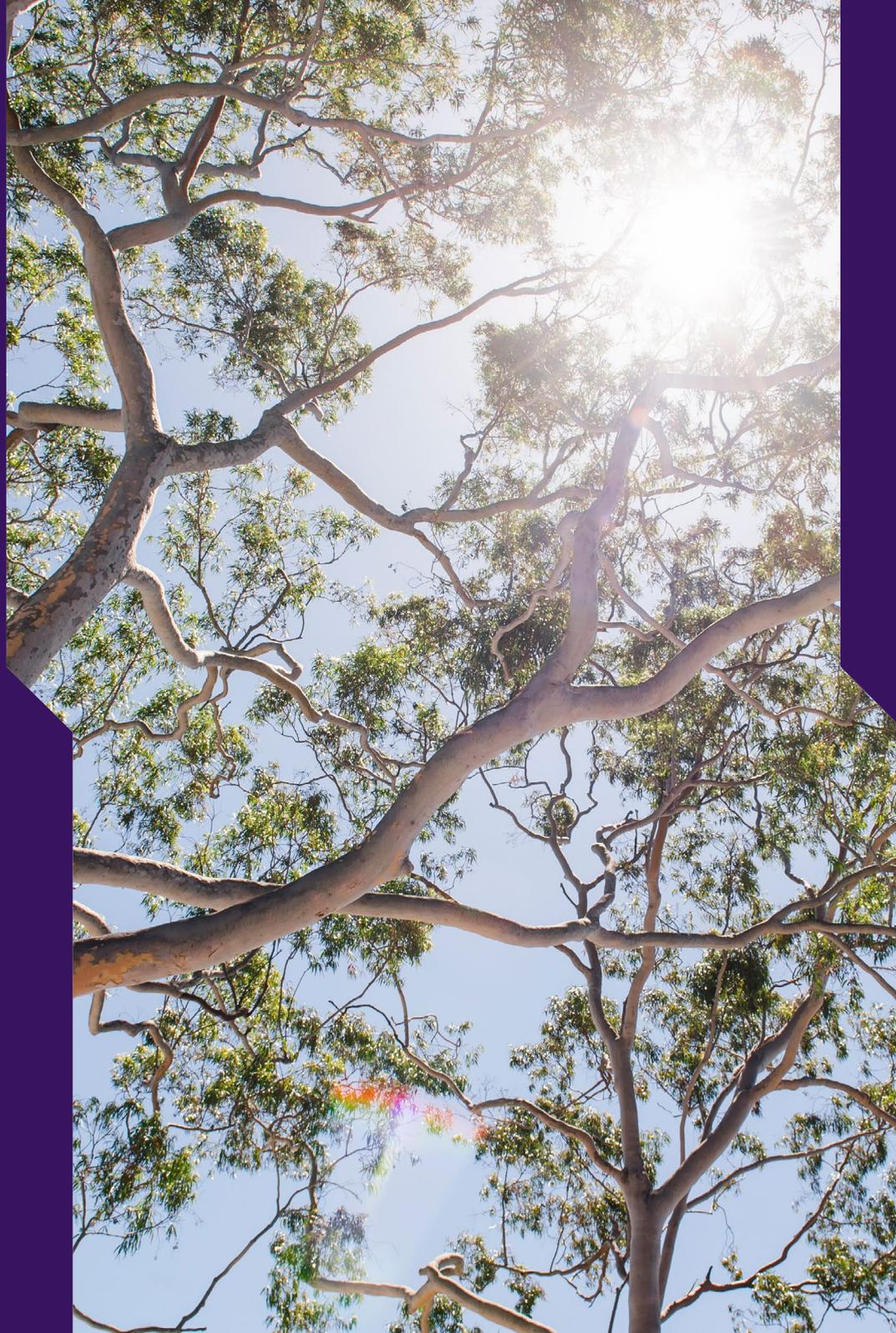


REFLECTIONS ON HOPE
AND RESILIENCE
2021

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Reflections on hope and resilience

A collection of interfaith
prayers and readings for a
community emerging from
the pandemic

With messages from the
Prime Minister and
Leader of the Opposition

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ACU acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.



The Hon Scott Morrison MP Prime Minister of Australia

This volume of prayers and reflections is a testament to the importance of faith in the lives of so many Australians.

Australia is the most successful multicultural and multi-faith nation on Earth. The Australia we love is one where the people of all faiths and beliefs live side by side.

As human beings, we are more than our physical selves, we are also soul and spirit. Faith is about the heart, the soul and the spirit.

For men and women of faith, religion is often inseparable from culture – they are one and the same.

This interdependence brings a richness of love and compassion to our national life. It helps us to live out our destiny as a people.

I am reminded of the words of the Late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks who said of his Jewish faith, “the purpose of Judaism is to honour the image of God in others”. It is such a beautiful idea, and it is an idea shared by many faiths, including my own.

Faith recognises the dignity of every person, it provides the sense of belonging that is the bedrock of community.

Our faith communities – through acts of compassion and concern – seek to bridge the gaps of human need in our free society. I am so grateful for the countless Australians of faith who, by coming together in unity, contribute so much to our national life.

In the course of the global pandemic, I have taken heart from Isaiah:

The Lord will guide you always, he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins; and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called the repairer of broken walls, a restorer of streets with dwellings.

As a nation, we have been through a lot. But now we are rebuilding – we are the rebuilders – as our country comes back together again.

I hope the prayers gathered in this collection will inspire people of all faiths across Australia to rejoice, to be hopeful – and to pray.



The Hon Anthony Albanese MP Leader of the Opposition

For so many during this time of trial and challenge, faith has been more than just a comfort.

Faith has helped to hold us together and give us a sense of perspective. It has given us hope of a better future together. Above all, it has shown us that what will get us there is inclusiveness, compassion, and the bond of our common humanity.

At its heart is the sense of community and care with which Jesus’ teaching is suffused: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat... I was sick and you looked after me.” If there is a positive to have come out of COVID-19, it is that the spirit of His lessons to us has spilled across political lines like a river breaking its banks.

In its own way, the pandemic has guided us back towards the truth.

So much is contained within the parable of the Good Samaritan alone: that we shouldn’t walk past those who are in need or suffering; that our care for others should be neither conditional nor transactional; and that we should be driven by our own humanity.

At once ancient and timeless, that is the lesson that can light the path before us.



Professor Zlatko Skrbis **Vice-Chancellor & President** **Australian Catholic University**

Since 2014, Australian Catholic University has hosted five parliamentary interfaith breakfasts, bringing together our parliamentarians and the leaders of our many faith communities in a spirit of mutual respect and dialogue. For ACU, the parliamentary interfaith breakfasts provide an opportunity to demonstrate our mission in action, namely, to foster an appreciation of the sacred in life, and a commitment to serving the common good. It is an occasion to not only embrace and better understand our diverse faiths, but also to reflect on the important role that faith plays in our everyday lives and in our calling to serve our communities.

In these times of uncertainty, with COVID-19 continuing to disrupt our everyday lives, and the risks associated with organising large gatherings, holding an interfaith breakfast during 2021 has not been possible.

In order to continue ACU's commitment to bringing together our respective faiths in the absence of our yearly breakfast, we have invited faith leaders from across Australia to contribute a prayer, reading, meditation or reflection. The purpose of this publication – and its collected readings – is to highlight the spirit, resilience and hope that each community of faith offers its members and the broader Australian community in this time of anxiety and despair for many.

It is my hope that this publication brings joy, understanding and a sense of connection to all who read this.

Prayers, readings, meditations and reflections

Anglican

Reflection and Prayer from The Most Reverend Geoffrey Smith
The Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia
Archbishop of Adelaide

God's Steadfast love in difficult times

The writer of the Hebrew Psalms repeatedly uses the phrase the *steadfast love of the LORD*. This phrase is used in psalms of praise, lament, and supplication. It is a reminder to the readers that whatever the circumstances we find ourselves in - be it personal trouble, national concerns, or environmental issues like drought - the constant goodness of God can be relied on. We are not left alone. It is a needed reminder for all peoples today as our whole world has been shaken by the Covid-19 pandemic and so much of the fabric of life that we took for granted has been challenged. The psalms encourage us to remember the work of God past and to be assured of God's steadfast love with us today.

Prayer

God of steadfast love,

We give you thanks for your goodness in creation and in our lives.

We praise you for your steadfast love that is far greater than our need and more gracious than we deserve.

We pray that you will continue to show your steadfast love to us, to our nation and to our world.

We pray for the strength, wisdom and will to work together to overcome the effects of Covid-19 and to grow as a nation in unity and peace.

Enable us, by your Holy Spirit, to be those that reflect your love to the world in which we live.

We pray this for your honour and glory. Amen.



Baha'i

Prayer from the Bahá'í Community of Victoria

O Divine Providence! Perplexing difficulties have arisen and formidable obstacles have appeared. O Lord! Remove these difficulties and show forth the evidences of Thy might and power. Ease these hardships and smooth our way along this arduous path. O Divine Providence! The obstacles are unyielding, and our toil and hardship are conjoined with a myriad adversities. There is no helper save Thee, and no succourer except Thyself. We set all our hopes on Thee, and commit all our affairs unto Thy care. Thou art the Guide and the Remover of every difficulty, and Thou art the Wise, the Seeing, and the Hearing.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Baha'i

Prayer from the Australian Baha'i Community

O Thou Lord of wondrous grace!

Bestow upon us new blessings. Give to us the freshness of the spring. We are saplings which have been planted by the fingers of Thy bounty and have been formed out of the water and clay of Thy tender affection. We thirst for the living waters of Thy favours and are dependent upon the outpourings of the clouds of Thy generosity. Abandon not to itself this grove wherein our hopes aspire, nor withhold therefrom the showers of Thy loving-kindness. Grant that from the clouds of Thy mercy may fall copious rain so that the trees of our lives may bring forth fruit and we may attain the most cherished desire of our hearts.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Baptist

Feelings, Questions and Faith from Reverend Angela Garton

Chair

Australian Baptist Ministries

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

A better translation of that first phrase would be 'When we worry about anything – pray'.

As human beings it is normal at times to be worried, feel fearful, anxious, or stressed and have questions.

What do we do with our feelings and questions?

- Acknowledge them, it is not a sin.
- Recognize that feelings are real but changeable – they are not always logical or rational, they are not fact or truth.
- Talk to the one who can make a difference. Tell God what you are feeling, ask your questions and then be willing to listen to what God has to say. Sometimes God changes the situation and sometimes God changes us to be able to be at peace during the storm.
- Seek the help of a mature Christian to help you by praying with you and for you.
- Sometimes we may need the help of someone in a professional capacity – a counsellor or doctor.

Let's be honest with ourselves about our feelings and questions and let us be careful to seek help at the right places with the right people.

Who will you connect with to discuss your questions and share your feelings?

Buddhist

A Buddhist contribution to the peace and wellbeing of all from Venerable BomHyon Sunim

Australian Sangha Association

Engaging the power of prayer that connects us

As we gather in friendship and community, taking a moment out of our busy lives to learn, share and reflect on the insights and wisdom of others, we are reminded of how blessed we are.

For the many who are suffering in our world, facing grave challenges, we stand in solidarity with them in compassion,

radiating loving kindness for ourselves, and all beings.

Let us engage in the power of prayer that connects us with the beliefs and ideals that deeply centre us, gently holding them in our heart-mind as we go about our day.

In all our engagements, whether with friend, stranger, foe -

we vow to extend the hand of friendship without distinction.

May we all be well, happy, and peaceful, may no harm come to us. May we have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable challenges and failures in life.

May our families, teachers and mentors, friends, and all living beings be well, happy, and peaceful - and may no harm come to them.

May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May all be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow.

May all abide in equanimity, without attachment or aversion.

May we never be separated from the happiness that is sorrowless, trusting in the compassionate heart and oneness of all that lives.

Buddhist

Reflection from Gawaine Powell Davies

Chair

Buddhist Council of NSW

Buddhism understands that while we usually think of ourselves as individuals, we do not live alone and we are not self-sufficient. Each of us is part of a family, a community, a nation. That first photograph of the earth from space showed us that we belong to the one planet. We are not outside nature, we are part of it, and subject to its laws.

The Buddha also taught that we are also responsible for our choices. Our present misfortune often arises from past foolishness. We are like people who dump their rubbish in the river and then complain when it litters the beach. And whatever we do in the present lays the foundation for our future, for better or for worse.

So where does hope come from in difficult times? It comes from recognising our interdependence, our shared humanity and our place in the community of living beings. It comes from taking responsibility for our actions, cultivating compassion and having the humility to learn from our mistakes. It means seeing others as companions on the road rather than competitors in a race or obstacles to our success.

We cannot always make the right choice, but we can work with others in good faith for the benefit of all. What stronger foundation can we have for our journey into an uncertain future?

Buddhist

A Classic Buddhist Prayer from Venerable Hojun Futen

Buddhist Council of Victoria

Karaniya Metta Sutta: The Buddha's Words on Loving-Kindness

Translated from the Pali by The Amaravati Sangha

This is what should be done
By one who is skilled in goodness,
And who seeks the path of peace:
Let them be able and upright,
Straightforward and gentle in speech.
Humble and not conceited,
Contented and easily satisfied.
Unburdened with duties and frugal in
their ways.
Peaceful and calm, and wise and skillful,
Not proud and demanding in nature.
Let them not do the slightest thing
That the wise would later reprove.
Wishing: In gladness and in safety,
May all things be at ease.
Whatever living beings there may be;
Whether they are weak or strong, omitting
none,
The great or the mighty, medium, short or
small,
The seen and the unseen,
Those living near and far away,
Those born and to-be-born,
May all things be at ease!

Let none deceive another,
Or despise any being in any state.
Let none through anger or ill-will
Wish harm upon another.
Even as a mother protects with her life
Her child, her only child,
So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living beings:
Radiating kindness over the entire world
Spreading upwards to the skies,
And downwards to the depths;
Outwards and unbounded,
Freed from hatred and ill-will.
Whether standing or walking, seated or
lying down
Free from drowsiness,
One should sustain this mindfulness.
This is said to be the sublime abiding.
By not holding to fixed views,
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of
vision,
Being freed from all sense desires,
Is not born again into this world.



Buddhist

Prayer from Michael Wells PSM

Chair

Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma-Sambuddhassa

(Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One)

Recollecting the Teachings, we go inside seeking wisdom

Returning to the world we see the beauty, but also the suffering

Recollecting the Teachings, we strive to act for the benefit of all beings.

May we develop true wisdom, so that we truly act with compassion and contribute, even in a small way, to the alleviation of suffering in the world.

May all beings be peaceful and happy

May they be free of greed, hatred and ignorance

May they be well in mind and body.

May all beings be peaceful and happy

May they be filled with infinite loving kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity.

May all beings be peaceful and happy

Whatever living beings there may be, from the least to the greatest, the seen and the unseen,

those living near and far away, those born and to be born

Without exception, omitting none

May they all share in the benefits of our good actions

And may we all attain to the true peace, happiness and wisdom of the Way.

Chaldean Catholic

Prayers from His Grace Archbishop Amel Nona
Chaldean Diocese of St Thomas

Prayers from the Chaldean Breviarium (Huthra) from the season of supplication (Baotha).

May we labour for your pay, Master who gives servants strength.
May we proclaim your Gospel, may it ring to all the earth.
Good Shepherd gather your sheep, for they beg for your succour.

Grant us, O Lord, unveiled face, that we may ask for mercy.
We cannot speak before you; our sins have multiplied so.
May our prayer be a key, that opens your doorway.

Grant us, O Lord, forgiveness, that we may come to your door.
Kind One, accept our pleading, now, as is your own custom.
O Lord, who loves the penitent: open the door to our prayer.

Your mercy daily overcomes, the sins we do before you.
Your grace is overflowing, to sinners who call to you.
In your kindness, Merciful One: may your aid come to save us.

You have begun in your grace; in your mercy. Complete us.
In grace was the beginning; in it be the completion.
Begin and end in your grace: that in both we may thank you.

In pain and tears and fervent prayer, we cry to you, good Lord above!
Be our healer and our wise guide: deep are our wounds; bitter our pain.
We have no right to plead to you: our faults abound, our malice spars.
The sea and land, and all therein have quaked and raged due to our sin.
In our own time, as Scripture says, the end of days has come upon us.
In mercy, save us from distress, for height and depth have been confused.
O Good Shepherd come tend your flock, for whose sake you endured the cross.
Make peace for us in Church and world, that we may live a tranquil life.
May we be yours, as is your will: Father, and son, and holy Spirit.
From age to age, amen, amen.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Prayer from Russell M. Nelson
President

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Our Father in Heaven, as fellow passengers on Thy planet earth, we humbly pray unto Thee. We thank Thee for life and all that sustains life. We thank Thee for the beauties of the earth, for order in the universe, the planets, stars, and all things of eternal significance. We thank Thee for Thy laws that protect and guide us. We thank Thee for Thy mercy and loving watchcare. We thank Thee for our families and loved ones who fill our lives with joy.

We are grateful for all who are striving to combat the COVID pandemic. Please bless them with protection and inspiration. Wilt Thou help us end this virus that has plagued so many of Thy children.

We thank Thee for the leaders of nations and others who strive to lift us. We pray for relief from political strife. Wilt Thou bless us with a healing spirit that unites us despite our differences.

Wilt Thou also help us repent from selfishness, unkindness, pride, and prejudice of any kind so that we can better serve and love one another as brothers and sisters and as Thy grateful children. We love Thee, our dear Father, and pray for Thy blessings upon us in the name of Thy Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, amen.

Hindu

Universal Hindu Prayer from Pandit Ramachandra Athreiya

President

Australian Council of Hindu Clergy Inc

**svasti prajābhyaḥ paripālayantām nyāyena mārgēna mahim mahiśāḥ |
go brāhmaṇebhyaś śubham-astu nityaṃ lokāḥ samastā sukhino bhavantu ||**

May all the citizens enjoy wellbeing, may the administrators protect them and walk in the path of justice, may the whole universe and all spiritual aspirants have perpetual auspiciousness, may all the worlds be happy.

**sarveṣāṃ svastir bhavatu | sarveṣāṃ śāntir bhavatu |
sarveṣāṃ pūrṇam bhavatu | sarveṣāṃ maṅgalaṃ bhavatu |**

May there be good to all beings. May there be peace to all beings.

May there be fullness to all beings. May there be auspiciousness to all beings

**sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ sarve santu nirāmayāḥ |
sarve bhadraṇi paśyantu mā kaścid duḥkha bhāḥ bhavet ||**

May all beings be happy, may all be free from disease,

May all find what they seek, and may none experience sorrow.

**kāle varṣatu parjanyaḥ pṛthivi sasya śālini |
deśo'yaṃ kṣobha rahito brāhmaṇāḥ santu nirbhayāḥ ||**

May the rains fall on time, and may the earth yield its produce in abundance,

May this country be free from disturbances, and may the righteous be free from fear.

**sarve taratu durgāṇi sarvo bhadraṇi paśyatu |
sarva kāmān avāpnotu sarva sarvatra nandatu ||**

May all beings cross over their tribulations, and may all attain their respective goals,

May all realize their desires and may all beings at all times and places be happy.

Hindu

Prayer from Prakash Mehta

National President

Hindu Council of Australia

ॐ – AUM

ॐ द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः

पृथिवी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः ।

वनस्पतयः शान्तिर्विश्वे देवाः शान्तिर्ब्रह्म शान्तिः

सर्वं शान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः सा मा शान्तिरेधि ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

May there be peace in the heavenly region.

May there be peace in the skies.

May peace reign on Earth.

May the water, the medicine, the trees be the source of peace to all.

May all the gods bring peace to us.

May the Vedas spread peace throughout the Universe.

May all other objects give us peace and may peace even bring peace to all.

May that peace come to us.

Om Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!



Jewish

Prayer for our world in the wake of Covid-19 from Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton
Chief Minister
The Great Synagogue

Prayer for our world in the wake of Covid-19

Almighty God, creator and guardian of all life.

As the Covid-19 Pandemic passes its most destructive phase, we commend into Your care the souls of those who succumbed to the disease. We pray that the families and loved ones may find comfort and consolation and that all those still struggling with illness are granted healing.

We give thanks for the heroic work of health care providers and all those who supported those who were and remain unwell and those around them. We thank you for the insight and intelligence that led to the development of vaccines in such a short time and so such a level of effectiveness.

We ask that the leaders and peoples of the world find the wisdom and the material resources necessary to ensure that all people receive a vaccination to protect them to the greatest possible extent against illness and death.

We pray for strength to deal with other damaging effects of the pandemic: mental health challenges, financial struggles, the rise in domestic abuse and violence, educational opportunities lost, and in many other areas. May there be healing and rectification in all respects.

We ardently hope that no new strains emerge and spread that will take us back to the dark days that we have endured. We beseech You to withhold further pandemics but also that you inspire our leaders to prepare for the next global health crisis, so that if it does come, we shall be better prepared and fewer will suffer.

In the words of our daily Hebrew prayers:

Heal us O Lord and we will be healed, deliver us and we will be delivered; for You are our praise. Grant a complete healing to all our affliction because You are the Almighty, King, Who is a faithful and merciful Healer.

May this be Your will. And let us say, Amen.

Jewish

A blessing from Rabbi Yaakov Glasman

Senior Rabbi
St Kilda Hebrew Congregation

This once in a lifetime pandemic may have separated us in body but it has united us in spirit. Covid has wreaked devastation on billions around the world but has also inspired the best of humanity as all G-d's people have sought to help each other throughout.

Community spirit has soared in solidarity with one another as we seek a better world going forward and a brighter future for all peoplehood.

May the G-d of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs watch over all His peoples and grant us all strength, wisdom and compassion to get through the challenges of the present, paving a path for a future free of disease and hardship.

May G-d Almighty bestow upon all the world's inhabitants His kindness and mercy, His benevolence and grace, as we regather and rejuvenate for the days, months and years that lie ahead in the rebuilding of our wounded but hope filled world – and let us say – Amen.

Jewish

A Reflection from Rabbi John Levi AC

Emeritus Rabbi
Temple Beth Israel

Let me tell you a story.

It is a legend but it concerns the creation of the universe.

When the Divine Being (whose name is the Ein Sof -the Infinite One) decided to bring order into chaos a plan was needed. The echoes of that plan are to be found in the story of creation. In English we read “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” But the Bible was not written in English. It was written in Hebrew which is, of course, (as everybody knows) the language of the Heavenly Hosts.

There was great excitement in the Divine Spheres. What would the Universe look like? The angels were upset. Adam and Eve would be “little lower than the angels” (Psalm 8). That, in itself was enough to upset the angels. And they would dwell in the Garden of Eden. And the Divine plan would be revealed for all to read. And all the letters of the alphabet yes, I know, in Hebrew it is Aleph and Bet) debated about who would become the first letter that God would choose.

The letter Aleph instantly claimed the first place. “After all”, he proudly proclaimed “I am the first of all the letters of the alphabet. I must come first. Even my shape proves that as my arms are held high pointing heavenwards. The story of Genesis must surely begin with me”.

Now God overheard him boasting and decided that Aleph could not be the first letter of the whole of the Bible. Aleph needed to learn that pride can have serious consequences. And so it has come to be. The biblical story of the creation of the universe begins with the letter “Bet” which is, as everybody knows, is the second letter of the alphabet (Alphabet). Bet signifies the numeral two. Its shape is open ended and it faces towards the future. It reminds us that there is this world and the world to come. Most importantly, it is the first letter of the word “blessing”.

Aleph was shame faced. He apologised to all his friends and colleagues. Up there on high, God heard his remorseful words and mercifully made Aleph the first letter the Ten Commandments.

The story is to be found in Midrash Rabbi (1:10). An ancient collection of sermons and stories written (in Hebrew) during the first four centuries of the Common Era. Sometimes we need to remember that the Universe is vast and we are its children. We can dimly perceive order and intelligence within it. We need to be able to say “And God saw that it was good” at the conclusion of each day. In this way we can become God's partner in the ongoing work of creation.

Maronite Catholic

Prayer from Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay

Maronite Bishop of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania

Heavenly Father,

We come before you today, bringing all we have in our hearts, minds, and spirits, raising our souls to you in humility and in faith. We acknowledge that we are many but we are one, and that we have our sins and mistakes, making us fall short of the holiness you seek from us. Our minds are weak, our hearts are unstable, but our spirits are full of hope in you.

We come before you today, bearing in our hearts and in our minds, a love which moves us with compassion for the human predicament, the all too human tragedy which is unfolding over this planet. Moved by present suffering, and compelled by love, we ask you to show us the way, and how to act so that we are in harmony with your divine will, as we try to serve you in our brothers and sisters, especially those in need.

We come before you today, with fullness of heart, mind, and spirit, for through faith, hope, and love, we possess the certitude that all can be redeemed through the mystery of the Resurrection, as we share in that endless strength which comes from your grace and blessings. We ask you to help us persevere in the service of our Nation, for you are the unchanging source of all compassion, all goodness, and all mercy. Amen.

Muslim

Prayers from The Most Eminent Imam Abdul Quddoos AlAzhari

National Grand Mufti of Australia

In the name of God the beneficent the Merciful

We are very grateful to the Catholic University Parliamentary Interfaith Event organisers for bringing us all together to offer these important prayers and allow us this opportunity to collectively offer solace to our fellow Australians.

On behalf of my Muslim congregation from all over Australia and abroad, I bring you these prayers from the depth of my heart.

“O my Lord! I pray for refuge with You, in case I ask you for that about which I have no knowledge. And until You forgive me and have Mercy on me, I will truly be lost!”¹ “There is no God except You: Glory to you: to you, I confess my wrong.”² “O my Lord! Do not leave me to struggle alone, You are the best of those who give support”³.

“Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: forgive us and grant Your Mercy so that we are not lost.”⁴ “Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us for You are the All-Hearing the All – Knowing”⁵.

“Our Lord, You are the One Who (always) watches over us”⁶. “O Allah, our Lord! Fill our table with food and make our food a plentiful feast for the first and the last of us and a Sign from You; And provide for us the means to live, for You are the best Provider”⁷.

“O Allah, remove from us the pandemic and the affliction and the debilitating illnesses.”⁸

Our Lord, this pandemic has hampered our lives for two years and you know best our condition, it has affected the livelihood of billions of Your creation, it has affected the mental health of Your congregation; our Lord, bring down Your mercy upon us and revive and heal us through Your Grace just like You bring life back to earth with Your plentiful rain.

Our Lord, bring the human family closer together, so that we may learn to love, respect and honour one another, help us find peace, tranquillity and healing so that we may be devoted to you now and forever Amen.

1 Prayer of Nooh (Noah) (Al Quran 11:47)

2 Prayer of Yunus (Jonah) (Al Quran 21: 87)

3 Prayer of Zakariyya (Zakariah) (Al Quran 21:89)

4 Prayer of Adam and Eve. (Al Quran 7: 23)

5 Prayer of Ibrahim and Ismael (Abraham and Ismail) (Al Quran 2:127)

6 Prayer of Musa (Moses) (Al Quran 20: 35)

7 Isa (Christ, the son of Maryam (Mary) (Al Quran 5:14)

8 Authentic Hadith

Muslim

Prayer from the Islamic Women's Association of Australia (IWAA)

Indeed, the righteous will be among gardens and springs,
Accepting what their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were before that doers of good.
They used to sleep but little of the night,
And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness,
And from their properties was [given] the right of the [needy] petitioner and the deprived.
And on the earth are signs for the certain [in faith]
And in yourselves. Then will you not see?
And in the heaven is your provision and whatever you are promised.

Quran: Chapter 51, verses 15-22
Saheeh International translation

Roman Catholic

Reflection from Archbishop Mark Coleridge
Archdiocese of Brisbane

The time of pandemic has been a season of disconnectedness – lockdowns, social distancing, borders closed and even online worship. Connected we've certainly been as we join endless face-to-screen meetings, but we know that meeting face-to-screen is no substitute for meeting face-to-face. Online meetings can be good for transaction, but they're not so good for interaction; and interaction between people is what makes for real human connectedness. In a season of disconnectedness Pope Francis has been a prophetic voice speaking of the radical interconnectedness of all things in his Encyclical Letter Laudato Si (Praise to You) and his follow-up Letter Fratelli Tutti (Brothers and Sisters All) where he speaks of the radical connectedness of all human beings. Not by chance the titles of both Letters are taken from St Francis of Assisi who possessed nothing and no-one but who was mystically connected to everyone and everything, speaking even of Brother Sun and Sister Moon. In a disconnected and disconnecting world, the Church as a whole is called to stand as a prophetic sign showing in word and deed what it means to be connected – to each other, to the creation and finally to God. At a time when the Church, in Plenary Council at home and the Synod process worldwide, is seeking a new way forward, this is where we begin.



Roman Catholic

Prayer and Reflection from Sr Sheila Flynn OP

Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia & the Solomon Islands

Reflection:

We are here, joined by our human hearts and minds in our respective faith traditions. For this we give deep thanks.

Together, working in sync to create a new consciousness, a new mindfulness, we can take unimaginable risks for the future good of the whole earth from all its current brokenness, recognising the deep-seated connection between ecological devastation and social injustice, resisting the distortions of our consumer-addicted and politically bankrupt world.

R/ We choose life.

The tide of human suffering continues to rise all around the world. There is a systemic assault on the fabric of all that is precious. From the core centre of our faith traditions, we seek to live an alternative set of values – those of hope, of the sacramentality of all forms of life, and our co-responsibility for its flourishing.

R/ We keep choosing life.

Prayer:

To the Author of all that is, that sustains us all in being, grant us the courage to attend to the anguish in our world.

Use us in our collective strength to heal brokenness, work to free the imprisoned, offer welcoming shelter to the refugee, bring music to deaf ears, dance to the lame, beauty to the sightless, light in the dark places of mental distress, compassion to hearts shattered by suffering.

May the cadence of all that is good, ring true in our hearts. In our collective strength may we together, make a heart-work of justice in our world. May we be strong beacons of hope. Amen.

Roman Catholic

Prayer from Sr. Giovanni Farquer RSJ

Director, Commission for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney

Almighty, everlasting and merciful God, Creator of the Universe and Father of the whole human family,

Shine the light of your Countenance on us gathered before you today.

Pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inflame in us a burning desire for peace, justice, truth and profound hope for a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.

May we recognize the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us and move us to create healthier societies within a united and more dignified world.

Salvation Army

Reflection from Commissioner Robert Donaldson

The Salvation Army Australia

Working together

A reflection on 1 Corinthians 12 and 13

In the days of the early Church, Corinth was prosperous and cosmopolitan. Commerce flowed in every direction and there were abundant signs of wealth. The Corinthian community included Romans, Greeks, people from the Orient, Jews, and merchants and sailors from far and wide, resulting in a factious, competitive, and independent spirit in the community. Idol temples hosted social and community gatherings.

In the earlier chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses the influence of the Corinthian culture on the Church then leads into a beautiful description of working together in chapters 12 and 13.

12:1-11 celebrates uniqueness, individuality, and spiritual gifts. Individual, yet given by the same Lord, the source of all.

12:12-31 describes the forming of a gathering of individuals into a special community; the body of Christ, where all belong, and all have a part to play. Where no individual is more important than any other and all are interdependent. One body, one Spirit.

13:1-13 outlines the attitudes and behaviours that hold us together, set the Christian community apart, and point people to Christ. Love.

As Paul encourages the multi-cultural Church of Corinth to be the embodiment of Christ in their world, so he encourages the Christians of today to celebrate our individuality and function as the body of Christ, enabled by love.

Sikh

Reflection from Jasbir Singh Suropada

Chairperson
Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria

Acknowledging the challenges and responding to them in a positive way is important. Sometimes we mourn or celebrate, at times we doubt or trust, but the important thing is to hold on to Hope that thing will get better. Sikhs believe in the concept of “**Chardi Kala the Positive Attitude,**” *an equivalence of a mind that never despairs, never admits defeat and refuses to be crushed by adversities.*

During COVID19 pandemic, the Sikh Community has spread love and compassion through preparing and delivering thousands of free meals daily to vulnerable peoples regardless of race, religion, caste, colour, gender or social status.

Its humbling seeing many communities and faiths coming together to help each other in times of crisis to connect as Oneness-**Unity in Diversity**

Experiences make us stronger and resilient survivors to adapt and improvise. We need to role model resilience, so we can become the beacons of hope for our children. We need to focus on our children and youths facing challenges. Take time out to connect with our children, even with a simple R U OK can make a huge difference.

We pray for the wellbeing of all in the words of Guru Amardas Ji:

The world is going up in flames - shower it with Your Mercy, and save it!

Save it, and deliver it, by whatever method it takes.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji- Ang 853

Our prayers end with words:

“Oh Lord may everyone in the world prosper, be well and in peace”

Sikh

Reflection from (Sardar) Ajmer Singh Gill JP

President
National Sikh Council of Australia

This pandemic crisis has forced us to adapt and change in many different ways both personal and societal as we move to a new normal post Covid era. Coming out of this crisis let us consider what we can do better. We have an unparalleled opportunity to change our lives and communities for the better. Let us embrace this opportunity for the betterment of all.

The Sikh concept Sarbat da bhala means “blessings for everyone” or literally “may everyone prosper”. It performs a very important and essential role in the religious philosophy of the Sikh Gurus. It invokes the Sikh to request, pray and ask the Almighty for the well-being of all of humanity, prosperity for everyone in the worldwide community and global peace for the entire planet. A Sikh selflessly prays daily for “all to prosper”.

The Sikh faith says there are “no others”, “there is only One”. The same “One God resides within all”. We are “all the children of that One God”. As the potter makes pots of different forms and colours from the same basic clay; and as the goldsmith moulds jewellery of various types, colours and shapes from the same single homogeneous material, gold; similarly, we are all born of the same One Light: “There is no difference”.

If you don't see God in All you don't see God at All.

Let us work for the betterment of all mankind. Helping everyone regardless of who they are or what their background is.

Uniting Church

Prayer from Sharon Hollis

President
Uniting Church in Australia

As I reflected on the past two years living in Melbourne, observing the response to Covid-19 around the world I found myself full of gratitude for all the goodness, mercy and kindness I saw and an awareness of how much the world needs goodness, mercy and kindness. This is my prayer of thanksgiving and pleading.

Blessed Holy Trinity, loving Community we pray and give thanks to You

For those who gave of their skill compassion and kindness
to care, support, and heal
we give You thanks.

For a spirit open to the needs of others and the will to care for the most vulnerable we pray.

For those who use their intellect, wisdom and resources
to understand and find ways to respond to the virus
we give You thanks

For courage and wisdom to meet the greatest challenges facing the planet we pray.

For those who found new ways to teach and learn
and for ancient Wisdom that still teaches
We give You thanks

For a world where all who want to learn are given the opportunity we pray.

For new ways of being together and technology that helps us overcome our separation
and for opportunities they provide for those previous excluded to find a place in community
we give you thanks

For a heart big enough to become a community and nation that seeks to expand its
inclusion and welcome we pray

Blessed, Holy Trinity, loving Community, hear our prayer. Amen



Australian Catholic University

ACU is the largest Catholic university in the English-speaking world and a public university open to people of all faiths and of none. ACU has seven campuses across Australia, located in Ballarat, Blacktown, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, North Sydney and Strathfield, as well as an international campus located in Rome, Italy. As a Catholic university, ACU engages in the Catholic intellectual tradition where faith and reason are compatible in education, and knowledge is cultivated in an environment that fosters intellectual freedom, personal development and equity for all.

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