

## Pondering God's purpose

Have you ever experienced something that becomes more absorbing the more you spend time with it? Maybe it's a piece of music, a novel, a spot in the park. You could watch that movie a million times. The bible is similar. It was written to be pondered; it is 'meditation literature'.

For example, there is a verse tucked away in today's second reading from the Letter of James. In the version of the bible that I am reading (NRSV, Catholic Edition), it says: *In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.*

Let's ponder it, break it down into its parts and see how they are connected:

- (a) In fulfillment of his own purpose
- (b) he gave us birth by the word of truth
- (c) so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

God has a purpose, and he acts. A carpenter has the plan in his mind, for example, for a beautiful wooden chair. He executes that plan by gathering, cutting, and shaping the pieces of wood and then fitting them together.

- (a) is the general description: God has a purpose to fulfill;
- (b) is the action: he executes this purpose by giving birth to us 'by the word of truth'.

What about (c)?

The logical connection between (c) and the preceding phrases is revealed in its first two words: 'so that'. God does

something. Why does he do anything? Because he has a reason to. He has a purpose. So (c) specifies what remains general in (a): God's 'purpose' named in (a) is described in (c), accomplished through (b). He 'gives us birth' (the action) *so that* or 'in order to' make us 'first fruits'.

In other words: God's plan is to make us 'first fruits of his creatures' by giving birth to us 'by the word of truth'. The language is strange and wonderful. What does it mean?

Consider this: (b) 'birth by the word of truth' is Early Church language for baptism. Birth is a metaphor: at baptism we are born again, not into this world but out of it, into the new world. Jesus died and rose into 'new life' - eternal life - and in baptism we share in his new birth *in advance of* our own physical death. We share in the life of the world to come - eternal life - *in advance of* the end of this world. (c) is the effect of (b), our baptism, realising (a) God's purpose.

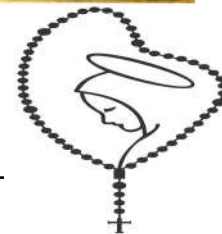
Baptism makes us 'first fruits of his creatures'. The 'first fruits' is an agricultural metaphor. Early Christians knew that the world since Jesus's resurrection is in 'harvest time'. When someone enters the Church through baptism, God is gathering the earliest ripened fruit in advance of the ultimate harvest, when he will transform the whole universe on the model of Jesus's resurrection.

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## MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP PARISH

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**22nd SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME**  
**Saturday 28 & Sunday 29 August 2021**

**ST. MONICA,**  
*pray for us!*



### Feast of St Monica & St Augustine

*August 27th & 28th*

Born in the 4th century in North Africa to Christian parents, Monica's patience and kindness helped to bring her husband's family to faith in Christ. After many years of wandering in the places of pleasure and privilege of the world, her son, Augustine returned to the Christian faith and became a bishop and Doctor of the Church.

**Blessed St Monica, mother of St. Augustine,**  
**we give thanks to our Father in Heaven**  
**who looked with mercy upon your tears**  
**over your wayward son.**

**His conversion and heroic sanctification**  
**were the fruit of your prayers.**

**Dear St. Monica,**  
**we now ask you to pray with us**  
**for all those sons and daughters**  
**that have wandered away from God,**  
**and to add your prayers to those of all mothers**  
**who are worried over their children.**  
**Pray also for us that,**  
**following your example, we may,**  
**in the company of our children,**  
**one day enjoy the eternal vision of our Father in**  
**Heaven. Amen.**



*St. Augustine,*  
**PRAY FOR US!**

Dear Parishioners,

This is the first time that I write to you as Parish Priest of both our Parishes.

To each of you, in whatever situation you find yourself, I bring the love and support of your parish.

I do hope you and all those in your bubble are doing alright during level 4 lockdown. It is very challenging to work from home, plus have home schooling for our students, plus care of all in the bubble. I hope, too, that your bubble provides some support and enjoyment.

Lots of encouragement to get through and to make the most of it. If anyone needs help, please reach out. As well as ringing the parish, your newsletter has a list of places to call.

All of us need to keep reaching out to care for others. It's a simple thing to ring someone every day.

I would like to update you on a few things:

First, the impact of our Covid-19 Lockdown.

- Bishop Pat has ordered that all Churches in the Diocese be closed during level 4 lockdown. Look at it positively — it's also an opportunity to deepen your prayer life. Not only do we have a beautiful harbour, but Jesus tells us that when we go into our room, "Your Father who is (there) in secret will hear you".
- You can find the daily Mass readings, including the Sunday readings at <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/083020.cfm>
- It is a great time to start family prayer if you are not already praying as a family.

Second, Sunday Mass continues through Shine TV at 2.00 pm on free to air Channel 25 or Sky TV 201. You can also stream from their website.

Some Parishes also are streaming daily Mass. For example, Pakuranga streams daily. Howick does Friday 9.14, Saturday 5.30pm; Sunday 9.30am.

You can view my Sunday homily here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfWsFXiJSK4>, as well as on Facebook and Instagram. Akata Siale will also put up a hymn for you.

Third, your Parish Councils met last Monday by Zoom to discuss where we go with Mass times. James Bergin and Helen Partington and Loy Correa presented an amazing PowerPoint Four models of Mass times were discussed, and participation was excellent. At our next meeting we will narrow the models down to two, after which I will make a decision.

Fourth, our world is caught up in tragedy— both near and far. If you are in a position to help, financial support for our needy parishioners is welcome, through your Parish. Support for Afghanistan and Haiti can be made through Caritas, the Bishops' Aid agency.

God bless us all!!

*Fr John Dunn*

**On-line Rosary (contact [anita@stpatricks.org.nz](mailto:anita@stpatricks.org.nz) to join) at 9am daily with the Cathedral of St Patrick's and St Joseph**



**"O Lord, who may abide in your tent?"**  
*Psalm 15*



**Next Week: 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time 4 & 5 Sep 2021**

**1. Isaiah 35:4-7 2. James 2:1-5 3. Gospel Mark 7:31-37**

**We remember in prayer our parishioners whose anniversaries occur during August:**

Paul Krause, Mary Sullivan, Tony Lammert, Alice Daly, Cuthbert John Ryan, Cornelia Lemon, Margaret Graham, Victor Davis, Denis Culpan, Sean Kelly, John Turich, Doreen Sweeney, Jim Talor, Christopher Hughes