

Homily. 4th Sunday of Lent. Year A. 21/22 March 2020.

Faith and Hope in a time of fear seeking healing.

How strange it is for me as your Parish priest, and a Priest who has worked and served tirelessly in Parish communities across our Archdiocese for over 35 years, to write a 'homily' that no one will ever hear me speak. I fully understand the reasons our Archbishop Mark Coleridge ordered on Thursday 19/03/2020 the cessation of all weekend Masses during this time of virus (SARS-CoV-2/Covid 19). Nevertheless, like you, I greatly feel this loss of community and shared Parish worship of God, especially during Lent and with Easter visible on the horizon.

In my position, I have had to take many difficult and lonely decisions over these past couple of weeks. I'm very grateful for the support and understanding of our Parish Office staff, and for their help in contacting so many of you, our Parish members and friends, via texts, emails and the Parish website. To these we have just added a new and updated Facebook page simply called Corinda Graceville Catholic Parish. As much as I can, I will stay in touch through these means and keep the Parish Office open. If illness or new regulations come into effect that change this, I will endeavour to let you know by these means.

My request to you is that you go to our Parish website and stay in touch.

<http://www.corindagracevilleparish.org.au>

On this site is a form you can fill in and send to us that will connect you to our emails and sms messages, uniting our faith journey together.

It is to faith in God that we all must turn, more than ever at this time. The readings for this weekend begin by telling us that God does not see as we see. In the 1 Samuel reading we hear that human beings like us look at appearances and external things, but God looks inwards at our hearts. Then, in John's Gospel (9:1-41) about the giving of sight to the man born blind, the disciples wanted to know if the man or his parents sinned for him to have been born blind? Speedily, Jesus rejected such thinking, saying that no one's sin caused his blindness. It was given so that the works of God might be seen and displayed to us in him and his healing.

The present pandemic isn't caused by sin, nor is it sent by God to punish anyone either, but through it we might yet come to see God working, leading us to greater truth, compassion, faith and insight beyond mere externals. The story tells us that the man saw for the first time and kept on growing in his light of insight, wisdom and faith. He came to know Jesus, the Light of the world, believing and worshipping Him as Lord. Parallel to the man's experience runs the fate of those who thought that they knew God and how everything worked. Their arrogance and fear led them ever deeper into a dark morass of mind, soul and spirit. They refused to see the truth of God acting in Jesus Christ even though He and the evidence of the once blind man's healing was right in front of them!

Fear is the opposite of faith, for fear destroys trust while faith deepens it. Fear turns us inwards in a bad way, whereas faith sends us outwards with hope shown through our love and care for others in their crisis.

Like never before this is our time, our calling from God for choosing faith, showing this in our goodness, respect, right living and truthfulness, as St. Paul says to us in his Letter to the Ephesians. Our days and nights will be

quieter, so we can reflect on the scriptures and pray more fervently and often. An unusual stillness can already be sensed around us as more and more people withdraw from their previous ways of living. This can flatten our spirits or it can fuse them with new calm and considered Christ-like actions. The choice, as always, is ours.

Psalm 23, so well known, is what the Church offers to us this weekend. Get your Bible set up at home in a prominent place, choose it, reading it often during this week letting it seep deep down into us. Then our growing isolation will bring forth a deeper hunger in us for what we miss, our Parish friends and community. The enveloping silence will lead us to fresh faith in Jesus Christ, the Light of the world that no darkness overcomes.

You are all in my heart and prayer. Please, in my difficult tasks and many decisions, some I would rather not have to take, keep me in yours.

Fr. Mark Percival. MA, PP.

**Corinda Graceville Catholic Parish.**

**Please Note:** Malia, Melissa and I will be at every usual weekend Mass time **for this weekend only** in order to explain the closure of all Churches in our Archdiocese due to this pandemic. For those who do turn up seeking Mass we will have resources to hand to them. Our own Parishes resources and other links are already on our website, above.