

# PARISH OF ASCOT VALE

ST MARY'S CHURCH, 123 ST LEONARDS ROAD, ASCOT VALE  
ST MARGARET'S CHURCH, BARB STREET, MARIBYRNONG

Parish Priest:	Rev Fr Justin Ford
Assistant Priest / Lithuanian Chaplain:	Rev Fr Joseph Deveikis
Presbytery / Parish Office:	123 St Leonards Rd, Ascot Vale (Postal: PO Box 468 Ascot Vale 3032)
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Principal, St Mary's School:	Mr Paul Hogan T: 9370 1194
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## Weekend Mass Times

### Saturday Vigil:

6.00pm St Mary's

### Sunday:

8.30am St Margaret's

10.30am St Mary's

6.00pm St Mary's (Spanish)

Live streaming of our 10:30

Sunday Mass is continuing,  
accessible on our parish website.

## Weekday Mass Times

**Mon** 10.00am St Mary's

**Tue** 9.00am St Mary's

**Wed** 9.00am St Mary's  
7.00pm St Mary's

**Thu** 9.00am St Mary's

**Fri** 9.15am St Mary's

**Sat** 9.30am St Mary's

## Reconciliation (Confession)

### Saturday

10.00–10.30am St Mary's

5.30–5.45pm St Mary's

## Eucharistic Adoration

**Tue** 9.30–10.30am St Mary's

**Sat** 10.00–11.00am St Mary's

## Baptisms at St Mary's

Group baptisms recommence  
on 7 March: 12:00 every Sunday  
till 27 June. Until March, we are  
having baptisms for individual  
babies, with up to two  
ceremonies every weekend.

Baptism Information Sessions  
are held in St Mary's Church at  
7:30 pm on the first Thursday of  
each month. Those interested in  
the baptism of their child should  
attend one of these sessions.

## Weddings at St Mary's

For information on weddings  
please ring the parish office.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – 24 January 2021

*Today we follow on from last week's reflection on the role of the human body in our concept of the nature of the human person and of the human good. Understanding 'philosophical anthropology' [the study of man] in depth is challenging, but it casts a bright light on the reasons for various conflicts and tensions between Catholic teaching and some of the unexamined assumptions of contemporary culture.*

### Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Body and Soul but Truly One"

**364** The human body shares in the dignity of "the image of God": it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit: (Cf. *1 Cor* 6:19-20; 15:44-45)

Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator. For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honour since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day. (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) 14; cf. *Dan* 3:57-80)

**365** The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the "form" of the body: (Cf. Ecumenical Council of Vienne (1312): DS 902) i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.

**366** The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God – it is not "produced" by the parents – and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection. (Cf. Pope Venerable Pius XII, *Humani generis* (1950): DS 3896; Pope Saint Paul VI, *Credo of the People of God* (1968) 8; Fifth Lateran Ecumenical Council (1513): DS 1440)

### The soul as the 'form' of the body:

*What is a human being really? Are spirit and body separate, 'ghosts hovering inside machines'? How does the soul relate to philosophy and science? (And could cats go to heaven?)*

Last week we looked at how the human body is not a mere material piece of property 'owned' by a person, external to his or her 'real self' (supposedly maybe the consciousness, or the spiritual soul). Rather, the body is *part of the essence* of the human person: my 'real self' is a unity of body and spiritual soul. "The body can never be reduced to mere matter: it is a *spiritualised body*, just as man's spirit is so closely united to the body that he can be described as *an embodied spirit*." (Pope Saint John Paul II, Letter to Families *Gratissimam Sane* (1994) 19)

One consequence is that if I choose to destroy my bodily life, or override or manipulate my biological sex or its associated self-transcending procreative potentiality, I am violating my own person and self – not just 'disposing of my property as I see fit'. I am degrading my body from the status of personal subject with inherent laws, and treating it as though it were just a physical object, raw material for my wishes. In truth, genuine love and respect for ourselves and others must harmonise with this real human identity, the body-spirit person – rather than the incoherent 'identity' of a disembodied consciousness no one has ever met.

The Church teaches that the spiritual soul is the *form* of the body. 'Form' here does not mean 'geometrical shape'. In the explanation of Saint Thomas Aquinas (derived from Aristotle) the 'form' of a material entity is that component of it which determines it to be *the specific type of thing* it is. Not all details of St Thomas' thought are binding on Catholics.

However, he does give us a compelling way of understanding Catholic teaching in these matters. On his view, every material substance (entity) has two basic components, matter and form, that go together to make that one entity. Matter is an indeterminate component, with no particular nature of its own, whereas form is what gives the matter a basic determinate nature – say, an electron, or an oxygen molecule, or an oak tree, or a horse, or a human being, as the case may be. Form is not itself something spatially extended (and so cannot truly be ‘pictured’). Rather, it is present in its totality in each part of the extended matter, giving that matter its specific laws. (Neither can we picture ‘matter without form’: we always picture and encounter only unified composites of the two.) Multiple forms of the same type can only be differentiated by being related to matter having different spatial locations.

A special type of form is a soul, which is the form of a *living* body. (For philosophy, the term ‘soul’ has no special connection with religion. It translates the Latin *anima*, from which we derive ‘animal’ and ‘animated’.) So for St Thomas, animals and plants have (non-spiritual) souls, that make them unified living beings of particular species. (Again, for Catholics this view is permitted but not binding.) These souls, being non-spiritual, do not act or exist in their own right but depend on the soul-body composite as the basic entity; and therefore (St Thomas *presumes*) cease to exist at bodily death when that composite disintegrates. [Or could God then miraculously sustain some of these animal souls?]

The human soul *does* survive death because unlike the other souls, it is also a *spirit*. ‘Spirit’ is an entity whose existence transcends matter. Only such an entity is capable of rational thought employing abstract general categories, since this activity (it can be shown) is only made possible by the presence in the intellect of pure forms (i.e. general or universal ideas) separated (‘abstracted’) from individualising matter. If spirit is taken away, logic and science become impossible. Since human beings are capable of rational thought [and consequently, free choice] they must have a spiritual component, which can only receive existence directly from God. There is therefore no reason why the disintegration of the body would affect the existence of the spirit, since bodily death does not impede the direct creative influx of existence to the spirit from God. And as non-extended, spirit cannot itself decompose.

But the human spirit is also soul and form: that by virtue of which the body to which it is united is living and human. This is how the ‘interaction’ of spirit and body is explained. Otherwise, no philosophical solution is available for how in our unified consciousness there is both sense-knowledge of individual material realities and spiritual-rational knowledge of universal truths. From the start, the human self is known to be not just a spiritual reality, but also a physical reality with sense organs. The conscious self is not just a mind or spirit somehow ‘floating’ inside the body or brain. Rather (given certain pre-conditions, in the brain for example) the unified spiritualised body is *of itself* conscious – contrary to a misguided instinct deep in our culture that no bodily entity is conscious just by its nature.

The current ‘western’ way of viewing material reality arose in the 1600s, when the Aristotelian viewpoint was rejected. Aristotelian *science* was indeed inadequate in various respects; but the deeper *philosophy* of Aristotle and St

Thomas was never truly refuted, and in fact gives a much more complete and coherent view even of how science works than the 17<sup>th</sup>-century philosophies that replaced it.

For Aristotle and Aquinas, the material world (at least the living world) is basically a set of larger-scale unified entities, such as human beings, dogs and cats; rather than, as later scientists typically conceived it, something that was basically explained by understanding its tiniest parts, then just adding them all together. Now, that manner of seeing things as an interacting collection of tiny particles is not wrong, and has been very powerful. The problem comes when one makes that the only way, or the basic way, one views all reality – in particular human reality. If our bodies are *most basically* a ‘collection’ of particles, then we could not possibly also be truly *unified* bodily entities (with the unified conscious activity we experience of both sensation and rationality, that underpins our knowledge) – the ‘more real’ entities would be the individual fundamental particles.

But in an Aristotelian perspective, the particles themselves, while following their own laws on the microscopic level, get their most basic metaphysical identity from being a part of a larger-scale holistic entity (such as a human being, with a form of its own to unify the organic substance). (An analogy that might help us understand is the hand, which is more basically a part of my whole self (and serves my whole self) than being a complete entity in its own right.)

When deterministic Newtonian physics was thought to govern all matter, everything was seemingly rigidly fixed by the laws governing the tiniest particles. It thus seemed that for forms such as the soul to make any difference (and in particular for free will to operate and make a difference) these rigid deterministic laws of physics would need to be in some sense ‘broken’ within the human person.

To say that the spiritual soul could thus ‘override’ the laws of physics (like, in a way, God himself working a miracle) is a defensible position, especially since we already know from direct experience and from philosophy that free will does in fact exist. However, with the discovery of indeterministic quantum physics, a more pleasing theory is possible. According to the standard interpretation of quantum physics, the actions of the tiniest particles are not fixed in advance, but (within certain limitations) can take up various different states. Thus from what the state of things was at some earlier time, it is not fully determined what the later state will be. This indeterminacy makes it possible for the soul to exercise a causal influence without ‘breaking’ any of the laws governing the particles.

In the human body for example, quantum physics allows for the particles in the body to exist in a huge range of combined states from one moment to the next. (And science shows how tiny microscopic changes can in some systems propagate to the point of making major differences at a macroscopic level.) The form (which is united with each particle, conferring on it its deepest identity as part of a larger whole) further limits and channels those quantum possibilities, so that the physical state taken up in the human body will simultaneously satisfy both the quantum laws and the requirements of the form (in particular the decisions made in virtue of free will). Thus a holistic approach that recognises the forms need not be in conflict with any scientific laws: they operate on different levels.

## **SAINT OF THE WEEK 28 January : St Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) – Priest and Doctor of the Church**

Arguably the greatest theological and philosophical genius in history, St Thomas Aquinas (of the family of the Counts of Aquino) was born about 1225 at the family castle at Roccasecca near Naples, then in the Kingdom of Sicily. Aged five he was sent to nearby Monte Cassino, the ancient monastery of St Benedict (480-547); and from 1239 he studied at the University of Naples. Expected to one day become abbot at Monte Cassino himself, he dismayed his family by wishing instead to join the new order of friars established by St Dominic (1170-1221). This was considered radical – the life of the Dominican and Franciscan friars, dwelling in the towns and begging for their upkeep, was a departure from the ancient tradition of monasticism – and in 1244, as Thomas was journeying to Paris to take up his studies as a Dominican, his brothers kidnapped him and imprisoned him at Roccasecca. In 1245 his mother connived at his escape. As a Dominican student, he studied under St Albert the Great in Paris then Cologne.

He was ordained priest in Cologne Cathedral between 1248 and 1252. In 1257 he became professor at the University of Paris, later lecturing at the papal court at Anagni, Orvieto, Rome and Viterbo, and at the Universities of Bologna and of Naples. With St Albert, he integrated into Catholic thought the vast intellectual system of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC). St Augustine (354-430) was naturally another major influence, and Aquinas' writings also connect with the medieval Islamic and Jewish Aristotelians, and indirectly with Aristotle's teacher, Plato (d. c. 348 BC). St

Thomas' work is the pinnacle of the great intellectual movement of the Middle Ages known as 'scholasticism'; his own philosophical and theological adherents, past and present, are known as 'Thomists'.

Among numerous writings, his masterpiece is the *Summa Theologiae*, with its 3000 'Questions' and logical answers to 10000 'Objections'. His 'Five Ways' of proving God's existence are much commented on, but he influenced every part of theology and philosophy. Other works include *On Being and Essence*, *On Truth*, the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, and commentaries on Scripture and on the works of Aristotle. Pope Urban IV had him compose the original liturgy for the feast of Corpus Christi, with its Sequence *Lauda Sion* and the Eucharistic hymns *Pange lingua* (*Tantum ergo*) and *Panis Angelicus*.

In 1273, St Thomas had a mystical experience while celebrating Mass: 'Such things have been revealed to me that all that I have written seems to me as so much straw.' He died on 7 March 1274 at the Cistercian Abbey at Fossanuova south of Rome, on his way to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Lyons. Pope John XXII canonised him in 1323, and in 1567 St Pius V named him a Doctor of the Church. He is known as 'the Angelic Doctor' and 'the Common Doctor'. In 1879 Pope Leo XIII launched a new focus on Aquinas, and in 1880 made him patron of all Catholic universities and schools. Popes since then have repeatedly extolled him, and St John Paul II used him in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* ('Faith and Reason') as prime example of the harmony of faith and reason.

*Among the Scholastic Doctors, the chief and master of all towers Thomas Aquinas... rightly and deservedly esteemed the special bulwark and glory of the Catholic faith...*

*Reason, borne on the wings of Thomas to its human height, can scarcely rise higher, while faith could scarcely expect more or stronger aids from reason than those which she has already obtained through Thomas.*

**Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Aeterni Patris* (1879)**

*The Magisterium has repeatedly acclaimed the merits of Saint Thomas' thought and made him the guide and model for theological studies...The Magisterium's intention has always been to show how Saint Thomas is an authentic model for all who seek the truth. In his thinking,*

*the demands of reason and the power of faith found the most elevated synthesis ever attained by human thought...*

*In him, the Church's Magisterium has seen and recognised the passion for truth; and, precisely because it stays consistently within the horizon of universal, objective and transcendent truth, his thought scales heights unthinkable to human intelligence.*

*Rightly, then, he may be called an "apostle of the truth". Looking unreservedly to truth, the realism of Thomas could recognise the objectivity of truth and produce not merely a philosophy of "what seems to be" but a philosophy of "what is".*

**Pope Saint John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* (1998)**

**VATICAN II, Decree on Priestly Training (1965)** – 'In order that they may illumine the mysteries of salvation as completely as possible, the students should learn to penetrate them more deeply with the help of speculation, under the guidance of St. Thomas.'

**CODE OF CANON LAW (1983): The Formation of Clerics – Canon 252 §3:** 'There are to be classes in dogmatic theology, always grounded in the written word of God together with sacred tradition; through these, students are to learn to penetrate more intimately the mysteries of salvation, especially with St. Thomas as a teacher.'

'Everything belonging to a being is either caused by the principles of the being's nature, as the ability to laugh in man, or comes to it through an extrinsic principle, as light in the air from the influence of the sun. But existence itself cannot be caused by the very form or quiddity of a thing; I mean that it cannot be caused as by an efficient cause, since then something would be its own cause and bring itself into existence; but this is not possible. Therefore everything that is such that its existence is other than its nature must have its existence from another. And because everything that exists through another is led back to that which exists through itself as to its first cause, there must be one thing which is the cause of existence in all things because it alone is the act-of-being; otherwise there would be an infinite series of causes, since everything which is not existence-only would have a cause of its existence, as was said. Hence it is evident that a spirit is form-and-existence, and that it has its existence from the first being, which is existence-only, and this is the first cause, which is God.' (From St Thomas' early masterpiece of metaphysics, *On Being and Essence* (1252-56))

## **3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR B – READINGS**

### **ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

O sing a new song to the Lord;  
sing to the Lord, all the earth.  
In his presence are majesty and splendour,  
strength and honour in his holy place.

### **FIRST READING**

*Jon 3:1-5, 10*

*A reading from the prophet Jonah*

The word of the Lord was addressed to Jonah: 'Up!' he said 'Go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach to them as I told you to.' Jonah set out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was a city great beyond compare: it took three days to cross it. Jonah went on into the city, making a day's journey. He preached in these words, 'Only forty days more and Nineveh is going to be destroyed.' And the people of Nineveh believed in God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least.

God saw their efforts to renounce their evil behaviour. And God relented: he did not inflict on them the disaster which he had threatened.

*The word of the Lord.*

### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

*Ps 24*

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

1. Lord, make me know your ways.

Lord, teach me your paths.

Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:

for you are God my saviour. (R.)

2. Remember your mercy, Lord,  
and the love you have shown from of old.

In your love remember me,  
because of your goodness, O Lord. (R.)

3. The Lord is good and upright.  
He shows the path to those who stray,  
he guides the humble in the right path;  
he teaches his way to the poor. (R.)

### **SECOND READING**

*1 Cor 7:29-31*

*A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians*

Brothers, our time is growing short. Those who have wives should live as though they had none, and those who mourn should live as though they had nothing to mourn for; those who are enjoying life should live as

though there were nothing to laugh about; those whose life is buying things should live as though they had nothing of their own; and those who have to deal with the world should not become engrossed in it. I say this because the world as we know it is passing away.

*The word of the Lord.*

### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*Mk 1:15*

Alleluia, alleluia! The kingdom of God is near:  
believe the Good News! Alleluia!

### **GOSPEL**

*Mk 1:14-20*

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark*

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come' he said 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'

As he was walking along by the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you into fishers of men.' And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending their nets. He called them at once and, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

### **MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION**

We proclaim your Death, O Lord,  
and profess your Resurrection, until you come again.

### **COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;  
whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,  
but will have the light of life.

### **SPIRITUAL COMMUNION**

*(for those unable to receive sacramentally)*

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

### **Weddings at St Mary's**

We congratulate **Sarah Pizzoferrato & Matthew Nicol** and **Caroline Wood & Christos Argiropoulos**, who were married at St Mary's on Saturday.

### **St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal**

You are encouraged to donate, either by using the envelopes at the church doors, by calling 13 18 12, or online at [vinnies.org.au](http://vinnies.org.au) (A button on the home page of our parish website will take you to the donation page.)

### **Recently Deceased:**

Rocco Trimboli; Caterina Pollino

### **Anniversaries:**

Frank Hillas; Julio Fonte; Kiara DeSouza; Rev Fr Bernard O'Brien omi; Danny Papal;  
Rosario Portolesi

### **Feast Days:**

**25 January:** Feast of the Conversion of St Paul      **26 January:** Australia Day  
**27 January:** Sts Timothy and Titus; St Angela Merici      **28 January:** St Thomas Aquinas

### **Readings Next Week:**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time:** Deut 18:15-20; 1 Cor 7:32-35; Mk 1:21-28

**St Vincent de Paul Helpline: 1800 305 330, Monday – Friday, 10am – 3pm**