

A Coffee with Alessio



Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A

There is quite a lot I could write about in this week's column, including the passing of the singer Vera Lynn on Thursday 18 June, the further easing of COVID-19 restrictions into Phase 4, and of course something about the readings this coming Sunday.

Vera Lynn passed away last Friday at the age of 103 - a very good innings! She was best known for performing hits such as "We'll Meet Again" to troops on the front line in countries including India and Egypt. What a very kind deed Vera did to be lifting the spirits of frontline soldiers through the gift of song. The song "We'll meet again" says:

*"We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when
but I know we'll meet again, some sunny day."*

In 1940, at the height of the London Blitz, Vera Lynn would set off to the BBC's underground studios at the Criterion Theatre in central London, to broadcast a 15-minute show called *Starlight* which was broadcast at 2:30am to soldiers around the world. It sounds as though her life was at risk as well as those involved in producing the program. The Parliamentarians of the day criticised the BBC "for broadcasting slushy, sentimental songs". A number of MPs felt there needed to be more upbeat songs to boost morale. Yet, Vera Lynn's program was a success because the songs she sang resonated with the intended audience because they spoke about the separation the soldiers were feeling from their families and sang those songs directly to them.

In the Gospel this Sunday we will hear Jesus say: "If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward." Yes, Vera Lynn and those who helped her with her program certainly gave more than "just a cup of cold water" to one of the little ones. She was rewarded for her good labours. God always smiles on good deeds when they are done for the right reasons. She had sold more than a million records by age 22, and just a few weeks ago "she became the oldest artist to get a top 40 album in the UK, beating her own record when her greatest hits album re-entered the charts at number 30." A pretty good effort for someone who is 103. At 103 most people are forgotten about. However, kind deeds are always remembered and looked upon with gratitude!

Speaking of wars, yesterday marked the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War. Over 17,000 Australians served during the Korean War (1950-1953), of whom 340 were killed (of whom 43 remain missing) and over 1,216 wounded. Another 29 soldiers became prisoners of war. This weekend in our liturgy let's pray for those servicemen and women who gave of their lives in this conflict.

From this Saturday, we have a further easing of restrictions, with registers no longer needing to be kept and the numbers of people in a venue can increase with the only restriction being the two-square-metre rule. Some parishes have been operating for a few weeks now, some never stopped. However, as we prepare to welcome back people into our communities, we need to be mindful of physical distancing and keeping our music areas, resources and churches disinfected and clean. Please God, we don't get a second wave. We have all worked hard to get out of the COVID-19 lockdown. To me, just as Vera kept the soldiers company, those parish workers who have been active through the lockdown have kept isolated parishioners company. For some people a streamed liturgy or a phone call from a parish worker, or a parish newsletter was their only way of remaining connected to their parish community.

The Servant Song fits in with the Scripture Readings this Sunday as does *Christ, Be Our Light*.

As we ease our way back into our worshipping communities, singing familiar music for the next few weeks including a few "good old chestnuts", to boost people's spirit will work effectively. While I'm giving music suggestions "Christ, Be Beside Me" which is a metrical version of Saint Patrick's Breastplate will fit in perfectly with this Sunday's liturgy because in the Gospel we hear from Jesus Himself how God must be first in all things.

Another Presentation Sister went to God this past week - Sr Mai Delahunty PBVM. I've mentioned the Presentation Sisters before and how they really did put God first in all their apostolates. The Sisters taught me a lot! Sr Mai was a very gentle soul who served the Lord both in the classroom and in a parish setting. My sincerest condolences to the Presentation Sisters on her passing and may Sr Mai rest in peace.

Well, as you can see it's been a full-on week both in the present and in the past. Let us serve the Lord with a willing heart, and give thanks to Him for all the blessings we have received so that with the Psalmist this Sunday we can say "For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord."

As for a coffee and a cake this weekend, Dome seems a good place to go to fit in with the suggestion of using tried and tested music for this Sunday in Ordinary Time, the same for a café fits in well.

Till next week, enjoy your coffee and cake!

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Friday 26 June 2020

References:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-53091856>

www.awm.gov.au