

SA Catholics for an Evolving Church



An Easter Spirituality: Lent 2025

Resurrection, Transformation, Fulness of Life, Salvation

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Summary of the series: Transformation

1. Change our perspective.
2. Change our thinking.
3. Change our relationship with God/Spirit
4. Change our sense of direction.
5. Change our idea of the Kin'dom.
6. Change the way we live.

Week 1. Change our perspective

Acknowledgement of Country and Heritage

The Kurna people have cared for and loved this land for thousands of years. The stories of the Rainbow Serpent of the rivers, Dark Emu among the stars and Tjilbruke's epic, hold subtle meanings and lessons.

This was, is and always will be Aboriginal Country. It has never been ceded and still stirs great depth for aware hearts and minds.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories and traditions of sacred ceremonies, rituals and initiations.

Let us listen to the wisdom, breathe the air, be open to the spark of Light deep in the Spirit of this people.

Meditation/Reflection

Let's do a brief meditation on the integration of self (physical, biological, knowing and loving). Let's centre ourselves for a moment. Let go of the day's busyness and the rest of the day to come. Take a deep breath and let it exhale gently.

I would like us to think about our various parts, what makes us what we are, how our organs and activities function and interconnect to make a whole self.

Let's begin with our bones, our skeletons. **Their functions are mechanical and physical.** We rely on them to hold ourselves upright, to provide a solid frame or scaffolding, to walk and get about from place to place, to lift and hold. Remember the different electrical charges in and outside our cells that enable transference.

Think about the **chemical** reactions that keep us alive including the oxygen transfer in our lungs, digestion and the constantly changing combinations of atoms and molecules in every one of the 37 trillion cells in our bodies that never stop pulsing and wiggling.

Notice how all those cells combine in 78 main organs that work together in the most amazing combinations to form our **biological** selves. Include our hearts, lungs, brains, livers kidneys and nervous systems - more complex than any computer system.

As biological organisms, we see, hear, feel smell and taste but beyond the biological, we are reflectively **aware** that we do these things. We can remember what happened yesterday and compare it with what happened the day before. We can imagine what we will do tomorrow or what someone is doing far away.

We **experience dreams** and feelings that emerge from the hidden depths of our psyche.

We **understand and know**. We think about the images, feelings and experiences that flow through our senses and imaginations, what we see and hear. We ask questions. We develop ideas, concepts and theories about them and how they relate to one another. We judge what is true and real.

We **decide and choose**, select among possibilities and opt for what is worthwhile and what seems good to us. We make ourselves what we are to be – the one and only version of ourselves that ever will be. We become a human, responsible self.

To cap it all off, we **love and fall in love**, going beyond ourselves, reaching out to another or others, be that a person, a community, the natural world or God (whatever we conceive 'God' to be). We are thereby transforming our selves, creating bonds of transformation.

The most amazing thing is this – I am and we are.

We really are amazing beings.

Week 1. Change our perspective.

1. Begin our reflections with Easter.
2. Our deepest desires
3. Salvation. A larger life
4. Understanding the universe and ourselves
5. Interiority and focus on the subject in action.

1. **Begin our reflections with Easter.**

We focus on Easter rather than suffering and death. The first Easter was the revelation of Big Life.

In the aftermath of his death, Jesus' followers experienced an awareness of a vastly different world. It was not that the world around them changed but they changed. Jesus did not physically come through walls but he did break through the walls of their minds and limited horizons. Suddenly, they were conscious of a much larger universe of life. They no longer saw human death as the end or boundary of life. It is not so much that Jesus came into their lives as that they came into Jesus' life. Jesus' life was characterised by his awareness of his relationship to God, whom he referred to as Father. His personal (mental or psychological) horizon reached out to God, expressed in anthropomorphic terms. We are now open to using different language.

2. **Our deepest desires**

Think about what you most want in life, the deep-down desire or achievement. No need to tell anyone – you may have never spoken aloud about it. What do you seek in your heart of hearts? Be as precise as you can. Hold this question in mind for a few days – it will tell you something. At our core, that deep desire is good and wholesome. But we need to be very honest. It takes time, practice, self-discipline and perseverance to uncover the core.

Is achieving this deep desire what we commonly mean by salvation? Or is that something else?

We are born 'good' i.e. not in sin or sinful, but growing up can be hard and maintaining our integrity is precarious at the best of times. We must live before we can work out how to live and, in the process, we cause offence and do harm to ourselves and others. We are caught in a bind.

The solution is not an intervention by God from outside but the fulfilment of something that was here all along. There are no afterthoughts in God. Augustine was right: 'The deepest desire of the human heart is for identification with God.' We know our desire: what does that tell us about God?

3. **Salvation. A larger life**

That Jesus lives, after human death, means that human living is only part of the story. This is usually explained in terms of life after death in another realm of existence. In fact, there is only one realm of existence and we live in it but our ability to perceive the whole reality is limited by our human condition. The real universe of life (or of 'being,' as philosophers would say) is much larger and more extensive than what we know or can experience.

It is not that we go from one world to another at human death but that we are transformed in a way that enables us to participate in the same total universe in quite a different way. Transformation is not 'outside' or 'separate from us.' We are the transformation; we are evolutionary beings. We were there all along. Does a caterpillar see and live in the same world as a butterfly?

4. **Living in the real universe**

To live in the real universe, we need to adopt an appropriate perspective. We are accustomed to thinking of things, the world around us and the universe as if we could see them 'objectively', from 'the outside', independently of where we stand ourselves. That is an 'out there world' perspective.

A modern understanding of our universe, gained through the physical and human sciences, can make God seem distant and impersonal. Traditional spirituality and theology do not seem to have met the challenges of our time. The language of metaphor and myth, of story and narrative and the dogmas and doctrines of earlier centuries, while very good in many ways are often found wanting these days.

Fortunately, there is another way – the way of interiority. It will not replace more traditional spirituality but will integrate it into a more comprehensive understanding and purposefulness, a higher viewpoint.

Many can and do live good lives with a language of metaphor and symbol with a theory level of understanding and believing the words of others. But there are more adventurous, questioning people, who seek more.

5. Interiority, focus on the subject (yourself) in action.

The real drama of our living happens within – in our feelings, experience, insights, judgements, deliberating, deciding, and loving. It is not easy to get our heads around this. We do all those things all the time but seldom advert to the fact. It takes practice, mindfulness of our minds, of self, in a reflective way. Everyone has some sense of the inner life but it can be difficult to get a clear handle on it. Try yoga of the mind and psyche!

‘As we walk these forty days, let us do so with hearts lifted toward the promise of Easter.’ Pat O’Regan. I would qualify this by referring to the ‘reality of Easter’. ‘Easter’ is not a theory; it is a fact most clearly recognised in the real interior world. Easter happens every day.

The movement towards a stronger sense of individuation (not individualism) since the mid-1900s is a society-wide expression of the value of interiority. There is a growing awareness of what it is to be the agent, initiator of what we do and what we are. ‘Much of what we believe to be objectively real we know through subjective experiences. What it feels like to taste a fine wine or to hear and become lost in magnificent music, is subjective. Yet no one doubts that these experiences are real. We encounter objective reality via subjective experiences.’

An inner integration is needed to achieve a wholeness and therefore holiness. The aim is to achieve ‘at-one-ment’ rather than ‘atone-ment.’ It is about transcending our biases and immorality, not about paying for our sins.

The ‘boundary’ is not between physical, biological, ‘out there’ world and ourselves but between me as agent and initiator and everything else – what is experienced, known, chosen and acted on whether that is myself or the rest of the world.

A note on transformation.

The trick here is to look at the whole scene from a personal perspective (‘subjective’ if you like!) rather than looking for a ‘bird’s eye view’ (‘objective’). The transcendence we seek will be found through stretching ourselves to be more than we are, and even more than we thought we could be.

A note on supernatural.

The theory of the supernatural was developed by St Albert the Great (1200-1280), teacher of Thomas Aquinas. It distinguishes natural and supernatural orders; natural – reason and observable laws, supernatural – divine revelation and grace. It is enormously helpful for spirituality but it is still a theory.

‘It is as if there is deep in our souls a spark or ember of love and meaning. It is like we have an inkling of a song in the back of our mind or deep in our psyche somewhere but cannot quite grasp it. We don’t know where it came from or what it relates to. Every now and then it is almost tangible but always remains unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to let it blaze. And let it blaze we must if we are to perceive it, for our perceiving is through our own loving.’

Pay Attention!

Red, orange, green signals, and bright coloured billboards –
 God is down in the streets today.
 Sensational as the Fringe and incredible
 As the soul-worlds acted out by passers-by.

A humble scene in a littered street-corner
 Where no one important ever looked,
 A lonely homeless lady looked up in the face
 Of the One and the Endless, the Mind
 That has stymied the profoundest of mortals.

Coles, school, mosque, harsh McDonalds,
 But mostly small quiet businesses.
 Yet an important occasion as a radio newsreader
 Unknowingly prepared to inform local travellers
 That beautiful, beautiful, beautiful God
 Is breathing love on Marion Road.

With apologies to Patrick Kavanagh