

SUNDAY 25 DECEMBER 2022

Christmastide

1 The holy Son of God most high,
For love of Adam's lapsed race,
Quit the sweet pleasures of the sky
To bring us to that happy place.

2 His robes of light he laid aside,
Which did his majesty adorn,
And the frail state of mortals tried,
In human flesh and figure born.

3 Whole choirs of angels loudly sing
The mystery of his sacred birth,
And the blest news to shepherds bring,
Filling their watchful souls with mirth.

4 The Son of God thus man became,
That men the sons of God might be,
And by their second birth regain
A likeness to his deity.

Henry More 1614-87

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1



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SUNDAY 2 OCTOBER 2022

Poverty and homelessness

Are you awakened to homelessness? When did you last think what it must be like to have nowhere to live? Like King Lear, old, thrown out by the daughters he favoured, in a storm? Or refugees, trudging through bombed out cities or struggling through jungle? Or true poverty, scratching the earth to plant some seeds? There is also the poverty of hopelessness and the homelessness that comes with fractured families or loss of community identity. Our response can be to live simply that others may simply live. Lord, help us.

And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.' Matthew 20:40

Members in the Solomon Islands deal with the consequences of poverty, along with tourists. Robberies involving violence, handbag snatching, pick-pocketing, distraction thefts, harassment and house burglaries are testimony to an unequal society. Let us pray for the abused and abusers alike.

SUNDAY 9 OCTOBER 2022

Prisons week

Out of sight, out of mind. That's the problem really when it comes to those in prison; murders and the mentally unwell, caged for our personal and property protection. Does this mean that as a society we are more concerned with goods and chattels than human lives? Are we in a societal prison of fear and distrust? Do you or your community pray for those in prison or detention?

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn. Isaiah 61:1-2

In Britain and Ireland MU members send gifts and cards to prisoners and their families. In Australia prison rules around contact are much more stringent. Keep praying.

SUNDAY 16 OCTOBER 2022

Racial injustice

In Australia a new federal government and the death of Queen Elizabeth II have both raised the foundational racial injustice in Australia – the status of our Indigenous Peoples. In his very first letter St Paul tackles the fundamentals of human relationships. His conversion from a learned Jew to a disciple of Jesus Christ rocked the very nature of his being and upbringing, his faith system and how he viewed others around him. The challenge he faced is written large in Galatians 3. It demonstrates a fundamental turn right around and an opening up - eyes and heart and mind - wide open. And yet we continue to be obsessed with race, status and gender difference. How long, O Lord, how long???

There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

We are asked this week to pray for the Diocese of High Veld in South Africa. This diocese includes Johannesburg, a city which suffers much from racial tensions. Here ‘the mothers donated trees to five parishes to plant as part of the Green Anglicans support and awareness drive’. We can thank God that members are recovering from racial injustice and now consider what they can do for future generations and the Earth.

SUNDAY 23 OCTOBER 2022

The marginalised

Jesus’ generosity to the marginalised was shocking to his religious contemporaries because they saw disease or any other misfortune as a punishment from God for sin. However, humans don’t need much excuse to put their neighbour down. Being fat with straight hair or stammering could cast you to the furthest bench in the schoolyard. No matter the religious or social norm there will always be bullies in every part of society. As with all things human, Jesus shows us the Way, the Way of Love, which crosses all boundaries and prejudice.

Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Mark 10: 48-51

Let us pray for our brothers and sisters in Myanmar and especially for MU members there, marginalized by their faith.

SUNDAY 18 DECEMBER 2022

Wonder and joy

O Morning Star
 Splendour of Light Eternal,
 O Radiant Dawn, O Dayspring from on High,
 shining with the glory of the rainbow,
 come and waken us
 from the greyness of our apathy
 and renew in us your gift of hope.

Jim Cotter ‘Cries of Advent’ No 16. From *Prayer in the Morning*, Cairns Publications 1989.

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.” Luke 1: 46-47

SUNDAY 11 DECEMBER 2022

Light and love

O Salmon

leaping like lightning from the womb,
bursting above cascades of chaos
climbing Love's deadly ladder,
come and sow your blood and burning water,
at the ancient source of all our sorrow:
drowning, you destroy death;
leaping, you lead us to life:
O Ichthus, come in glory.

Jim Cotter 'Cries of Advent' No 11. From *Prayer in the Morning*, Cairns Publications 1989.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined. Isaiah 9: 2

Let us pray for the Diocese of The Murray; for the people near that mighty river which is in so much danger of destruction; for farmers, timber workers, and refugees earning a living at the slaughter works and for the faithful scattered congregations and especially for the work of AMUA in Naracoorte.

SUNDAY 30 OCTOBER 2022

Equal before God

With relative gender freedom in Australia, it is often difficult to both remember when this was not so and also to be aware of places around the world where feelings and regulation around the status of women result in cruelty and injustice. Practices such as child marriage and genital mutilation are world-wide and there is a growing trend to charge women who miscarry with murder and give a sentence of life imprisonment. In his day, Our Lord Jesus Christ was a law-breaker. And he paid the ultimate price for his conversations and friendships with unclean women and Samaritan dogs.

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." Mark 5: 34

Let us pray for God's holy people in the diocese of Riverina, for Lyn Middleton, diocesan president/secretary/O&NO/ Mia Mia distributor/ publ'ns and Australian secretary; for Ethel Rafferty, treasurer; Dorothy Marks P&S; Iris Herrman Social Issues and Sue-Ellen Chilvers chaplain.

SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2022

Issues of gender justice

In many countries there are cultural and/or religious traditions around marriage. It is telling that the late Queen Elizabeth was the first British monarch to marry the person of their choice, and as an adult. However, girls in their early teens, all over the world, are forced into marriages of convenience, usually to older men. In the 21st century childhood, for this purpose, does not end at 12 or 14 or 16 as in former times. As well, these traditions conflict with a view of marriage as the union of equals and a modern sensibility that puts freedom of choice before family rules or convenience. Religion and who makes the rules is the big issue about which we pray God's mercy.

God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Genesis 1: 27, 31

A Mothers' Union worker *Sarah, an ordained minister in a Diocese in Kenya, works to prevent child marriage where possible. She is notified if a marriage is likely to take place. She tries to talk with the family and if the wedding cannot be prevented in this way, they will find a discreet way to get the young girl to safety and into care. Then the government will start working with the family. *Sarah's identity is hidden for her safety.

SUNDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2022

Speaking out for the voiceless

A 10-year-old boy held in a cell in isolation; a wife too frightened to ask for extra housekeeping; a person whose papers were stolen in indefinite detention... Come, Holy Spirit, Advocate and Guide, help us to discern our next move, our next prayer, our next letter, our next cheque (whoops: direct debit transfer thingy). We need our ears to hear the changed tone of the woman's conversation so we can gently ask ??? We need to see the opportunities for action, a petition to sign, a change of career towards humane and loving support for young offenders and refugees. Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out; judge righteously; defend the rights of the poor and needy. Proverbs 31: 8-9

There is a Women's Prison in the Diocese of Bendigo. Loving God, be with those who visit and who speak on behalf of the women there. We pray especially for the Rev'd Shannon Smith, Diocesan Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

SUNDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2022

A heart for Gender Justice

There is a spiritual art or discipline which teaches us to look *accurately* our motivations and how we present them. Simply, is our heart really in it? Do we have a **heart-felt desire** to speak out for the voiceless? Do we pay lip-service to gender justice but cosy up to some important person although that person is a renowned misogynist? Jesus wants us to be 'true believers'. He said, "For where your treasure is there your heart will be also." *Luke 12: 34*. In today's world everyone has an opinion. And we treasure them mightily, often to our Faith's detriment.

Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Proverbs 31:8

Let us pray with all our heart and mind and soul for the people of Sri Lanka. UNICEF found that 70% of the country's families have cut down on food since the start of the year, and stocks of fuel and essential medicines are also fast running out.

SUNDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2022

Season of Advent

O Cornerstone

O Keystone of the Arch,

holding in your being

the opposites of your creation,

come and give us courage

in our bearing and in our striving. Jim Cotter 'Cries of Advent' No 9.

From *Prayer in the Morning*, Cairns Publications 1989.

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, the spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11: 1-2

This week we pray for Anglicans in Nigeria. With 60% of its population living in extreme poverty and 40% under 14 years old there is much for Mothers' Union to do, guided by the mission and loving concern of Jesus for all the lost and broken

SUNDAY 4 DECEMBER 2022

Hope and expectation

O Sovereign Stag

of Hind Embracing,

fresh and whole and eager,

carrying love's immortal wound,

come to us who are banished, barren, snared;

climb down to free us;

lead us home to headwaters, crags and columbines.

Jim Cotter 'Cries of Advent' No 10. From *Prayer in the Morning*, Cairns Publications 1989.

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." Isaiah 2: 3

Mothers' Union in the Diocese of Coventry organises seaside holidays for needy families. Their Facebook page displayed a wobbly "thank you for our holiday we really enjoyed it" written in a Thank You card addressed "To the lovely ladies". This family has felt the power of Christ's love .