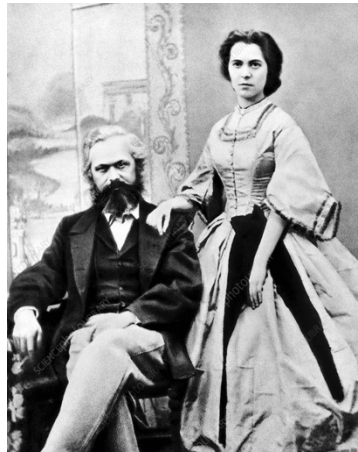


INTRODUCTION TO MASS OF WEDNESDAY OF THE 27<sup>TH</sup> WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME Year 1  
Pre-recorded for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia for 6 October 2021  
St. Mary's Basilica, Sydney

A warm welcome to St Mary's Basilica in Sydney, the mother church of Australia, for this Mass midway through the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia. We continue to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to us in our listening and discernment, our dialogue and debate, our Word and sacrament, and to implore that Spirit's wisdom for all the Councillors. We also ask our national patrons, Our Lady Help of Christians and St Mary MacKillop, to intercede for the Church in Australia at this time, and we join the Apostles today in asking the Lord to teach us.

HOMILY FOR MASS OF WEDNESDAY OF THE 27<sup>TH</sup> WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME Year 1  
Pre-recorded for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia for 6 October 2021  
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One of Karl Marx's daughters once confessed to a friend that she had no religion and really knew nothing about it—unsurprising, given her father was the inventor of atheistic communism!



Karl Marx and his daughter Jenny, 1866

“But,” she told her friend, “the other day I came across a beautiful little prayer, which I very much wish could be true.” “And what was the prayer?” she was asked. Slowly Ms Marx began reciting, “*Unser Vater in dem Himmel*—Our Father who art in heaven”.<sup>1</sup>

“Lord teach us how to pray,” the apostles ask in our Gospel today (Lk 11:1-4), for they knew Christ was the best of teachers. Of the ninety times people address Jesus in the Gospels, they call Him ‘Teacher’ in sixty of them, a title He also used for Himself.<sup>2</sup> For our Plenary Council, also, Christ must be our wisdom and guide, and so: *Lord teach us how to pray.*

Jesus responds: *Pray like this: God our Protector, lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil!*



We are all too aware of the unhelpful trends in our culture: the hostility or indifference to faith, told in the rapid rise in the ‘nones’ with no religion, and moves to exclude those who have faith from the public square; the crisis of affiliation, practice and vocation, most apparent in the shortage of young adults at Mass and elsewhere in our Church’s life; the turn against Christian reverence for life and love, in law and practice around abortion, euthanasia, marriage and more. Christians pray every day for God to protect us from evils within us, committed through us, or going on around us. Christ responds with the gift of His Church to protect us in danger and console us in trial. *Protecting God, renew your Church in Australia today, deliver us from every evil, keep us free from sin and safe from all distress.*

Avoiding bad things isn’t enough: we must also pursue good ones. So Jesus said: *Pray like this: Provident God, give us the bread and forgiveness we need!* Christians intercede before God to shower our world with blessings, opportunities and mercies. We think of those most wonderful gifts—the daily bread of the Holy Eucharist and daily forgiveness of sacramental Reconciliation—gifts for which we’ve hungered during this pandemic and that our Plenary Council is so concerned to ensure will be widely available in the future.



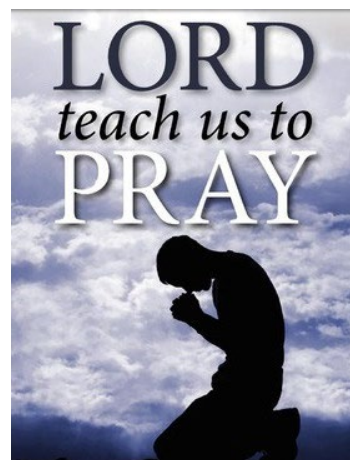
The Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, Haarlem School (1580), Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen

Christ gives us His Church to provide for physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual needs, through families and parishes, schools and hospitals, Vinnies vans and social

services, orders and movements, and more. *Provident God, renew your Church in Australia today, give us our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses.*

The God of Christianity is *Our Father*, a *God-with-us*, a *God-for-us*. Our Plenary Council is all too aware of the threats to His favourites, the little and poor ones: unborn, newborn and disabled, mentally ill, frail elderly and dying, trafficked and refugees, indigenous or homeless. And so the Master taught us to pray: *God, who converts our minds and hearts: may your kingdom come and will be done in and through and around us!* We try to do His commandments and be His beatitudes, and so inspire others to live out His plan for them. For this also, Christ founded His Church: to evangelize and change hearts, to catechize and educate minds, to convert and form souls. Then it is His heavenly kingdom dawns amongst us, His presence swells, His sovereignty rules in our lives. *Transforming God and King, renew your Church in Australia today, convert our hearts and align our deeds with your divine will so your kingdom grows in our land.*

Finally, Christ the Teacher of Prayer, tells us to pray like this: *Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy.* If He is our Protector and Provider, Converter and King, He is before all else our God, All-holy and totally Other, the fruitful, loving, parental Creator, the ultimate why of all that is, worthy of all worship and praise.



We know that the first purpose of the Church is the worthy worship of God, and our Plenary Council will surely do all it can to ensure this takes place going forward. *Creator God, renew your Church, so your name is known and your person honoured in every Australian heart and so you are exalted as our Holy, Heavenly, Fatherly God.*

“If only it could be true”, Marx’s daughter prayed, *if only it could be true that there is a God who is Protector and Provider, Converter and King, Totally Other yet Totally For Us, like a Heavenly Father.* If only there were such a God? “Well, Ms Marx,” we the People of God in Australia respond, “there is!”

“If only it were true,” she challenges us again, *that His children hallowed His name, made His kingdom come, ensured His will was done, daily fed and forgave others, were fed and forgiven themselves, and were freed from all evil.* For all that to be true, the Church must be Australia’s powerhouse of prayer. Only through prayer can we hear, discern, converse, propose, decide. Only with such inspirations that we can make the decisions we must. But with true and deep prayer we can face the dreams and difficulties head on, in the grace of the Holy Spirit and the company of fellow believers, striking out with renewed conviction and humble confidence. *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done—in Australia, as it is in heaven!*

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<sup>1</sup> G. Fuller, *Stories for All Seasons* (St Paul’s, 2010), p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. *Mt* 8:19; 9:11; 10:24-5; 12:38; 17:24; 19:16; 22:16,24,36; 26:18,25,49; *Mk* 4:38; 5:35; 9:5,17,38; 10:17,20,35,51; 11:21; 12:14,19,32; 13:1; 14:14,45; *Lk* 3:12; 5:5; 6:40; 7:40; 8:24,45,49; 9:33,38,49; 10:25; 11:45; 12:13; 17:13; 18:18; 19:39; 20:21,28,39; 21:7; 22:11; *Jn* 1:38,49; 3:2,10; 4:31; 6:25; 8:4; 9:2; 11:8,28; 13:13,14; 20:16.