

Dear friends,

I know for all of us, these are troubling and anxious times as the Corona-virus spreads throughout our country of Australia, and indeed throughout the world. Of course tragedies like this bring out the best and worst in people. But, I've always believed that these opportunities call us to make choices about it as that will bring out the best in us as we struggle to cope with the chaotic and unknown.

I know that for many people in the parish community, this is a time for personal prayer and reflection when we are not able to celebrate the Mass together as a community. The Archbishop of Sydney, Anthony Fisher OP, has reminded us that: 'the Church in Australia was founded at a time when the Mass could not be celebrated on these shores and our forefathers and mothers waited for years to receive the Eucharist.....but just as prayer sustained them through those times, so it can be for us today.' We take comfort in the fact that just as they prayed and sustained the young, pioneering community through those times with devotions, rosaries and their faith in the Lord, so we too know that we have hope that one day, we will return to our church as the People of God, to give the Lord thanks once again in the Eucharist.

Prayer is the vital thread which continues to unite us as a community of Christ's faithful. But we are fortunate to have the advantage of telecommunications which can further connect us at this time. It is heartening to hear that Channel 7 will broadcast the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies live from St Mary's Cathedral, and that many people have been able to access the Mass through the internet, as well as programmes which feature communities praying together.

Last week, the Holy Father Pope Francis televised his 'Urbi et Orbi' address on the Coronavirus, using the image from the gospel where Jesus calms the storm, while the disciples remain fearful that the Lord doesn't care that the boat is sinking. The Pope says: 'We find ourselves afraid and lost. Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realised that we are in the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each is in need of comforting one another.' This is the time when especially during these days of Lent we are called to put our wants and desires aside and to be self-sacrificing toward our fellow men and women.

The Pope further reflects upon our greed, our feeling powerful and reliance on ourselves: 'unshaken by our own haste, oblivious to injustice, carrying on regardless, thinking we could stay healthy in a world that was sick. Now that we are a stormy sea, we implore you.'

"Wake up, Lord!"

As we rely on the Lord to now calm the 'storms' of our lives, and bring us back to the realisation that Jesus is the Lord of Life, and as we approach Holy Week and Easter, we know that Christ suffered, died and rose again that we might have life and have it to the full. (Jn 10:10).

We pray that as Jesus came and brought life to many that through the skills and expertise of all working to restore life: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women and so many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves. (Pope Francis, Urbi et Orbi, pg 3).

We entrust all to the Lord and to Mary His Mother, Our Lady of Lourdes, as we seek to pray and work together for the coming of His Kingdom.

Fr Kelvin