

Catholic Parish of Blackiriars

Issue 20
29th March 2020
Year A

Under the care of the Dominican Fathers



VERITAS



HOLY ROSARY CHURCH

Parish Priest

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Office Hours

Monday, Tuesday,
Thursday, Friday
9.00am - 12.30pm

Parish Finance Council

Roger Paul

Mass times

Wed & Fri - 5.30pm
Tues & Thurs - 6.45am

Saturday 5pm (Vigil)

Sunday 8am, 10am & 5pm

9am Mass Saturday &
Public Holidays
excluding Mondays

Pray the Rosary

and First Saturday each month
3.30pm

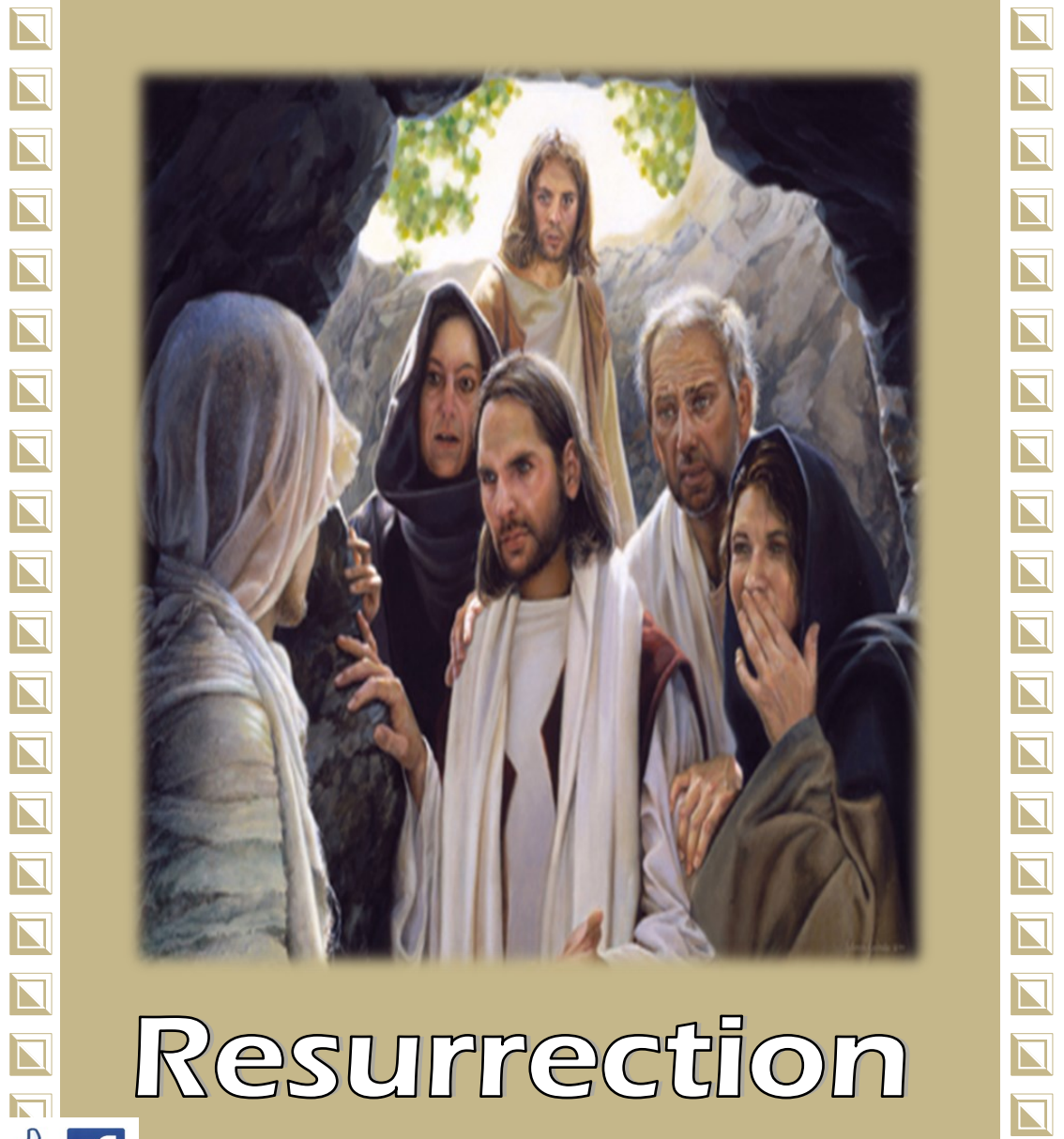
Reconciliation

Saturday 12pm—12.30pm
and 4pm—4.30pm

ACU Chapel Signadou

Wednesday - Midday

Fifth Sunday of Lent



Resurrection



<https://www.facebook.com/Holy-Rosary-Parish-Watson-Canberra-105834614351072/>

If you are in Urgent need of
a Priest out of office hours
call - 6248 8253

A warm welcome is extended to guests & parishioners celebrating our Eucharist today.

FIRST READING

Reading

Ezekiel 37:12-14

The Lord says this: I am now going to open your graves; I mean to raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel. And you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. And I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live, and I shall resettle you on your own soil; and you will know that I, the Lord, have said and done this – it is the Lord who speaks.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Responsorial Psalm: 129

With the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!
O let your ear be attentive
to the voice of my pleading.

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, who would survive?
But with you is found forgiveness:
for this we revere you.

My soul is waiting for the Lord,
I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord
more than watchman for daybreak.
(Let the watchman count on daybreak
and Israel on the Lord.)

Because with the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption,
Israel indeed he will redeem
from all its iniquity.

SECOND READING

Second Reading

Romans 8:8-11

People who are interested only in unspiritual things can never be pleasing to God. Your interests, however, are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you. In fact, unless you possessed the Spirit of Christ you would not belong to him. Though your body may be dead it is because of sin, but if Christ is in you then your spirit is life itself because you have been justified; and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Gospel Acclamation

John 11:25-26

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord;
whoever believes in me will not die for ever.
Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

GOSPEL

Gospel

John 11:1-45

There was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany with the two sisters, Mary and Martha, and he was ill. It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. The sisters sent this message to Jesus, 'Lord, the man you love is ill.' On receiving the message, Jesus said, 'This sickness will end not in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.'

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judaea.' The disciples said, 'Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews wanted to stone you; are you going back again?' Jesus replied: 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? A man can walk in the daytime without stumbling because he has the light of this world to see by; but if he walks at night he stumbles, because there is no light to guide him.' He said that and then added, 'Our friend Lazarus is resting, I am going to wake him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he is able to rest he is sure to get better.' The phrase Jesus used referred to the death of Lazarus, but they thought that by 'rest' he meant 'sleep', so Jesus put it plainly, 'Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad I was not there because now you will believe. But let us go to him.'

Then Thomas – known as the Twin – said to the other disciples, 'Let us go too, and die with him.'

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said: 'I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.'

Do you believe this?’

‘Yes, Lord,’ she said ‘I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.’

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, ‘The Master is here and wants to see you.’ Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were in the house sympathising with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, ‘Where have you put him?’ They said, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept; and the Jews said, ‘See how much he loved him!’ But there were some who remarked, ‘He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man’s death?’ Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, ‘Take the stone away.’ Martha said to him, ‘Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.’ Jesus replied, ‘Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?’ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

‘Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.

I knew indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me,

so that they may believe it was you who sent me.’

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, here! Come out!’ The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, let him go free.’

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

SPIRITUAL HELP

Catholic Resources for Spiritual Health in these Difficult Times

Daily inspiration from Canberra Goulburn ‘Catholic Voice’, delivered to your email daily free of charge: <https://www.catholicvoice.org.au/daily-voice/>

Receive daily Gospel Reflections from the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn: <https://cgcatholic.org.au/livingword/>

Daily and Sunday Mass online from the Melbourne Archdiocese: <https://melbournecatholic.org.au/Mass>

The Divine Office: The purpose of the Divine Office is to sanctify the day and all human activity. This is the richest single prayer resource of the Christian Church, with prayers, psalms and readings for each of the Hours, changing each day and through the seasons. <https://universalis.com/> <https://divineoffice.org/>

UPDATED ARCHDIOCESAN PROTOCOLS COVID-19 CORONA VIRUS PROTOCOLS EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

Churches are to be closed 24 hours each day.

There are to be **no** catechetical, spiritual or social gatherings in parishes.

Given that Churches are to be closed, the following liturgical and pastoral protocols are to be followed, without exemption.

Eucharist

1. No public Masses are to be celebrated until further notice.

Communion to Sick People and Elderly Persons

2. No Communion to sick persons in hospitals, aged care homes or private homes until further notice.

Funerals and Weddings

6. Graveside funerals only with a maximum of 10 people, including celebrant.

7. Weddings to be conducted outside the sacred space only, with a maximum of 5 people, including celebrant.

Baptism

8. Baptisms are suspended until further notice, including RCIA candidates, except in the case of emergency.

9. Remind the faithful of “baptism of desire” (CCC 1258).

Penance

10. First rite of penance should be conducted in an open space, with priest and penitent observing 1.5m spacing.

11. When the penitent is under 18 years of age, the confession should be witnessed by an adult, who can see, but not hear the confession.

12. Second rite of penance is suspended until further notice.

First Penance, First Holy Communion & Confirmation

13. Suspended until further notice.

Holy Week

14. There will be no liturgical celebrations with a congregation. Online resources will be forthcoming.

Daily Mass is available on the **Catholic Voice** website online from 6am each day.

Additional resources for personal and family prayer are available on the Catholic Voice website. **Visit:**

www.catholicvoice.org.au

In Your Prayers

please remember those in our community who are ill:

Alexia Harris, Maria Martiniello, Greg O’Neill, Una Bell, Mary Martin, Barbara Wilson, Mary Bui, Anne Corver, Bernard Slammon, Fr Ellis Clifford, Maureen Dawes, Edith Jensen, Philip Bailey, Awny El-Ghitany, Joe Schimizzi, Elsie Loughton, June Pollard, Paul Neddrie, Beth Delos Santos, Margaret Sullivan, Rosa Maria Santos, Pamela Sandy, Elizabeth Webster, Frank Zobec, Zelma McManus, Mimma Giampietro, Catherine Feehan, Maureen Blood, Charlotte Woolner, Fr Joe McGeehan

Deceased

Laurie Drew, Robert O’Brien, Bev King

In Memory

Felipe Miragaya

LAZARUS



For many of us right now is a "Lazarus" moment. We are stuck in the tomb of our own homes, there are restrictions, there is chaos and confusion, there is the spectre of sickness and death. All of this seems rather grim and a lenten penance that nobody expected or thought would come to this.

Furthermore the Church, like our protagonist Lazarus, has gone into the hibernation of the tomb too. Churches have been ordered shut, the sacraments have been more or less suspended or harder to access. It would seem that the death of Jesus is all too palpable; an extended Good Friday one might say!

The Lazarus story which we read in this week's gospel is a narrative which outlines a very real experience in all of our lives namely the death of a loved one. When a loved one dies it is surreal, you expect them to come back, or you treat their absence as temporary. Days pass, then the months, but they never return. You look at the chair they sat in in the living room, never to be properly filled ever again; it begins to feel permanent. You wonder where they are.

Our gospel reflects this type of loss quite graphically. St John tries to sketch the bond that Jesus had with this family - Martha, Mary and Lazarus, John has the sisters of Lazarus send this message:

"Lord, the man you love is ill."

The Greek word used here for love is *φιλεῖς* which means "to show *warm affection* in intimate *friendship*, characterised by tender, heartfelt consideration and kinship". Lazarus wasn't just some acquaintance, he was a close personal friend. We also know from our gospel text how close these two men were when we see Jesus later at Lazarus' tomb, and it is here we encounter one of the most poignant phrases in the scriptures "Jesus wept". The death of Lazarus had a profound effect on Jesus. Jesus wasn't some kind of cold emotionless automaton programmed to do the Father's will but in the fullest expression of his true human nature the Word made flesh sheds a tear for a friend, one of the most human experiences one can ever have.

Lazarus' death, however, is not the final word in his story, it is just the beginning. Jesus allows Lazarus to pass away so that "you may believe". Lazarus' passing was permitted in order for Jesus to reveal his divine nature and his union with the Father. Jesus exclaims to Martha, who is so busy about the practicalities of Lazarus entombment, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God? This phrase backs up his earlier statement to this incredulous sister "I am the resurrection and the life". For Martha the resurrection of the dead was something in the far flung future, something she would hope to see....one day. Jesus' 'I am' statement (the third one we've heard this Lent) brings the resurrection into focus as something that IS happening now.

The resurrection will happen not to Lazarus but to Jesus, not in some distant future. Lazarus' situation, one might say, is the dress rehearsal.

'Lazarus, here! Come out!', Jesus manifests his true nature as the one and only mediator with the Father as he prays 'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me.'

Jesus' raising of Lazarus is a demonstration that he is the Christ the one who is coming into the world that he is indeed the resurrection and the life, that is a resurrection to a new kind of life. Lazarus' return from the dead however is not a resurrection in the same vein as that of Jesus himself. For Lazarus it was a return to the mundane, for Lazarus he would have to go back to work Monday morning, for Lazarus it was a return to what he had always known, his death merely held off for another time, but it is granted to show Jesus' power and also to foreshadow Jesus' own resurrection which is something of a very different calibre to Lazarus' resuscitation.

In this time of uncertainty and let us be frank, a kind of 'death', let us be buoyed by the story of Lazarus because it speaks to us that there is a resolution to crisis, a solution to the problem and the hope of bringing life from certain death. As we march on to a very different Easter from what we've ever experienced may we be confident that in death life is changed not ended and that the future hope of resurrected life is the sure thing that helps us to continue to march through the joys and sufferings of our present crisis.

God love you all. You're all in my prayers

Fr Mannes OP

ON LINE MASS & PRAYER RESOURCES

Options for viewing Mass online:

1. **Daily Mass:** Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn: www.catholicvoice.org.au Mass celebrated specifically for viewing online. Available from daily at 6am. (Beginning Sunday 22 March 2020)

2. **Daily Mass** Archdiocese of Melbourne: <https://melbournecatholic.org.au/Mass>

Daily Mass: The 1.00pm Mass is streamed live daily (Mon - Fri) from St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne and is then available as a recording on demand until one hour prior to the next 1.00pm Mass.

Sunday Mass: On Sundays, the 11.00am Mass is streamed and it is also available as a recording on demand.

Options for Daily Prayer: www.catholicvoice.org.au <https://www.facebook.com/archdiocesecanberragoulburn/> (Content source: *Liturgy Help/Universalis*)

Living Word – Daily Gospel reflections. Subscription available at <https://cg catholic.org.au/LivingWord/> or view daily at www.catholicvoice.org.au

Documentation provided for download - Prayers of intercession - How to pray with children - Praying as a family - *Be Still and Know that I am God*: Eucharistic Adoration Guide Video reflections – Archbishop/VG/selected laity.

Additional Video Resources: www.catholicvoice.org.au and www.cg catholic.org.au

Management of psychological and economic issues: Provide practical and pastoral support for issues people are dealing with as a result of the crisis.

Resources for Easter Liturgies:

Way of the cross: video incorporating Youth Ministers and Archbishop Prowse with additional downloadable material.

A SEASON FOR LISTENING

Autumn lends itself to deep listening. It is a season to take time out to really hear what is going on.

Autumn is a season of change, from the heat and activity of summer to the cold and calm of winter. It is the time when crops are harvested and stored to provide food through the winter, and the ground prepared for the next season's plantings. It is a time of preparation and change. It reminds us that in the midst of life, we must ready ourselves for hardship and loss, even death. Autumn can be a time when we 'cultivate an open, attentive and receptive attitude in order to enter into transformative, mystical encounters'.

THE SACRED

Just as we have no control over the way in which nature prepares for cooler weather, we have no control over whether we will experience mystical encounters. However just as nature goes through a transition at this time of the year, we too can prepare ourselves to encounter the Sacred.

When you 'listen deeply' in an Australian autumn, take time to really see and hear what is going on at every level of your life and your environment. What do you hear/see/touch/ taste/feel? The leaves on eucalypts thin out noticeably; deciduous trees shed all of their leaves, revealing dark skeletons of bare branches. The earth rests, plant growth slows, the sun's heat becomes but a soft warmth.

We have much to learn from the people of Australia's first nation about deep listening. Miriam Rose Ungunmerr shares with us the notion of Dadirri.

'It is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness....'

'Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call "contemplation"....'

'When I experience dadirri, I am made whole again. I can sit on the river bank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need of words. A big part of dadirri is listening. Through the years, we have listened to our stories. They are told and sung, over and over, as the seasons go by. Today we still gather around the camp fires and together we hear the sacred stories.'

SEASON OF CHANGE

When we listen deeply to autumn in our own place we open ourselves to a recognition of God's presence in all that is. It is a season of change, a liminal time, which offers us the opportunity of allowing God's infinite love and goodness to protect us from the cold, and comfort us in our losses.

It is a time when we can reflect on the social, economic and environmental challenges that are facing our land and her people, especially those so recently affected by fire, drought and floods, and those displaced from their place of origin.

Many people do not like the prospect that autumn heralds in a period of longer darkness and less sunlight. They tend to become depressed in times of confinement, and personal and global issues crowd in on them. All that is very real. We need to prepare during autumn so that we can wrap around ourselves our friendships, our experiences and our achievements against the coldness which is to come.

It helps to find beauty in the changing environment. From now on, our lives will be lived within. Like the grapes that are harvested in happy sunlight, turning to wine in dark cellars, our thoughts will transform and grow richer.



Cont....

A SEASON FOR LISTENING

DEEPER ENCOUNTERS

Most importantly we are not alone. Autumn provides us with an opportunity for greater clarity about the transitions in the life of Christ. He listened deeply in the desert as he prepared for his public ministry; he withdrew to mountain tops and seashores from time to time; he lingered in the Garden of Olives when he realised that the officials were closing in on him. Deep listening in this autumn time can open us to deeper encounters with the Sacred.

We could make this our prayer at this time:

May all that is not love fall away.

May all that is not truth fall away.

May all that is not fullness fall away.

May all that is not richness fall away.

May all that is not peaceful fall away.

May this autumn season's soft release

bring us closer to your all-embracing love.

Through and with the love of Christ, Amen.

Reflections by Sr Mary Tinney, Sisters of Mercy

BACKGROUND

Today's Gospel reading recounts another sign, or miracle, found in John's Gospel, the raising of Lazarus. As our catechumens move closer to the celebration of their Baptisms at the Triduum, today's reading invites us to reflect upon what it means to call Jesus the Resurrection and the life.

The context for the story of the raising of Lazarus is the Jewish leaders' growing animosity toward Jesus. Jesus has been in Jerusalem, taking part in the feast of the Dedication, which we have come to know as Hanukkah. The people have been pressing him to declare plainly whether he is the Messiah. Jesus tells them to look to his works, which testify to his coming from God. Many do not believe Jesus, however, and some try to stone him for blasphemy.

Into this scene of confrontation, Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, send word to Jesus that his friend is ill. Jesus is said to love Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, but he delays his journey for two days. The delay heightens the drama and shows Jesus' obedience to God, who is to be glorified through Lazarus's resurrection. When Jesus finally declares that he will journey to Bethany, his disciples fear for his life. Thomas declares that he and the other disciples should prepare to die with Jesus.

The scene described at Bethany is a sad one. Martha meets Jesus weeping and saying that if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died. Yet she remains confident that God will do whatever Jesus asks. Martha affirms her belief that there will be a resurrection of the dead in the last days. Then Martha's sister, Mary, comes to Jesus with the same confidence, saying that Jesus could have cured Lazarus. Jesus asks to be brought to Lazarus's tomb where he prays and calls Lazarus out from the tomb. At this sign, many come to believe in Jesus, but others take word of the miracle to the Jewish authorities, who begin their plans for Jesus' death.

Set against the backdrop of Jesus' impending death, many elements of the raising of Lazarus foreshadow the good news of Jesus' own Resurrection. Jesus, facing the conflict with the Jewish authorities, acts in complete obedience to God. In raising Lazarus, Jesus shows his power over death so that when Jesus dies, those who believe in him might remember that and take hope. Just as Jesus calls for the stone to be rolled away from Lazarus's tomb, so too will the disciples find the stone rolled away from Jesus' tomb. With our catechumens preparing for their Baptism at Easter, the Gospel today calls us to reflect on Baptism as a dying and rising with Jesus. In Baptism we die to sin's power over us, rising as children of God. In Baptism we join ourselves with Christ, who conquered death once and for all so that we who believe in him may have eternal life. With Martha and Mary, we are called to profess our belief that Jesus is indeed the Resurrection and the life.

<https://www.loyolapress.com/>

All Masses Cancelled! Catholic faith in the time of Coronavirus

This crisis calls on us to care for one another and thank God at home.



"All Masses Cancelled"

That sign has just gone up outside my local church. Who could have imagined it just a couple of weeks ago?

Most Catholics are simply glad. Large gatherings are just what we do not want at the moment. The loving thing right now is to keep our distance lest we catch and transmit the coronavirus. But in every parish there are Catholics who do not like the idea of "missing Mass" and wonder could they not "get Mass" even if they did not gather?

In a more worrying vein, I have heard at least two priests say that they will not have the State – imagined as the Church's enemy – telling them to close.

They want to take the high ground of defending the freedom of religion. But if they go ahead and "provide Mass" – note the phrase – they may actually be endangering the very people they are claiming to serve.

But the fact that many regular Mass-goers will not be in a church this weekend – and maybe not even over Easter – might actually help us to broaden our understanding of the Eucharist and deepen our spirituality.

Object or action?

For far too long – some historians would say since the 7th century – Latin Christians have had an attitude of thinking about the Eucharist as an object (something that happens due to the priest's work and they are in attendance) or as a commodity (and we behave like religious consumers).

The language we use is the giveaway. We talk about "getting Mass" and "attending a Mass," and of "getting communion" and "taking communion." The image is that the Eucharist is "out there," and then we somehow obtain it or make it our own. But the word "Eucharist" relates to a verb. It is something we, the whole People of God, *do*. It is *our activity* of thanking God the Father as a gathered community. And we offer this praise and thanks through Christ our Lord.

The focus is on thanking the Father. Access to the Father is provided to us in the Spirit through Jesus Christ. The prayers are led by the priest. It is our basic activity as Christians, not some "thing" that the priest does for us or makes for us.

The virus has struck

So if we cannot gather because of COVID-19, can we still offer thanks to the Father through Christ?

Let's re-learn some basics.

1. Jesus is present with us

Many Catholics treat church buildings as if they were pagan temples, as if God is only "in there." But God's presence is everywhere and the risen Christ is not limited by space.

This presence of the risen Jesus among the community was captured in this saying preserved in Matthew's gospel: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt 18:20).

Even in the smallest gathering of just two people, staying two meters apart so as not to spread the virus, the Risen Lord is among them. They might be two people in a house, or two people linked by phone or Skype.

This was expressed in another ancient Christian saying that is preserved in the *Didache* (a first-century new disciples' guide):

"Wherever the things of the Lord are spoken about, there the Lord is present" (4:1).

2. My room is basic place of prayer

We sometimes think that we are only commanded to pray in a church building. We have grown up with the idea of Mass on Sunday as a regulation. But it is always sobering to recall this instruction by Jesus:

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the gatherings and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Mt 6:5-6).

We are now being told to stay off the streets, out of the churches and away from people. So we can rediscover shutting the door and praying alone – knowing that the Father will listen to our prayers.

3. Centre and summit

We describe the Eucharist as the centre and summit of our Christian lives, but often it is the sole part of our religious lives. This crisis calls on us to build up the surrounding foothills by caring for one another and thanking God at home, as well as in the church.

If we are not thankful for the meals we share at home, we are hardly ready to be thankful at the Great Thanksgiving that we call the Eucharist.

4. Every table is a sacred place

Jesus encountered people and taught at their tables. Every table is a place where we can encounter the Lord in those with us.

We will not be eating together as sisters and brothers in a church for the next few weeks, so let's starting recalling that whenever we eat, we should be thankful.

"You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you" (Dt 8:10).

We should be thankful for the food (grace before meals) and for enjoying it and the pleasure of being together (grace after meals).

Let's discover what it means to be Church

We will not be gathered as large groups for the next few weeks. Let's use this experience to rediscover that *we are the Church*; that the Church is not a building.

*Let us remember that we must be Eucharistic every day,
but especially at meals;
that the Eucharist is not an object we get,
take, receive or attend.*

*And let us never forget that the Risen One is with us,
interceding for us with the Father during these worrying times.*

Thomas O'Loughlin is a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton (England) and professor of historical theology at the University of Nottingham.

STAYING SOCIAL WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING

By nature, humans are social creatures. Yes, some of us are introverts (hello, I see you) but we all require some kind of social interactions in our lives for our mental wellbeing. An essential part of finding fulfilment in our lives is the ability to share them with others. As social beings, we crave connections with friends and family and thrive with social interactions in our weeks. For some of us, that may just be able to say good morning to our co-workers each day, and for others, it's constant meet ups, dinners, drinks and outings.



However, right now with COVID-19 sweeping through the globe and threatening lives right across our nation, we're living a bizarre time of self-isolation. Those of us who can work from home are urged to and everyone is encouraged to stay home as much as possible. Basically, if you can self-isolate, you should be. Although this is a necessary step to stop the spread of COVID-19 — and especially in order to protect those most vulnerable in our communities such as the elderly and immunocompromised — being confined at home is going to take its toll on the mental wellbeing of many of us.

When we are cooped up inside, it's likely we'll experience cabin fever; a condition of those in confinement who experience feelings of restlessness, irritability, boredom and dissatisfaction. Some will also see increased levels of stress and anxiety. Plus, with the uncertainty around the spread of the virus, the rising infection rate and the economic repercussions, many will be feeling more anxious and overwhelmed. Additionally, those with pre-existing anxiety may find the isolation and current crisis particularly stressful with the constant stream of news, and self-isolated people will be reaching for their phones even more than usual, becoming prone to the onslaught of headlines.

'In times of crisis, often others share our fears, doubts and anxieties and when we talk them through with one another, we feel some of the weight lifted. There is solace in knowing we aren't going through this scary time alone.'

Loneliness is also something we need to watch out for as a side effect of self-isolation, which can lead to increased levels of depression, anxiety, paranoia or panic attacks. Along with this, sufferers can experience negative feelings such as worthlessness, hopelessness and a lack of motivation and tiredness.

To combat this, we need to be checking in on each other during this period. Although we can't have face-to-face contact, we can still touch base digitally and over the phone, and ask each other how we're doing.

The World Health Organisation advises people in isolation should try to maintain their social networks. They recommend that as social contact is limited, we should aim to stay connected via email, social media, video conference and telephone. Despite the mess of the world right now, we're lucky to live in a digital age where many of us have the technology at our fingertips to bring us together. We can video chat over morning coffee, have lunch dates over video calls, send endless Snapchats throughout the day and make group chats discussing our favourite shows and the sports games still running.

Sometimes just speaking to another person can boost our spirits and help us feel less isolated and more validated in our feelings.

Cont... STAYING SOCIAL WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING

R U OK? Day is in September, but let's amp up the mission of it and regularly be asking our mates and family if they're okay throughout this turbulent and distressing period. And if you have a friend who's extroverted, lives alone or has a pre-existing mental illness, I especially encourage you to reach out to them as they'll be really impacted by missing out on social interactions.

It's also proven that reaching out and helping others has proven to be beneficial for your own mental health and wellbeing as it helps reduce stress and improve emotional wellbeing. It's something you can do for own wellbeing, as well as other people's.

So while we're isolating, let's regularly check up on our loved ones in safe ways. We're all in this together, even if we're physically apart.

Marnie Vinall is a freelance writer and copywriter in Melbourne

LISTENING

"I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God."

Ezekiel 37: 12-14, Ps 130, John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 31-45

Do you sometimes stop to think about what you believe? When you pray, do you believe that God will answer your prayer? Sometimes, God answers our prayers in a different way to what we were expecting. That can be difficult for us. However, God is always there, loving us and listening to us.

MIRACLE

Reflection: Of the amazing miracles that Jesus performed during his ministry, this is surely the greatest. It is the one which cemented the enmity of the Jewish leaders against him. It is ironic that by demonstrating that he is the source of life he seals his death sentence. Much of what Jesus reveals of the Kingdom of God is in opposition to worldly values. Often for ourselves also, it is the challenges of life that offer us the most potent growing experiences. Can you think of any 'death' experiences that have led to some sort of transformation or 'new life' for you? Just as strips of burial cloth bound Lazarus, often our experiences of life leave us tied and knotted up. What areas in your life need to be unbound?

What aspects of your true self have you buried in the course of your life?

How might Jesus help resurrect there?

Who are the 'life-giving' people or occasions in your life?

Try to be 'life-giving' to others this week with positive affirmation.

<https://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz>

FOCUS

Two of my favourite sayings are, "You're not dead till you're dead," and, "Think outside the box; you'll have eternity to be inside the box."

This Sunday's readings focus on graves, the depths and death, but they really are about life. We all know people who are old before their time, people whose get-up-and-go got up and went, and people who act like the living dead. Many reasons exist for dispiritedness. And then we know people who are full of energy, who have a passion and zest for life, and who in the winter years of life remain ever green, ever hopeful, always enchanted with the gift of the moment. They have never lost the wonder and playfulness of the inner child who beckons them onward to new adventures and new relationships.

Carol J. Dempsey is a Dominican Sister of Caldwell, New Jersey

'Somewhere along the way. we must learn that there is nothing greater than to do something for others.'

PROJECT COMPASSION

Tawonga is a ten-year-old girl, living with a disability. She lives in a village in northern Malawi in a region plagued by food insecurity and poverty. For most of her life, her parents have struggled to put meals on the table. Tawonga often had to miss school because she was too sick from hunger. The family also faced discrimination in their community due to her disability. Since participating in a Caritas Australia supported program, Tawonga's life has transformed. Her family now grows enough food to provide three meals a day, ending the struggle of malnutrition, and helping her thrive at school.



TAWONGA, MALAWI

Tawonga, whose name means 'thank you', says her community is blessed with many resources, like rivers, fertile soil and hills. However, with dry spells followed by floods, armyworm infestations and crop failures, her parents struggled to make a living. In 2016, Tawonga's parents heard about the A+ program run by Caritas Australia's partner, CADECOM (Catholic Development Commission in Malawi). They learnt irrigation farming and were given fertiliser and high-yield seeds. With these new techniques, their production of crops almost tripled. With your help, this transformational program can continue to empower vulnerable women, men and children, and strengthen the communities around them. Let's Go Further, Together.

REFLECTION

The scriptures today are about life and about death. In the midst of a world with so much death, we believe in a God of life. Jesus says to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life." We are invited to implement God's vision of life. Jesus says: "Lazarus, come out." Jesus says to those around him: "Untie him and let him go." Our contemporary world needs us, the people of God, to respond to Jesus who invites us out of our tombs and into freedom; freedom to respond to the needs of others, freedom to let go of everything that keeps us from being fully alive.

Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus. We too have so much to weep over: In a world of plenty, 6 million of Malawi's 19 million people require food aid. 23% of all child death cases in Malawi are related to under-nutrition.* 663 million of our sisters and brothers around the world do not have easy access to clean, safe drinking water.

The Project Compassion story this week features Tawonga from Malawi. In her eleven short years Tawonga, like millions in our global family, has faced the challenges of food deprivation. She is living with a disability and walks with the aid of crutches. Her siblings used to push her three kilometres to school in a donated wheelchair. She was often sick and missed school due to hunger. 90% of youth living with a disability live in rural areas of Malawi, leading to fewer education opportunities.

During the East Africa Food Crisis Tawonga's family participated in a Caritas Australia supported A+ program in Malawi three years ago. They now have enough food to eat and access to safer water closer to their home. Her family is benefitting from their ability to earn a reliable income from the sale of their crop. This has enabled Tawonga to continue her education and attend boarding school. The hunger that their family and community once experienced has given way to new life. Hearing Tawonga's story can also bring about a change in us. In what ways can we go further together to ensure the inherent dignity of all?*

[Project Compassion](#)

PRAYER

God of all peoples and nations,
As you accompany us
on our Lenten journey,
may our fasting strengthen our
commitment to live in solidarity,
our almsgiving be an act of justice,
and our prayers anchor us in love
and compassion.

Awaken our hearts and minds that
we may be one human family
as we all go further together.
We ask this in Jesus' name,
Amen

THE VALUE OF RECONCILIATION

The examination of conscience ... teaches us to look sincerely at our own lives, to compare them with the truth of the Gospel and to evaluate them with parameters that are not only human but drawn from divine Revelation. Comparison with the Commandments, with the Beatitudes, and above all with the Precept to love, represents the first great "school of penance".

To be welcomed and heard is a human sign of God's welcome and goodness towards his children. Integral confession of sin also helps penitents to be humble, to recognise their own fragility and, at the same time, to achieve an awareness of the need for God's forgiveness and the belief that divine Grace can transform life.'

IMPORTANT PARISH INFORMATION

It is important that you contact the office by email, phone or in writing if you would like to have a Mass Intention, Memorial Mass, Baptism, or use of the Parish Centre a **minimum two weeks** notice for Wedding bookings **six months** notice is required.

If you DO NOT book through the Office we cannot guarantee your request.

If you would like a loved one in the prayers for the sick, anniversary or death in the *Bulletin*, details must be with the Parish Office **NO** later than **Tuesday 9am** of that week.

PARISH BULLETIN - DEADLINE for notices is NOON TUESDAY
Ph. 6248 5925 or Email: watson@cg.org.au

NEW PARISHIONERS would you like to join our Parish? If you wish to register as Blackfriars Parishioner please fill out a card which you can find on the entrance tables and place on the second plate or give the card to Father.

Friends and Supporters of The **THOMAS MORE FORUM**
Due to the current coronavirus public health issue, the decision has been made to postpone the St. Thomas More Forum on Tuesday 24 March with Paul Kelly, Editor at The Australian Newspaper.

In the interest of **AMICUS**, our members, their families and the wider community we are suspending all AMICUS activities until further notice when this Corona Virus emergency is no longer a threat to us all. We look forward to resuming again then.

CONCERNED CATHOLICS - PUBLIC FORUM Amazon Synod - Learnings for Australian Catholics and the Australian Plenary Council Thursday, 2 April - 7:30 pm 9:30 pm, has been cancelled.