

May the words of my lips and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and redeemer. Amen.

Please be seated. For those who have been part of the services over the past few weeks where we've had live broadcasts of Mildura for Janey's sake, we don't have that today because Janey sent me a message from Mildura saying, 'The elders are taking me out on the river.' And I said, 'Wonderful!

I said, 'It's very frosty here, the carpark has frozen over, and the volunteers are freezing.' She replied, 'Well, I don't know if it's smoke or mist on the water up here.' I said, 'That sounds like a title for a good song!'

Now I've got to be careful here because there was. There's someone in this congregation who was there.

When I was ordained Priest, my first high mass at Holy Trinity in Launceston was a wonderful day.

And Archdeacon Warwick Letchford, the Archdeacon of Launceston, just about to retire from ill health, decided to preach at this First Mass because it was not only mine but also for the deacon, Andrew Lang, his first as a deacon.

So there we are, neo-presbyter, neo-deacon, absolutely petrified by the extreme ritual, trying to get it right, knowing that there were people in the choir and the service scrutinising every move we made.

When it came time to preach, the Archdeacon decided to tell a modern fable based on the Good Shepherd reading.

And the idea was that as a young priest, I was to be the Shepherd. I would call people by name; I would bring them in.

And if ever the community faces danger, I will be the one who will stand at the gate and protect them.

But as Sandra knows, dear Warwick sometimes got things a little confused. And instead of me standing at the gate protecting the people, the community took the Priest at the entrance and sacrificed him.

And he realised that as he was going, I don't think that's gone well. So he defaulted to his standard First Ordination sermon, and those who knew Warwick knew there were already five sermons anyway.

The ABC of the priesthood, oh no, we've got two sermons, didn't we? The Good Shepherd does know the people by name.

But a lot of the time, the Good Shepherd will call people in and out. And in the Gospel there, there's a critical verse that many people overlook.

They will find, they will go, they'll come in and go out and will find pasture. Once you're in the fold, that doesn't mean that's where you stay.

You will go out. Now we know from the Shepherd, the 23rd Psalm, that God is with us no matter where we go, and we will be abundantly provided for.

However, on our journey, we will encounter some strange things. There are times when we will be challenged, and there will be times when the Shepherd won't be there to tell you what to do.

A Good Shepherd would expect you to return to the home base when you find things challenging.

And in this case, it's the church. If you're finding it tough, come back and pray.

Come back for sanctuary. Come back and find solace.

However, in that verse, there is that promise that will be, once you've found that, you won't stay there because you will be sent out.

Travelling through the Midlands in Tasmania, which is excellent sheep territory, you must rotate the paddocks or pastures just as much as you would if you were planting crops because sheep can strip a paddock bare.

So you've got to be able to know when to say, well, the top paddock is not going to be there today.

We'll give that a year's rest and move them further down.

And so the sheepfold will move. And that's part of the rhythm of life.

For the Wurrundjeri Woiwurrung, they have six seasons, not four. And now we are into a good start today, Waring or wombat season.

We are in the next season because that first frost has arrived. And this is the time of ice and steaming.

And that's what I liked about Janie's reflection this morning, and it's a change of season.

I was challenged and didn't get around to it because I was doing other things in preparation: photographing the frost on the spider webs on the trees.

If it's frosty tomorrow morning, I'll see if I can get out there. But given that we've got two funerals, a whole heap of professional standard stuff to do, and lots of things from the diocese which are due on Wednesday, which we're only told on Friday about, you know, let's see how the week goes.

Yesterday, in this place, a group of you gathered to consider the statement from the heart, the statement from Uluru.

And on the pew sheet, again, because the black and white doesn't do justice, but I think you can see from the colour it's rich in its tapestry.

And I've put the statement in the middle. I've taken the liberty, with apologies to the elders, of putting the heart, which was the symbol in 2017, behind it.

Because it truly is a statement from the heart. Now, I have no idea what the outcome was from yesterday, and I dare say there will be some feedback from you at some time.

In my editorial on page two, I mentioned that it's not my role to tell you how to vote when the referendum comes around.

But it is my role to provide you with a scriptural and spiritual understanding of where the church is regarding what it thinks.

Now there are some aspects of it from the College of Bishops that I don't necessarily agree with, but I'm not of their pay level, so we'll let them have their say.

However, we need to discern what the Spirit says to the church. And that's why we're continuing right through the Pentecost to have that as the response to the readings.

It's from Revelation, the book of Revelation. Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

And we need to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church regarding the inequality and absolute shame that, as a nation, we have subjected the First Nations people.

I was thinking as we were coming in. We started with a hymn, which was, this is an Australian hymn.

We then moved to a hymn from Iona and, in good colonial fashion, moved to France. Where are we going next, Alison?

What country? Australia.

We're going to Australia. That's good.

We're going to the Torres Strait. So, we're getting there, and understanding is fundamental.

Now I heard some people gasp and look at the mortar and pestle. I would say that would have been fashioned around 20,000 years ago.

How many loaves of bread have been made on that very rock? It's from Gebor/Mount Macedon.

And it's returning there. I have been a custodian for a short period in the life of this.

Formed in the volcanoes, the three volcanic actions which created our mountain range. Crafted and adapted by the Woiwurring to grind flour from some native grasses.

And when you think back to it, I said at St Paul's last week, the simplest thing that we're asked to do by Jesus is to know Him in the breaking of the bread.

Think about that for a moment as you look at that rock. When it came into my possession, it was wet, and the moss glistened.

And there was a thought, should we wash that? Should we clean it?

My answer is no. Let the earth and everything which is in it stay there.

I guess it would add an exciting flavour to the bread. Sourdough might not be just an invention of recent times.

There's no secret that the bishops have asked us to consider voting in favour of this. It won't solve; I was asked this the other day by a young man coming through the church, what do you think it will achieve?

And the answer is I don't know. But if we don't start talking and listening, nothing will happen.

It's not a binding voice on Parliament but a voice to Parliament.

Canberra is an indigenous word for a place of gathering. From the French to talk.

Well, if you ever watch Question Time, there's lots of talking but not much listening. We're being asked to attend.

What can change if we listen? I'll go back to it again.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. When we come back to the fold, we are called to listen.

We might not like to hear many things that will be said to us about the last 230 years.

We're not going to like a lot of things. It struck me as we told me on Wominjeka.

Wominjeka, the word for welcome, is German. Did you know that?

It's not Wurrundjeri. And it says something about the heritage of this nation, Wominjeka.

It's a word you can travel across Europe and greet people with. Me, hello.

I think it's a beautiful way of starting, just me on. It sounds good.

Me on. Hello.

And welcome. So, in terms of listening, I will provide for you from time-to-time different resources.

I'll try to be balanced where I can, even if I must provide resources I can't entirely agree with.

You'll probably pick it up anyway from the vibes. But if we're not listening to one another, how can we hear Jesus call our voice?

We do need to listen. Prayer is always about dialogue.

And often, when I go to different churches, I know what St Paul means when he says it's like a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

How can you listen to what the Spirit says to the church if you feel it with word and noise?

Today we gathered in the smaller fold here at St John's. With the change of staff, it's going to be necessary from time to time to gather in one place.

And we have had that in the past on the fifth Sunday; that's what we do. On special occasions, that's what we do.

The next one, the fifth Sunday, is Pentecost, the beginning of the church. And we'll gather at St Paul's.

The parish council has asked me to move it from 10 to 1030, so apologies to those who were on the automatic pilot this morning and arrived at 10.

It'll be at 1030. However, the choir gave some of you a rehearsal, which is excellent because we're all apprentice angels.

The symbolism of the water from Woi Worrung Creek is essential. The water is not clear. What colour would you describe it as, Susanna?

Brown. Brackish.

Full of earth. Full of the native nature of our creek.

Sorry, we didn't get tadpoles. From water and mixing it with the grass, we get bread.

And we gather around a fire, in this case, the Paschal Candle, where all the excellent teaching of the Woi Worrung Creek and Woi Worrung occur.

They would break bread together in a circle around a fire. Around an evening light in a maze, two disciples knew Jesus at the breaking of the bread.

I find that astonishing.

It's hard to believe it's been 12 months. If I get a chance, if you get a chance, I'd like to try and get some red yarn, yellow yarn and black yarn and try and make them, plant them together to create a bracelet for this year.

So we've got a few weeks. And we're asked to pray for five things or five people.

And the reason I'd like to entwine the national colours of the indigenous people, we could also use teal and white for the Torres Strait Islanders, or if you want to be patriotic for the king, red, white, and blue.

Ask this one question every time you look at the little band around your hand. What is the Spirit saying to the church?

And then listen. The prayer for today out of the Vikingdom comes, and I'll provide all these resources as the week goes by.

Come, O Holy Spirit, over the broken, the lonely, the hurting or grieving. Come to Holy Spirit as the gentle whisper of God's presence.

Come, be close to all those who feel broken, lonely, hurting or grieving. Feel to each one a sign of your kingdom with them.

The Lord be with you. And also with you.