

Risen Christ



Second Sunday of Easter -- Year A

11 & 12 April 2026

The Catholic Communities of Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham & St Francis Xavier, Montmorency



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation who are the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respect to the elders past, present and emerging.

Gospel: John 20:19-31

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you.'

'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.'

After saying this he breathed on them and said:

'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, 'We have seen the Lord', he answered, 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him:

'You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'

There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

Parish Ministry Gatherings - Hospitality

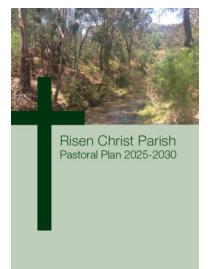
Great news regarding coordinators for Hospitality as part of our Pastoral Plan. Three weeks ago a meeting was held at Our Lady's and, like the other 2 meetings for Social Justice and Prayer and Liturgy, it was very well attended. Much was discussed during the evening, but no coordinator stepped forward at our Hospitality meeting. Over Easter, Paul & Robyn stepped forward as a couple, to complete our need for coordinators in each area. It is the job of the coordinators to gather together all the information from the nights held, and activities that are presently going on, and the hopes and dreams from past years and future desires. These coordinators have a marvelous responsibility in our Parish to knit together all this relevant information and people involved.

Michael.



Paul Brady: *I have been living in Eltham for 15 years, and I have become a regular at the 8:30am Sunday Mass in Montmorency over the past few years. I want to contribute more to the parish and the wider community, so I have taken on the shared role of Hospitality Coordinator with my partner, Robyn De Remer. I look forward to working with our parishioners and strengthening the connection with our community.*

Robyn De Remer: *I've lived in the Templestowe area for 27 years and have been attending Risen Christ at Montmorency for the last four years. Together with my partner, Paul Brady, we are keen to become involved in encouraging the sense of community within the parish through hospitality. I look forward to getting to know many more of you.*



This parish has a commitment to ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable people in our community. We support the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional abuse and pray for all the survivors.



PARISH TEAM & INFORMATION

OUR PEOPLE & OUR CONTACT DETAILS



Parish Priest

Michael Sierakowski - **Moderator**

Michael.Sierakowski@cam.org.au

Parish Office

all correspondence to:
86 Mayona Road,
Montmorency Vic 3094
9435 4742

RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au

Kate Kogler:

Parish Secretary
Tue-Fri 9am-3pm

Peter Williams:

Safeguarding Officer
RisenChrist.ChildSafety@cam.org.au

Volunteers

Marisa Capuana: Various

Kerry Mash: Wed & Fri 10am-3pm

www.melbcatholic.org/risenchristparish

Facebook: [Risen Christ Parish](https://www.facebook.com/RisenChristParish)

Risen Christ Parish Bulletin items:

RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au

Schools

Holy Trinity Primary School

Principal: Vince Bumpstead: 9431 0888

principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School

Principal: Rudy Vail: 9439 7824

school@olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

www.olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

St Francis Xavier Primary School

Principal: Jo Nolen: 9435 8474

principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

RECONCILIATION

available half an hour before
any weekday or weekend Parish Mass.

Risen Christ Parish Calendar of Events

Saturday 11

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 12

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

Monday 13

11:00am Funeral: Raymond Carroll

Eltham

2:00pm Mass

Calvary Lower Plenty Garden Views

Tuesday 14

2:00pm Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

7:00pm Jordan Small Church Community

Montmorency

Wednesday 15

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Eltham

1:00pm Kairos Small Church Community

Montmorency

Thursday 16

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Montmorency

10:30am ASRC Food Collection

Montmorency

2:30pm Meditation

Eltham

Friday 17

9:30am Mass

Eltham

Saturday 18

12:00pm Baptisms: Siora, Noah,
Grace & Oliver

Montmorency

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 19

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

12:00pm Baptisms: Ollie, Axel, Lilifa,
Cooper & Mackenzie

Eltham

Tuesday 21

9:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

10:00am Craft Group

Montmorency

11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry

Eltham

2:00pm Bethany Small Church Community

Montmorency

Wednesday 22

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Eltham

Thursday 23

9:00am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency

Thanksgiving

Dear Parishioners,

Following is a list of ways in which you can give towards the running of our Parish (left to right):

A) EFTPOS terminals

B) scan the QR code (<https://bit.ly/45ifhRp>) & donate to any Parish finance campaign including Thanksgiving, Presbytery Offerings, baptisms etc

C) cash/coins in the collection baskets at each church

D) thanksgiving envelopes

E) set up payments from credit/debit cards/bank account

Thank you for your generous support,

Michael



Collections: 29 March & 5 April 2026

Thanksgiving	Cash	\$1,653.00
	Electronic	\$8,447.00
Presbytery	Cash	\$3,694.05
	Electronic	\$205.00

Thanksgiving Offering

Month	Total
January	\$20,974.17
February	\$20,922.62
March	\$21,282.67



*Let us pray for all those who have gone
before us marked with the sign of faith ...*

For those in need of **healing**, remembering especially:

*Darby (13 years old), Peter, Stephen Andrew, Des Arneson, Bill Boyce,
Penny Boyce, Ruth Decker, Nora Edmond, Pat Hosmer, Siobhan Lappin,
Mary Luttick, Jarrod Mizzi, Cindy & Ed Morrissey, Bernard Murray,
Phil Routar, Audrey Tunks, Regina Roszczenko (mother of Liz Gray),
Jeanne Vanderwert*

For those who have **died** recently:

Elizabeth Benson, Raymond Carroll, Brian Garvey

For those whose **anniversaries** are at this time:

*Jack Boyd, Maureen Briffa, Don Edmond, Kath Feil, Denis Morganti,
Thomas Scalzo, Janet Taylor, Jack Wood*

To include an anniversary please contact Parish Office
9435 4742 or RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au.

The Top Shelf...

Greg Sheridan, bestselling author of *God Is Good For You*, may be a name of which you are familiar through his journalistic profile.

The book has been on our library shelves since last year. I hope it has found a few readers since then. I found it absorbing, and was delighted to find Sheridan's latest book, *How Christians Can Succeed*

Today, has been left by an anonymous parishioner. Whoever you are, a huge thank you for I have not put it down. It will be on the shelves as soon as I have finished it. It has enriched my faith, and I can't wait to share it.

If, and when, you read it, please talk to me of its impact.

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In the catalogue there are **ten** Richard Rohr books listed. There is but one on the shelf today: *Breathing Under Water*.

Someone either loves or hates Richard Rohr; the former one would hope!

Anyone who has a R. R. book, please return.

Always sign in and out when you borrow and return. Blessings to all, *Trish Taylor*



### **Permanent Diaconate Information Session 2 May 2026**

The annual May Information session has been scheduled. The Permanent Diaconate is open to single and married men, aged between 30 and the 50s, who want to serve God and the Church as ordained ministers. It is an ordained ministry of service. The information session is open to **everyone interested in learning more about the permanent diaconate**. If you have attended any previous session, you are also welcome to attend this session. It is an opportunity to further discern your vocation. Wives most welcome.

The session will be on Saturday morning, 2<sup>nd</sup> May and will be in person. If you are interested email Deacon Kevin Pattison ([Kevin.Pattison@cam.org.au](mailto:Kevin.Pattison@cam.org.au)) with full name and parish, but **if you forget, then just turn up** on Saturday morning. All are welcome.

**Event Date: Saturday 2 May 2025, 10.00am–11.30am**

**Venue:** Catholic Theological College, 278 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE  
OF MELBOURNE

**The Secret of the Holy Face Australian Tour. Fr Lawrence Carney**, author of *The*



*Secret of the Holy Face*, has dedicated many years to promoting & teaching this powerful devotion. Fr Carney will share the history, meaning, and spiritual significance of the Holy Face devotion & how simple daily prayers can become a profound act of reparation & renewal in our world. **Melbourne dates:** 26 & 27 April.

**Humanitix.com** – search for *The Secret of the Holy Face* to find 3 locations in Melbourne - (Blackburn North, Mill Park & Caroline Springs). Free tickets for entry / donations to be collected after talk. Books & merchandise available (cash sales). Contact: Evelyn Ogilby 0405 156 971

### **Roster for week ending 12 Apr 2026**

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| Armstrong, Miranda | R10:00     |
| Bacani, Brian      | W6:00      |
| Boyd, Mary         | PRYR       |
| Capuana, Marisa    | W6:00      |
| Cseh, Ferenc       | E10:00     |
| Donnellan, Denice  | E10:00     |
| Drljo, Frank       | CLNR       |
| Dunell, Linda      | E10:00     |
| Fitzgerald, Susan  | H10:00     |
| Heyhoe, Margaret   | C10:00     |
| McKinley, Michael  | W8:30      |
| Nolan, Kathleen    | H10:00     |
| Nolan, Mike        | H10:00     |
| Ramsdale, John     | W8:30      |
| Reardon, Kathy     | ASE        |
| Reardon, Kathy     | E10:00     |
| Reischel, Marita   | H10:00     |
| Roy, Yvonne        | E10:00     |
| Said, Marie        | ASRC       |
| Said, Mike         | ASRC       |
| Skipper, Patsy     | LoW-01 Thu |
| Stewart Family     | PRSE       |

### **Roster for week ending 19 Apr 2026**

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| Armstrong, Miranda | H10:00     |
| Capuana, Marisa    | LoW-01 Thu |
| Cotter, Anne       | CLNR       |
| Davidson, John     | PRYR       |
| Dopheide, Marlis   | H10:00     |
| Haines, Geoff      | E10:00     |
| Haines, Geoff      | R10:00     |
| Haines, Jan-Marie  | E10:00     |
| Hall, Vali         | ASE        |
| Kenny, Michael     | W6:00      |
| Kulkens, Mark      | W6:00      |
| Mallia, Anthony    | E10:00     |
| Reardon, Peter     | E10:00     |
| Scully, Greg       | E10:00     |
| Sullivan, Frances  | W8:30      |
| Taylor, Trish      | C10:00     |
| Wood, Gerard       | CLNR       |
| Wood, Marie        | W8:30      |
| Zavadil Family     | PRSE       |

**ASE** = Altar Society @ Eltham;

**C** = Commentator;

**CLKR** = PowerPoint Clicker @ SFX;  
**CLNR** = Cleaner @ SFX; **R** = Reader;

**E** = Eucharistic Minister;

**H** = Hospitality;

**LoW-01** = Liturgy of the Word with  
Communion @ SFX;

**PRSE** = Pilgrim Rosary Statue @

# A passage to a new creation

In the face of war, suffering, ugliness, betrayal and hatred, the Church proclaims that, with his Passion and Resurrection, Jesus takes death on himself and explodes it from within. Easter is an invitation to take his death-defying love into our lives / **By Erik Varden**

ALAMY/HISTORY & ART COLLECTION



**The period** between Christ's Resurrection and his Ascension into Heaven was a time of remembrance. The apostles spent it turning over in their minds all that the Lord had said and done to draw this into a coherent whole in the light of his paschal victory.

By means of the liturgy, the Church draws us into this apostolic work of assimilation. It moves me that she, our Mother, lets us re-read in Eastertide words Jesus spoke on the eve of his Passion. The teaching of the thirteenth chapter of St John strikes chords then that differ from those struck when we heard it last on Maundy Thursday.

"Love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another."

When this "new commandment"

was given in the Upper Room, the Apostles connected it with the gesture just performed: the washing of their feet, including those of Judas, now gone into the night on an errand of betrayal.

The eleven will have remembered how, during the past three years, Jesus had again and again forgotten himself to attend to the troubles of others. They will have thought of the meeting with the haemorrhaging woman, of the healing of the lame man lowered through the roof, of the raising of the son of the widow of Nain.

They will have recalled the detachment required when Jesus, weary, had gone apart to rest, only to find on arrival that a crowd awaited him: no word of complaint was heard; instead he turned towards the interlopers

The concrete reality of death: Caravaggio's *The Incredulity of St Thomas* (1602-03)

cordially, all theirs. Truly, he had taught them what charity looks like.

**The fact of** Jesus' Resurrection raises our reflection into a further dimension. The ethical demands of Christian love remain. They are timeless. By them we shall be judged. Still, "love" in biblical language stands for something more.

"God is love." Divine love shows itself in kind acts, as when the Lord, sending Adam and Eve forth from Eden, clothes them in garments of skin; when he consoles Hagar in the desert; or sends ravens out to feed his hunger-striking prophet Elijah.

But the love that is God's being

can terrify, too. It is at work in the Egyptian plagues, in the downfall of Og, in the censuring of David after his calculated adultery with Bathsheba.

We might assume that the opposite of love is hatred. But no; hatred can contain a passion that does not contradict love but is love's inverted reflection.

Elie Wiesel said that the opposite of love is indifference, the carelessness that may not itself pursue the destruction of another but does not bother when others do. Love, seen in this perspective, comes to an end in the extinction of compassion, when individuals, communities or even states pursue no other goal than self-preservation.

In biblical terms, the opposite of love is death. God is love in as much as he is the principle of life, desiring things and beings to exist for the sheer delight of it, without expectation of gain. To love as God loves ("just as I have loved you") is to nurture the existence and thriving of others while having no truck with death, resisting anger and the other passions that cause us to subsist in a kind of living death. For it is quite possible to have a regular pulse and normal digestion and yet to be soul-dead.

"Death with life contended," sings the Easter sequence. It goes on: "Combat strangely ended!"

It seems weird, at first sight, that the cross, an instrument of execution, should be the emblem of life restored; it seems weird until we recall that what died on the cross was death itself, while life was proved invincible. "Love is strong as death," we read in the Song of Songs. That proposition was borne out on Calvary, then proved within the grave of Joseph of Arimathea, where Jesus rose.

We must invite this death-defying love into our lives. John proclaims: "I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth." That reality is not for the end of time only; it is to be inaugurated now, in current experience.

But is this possible?

Already in the earliest times of Christianity, critical voices arose saying more or less this: "You

Christians claim that Judah's Lamb has conquered and the power of death has been trampled underfoot. But look around! Wars rage, the innocent suffer, beauty is stifled by ugliness. Friends betray friends; people once united in love hate one another. And you maintain that the kingdom of Heaven is in our midst? Of all pretensions, this is surely the stupidest?"

**When we consider** the world we live in, we must admit: that question has not gone away. It calls for an answer.

The Gospel testifies to Christ's Resurrection. He who was once dead is alive, and lives forever. On this conviction - of a historical, not symbolic, nature - our faith is founded. The risen one was fully human, like you and me. The fact that he emerged from death's clutches shows that death is not life's end, but a passage from one form of life to another.

Christians of the East call Easter *Pascha* - a Hebrew word whose root sense is, precisely, "passage". It points towards the first Pasch in Egypt, when Israel after long captivity left Pharaoh's domain. The angel of death *passed over* the dwellings of the Hebrews, marked with the blood of the Paschal lamb. What was accomplished in mystery then, in order that Israel might *live*, shows its significance in Jesus' Pasch. He takes death on himself and explodes it from within.

An inadequate but suggestive image may be drawn from the realm of computers. Think of a virus invading an operating system to render it ineffective. That is what Jesus did to death, which wholly beneficent viral force. Even though death remains for us a physical fact, it is no longer a closed system. We must suffer it, but are not its captives. In Christ, we pass through it. His Pasch is ours.

Jesus calls himself "the living one": "I was dead and now I am to live for ever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and the underworld." He descended into hell. He knows that sad neighbourhood. No cell of the kingdom of death is alien to him.

It is impressive that the

evangelists, bearing witness to Jesus' Resurrection, expose the concrete reality of his death. They show us his wounds. Christian faith is realistic. Our religion is no magic. The God we believe in is no wizard.

The living God acts in life as it is. He sets out from what is old, from lived life, and discloses eternally salvific potential within it.

We may find it hard to believe this. It was hard for the Apostles, too. Thomas doubted because he had known the meaning of despair. He had put his hope in Jesus.

His devotion can be seen in the story of the raising of Lazarus. When Jesus insisted, in the face of threats, on going up to Jerusalem, Thomas cried out: "Let us go up with him, and die with him." No one has greater love than he who gives his life for his friends.

We can understand what grief the mere thought of Jesus' wounds must have called forth in Thomas. Jesus' response to his doubt is no stern correction. It is rather a gentle expression of friendship: "Touch my wounds: you will see that they are not lethal."

Thomas realizes: Jesus takes away the sin of the world, not its wounds. His blood, though, flows into them and makes them clean, even glorious.

The Lord is at work *in* pain, also in the pain of our wounded world. The birth pangs of the new creation continue, pointing towards a goal. We know the way to that goal. It carries the name of a person. Whoever says that he or she belongs to Jesus, "must walk as he walked". The greatest temptation to which we are exposed is the temptation of hopelessness. It is to be resisted bravely.

Back then, in Jerusalem, after the first Easter, "those who were ill and tormented by unclean spirits" crowded together in the hope of being touched even by the merest shadow of the Gospel. "All of them were healed." That can happen now, too, through Christ, with him, and in him.

**Erik Varden** is a Trappist monk and the Bishop of Trondheim, Norway.

## Prayers of the Faithful for 12 April 2026 - Second Sunday of Easter

**Leader:** Before God's loving presence we pray together today.

For community: may we treasure and nurture the gift of family, friends, home and community. May we be generous and welcoming members of our communities. We pray for the many people whose communities have been disrupted or destroyed through war, violence or displacement. May God's gentle presence bring them peace and calm.

*Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.*

"My lord and my God": Thomas' humble response, before the Risen Christ, delivers an image of humanity, humility and finally, profound belief. We pray for love and trust in the Lord.

*Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.*

Sharing a table and breaking bread together is one of the pillars of our earliest communities. May we always value and give thanks for the beautiful gift of hospitality. We remember and pray for those who struggle to provide for their families or who have lost their shared community through separation or conflict.

*Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.*

"Peace be with you!": Jesus' first message to his gathered apostles. We pray that the message of the risen Jesus and the influence of the holy Spirit may spread a spirit of peace in our world and in our hearts. May pathways to dignity, respectful discussion and resolution be found.

*Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.*

"My strength and my courage is the lord." May we listen, pray and offer our trust in the lord. We pray especially for those who are sick that they may feel Jesus' loving presence. Let us pray to the Lord.

*Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.*

For those who have died recently, especially *Elizabeth Benson, Raymond Carroll and Brian Garvey*; and for those whose anniversaries occur around this time, including *Jack Boyd, Maureen Briffa, Don Edmond, Kath Feil, Denis Morganti, Thomas Scalzo, Janet Taylor and Jack Wood*. May they rest in the peace of the Risen Christ.

*Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.*

**Leader:** May we give thanks to the Lord for his love, and spread his love among those we meet. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen

## ST PETER'S SQUARE / 'Let the Gospel counter the evil that corrupts history'

# Pope Leo declares prayer vigil for peace on 11 April

PATRICK HUDSON

Pope Leo used his first Easter message to announce a prayer vigil for peace on 11 April.

Speaking in St Peter's Square after delivering the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing on Easter Sunday, the Pope invited "everyone to join me" in prayers for peace.

"The power with which Christ rose is entirely nonviolent. It is like that of a grain of wheat which, having rotted in the earth, grows, breaks through the clods, sprouts and becomes a golden ear of wheat," he said.

"It is even more like that of a human heart which, wounded by an offence, rejects the instinct for revenge and, filled with compassion, prays for the one who has committed the offence."

He continued: "On this day of celebration, let us abandon every desire for conflict, domination and power, and implore the Lord to grant his peace to a world ravaged by wars and marked by a hatred and indifference that make us feel



Pope Leo: with Easter 'death no longer has power over us'

powerless in the face of evil," he said.

Preaching at the Mass in the square beforehand, Pope Leo said that with Easter "death no longer has power over us" despite its presence "within and without".

"We see it in violence, in the wounds of the world, in the cry of pain that rises from every corner because of the abuses that crush the weakest among us, because of the idolatry of profit that plunders the earth's resources, because of the violence of war that kills and destroys," he said.

On Easter Monday, after praying the *Regina Coeli* with pilgrims in the square, Pope Leo warned that "the proclamation of truth is obscured by what we today call 'fake news' - lies, insinuations and unfounded accusations".

He said it was vital that the Gospel reaches "those oppressed by the evil that corrupts history and confuses consciences".

"I think of peoples afflicted by war, of Christians persecuted for their faith, of children deprived of an education," he said. "To proclaim that paschal mystery of Christ in both word and deed means to give a new voice to hope - a hope otherwise stifled by the hands of the violent."

## CAN ISRAEL BE SAVED FROM ITSELF?

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Israel has become its own worst enemy. And that its best friend, the United States of America, is its second worst - for having agreed to their foolhardy and illegal joint attack on Iran, which several previous presidents, truer friends of Israel than Donald Trump, had declined to do. Genuine friends sometimes have to say no. And this is a moment when Israel's many other friends, including the United Kingdom, have to pray hard this Easter for a quick conclusion, unlikely though that now seems.

Religions - mainly through deviating from their mainstream traditions - have played an unhelpful role in this crisis. Judaism has been hijacked to support an Israeli version of aggressive ethno-nationalism. Dispensationalist Evangelical Christianity is vying to become the dominant religious ideology dictating US government policy, notwithstanding its much-vaunted "separation of church and state". Shia Islam in Iran has stepped away from its long-standing co-existence with Sunni Islam and is trying to assert its ascendancy. None of them is succeeding except in increasing the sum total of human misery.

This has had serious consequences in the West, where religious minorities find themselves blamed for conflicts they did not start and which, by and large, they have tried to stand aside from. Polling suggests that a substantial majority of the Jewish population in the US does not support Israel's war on Iran. There are, however, pressure groups within that Jewish population, especially the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which had great influence in Washington. AIPAC does not speak for the Jewish community, though it likes to pretend to; it really speaks for Benjamin Netanyahu and the government he heads in Israel. Insofar as AIPAC has groundswell support, that lies not with American Jews in general but with Evangelical Christians in the American Bible Belt. The means may be similar but their ends differ sharply - part of the Evangelicals' end-times scenario includes the wholesale conversion of Israeli Jews to fundamentalist Christianity.

None of this is replicated in Britain, fortunately. But it resonates in other discordant ways. There has been a surge in antisemitism and Islamophobia, seen in both major incidents and in micro-aggressions - small everyday discourtesies, or worse, between individuals. The latter are the more distressing, not least because they indicate a cultural change from a climate of tolerance towards the normalization of bigotry. It cannot be stressed enough that religious leaders in Britain, especially those who lead the major Christian Churches, have a heavy responsibility to resist this tendency in all the ways open to them.

The Catholic Church has led the way in providing a theoretical basis for overcoming antisemitism, especially in the Second Vatican Council decree *Nostra Aetate* of 1965. Since then it has been official Church doctrine that the Jewish people were never rejected or cursed by God, never collectively guilty of deicide, and never superseded or replaced by Christianity as the divine vehicle of salvation for humanity. God does not "repent" of his gifts to his chosen people under the Covenant, says *Nostra*

*Aetate*, quoting St Paul, but enlarges them to embrace the whole world. Holy Week is an appropriate time to remember that these discredited propositions provided the ancient basis for two millennia of prejudice against Jews, which undoubtedly helped create the antisemitic climate in Germany which Nazism exploited for its own evil ends. Insofar as Israel's collective memory of the Holocaust still shapes its government policy, Christianity cannot escape its share of the blame for the present conflict. Nor can Britain, as the country that governed Palestine and laid the foundations for the Jewish state of Israel. What's done is done. But looking away from it is not an option.

The Catholic Church has studiously avoided committing itself to acknowledging the biblical basis for the claim to the land of Israel, although this has become a key element in Israeli policy. The religious right in Netanyahu's coalition, alongside pro-settler movements in the West Bank, asserts Israel's right to the whole land up to the River Jordan on the grounds that it was given by God to the ancient Israelites as their Promised Land. This is a very literal reading of the text; most exegetes have reservations, not least because any such gift was conditional on Israel's compliance with God's laws. This includes of course "Though shalt not kill", but also Exodus 22:21, "You shall not wrong a resident alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt", and Leviticus 19:33-34, "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt." So Israel's appalling treatment of the Arab populations of the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza is a serious challenge to the ideology of Greater Israel. American Evangelicals do not seem to have noticed this.

But they are right that Christians have a moral obligation to support Israel's right to exist, at least on the grounds of international law adopted by the Holy See when it recognised the State of Israel in 1993. (The Holy See also recognizes the State of Palestine.) The Catholic Church in particular sees itself as participating in the status of a people chosen by God, and this implies a strong unbreakable covenant with Judaism and the Jewish people worldwide. Indeed, unlike American Evangelicals, Catholicism does not seek the conversion of the Jews as part of a messianic Second Coming. It is a truer friend than Israel's North American well-wishers. Nor has it influenced US policy to join Israel in a war against Iran which is increasingly likely to end in disaster.

The Catholic Church is well positioned to act as an intermediary between Judaism and Islam, gently recalling them to the peaceful and law-abiding tenets shared by the three great Abrahamic faiths when purified of their ideological and nationalistic distortions. Pope Francis's visit to Cairo in 2017, and his joint appeal with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed el-Tayeb, for Christians and Muslims to build a "civilization of peace" together, must surely be expanded to embrace Judaism. Like Christianity, Judaism is already beholden to Isaiah 2:4: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" Amen indeed.



## 16. Synodality and the margins

A synodal Church pays attention to voices often overlooked: the poor, the wounded, the disaffected, and those who feel distant from the Church. Their experiences matter, and their stories can teach us where renewal is most needed.

## 17. Synodality require humility

Walking together means recognising that no one has all the answers. Synodality invites humility - from leaders and from communities - so that the Spirit can guide us beyond our limitations.

## 18. Is synodality slow?

Synodality may seem slower than top-down decision-making, but it often leads to deeper, more lasting renewal. What is discerned together is more likely to be embraced together.

## 19. Synodality and joy

When people are invited to participate meaningfully, joy increases. A synodal Church is not weighed down by bureaucracy but energised by shared mission.

## 20. Synodality and the Eucharist

The Eucharist is the heart of synodality. Around one table, many are gathered as one Body. What we celebrate sacramentally must shape how we live communally.



## Melbourne Catholic Digest - The power of the risen Christ

Happy Easter!

The joy of the resurrection of Jesus continues this week, with the Easter Octave bathing us in the glow of the new light that shines after the darkness of Christ's crucifixion.



### The Easter Triduum at St Patrick's Cathedral: a photo gallery

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/the-easter-triduum-at-st-patricks-cathedral-a-photo-gallery>

The Easter Triduum is the highpoint of the liturgical year. Christ's paschal mystery unfolds in one liturgy over three days - from Holy Thursday through to the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night - where the Paschal Candle is lit as a symbol of Christ's light and victory over death.

Thousands attended the Easter Triduum services at St Patrick's Cathedral this year both in person and online, with crowds young and old gathering to mark the Lord's suffering, death and resurrection. And across the Archdiocese of Melbourne more than 550 catechumens and candidates - the highest on record - received the sacraments of initiation and were welcomed into the Catholic faith this year.



### 'The power with which Christ rose is entirely nonviolent,' Pope says in Easter peace message

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/the-power-with-which-christ-rose-is-entirely-nonviolent-pope-says-in-easter-peace-message>

Speaking from the loggia of St Peter's Basilica on Easter, Pope Leo XIV delivered a passionate appeal for peace, declaring that the power of the risen Christ is 'entirely nonviolent' and calling on world leaders to lay down their weapons and choose dialogue over domination. The address came moments after the Pope offered Easter Mass in St Peter's Square with more than 50,000 people present and preceded his solemn blessing, *urbi et orbi*, meaning 'to the city and to the world', in which the Pope offers an indulgence to Catholics around the world who receive the blessing with the proper dispositions.

'In the light of Easter, let us allow ourselves to be amazed by Christ! Let us allow our hearts to be transformed by his immense love for us! Let those who have weapons lay them down! Let those who have the power to unleash wars choose peace! Not a peace imposed by force, but through dialogue! Not with the desire to dominate others, but to encounter them!' Pope Leo said on 5 April.

The Pope repeated the word peace 13 times in his address, underlining that the peace the risen Christ offers 'is not merely the silence of weapons, but the peace that touches and transforms the heart of each one of us.'

<https://melbournecatholic.org/events>

For more information: [www.melbournecatholic.org](http://www.melbournecatholic.org) or [www.facebook.com/CatholicArchdioceseofMelbourne](https://www.facebook.com/CatholicArchdioceseofMelbourne)