

**DARLING DOWNS PARISH OF THE AELC**  
**TRINITY OAKLEY, ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,**  
**BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA**

18 February 2018

Bulletin for the First Sunday in Lent

**HYMNS:** 465 194 442 287 291 437

**INTROIT:** How lovely is Your dwelling-place, O LORD of hosts!

My soul has been deeply longing, — indeed, it has been yearning, for the courts of the LORD. My heart and my flesh are shouting for joy to the living God.

Even a sparrow has found a home, and a swallow a nest for herself, where she has settled her young, near Your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.

Blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are constantly praising You. Blessed are the people whose strength is in You! Your paths are in their hearts.

As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they turn it into a place of springs. The early rain also covers it with blessings.

They go from strength to strength. Each one appears before God in Zion.

O LORD, God of hosts, hear my prayer! Listen, O God of Jacob!

Look at our shield, O God! Look on the face of Your anointed one!

For one day in Your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather lie at the threshold of the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

For the LORD God is a Sun and a Shield. The LORD will give grace and glory.

He will not hold back anything good from those whose conduct is honest.

O LORD of hosts, blessed is the person who trusts in You!

Psalm 84

The Lord's Supper has always been seen as a sign of unity between those who commune together at the Lord's table (1 Cor. 10:17). When Christians partake of the Lord's Supper in a church body that has a confession of faith, they thereby declare that they believe that they are one in faith with those who commune with them. Since people cannot honestly hold two differing confessions at the same time, they cannot honestly commune with those whose confession is in conflict with their own. If any do this nevertheless, they deny their own confession, and so deny Christ Himself (2 Cor. 6:14-18). **We ask visitors who are communicant members in a church not in fellowship with the AELC, or are not familiar with the *AELC Statement of Faith*, to refrain from communing today. If you have questions, please speak with the pastor after service.**

**COLLECT:** Almighty God, You have promised to be with Your Church for ever. We praise You for Your presence and ask for Your ongoing blessing on those who gather here today. Dwell continually among us with Your holy Word and Sacraments, strengthen our fellowship in the bonds of love and peace, and increase our faithful witness to Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**READINGS:** Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 God renames Abram and Sarai.  
Romans 5:11 "We have now received reconciliation."  
Mark 8:27-38 "Take up his cross and follow Me."

**SERMON:** Deuteronomy 32:11-12

<sup>11</sup> As an eagle stirs up its nest and hovers over its young birds, as it spreads out its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions, <sup>12</sup> so the LORD alone used to lead him, and no foreign god was with him.

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### **Though Invisible, the Church is not Unnoticeable**

The church is invisible. Only God can look into a person's heart to see if that person has faith in Christ. Yet, though the church is invisible, we can find where it is present. The means by which the presence of the church is identified are the means by which God produces the church. These means are the gospel and the sacraments. Where the gospel is proclaimed, where the sacraments are administered, there we are assured we will find believers. The gospel has the power to change hearts (Ro 1:16). Where it is proclaimed, there we are assured God is at work bringing people to faith (Isa. 55:10,11). We, then, call the means of grace the marks of the church, because they indicate to us where the church can be found.

Further, where you find believers, you will find fruits of their faith. You will find people holding to Christ and His Word in faith. Jesus said, "*If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples,*" (John 8:31). You will find people confessing their faith in Christ. This is a natural fruit of a Christian's faith. As the apostles said, "*We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard,*" (Acts 4:20). Where the church is present, we will find people holding to Christ in faith and confessing their faith in Him.

We call a visible gathering of people around the gospel the visible church because of the believers in its midst. This is not a church apart from the invisible church. Those believers in a visible gathering are members of the invisible church. That visible gathering of people around the gospel is called church for the sake of the believers in its midst. Yet we are also aware of the fact that there are

hypocrites in visible gatherings of people around the gospel. Jesus told the parable of the weeds among the wheat (Matt. 13:24-31, 36-43) to illustrate that unbelievers will be present in visible gatherings of people around the gospel. They will pretend to be Christians, but they mask an unbelieving heart by a pretence of Christian faith. That is why the Christian life cannot be an infallible mark for identifying the presence of the church, for the Christian life can be imitated. Ananias and Sapphira tried to imitate the Christian life. However, they were hypocrites whom the Lord exposed in the early church (Acts 5:1-11).

Hypocrites will be present in the visible church. Yet they are not part of the invisible church. Since they have no faith, they do not belong to Christ's church, even if they are associated with a group of believers who gather around the gospel.

Concerning these matters our confessions state:

However, the church is not only an association of external ties and rites like other civic organizations, but it is principally an association of faith and the Holy Spirit in the hearts of persons. It nevertheless has its external marks so that it can be recognized, namely, the pure teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the gospel of Christ. (Ap VII and VIII:5)

Although hypocrites and wicked people are indeed associated with this true church according to the external rites, nevertheless when the church is defined, it must be defined as that which is the living body of Christ and as that which is the church in fact as well as in name. (Ap VII and VIII:12)

Nor indeed are we dreaming about some platonic republic, as some have slanderously alleged. Instead, we teach that this church truly exists, consisting of true believing and righteous people scattered through the entire world. And we add its marks: the pure teaching of the gospel and the sacraments. (Ap VII and VIII:20)

Therefore, in accordance with the Scriptures we maintain that the church is, properly speaking, the assembly of saints who truly believe the gospel of Christ and have the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, we admit that in this life many hypocrites and wicked people, who are mixed in with these, participate in the outward signs. They are members of the church according to their participation in the outward signs and even hold office in the church. Nor does this detract from the efficacy of the sacraments when they are distributed by the unworthy, because they represent the person of Christ on account of the call of the church and do not represent their own persons, as Christ himself testifies [Luke 10:16], "Whoever listens to you listens to Me," (Ap VII and VIII:28).

*Welcome to all with us today! May God bless our worship of Him by His serving of us!*

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Weekly sermons and bulletins are available at [www.aelc.org.au](http://www.aelc.org.au).

**Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.**

## COMING SERVICES

28 February 3 <sup>rd</sup> mid-week Lenten Service	4 March 3 Lent	7 February 4 <sup>th</sup> mid-week Lenten Service
7.30pm AUB Vespers	8.30am OAK HC 8.30am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.00am GRN HC	7.30pm TMBA Vespers
<b>Wednesday, 28 February</b>		
READINGS: Hebrews 4:14-16; Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-54; John 18:1-14; John 18:15-18; Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27; John 18:19-23; Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:65		
HYMNS: 65 170 298 48 v.3		
<b>Sunday, 4 March</b>		
READINGS: Exodus 20:1-17;	1 Corinthians 1:18-31;	John 2:13-25
HYMNS: 171 188 54 (53 335) 754		

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Friday, 2 March. 7.00pm. Family Evening at Aubigny. Pizza etc is provided for a gold coin donation (Usually start eating 7.20). The evening finishes with supper about 9pm, please bring a plate. Contact Jane Sippel 0488722074 for more info.

Saturday, 3 March, 10.00am. CoC/Seminary Committee meeting at Marburg. Please forward any agenda items to Ian Manz: [igm64@hotmail.com](mailto:igm64@hotmail.com)