

THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH



Church of St. John the Beloved

91 Carroll Crescent, Gardiner, Victoria
(opposite Gardiner Railway Station)

HOLY EUCHARIST is celebrated each Sunday at 10.30 a.m.

Other Services as announced and advertised.

*A WARM WELCOME IS EXTENDED TO ALL VISITORS
AT ALL OUR SERVICES*

WELCOME TO ST. JOHN THE BELOVED

We are pleased to offer you this brochure in the hope that it may assist you in your initial contact with the Liberal Catholic Church and some of its services.

For the service of the Holy Eucharist you need a Liturgy and a Hymn book.

During the Service we normally stand when singing and kneel when praying. However, you may prefer just to sit quietly and absorb what is happening. Whatever you decide to do, please feel free to sit with someone and ask for assistance.

There will be a Collection made during the Offertory Hymn for the work and maintenance of the Church.

You are cordially invited to a 'cuppa' after the Service in the Social Room. It would be nice if you did, as this gives you the opportunity to meet us in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

We hope you enjoy your time with us and look forward to seeing you again.

Very Rev. Frederick A. Shade
Vicar

P.S. Please take a copy of the Parish Newsletter - copies are available in the Foyer and in the Social Room. If you would like to receive a copy on a regular basis, leave your name and address with us. Please feel free to contact us for healing, baptisms, weddings and funerals; our services are available to everyone.

THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH is a completely independent Christian Church, neither Roman nor Protestant, but Catholic. It is one of several Catholic Churches that are independent of Rome - such as the Greek Orthodox, the Coptic and the Old Catholic. The Liberal Catholic Church is, therefore, an independent and autonomous body, and unconnected with any other church. It uses a revised liturgy, in English, which emphasises the love, beauty and justice of God. It calls all men and women to the true freedom that comes from service to God and Humanity, and from understanding of self.

The Sacraments

This Church administers the seven sacraments that are regarded as channels of Christ's blessings and as a means whereby divine grace is bestowed and received. It endeavours to preserve a natural balance between ceremonial worship and devotional aspiration, and between scientific and mystical thought. It thus aims to combine the traditional sacramental form of worship which incorporates stately ritual, beauty and deep mysticism, with the widest measure of intellectual liberty and respect for the individual conscience on matters of doctrine and interpretation.

Doctrine

The Church erects no doctrinal barriers around its altars; all who come in a spirit of reverence are welcome to receive Holy Communion and to the other services of the Church. It is not for the Clergy to determine who may receive the sacrament, as the Church believes this is the prerogative of God alone. Private confession is entirely optional and voluntary, and is not a requirement for receiving Holy Communion.

The Liberal Catholic Church has a considerable body of teaching concerning the human race, its purpose and relationship to God, the mission and ministry of the Christ, as well as a rational and logical explanation of the place and function of the sacraments in the

spiritual life. The Church proclaims the ancient path (as seen in the lives of the apostles and saints) of Purification, Illumination and Union with Christ in God. By following this path people come to discern for themselves the things of the Spirit, and thus religious tenets no longer depend on faith alone, but are grounded on knowledge and personal experience.

The Clergy

The Church does not pay its clergy, and it is expressly laid down that no fee may be demanded for administering the sacraments or for other spiritual work. The Clergy also make no claim to temporal or spiritual domination over those people who are members of the Church, neither do they seek to control the consciences of anyone. The Church does not proselytise or evangelise in an aggressive manner in order to gain members, believing that one's personal conduct is the best advertisement. Neither does it seek to take members away from other denominations or Faiths. The Church believes that there are many paths to God, and therefore it will not seek to convert an individual from the particular path they have chosen.

Spiritual Authority

The Liberal Catholic Church derives its authority and Holy Orders from the Old Catholic Church of Holland, which became separate from Rome over two centuries ago and whose Orders are everywhere acknowledged as valid. Through this apostolic succession from Christ, the Liberal Catholic Church aligns itself with the historical church of past centuries; it is a constituent part of "the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church".

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WORSHIP IN THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

In case you are unfamiliar with the Liberal Catholic Church liturgy and ceremony, the following notes have been compiled to make it more meaningful for you.

The Church Building

It is often said that humanity can worship God in any place and that it is unnecessary to have a church building as such for this purpose. With this viewpoint we can be in complete agreement as all of life, for the person who is dedicated to spiritual matters, is truly sacred and “sacramental”.

Any place where we may find ourselves, therefore, is a fitting one in which we can give thanks and praise to God, who is the centre of all life, the beginning and the end of all things within this universe. But for most of us in this present age there is great value, indeed necessity, in having a church building in which to worship and pursue a spiritual life. The explanations outlined below are some of the reasons which can be given in support of this view.

A church is a centre in which special conditions have been created to enable the free passage of spiritual power, life, grace and consciousness from the spiritual to the material level, and from the material back to the spiritual.

Within the Christian faith, all new churches are dedicated or consecrated to the service of God for the fulfilment of His purposes upon earth. Perhaps the most important of these purposes is the matter of worship. Worship is our way of giving praise and glory to God for the wonder and beauty of His Creation and also for our special part in it (Christ’s first commandment: Matt. 22:37).

It is one of the special concepts put forward by this Church that the whole of life is motivated by vast unseen forces and that these can

operate for purposes of good and evil. When a church is consecrated it becomes a highly “magnetised” centre, so to speak, and a channel of spiritual grace. In a spiritual sense, its purpose is to stimulate the influences of good and exclude all the influences of evil.

A consecrated church is a hallowed building and a centre of peace, a place of worship to which people may come as a haven from the distractions of worldly affairs. It is also a centre of fellowship, a sacred place where people can join together in His Name and pour out their devotion to Him, and wherein we can serve each other in love (Christ’s second commandment: Matt. 22:39). Thus the church building enables us to worship as a community.

A church is a House of God in which there resides a unique form of His power, His consciousness and His presence. These are manifested within the church in a special way on the altar, which is seen as being the very throne of God.

The Purpose and Value of Ceremony and Ritual in Worship

Ceremony in worship, or in any other important occasion, is intended to form a communicating link between the unseen world of the eternal and the physical, temporal world in which we live. In the Liberal Catholic Church, the focus of our attention is the altar. The altar is for us the “interface” between God and His people as well as being the throne of the Risen Christ.

In our ceremonial form of worship we also have the privilege of co-operating with the work of the holy angels and this is a very special way in which another bridge can be built between the spiritual world and our world, the coming together in worship to God of the hosts of heaven and humanity. The angels assist us spiritually in our services, carry the prayers that we offer to the Most High and help us receive, if we are willing to be helped, the benefits that God has to offer us.

Thus worship, praise and adoration serve to lift both worshipper and angel nearer to the heavenly throne of God.

The aim of all church worship and its ceremonial and the goal of all spiritual endeavour is to unite with God, to identify the Christ within us and thus be united with our Lord Himself. By this endeavour we also become united with humanity in general and experience “at-onement” with **all** life.

The Holy Eucharist

The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist was instituted by our Lord Christ and is a special vehicle of His grace whereby we enter into a state of communion with our Lord, a relationship that is very intimate and personal to each communicant.

In this service we have the opportunity of offering ourselves - spirit, soul and body - in loving service and devotion to God:

“Here we offer and present unto thee ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a holy and continual sacrifice unto thee. May our strength be spent in thy service and our love poured forth upon thy people.”

To every prayer and service of praise and thanksgiving there is a divine response. By partaking of holy communion (the consecrated bread and wine) we receive the Divine Life of Christ; we endeavour to become more like Him and serve Him better. (The consecrated bread is referred to as the “Host”.)

With a realisation of the sacredness of holy communion and the privilege of being able to approach the altar, it is advisable to have some time for quiet thought and preparation beforehand. Self-preparation and composure of the mind and the emotions should always precede worship. Ideally, before the service commences, we should also endeavour to achieve mental and spiritual unity with our fellow worshippers.

In the Liberal Catholic understanding, the Holy Eucharist is also a means for the sending out of spiritual help and power over a wide area around the church, so that not only does the congregation benefit from this service, but also the surrounding neighbourhood.

At each celebration of the Eucharist there is a pouring out of divine life, spiritual power and grace, and this arises from two main sources. The first is the divine blessing that comes through the consecrated Host. The second is derived from the building up of a “spiritual temple” on the part of the clergy and congregation during the service, together with the great help granted by the holy angels, who are always on hand to do the will of our Lord and respond to our prayers. In fact, at the beginning of the service, the celebrant invokes the presence of a particular angel to direct this work:

“We pray our heavenly Father that he will send his holy angel to build for us a spiritual temple through which his strength and blessing may be poured forth upon his people.”

By the uplifting of our hearts and minds in love to God, and the offering of ourselves to Him in all that we are and all that we do, we can assist the angels in building that spiritual temple, and with them experience the presence of our Lord Christ among us as He promised (Matt. 18:20) as well as in holy communion.

The central point of the Eucharist service is the act of consecration. The “elements”, the bread and wine, are solemnly and joyously blessed by the celebrant, who recites the words used by our Lord Himself. When the wonderful act of consecration takes place, the wafer or bread and the wine then embody the very life-essence or “substance” of our Lord Himself as the Ever-Blessed Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. They become a means by which the life and consciousness of our Lord is brought directly and immediately into our presence.

The prayer given below is suitable for saying privately while waiting to receive communion:

“O thou who in this adorable sacrament has left us a living memorial and pledge of thy marvellous love for mankind and dost therein graciously draw us into wondrous and mystic communion with thee, grant us so to receive the sacred mysteries of thy Body and Blood that our souls may be lifted into the immensity of thy love and that, being filled with a high endeavour, we may ever be mindful of thine indwelling presence and breathe forth the fragrance of a holy life. Amen.”

As has already been mentioned, the service of the Holy Eucharist is a means by which our Lord pours out His love and blessing, not only to those present at the service but also to all peoples of the world. But the worshippers also take Christ’s blessing with them when they leave the church. They too become channels of our Lord’s healing grace and peace in their personal contact with others in their daily lives.

In this way, the Holy Eucharist becomes not only a particular form of corporate worship and personal communion with God, but just as importantly, it is used as a vehicle for bringing Christ’s blessing to the rest of humanity.

The Reserved Sacrament

In the Liberal Catholic Church we have the privilege of the sacramental presence of Christ on the altar in the form of the retained or “reserved” Host, and this is kept in what is known as the Tabernacle. This is why we show reverence by genuflecting whenever we enter the Church or approach the altar. Our reverence is reflected in the words of the Liturgy:

*“Yea, Lord, we greet thee, throned on thine altar;
Ever to thee be highest glory given.”*

Wherever the Sacrament is present on the altar, we come in touch directly with God in a special way. And although we declare that in Him we “live and move and have our being”, we believe that we are in the presence of a particular manifestation or “epiphany” of Christ the Son of God; when we are close to the sacred Host, we are in the presence of his life and consciousness. For these reasons, we can demonstrate our love and our devotion to him by genuflecting whenever we enter the church.

The Sign of the Cross

The sign of the cross is used frequently in the services both by the celebrant and the people. It is the Christian “sign of power” and “sign of faith”. When used by the priest it becomes a vehicle of spiritual force; when made over ourselves it draws around us unseen influences that will assist in driving away unwholesome thoughts and at the same time make it easier for us to retain what is good.

It is also designed to remind us of our Lord Christ of whom it is the symbol. Every time we make this sign, we consecrate our mind, heart and actions to the service of God through Christ, so that all we do and say, all decisions we make, and the work we take up shall be done in His Name.

Incense

The use of incense at places of worship is a very ancient custom. It is offered as a mark of respect, and is used in many other denominations and religions. It plays an important part in the services of the Liberal Catholic Church and its use in our worship has very real significance. The incense ascends before God as a symbol of the prayers and devotion of the people. Its aroma spreads through the church as a sign of the sweet savour of the blessing of God.

Incense is used also with a definite idea of purification. When the priest blesses it he has in mind the intention that wherever its aroma may penetrate, wherever the smallest particle may pass, it shall bear with it a holy influence, a sense of peace, of purity, and that its influence may brush aside all disturbing thoughts and feelings.

Open Communion

In this Church, all visitors worshipping with us are invited to receive holy communion at the service. It makes this invitation, not only to those who are members of a Christian church but to **everyone**, because we believe that we act as “agents” of Christ in this regard, and do not have the right to exclude from the sacrament anyone who devoutly and sincerely desires to draw near to Christ by receiving holy communion.

Enquiries

Your local Liberal Catholic Church will be pleased to hear from you and answer your questions about our work.



JESUS CHRIST VICTOR

Suggested Reading:

- The Liturgy of the Liberal Catholic Church, St. Alban Press
- The Liberal Catholic Church Statement of Principles and Summary of Doctrine
- An Introduction to the Liberal Catholic Church, J. B. Parry and R. A. Rivett, St. Alban Press
- The Work of Transformation (A pictorial exploration into the meaning of the Holy Eucharist) J. B. Parry and M. C. Godby
St. Alban Press
- The Larger Meaning of Religion, J. I. Wedgwood,
St. Alban Press
- New Insights into Christian Worship, J. I. Wedgwood,
St. Alban Press
- The Liberal Catholic Church and some Facets of its Doctrine,
C. C. Wicks, St. Alban Press
- The Science of the Sacraments, C. W. Leadbeater,
St. Alban Press

*Please contact the Liberal Catholic Church for these publications.
The address of your local church is given over the page.*

CONFITEOR

O Lord, thou hast created us to be immortal and made us to be an image of thine own eternity; yet often we forget the glory of our heritage and wander from the path which leads to righteousness. But thou, O Lord, hast made us for thyself and our hearts are ever restless till they find their rest in thee. Look with the eyes of thy love upon our manifold imperfections and pardon all our shortcomings, that we may be filled with the brightness of the everlasting light and become the unspotted mirror of thy power and the image of thy goodness; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

ACT OF FAITH

We believe that God is love and power and truth and light; that perfect justice rules the world; that all shall one day reach his feet, however far they stray. We hold the fatherhood of God, the unity of all that lives; we know that we do serve him best with service freely given. So shall his blessing rest on us ✠ and peace for evermore. Amen.

THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

- Is neither Roman nor Protestant, but all-embracing. The term Catholic denotes those churches, both east and west, sharing in the Apostolic Succession that goes back to Christ Himself.
- Encourages the widest possible freedom of belief and interpretation among its members. It makes no claim to spiritual or temporal domination over any person.
- Welcomes as members those who desire a form of worship which combines the wisdom of the old with the freedom of the new.
- Has for the intelligent, critical or seeking person an approach where religion, science and philosophy may go hand-in-hand and where no particular system of thought or belief is beyond question or query.
- Endeavours to preserve a natural balance between the beauty and reality of sacramental worship, modern thought and mystical experience.
- Does not pay any salary or stipend to any of its ministers, nor demands payment for spiritual work.
- Offers its spiritual services to all, such as Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals.
- Offers Holy Communion to all who reverently seek it. Administers the seven traditional sacraments including the sacrament of Healing.

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The address of your local church is:
St. John the Beloved
91 Carroll Crescent
GARDINER, VIC. 3146

Contact:
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Tel: (03) 9459 2670