

An Easter Prayer

*Lord, thank you for the gift of **HOPE** you gave us on Easter morning. Because of you we know that no problem is too difficult, and even death does not have power over us.*

*Thank you for the gift of **JOY** you gave us when you were resurrected. Because of you we know that no matter how challenging life may be, in the end we will rejoice again.*

*Thank you for the gift of **LOVE** you gave us when you laid down your life. Because of you we know that there is no sin too great to separate us, and we are incredibly valuable to you.*

*Thank you for the gift of **LIFE** you gave us when you left the tomb. Because of Easter we know this world is just the beginning, and we will spend forever in heaven with you.*

*We celebrate you, **JESUS**, with hearts full of praise and gratitude, for who you are and all you have done for us!*
(Holley Gerth)

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Message from the Regional Couple

Dear friends in Teams

We trust that you had the opportunity to engage in one of the various Lenten programs that were available over the Lenten season. There was the new Lenten 'virtual' experience called "Walk in the Spirit" promoted by our Archbishop Christopher. We took the opportunity to utilise the 'Comfort: Lenten Program 2021' published by the Diocese of Wollongong - it contained daily reflections including an emphasis on the Lenten Sunday Gospels. We shared our journey through Lent with another six people from our Parish and their input and insight was helpful to all of us.

On the Monday leading up to Good Friday, our Team C4/5 celebrated a Christian adaptation of a Passover Meal at lunch time which was followed by a lamb roast dinner - we have done this for countless years. If anyone would like a copy of the Passover Service, please contact us.

There is an update on the Oceania Gathering 2021 in this newsletter - the important issue to note is that it will be delivered 'virtually' into your homes.

We ask you to pray for all the sick members in our Region.

Blessing and Peace to you all during this Easter season.

Genevieve and Tim
0437 013 328

The 2021 Teams Oceania Gathering

A Virtual Gathering of Team Members from all Regions across Oceania, Saturday 18 September 2021

Theme: *Teams Supporting Couples - Connect, Communicate, Commit*

The program for the 2021 Gathering reflects the importance of Teams couples and individual members *connecting, communicating and then committing to:*

- each other,
- other members of their Team,
- their Region, and
- their Church and their broader community.

Connect, Communicate and Commit will be a constant thread throughout the program.

The Program: A Virtual Program

The 2021 Gathering will be delivered “virtually” due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this presents a great opportunity for many more Team members to participate than would normally be the case when Gatherings are held in a particular Region. As a result, we can expect Team members from New Zealand, all Regions in Australia, and the Philippines to join in the 2021 Gathering mainly from their homes. Currently individual Regions are deciding the best arrangements for their Region.



A Program Designed to Bring Team Members Together

The program focuses on three issues that are central to our lives in the 2020s:

- Support for married couples and challenges facing Catholic marriage,
- A time of upheaval in the world with a focus on young people, their relationships, beliefs and values, and
- What the next few years might bring to our Catholic faith

A unique feature of Oceania Teams Gatherings has been the opportunity for Team members to meet other Team members from other Regions in Australia and even from Regions in other countries. This will continue with the 2021 Gathering. Not only will there be a stimulating, well-informed and thought-provoking range of presenters, there will also be the opportunity for individual participants to provide

feedback and follow up in “virtual discussion groups”. In these groups you will be able to meet and exchange views with Team members from across Oceania.

A detailed program will be completed and circulated shortly but already all presenters who had agreed to participate in the postponed Gathering last year are committed once again to being part of this “virtual” 2021 Gathering. For further information, visit the Teams Oceania website and search for “gathering”. There you will also find a flyer for the event.

Our Speakers for the 2021 Oceania Teams Gathering:

Bishop Stephen Lowe

Bishop Stephen Lowe is the Bishop in the Diocese of Hamilton in New Zealand. Bishop Stephen has been instrumental in the recent expansion of the Teams movement in his Diocese.



Bishop Stephen will open the Gathering with an address on the value of Teams and the many challenges facing Catholic marriage.

Lara and Tim Kirk

Lara has over 20 years’ experience speaking with young people about marriage and sexuality and currently works for the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn as Marriage, Family and Relationships Co-ordinator. Lara and Tim are trained in Theology and Education and are leaders within the Disciples of Jesus, a Catholic lay community.



Lara and Tim will talk about their personal experience of married life and the importance of support for all married couples.

John Warhurst

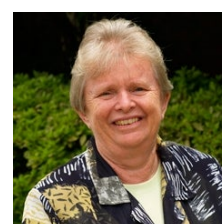
John Warhurst is an experienced political scientist, with special interests in public policy, political lobbying, election campaigning and church-state relations.

John is Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University in Canberra. John is Chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn and is a delegate from the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn for the Plenary Council 2021. He recently served on the Governance Review Project Team for the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.



Sr Clare Condon

Sister Clare Condon is a former Congregational Leader of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. She served as leader from September 2005 until September 2017. In 2013, Sr. Clare was awarded a Human Rights Medal by the Australian Human Rights Commission in recognition of the Good Samaritan Sisters’ work with asylum seekers,



Indigenous Australians and the victims of domestic violence.

Both John Warhurst and Sr Clare Condon will discuss what the next few years might bring to our Catholic faith and the challenges our Church might face.

Phil Billington

Phil has been Coordinator of Religious Education for the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese and then Director of the Catholic Education Office in the Sandhurst Diocese. Phil has also had extensive experience in Teams, being a spiritual counsellor and facilitated many Teams Gatherings. One of her current interests is young people's views about long-term relationships and marriage.



Phil will facilitate the 2021 Gathering as well as speak about the relationships, beliefs and values of young people at a time of upheaval in the world.

Commissioning of Sydney Sector Team Responsible Couples

During Sunday Mass on 7 February at St. Joseph's Maronite Catholic Church in Croydon, Fr. Danny Nough, with Roula and John Tannous commissioned the incoming Team Responsible Couples for the Sydney Sector. The music and singing during the Mass was wonderful. This was followed with a picnic lunch at a nearby park which everyone enjoyed.



Fiat Spirituality

The following reflection, 'Open My Eyes So I Can See', has been provided by Jocelyne and Maxime Juste (Our Lady of Lourdes Team, Sydney). The document has its origin in Mauritius and has been edited by Margaret and Jean Noel Adolphe and FIAT collaborators.

Fiat Spirituality is a full-and open-hearted response to God's plan for the redemption of mankind. Rooted in Mary's 'Fiat' ("Be it done") and the Holy Spirit's power, it emphasises evangelisation and works through a network of small prayer groups which encourage committed individuals to take apostolic initiatives in spreading the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we imitate Mary's humility, we too become totally open to God's plan for our life.

OPEN MY EYES SO I CAN SEE.....

THE EYES are like a lamp for the body. If your eyes are sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eyes are no good, your body will be in darkness. **SO IF THE LIGHT IN YOU IS DARKNESS, HOW TERRIBLY DARK IT WILL BE!** (Mathew 6:22-23).

THE EYES ARE THE MIRROR OF YOUR HEART AND REFLECTS YOUR SOUL. A lot of emotions can be perceived in your look. Eyes that have an empty look can indicate anger, rage, shame, uneasiness, culpability, sadness, hypocrisy, jealousy... whereas bright eyes assert confidence, happiness, joy and love. In what state are your eyes? What do they reflect? Can you see in a fair and correct manner? May be something is forbidding you from seeing truth as it is? (R. Leduc) The way we perceive ourselves, others, life in general, the world, God, etc... arouses our emotions and shapes our behaviour. Each of us has a unique and quite personalised perception of reality. (John Powell)



TWO men looked out from prison bars. One saw mud; one saw stars (Dale Carnegie)

Our way of seeing reality is often restricted and distorted. "We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are". (Anais Nin)

IF WE want to grow into fully accomplished people, we would need to be aware of our vision and work patiently at correcting all lack of balance and eliminating all distortions. The way we interpret and evaluate reality is the key to our mental and emotional health. There can be no real change, no real growth in any of us until and unless our basic perception of reality, our vision is changed. (John Powell)

VERY OFTEN we have **eyes that do not see** as says the prophet Jeremiah. "Listen to this, foolish and stupid people, and who have no heart! They have eyes that can't see, ears that don't hear." (Jeremiah 5:21). We do not know how to look, we do not see right, we interpret things wrongly, because we are blinded by petty preoccupations.

REMEMBER the Emmaus narrative: "While they were talking and discussing, Jesus drew near to them and walked with them. But their eyes could not recognise him



(...) As they came closer to the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going further. But they held him back, saying: "Stay with us; the day is almost over, and it is getting dark." Therefore, he went in to stay with them. He sat and ate with them, took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him. (Luke 24:13-31)

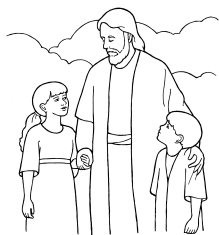
All religious teachers have recognised that we human beings do not naturally see; we have to be taught how to see. **Spirituality is about seeing.** Once you see, the rest follows (Richard Rohr)

PEOPLE FAIL TO GRASP the meaning of the Gospel message not because they lack intelligence, but because they do not have the necessary spiritual perception. The Bible describes this gap as a sort of blindness. Spiritual blindness prevents human beings from understanding the truths of the spiritual world. (<https://entretienschretiens.com>)

It is blindness of the spirit that prevents one from seeing the essential thing, from fixing one's eyes on the love that gives life; and it is this blindness that, little by little, makes one concentrate on what is superficial, and finally leads to indifference to others and to goodness. So many temptations can confuse **'the eyes of the heart, causing them to become short-sighted! (Pope Francis)**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges our way of seeing things: "Why then, do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the log in your own eye? How dare you say to your brother: "Please let me take that speck out of your eye" when you yourself have a log in yours? You, hypocrites, first take the log out of your eye, and then you will be able to see clearly and take the speck out of your brother's eye!" (Matthew 7:3) Forgive us Lord for the look which freezes and which kills. Forgive us for the eye that distorts and makes us see the bad side of others.

Before we begin to criticise, we should perhaps verify the quality of our eyes, and then we could see with more clarity, the limpidity of the hearts of others...



Jesus says: " I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles themselves and becomes like this child (Matthew 18:3-4). Whoever welcomes in my name one of these children, welcomes me; and who ever welcomes me, welcomes not only me but also the one who sent me (Mark 9:37). The eyes of a child are usually full of purity. If only we could find this purity again, we would be less inclined to judge or categorise!

FORGIVE US, Lord for our heart of stone, for our lack of attention that prevents us from loving and seeing you in others. "Our rigidity could keep us far from the tenderness of God" (Pope Francis). This frightening lack of attention can get us caught in an unconscious blindness. At the end of our life, will we say to the Lord, in an incredulous way: "Lord, when did we see you being hungry, or thirsty, naked, a stranger, sick or in prison, without being of help to you?" (Matthew 24:44)

The quality of the look in our eyes depends on the quality of our hearts. "One can only see with the heart; the essential is hidden from the eyes" said Antoine de St. Exupery. It is only when the heart has allowed itself to be ploughed by the Word that it changes and projects a more compassionate, merciful, and clear look. It is only then that it can perceive the invisible and capture spiritual realities.

SPIRITUAL MATURITY can be widely considered as a growth in the way we see things. There are some moments of intense revelation which leave a person into a deep communion with God. These are epiphanies. It is remaining in the presence of God in contemplative prayer. It is not our intellectual faculties that allow us to be conscious of the reality of God; It is only by the Holy Spirit that this is revealed to us.

In the early medieval period, two Christian philosophers at the monastery of St Victor in Paris, Hugh of St Victor (1078-1141) and Richard of St Victor (1123-1173) wrote that humanity was given three different sets of eyes, each building on the previous one. The first eye was the eye of the flesh (thought or sight), the second was the eye of reason (meditation or reflection), and the third eye was the eye of true understanding (contemplation). The third-eyed person has always been the saint, the seer, the poet, the metaphysician, or the authentic mystic **who grasped the whole picture** ... There is an urgent need for **contemplative seeing**. Contemplation is an exercise in keeping your heart and mind open long enough for the mind to see other hidden material (Richard Rohr).

“If we could look at life, then all of life would become prayer. Because the whole life unfolds under God’s eye” (Michel Quoist). And Jacques Loew talks about “this constant meditation of the Word of God which, little by little, imparts the very mentality of God, and which gives to the eyes the depth of the eye of God.” The understanding of spiritual things is given to those who choose to walk intimately with the Lord.

PAUL made this request to God on behalf of the Christians of Ephesus, that they may acquire spiritual perception (Ephesians 1.18): “I ask that your minds (heart) may be open to see the light. So that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you.” We should address this prayer to the Lord... That he may open the eyes of our heart, and makes the scales come off our eyes, similar to the blind man Bartimaeus, so that we can see the reality of the world in the light of the Scriptures.

LORD, MAKE ME SEE! AMEN!

