

# The Parish Paper

Number 6

## Patronal Festival 2023

St Peter's Church, Eastern Hill, Melbourne

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## St Peter's and St Peter

*Fr Michael Bowie, Vicar of St Peter's Eastern Hill*

A dedication like that of our parish, to St Peter alone, is a peculiarly Anglican phenomenon: the Western Church mostly yokes Peter and Paul together with a shared feast on 29 June. Even before the time of St Augustine (4<sup>th</sup> century) the two Apostles were celebrated together. Augustine writes in a sermon for the feast: *There is one day for the passion of two apostles. But these two also were as one; although they suffered on different days, they were as one. Peter went first, Paul followed. We are celebrating a feast day, consecrated for us by the blood of the apostles. Let us love their faith, their lives, their labours, their sufferings, their confession of faith, their preaching.*

It is of course true that, in Rome, Peter and Paul each have a church: each is buried in their own basilica there. I don't know why Cranmer decided to commemorate St Peter alone on 29 June, but his decision has led to many Anglican parishes having this single dedication.

Jesus certainly intended Peter to be the leader of his followers after he left this world. He also intended, one must assume, that others would carry on this leadership after Peter, though as St Augustine also reminds us it is Peter's *confession of faith* in Jesus as 'Messiah and Son of the living God' (Mt 16) and the *shared apostolic gift of binding and loosing*, which is the rock on which the church was to be built, rather than Peter or his successors personally. Anglicans and Roman Catholics continue to converse about our understanding of the Petrine ministry of the Bishop of Rome (the title preferred by Francis, to emphasise his collegiality with his fellow bishops: he has never referred to himself as

'Pope'). We are not under his jurisdiction, but we can still acknowledge his spiritual leadership of the largest Christian community in the world, with which we share most of our theological and ecclesial DNA.

Ours is the second parish dedicated to St Peter in which I have served. The first was, at Berkhamsted in Hertfordshire. There I received a curate, Fr John Pritchard, who had been Sacristan of St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. Before ordination, John was invited back to the castle for a farewell, where he was buttonholed by the Duke of Edinburgh, always a slightly daunting experience. 'Berkhamsted?', he said, 'don't we have a castle there?' There is indeed a picturesque ruined early Norman castle in Berkhamsted, built on the site of the surrender of the Anglo-Saxon Barons to William the Conqueror in December 1066. St Peter's Church in Berkhamsted, dating from around 1220, was constructed by a later monarch because he thought the existing parish church too small and mean for a town where he had a house. When St Peter's Berkhamsted was built the town numbered two or three hundred people, yet St Peter's seats about 600: it was a vanity project for a monarch, but is now a focal point in a modern commuter town of 16,000. Berkhamsted is just six miles along the Grand Union Canal from Hemel Hempstead, where Helen Drummond was born: Helen and I spoke at length about both places in the last proper conversation I had with her a couple of months ago; she remembered that St Peter's too as we talked about many friends in our St Peter's community here who were wishing her well, and the importance of our St Peter's in her long and active life, for which we gave thanks at her recent Requiem.

Our St Peter's, with its deep links to origins of Melbourne and Governor La Trobe's vision for the city, is significant in Australian Anglican history, having participated enthusiastically

in the rise of the Catholic Anglican witness within the diocese and in our national Church. Now we are seeking to rebuild our community after Covid and other bumps in our road, a particular challenge in a city church like ours at a time when our tradition sometimes seems marginalised by the wider Church, a decline for which our own past hubris may be partly to blame. Our Patron was not unfamiliar with existential challenges and also made a few missteps in meeting them. We need his prayers and his humility as we look to the future with hope, under God.

Our history has sometimes led our parish into an exceptionalism which can be a trap. Fr John Hope, the saintly Rector of our sister church, Christ Church St Laurence in Sydney, and an exact contemporary of Fr Maynard, used always to preface the introduction of any innovation there with the tongue-in-cheek phrase, ‘as is our custom’. Anglo-Catholic city churches (and this is now the third such parish I’ve served) tend to see themselves as alternative cathedrals where things are done ‘properly’ (meaning that however *we* do them is the ‘right’ way) and where alleged traditions can easily gain a stranglehold. St Peter’s Berkhamsted gradually came into its own as the town grew around it and its origins became irrelevant. We are a much younger plant, though venerably old in Melbourne terms, but I hope we are also able to be as flexible as our Patron in acknowledging past missteps and vanities and seeking to walk in the way of Our Lord in company with the whole Church. What we have is beautiful and valuable, but only as it witnesses to lively Christian faith in community. Our calling as a contributor to the wider Church rather than a quirky exception to it is worth praying about: to that end we need both humility and a commitment to forming ourselves more confidently within our own tradition, to give an account of the hope that is in us, as Fr Greg Davies recently reminded us from the pulpit.

A most striking example of our patron saint's lifelong need for self-reflection is recorded in the apocryphal *Acts of Peter* and related by Origen and St Ambrose. Peter is represented in flight from Rome, escaping death during the persecutions of Nero. He meets Jesus on the Appian Way and asks him "*Domine, quo vadis?*" ("Lord, where are you going?") to which Jesus replies "*Venio Romam iterum crucifigi*" ("I am coming to Rome to be crucified again"). Peter, the penitent denier of Jesus, hears the rebuke and makes a final act of repentance: he turns around and goes back to his death.

As we look to our future together we rely on the prayers of St Peter to set us on the right path, following the footsteps of the Lord and seeking to build up one another and all our fellow Christians as we offer worship to God in our sacramental life and witness, our service to the poor and homeless, and our commitment to share the riches of the Catholic faith in teaching and in who we are. That isn't always easy but there is always glory on our horizon, and joy to be found in working it out together.

## On This Rock

*Mthr Kathryn Bellhouse, Assistant Priest, St Peter's Eastern Hill*

Caesarea Philippi—now called Banias—was a town at the base of Mount Hermon on the border of Israel and Syria. It is a fertile place: water from the heights flows through the town into the Jordan River and fertilises the northern side of the Jordan River Valley. In the first century the town was in the hands of one of the heirs of Herod the Great. The Herod rulers were in theory Jewish, yet Caesarea Philippi remained an overwhelmingly Roman settlement. There is no evidence of a synagogue or particular Jewish presence, whereas built into Mount Hermon's sheer red escarpment was the shrine of the god Pan (a satyr with a flute),

alongside a temple dedicated to the thunderous Zeus, another to the emperor Augustus and various ‘niches’ for other gods. Grand main streets, lined with giant marble columns, once led to this sanctuary precinct at the head of town.

One feels very small walking through this place—even now, when it lies mainly in ruins. I visited the site last year, and it incarnated, to me at least, a profoundly intimidating impression of Power—be it the power of nature (the severe red cliff-face), or of this world (Rome), or of deity (Zeus, Nikke, etc). Whereas here me and my companions were—unarmed creatures, made of flesh and blood—wandering below.

As far as I can discern, there was no need for our Lord to take his disciples there. It was a few days’ walk from the towns of Galilee proper, and there was apparently no synagogue for them to visit and proclaim the Kingdom. No reports of healing or showdowns with religious peers in Philippi, for which purpose the Lord might have come ...

*And yet*, in the Gospel of Matthew we are told that Jesus did bring his disciples here. Here that impulsive fisherman, Simon, stood in the shadow of the sheer red rockface, populated by gods far fiercer than his own. Here he was told, ‘*You* are Peter—that is, *Rock*—and on *this* rock I will build my church.’

Notice the contrast?

There is the Rock of worldly power. There is the Rock of capricious Pan and thunderous Zeus and mighty Augustus.

Then there is Simon: ‘feeble’ flesh and blood, outspoken and, at times, equivocal. *He* is the Rock the Messiah chooses to build his church upon.

Peter gives the church a foundation, of course, by sharing his faith and loyalty to the Messiah, Jesus. In Jesus Simon faced a Man who had never picked up weapon or sceptre in his life,

whom he yet recognised to be the Messiah, *the authority Anointed by God to rule Israel with justice—maybe even the peoples of the world with equity.* Our Christ incarnates Power fundamentally other than the forceful ways of the world—different because it comes, not from fallen man, but from God. Faith in him, loyalty to his Kingdom, “is the Father’s gift through revelation” (as Saint Hilary of Poitiers once put it).

The Messiah did not call Simon Rock for the infallibility of *his own reason or instinct*; quite the contrary. Peter’s judgement, when he is left to his own devices, is anything but rock-solid. It is Peter *under the influence of Divine grace* who grounds the church in something firm and sure.

The Roman Catholic Church, of course, understands the authority of Peter to be handed on to his successors as Bishop of Rome. Interestingly, many of the Eastern Orthodox, while also affording Peter, together with Paul, “pre-eminence” among the apostles, regard the bishop of *any* and *every* diocese to be the heir of Peter’s primatial authority—exercised in relation, not to one another, but to the priests of their diocese. This view has its roots in various theologians of the early centuries. St Cyprian of Carthage, for instance. Or St Gregory of Nyssa (whom I am very fond of) who writes: Christ “through Peter gave to the bishops the keys of the heavenly honours”.

What both major communions of the Church would agree upon is the tremendous importance of the person of the bishop, alongside the substance of their Christian confession, to sustaining and nurturing the Faith of the whole people. The confession in itself, words on a page, is not enough to sustain and inspire our faith, let alone guide us into the future. The Lord appoints *the person* to be a source of unity and confidence in the faith.

This can be difficult. We can often look at bishops *in their humanity, in their own right*, and become more inclined to see fault

and to speak of it than to be inspired with confidence, bolstered in our faith. But who would have called Peter “the Rock” on the morning of the Lord’s condemnation? Could Peter have possibly felt like the Rock beneath the shadow of those tremendous higher powers of Caesarea Philippi? *The Peters of the world are always flesh and blood.*

Yet, they are transformed by Divine Grace. I remember quite clearly the weightless weight of the hands upon my head, of the bishop who confirmed me some years ago. I myself was nervous and rather dazed by the whole affair—I knew it was momentous. Being built into the church *is* momentous, even if perfectly common and simple enough. The power of it didn’t come from the bishop’s person in his own right (although he happens to have a wonderfully deep personality). It was about the person transformed by grace, the grace entrusted to him, the confidence conveyed that evening to all of us who were confirmed in the Faith of Christ. We trembled, and yet we were inspired. Peter fumbles—at times, he seems to crack—yet he is Rock, and it is upon Rock that the Lord builds his church...

Editorial: The photographs of parishioners in this issue are taken by Louisa Billeter and Susan Southall. Bishop Graeme Rutherford’s review of Julia Baird was first published online by Roland Ashby at The Living Water site: <https://www.thelivingwater.com.au/> Dr Charlie Bell is John Marks Fellow, College Lecturer in Medicine and Praelector at Girton College, Cambridge. His article is an introduction on the SCM Press site to his new book ‘Light to those in darkness: total pain and the Body of Christ’. The poem ‘Four Women and a Tomb’ by Richard Bauckham comes from ‘Tumbling into Light : a Hundred Poems’, published last year by Canterbury Press Norwich, copies available at the St Peter’s Bookroom. Thanks to Mthr Kathryn Bellhouse for editorial assistance with Norman Missen’s eulogies. 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.



## The Atmosphere of God

*Bishop Graeme Rutherford*

*Australian feminist, author and journalist Julia Baird says it is not easy to maintain faith, especially for women and members of the LGBTQI community. But her faith endures, she says, because she has a sense of God as 'large, expansive, forgiving, infinite, and both incomprehensible and intimate.' Author and retired bishop Graeme Rutherford reflects on her use of the word 'phosphorescence', which is also the title of her recent book, and how it has illuminated his understanding of faith, contemplation, St Paul and 20th century mystic Thomas Merton.*

Julia Baird, in the title of a recent book coins a new word for contemplative prayer: '*Phosphorescence*'. It describes, for her, being '*gobsmacked*' by the astounding beauty and diversity of creation. She says, '*Some of us need to teach ourselves how to wonder again, how to be ready for that sensation. When was the last time you had goosebumps?*' (Baird 62)

I resonated with Julia's love of starting each day with a morning swim. After her first major surgery for cancer, she yearned to slip back into the sea. Swimming for her, as for me, is a form of meditation. Chlorinated pools will never have the same charm as the wide blue sea. (Baird 29)

I was relieved to hear the Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell say that he is not much good at sitting still and sinking into deep silent contemplation. He admitted that his mind jumps from one thing after another. He shared his experience of walking the Camino and says he meditates best as he walks.

During the Covid lock-down, I walked nearly every street North, South, East and West of where I live, and in my quest to become *phosphorescent*, (to use Julia's word) I made a favourite poem my prayer as I started off each day. It was written by the First World War padre, *Fr Studdert Kennedy*, entitled *Sursum Corda – Hearts Upwards*. It has nothing to do with *altitude* and everything to do with *attitude*

– an attitude of *exploration, gratitude* and the *celebration* of creation. It captures for me something of the wonder and marvel of creation:

*There are cowslips in the clearing with God's green and gold ablaze and the distant hills are nearing through a sun-kissed sea of haze.*

*There's a lilt of silver laughter in the brook upon its way, with the sunbeams tumbling after like the children at their play.*

*There's a distant cuckoo calling to the lark up in the sky and his song comes falling, falling to his next a happy sigh.*

*Sursum corda, how the song swells through the woods that smile and nod.  
Sursum corda ring the blues bells. Lift ye up your hearts to God'.*

From a small window in his cell at Gethsemane Abbey, in the Kentucky hills, Trappist monk Thomas Merton looked out at the sky with its moving clouds and changing colours and the green leaves of the trees and was *awestruck*, aware that he was part of a universe unfathomably larger than himself.

This was the apostle Paul's experience when he reflected on the unfolding plan and purpose of God: '*O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!*' (Romans 11:33) When you come into this ambience, into the atmosphere of God, the first thing you recognise is you don't know where you are, you don't know what's going on, this is bigger than you can manage, *you haven't got the words for it*. And it's that dimension of being out of your depth that is so easily lost sight of if the life of the church simply becomes *routine and drab, another thing that you just do*.

Through his contemplative attention, Merton also became aware of people in their hour of need.

He was busy writing to the rhythm of Martin Luther King's freedom marchers. He saw that the campaign for non-violent action, if successful, would free whites from fear as well as blacks

from oppression. It was God's '*kairos moment*' in America and he believed that no monk could stand aloof from the civil rights movement, the peace movement, the war in Vietnam without incurring guilt. If he did, he would become a guilty bystander, which forms the brilliant title of one of Merton's books - *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*.

Christianity is at its most powerful when it is at the margins, or periphery, not the centre of power. Jesus condemned leaders who were power hungry. As Julia Baird puts it: '*He dined with sex-workers, not CEO's*'. She movingly goes on to say, '*The church must be a sanctuary for the abused, not a refuge for abusers ... It is not easy, especially for women, or members of the LGBTQI community to maintain faith in the midst of ugly politicking and hateful sentiments. ... complicity in the colonization and exclusion of Indigenous people, has caused deep and rational cynicism about the church. My faith has endured despite all the rubbish I've heard about women and my queer friends, despite all of the hate mail and insulting messages I have received from conservative Christians who despise my feminism. My faith continues to exist because I have ... a sense of God as large, expansive, forgiving, infinite, and both incomprehensible and intimate*' (Baird 249)

That is, Phosphorescence!

Which leads me thirdly to Merton's humanity and vulnerability.

Some of Merton's more pious followers who had been making hagiographic attempts to turn him into a saint were shocked when it was discovered after his death that he had fathered an illegitimate child during his student days at Cambridge University in 1934. It appears that the censors in the Trappist Order to which he belonged had cut out from his autobiography the more scandalous of his youthful excesses. Hence, there is no mention of '*the party in the middle of the night*' in his book: *The Seven Storey Mountain*.

In a will made soon after he entered the monastery Merton gave instructions to his guardian for money '*to be paid by him to the person mentioned to him by me in my letters, if that person can be found*'. The

illegitimate child (apparently a son) was a factor which loomed large in Merton's subconscious for years. In fact, he was interviewed a few weeks prior to his death and the interviewer said:

*'Merton helped me by telling me that when he was at an English University, he had an affair with the girl who made beds in his dormitory, and she had a baby, and he said to me, "You know my son would be such and such an age right now and I don't know whether he survived the blitz or not". And he carried that with him. That was on his mind. And he let me know that this was the key to his life.'* (Mott 576)

From all this we can see that Merton was no Plaster-of-Paris saint. His was a very spotted form of virtue and if that is worrying to a pious elite *it has been very consoling to me throughout my ministry*. It is far easier and certainly more encouraging to relate to the saints in their *weaknesses* than in their *strengths*.

William Shannon, who has edited many of Merton's literary works and is in a position to be able to draw some helpful conclusions as to why people are keenly reading and re-reading Merton, summarises his *humane appeal* in this way:

*'In him we find an earnest, genuine, no-holds-barred human being struggling, like the rest of us, to find meaning, seeking to confront the absurdity that life so often appears to be. He knew loneliness, homelessness and alienation ... He was human in his strengths, but also in his weaknesses. His clay feet are there for us to see. Like ourselves he had attachments he had to rid himself of and illusions he had to unmask. He was vulnerable in his humanness: a reality he never tried to hide or deny.'* (Shannon 49) Spiritual guides who speak *most personally* speak *most universally*.

In saying these things, I am not suggesting that we are free to rationalise *under-achievement* or *spiritual mediocrity*. In his letter to the Philippians the apostle Paul implied that no-one is perfect. He certainly admitted that he was not perfect. But what follows from

that is not along the lines of an attitude which rationalizes failures.

On the contrary, in a favourite verse of mine, the apostle says. '*Not that I have already obtained this or have already been made perfect; but I press on to make it my own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus'*'. (Phil.3:12-14)

May we keep '*pressing on*', like Merton, in phosphorescent prayer in our respective lives and ministries, for the glory of God and the enrichment of God's people. Amen.

References:

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## Norman Missen (1942-2023)

*From Mark Brown's eulogy:*

*Long-term friend of our parish, Norman Missen, passed away on May 27<sup>th</sup> and his funeral was held here at St Peter's, his ashes being interred under the high altar. Here are some words of tribute from family and friends.*

To me Uncle Norman was always full of life, always looking for a laugh and often at his own expense or Derek's. He along with Uncle John created so many memories for me, my children and family. He was always so positive and happy, I never saw him anything else than excited. He was often more excited for you and what you were doing than you were yourself, it was infectious.

Uncle Norman was not only an uncle...he was a son, brother, lifelong partner, great friend, workmate and family man. I would often say to Mum, don't think I will go to that thing next week or

whenever it is, but sure enough days out from the event Uncle Norm would ring and I was going, he simply wouldn't take no for an answer when it came to getting his family together and for that I am truly grateful.

Norman was born in Werribee hospital which was located where McDonalds is now in Synnot street. They lived at Rockbank in a modest 2-bedroom farmhouse where I'm told Uncle Norman slept in the bathtub in the bathroom as a youngster, that might explain his crook back in later life. Uncle Norm attended Rockbank Primary school, walking approximately one mile to and from school each day. He then moved onto Sunshine Boys Technical School, completing and receiving his leaving certificate. I'm told the train would stop at the crossing near home to allow Norman to board the train instead of him having to go to the station or if he was running late, I can't imagine that happening today.

Norman travelled the world with the Southern Cross Hotel, and I remember him bringing me back tennis rackets from America well before they were released in Australia, sadly it didn't improve my game. I still have garbage bags of baseball caps that he brought back for me from the places that he had visited around the world. Uncle Norman finished there in 1996 when the hotel closed. From there he went on to manage some apartments in South Yarra which I stayed in often when working in Melbourne and he would always make sure I had the top floor apartment; it wasn't very flash but I didn't tell anyone that, I just said I was on the top floor. He retired in 2011 as working was clearly interfering with his socializing.

Over the journey Norman lived in Rockbank, Toorak, Malvern, South Yarra, Caulfield, Richmond and Altona. He nearly did a full circle. It's great to see the red-white-and-blue scattered among you all today. Footscray or the Western Bulldogs as they

are today were undoubtably Uncle Norman's greatest passion and source of pain and joy. From around the age of 9 or 10 to the very end he was a true and loyal supporter enduring many, many years of heartbreak and torture, with just a couple of years of joy in 1954 and 2016 to keep him going and optimistic. At the Whitten oval, the home of the Dogs, Uncle Norm had his own seat, plaque and all, seat number 70, in the Teddy Whitten stand.

Uncle Norm seemed to have a sixth sense when it came to ringing you, he more often than not rang at the most inconvenient time and if you didn't answer he would simply keep ringing. He rang Mum every morning and night around the same time and if Mum didn't answer, I would get a call "Where is your mother?" he would say and I would normally follow that up with "Good morning Uncle Norm and I have no idea", "Well you need to make sure she is ok and call me back" and he would hang up. So, I would call Mum or go around to home to make sure everything was ok and get Mum to call him, he was always Mum's big brother looking out for his little sister. If he found out you were away on holidays, that was a disaster, as he would call all the time, he thought it was hilarious to call and ask how's your holiday 3 times a day.

He was always first to call on my or anyone else's birthday in our house and every April Fool's Day he would call and say where are you, and no matter where you said you where he would always get you to race outside as he was above in a hot air balloon, waving from a plane, on a boat going past, it didn't matter, he always had a plausible answer, and after getting yourself and sometimes the kids if they were with you outside, and everyone looking skyward and saying, no nothing yet, we still can't see you Uncle Norman he would say ya bloody April fool and laugh like mad.

*From Doug Bull and John O'Sullivan:*

We met Norm in June 1970. We said goodbye to him on the 27th May 2023, a friendship lasting 53 years. We supported Norm and cared for him as a brother. He was a special person to us.

On the Sunday of the long weekend in June 1970 John Taaff rang us and said he would like us to meet a new friend of his and could he bring him around. They turned up a couple of hours after the phone call and that is when we first met Norm. We bonded straight away. In 1970 we were young, conservative and extremely attractive. Having good reliable friendships was very important to us. Each of us had different personalities and that was a good thing. We also came from totally different backgrounds.

John and Norman, and John and Doug were a close team for many years. We socialised a lot, visiting each other frequently. We had many happy times together going on picnics, playing tennis on the East Melbourne tennis courts on a Saturday afternoon with other friends, short trips away for a few days at a time and other social activities.

One Sunday the four of us went for a picnic in the hills. We stopped en route to buy some petrol but the car wouldn't start again so John Taaff got out of the Valiant he was driving, put the bonnet up, got a tennis racquet out of the boot and started bashing the engine with the racquet. He then yelled out "try it now Norman." Norm turned the key in the ignition and the engine started. John put the racquet back in the boot and off we went and had a lovely picnic.

On another occasion we went to Lorne down on the Great Ocean Road for weekend away. On the Saturday night, we were having dinner at the Lorne Hotel and one of us noticed someone we knew sitting alone so we invited him to join us. He was the vicar

of the Anglican Church in Brunswick at the time. We had a very enjoyable dinner and afterwards drove the vicar to the place where he was staying and we popped in for a nightcap. It was a late hour when we got back to our hotel, it was all locked up so John O'Sullivan climbed up the building with the assistance of a drainpipe and onto the hotel balcony. He climbed through the window into one of our rooms and let everybody inside. It was quite an achievement considering what we had drunk during the night.

Norm's friendly personality meant that he was well liked and loved by everyone. He was a very sociable person. His support for John over many years of his illness was amazing. He offered that same support to others as well especially in offering to drive people whenever they needed to go for appointments, dog grooming or whatever.

Norm had contact with this church St Peter's for many many years. He drove John here for 8.00am Mass on Sunday mornings and then a cuppa afterwards. He got to know a lot of the parishioners who came here. His wish was that his funeral service be held here and his ashes be laid to rest here.

We texted Norm every morning and he texted back. If either of us were late in sending a texted message the phone would ring to make sure everything was okay. Our final text to Norm was on the morning after he died just to say "bye bye to our dear friend". Norm is with us every morning and every evening and always will be.



## The 'communion of saints' is a gift to pastoral practice

*Charlie Bell introduces his new book Light to Those in Darkness*

I'm a psychiatrist and also ordained as a priest in the Diocese of Southwark. My first love – and, frankly, what I always thought I would do in my medical career, was oncology. The problem I found – if it is a problem – is that the more I talked to the dying, and those who cared for, nursed, and prayed alongside them, the more I realised that the thing that really interested me is how people think. It was a bit of a lightbulb moment – I still wanted to treat the cancer, and in many ways I still miss that part of medicine, but I really wanted to understand the existential questions people were facing, to think more carefully and fully about what this whole death thing – and the whole avoiding death thing – was about. It was amongst the dying that I found some of the truest, most honest, most searing and heart piercing narratives of human existence.

My first work experience was in a hospice, and it was there that I first heard of the idea of 'total pain' – something that was heavily influential on the palliative care teaching at the University of Cambridge and which also speaks very clearly to my other life as a priest. 'Total pain' is a serious attempt to recognise and to do something with the fact that when people come towards the end of their lives, things can sometimes become so overwhelming that it's not as easy as simply giving analgesia and hoping for the best, but that one form of pain might manifest as another.

The concept came initially from Dame Cicely Saunders, surely one of the greats not only of palliative medicine but also of pastoral theology of the last century. Saunders was just a remarkable person – working in and then setting up hospices with an explicitly Christian but explicitly non-proselytising nature, and I think it's fair to say that without her there would be

nothing like the movement we have today. Saunders connected with her patients in a remarkable way and saw that the different forms of pain – physical, mental, psychological, social, spiritual – each of these became part of a complex and complicated mix in the dying person, and were far too frequently unaddressed, at the very least, and quite often simply ignored. She ‘got’ it, in a way that far too many doctors still don’t, and her concept of ‘total pain’ has a huge amount to offer clinicians to this day.

‘Total pain’ had infused much of my thinking whilst on a cancer ward, and it was during this time that I was training for ordination. Throughout my training and since, it has become clearer and clearer to me that we seem to have a bit of a problem with ‘doctrine’. That’s not because I think the doctrines of the church are somehow pointless or unnecessary, outdated or irrelevant – far from it – but because we so frequently think of them in the abstract without doing the hard work of linking our pastoral practice with our doctrinal commitments. I bring one particular example of such a doctrine into conversation with ‘total pain’ in *Light to Those in Darkness*, the doctrine of the ‘communion of saints’. I happen to think that this particular doctrine has much to learn from Saunders’ conception, and similarly, that ‘total pain’ can be sensibly and thoughtfully addressed through the lens of the communion of saints. This book is an attempt to show why that might be the case.

The idea of the ‘communion of saints’ sounds a little bit dry, not least if we only ever meet it when reciting the Apostles Creed, but it is actually one of the most radical, extraordinary things that Christians, of all different persuasions, profess – that we on earth are part of something much, much bigger than we are, that there is somehow a continuity with those who have lived, loved, and died years ago, and that this continuity is not some vague, vain imagining but a vibrant, genuine reality. When my father died in

a hospice many years ago, the simple existence of this reality became more and more obvious to me – not something that I could easily explain, beyond a simple recognition that the communion of saints *is*. As Christians, we have this wonderful inheritance of the faith, this deep well of faithful resource we might draw on, and I wanted to do the theological work that linked our belief in this reality with what Cicely Saunders saw in her patients.

This is very much a two-way conversation. The communion of saints provides us, as Christians, with ways of thinking about death and dying, about existential dread, about pain, about how we are called to minister to the dying and about how they, too, might be ministering to us. There is a gift to our pastoral practice from our doctrine, if only we might look for it. Yet there is a complementary gift from conceptions of human experience that can broaden our doctrinal understandings and that call us to a continued process of questioning and deepening what has been revealed to us. It reminds us, too, of some fundamentals in our lives together as Christians, and in our lived-out anthropology – highlighting the ever-present need to recognise where we have our own part to play in our participation in the life of Christ, and reminding us of the mystery of the life of communion into which we are all called.

*Light to Those in Darkness* is a book that is grounded in theology and that refuses to make a neat division between that and pastoral practice. It is a book, too, that asks what the practical implications of our taking this seriously might be. It ultimately calls us to a recognition of the importance of hospitality and of sociality in our lives together, and of the importance of not ‘othering’ those on the edge, dying or otherwise. I hope it might be a small contribution to the revivifying of our doctrine and the recognition that real life really matters, too.

## Four Women and a Tomb

*Richard Bauckham*

After so much slow sorrow,  
emptied of feeling,  
drained dry of hope,  
still their love led them.

At the third cockcrow  
on the third morning  
they gathered,  
heads cloaked and baskets  
weighty with fragrance.

Out of love's fullness  
he poured himself, emptied,  
an offering,  
sweet-scented as April  
in the garden of God.

That spring of all loving  
that never runs dry  
poured a deep draught for them,  
quenching their emptiness

- an emptied tomb

and wonder, heart-whelming wonder.

