

SA Catholics for an Evolving Church



An Easter Spirituality: Lent 2025 Week 2.

Resurrection, Fulness of Life, Salvation

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, Dark Emu and Tjilbruke's epic journey down the Fleurieu coast, 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 hearts and minds that are aware.

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.

Becoming	Self-Making
<p>I have searched for myself in mirrors, in the echo of my own name, in the footprints I left behind— as if the past could tell me what the present still holds in its hands.</p> <p>I have mistaken stillness for knowing, motion for meaning, but here, in the hush between questions, I find something softer— not an answer, but a pulse.</p> <p>The self is not a destination, not a shape waiting to be drawn. It is water, moving, shifting, reflecting the sky, then the stars, then nothing at all.</p> <p>And still, it is whole. And still, it is mine.</p>	<p>I am not found, I am made. Not written in stone, but carved in motion, a shape shifting under the weight of choice, the press of time, the hands of becoming.</p> <p>I gather the pieces: a dream from yesterday, a lesson from loss, a thread of fire spun from longing— each stitched into the fabric of me.</p> <p>Some days I am clay, soft, waiting, moulded by the wind of want. Other days, I am the sculptor, chisel in hand, carving the lines of my own face.</p> <p>I do not wait to be named. I am the voice that speaks. I am the ink that writes. I am the hands that build.</p> <p>I am becoming— again and again, without end.</p>

Week 2. Change our thinking - Interiority

1. 'When I was a child ... (1Cor 13:11)
2. We are responsible for our judgements and choices.
3. The pattern of human feeling, thinking, deciding and loving is normative for self-making.
4. Meditation and reflection as formation
5. Self-appropriation

1. 'When I was a child ...'

'When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.' Growing up is hard; otherwise everyone would do it.

'When the disciple comes of age, the master disappears.' Diarmuid O'Murchu. Here Diarmuid is reversing a Chinese adage, 'When the disciple comes of age, the master appears'. As I understand it, the second proverb suggests that we find the appropriate teacher when we work out what we want. The first suggests that we can move beyond a teacher's instructions when we learn how to think for ourselves. This does not mean that we do not continue to learn through our interactions with others but that we are primarily self-directive and guide our own searching.

The focus here is not so much on the conclusions we come to (Joan is a real friend) or decisions we make (who to vote for) but more on how we come to those conclusions or make those decisions

Our conscious spirituality is a reflection and expression of our deepest desires.
Our actions and behaviour reveal the hidden aspirations of our hearts.

2. The pattern of feeling, thinking, deciding and loving is normative for intentional self-making.

Some of us are familiar with See, Judge, Act as a method or tool for social analysis. We use it to get an understanding of a problem or issue, to work out what needs to be done about it and then how to deal with it or resolve it, etc. The method works well. The focus is usually on an issue or problem.

I would like to shift the focus to what we are doing when we are 'seeing, 'judging' and 'acting'. What is going on in us? These are activities that we are doing. What exactly are we doing? We are agents, doers, subjects of operations and activities. The reason why *See, Judge, Act Method* is so successful is that it is the basic pattern of human activities of experience, knowing and deciding

The following is a more complete distinguishing of the features of interior activity.

Psyche. The secret, unexpressed, even unformulated feelings, dreams and hopes we have. Fears and anxieties? Inhibitions. Topics we do not want to think or talk about – emotional relationships, phobias, suppression, repression, The awareness that comes to us from deep recesses of our selves. When you feel, 'This is right for me' without having a clear sense of where the conviction came from. Dreams emerge from this unconscious or semi-conscious realm within.

Experiencing. Noticing the sensations that come through our senses – seeing, hearing, smelling, Touching – and our inner experiences of happiness, regret, sorrow, anxiety, etc. Feeling cold! Pain! Noticing clouds! What is happening

Knowing. Insight, getting the point, forming concepts, Understanding clouds or how water becomes steam. Asking open questions – what, why, how, who, where, etc. leads the way. What is this pain? Why do clouds float in the sky?

Judging. Checking the truth or reality of your understanding, insights and concepts. Is there enough evidence to support my bright idea. Am I correct. Is it true? Is it a fact? Asking closed questions leads the way – yes or no? Is this pain due to arthritis? Are clouds really lighter than air?

Deciding (choosing). Committing to a course of action. I am going to the doctor. I will take an umbrella today. It involves deliberation on possible actions and discernment of values, what is worthwhile for me and the common good.

Falling in love. This goes beyond conscious decisions. It happens to us. I often follows a series of deliberate decisions but when it happens, it takes us to a new level.

With understanding, getting an insight, forming a concept, we transition from tangible, measurable to intangible, mental, ‘spiritual’.

The point here is to get a sense of the range of activities we engage in, to notice that even in casual everyday behaviour, our inner lives are quite complex. No need to try remembering the details. This activity is self-making. We are who we are primarily because of our experiences, insights, judgements and decisions.

These activities are conditioned by circumstances, personal history, influences, habits and biases. By understanding how our thinking is patterned or confused and choices are genuine or compromised, we can gain control over our making of ourselves.

3. We are responsible for our judgements and choices.

Individuation is part of growing up. As we gradually take charge of our own lives, we separate from the group in some ways but being aware of a maturing in our thinking and decision-making, we can relate in more adult, more responsible ways.

Intellectual (or knowing) maturity consists in checking the evidence or facts for what we accept as true or real.

Moral maturity consists in accepting responsibility for our choices

A note on believing

Believing is grounded in a decision to believe. I decide to believe because –

The speaker is credible – others have assured me said or what she said in the past turned out to true.

What she is saying makes sense.

She showed she is a good person by her caring, generous actions so I believe her.

I love her and could not imagine her being deceitful.

By far the greater part of what we 'know' is in fact belief. Do you know or do you believe that Australia is an island, that Neil Armstrong walked on the moon? Do you believe or know from your own experience that Alice Springs lies between Adelaide and Darwin?

Decisions to believe are critical and central to our knowledge of just about everything.

Who do I believe or What do I believe, accept as true

Obviously, we cannot check out the truth of everything for ourselves but we must accept responsibility for deciding who and what we believe.

We learn, understand, practice how to live and envision what this living entails now, not by focusing on a life hereafter but by living life now.

4. Meditation and reflection as formation

It takes a period of reflection and introspection (short or long) to become familiar with our own interiority. Most of us in our groups would have a fair bit of experience in this area.

In the past we often comforted ourselves by thinking there was an 'authority' who could declare the final word on just about everything, whether it was a parent, Jesus, the church or someone else.

Becoming an adult means we grow beyond that phase of life. Even with all our shortcomings and vulnerabilities, personal integrity demands that we identify and stay faithful to the deep desire at the core of our being.

For most of us of a certain age, we were imbued with and formed by a traditional spirituality over many years and in environments where it was normal. Three responses are possible for Catholics who now find it inadequate.

1. Persist with it in the face of its shortcomings
2. Give it up as valueless
3. Work out what is inadequate and what is valuable and develop a new spirituality fit for the times.

Number 3. is the sensible and responsible option but it takes commitment, effort and perseverance – and frustration. We must live our own lives while respecting the quality of mentors, guides and authorities. As Karl Rahner said: The Catholic of the future will be a mystic (thinking, reflecting and taking responsibility).

5. Self-appropriation

Traditionally we based our knowledge, belief and decisions on how to life well on criteria and principles set out by others. That worked for us until we found ourselves in a different world.

Australians are now better educated, more accustomed to making decisions on how to live, form relationships, take agency in their lives. Authorities once believed to be reliable, trustworthy and sure guides are now seen to be human like the rest of us and as liable to misunderstandings and weaknesses. We now look for criteria and values within, through our own experiences, insights and deliberations. We are more likely to consult our friends, peers and secular professionals than religious authorities.

Build the house of interiority and furnish it.

Open up the place and experience of interiority. People walk about with their own worlds. See the people at Marion. Imagine what they are thinking about, what is going on in their lives.

That in the end, I may find
Something not sold for a penny
In the slums of mind

For a New Beginning

In out-of-the-way places of the heart, where my thoughts never think to wander,

This beginning has been quietly forming, waiting until I was ready to emerge.

For a long time, it has watched my desire, feeling the emptiness growing inside me,

Noticing how I willed myself on, still unable to leave what I had outgrown.

It watched me play with the seduction of safety and the grey promises that sameness whispered,

Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent, wondered would I always live like this.

Then the delight, when my courage kindled, and out I stepped onto new ground,

My eyes young again with energy and dream, a path of plenitude opening before me.

Though my destination is not yet clear I can trust the promise of this opening;

Unfurl myself into the grace of a beginning that is at one with my life's desire.

Awaken, my spirit, to adventure! Hold nothing back! Learn to find ease in risk!

Soon I will be at home in a new rhythm, for my soul senses the world that awaits me.

John O'Donohue (Adapted)

Paul reminisces

Sitting at the back of the ship, feeling the wind in his face and moving with the sway of the tide, Paul seemed to be away in another world. In fact, he was deep in his own thoughts, that intimate world that is unique for each of us. He was finally on his way to Rome, the centre of the great empire that had been the dominating and only political, economic and exploitative context of his life. This was not how he had imagined it would be, a prisoner being taken for trial by imperial authorities. 'It is what it is,' he thought, 'I have been hauled up before other courts and I have often faced death. That time in Lycaonia was the worst. I really thought I was a dead man then.' After a moment's reflection, he continued to himself: 'That's when I realised I had no fear of dying. But I felt I had so much I still wanted to do, life beckoned.'

Paul's musings then turned to that day on the Damascus road. He had left Jerusalem with every intention of chasing down and killing every follower of the cult of Jesus, the Nazarean. The movement was threatening to set Jew against Jew and corrupt the religion he loved. It made no sense, that the wandering preacher who was executed, rightly, for leading people astray and causing trouble even in the Temple itself, was somehow still alive! But there was something about it that niggled, even keeping him awake at night sometimes. He knew that the dead all rise again at the end times but this was different. Or was it? 'As I was thinking through this on my way to Damascus' he reflected, 'it struck me that this was not different. If Jesus was to rise again at the Parousia, he must be alive (risen) in some way in the meantime. The shock of that insight nearly killed me. I was sure I could see Jesus looking at me. I fell down in the dirt and had to be led by the hand for the rest of the journey. I could not focus on anything and my friends told me later I was talking gibberish.'

Even now on his way to Rome, Paul had trouble understanding what had happened that day. The conviction of a life larger than human death became the foundation of his faith and preaching. After a short while in Damascus, he felt he had to take time out to work through the implications of his transformed perspective so he went walkabout in the Arabian desert. It was three years before he went to Jerusalem and met with Peter and James.

Looking across the rolling sea, he felt a shiver go through him as he wondered at how that one experience of a revelation of Jesus Christ had become the foundation and motivation for his life ever since.