

In the news

Reprinted from the Vancouver Sun, some entries in a Bible quiz:

- Moses went to the top of Mount Cyanide.
- The seventh commandment is 'Thou shalt not admit adultery'.
- Salome danced in seven veils in front of King Harrods.
- The people who followed Jesus were known as the Decibels.
- St Matthew was one of the opossums.

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Saints Alive

Newsletter of All Saints Anglican Church
Northcote
Parish of South Darebin

Volume 2 Number 2

The Bread of Life

The Venerable Andrew Oddy

In the Church's year, outside the major seasons of Easter and Christmas, we have some 30 Sundays which we call 'Ordinary Sundays'. In the Church the colour adopted for these Sundays is green. The colour is for growth and is seen in the robes worn, the banner and the book markers used in the great bible. It is on these ordinary Sundays that we read in an orderly fashion through one of the first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. In the last edition of *Saints Alive* I wrote of the Gospel of Matthew, to give something of the special flavour of that particular Gospel account.

In this year (designated as Year B) the compilers of the lists of readings also give us six Sundays on which we read from the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. This is a great departure from the usual readings. John's Gospel is otherwise reserved for the Sundays of Easter – not Ordinary Sundays!

This chapter in John's Gospel has a single theme – Jesus the Bread of Life: he feeds the hungry multitude; he patiently unfolds, in the course of a carefully constructed sermon, how he is himself the spiritual food of humankind.

The sermon contains a brilliant use of traditional material, fundamentally based on the story of the manna in the wilderness, found in Exodus Chapter 16. In Exodus we find the account of the escape of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt with Moses as their leader. They encounter starvation on their journey in the desert. There Moses instructs the people to collect what was likely to have been an insect secretion that could be gathered early in the morning, before other insects or the hot sun removed it. Known as



Manna falling
<http://stpetersconway.org>

'manna', it was a major part of the pilgrims' diet. It was ground and baked into cakes, according to the Exodus account.

Later reflections by interpreters of this story spoke of the manna in the desert as a symbol of everything that God had to teach his people. The manna was spoken of in terms of the Wisdom of God and his gift of the Law. Whilst fed in this way the people of Israel learned to listen to God and to take their place in God's plan for them as a nation. They learned that they 'did not live by bread alone but by every word that came from the mouth of God'.

So, Jesus teaches, he too is the source of this teaching. This element of God's true wisdom found in Jesus is the first of three themes which run through the sixth chapter of John's

Saints Alive

The Bread of Life...

“This chapter...concerns what we do together, week by week, in hearing God’s word and approaching his table.”

Gospel – the true teaching that gives life to the world.

The second theme is Jesus given by God as food for the world’s life, consumed by the world by crucifixion. This is found in the reference to God as the Giver of Jesus – always the gift of God is completed by Jesus’ death. Note that according to John’s Gospel, as Jesus dies he says, ‘It is accomplished’. Here in Chapter 6 Jesus proclaims, ‘The bread that I give for the life of the World is my flesh.’

Lastly, a third theme has been controversial over the centuries of biblical interpretation. Jesus proclaims, ‘Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life.’ This is a reference to the Eucharist, the sacrament of Holy Communion. In the past, Protestant scholars have seen these verses (51–58) as a later addition to the

text of John’s Gospel. Now there is agreement that this is not an addition. Professor Dorothy Lee puts it this way: ‘The divine self-giving of Jesus’ death and in the Eucharist is one event, the two representing different dimensions of the one self-gift which is both human (of the flesh) and divine (God’s self communication).’

This is a high doctrine of the Holy Communion and has given rise to many sermons that pick up on the difficulty which Jesus’ hearers had in accepting all that he had to say (see verses 60 and 66 ‘Many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him.’)

But this chapter is also encouraging and assuring. It concerns what we do together, week by week, in hearing God’s Word and approaching his table.

From the churchwardens

Bruce Clezy and Betty Reay

Here is a brief update on property matters.

- The major electrical re-wiring of the meeting room and hall has been completed.
- We have purchased a new set of chairs for the meeting room, after considering many types and styles of chair. Following a call for donations and selling some 2010 merchandise, we have raised about \$560 towards the cost of the chairs. This is an excellent result. Thank you for this generous response.
- We have had a run of misfortunes including a major break-in to the meeting room via the male and female toilets, and to the church itself, and some damage to flooring of the Brotherhood shop following torrential rain. All repairs have been completed, and a full clearance obtained to confirm that there is no hazard from asbestos fibres following breakage of the cement sheeting walls. Additional and replacement locks have been installed and we will discuss further strategies with the Vestry.
- It will soon be time to have the spouting cleared on all our buildings and some repairs are needed to the shop building.
- We are still calling for your help with routine tasks around the church. If you would like to volunteer your time to assist in any task, or in any aspect in the life and upkeep of our church, please let either of us know. In particular we are looking for people who may have a few hours available to help with cleaning the church each week.
- Health and Safety. We attended a recent seminar by the Diocese, with Andrew and Alma (Health and Safety Officer). We are happy to note that we are up to date with requirements. The Diocese wants a strong focus this year on preventing trips and falls, as these are a common cause of injury. We remind you to report any incident like this to Alma, whether or not an injury occurs, so we can act to prevent further incidents.



**Good at cleaning?
The church needs YOU!**



Please report any incidents that could have resulted in injury, even if no one has been hurt.

A woman of exceptional grace

The Rev. Philippa Wetherell

PD James – Phyllis Dorothy James – was born and died in Oxford though she lived much of her life in London, becoming in 1991 Baroness James of Holland Park. Acclaimed as the writer of nigh on twenty erudite classical detective novels, James' stories reflect her belief that 'it is possible to remain within the constraints and conventions of the genre and be a serious writer, saying something true about men and women and their relationships and the society in which they live.'

I have enjoyed many of her novels, admiring her imaginative and stylish use of the English language, fascinated by the ingenuity of her plots, transported by her depiction in meticulous detail of settings both strange and humdrum, and caught up in the workings of the mind and the controlled emotions of the heart of her favoured protagonist, Commander Adam Dalgliesh. That poet and lover of poetry is at the centre of fourteen of her crime novels. Indeed, in an interview James considered him to be 'a male version of me, brainier than me, but his emotions are mine, very unsentimental like me.'

However, it was only when I read *A Fragment of Autobiography*, a kind of diary that PJD kept between her 77th and 78th birthdays, that I came to know something of the woman behind the stories. Written in 1997–98, and prompted by that great man of letters, Samuel Johnson, who wrote 'at seventy-seven it is time to be in earnest', she agreed reluctantly to record her thoughts as they arose out of day to day happenings, perhaps with 'a need to capture time, to have some small mastery over that which so masters us.' The memoir was published under the title *Time to be in Earnest*. In an interview in 2010, in her 90th year, James said, 'I have lived a very happy and fulfilled life.' That she could say this with sincerity is testament to her strength of character and her Christian faith, for her growing up and her married life were both scarred by the mental illness of the two people she loved most dearly, her mother and her husband. Compassion and sensitivity she showed in abundance in her person and in her writing, but with a spurning of the sentimental and the mawkish. In the prologue to the diary she admitted that

there was much in her past painful to dwell upon, but 'it is over and must be accepted, made sense of and forgiven,' and she adds, 'I have always known that happiness is a gift, not a right.'

PD James was a conservative in faith and in political allegiance. An Anglican who worshipped at the Anglo-Catholic church of All Saints, Margaret Street, she preferred the 1662 liturgy, delighting in the beauty of Cranmer's language. 'Words in their beauty, their simplicity, their numinous power, should be capable of so entering our consciousness...that we rest confidently in their familiarity to bring us into that hoped-for communion with God which is surely at the heart of prayer and worship.' Yet she was far from closed to contemporary ideas. After attending a conference in Cambridge in 1998 on liturgy and gender, she wrote that it was 'interesting and educative for me'.

Surprised in 1991 to be honoured with a life peerage, Lady James took her responsibilities very seriously, sitting in the House of Lords with the Conservatives and taking a keen interest in the debates. She had worked hard from her mid-teens, entering first the National Health Service and then the Home Office, at first in the Police Department and then the Criminal Policy Department. She put to good use the knowledge she gained there, her crime novels from *Cover her Face* (1962) to *The Private Patient* (2011) reflecting her interest in forensic matters.

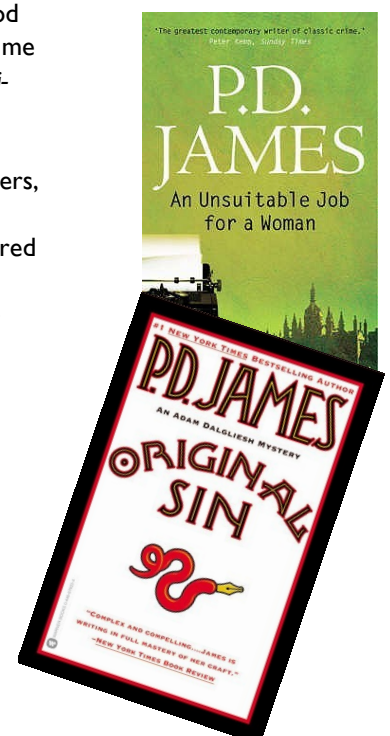
She was the devoted mother of two daughters, and the delight she took in them and their families was evident in her memoir. She shared many occasions with them in the midst of a busy round of speaking engagements, meetings, public lectures and events to support charitable fundraising.

A woman and writer to be admired, I can offer no greater praise than to use the words from her friend Nigel Williams, who described her as 'funny, warm, self-critical, and never puffed up.'



PD James
Photo: Theo Chalmers

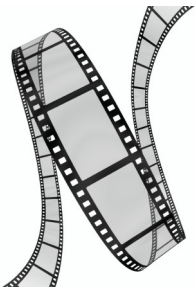
"...funny, warm, self-critical, and never puffed up."



Saints Alive

Two different movies. One big crime.

FILM REVIEW



Tom Hanks in
The Green Mile, 1999



Susan Sarandon as Sr
Prejean in *Dead Man
Walking*, 1995

Bruce Clezy

Being Christian forces us to think about the death penalty. Christ was put to death as an enemy of the state. Each Sunday we remember this when we take the holy sacrament; although rarely, I would argue, do we think about it as an example of capital punishment. The death penalty does not sit easy with us. Australians, for example, rightly protested when two of its citizens were put to death overseas; yet we remain notably silent as other high profile young people face the death penalty around the world. Why is this so? Two Hollywood movies, *The Green Mile* (1999) and *Dead Man Walking* (1995) have looked at this particularly Christian dilemma.

The Green Mile is a fantasy crime drama based on the novel by Stephen King. Set in the US state of Louisiana in 1935, it tells the story of a strange encounter between a death row corrections officer (played by Tom Hanks) and his charge John Coffey (Michael Clarke Duncan). Despite his conviction for horrific crimes, Coffey is innocent. He reveals himself to be a gentle giant of a man, blessed with an amazing talent: being able to heal the sick and resurrect the dead. Despite these miracles he is still forced to walk 'the green mile', a green corridor leading to execution in the electric chair, leaving Hanks' character to ponder if he too has committed a crime: killing an innocent and truly gifted man.

Dead Man Walking is also a crime drama, but takes as the basis of its story the real life work of Sister Helen Prejean, a Roman Catholic nun and a leading advocate for the abolition of the death penalty. The film is a fictionalised account of her work with death

row inmates during the 1980s, once again in Louisiana. After failing to gain a pardon for the convicted murderer Matthew Poncelet (played by Sean Penn), Sr Prejean (Susan Sarandon) becomes his spiritual advisor. As Poncelet walks to his death, Sr Prejean convinces him to take responsibility for his actions and confess to the crimes that he has committed.

Both films use Christian themes to take a very different view of the death penalty. *The Green Mile* is actually a very clever retelling of the Passion of Christ that points to the brutality and futility of capital punishment. John Coffey (another JC) is a miracle worker put to death for crimes he did not commit. His death leads to an eternal life (which I will not reveal) which is, the film makes very clear, at once a curse and a blessing. By contrast, however, *Dead Man Walking* works by emphasising the very Christian concept of forgiveness. Poncelet is a violent, ignorant racist, who has committed the most hateful of crimes. His life, however, is 'redeemed' through his confession and apology, but also the unwavering love of his new friend and confidante Sr Prejean. She is the model of forgiveness. The film even ends with images of some of the victims' families working with her, learning how to forgive.

When seen together what these movies make clear is that capital punishment is itself a crime; a lesson that we could all usefully remember as we contemplate and object to the death penalty around the world. As Jesus himself said while on the cross: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they are doing.' (Luke 23:34).

Our Treasures For Free by Rob Lane

They're our gifts, our treasures sent from above
 They're the ones around us, they're the ones we love
 They're our mothers and fathers and our kindred lot
 They're the ones we love, but have often forgot
 They're our wives and husbands and our friends and all
 Yet often forsaken in life's endless call
 Yes these are our treasures given for free
 Living among us just like you and me.

So many memories cherished and old
 Still more to come so let us behold
 Like the commandment of old let us be still
 And love all these gifts of ours until
 We walk from the dark and into the dawn
 With the treasures we love and into our glorious morn.

Brotherhood Books

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www.brotherhoodbooks.org.au



Welcome to Barry and Trish

In August we asked God's blessing on Andrew and Pamela as they set off for weeks of long service leave, travelling in Europe. We look forward to welcoming them home towards the end of October. In the meantime we welcome the Rev Fr Barry Fernley, who will be our parish's locum priest during Andrew's absence, and his wife Trish. Barry will be our full-time locum and will look after services and all of Andrew's usual responsibilities during this time.



smAll Saints



**'Moses at the Red Sea' and
'Palm Sunday'**
Art work and paper craft from the
children's group at All Saints



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NEXT ISSUE: December 2015

Welcome!

We seek to share with others our experience of God and to make of All Saints Northcote a place of permanent welcome, a refuge and anchor for the human spirit.

Welcome the Lord – worship

Reverence for liturgy and joy in music are central to our worship. The observance of season and feast has continued in unbroken service in this place for 155 years. We seek to be close to God in the celebration of Baptism and in the breaking of the bread, and to draw others into a sense of the sacred. We hold to a middle way, resisting extremes, allowing for difference and listening to new ideas, but always anchored in prayer book and hymnal, in parish and Diocese, and in the great Anglican tradition.

Welcome the stranger – relationship

The defining spiritual features of our community are love, tolerance, warmth and inclusiveness. We are less concerned about numbers, money, appearances, power or status than about hospitality, participation, and the gifts each person brings, regardless of their age or abilities or sexual orientation or any other personal characteristic. We love children and young people. We treat outcasts and fringe dwellers compassionately and support church agencies of social action.

Welcome the friend – partnership

We are enriched by our connection with St Paul's Fairfield and St James the Great Thornbury as part of a united parish, and we respect the different identities of each community. We value our connection with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and are willing participants in ecumenical exchange and inter-faith activity.

Saints Alive is published on our website along with other information about All Saints

allsaintsnorthcote.org.au

All Saints is 155 years old!

In August we celebrated our 155th birthday, services having commenced at All Saints in August 1860, the same month in which Bourke and Wills set out on their expedition.

Compared with our church, some of Melbourne's famous landmarks are quite young:

- The Royal Exhibition Building is only 135 years old, built in 1880.
- Northcote Town Hall is only 125 years old
- St Paul's Cathedral is only 124 years old (consecrated 1891)
- St Patrick's Cathedral is only 118
- Flinders Street Station is only 106 years old.

Many thanks to Arnaud, who again this year made his famous apple crumble with the birthday year spelled out in almonds.

All Saints was established less than 30 years after John Batman first met Jika Jika on the banks of the Merri Creek, not far from where the bridge across the creek now stands (built in 1858).

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land on which our church was built, and pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.



1860 — 2015