in times of trial by contemplating the all-powerful God who created the universe
– Pope Francis Laudato Si' #73

6. 27th SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Human Bonds

Life Realities

Opinions on human relationships vary, divorce increasingly common, many choose not to marry, family violence increases, children as a blessing, commitment as struggle and self-giving, simple goodness.

Grace to Celebrate

Social behaviour in relationships are changing making us feel confused, even adrift. Jesus explores Scripture to provide an anchor. He understands our confusion and invites us to pause and reflect. His abiding Spirit is with us as we navigate a way forward. We can celebrate that we are not alone in making our life-choices.

Scriptural Excerpts

Gen 2: 18-24; Ps 127; Heb 2: 9-11; Mk 10: 2-16

*God formed all animals and birds
brought them to Adam to name
it is not good for a man to be alone
will make him a help like unto himself
God created woman from the rib of Adam
bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh
a man shall leave father and mother
cleave to his wife, two in one flesh
blessed are all who walk in God's ways
eat the labours of your hands
see the good things of Jerusalem
see your children's children living in peace
Jesus, a little lower than angels
source of salvation for all
not ashamed to call them brethren
Pharisees asked: lawful to divorce a wife?
Jesus asked, what did Moses command?
what God has joined let no one put asunder
his disciples asked the same thing
whosoever divorces commits adultery
suffer the children to come unto me
for of such is the kingdom of God.*

the fullness of humanity and of history is realized in a city ... God dwelling in their homes, in their streets and squares

– Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* #71

Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Married – God created man and woman so they would not be alone. That by the way we live we show respect and love in every human relationship, a witness to all ... we pray
2. Divorced – Jesus understood the woman by the well. That we show understanding to those in failed relationships, helping them to create new lives of hope and confidence ... we pray
3. Abused – God's Reign comes like the simplicity of a child. That we always speak up against coercive control, displaying individual and social care for the abused ... we pray
4. Secular Debate – Jesus negotiated with Jewish and Roman expectations. That we listen with respect, calmly presenting our views in a spirit of dialogue for the good of all ... we pray
5. Complexity – God began the complex process of social evolution. That we respectfully listen and discern analysis, working with political leaders for the nation's common good ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. Your Son comports the confused Opening to them the wisdom of Scripture Guiding them to discern between opinions Giving confidence to weigh choices Courage to stand before criticism And granting peace of spirit. So, we join the messengers of God the saints and all people of good will and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...



humanity is experiencing a turning-point in its history ... advances ... remember that the majority of our contemporaries are barely living day to day

– Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* #52

Mary, Mother of Believers

Mary as Mother of God was the *First Christian Feast Day* celebrated on New Year's Day. Mary is the *Mother of all Believers* proclaimed by Jesus from the Cross. He gazed on John the Beloved – *behold your mother*. In 2018 the Vatican declared that Mary was to be celebrated as the *Mother of the Church* on the day after Pentecost. Over two thousand years, every cultural church tradition named Mary as the great sign of the nurturing and caring face of God. Pope Francis fills out this relationship of love by pointing to the unbreakable link between Earth and humanity – Mother Earth. Beyond her role as mother and wife, Mary is theologically part of God's economy of Salvation.

Gospel and Coercive Control

Identifying the roots of evil has always been Catholic teaching. Magnify violence against women includes a culture that objectifies men as sex objects who have to win. Commercial TV's low-level porn loves picturing flesh. Respect across the sexes dies as even farmers and marriage are dragged into relationship games. Win at all costs is the norm in sports. Clubs employ 'once were warriors' as bread for the mob. This extends to 'betting with mates'. Coaches coercively control players as objects. Dominance over nature in TV shows extends the orbit. Men (and women) are made into objects within a cumulative toxic culture of expectations. Some act out control in anger. Some commit suicide when not measuring up. Narrow legal and counseling cures are not enough. With hope and confidence, Gospel people need to join in the conversation, systematically facing the causes of a cultural illness.

A Method for Action

People aim to feel fulfilment in their roles and jobs, a way to grow close to a creative God. How to structure a way forward becomes a question. Teams around Fr Joseph Cardijn in early 20th century Belgium reached out to often angry young working men who felt like undervalued cogs in a machine. In a process of *Action and Gospel Reflection (YCW)*, they named their *job as vocation*. Using their skills gave them purpose and a way to serve God as co-creators of a future. They went further to grow leaders to counter exploitation under mean spirited industrialists. They redefined work to include time spent with family and community, health and job security. The Cardijn way contributed to labour reforms in Australia.

rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies and, above all, the meaning of our existence

– Pope Francis *Fratelli Tutti* #33

Revising the Liturgical Year

Vatican II mandated that the Bible be opened more lavishly to believers (SC #51). The new 1969 Lectionary offered a richer diet. In projects like the Adelaide's Earth Bible, scholars retrieve the hidden voice of the Earth and its first fruit was to create a September liturgical *Season of Creation*. Pope Francis, Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew and the World Council of Churches (WCC) endorsed it ecumenically. Scriptural scholars are selecting more texts to further reform the Lectionary. They aim to help believers face modern issues - the equal dignity of women, LGBTQI+ awareness, growing peace by listening and negotiating in respect, 'walking together' to structure an evolving church.

[media] omnipresent ... can stop people from learning how to live wisely, think deeply and love generously ... contrived emotion

– Pope Francis *Laudato Si'* #47

7. 28th SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Following the Wisdom of Jesus is Hard

Life Realities

People want to live wisely, how to serve others in this age is unclear, a calling to be radical is difficult, money is often the measure of success, radical service of others often seems stupid, living life with a sense of satisfaction seems complex.

Grace to Celebrate

The wisdom of Jesus often appears radical and hard to follow. He presents riches as an obstacle. God's wisdom pierces the spirit and demands humility. This troubled the disciples, but Jesus assures them that nothing is impossible with God, so we can celebrate.

Scriptural Excerpts

Ws 7: 7-11; Ps 89; Heb 4: 12-13; Mk 10: 17-30

*I called upon God, and
the spirit of wisdom came to me
preferred her to thrones and riches
her light cannot be put out
rejoice for wisdom humbles us
God directs the works of our hands
the word of God is living and effective
pierces deeper than a two-edged sword
Master, what will I do to gain life eternal?
you know the commandments
these I have observed from my youth
Jesus looked on him and loved him
one thing is wanting
sell what you own, and give to the poor
have treasure in heaven; follow me
the man went away sorrowful, for
he had great possessions
Jesus said: how hard for the rich, easier
a camel to pass through the eye of a needle
the disciples: who then can be saved?
Jesus: all things are possible with God.
whoever leave house, family or lands
for my sake and for the gospel
will receive a hundred-fold.*

*radical individualism is a virus that is extremely
difficult to eliminate, for it is clever*
– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #105

Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Riches – Jesus looked with love on the rich man but asked for more. That we manage our wealth with wisdom, glad for its blessings but knowing when to say 'enough' ... we pray
2. Universities – The Holy Spirit raised up monasteries as centres of learning. That we praise those dedicated to study and education, and creatively apply their learning ... we pray
3. Doubt – God listens to those who pray to be wise. That we be bold in imagining new ways for the good of humanity and the planet, cooperating to solve doubts ... we pray
4. Secrets of Nature – God told Job to look humbly at the wonders of nature and acknowledge their Creator. That we walk with scientists fascinated with the complexities of nature ... we pray
5. Life Vocation – Scripture shows that God calls people to diverse vocations. That we meditate on the bigness of God's love when we are choosing a pathway in life ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. Following your Son is not easy He invited his disciples to go beyond successes Beyond keeping the commandments To look to the poor of society To walk humbly within the gift of the planet To seek God's wisdom in all things finding satisfaction and blessings. So we join the messengers of God the saints and all people of good will and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...



the disciple is ready to put his or her whole life on the line ... bearing witness to Jesus ... capacity for liberation and renewal revealed – Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #24

In-depth Scriptural Studies

Scripture underpins theological and pastoral advances. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)* said, *look to the bruised in the streets, take on the smell of the sheep.* Theology that hears the realities of life - meets people in conversation about what it means to be human, engages imaginations under the Holy Spirit to discern new ways. Theology in context is called *praxis*. Fundamental to growing church communities is to give opportunity and finance for any believer to study the patrimony of Scripture and how theology grows. These create the building blocks for authentic liturgical prayer giving impetus to authentic evangelisation.

fragmentation makes it more difficult to resolve problems that affect us all ... [just] refining existing systems is denying reality – Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #7

Allurement of Riches

Every religion and philosophy reflect on the dangers of riches. Dedicating one's efforts to gaining riches is falsely enticing. Media showing opulent homes and lifestyles paint a tempting picture, while in the job market, money becomes the only measure of success. It takes reflection and wisdom to imagine alternatives - the riches of a loving extended family; honing a skill to create ways forward; using tongue and eye, ear and hands in art that communicates; witnessing to deified life beyond the present – these are alternatives. On a mundane level, being willing to pay a fair share of tax, or give to the less fortunate until it hurts, these are the teachings of Jesus.

Wisdom in Earth's Systems

Earth is a complex system of interacting physical, chemical and biological 'spheres'. Its systems, even if complex, are predictable and can be mapped. Atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, geosphere and polar spheres inter-link. None works in isolation. Their envelope is the solar system and galaxies. Earth and cosmos present an unfolding story that opens mystery and delight to those with eyes to see. Equally important, good and bad human impacts on these systems can be mapped. A sobering thought for believers in a Wise Creator God.



Secular and Wisdom of God

G.K. Chesterton entered deeply into the debates of his time, conversing with the leaders of the Enlightenment. Skilled poet and essayist, he became a radical social commentator. He criticised both pompously closed traditions, and flaws in emerging thinking. He argued against Hume's focus on reason alone and Huxley's reliance on science alone. Ever seeking, Chesterton became a Catholic. He wrote about the radical claim of Jesus who said, I am, God incarnate, embracing all that is human. He delighted that the baptised are both deified and sinners, living in two streams. His writings show a search for the radical wisdom of God, and he was declared a Doctor of the Church.

GM cereals may be harmful ... brought about economic growth ... significant difficulties should not be underestimated – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #134

8. 29th SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Humble Servants

Life Realities

Feeling like a victim, hard bearing the burdens of others, heroes during disasters impress but challenge, offended by people seeking accolades and fame, worried about what role to choose in life or what career to follow.

Grace to Celebrate

Jesus sets a high bar for his disciples. His own life set a challenging example -obedience to the will of God who he called Father; compassion for social outcasts; serving the spiritually lost. But we celebrate that, by our baptism, we have the power to choose a life of service in Christ Jesus.

Scriptural Excerpts

Is 53: 10-11; Ps 32; Heb 4: 14-16; Mk 10: 35-45

God bruised him with infirmity

laying down his life for sin

the will of God will be accomplished

the just servant, bears their iniquities

God works with faithfulness

Earth is full of the mercy of God

frees them from death and famine

we place our trust in God

a great high priest, compassionate

tempted like us but without sin

we go in confidence to the throne of grace

James and John came to Jesus

may we sit with you in glory?

can you drink of the chalice that I drink?

the ten were displeased with them

Jesus said: princes have power

among you the greater will serve

the Son of man came serve

to give his life saving the many.

Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Suffering – God sent his Son as the Suffering Servant. That we not be afraid to follow the way of Jesus, trusting that God is with us and does not push us beyond our limits ... we pray
2. Carers – Jesus saw the suffering of the outsider and healed them. That we care for the sick with love, praising carers in homes for the aged and disabled ... we pray
3. Religious Power – Jesus confronted the religious powerbrokers of his day. That we encourage people of all faiths to walk together seeking spiritual meaning for all ... we pray
4. Vocation – God called Israel's leaders and Jesus chose apostles. That our minds be attentive to the will of God as we choose how to best use our given and cultivated talents ... we pray
5. Climate Emergency – Scripture is full of images of drought and flourishing trees. That we listen to scientists explaining the human causes of climate change, and act ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. The servant life of your Son challenges us. He saw people caught in famine and sickness Boggled in sinful pride and ambition And he chose to give his life to save them To serve their needs and heal their spirits. He called his followers to do the same Warning against seeking power and status. So we join the messengers of God the saints and all people of good will and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

humble worship of God bears fruit ... in respect for the sacredness of life, respect for the dignity and freedom of others, and loving commitment to the welfare of all

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #283



*humble and awe-filled veneration of the Gospel
.... taking the time to study ... and a holy fear
lest we distort it*

– Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #146

Compassion for Victims

Reports on the impacts of war, starving children and desperate migrants drowning at sea confront us daily. We can feel overwhelmed. We often try to shield our sanity by ignoring the reports. Jesus showed a different response. He was moved with compassion. Calling on God as a faithful father of all, Jesus talked with victims, healed and set them on new journeys. Everyone feels like a victim at times and lashes out, blaming someone or the system. Jesus leads us to free ourselves from self-pity, to call on his Spirit to guide and give courage. The Gospel sets new standards and gives hope.

Ecological Martyrs

During WWII Russian Nikolai Vavilov and 14 companions protected a Seed Bank during the 1942 siege of St Petersburg, even though themselves starving. Modern ecological martyrs live a spirituality that welds together death and life. Cattle ranchers murdered Chico Mendes in 1988 for protecting the livelihood of rubber tappers. In 2016 Berta Caceres, a Honduran woman, was murdered for helping protect the local community's water supply. All embraced suffering for the sake of something more precious than their own lives. Ridiculed for their self-sacrifice, they understood the Cross of Jesus.

Wisdom embodied in Trees

Trees on Earth evolved about 390 million years ago in a family of oxygen fixing plants. They adapted, creating height to capture light and rings of growth to support increasing weight and longevity. Spreading to new regions, they diversified 125 million years ago by producing flowers, fruits and seeds. They evolved mutually beneficial systems with insects and animals. Their complex eco-systems became a source of wonder for humanity. It is a human and wise task

to protect old growth forests and increase timber plantations. Praying with forests is a spiritual way to God. <https://www.columban.org.au/assets/files/cmi/columban%20stations%20of%20the%20forest%20booklet.pdf>

creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #86

Impacts of Human Population

That human hunters speeded up mega-fauna extinction rates during the late Pleistocene in Australia seems incredible. Modern debate around human population pressure impacting eco-systems can be fractious. But respect for land, its processes and species, brings an evolutionary perspective to cultural values. Aboriginal rock carvings dating back into the last ice age witness to ever changing ways of living. Archbishop Polding's 19th century mission service to scattered white settlements in outback and coastal Australia witnesses to both rising population and changing values in land use. 21st century migrant and citizen expectations call for *wise decisions while walking together*.



human creativity ... [artists] science and technology cannot be prevented from using their God-given talents ... power involving considerable risks

– Pope Francis Laudato Si' #131

9. 30th SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Blind See and Lame Walk

Life Realities

People healed in mind and body are astonishing, the mentally and physically disabled disturb me, nations besotted by a religion or ideology, cultural power over people, faith as a dimension in every walk of life, Earth's evolving cycles of life and death are relentless

Grace to Celebrate

Two words, comfort and challenge, vie with each other in every Gospel. God is ever faithful, gathering us from the ends of the Earth. God commands us to respond with actions for the good of all, to face harsh realities while striving to do good in everyday life. Bathed in the Spirit of Jesus we can see and walk, so we celebrate.

Scriptural Excerpts

Jer 31: 7-9; Ps 125; Heb 5: 1-6; Mk 10: 46-52
your people, the remnant of Israel
will gather from the ends of the Earth
the blind, the lame, woman with child
through flood to the right paths
I am a father to Israel, my firstborn
The Lord has done great things
brought back the captives of Sion
sow in tears will reap in joy
high priest offers sacrifices for sins
has compassion on the ignorant
himself weighed with infirmity
no man takes the honour to himself
you are my son, priest forever
at Jericho a blind man sat begging
Son of David have mercy on me
Jesus asked, what do you want of me?
Rabboni, that I may see
Go, your faith has made you whole
he saw and followed Jesus on the way.

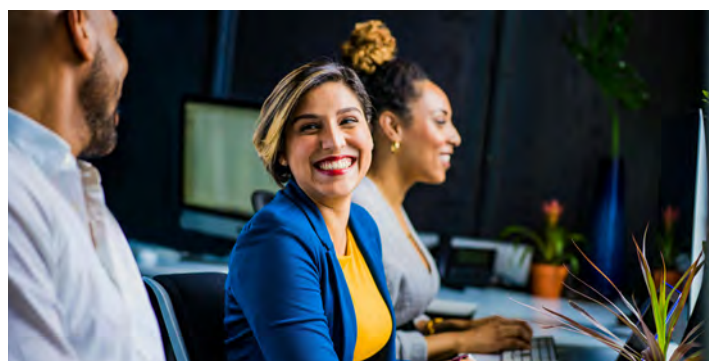
parts of our human family it appears, can be readily sacrificed for the sake of others ... especially when they are poor and disabled, 'not useful' – Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #18

Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Faith in God – God was with the remnant people of Israel. That we lift our heads in confidence, believing that God sees every part of our lives and wants to heal us ... we pray
2. Slavery – God freed Israel from slavery under Pharaoh and Babylon. That we support UN agencies and Caritas as they lobby for oppressed people while organising aid ... we pray
3. Ethnic Groups – God names all people of Earth children of God. That we rejoice with the diverse ethnic peoples in our church community and value their unique gifts ... we pray
4. The Blind – Jesus healed the blind and deaf, lame and possessed. That we be known in society by the way we volunteer with groups supporting those impaired ... we pray
5. Ask to Receive – God-given human freedom is a gift, to accept or reject. That within earth and human realities, we humbly ask God for the particular gift we need to flourish ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. Your Son both comforted and challenged disciples Opening to them the messages of Scripture Expanding their horizons by his example Lifting their doubtful spirits, giving hope Guiding them in wisdom To achieve the seemingly impossible. So we join the messengers of God the saints and all people of good will and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...



unless we are blind, we begin to realize that Jesus' gaze, burning with love, expands to embrace

– Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #268

Signs of the Jesus Covenant

God gives us the ultimate Covenant in Jesus, God made flesh. Teachers in the synagogue were amazed at his wisdom. Peter preached Jesus as Saviour, healer of bodies, the possessed and the mean spirited - the people were converted (AA 2:22-24, 36-39). To change one's hearts and return to the ways of God was the human side of the Jesus Covenant. It is the response of believers to God's outreach - pure gift and acceptance, not a contract between equals. Celebrating the Lord's Supper in thanksgiving captures the Jesus Covenant.

Future Generation Climate Despair

In 2023 average global temperature were the highest yet above preindustrial levels, rising to just under 1.5C. Paris COP aspired to *not exceed a 1.5C rise*, and estimated 2.0C would devastate the planet, as we know it. Already Australia is experiencing more frequent and extreme temperatures, droughts, fires, floods - threatening houses and infrastructure, and the physical health of citizens. Politicians, business and voters express concern, but lack the will to change lifestyles as the nation fails its Paris commitment. Young people worry to the point of mental trauma. Blind or weak civil and church leaders cannot condemn future generations to despair.

Church's social teaching helps us to acknowledge ... several aspects of the present ecological crisis ... results of the best scientific research – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #15

Design Living for Climate Refugees

Relocating communities at risk from climate change across Australia will be traumatic. Places become unliveable - one in five homes on river plains will be uninsurable. Citizens and believers

alike must face a sense of loss. It begins with recognising the reality and busting false dreams to accept internal trans-location. Governments at all levels need to initiate honest conversations on remedies - hard-headed information, guidance and help. Catholics can pray for *the blind to see* as they apply the call of Pope Francis to listen to the *twin cry of Earth and people*.

Social Teaching and Petitions

It is best for local communities to prepare the Prayers of the Faithful each Sunday. Formats vary but the Church's official *Divine Office* gives a lead. First, point to a work of God before asking that God now grant a similar outcome for a local need. Not sure what grace to ask for, consult *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004). It couples multiple topics with Scriptural and Papal teachings. Sr Marjorie Keenan RSHM New York, while working within the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace, compiled the Compendium to make scattered official church teachings accessible.



each person, who is not just something, but someone ... capable of self-possession and of freely ... entering into communion with other persons – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #85

10. 31st SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Love God and Neighbour

Life Realities

Searching for a defined path in life to follow, many claim to have the right answers, varied expectations become confusing, some call into doubt the credibility of church teachings, love seems at the heart of true teaching, good living people have credibility

Grace to Celebrate

Some believers complicate religion with complex theologies and devotions. Jesus says it is simple: love God and neighbour. When pulled in different directions, Jesus tells us to be calm and trust God. God is present with us as we daily try to first love those around us, and Jesus says, we are not far from God. So, we can celebrate.

Scriptural Excerpts

Dt 6: 2-6; Ps 17; Hb 7: 23-28; Mk 12: 28b-34

keep Gods precepts, you, grandchildren that all may be well

love God with your whole heart

whole sprit and whole strength

In God I put my trust

I will call upon the Lord

Jesus brought an elernal priesthood

always making intercession for us

holy, innocent, undefiled

gave himself once, perfect for evermore

which is the first commandment?

Jesus: first, there is one God

love God, with your whole heart

second, love your neighbour as yourself

no other commandments are greater

Jesus said to the scribe

you are not far from the Kingdom of God.



Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Theology – God raises up teachers in every age. That we know the teachings of Vatican II as written by thousands of bishops from church communities around the globe ... we pray
2. Judged by their Fruits – False prophets arose even in early church communities. That we trust the Holy Spirit within us as we discern good teaching by the fruits they bear ... we pray
3. Humanists – God works to create good people in every culture. That we both listen and speak in dialogue with secular people to advance good-living human beings ... we pray
4. Ten Commandments – God gave Israel the Ten Commandments. That we study and pray, open to applying and adapting these precepts for our times ... we pray
5. Laws of Nature – God first revealed law through the systems of an evolving natural world. That we respect the findings of Earth scientists to learn ways to care for people and Earth itself ... we pray

as society becomes ever more globalized it makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers and sister

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #12

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. Leaders in all cultures created laws to live well The Teachers of Israel discerned the laws of God Your Ten Commandments given to Moses Honoured you as God and Lawgiver Promised good lives and justice in prosperity. Your Son Jesus repeated: love God, love neighbour

A message to be preached in every nation For no one is far from the Kingdom of God. So we join the messengers of God the saints and all people of good will and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

[love] the first and the greatest of the commandments, and the one that best identifies us as Christ's disciples

– Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #161

God's Law of Covenant Love

Jesus knew God as a loving Father. This story began with Adam and Eve, repeated in the Covenant promises given by God to Abraham and the People of Israel (Ho 11:3-4). The Ten Commandments given to Moses is well known. But God's covenant promises called for a choice by the Chosen People in response. Every generation of Church communities, as a new People of God, has to make choices and live with the consequences of its choices (Rm 6:12-14). They journey together in ever-new circumstances, retelling the Covenant stories, continuing to grow as children of God in the Risen Christ and a transformed Earth (1 Co 1:4-9).

Communities under the Holy Spirit

God's spirit is near in all events on Earth (Is 58:1, 21) and Jesus gave the Holy Spirit as an abiding companion. That Spirit formed the early church communities, correcting and growing their beliefs. The Spirit renews their roles in every era, even in 21st century armed conflicts and forced migration. Loving new neighbours as oneself means understanding other cultures and negotiating new ways of living together. Tensions arise in questioning the absolutes of one's culture. For three centuries, Australians have struggled with the task, a part of local Catholic history. It has lessons for our times as communities of believers live out God's command – love God and neighbour.

Law, Justice and Reconciliation

In the 1992 Mabo case, the High Court of Australia ruled that the legal term *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one) be dropped. It recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights to land and water through unique links existing before colonists arrived. The case was named after

Torres Strait Islander *Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo* who led the campaign. A 1993 Native Title Act created a framework to recognise indigenous peoples' traditional laws and customs. Today, native title covers 15% of Australian territorial land and waters through 629 registered Indigenous Land Use Agreements. The work of reconciliation continues.

'who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied with a parable ... priest, Levite ... passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan ...

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #56

Catholics as Multiculturals

Reports say racism and discrimination are increasing in Australia. Born of British colonization of Aboriginal lands by mainly white Christians, after WWII waves of migrants came from diverse non Anglo-Saxon cultures. Inspired by Prof J. Zubrzycki, from the 1970s laws reflected a *multi-cultural mob* in a move away from *assimilation to integration*. There were social costs - fractured national cohesive identity and obscuring the pain of immigrants. While most Australian citizens are proud of a fairly-successful multi-cultural nation, complex problems of race and culture, religion and values remain. Local Catholics are international by definition, and in fact. They have a vocation to be an effective sign of mutual understanding, respect and cooperation to grow a new multi-cultural future.



united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each creature ... brother river and mother Earth – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #92

11. 32nd SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Giving One's All

Life Realities

Inequality among Australians is extreme, poor peoples around the planet are in dire need, I ask what difference can my small actions make, loud protestors and empty words upset me, those who give time and energy to care for people on the fringe of society stir my conscience.

Grace to Celebrate

Being a success in Australia often equates with gaining wealth, or gaining acclaim in academic or sporting fields. Jesus set different standards. He calls us to change our hearts and minds, to follow his action in offering his life as a living sacrifice to God, while giving us the power to do the same. So we celebrate the standards of Jesus.

Scriptural Excerpts

1 Kg 17: 10-16; Ps 145; Hb 9: 24-28; Mk 12: 38-44

*Elijah went to the city of Sidon
he called a widow gathering sticks
please give me a morsel of bread
I have only a handful of meal and oil
that me and my son may eat and die
fear not, the meal and oil won't be diminish
the Lord will give rain upon the Earth
God feeds the hungry, frees slaves
but thwarts the ways of sinners
Jesus not enter a man-made sanctuary
but into the presence of God
offered himself once and forever
destroying sin
to appear again bringing salvation
people put money into the treasury
Jesus saw the rich cast in much but
a poor widow put in two small coins
this widow has given more than all
she gave in all she had.*

*St Francis, mystic and pilgrim lived in simplicity
and harmony with God, with others, with nature
and with himself ... commitment to society and
interior peace*

– Pope Francis Laudato Si' #10

Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Vow of Poverty – Religious Sisters and Brothers choose a vow of poverty to help them serve Mission in Christ. That they inspire us to say 'enough' and plan a simple lifestyle ... we pray
2. People on the Social Fringe – Jesus showed a preferential option to serve the poor. That suffering move our hearts to use our head and whole body to walk with them ... we pray
3. Fair taxation – Jesus invited tax collectors to follow him. That we overcome the pressure to greed, and be converted to fairer ways of individual and corporate taxation. ... we pray
4. Climate Disasters – Scripture tells of believers responding to those suffering famine. That we study the ecological and human reasons causing modern famines, and act ... we pray
5. Global Justice and Peace – Jesus preached conversion. That we reflect on the causes of war with Pax Christi, committing to engage in social efforts for justice and peace ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being,
it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus
and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives.
Your Son plunged into issues of his day
Teaching that greed is a cause of injustice
Praising the generosity of givers, like
The widow serving Elijah and the widow's mite
Calling followers to lives of self-sacrifice
Promising a provident God is with them
To bring peace on Earth.
So we join the messengers of God
the saints and all people of good will
and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...



[family born] from the depth of the obligation assumed by the spouses who accept to enter a total communion of life

– Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #66

Eucharistic Prayer of Thanksgiving

With the mind of the widow at the temple, every Mass is a Prayer of Thanksgiving. Its focus is on remembering the works of God. The prayer links three periods – future, past and present. Petitions ask God to lead us into future blessings, be it to send good leaders to the faith community or grant life everlasting among the saints. It proclaims thanksgiving with confidence based on what God has done in the past - healing or giving a guiding Holy Spirit just as the apostles received. Finally, the prayers remember that God is blessing us in this time, be it granting courage or peace of mind.

social friendship ... not merely utopian. It demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #180

Ernie Dingo “Going Places”

Places and people fill Scripture. *Going places with Ernie Dingo*, a SBS series from 2017-2023 ran over fifty episodes. Ernie visits iconic Australian places, talking with local identities, indigenous and late comers. With gentle curiosity, warmth and interest to learn, he walks respectfully with them around each locale - beach or waterhole, historic building or rocky mountain, a dry plain or lush forest. He teases out what each place means to the people he interviews, listening intently, relishing their humour. He asks questions to fill out their stories. For believers especially, his visit to Bathurst Island is a model of gentle respect for place and people. Session 4 Episode 3.

commitment to the truth ... promoting human development of universal range, in dialogue between knowledge and praxis

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #184



Super-funds and Climate Choices

I'm alright Jack is not an uncommon response from those who have worked hard to secure a comfortable retirement when confronted with those who have not made it. It is hardly a Christian response. These days, the stock market is booming and superannuation funds climb. But superfund investments in carbon polluting companies rose from \$19 to \$39 billion 2019-2021, while clean energy investments fell to \$7.7 billion. How might a believer with a conscience react? Believers can demand more investment of their super funds in alternative energy projects. Rational economics alone demand it. This choice is about growing a future with hope for the nation and one's grandchildren.

Mercy Sisters apply “Laudato Si’

The Mercy Sisters' *Integral Ecology Polices* identify seven goals of the church's *Laudato Si' Action Platform* to implement. In one commitment, they organised a workshop with people of Eugowra, NSW. The Mandagery Creek system flowing through the small town flooded in 2022. What was termed a 'water bomb' caused dire flood impacts on land, town and residents alike. Workshop participants learned ways to work with nature to slow water runoff, capture and spread catchment flow. Sally Neaves led 70 farmers, Mulloon Institute scientists and Sisters in the workshop. Boot camps for action followed. <https://institute.mercy.org.au/eugowra-bootcamp-to-slow-the-flow/>

12. 33rd SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Apocalyptic End Time Stories

Life Realities

Daily life seems ever more busy and complex, feeling overwhelmed by news of disasters, mental health issues increasing nationally, media enticements to follow cult-like gurus, fear the opinion of others, games and novels painting bazaar scenarios, the cosmos seems increasingly unknowable.

Grace to Celebrate

Scriptural stories about the tension between despair and hope are many. The Prophet Daniel says to set our eyes on God as our inheritance. Jesus promises that even if apocalyptic like events engulf our lives, he gives his own life as an offering for all. His words will not pass away. Choosing to follow in faith and hope we can celebrate.

Scriptural Excerpts

Dn 12: 1-3; Ps15; Heb 10: 11-14, 18; Mk 13: 24-32

*Michael will rise in time of distress
some to shame, some to life everlasting
God is my inheritance
I set the Lord always in my sight
heart glad and tongue rejoices
revealing to me the ways of life
ministerings never remove sins
but Christ offered one sacrifice
sits at the right hand of God
tribulation, sun darkened, stars fall
Son of man comes in power and glory
angels gather his chosen
from the four winds of Earth
the fig tree parable teaches seasons
know when the Saviour is near
heaven and Earth shall pass
but my words shall not pass
none know the hour or day
except the Father.*

large-scale natural disasters as well as social and even financial crises ... cannot be analyzed or explained in isolation

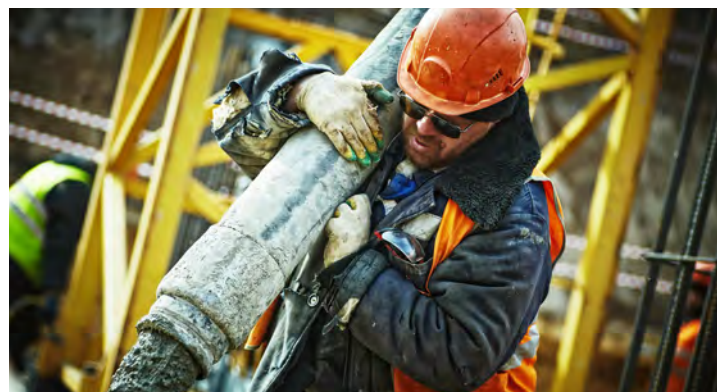
– Pope Francis Laudato Si' #61

Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Last Days – Apocalyptic literature teaches hope in times of disaster. That tragedies not overwhelm us as we walk forward together in God's hope and timelines ... we pray
2. Apocalyptic Cults – Fear marks cults of apocalyptic tragedy. That we not be deceived by prophets of doom but see disasters as opportunities to create a future with God ... we pray
3. Sacrifice of Praise – The once for all offering of Jesus himself replaces multiple sacrifices. That our daily lives, lived with God, become a living sacrifice of praise ... we pray
4. Opportunity - God used famine and slavery as signs to bring liberation. That we use our skills to work with creators of opportunity, growing just and loving social systems ... we pray
5. Judgement Day – The time of judgement is for God to decide. That we live each day in a fullness of love as if it was our last ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. Told in apocalyptic images of distress Your Son will come to judge the living and dead Separating good from bad like sheep Welcoming those who used their gifts and skills Inviting them to see God face to face Enjoying forever a home with God. So we join the messengers of God the saints and all people of good will and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...



*the joy of salvation abounds in messianic times
... bring the message to others ... all creation
shares in the joy of salvation*
– Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #4

Apocalyptic Images of Distress

The Earth shook and the curtain of the temple split when Jesus died. Calamity is part of Scriptural apocalyptic literature. Its stories are signs that the people have broken God's covenant bringing chaos on Earth. In biblical stories, sprinkling heads with ashes signified repentance. The image of Ezekiel's chariot of fire represents hopeful apocalyptic literature. It gives a vision of liberation. Paradise was envisioned as the apocalyptic New Jerusalem where God lived among the people (Rv 21:3). Real disasters and calamities met on the human journey can work for good for those who love God (Rm 8:28).

Creation and Redemption are One

Pope Benedict XVI called for *a new understanding of the inseparability of Creation and Redemption* (20.08.08). Bringing ecological insights about the cycles of death and new life into liturgical prayer leads believers to a deeper appreciation of the Cross as part of a New Creation in Christ. Eco-spirituality does not fixate on 'nice creation' imagery but remembers that from the beginning of creation, life contended with death. Liturgical prayer faces harsh ecological, social, psychological and spiritual realities. Often traumatic, they are where God is at work. Cross and Resurrection are a continuum.

*growing loss of the sense of history kind of
deconstructionism ... claims to create everything
starting from zero in today's culture*
– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #13

Southern African Earth-Keepers

The Church exists as a Communion of local churches in Christ Jesus, mutually inspiring and correcting. Vatican II 1962-63 was the most recent Catholic gathering. English speaking

churches form a subset of this Communion. Local conferences of bishops offer insights to each other. English speaking federations, in spite of traumatic histories, often join inter-faith institutes such as in southern Africa. Since 2005 it has helped raise awareness, built skills and taken action on eco-justice, sustainable living and climate justice. They take the title *Earth-Keepers*. Their resources are multiple <https://safcei.org/resources>

God Judges the Chosen People

From the time of Abraham God promised to lead and care for the Chosen People of Israel. In recurring covenants, God gave them a home among the tribes of Palestine. In famine, God sent Joseph to send wheat from Egypt, freeing them when they fell into slavery. He blessed their cities under kings and freed them from bondage in Babylon. When they rebelled God corrected them, even using the rulers of surrounding nations to do so - Pharaoh (Rm 9:17; Ex 3.9) the Darius (Ez 21.24; Is 47.6). History became opportunity for God, to punish but show forgiveness to change hearts.



*young people wonder how anyone can claim
to be building a better future without thinking of
the environmental crisis and the suffering of the
excluded – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #13*

13. 34th SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Counter Kingdom

Life Realities

Many rulers act like dictators, political service of the people often turns to seeking power, feeling timid when confronted by distortions of power, those who serve the needs of their local community shown as true leaders, feeling afraid to take a leadership role.

Grace to Celebrate

Jesus had to correct the distorted ambitions of some disciples. He showed a new way of leadership by living as the Suffering Servant. The last shall be first. He freed the infirm and praised the good pagan, loved his friends and reached out to those on the social fringe. With Jesus the Christ of God we can lift our heads and celebrate.

Scriptural Excerpts

Dan 7: 13-14; Ps 93?; Rev 1: 5-8; Jn 18: 33b-37

*the Son of man came in a cloud
given power, glory and a kingdom
all peoples, tribes and tongues serve
a reign not to be destroyed
holiness becomes your house
Jesus Christ, faithful witness
prince of the kings of the Earth
our sins washed in his blood
I am Alpha and Omega
the beginning and the end
who is, was, and will come again
Pilate asked: are you a king?
My kingdom is not of this world
born, came into the world
to testify to the truth
those of truth hear my voice.*



Intercession Prayers of the Faithful

1. Leadership – Jesus challenged religious leaders by showing a new way. That we walk with the Pope and believers in all nations as we and Spirit structure a renewed church ...we pray
2. Truth in Love – Jesus named love as fulfilling all laws. That daily we choose self-giving love as the way of integrity, co-creating with God a new society for all humanity ... we pray
3. Inclusion – Every Gospel tells of Jesus reaching out to those pushed to the fringes. That we allocate time in our week to listen to the cry of the poor and cry of Earth, and act ... we pray
4. Confrontation – Jesus preached, explained and prayed about living out the will of his Father. That we shun angry protest, praying and witnessing into reality what God wants ... we pray
5. Climate Challenge – Jesus pointed to nature's seasons as teachers. That in humility we listen to nature's warnings, forgiveness and ways forward as the voice of the Holy Spirit ... we pray

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being, it is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus and in his Spirit who guides our daily lives. Scripture images Christ at your right hand The beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega The First-born of a New Creation Where all in heaven and on Earth are fulfilled Inviting us to follow where he has gone Where every tear is wiped away Bathed in truth, love and beauty. So, we join the messengers of God the saints and all people of good will and Earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

kingdom that Jesus came to establish ... without mincing words, there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor
– Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium #48

the financial crisis of 2007-08 provided an opportunity ... new ways of regulating speculative financial practices and virtual wealth – Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #170

Counter Kingdom

The church often sinned in pursuit of *Christendom* - wielding political and civil power to govern 'in the name of God'. Priests gave it voice. History shows that Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, even Orthodox and Protestant churches have made similar mistakes. Elites set up 'theocracies' and appoint themselves to be the voice of God. Under the Holy Spirit, secular thinkers created legal separation of church and state. Jesus challenged 'kingly' thinking by taking the title 'witness to the truth'. He was the Suffering Servant before he sat at God's right hand. Even trying to soften the term 'kingdom' by saying *the Reign of God* may be a poor corrective.

Eco-spirituality Townsville Diocese

Gumburu symbolises the leadership and commitment of one Australian diocese to *Education 4 the Environment*. It sits at the edge of the rainforest on Misty Mountain, 90 kms north of Townsville. Since 1995 more the 45,000 Catholic groups and schools have used the centre learning how to reflect on the environment spiritually. Its mindset grew over three decades of planning curriculums where all teachers learnt to be eco-teachers. The diocese allocated finances to renovate and construct using solar technology. Townsville schools are now 100% energy neutral in a practical application of *Laudato Si'*. <https://www.gumburu.tsv.catholic.edu.au/>



Electric Bus Commutes

State governments plan for zero climate polluting transport emissions, and economic planners have done the costings. Quiet, comfortable, no-emissions electric public buses can attract commuters away from cars which are big polluters. It means a collaborative and concerted effort across manufacturers, government, bus operators, and the wider community. The finance sector is key to investment but large upfront costs will soon pay off the Gatton Institute calculates. Side benefits are substantial – cleaner air, less commuter costs and stress, new skilled jobs, reducing the need for more roads. *Care for Earth and people* preaches Pope Francis.

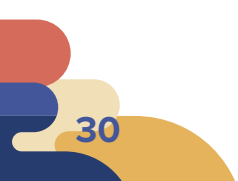
law based on the realization that justice is an essential condition for achieving the ideal of universal fraternity

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #173

Sant 'Egidio Growing Peace

A former Trastevere monastery in 1973 became home to the Sant 'Egidio lay community. It grew out of efforts by teenage student Andrea Riccardi and friends teaching poor children in shacks on Rome's periphery. They prayed together, widening their scope to serve lonely elderly, immigrant and homeless people. *Country of the Rainbow* expanded their vision to learn respect for nature. The 1989 murder of a South African refugee stimulated the *People of Peace* initiative, pooling their skills to be negotiators growing peace. The Sant 'Egidio network has small communities in 73 countries with 50,000 members. As a member, Matteo Zuppi was key in peace negotiations during the Mozambique Civil War.

mistake to view other living beings as mere objects ... engenders immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority – Pope Francis Laudato Si' #82

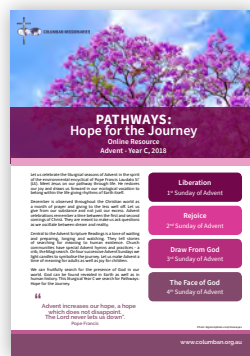
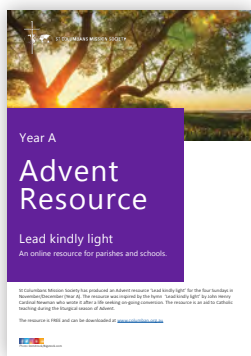
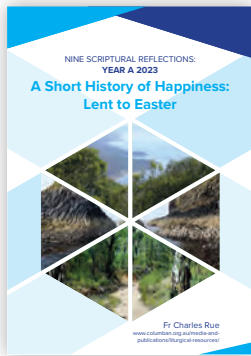
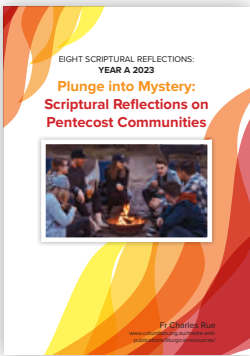
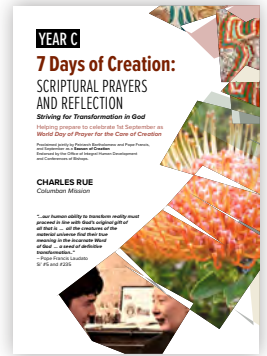
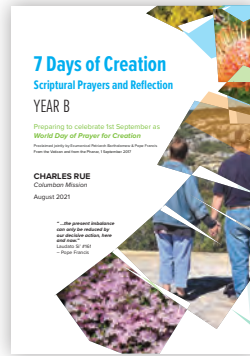
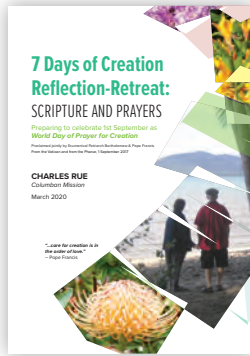
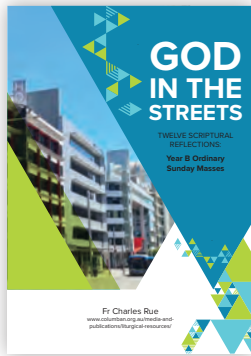




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Prayer of Saint Basil

O God,

Enlarge within us a sense of fellowship
with all living things,
our brothers and sisters the animals,
to whom Thou gavest the earth as their home
in common with us.

We remember with shame that in the past
we have exercised the high dominion of humanity
with ruthless cruelty,
so that the voice of the earth,
which should have gone up to you in song,
has been a groan of travail.

May we realise that
they live not for us alone but
for themselves and for Thee, and that
they love the sweetness of life.

