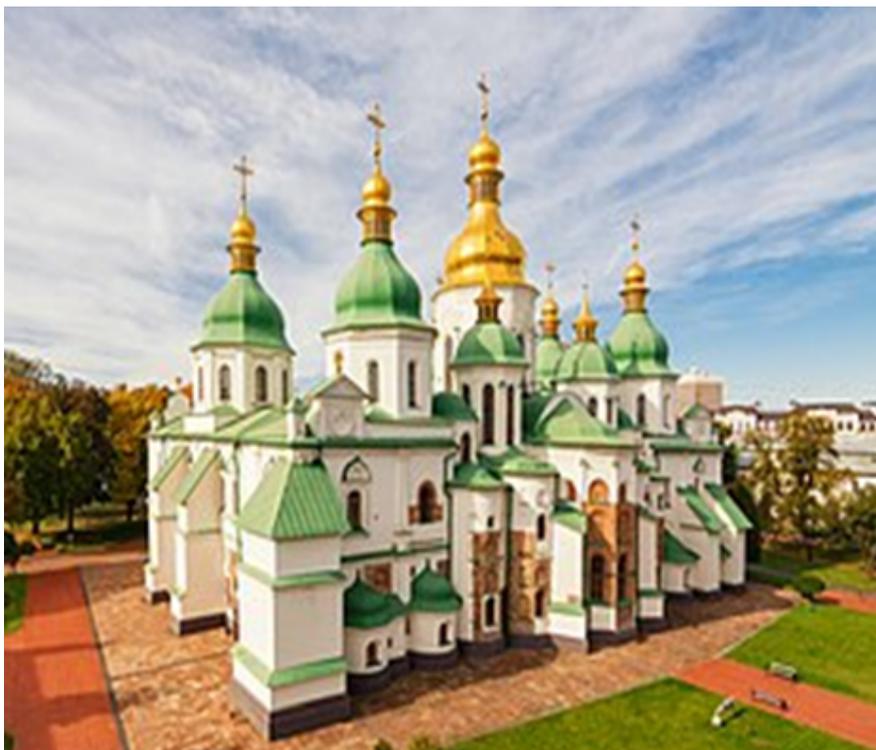


St Thomas Parish Messenger

Winter 2022



St Basil's Cathedral, Moscow



St Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv, Ukraine

Re The cover of this edition of the Messenger

Reverend Doctor Noel Cox has written an article for this magazine, about the present war between Russia and the Ukraine. It seemed appropriate therefore to include a picture of the Cathedrals in Moscow and Kyiv on the cover of this issue of the Messenger – if for no other purpose than to highlight the idiocy of two Christian countries being at war with each other.

In the Ukraine, 80% of the population adhere to the Orthodox Church, and 10% are Catholic. In Russia, 40% are Orthodox, 6% are other Christian, and 25% claim to believe but have no adherence to any religion.

In 2011 I was fortunate enough to visit Moscow and St Petersburg, including the Red Square, Moscow, which surrounds St Basil's Cathedral. It is a truly magnificent building. Regrettably I have not seen St Sophia's Cathedral, but from this Google photo it looks beautiful also.

Tony Poole, Editor

Just Wars

Reverend Doctor Noel Cox, Priest in Charge

Jesus tells us to love one another, including those who would do us harm. But it is not always easy to do so. This is as true at national and international level as it is in our daily lives. Look for example, at Ukraine. If you were Ukrainian, would you be able to love Russian soldiers who had bombed your town? Or those who had shot your husband, wife or child? The answer most likely is “no”. But that does not necessarily make you a bad Christian. Nor can a state be criticised for fighting a war, at least in limited circumstances.

Whilst parts of the *Bible* hint at ethical behaviour in war and concepts of just cause, the most systematic exposition is given by Saint Thomas Aquinas (drawing on writings by Augustine and others). In the *Summa Theologiae* (c.1269-74), Aquinas presents the general outline of what became known as the just war tradition. He discusses not only the justification of war (“jus ad bellum”), but also the kinds of activity that are permissible in war (“jus in bello”). Aquinas’s thoughts become the model for later commentators to expand upon. In the twentieth century it underwent a revival, mainly in response to the invention of nuclear weaponry and other factors including American involvement in the Vietnam war. More recently it was revisited due to the Iraq war, but so far without a clear outcome. Yet some wars are clearly simply wrong, unjust as it were.

The just war tradition deals with the historical body of rules or agreements applied (or at least existing) in various wars through the ages. Historically the just war tradition developed through the interaction between two countries within the same cultural environment – primarily European states. It was therefore arguably less applicable where there was a great disparity between combatants, as in the nineteenth century colonial wars, for instance. But it most certainly does apply as between two European states, both of which are internationally recognised as independent and sovereign.

Rules have developed over time to control and regulate war, and the tendency over the past few centuries has been to limit the freedom of sovereign states to levy war.

The United Nations Charter in particular, designed to promote peace, enshrined a growing tendency to prohibit all wars not waged in self-defence, though it does allow collective self-defence, and the restoration of international peace. This left little room for the “just war”, a concept which has nevertheless increasingly once again reared its head in the law on the use of force.

Going back to basics, wars were allowed, in the view of Aquinas, only as a last resort. Additionally, three elements must be present, or it is sinful. First, the war must be waged upon the command of a rightful sovereign. Second, the war needs to be waged for just cause, on account of some wrong the attacked have committed. Thirdly, belligerents must have the right intent, namely to promote good and to avoid evil. All three elements have to be present. Thus, not every exercise of military force is lawful, whether it is called a “special mission” or an invasion.

Russia attacked Ukraine for contested – and largely discredited – geopolitical reasons. Put simply, a country cannot lawfully do that, because it amounts to an offensive war, which the UN Charter outlaws. But more fundamentally, it fails two of the three elements of the just war test; sovereign authority, just cause, right intention. Vladimir Putin may have power to command Russian troops to invade Ukraine. But there was no wrong committed – or threatened – by Ukraine which would justify war. It must also seriously be doubted that he was motivated by a desire to promote good and to avoid evil. The invasion certainly was not an action of last resort.

Why write about this in a parish magazine, you may wonder? Well, it would be simplistic to say that politics and religion don’t overlap, or that church leaders ought to keep out of politics. What Christian leader – lay or church – should or could stay silent in the face of unlawful war (or any other egregious wrong for that matter)? Alas, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, has thrown his weight behind the “special mission” in Ukraine. Fortunately, Anglican leaders, like the great majority of church leaders worldwide, thought otherwise.

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, described the invasion as an “act of great evil”, and Archbishops Don Tamihere and Philip Richardson, of our own Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, noted that the invasion “flies in the face of the Jesus-values of peace-making. In this instance, those values call us to stand against violence and stand with the oppressed.”

We try to love those who would do wrong, but that does not mean that we have to approve of their actions, or be indifferent to them. We should follow the Lord’s example, and condemn wrongdoing rather than the wrongdoer. Jesus said, “go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). Let us pray for the peace of the world, and especially for those who bring war, death and destruction, that their hearts and minds may be changed.

Trinity Sunday – A Lay Person’s View

Tony Poole

Sunday 12 June was Trinity Sunday. Trinity Sunday is widely celebrated in our Churches. It falls on the first Sunday after Pentecost; Pentecost is the 50th day after Easter, so Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday after the 50th day after Easter!

Trinity Sunday celebrates the concept of One God, in three parts - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This understanding of the functions of God is sometimes referred to as “The Triune God,” or “God the Trinity”, and is universally conceptualised in the form of a diagram, the Welsh version of which was printed on the front page of the St Thomas pew-sheet on Trinity Sunday.

Many people have difficulty conceptualising God the Trinity.



God the Creator is probably clear enough, in that almost all of the Old Testament is about such a God; although it is possible to look back with hindsight from the New Testament, and see references to God the Saviour in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, *God the Saviour* is clearly the main topic of the New Testament, although references to *God the Creator* still occur in the New Testament, where he tends to be portrayed more as *God the Father*. I may be wrong, but I don't think this change of emphasis from God the Creator to *God the Father*, causes much problem for most people.

The problem seems to occur with *God the Holy Spirit*. References to this aspect of God are fairly rare in the Old Testament, and while slightly more frequent in the New Testament, he is, as it were, still only a bit player. I think it is God the Holy Spirit that causes confusion; that, and also the concept of three Gods but only one God.

The word *Spirit* has a number of meanings. For example, there is a spiritualist church, in New Zealand and elsewhere, which in its teaching about the spirit, appears to align it with the word Ghost. They claim to communicate with the spirits of those who have died. Whether they actually do communicate with spirits is debatable (possibly even doubtful!), and in any event, dead people's spirits are not what is meant by the *spirit* as part of the *triune God*. The established Church itself appears itself to add to this confusion, by treating the term *The Holy Ghost* as being synonymous with *The Holy Spirit*.

Whether or not those who were close to us and have now died can look down from Heaven and observe our human lives is an interesting but irrelevant question. For example, I sometimes wonder whether my mother in particular knows what I have been up to, and has a wry smile about it; but trying to make such connections is not part of the Church's teaching, and has nothing to do with the Spirit as in the *Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*.

If I can be allowed to again gently take the established Church to task, I sometimes wonder whether it would be better if the word *Holy* was dropped, and we referred to just the *Spirit*, or the *Spirit of God*, as being part of the Triune God; because, to my mind, that is what the *Spirit* in the Triune God is – *The Spirit of God*.

The Spirit may be Holy, but surely no more so than the Father and the Son, and for some reason we don't feel obliged to constantly refer to the *Holy* Father and the *Holy* Son. If I had my way, the word Holy would be dropped from the expression Holy Spirit (perhaps to be replaced by the Spirit of *God*), and the *Holy Ghost* would disappear altogether from the Church's vocabulary.

As an aid to understanding, let us consider an *actions-based* definition of the Triune God. God the Creator/God the Father was responsible for creation; God the Son/God the Redeemer was responsible for saving us, and God the Spirit is responsible for on-going actions and communications between us and God. This arrangement concentrates on what can be seen as the *main* job of each of the three parts of God, but does not preclude each of the parts from doing other parts' functions. God the Son is now restored to being with the Father (although in one sense he never left him), and communications between each of us and God can be exercised by all three, because they are three parts of the one God!

Therefore, one God, but three functions of God, is my simplistic way of looking at the Triune God.

An unworthy illustration: I began my working life as a secondary school teacher, then I became an inspector of secondary schools, and then I became a secondary school Executive Officer. Three distinct functions, one person. However, when I became an Executive Officer, I still taught (I took a few dancing classes at the school, and in other schools it was fairly common for the Executive Officer to also teach subjects in which they held qualifications – e.g., accounting). I also went to Fiji on several occasions to take courses for senior teachers of Accounting and Economics, and I set an end of year economics examination paper for the South Pacific Examination Board, of which Fiji was a member country. All functions normally associated with teaching, but being done by an Executive Officer.

The school of which I was an Executive Officer also put me to work on some of its interactions with the then Ministry of Education, because of my familiarity with both the work, and with the people who continued to work there. So, one person, three functions.

This is undeniably a simplistic explanation of the Triune God. A satisfactory human definition of one of the mysteries of God is probably impossible; it is a bit like someone who has only ever seen rowing boats trying to explain what an ocean liner is like; or trying to describe to a farmer who has never seen even a picture of the sea, what the oceans are like.

Nevertheless, keeping all of that in mind, I hope my simple explanation may be of some help to someone.

The Lows and Highs of the Eucharist
(or, Don't Forget the Drama of the Eucharist!)

Tony Poole

This article gets increasing dramatic as it goes along. Don't take it too seriously; but also, don't overlook the point that was being made to me, which is that the liturgy is not just solemn words; it has within it passages where emotion should also be felt.

Many years ago, I was being instructed on the first form of our present liturgy, beginning at P404 in the New Zealand Prayer Book, which at that time had just been published. I can't remember now who it was or when it occurred, but looking back, I think the member of the clergy concerned may have been on the writing panel which produced the liturgy. He felt that congregations were in danger of missing some of the poignancy of pages 406 – 408 of the liturgy.

At the top of Page 406, the Priest or Liturgist recites the summary of the law. Then, following one of the two forms of the Kyries (in some Churches omitted), at the top of Page 407 the Priest or Liturgist quotes one or more of four passages of scripture to do with sin: i.e.,

1. God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.
2. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from every kind of wrong.
3. There is joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.
4. Come unto me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

These sentences are preceded by the statement *One or more of these sentences may be read*. This clergyman claimed that this sentence was added later, and that all four sentences should in fact be read, because they show the full forgiveness *process*; i.e.,

1. Out of love for us, God sacrifices his son
2. So that if we confess our sins, we will be cleansed for every kind of wrong
3. There will be joy in heaven over every sinner who does so
4. And sinners will have respite from their burden of sin.

Then follows one statement about God's forgiveness, and three conditions which must be fulfilled first: i.e.,

God has promised forgiveness

1. To all who truly repent,
2. Turn to Christ in faith
3. And are themselves forgiving (of those who have sinned against them).

This is followed by a period of silence to contemplate our sins.

This period of silence is intended to give us the solitude and silence to recall all of our sinful acts and weaknesses that have resulted in sin; to contemplate our ignorance which has led us to unconsciously sin; to remember those who have sinned against us, and to forgive them. This is quite a lot of remembering, and I doubt if it can be completed in the 5 or so seconds that the Priest or Liturgist usually allows us, (perhaps fearful we will begin to fidget and wonder if he/she has gone to sleep if they wait longer!).

Then comes the quite long confession of our sins, as a result of the long period of silent contemplation which precedes it. It could be the cleric was advocating a length of time for contemplation of our sins, of roughly the same length as the confession of sins which follows it; that's just surmise on my part.

If you are feeling quite despondent after all of this, this cleric felt that is exactly how the writers of the Liturgy intended you to feel!

But, now comes forgiveness! Through the Priest, your sins are declared forgiven. Look at the words - "God have mercy on you ... pardon you ... set you free. Know that you are forgiven ... be at peace. God strengthen you and keep you in eternal life."

What more could you ask for? You are forgiven!

The instruction in the prayer book then says *Glory to God in the Highest may be said or sung here, all standing*. In our church, without a choir, we quite reasonably ignore this instruction. But we should not ignore its *intent*, which is one of joyousness. I.e., it carries on the feeling of relief and joy from the absolution.

Therefore, the Priest or Liturgist says in a loud, joyous voice –

“The peace of Christ rule in our hearts”

To which we as the congregation should reply at least as loudly and joyously -

“The word of Christ dwell in us richly”

I must say, I don't think we do say those two sentences loudly and joyously.

Perhaps we should at least do that, to acknowledge the forgiveness of our sins.

One or both of the Sentence and the Collect-of-the-day are said, and we can then collapse exhausted and rest while the lessons are read to us! That at least, was how the cleric who spoke to me saw it.

Visiting Those who Used to Come to Church

And now don't because of their age

Editor's Explanation: about a month ago, I announced that, because several parishioners were known to visit people in Retirement Homes who were unable for various reasons to attend Church, perhaps these parishioners might like to write a brief article for the Messenger telling us how the retirement homed parishioners were getting on. I received three articles, and although they did not exactly do as they were asked, the overall effect is even better than expected. The first article talks about her retired person, the second tells of the help she got from this parish, and the last tells what it is like to live in a retirement village.

From Leith Hamilton

The lady I visit has for decades lived in her various homes. She is now in a rest home. She has Asperger's and does not know anyone. She is distantly related to me by marriage. I have taken up the mantle from my mother, who used to talk to her over the telephone, regularly. She is an Anglican and used to drive to her church on Sundays, bright and early to avoid the traffic. The Police brought her home, once, at 5.30am!

The lady is eccentric and loud. She used to go out to lunch and would inform every one of our relationship (I was her first cousin) and what she would eat. ("I am gluten free!"). Of course, she was not! I am really happy to visit her and she is usually pleased to see me. But, at times, she will limit herself to "so it's you!" Her room is absolutely loaded with her "things". Paintings, a fridge, vases, writing materials, jewellery, rugs, cushions and pots of stuff. In the past, she has written to anyone she vaguely remembers.

Having broken her hips, through falling out of bed, she no longer walks and has to be wheeled places in her Lazy Boy. She remembers all the staff names by the places where they live. "Hello, Otara". "Hello, Pakuranga!" Always shouted. And followed by "I love you!" They usually respond.

She is an absolute character!

Leith Hamilton

St Thomas Tamaki – a Place to Call Home

From Lizzie Samuels

We arrived in New Zealand from Sri Lanka in October 1999. The first thing my late husband Chris wanted to do was to find a church where we could worship.

So, we began to visit a few churches located in our neighbourhood. However, he did not feel that any of them was for us. But one day as we went for a walk, we saw this beautiful Church.

Chris immediately called the then Priest-in Charge, Rev. David Steele and had a very warm and pleasant chat with him. He invited us to attend service the following week.

That Sunday we went, and as we entered the foyer, we both felt at once that this was our Church. Everyone welcomed us with open arms and we felt happy.

We were new to the country and feeling a little homesick, but any feelings of nostalgia and sadness were swept away from the minute we came to St Thomas. We felt it was home and became part of this great family.

When my dear Chris passed away the Church family was an unfailing and comforting presence, sharing our loss and sorrow. The week after the funeral when I went to Church and sat in our usual pew, I was in tears, but one of the parishioners came to sit next to me and held my hand. She said, "Lizzie you are not alone, we are all with you and your daughter." From that day onwards she always sat with me, a visible reminder of how much the church family cares for us.

This is indeed my home and you all are my family. I will miss you all very much when I leave for Canada. But rest assured you will be in my thoughts and prayers always.

May our beautiful church grow from strength to strength and from triumph to triumph, in proclaiming the WORD, the HOPE and the LOVE of our Lord JESUS CHRIST to all Mankind.

Lizzie Samuel

Remuera Gardens Retirement Village

57 Richard Darrell Ave, Remuera

Joan Osborne

It must be about 13 years ago since a certain (late) ex-coroner said to me “If we go into a retirement village, I don’t want to be walking down long grey corridors.” So, I took him to see Remuera Gardens. He loved it.

And so, on 7th March 2010 the Osbornes moved into their upstairs apartment. Remuera Gardens has only a ground floor and an upper level. It is quite old, and shows its age by the woodwork being painted brown, and the roof tiled orange. The roof has since been altered to grey as have some of the units.

Some ground floor residents cultivate small gardens outside their units. Upper floor residents can use pot plants on their balconies, and some folk have small vege plots in other areas of the grounds.

When we first came here there was a stairway up to our floor; now this has been replaced by a large lift. It is big enough to take a St John’s stretcher, and Steve was the first to use it as such when he went into hospital last year. Another set of stairs has been put up towards the other end of our set of units

My double apartment has two bedrooms; one larger, with a walk-in dressing room and meant for a double bed, and a slightly smaller one for a single bed. There is also a well-appointed bathroom with a shower.

Not only are there double apartments but single ones too. Then there is what is known as Beattie Lodge. Here there are smaller single apartments for those residents who need help with changing and cleaning. They have washing done for them, and go to the dining room for lunch and dinner. The dining room is known as the Oxford Room, where meals of a restaurant type are served.

There are other rooms too in the Beattie Lodge building. Opposite the Oxford Room is the Cane Room, where we can go for tea and/or coffee whenever we like, and where something sweet is often served about 10.00 am and 3.00 pm.

Also, in the lodge is the reception area and offices, a TV room, a library, a swimming pool, several smaller lounge areas, as well as the large lounge. This is where we meet for big meetings and entertainment, especially the Friday evening “Happy Hour” between 5.00 and 6.00 pm. A glass of soft drink, wine or beer are served at a very nominal cost.

This large lounge is also available to residents for meetings of a personal kind – e.g., we celebrated Steve’s 90th birthday there with a large gathering of family and friends. Nearby there are smaller lounge areas, where cards and other board games are played, and there is a snooker table and a table tennis area. Outside there is a bus service used for regular shopping trips and for journeys further afield.

Remuera Gardens is what we are called, and we have lovely gardens, well cared for by a little band of gardeners – roses, camellias, ponga ferns, many large trees, with an odd orange or lemon tree here and there. As I sit writing this I can see three trees which have shed their leaves: a magnolia tree, a double white camellia and a kaffir lime which has recently had its annual hair-cut.

“Gardens” it truly is.

Joan Osborne

P.S. Other thoughts: When we are rather sickly, no longer able to care properly for ourselves, we move to Kensington House (this is where Janet Foster now is). It is really like what used to be called an Old People’s Home. Holy communion is held there on the third Thursday of the month; the Vicar of St Aidan’s takes a slightly simplified Anglican Service.

From our parish, several other St Thomas’ parishioners are here – namely Joye Clapp, Annette Charlton, Cathie McGarry, and Janet Foster whom I have already mentioned.

Some very, very good news

It was with great joy we received the following letter from John Goodwin.

Dear Friends,

It is with great relief that I can let you know that the false claim against me has been finally withdrawn.

It is because of your loving care, support and prayers that our family has been able to endure the last 486 days in a shadowy wilderness!

The nature of the claim and the publicity around it was deeply corrosive and impacted our whole family - but your supportive acts, generosity and words of kindness gave us the courage to go on.

It often happened that during the darkest moments one of you would bump into me in a street or shop, send a text or email, pull up by the side of the road, ring for a chat, send a card or invite me out for a coffee. You did not know how important your reaching out was and how it buoyed me up.

I look forward to returning to normality - moving back home and starting back at school, faith intact, a little battered and bruised, but also very excited!

Diane, Sam, Ben and our extended family in Australia join me in offering our heartfelt thanks.

Wishing you every blessing,

John

Liturgists Wanted

You don't need to be especially good, all that is needed to be a liturgist is a sense of calling; a sharing in the feeling that, notwithstanding all of our faults, God is calling us to put our names forward to be a liturgist.

When you become a liturgist, you are not left on your own. You will be given whatever training you feel is necessary, you will be given an explanatory copy of the Eucharist to use for as long as you want to, ideally you will not be rostered on more than once a month, with flexibility around which weeks each month you are rostered on; and it is not a life sentence, you are free to stop being a liturgist any time you want to.

Please consider it, and put your name forward to the Priest in Charge if at all possible.

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