



St Francis' Church Melbourne Blessed Sacrament Congregation



**Newsletter
April 2010**

A DYING AND RISING CHURCH

We pass the fire burning brightly by the front door. We wait in the dark until the single flame of the great Easter candle illumines the whole church. We delight in the spreading sea of flickering lights as the tapers of all present catch fire from the one flame. We thrill to the ancient song in praise of the Light of Lights. Now we settle in for the long haul as the word of God is proclaimed in one powerful passage after another. We begin with the roll-call of creation from the first chapter of the first book of the scriptures, "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth . . ." The proclamation of the text is punctuated by the refrains chanted by the cantor and repeated by all: "And so it was", "God saw that it was good", "Evening came and morning came the first day".

God saw that it was good. Our hearts agree. The world is good, the world is blessed and graced, and it is good for us to be here. How shocking then to discover a line in a prayerful poem that reads, "God saw that it was very, very bad." It brings you up short, it makes you stop and think, and in the end persuades you of its truth. What poem, you may be wondering, and what it was that God saw as very bad. The poem has not yet been published. It concludes a doctoral thesis entitled "Telling the Stories: The Martyrs of San Francisco Gotera" written in 1995 by an Irish Franciscan named Peter O'Neill. Sadly, Peter died of a heart attack in San Salvador just a few weeks ago. He spent thirty-five years as a missionary in Central America, including the dangerous decade of the civil war in El Salvador. Now he's buried among his adopted family, the people of his parish.

In Peter's poem it was the dark reign of terror, lies and violent death in El Salvador that God saw as "very, very bad". Above all, it was the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero on 24 March 1980, killed by an assassin's bullet fired from the back of the church while he celebrated Mass. Like Jesus himself, Romero lived the last years of his life acutely aware that his prophetic witness for the poor put his life on the line. Inspired by the testimony of Jesus' non-violent victory over death, Romero dared to speak in advance of his own resurrection. Writing recently in the *National Catholic Reporter*, Jesuit peace activist John Dear repeats what Romero said to a Guatemalan reporter just two weeks before he was shot: "I have often been threatened with death. If they kill me, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people. If threats come to be fulfilled, from this moment I offer my blood to God for the redemption and resurrection of El Salvador. Let my blood be a seed of

freedom and the sign that hope will soon be a reality."

Peter O'Neill's thesis is a tribute to the courage and faith of the ordinary people who were assassinated by the death squads of the military regime. Their stories, Peter wrote, are "stories from the heart . . . steeped in symbolism, in spirituality, in courage, in sadness and yet in hope. By connecting these stories with that of their beloved Monsenor Romero and eventually with that of Jesus, the communities are overcoming the 'narrative of the lie' which has been so prevalent in El Salvador through the centuries." He went on: "My heartfelt hope is that these stories will not die. They illustrate that even in the most tragic and terrifying circumstances of life and death there can still be hope. . . Monsenor Romero shines out in them, not as a remote figure but as a dearly beloved brother who leads people to the story of the crucified Christ even in the darkest hour. The cross is not separate from the resurrection. It is the courage and faith and hope of these people that signifies both. The love that they had in their hearts shines forth even from their cross. It is easy to apply to them a line from Yeats: 'A terrible beauty is born'."

Some of you on first reading that phrase "God saw that it was very, very bad" may have first thought of the scandal that is getting so much media attention in the Western world at present: the sexual abuse of children by church personnel and the handling of this issue by bishops and the Vatican. The chorus of criticism is growing day by day. The official response so far has been a blend of condemnation for the criminal behavior, compassion for the victims, acceptance of responsibility by some bishops but not others, and denial of responsibility on the part of high-placed Roman church officials. It was unfortunate, to say the least, that Pope Benedict's letter to the Irish bishops was issued just as another reluctant admission came forth from the Legionaries of Christ confirming the truth of allegations against their late founder, Marcial Maciel. How this serial abuser of men, women and youth succeeded in securing decades-long protection and patronage from Pope John Paul II is all but inexplicable. For most of his long ecclesiastical career Maciel succeeded in living his own personal "narrative of the lie". To his credit it was Pope Benedict who finally began calling him to account.

Some would sum up the core issue in the sexual abuse crisis with the accusing phrase "culture of secrecy". Not all the critics can be simply discredited as enemies of the church. In 2007, in his book *Confronting Power and Sex in*

the Catholic Church, Bishop Geoffrey Robinson wrote this: "I am convinced that if the pope had spoken clearly at the beginning of the revelations, inviting victims to come forward so that the whole truth, however terrible, might be known and confronted, and firmly directing that all members of the church should respond with openness, humility, honesty and compassion, consistently putting victims before the good name of the church, the entire response of the church would have been far better" (p 9).

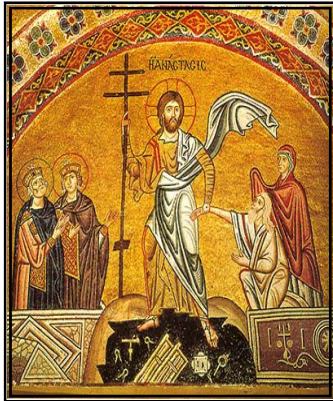
It may be the case that a certain kind of church is dying. If so, we can take heart at the paschal promise of a new church being raised up in the power of the Spirit. What kind of church would we want it to be? If you were asked to name your seven dreams for the church, what would you say? Last September, respected Australian Jesuit theologian Gerald O'Collins wrote in *The Tablet* of his seven dreams for the church. It really isn't fair to him just to list them without explanation or comment, but here they are, slightly re-edited but in their original order:

- a church with priests who are biblically literate;
- a church that ordains married men;
- a church that hears the cry of the poor;
- a church of loving and faith-filled families;
- a church enriched by diverse ministries, including women deacons;
- a church that reaches out to alienated Catholics and to other Christians;
- a church reformed by conversion to Jesus.

Whether Oscar Romero would have named his seven dreams in quite the same way we will never know. What is absolutely beyond doubt is that he himself lived and died hearing the cry of the poor. And if in El Salvador "a terrible beauty" has been born, then we must all hope and pray that the ugliness of sexual abuse and ecclesiastical self-interest may give rise to a new and transfigured church.

Tom Knowles SSS

CELEBRATING THE PASCHAL MYSTERIES



HOLY THURSDAY 1 April

- 4.00 PM EUCHARIST
- 6.00 PM EVENING EUCHARIST OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

GOOD FRIDAY 2 April

- 9.00 AM Liturgy of Readings and Morning Prayer of the Church
- 10.00 AM The Ecumenical Way of the Cross begins at St Francis'
- 12.00 PM Meditations on the Stations of the Cross
- 3.00 PM SOLEMN LITURGY OF THE LORD'S PASSION
- 8.00 PM St Francis' Choir will perform Liszt's *Via Crucis*.

HOLY SATURDAY 3 April

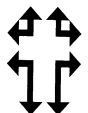
- 9.00 AM Liturgy of Readings and Morning Prayer of the Church
- 8.00 PM EASTER VIGIL AND EUCHARIST OF THE RESURRECTION: WITH ST FRANCIS' CHOIR & CANZONA BRASS

EASTER SUNDAY 4 April

- Mass at 8.00 am, 9.00 am & 10.00 am (Signed for the Deaf)
- 11.00 am Choral Mass with St Francis' Choir and *Chamber Strings of Melbourne*
- Mass at 12.30 pm, 1.30 pm, 4.30 pm & 6.00 pm (International Students)

MELBOURNE CITY CHURCHES IN ACTION: *Way of the Cross Walk*

Come and join the ecumenical *Way of the Cross Walk* which starts at St Francis' at 10.00 am on Good Friday, and visits Stations of the Cross outside eleven city churches.



DON'T READ THIS!

Don't read this unless you believe the music of St Francis' is vital to the Catholic life of Melbourne.

Don't read this if you think that the musical life of St Francis' costs peanuts.

Don't read this if you are shocked to learn that it costs A LOT OF MONEY to provide

- the hymns and Mass settings sung by all at weekday and Sunday Mass
- the inspirational music sung by our several choirs: St Francis' Choir, Julian Singers, Youth Choir
- the musicianship of our many organists

Don't read this unless you would like to donate a SUBSTANTIAL SUM either right now or in your will to ensure that St Francis' music will continue to inspire all who find their way here.

Page 2 Read this far? Then contact Tom Knowles SSS on 9663 2495 or at tfk@blessedsacrament.com.au

FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMME

Anyone interested in the Catholic faith is welcome to come along to a discussion on
Sundays at 1.00 pm
in the St Francis' Pastoral Centre.
Note: there is no meeting on Easter Sunday.

LIFE IN THE EUCHARIST (LITE) PROGRAM

Sat 17 April & Sat 24 April 9.30 am-4.00 pm
St Francis' Pastoral Centre

Presentations on the Eucharist as Nourishment, Reconciliation, Transformation, Abiding Presence, Liberation.
Story, teaching, witness, group sharing.
Enrolment forms at the Pastoral Centre.
Info: **Elaine Ward 9596-2362; Frank O'Dea 9898-9294**

SHOAH MEMORIAL SERVICE

7.30 pm Thursday 15 April

St Michael's Uniting Church, 120 Collins Street

You are invited to gather, to reflect, to pray as we remember the destruction of Jews in the Holocaust, and the destruction of something of our own humanity. You are also invited to share kosher light refreshments and conversation in the **Church Hall** after the service.

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS VICTORIA

invites you to a day seminar with
Sandra M. Schneiders IHM:

Ministerial Religious Life: Incarnating the Gospel in the World

Saturday 17 April 10.00 am-4.00 pm

Presentation College, 187 Dandenong Rd Windsor

Cost: \$50; morning & afternoon tea provided
Details: Christina **9429-8947** or clrcv@connexus.net.au

MISSIONARY SISTERS OF ST PETER CLAVER

Are holding their **80th Annual Mission Concert on Sunday 18 April at 2.00 pm at St Peter Claver Hall, 154 Cotham Road, Kew.** Come and enjoy an afternoon of popular musical selections. Admission is free. Fr John Sherman OMI will speak & a Missions collection will be taken. .

Study Tour: Advance Notice

Put **November 2011** in your diary now!
Come on a **four-week liturgical study tour.**

Visit key Catholic and ecumenical centres in Europe that inspired and continue the implementation of the vision of Vatican II.

"Realizing The Vision: 150 Years of Liturgical Renewal" is a Yarra Theological Union initiative.

PARISH DANCES

8.00 pm Fri 30 April (& last Friday every month)

Our Lady Help of Christians Hall
49 Nicholson St (next Barkly St)

East Brunswick

Bring own food/drink; tea/coffee provided

Ring Maurice 9895 5266

Admission \$5

Learn to Dance: classes with a variety of music at 8.00 pm every Tuesday.

A WEEKLY WAY OF THE CROSS

You are warmly invited to participate in a Way of the Cross Walk each Friday at 10.00 am, beginning at St Francis' Church.
For booking, please contact Rev Peter Gador-White: 0417-425-188

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

Social Justice in the City Seminar

Wednesday 28 April 12 noon

St Francis' Pastoral Centre

Phil Glendenning speaks on *The place of Indigenous Peoples, Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Contemporary Australia.*

Further information: **Paula: 9895-5800**

ART AT ST FRANCIS'

Wet Season

An exhibition of landscape paintings by

Susan Standley

Mon-Fri 10.00 am-5.00 pm

Sun 10.00 am-3.00 pm

20 April - 20 May

St Francis' Pastoral Centre



'Primeval Forces'

DEATH AND DYING: AN INTERFAITH SYMPOSIUM

Note change of date to: Wednesday to Friday, 7-9 April

Mercy Theatre

Australian Catholic University (St Patrick Campus)

Includes morning and afternoon tea; byo lunch.

Cost: \$25 per day or \$60 for the whole three days

For details, email: ecum@cam.org.au

FAMILY- SHARE THE DREAM in 2011

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Commission for Pastoral Life together with the Archdiocese of Melbourne are holding the third

National Family Gathering in Melbourne next year.

Join us in helping to build a new culture of life and love through Christian family life.

Friday evening 15 April- Sunday 17 April 2011.

Information: **Life, Marriage & Family Office**

Tel: **9287-5579**, or email lmf@cam.org.au

REGULAR MONTHLY MASSES

Mass signed for the deaf: 10.00 am first

Sunday (4 April)

Tertiary Students Mass: 6.00 pm first

Sunday (4 April)

For people living with HIV/AIDS: 5.30 pm

second Tuesday (13 April)

Filipino Mass: 2.30 pm second Sunday (11 April)

Indonesian Mass: 2.45 pm third Sunday (18 April)



April 2010 at St Francis'

Holy Thursday: See page 2

Good Friday: See page 2

Holy Saturday: See page 2

Easter Sunday: See page 2

Mass signed for the deaf: 10.00 am Sunday 4 April

Tertiary Students' Mass: 6.00 pm Sunday 4 April

Filipino Community Eucharist: 2.30 pm Sunday 11 April

Mass for people living with HIV/Aids: 5.30 pm Tuesday 14 April

Indonesian Community Mass: 2.45 pm Sunday 18 April

World Day of Prayer for Vocations: Friday 23 April

ANZAC Day: Sunday 25 April

Feast of St Mark: Monday 26 April (ANZAC Day Public Holiday)

Fr Ed's monthly reflection for April: *Three Days, One Celebration*

Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help & Eucharistic Benediction: 12.30 pm Friday

Rosary: 11.30 am Monday to Saturday in the Ladye Chapel

Sung MORNING PRAYER of the Church: 8.30 am Monday to Friday

Sung EVENING PRAYER of the Church: 6.00 pm Monday to Friday, 5.30 pm Sunday

EUCCHARISTIC ASSOCIATES

Next meeting: **Sunday 25 April**

2.00-2.30pm: Newcomers (Pastoral Centre)

2.30-3.00pm: Adoration – all members (Church)

3.00-4.00pm: Talk (Pastoral Centre)

Contact person: Melville Miranda on **9809 4316**

SERVITIUM CHRISTI

(Eucharistic Secular Institute)

Next meeting: **Saturday 17 April at 2.00 pm**

St Francis' Pastoral Centre

Contact: Mary Williams on 9818 5375 or
Tina Lazzaro on 9432 4441

SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB

Note: No meeting this month due to Easter.

Next month's discussion will centre on the issues involved for people with Alzheimer's and for their carers.

Pumphouse Hotel
128 Nicholson St Fitzroy
Wednesday 5 May 8.00 pm

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND

A wonderful opportunity for married couples to enrich their marriages. Volunteer couples and a Priest present the weekend. It is based around Catholic values, but you don't need to be Catholic to attend.

The next 2 weekends are **16-18 April & 25-27 June.**

Further information from **Peter & Erika Smith** on **9899-0824**, or email vicbookings@wwme.org.au

Check the website: www.wwme.org.au

ART AT ST FRANCIS'

'Fire Series'

by *Ursula Weinert*

Paintings of the artist's home and farmlet after the Black Saturday fires.

Mon-Fri 10.00 am-5.00 pm

Sun 10.00 am-3.00 pm

St Francis' Pastoral Centre

until 13 April