



### Speaking to Country

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which this reflection was written, the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji people, a people whose country has never been ceded and is now known as Cairns.

I acknowledge and thank the Elders, past and present whose wisdom and ways help me and those I work with better understand what it means to listen deeply and walk humbly. I also acknowledge the Elders on the countries which grew me up, the Nations of: Wiradjuri, the land of the three rivers which still calls me home; Dharawal where I learnt to teach to the sounds of the crashing waves at North Wollongong; and the Gadigal coast where I learnt leadership and collaboration skills.

Finally, I acknowledge the countries of Far North Queensland on which I work – the Kaurareg and Zenadth Kes of the Torres Strait, the Kuku Yalangi to the North, the Jirribal and Algnith to the West and the Yirrigangi to the East.

I invite you too to consider the country beneath your feet; the lands and waterways on which you live. The country which grew you up. I invite you to honour, in your own way, the people who have called the place where you are, home for millennia. Perhaps you could write and share an Acknowledgement that tells of your connections and learnings from Country.



### Context: St John XXIII

Pope John XXIII was born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli in Italy on 25 November 1881, at the age of 11 he entered Bergamo seminary, he was ordained a priest in 1904 [1]. At the outbreak of World War II, in the role of Apostolic Delegate to Turkey and Greece, Roncalli was active in assisting Jews escape persecution through the provision of 'transit visas'. When Pius XII died, Roncalli was elected Pope and took the name John XXIII. In the five years of his pontificate, he fulfilled corporal and spiritual works of mercy where he earned the name the Good Pope. He convoked the Roman Synod, established the Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law and summoned the Second Vatican Council.

*Figure 1*  
*Pope John XXIII (1881. Photograph. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016. quest.eb.com/images/126\_482151. Accessed 15 Sept 2024.*

## Scripture

*A reading from the Gospel attributed to John (for the feast of St John XXIII).*

John 21:15-17

After Jesus had revealed himself to his disciples and eaten breakfast with them, he said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to Simon Peter a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."



Figure 2

*Good Shepherd, The. Fine Art. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.*

*quest.eb.com/images/107\_3352328. Accessed 15 Sept 2024.*

The Gospel of the Lord

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ**

## Reflection

**by Rachel McLean – Director Identity and Outreach**

*Mater et Magistra* (meaning Mother and Teacher) was one of 2 major encyclicals that came from Vatican II, born in the decade of the 1960s, "the decade of the dream, of the civil rights movement, of the liberation of African nations from colonialism." [2] *Mater et Magistra* is infused with St John XXIII's quest for upholding the human dignity of all. He wanted to capitalise on the success being experienced by America and some nations in Europe and adapt their success for application in the majority world. [3] *Mater et Magistra* challenged the division between rich and poor:

*in some of these lands the enormous wealth, the unbridled luxury, of the privileged few stands in violent, offensive contrast to the utter poverty of the vast majority...and in other countries a notable percentage of income is absorbed in building up an ill-conceived national prestige, and vast sums are spent on armaments.* [4]

In the Pope's mind and heart, this blatant disparity of wealth was evidence of a disintegration of moral order and resulted in St John XXIII's explicit call to remain not just a material being, but a spiritual being. [5]

Perhaps the most profound challenge that St John XXIII makes in this Encyclical is for the reader to reflect on the impact of technology "in every aspect of life" [6]. St John XXIII was open to these benefits but was cautious of the impacts these technological advances would have on individuals identifying that, "spiritual values are ignored, forgotten or denied, while the progress of science, technology and economics is pursued for its own sake, as though material well-being were the be-all and end-all of life." [7] This caution for humanity to retain their spirituality in the busy and frenetic world of the 1960s was central to the thesis of *Mater et Magistra*. It could easily be written of the reality of our radically and rapidly changing world in 2024.

## Relevance for Today

In today's post-modern society, theologians and sociologists alike are at odds with how to meld the socio-political and spiritual worlds. New age spirituality, liberation theology [8] and the quest for tangible experience of 'the other' through volunteering or immersions results in a tendency for the modern world to "replace reasons with causes, to extirpate the sacred so that nothing might suffer the onus of being profane." [9] St John XXIII's writings not only break through the challenges of the time in which they were written but continue to provoke and inspire people today.

St John XXIII was regaled as being the "Good Shepherd" of the Church. The Church of Vatican II is vastly different to the Church of 2024. Mine is a Catholic Church which: mourns and seeks forgiveness for the Child Sex abuse crisis; wrestles with governance structures that reflect secular leadership structures that include the wisdom and ways of minority groups; is grappling with the place of women in its leadership, liturgy and language. Research within and outside of the Church [10] demonstrates that the youth are yearning to belong in ways that technology and social networking do not allow them to belong. The research suggests that even the youth are "yearning for community and relationship, [whilst being reluctant] to commit to it" [11] they want to be like St John XXIII who "lived with both feet on the ground, and...was interested in the everyday concerns of people." [12] Perhaps the writings of St John XXIII, his life and his actions, especially his capacity to be part of the common people, to "talk with ordinary people, to listen to a child, to console an invalid" [13] and, at the same time revel in the beauty and power of the supernatural, could provide the youth, with a model of authentic Christian living in 2024.



Figure 3

Italy 20th century. Photograph. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016. [quest.eb.com/images/126\\_479644](http://quest.eb.com/images/126_479644). Accessed 15 Sept 2024.

St John XXIII invited the world to hear the voice of the Church. He dared create a manifesto of social order that was equitable and evocative. Today, Pope Francis is asking us to turn up and tune in through the [Synod on Synodality](#). If we want our Church to grow, to nurture, to sustain – then it is up to us to tend it. Like a mother who raises a child, and then a child who cares for an aging mother, the reciprocal and live-giving love of mother and child is what I am committing to through my participation in my local Church. As we celebrate the feast of St John XXIII, perhaps you could consider what your Church is (Parish, Universal, School, other) and spend a moment considering what you will give her so as to grow her.





## Prayer

Prayer of the moon, said by St John XXIII on the evening of the first day of Vatican II

Dear sons and daughters, I feel your voices! Mine is just one lone voice, but it sums up the voice of the whole world. And here, in fact, all the world is represented here tonight.

It could even be said that even the moon hastens close tonight, that from above, it might watch this spectacle that not even St Peter's Basilica, over its four centuries of history, has ever been able to witness....

When you head home, find your children. Hug and kiss your children and tell them: 'This is the hug and kiss of the Pope.' And when you find them with tears to dry, give them a good word.

Give anyone who suffers a word of comfort. Tell them 'The Pope is with us especially in our times of sadness and bitterness.' And then, all together, may we always come alive — whether to sing, to breathe, or to cry, but always full of trust in Christ, who helps us and hears us, let us continue along our path.

*Pope John XXIII, "Moonlight Speech", October 11, 1962*

## Call to Action

- How will you connect with your Church this October?
- Learn about the religious, historical and social significance of Vatican II with this resource from [Melbourne Archdiocesan Catholic Schools](#), or the [Sr Sonia Wagner](#), or [Fr Frank Brennan](#), or [Fr Ormond Rush](#)



Figure 4 Andrea Mucelli Golden full moon over Superga Accessed: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bluestardrop/9348422653>

## References

1. Cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens, "Pope John XXIII" The Furrow, Vol. 15, No. 7 (Jul., 1964), p434
2. Liam Ryan, "The Modern Popes as Social Reformers," The Furrow, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Feb., 1991), p95
3. Ibid p96
4. John XXIII, Pope, Mater et Magistra Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on Christianity and Social Progress, May 15 1961, accessed at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater_en.html)
5. Ibid No. 69
6. Ibid No. 208.
7. Ibid No. 200
8. Ibid 176
9. Eamon O'Shea, "The Social Teaching of the Catholic Church to What Purpose? To What Effect?" Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review, Vol. 79, No. 314 (Summer, 1990), p117
10. Jeffrey C. Eaton, "Simone Weil and Feminist Spirituality" Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Winter, 1986), p 700
11. McCrindle Research Emerging Trends Enduring Truths: The Spiritual Attitudes of the New Generations White Paper [www.mccrindle.com.au](http://www.mccrindle.com.au)
12. Ibid p 5
13. Cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens, "Pope John XXIII" p432
13. Ibid p432

