

Sunday Mass Readings for May 25 2025, Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year C	
1st Reading	Acts 15:1-2, 22-29
Responsorial Psalm	Psalms 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8
2nd Reading	Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23
Alleluia	John 14:23
Gospel	John 14:23-29

Catholic Sunday Readings for May 25 2025, Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year C



This is my Reflection for today. For those that don't know me, my name is Marie Elizabeth Dowling. These are my thoughts about what it is to care for a home, to share a meal around a table, and be nourished by food. And as you will see, the importance of comfortable chairs.

Caring for the home

Growing up in Coburg the second youngest of 6 children, I knew from a young age that I wanted to get married and have children, just like my own mother who was one of 8 children. She seemed like the archetypal Mother – happily married with 6 children, a wonderful cook, she loved gardening, she could sew, and hand sew and had many good close friends.

As a teen, I thought it a bit odd that she had never worked once she had married. But mum was from a different era, she was born in 1921 when that was the rule, you stayed home once you were married.

I started to think how boring life must be without a “proper job,” and wondered whether she ever resented having to look after all of us EVERY single day?

My year 11 English Literature Teacher, Margaret suggested I read Virginia Woolf's ‘A room of one's own,’ and I wondered whether my mum would have liked somewhere of her own too, after all, dad had his shed.

I was itching to have a place of my own too, after sharing with my younger sister my whole life. A place I could care for and decorate, and at age 20, I moved into a 1-bedroom unit in Brunswick West, about 10 minutes from “home.” I felt so glamorous!

My Nana insisted that I have 4 bone handled knives and some forks that had probably been her wedding gifts, and I can still recall buying plates in Lygon Street, because there would be no Kmart crockery for me!

Robert, a good friend from the tennis club, (whose family all lived in Wangaratta), and I took turns cooking dinner for each other every second week. This was fun, as I excitedly chose new recipes from library books and read about exotic ingredients in the 'Epicure' section of 'The Age' newspaper.

I had a small garden too, and began growing a few herbs and colourful flowers, encouraged by my mum Catherine and Nana Nell.

Meanwhile, in January the man who would become my husband, came to work at the library that I worked at. Six months later we were married, and another six months later we welcomed James, who is now 38 years old.

I decided to resign from my Library Assistant job, even taking my superannuation to buy a 3-piece lounge suite because I thought that I was going to be a Mother now and hadn't considered ever going back to work....or that the marriage may end.

I was determined to create a wonderful home life for my little family, re-creating the warm, loving environment my parents Cath and Leo had provided for me. I loved cooking for friends and family, preparing for a day or 2 for a dinner. Luckily James slept a lot.

I dug up garden beds, pulled out weeds, cut back small trees and borrowed books on "English country gardens." I really wanted to be "a good Mother" like my own mother and my Nana Nell, my dad's mother (my only grandparent), who had a beautiful flower garden.

My daughter Elizabeth was born 2 years and 10 days after James. She neither fed or slept, which was very challenging. But that's another story.

When Elizabeth was a year old, I left my husband. This was a difficult decision to make on so many levels. Before I could leave, I had to get a full-time job and secure not 1, but 2 full time childcare places. This was the practical side covered.

Emotionally though, I was shattering my image of maternal perfection, which I had wanted all my life. I was now 25 years old. So very young really. I moved into a small 2-bedroom upstairs unit in Thornbury. My Nana Nell had died 2 years earlier, and a year later, I had the opportunity to rent her home from a cousin.

It was lovely to be back in Coburg. Living in **her** home, cooking for **my** children in **her** kitchen bought me great joy and was healing for me. I felt her spirit strongly in the home, the home that I had had occasionally slept overnight in as a child in the school holidays, and danced around the lounge room playing fairies in, as my younger sister pretended to "play" the piano. As a teen I drank many cups of tea here with my parents, as we ate her scrumptious date scones and each time we left her home, it was with our hands encircling a "tussie-mussie" wrapped in a wet tissue. This was a small selection of flowers, which always included blue Forget-me-not's (*Myosotis*) and perhaps a tiny rosebud, if there was one to be found. The wet tissue was to keep them alive, in our 2-minute car drive to our "home" a few streets away.

Care for my home has always remained central to who I am...

There are a few things that I value highly:

- I light a candle at every meal
- I say a blessing at every meal

If others are present who I suspect will disapprove, I will simply say “thank you to the cook.” My first two children (when younger) would sometimes add, “thank you to the kook !” and laugh, because, well, they did like to embarrass me I suppose.

If Peter and I are out to dinner, we make eye contact and blink 3 times, that’s our secret code for our blessing of the meal.

- I like to have a flower or some herbs from the garden on the table, no matter how simple
- I like to see colourful flowers when I look out of each window or door
- I like colourful furniture
- I like textured cushions, rugs and blankets
- I cook 2 cakes, sharing one. Someone is always in need of a cake, aren’t they?
- Seeing clothes blowing on the clothesline makes me happy!

The dining room table

In December 2024 I gave away my parent’s Danish reproduction dining room table and 6 chairs to my brother, as it took up too much space in my small unit. My 3 adult children, James now 38, Elizabeth now 33 and Laurens now 25, had said for the last 10 years that the chairs were too uncomfortable to sit on, and they were right! They had refused to sit on them, so they had been stored up high in Peters wardrobe, while James used other chairs until he moved overseas in July last year.

What I wasn’t prepared for was the effect this would have on me. With no table to sit at to eat, I lost interest in cooking, which was a huge change for me.

Even making porridge became a struggle.

And I stopped lighting the candle, which meant I also stopped saying my prayers before meals. You can see how one thing leads to another, and I noticed that I also started to feel a bit flat.

What was happening to me I wondered? With 2 weeks to go till Christmas Day, I felt that I couldn’t actually have Christmas without a dining table. So I borrowed one for the day. Problem solved, temporarily. Once the table had been returned though, there was still this space where the table **had been**.

There was an actual **void**, and I saw it as a void within me. (This was all unconscious at the time of course....until I wrote this!)

I decided I really **had** to get a table now, but given that I hate UGLY things (ie. Poorly designed), I couldn’t just go and buy **any** table. I started trawling the internet with my tiny budget. Freedom furniture, then Ikea, and even Target and heaven forbid... Kmart. No, I decided. I could not!

I would look in op shops. Because then I would get a wooden table with it’s own story, not something with a foil laminate, but no luck. Weeks went by and not having a table affected me more and more and so the very very small outdoor table came inside.

Interestingly it’s not so bad. I don’t love it, but it does the job and I tell myself it’s only temporary. It does however mean that I now sit down to eat again, I light a candle again, and I say a pray before meals again, so some sense of order has been restored to my world.

The importance of cooking and the gift of food

A few weeks ago, I felt the need to make 150 or so tiny meatballs, (polpette). It's something that I really enjoy doing. The next day I made two large pots of 'Rainbow Bolognese' sauce. That's the sauce I've been making for my children since they were born. The recipe came from a butcher's shop promotion recipe card from 'The Beef and livestock corporation' and consists of a bolognese sauce with grated carrot, zucchini and chopped celery. It's tasty and healthy.

My other favorite thing to cook is lemon and yoghurt loaf (cake) with frozen blueberries, raspberries or cherries. A Donna Hay recipe.

On Anzac weekend Peter and I were both a bit unwell and one of our lovely neighbors sent across 6 freshly baked Anzac biscuits. I made a mug of tea and sat down with a biscuit, and as I bit into it, I felt so nourished by Zoe.

I thought of her at the mixing bowl with her 6-year-old son measuring out the oats, flour, melted butter and golden syrup. Then I imagined **my** own children, as young children, doing the same with me, rolling the mix into balls, pressing the ball down onto the greased baking tray, watching the biscuits cook through the oven door, and that smell.....when you first take them out of the oven... I felt slightly teary as I ate the biscuit.

Zoe's biscuits were fresh and chewy, so I needed another, and another mug of tea to go with it, and as I sat back down on the couch, I thought again about how much I love caring for my home, a home with a table, andhopefully comfortable chairs to sit on.

Thanks for listening to my story.

Marie Dowling.