

# The Parish Paper

Number 7

Michaelmas 2023

St Peter's Church, Eastern Hill, Melbourne

<http://web.stpeters.org.au>

Parish Church of the City since 1847



'Naarm', Glenn Loughrey

## St Michael & All Angels

*Mthr Kathryn Bellhouse*

*Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven...*

You may, or may not, have noticed that our Liturgy is littered with references to angels. We may not think about them a lot, but we certainly pray with them. When we lift up our hearts to the Lord, we are joining a chorus of praise they already sustain beyond time and space. On Friday 29<sup>th</sup> falls the Feast of the Archangel Michael and All Holy Angels - "Michaelmas" - when we celebrate these mysterious beings. The Archangel Michael particularly highlighted in this Feast, is the Heavenly Defender who appears in one of the visions recorded in the Book of Revelation, casting Satan out of heaven so that Satan can no longer hang about the Heavenly Courts making accusations against people before God. The vision resonates with that curious declaration of our Lord, "*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.*" Michael commands the other ministering spirits who, by thought and desire, effect the world, seeking to restore all things to harmony with their Maker.

St Basil of Caesarea, who in the fifth century wrote very lucidly of angels, calls them the "reasonable powers" and "ministering spirits". He says that like us, they exist principally to worship God, reflecting the nature and beauty of the Holy Trinity - Father, Word and Spirit - as they offer ceaseless praise and adoration.

Angels do not, of course, sit comfortably within a materialistic worldview, which sees a universe comprised largely of inanimate matter, operating in accordance with patterns or laws that hold simply because they hold, independently of thought or will. Well, if there is anything the Archangel Michael can help us with, it is the spiritual battle against such a cold view of reality. After all, who am I to limit the forms of being God might conceive? If there is a Creative God beyond matter, a God who is Spirit, why wouldn't he conceive of beings in a form of reality that more nearly reflects his own? It is neither more nor less incredible than when an adult points a child toward the tiny twinkling stars and says, "Those are thousands of burning suns." The reality is that reality keeps revealing to us how wonderful the permutations of being are, as they unfold themselves before us.

We know from our unique human experience that two different kinds of “things” exist (recognising the word “things” is inadequate). There are tangible things circumscribed by time and space, such as your hands, or the words on this page. Then there are transcendentals: Truth and Beauty, for instance, or even physical laws and purely mathematical realities. They *exist*, either self-evident or discovered by reasoning, but they are not substantial realities: they don’t have bodies of their own to bump into chairs and stars and bears; they are the principles by which we recognise ‘chair’ and ‘bear’, and understand such objects. By means of our intellects, we recognise abstract truths, forms and values shaping the world of sense, while remaining themselves intangible. The latter is the currency of angels: not sensation and substance, but thought and desire. They exist principally to worship God, reflecting the nature and beauty of the Holy Trinity, who awakens such thought and desire within them. But the angels also engage with us and our physical world by means of their thoughts (comprehending what is) and desires (willing something to be).

So it is that angels populate the pages of Salvation history, influencing and protecting the people of God. At one moment they appear like human guests, coming to visit Abraham under the oaks of Mamre; at another, they are ministering spirits strengthening Christ during his great fast in the wilderness, and in his hour of desperation in the garden of Gethsemane. Even if we cannot pin down ‘what’ they are, what is undeniable is that *there* they are, woven into the tapestry of Salvation. St John Henry Newman once conjectured that they are so revealed to us in order to help us connect “the sight of this world with the thought of another”, as when our Lord encouraged Nathaniel to open his mind to the wonders of God with the words: “*You will see heaven laid open and, above the Son of Man, the angels of God ascending and descending*”. The courts of heaven are not empty chambers where the Persons of the Holy Trinity exist in isolation. They are populated with those beings who exist to reflect the Splendour of God, and praise God ceaselessly for this gift of being.

Aided by their prayers, we as Christians do need to go into bat against a view of the world that reduces it to a tangle of matter. Because it is only when we are able to place our understanding of this world in the context of our thirst for that Other, that we will find the inspiration we need to serve

our Lord faithfully in this one. As a final little note, my housemate tells me that as a child growing up in Kito, she was taught to pray...

Angelito de mi guarda  
 mi dulce compañía  
 no me desampares  
 ni de noche ni de día  
 hasta que pongas  
 en paz y armonía  
 con todos los Santos  
 Jesús, José y María

*[Little angel of my guard, my sweet companion, do not despair me, by night or by day, until you have brought me into peace and harmony with all your saints, with Jesus, Joseph and Mary.]*

## Glorious, Wonderful, Astonishing

### *What the Vicar does on his Leave*

I am writing on a sunny Sunday in Milan, after a beautiful Solemn Mass at the Duomo in the local Ambrosian rite, which varies significantly from Roman rite and is distinguished by a peculiarly expressive form of censing involving lots of full circles, performed with a thurible that lacks a lid! I shall not be recommending this to Anthony Schepis.

Having left Melbourne three weeks ago I arrived in an unseasonably hot London (over 30 degrees every day, for which the city is not built). It was a delight to be back at All Saints Margaret Street, staying next door to where I lived for more than eight years, and wonderful to spend time with Fr Peter Anthony and many other London friends. There were lunches and dinners and coffees and a little time to catch up with the recently reopened National Portrait Gallery; also an excellent production of Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of An Anarchist* at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Preaching at All Saints on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> was followed by a parish lunch in Dean Street, crammed into a happily airconditioned, basement under *Pierre Victoire*. All Saints continues to flourish and grow, which is heartening to see.

But the highlight of my London week was actually a trip to Belgium. I took the Eurostar on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September to see the beautiful Ghent altarpiece, of which a small copy forms the reredos in St Peter's Handfield Chapel. It is in process of being restored (painstaking work which began in 2012) and the recovered colours are vibrant and arresting; at this scale (huge by comparison with our reproduction) the image of the mystic Lamb at the centre of the heavenly worship is an extremely striking illustration of the sacrifice of the Mass.

After returning to London for more eating and drinking, I made my way to Milan on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup>, to be met by my friends Stephanie Trick and Paolo Alderighi, virtuoso jazz pianists whom you'll be able to hear next year, as they are coming to stay with me at the Vicarage in July. Paolo has lived in Milan all his life and so I was immediately treated to a walking tour of the centre and a predictably wonderful dinner.

This city is extraordinarily rich in culture and history, especially of the Christian faith. On that first walk I noticed a church five minutes' walk from where I'm staying (near the Porta Romana) which looked reassuringly ancient; the next morning I discovered it to be the Church of the Holy Apostles and St Navaro, founded by St Ambrose in 382, the first cruciform church building in the West: Ambrose imported this architectural form from Constantinople, to complement the more familiar Roman basilica format (the rectangular hall with an apse which derives from pre-Christian Roman architecture). This church is barely remarkable in a city which boasts St Ambrose's own church (where he can be seen lying vested under the High Altar, between two earlier local martyrs) and the largest Cathedral in Europe, dedicated to Our Lady's Nativity, in which you can visit the baptistry where St Ambrose baptised St Augustine (where I went to Mass this morning). Another joy of the Cathedral is that you can take a lift to the stone roof and walk from one end to the other, looking out over the noble Piazza and beyond.

Apart from the glorious ancient churches, and the equally wonderful Romanesque and later ecclesial architecture, there's an astonishing range of galleries and museums, with the contents ranging from ancient Roman to 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century art. One outstanding example of the latter is the *Villa Necchi Campiglio* house museum (which some of you may know as the setting for Luca Guadagnino's film *I am Love*, the first of the trilogy he

completed with *A Bigger Splash* and *Call Me By Your Name*). Designed by Pietro Portaluppi in the 1930s for a rich industrialist family it was preserved (at the wish of the last member of the Necchi family to live there) as a museum containing three distinctive collections of 20<sup>th</sup> century art. It is a perfectly executed piece of modern house design, full of beautifully designed furniture and ornaments. Equally good is the *Boschi di Stefano* house museum, in an apartment (also designed by Portaluppi) a little further north, the walls of which are completely covered with the paintings and other artworks of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, collected by a husband and wife of more modest means than the Necchi Campiglio family, but who knew the artists and were often given pieces by them: the result is a collection of 2000 pieces which rivals, or possibly surpasses, that of the splendid *Museo del Novecento* next to the Duomo.

There really isn't space here to share the breadth of experience I've already been lucky enough to amass, including a brilliant performance of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at La Scala and, at the *Conservatorio di Giuseppe Verdi* (my friend Paolo's school/university) an extraordinary performance of Beethoven's 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Symphonies by the Orchestra Mozart, conducted (without a score!) by local boy Daniele Gatti, one of the best-known conductors in Europe. I haven't yet mentioned that Stephanie and Paolo took me with them to Switzerland last weekend where they performed two wonderful concerts in the Waldhaus Hotel in Sils Maria, which looks out over a picture-postcard Alpine lake.

Tomorrow they are taking me with them to Siena for three days; on 1 October we'll be in Switzerland again for another of their concerts – this time at Giessbach, arranged so that we can go on to Neuchatel to visit the La Trobe Memorial Chapel, where I've been invited to give a short talk about La Trobe and St Peter's. As I have yet to write that piece and am very close to a reasonable word limit for this one, I must stop.

I look forward to seeing you all very soon!

Fr Michael

# Memories of Cheryl Duff

*Recorded by Peter Yewers*

*The following excerpts about Cheryl Duff's memories of St Peter's are taken from a longer family oral history recorded recently by Peter Yewers.*

In August 1956 when I was seven, we moved from Richmond to Fitzroy. We were living behind St Vincent's Hospital in Princes Street. St Mary's in Fitzroy Street was attached to St Peter's and the Sunday School went down to St Mary's. My mother was Anglican. She was an unwanted child and she went into a children's home at the age of six, first Salvation Army, then Anglican with the nuns at Camberwell and later Cheltenham.

My mother insisted that Barry, Jenny and I went to Sunday School at St Peter's. The Sunday School children were in the church up to when the sermon started during the Family Mass then we headed to a room above the old Guild Room. In 1957 the Sunday School went to the Spring Street Mission, which is now a Russian Church. Ethel Gordon was my Sunday School teacher who taught me how to follow the service by looking at the pictures in the prayer book. There was a picture of a chalice for the solemn part and a picture of a priest in the pulpit for the sermon.

My brother Barry went into Aftercare at that time and he got to watch the 1956 Olympics on television and we were very jealous. I was jealous as we couldn't afford to buy a television. He recovered from his infection and had to do lessons in after care as well.

In 1959 we came back to St Peter's in the old Guild Room upstairs. We used to romp down the stairs making a racket when the 9.30 people were having refreshments – only bread, butter and marmalade. Most people drank tea from a big pot. Nicolette Hooper brought in her own Vegemite jar. Gladys Hammond organized refreshments after 8 and 9.30 services and supper after evensong. They didn't have refreshments after 11am high Mass. Gladys used to go around and shake a container asking for donations towards the cost of refreshments. She attended David and Helen Farrer's wedding.

Then they fixed up Old St Mary's and the Sunday School went there. There were 20-30 Fire Brigade kids and 10-15 other kids from the parish. Sr Patricia CHN was in charge. Sunday School was attached to 9.30

service. We left after the readings and we would walk with the 4 or 5 teachers up to St Mary's. The teachers would then go to the 11 am service.

There were terrace houses in Gisborne and Albert Streets where the firemen's families lived. The Protestant children came to St Peter's and the Roman Catholic children went to St Patrick's. The fire trucks were in the historic building. The new building was finished in 1982 with a mural by Howard Freedman, the State artist who also made murals for VFL Park and Spencer Street Railway Station. On Easter Mondays we had our Sunday School picnics and buses would take us to Emerald Lake or Yan Yean reservoir. We went by bus to Emerald Lake one year and Yan Yean another. One year we had two buses. There were sack races (I think Helen Drummond won), egg and spoon races, and races for parents too. At Emerald Lake the kids wanted to swim. The boys played footy and when it went in the lake, Barry said "Don't you dare push me in". He couldn't swim.

Canon Maynard was lovely. I can remember him speaking on stage at St Peter's Day. He was so good to Jenny, my sister with intellectual disability, who played up so much. He bought her a picture book from the Bookroom. He also allowed Peter Bryce to do his homework in the vicarage. Peter said he first came to St Peter's in his mother's womb. When Canon Maynard said he was leaving, I didn't like Fr Taylor but I got to like him.

When I was a child, the Church made sure we didn't go without food. The nuns were really good. They made sure we had clothes and food vouchers so my Mum couldn't buy cigarettes.

I can't sing and I used to sit behind Helen Drummond and in front of David Farrer and his mother, who was a deaconess. I love music, especially hymns and listening to the choir. The carols have always been on the Sunday between Christmas and New Year. After Midnight Mass I stayed with Helen Farrer's parents in Coburg. They took me to Carols by Candlelight in the Bowl, it was free then, before the Midnight Service. Helen's sister drove us to Coburg afterwards and her father would drive us back on Christmas Day for 9.30. Parish picnics were held on Easter Monday for parents, children and other parishioners. The firemen's kids didn't come. Helen Drummond came with her mother.



Sister Patricia organized transport for us to go to St Andrew's Brighton one Saturday afternoon for a fancy dress party when I was 12 or 13. I won the prize for the most unusual costume. I was a cavewoman in a tattered dress made out of a shirt with fake fur. My hair was tangled and no shoes, so I was freezing. I made a club out of newspaper. I stuck it together with Clag, (sticky tape was hard to get and expensive) and painted it brown.

Sylvia Pettit, who worked at the Public Library, ran the Bookroom and opened it on Sundays after 9.30 and 11.00. She helped me with my English lessons. We moved to Ascot Vale and I went to secondary school at Flemington Girls, now Debney Park SC. I was top of form in year 8 which gave me some recognition.

Irene Robins made a better life for herself. She didn't know her father and there was no birth certificate. She started a cub group at St Peter's which included Barry and they went to a Jamboree. She received an Order of the British Empire OBE award on Queen's Birthday and Fr Taylor went with her to the presentation. She worked at ICI (Imperial Chemical Industries) on the corner of Albert and Nicholson Streets.

Jenny crocheted a knee rug during Fr Taylor's time and she gave it to Fr Andrew Jack. He always saw Jenny when he came to St Peter's. When Jenny had a bad turn and she went limp, she went to Cooloola at Sunbury. We caught a Red Cross bus from Flinders Street at weekends. Parents were upset when Cooloola closed. There was a fellow there who stole the residents' meat and butter to sell. I made a complaint and doxed him in. When Larundel, Janefield, Kew Cottages and Cooloola all closed we reckoned there would be trouble. Jenny went to a house in Epping, which she hated because she couldn't walk around the grounds. Then she went to Plenty Services. Jenny passed away in 2004.

We moved back to Greeves Street Fitzroy in 1964 before decimal currency was introduced on the fourteenth of February 1966. I remember working out new money to get to Flemington Girls High School and St Peter's. I stayed at Flemington Girls and finished Year 11.

The Vicarage Garden party started under Fr Taylor. Eileen Heden, a generous donor to the Church I believe, died a single woman She bought an apartment in Spring Street in Fr Taylor's time. My mother died in 1974 after Richmond won the Grand Final. They rang me at work in the Melbourne Titles Office. I was upset and I wasn't allowed to see her in intensive care. Fr Taylor couldn't go and David Farrer went in his place. There was a funeral at W G Ravens. I didn't know I could have had it at St Peters. Fr Taylor couldn't stay at SPEH after 10 years. He was a vicar in Brunswick and Moonee Ponds before he went to South Australia and Western Australia. He came back to Victoria when women priests were ordained and he went to the Roman Catholic Church.

Bp John Bayton followed Fr Taylor. Ann Bayton restarted the Sunday School. I was coming to 9.30. There was no sleeping around the grounds under Bp Bayton or David Farrer. They advised us to give homeless people food not money. The St Peter's Day service had been in the evening and John Bayton changed it to the closest Sunday. Ann Bayton made a beef stew recipe along with parishioners to keep the cost low.

I married David Duff who was born in Scotland. I had three boys Peter born in 1980 who died after five days, Andrew 1981 and Michael 1983. Fr John Bayton came to the Royal Women's Hospital and baptized Peter a few hours after he was born. He was then moved to the Children's Hospital where he lived for five days. A private car brought his tiny ashes to St Peter's for the funeral service. Bp John Bayton wanted the internment of Peter's ashes to be 'a Mass of the Angels', it was one weekday about 3 weeks after he passed away. It was held in the Chapel where we have the 8.00 am Mass on Sundays. Peter Bryce had the job of doing this, putting the ashes in the crypt.

Andrew was a boat boy for six months and I made a cassock for him but he hated it. I took an adult cassock home to use as a guide and made a T-shirt pattern. I put my pattern making and design course to use to make the cassock for Andrew when he was 5 years old. Steve Clarke ran Sunday School and prepared Andrew for confirmation. In 1996 Steve organized a procession with banners for the Church's 150<sup>th</sup>. There is a time capsule placed near the crucifix. My husband painted the shovel for the occasion and Joyce Bruce and other parishioners dressed up.

Barry died in 1996 aged 50. David Farrer took the service at St Peters. Barry donated his organs but we only managed to get his eyes to hand over. I drove to Church the day he had a massive heart attack in our house in Lalor. I was devastated I was so close to him. Barry's ashes were scattered on the Richmond football ground near the station. There was only myself and one other relative for the small little service on the ground.

I moved from Collingwood to Lalor in 1979. I won woman of the year award from Whittlesea Council in 2008 for my community work. John Davis supported me with the application. Then I moved to Mernda in 2016. I can survive at Mernda because I don't have any mortgage. John Davis advised the Whittlesea Council that I was a battler and drew people into the Church and most of them stayed. John Davis introduced carols before Midnight Mass on Christmas Day,

Jenny died during John Davis's time and her funeral was held at St Peter's. I had received a letter from Fawkner Cemetery saying there was no room in the double niche which I had bought for my mother. I got Jenny's ashes and they were put under the altar here. My prayers were answered.

Nancy McHugh who lived at Thornbury was in the embroidery guild and she made kneelers for my mother, Barry, Jenny and my son Peter. Barry's kneeler was stolen during the time when the homeless were sleeping in the church while the services were being held, but the other three are still used in the church. Nancy was hit getting off a tram and badly injured. She couldn't come to church after that. In 2016 Helen Drummond and I celebrated our 60th anniversary together at St Peter's.

What have I got from St Peters? Peace of mind. I believe in God and helping others. Before Covid I did swaps with Anna at the Lazarus Centre

at weekends. I still contribute to Little Aths, and I am a Justice of the Peace. Treating others as you would like to be treated yourself. I have never argued with people at Church. That's why people move away. People also move away when they feel they don't get enough recognition. Alex Gamser who worked in the Lazarus Centre now lives at Frankston and I stay there when there is Little Aths nearby. One day at the Lazarus Centre Alex commented that you can improve your life as a person even when you are down and out.

## Responsorial Psalmody

*Geoffrey Cox, Melbourne, March 1995*

Since the liturgical reforms of the 1960s in many denominations, there has been a welcome revival in the singing of the Gradual at the Eucharist in its early responsorial format. Several styles of responsorial psalmody have come into use, including those of Gelineau, the modern Benedictine chants of Dom Gregory Murray and others, as well as through composed works.

This setting represents a simple alternative style of responsorial psalmody, based on traditional plainchant. It comes from a complete cycle of psalm settings developed originally for use at St Peter's Eastern Hill, Melbourne, and used regularly there since the early 1980s. The aim has been to preserve something of the richness of the plainchant tradition, as well as to achieve a simplicity that might encourage congregational singing.

The melodies of the antiphons have been adapted afresh from traditional plainchant formulae, and are therefore referred to as "Plainsong New". They do not follow slavishly the notes of particular Latin-texted melodies, but rework traditional chant formulae to serve the natural accentuation of the English texts, in much the same way as was done with newly developed Latin texts over the centuries. The tones for the psalm verses are those of the Sarum Use, which have proven their suitability for use with English texts over a long period extending back at least to the work of G. H. Palmer's *Sarum Psalter*, and more recently used in H. B. Briggs and W. H. Frere's *A Manual of Plainsong* (1902 and later editions).

While this music may be performed without accompaniment, an accompaniment has been provided in the belief that it serves to encourage the singing of the congregation. The verses of the psalm may be sung by a

small group of singers within the choir or by a cantor, in the latter case preferably from the lectern.

The suggested method of performance is as follows:

- 1) The antiphon is played on the organ (without pedals) using a strong and clear registration.
- 2) The cantor or small group of cantors from the choir (perhaps high or low voices alone), sings the antiphon to the softer accompaniment of the organ (still without pedals).
- 3) The congregation repeats the antiphon (lead by the entire choir if present) to the stronger accompaniment of the organ (with pedals).
- 4) The cantor, or small group, sings the stanzas, as in (2) above, and the congregation repeats the antiphon after each stanza as in (3) above.

In unaccompanied performance, (1) above is omitted, and the cantor begins singing the antiphon immediately, perhaps joined by other cantors at an appropriate point, but reserving the entire choir to lead the congregational repeat of the antiphon.

Provided that the cantor(s) is/are sufficiently confident, it is suggested that the accompaniment in the verses should not double the melody, and that it be kept as light as possible. Experienced organists may wish to accompany the verses using chord progressions based on those provided here, but played at varying pitches, for example in close position around and above the melody line.

Melody lines of the antiphons are supplied for the use of the congregation, and these should be printed in the order of service or pew sheet wherever possible.

Editorial: The artwork in this issue is by the Revd Glenn Loughrey, vicar of St Oswald's, Glen Iris and is reprinted with kind permission. Artwork by Glenn Loughrey: 'Naarm', cover art. 'All of Life is One', page 20 'In Search of Peace', page 14. 'Always was, Always will be Wathaurong', back cover. The Parish Paper is edited by Philip Harvey, arranged by Warren Collins on his computer at home, and printed by the Parish Administrator, Eugene Chin, in the Parish Office.



*'In Search of Peace', Glenn Loughrey*

## Responsorial Psalmody and Geoffrey Cox

*Some thoughts and memories from Beverley Phillips, Director of Music and Organist at St Mary's Church, North Melbourne*

This Preface to the Psalms was written in 1995 at a time when Geoffrey Cox decided to test publish a few Psalms. Initially he had worked through the lectionary and composed antiphons, as he explains. He then cut and pasted the various verses specified and my job at one time was literally cut-and-paste!

The age of music computers and possibility of desk top came as I recall somewhere around the time when Mercy College was morphing into Australian Catholic University, so the long dreamed about project of setting up all the Psalms with an accompaniment I think rather got shelved or at least slowed down.

I note I purchased these printed copies from Fine Music in 1995. I do still have the old originals on file at St Mary's. Over the years Geoffrey gradually set up more, as and when he required, and of course we then ceased to be all using the one lectionary so some of his dream of a universal "Plainsong New" responsorial psalm 3-year collection rather hit a bump.

The Preface is attached to those few psalms that I know of that were actually commercially sold. In the particular case of this copy (and they were consistent with at least 2 others I think, that I checked) I think this was 'The Preface' he would have used had a collection been published. It is attached to Psalm 139 (138), The Inescapable God (St John the Baptist). Subtext. Dedicated on the front cover as follows: "For Keith Rayner on the 25th Anniversary of his Episcopal Consecration, St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne. 24th June 1994."

My contact with Geoffrey Cox was as an inspiring organ teacher who triggered me into trying things I probably thought never possible. I know him as a meticulous editor of all that he does, maybe something he honed with the publication of the 3 volumes he edited in the Faber Early Organ Series Vol 1-3 (England 1510-1710), a series in conjunction with James Dalton. I think I am correct in noting that he made a considerable number of contributions to various Dictionaries, e.g. Grove Music and Musicians.

Geoffrey was on the Editorial committee of the 'Catholic Worship Book II'. For many years President of Royal Society of Church Music (Vic.). He steered the organisation through the thorny issues of the beginning of RSCM "Aus" as the UK came to terms with provinces becoming more separate. He was also responsible for bringing Richard Proulx out to Australia on several occasions for several roles, an important trigger for a number of still currently practising musicians in Melbourne.

Geoffrey has left an invaluable corpus of psalmody in the plainsong style, in addition to his setting of the Exsultet used in many places and I would presume the Hill. In addition, he also edited the St John Passion, I note on his front page, in 2009. The only formally non-self-published works I am aware of are the organ volumes, and those occurring in CWBII, 'Together in Song', and there may be some lodged with GIA Publications. There is no doubt he has had a considerable influence on Church Music in this State and Country.

## The God of Outrageous Hospitality

*i.m. Robert Whalley 1946-2023*

*Ken Goodger*

*On Monday the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, a requiem mass for the Revd Rob Whalley was conducted at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Wangaratta. The Dean of the Cathedral, Ken Goodger, gave the homily, which is printed here with permission. Interment of ashes took place at St Peter's Eastern Hill, Melbourne, on Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup> of September.*

A warm welcome always awaits you at No. 7, The Close, Wangaratta. If you are not shown into the cosy drawing room at the front, you will no doubt be led down towards the kitchen/lounge/dining area via a long hallway that connects the old part of the house to the new. As you walk down the hallway, you see an array of different pictures, movie posters and prints of people from by-gone eras. As you approach the glass walkway you see a photo of a man hanging on a bookcase in the last room on the right.

In the photo, a man of around 50 years of age stands, wearing a white t-shirt under a dark denim shirt and leather jacket. With his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his jeans, and a cheeky grin on his face, he looks like a model in a Ralph Lauren or a Calvin Klein catalogue, rather than the



Trappist monk, writer, theologian, mystic, poet, social activist and scholar of comparative religion, Thomas Merton.

I've always liked that photo, because even though it is Thomas Merton, the photo is also so Rob. The fact that Rob is dressed in a similar way to Merton on the front cover of the order of service says a lot about Rob, his love of Merton and his spirituality.

And we get a clear picture of Rob's spirituality from the liturgy that Rob and John prepared in January for today. Musically, our hymns remind us that God is love, and we are the mirrors and bearers of that love to each other; the extraordinary love of Christ in his sacrifice on the cross; the resurrection hope Jesus gives us in the face of death; and the wonderful Croft Burial sentences and the Easter Anthems which speak also to resurrection hope. We have Bach, Fauré and Tim Stevens for communion, and what would any gathering with Rob Whalley be without a Sondheim show tune?

And our readings all speak in like manner of the hope in which we gather here today.

Divine hospitality is a theme that pervades scripture. Images of this hospitality are woven through the writings of the Old Testament prophets, such as in our first reading from Isaiah. Isaiah writes to a people who have most likely returned from their exile in Babylon. Discouraged and disheartened, Isaiah envisions a time when the shame of God's people will be removed and God will offer divine hospitality not just to the people of Israel and Judah, but to all people. Even death itself will be swallowed up.

The image of divine hospitality reaches its summit in the parables of Jesus with their vision of the great banquet in the heavenly kingdom. The hospitality flowing from the heart of God finds its clearest expression in the hospitality that God's people offer to others and is seen most clearly in the meal we share in remembrance of Jesus. Rob often spoke about how "we are called to be taken, blessed, broken and shared for others" as a sign of divine hospitality in the world.

The wonderful setting of Psalm 27 by Christopher Willcock uses a selection of verses from the Psalm that are a wonderful expression of trust in God. But as is so often the case, when verses are left out it can change the tone of

the reading and this is the case with Psalm 27. In between the verses we have, the Psalmist expresses fears that seem at odds with the verses we see. Having just talked of the Lord being “the stronghold of my life”, the Psalmist breaks forth with an anxious cry: “Do not hide your face from me” and “Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help.”

Psalm 27, like so many of the Psalms, wonderfully captures the ambiguity that is so often part of the life of faith. There are times when our fears get the best of us and bring out the worst in us. And then there are times when our faith holds. Psalm 27 is a reassurance of the constant presence of God, even in the midst of the struggles of life.

Our epistle reading is from the part of the letter to the Romans where Paul writes about the Roman’s calling and election. Paul’s message is clear: “nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God”. Nothing. We might make our own personal list of things which threaten our relationship with God: private disappointments, public failures, personal anxieties, financial difficulties, troublesome family members, challenging work colleagues, the list is endless. And yet Paul remains adamant in his conviction: nothing can separate us from God’s love. In spite of what may be happening to us, the ultimate reality of the kingdom is that God’s love is unconditional and promised. Everything else is secondary.

And then finally, we have a few verses from the story of the healing of the man born blind in chapter 9 of John’s Gospel. These verses seem odd ones to choose for a funeral, and I’m sorry I never had the opportunity to discuss his choice with Rob before he died. But I wonder if Rob chose these verses because he felt an empathy with the man born blind.

We join the story in John 9, verse 9, where the neighbours and those who had seen the blind man when he was a beggar interrogate the newly healed man to find out what happened and how. He tells them that a man named Jesus healed him. Some of the Pharisees say that since Jesus healed on the Sabbath he is not from God. Another group disagrees. “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” they ask.

The Pharisees are faced with a dilemma. They will either need to make a change to their understanding of how things might be, or else deny the presence of God. They decide to go with the latter. Instead of considering the possibility that their religious assumptions may have been wrong, they persist in their views and remain blind to the new things that God is doing among them.

While the story of the man born blind is, in effect, what the Johannine community was going through in the face of opposition and ostracism, this is the issue we face in our own day. And Rob and John have known some of the opposition and ostracism in their advocacy for the LGBTQIA+ community in recent years. They have been at the forefront of the question of how we can remain faithful in our witness to Christ in ways that speak to the movement of God's Spirit in our own time and place.

And so we come today to farewell Rob and to entrust him to the God of outrageous hospitality and inclusion; to the God of the ambiguity of struggle and hope; to the God of scandalous grace and unconditional love; to the God who will never let us go.

It would be nice to give Thomas Merton the last word today, and it is a quote from him that I think sums up not only Rob's journey over 77 years, but especially his journey in the last few years, months, weeks and days of his life.

In 'Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander', Merton writes of a crisis in the church in the twelfth century, but he could easily have been writing about the church today: "In a time of drastic change one can be too preoccupied with what is ending or too obsessed with what seems to be beginning. In either case one loses touch with the present and with its obscure but dynamic possibilities. What really matters is openness, readiness, attention, courage to face risk. You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope." Amen.



*'All of Life is One', Glenn Loughrey*

## Rowan Williams reads Poetry

### *Some Observations from Philip Harvey of 'A Century of Poetry'*

An anthology of 100 poems written in the past 100 years, with readerly responses on each from Rowan Williams, is a kind of autobiography of the archbishop's roving mind. Titled 'A Century of Poetry', the book's subtitle gets to the point with the claim that we are "searching the heart." This is not a best-of or my-favourites collection, but one where poems "open the door to some fresh, searching, and challenging insights about the life of faith."

The English poet Michael Symmons Roberts opens 'A New Song':

Sing a new song to the Lord,  
sing through the skin of your teeth,  
sing in the code of your blood,  
sing with a throat full of earth

To which Rowan asks, why do we praise? Then answers, "praise is as inescapable as lament in the human world. The singing evoked here is not a full-throated self-indulgent performance; it is what manages to escape from choked and knotted insides because it can't be contained; and it names or at least points towards what can't be named." His readings, over and over, are interested in the contradictions in our inheritance, how questions keep rising up that must be asked and considered. Roberts concludes

sing what you never could say,  
sing at the fulcrum of joy,  
sing without need of reply.

Rowan Williams is a maker of poetry and this is a guidebook to the sorts of poems he would perhaps like to make himself; we detect many of his own poetic interests and stylistic tendencies in this admiring selection. For example, the Pakistani-Scots poet Imtiaz Dharker's poem 'Prayer' is not a world away from Rowan's own manner:

The place is full of worshippers.  
you can tell by the sandals  
piled outside, the owners' prints  
worn into leather, rubber, plastic,  
a picture clearer than their faces  
put together, with some originality,  
brows and eyes, the slant  
of cheek to chin.

“What prayer are they whispering?” she asks. Rowan writes, “the worn sandal as ‘the perfect pattern of a need’ is the central image of the poem, Each of the sandals left at the door of the mosque has a unique set of indentations, a unique history of being pushed into this distinct shape by the unavoidable daily pressure of keeping moving.” Each sentence of his reading extends the meanings and ambiguities of Dharkar’s poem into a satisfying reflection on her own more concise argument. One example: “Dharkar ... gives us an austere picture of what prayer actually is: it is something as inescapable as walking, something that has to do not with anxious petitioning or ecstatic thanksgiving but with the sheer hope of moving, or perhaps growing, into a future.”

Understandably, Welsh poets are well-represented. Gwyneth Lewis, in ‘How to Read Angels’, writes of the encounter:

Yes, information, but that’s never all,  
 there’s some service, a message. A lie dispelled,  
 something forgiven, an alternative world  
 glimpsed, for a moment, what you wanted to hear  
 but never thought possible. You feel a fool  
 but do something anyway ...

Rowan identifies some rules of thumb about angel voices: “Truthfulness, forgiveness, hope – these are reliable signs that whatever has been sensed or guessed at is more than just the contents of our own mind ... What is convincing is the surprise that something we wanted might after all be thinkable.” Discovering what might be thinkable is a hallmark of this book.

The Indian novelist Vikram Seth took up residence in the Old Rectory at Bemerton, outside Salisbury, the home of poet George Herbert for a brief time in the seventeenth century. Rowan says Seth’s background is Hindu, but in this context it’s true to say his background is also decidedly Christian.

His list poem called 'This' includes the following items:

A beast of light; a blaze to quench or stoke;

Bread burst and burnt; sweet wind-fall;

storm-cloud-milk;

Hope raised and razed; skin-ploy; sleep-foil;

steel-silk ...

Seth once wrote a novel composed entirely in Pushkin sonnets, so he is right at home here writing a sonnet about love (the answer to the riddle) emulating Herbert's about prayer. "Like all good metaphorical speech, the succession of images sets out the contradictions that push us into poetry," writes Rowan, saying that Seth's poems "prompt some lingering on the frontier of 'sacred' and 'profane' experience, some questioning about how porous those boundaries are." This porousness is something Rowan Williams explores again and again in this book, just as he does in so much of his writing, and poetry. Poetry's appeal to experience opens up our shared knowledge, something being foregrounded here all the time.

Australian Les Murray's oft-quoted 'Poetry and Religion' goes

Religions are poems. They concert

our daylight and dreaming mind, our

emotions, instinct, breath and native gesture

into the only whole thinking: poetry.

Rowan applauds Murray's avoidance of cliché, chiming in with his shared view that "poetry aims to do in a small space what religion does in a large, communal and historically extended space: to hold a mirror to a formidable range of shifting, threatening, exhilarating 'givens' that require us to adjust to their presence and make sense of them." This is another way of meeting and enjoying the many ideas and experiences offered here. I have briefly quoted just five poems that are part of an ongoing conversation Rowan Williams generates in this book. The invitation is there to pick up a line, a verse and see where it takes you.



*"Always was, Always will be Wathaurong", Glenn Loughrey*