

Homily. Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Year. B. 9/10 January 2021.

Once again I'm writing a homily that I'll never get to give to you.

I want to make it crystal clear to you that I completely support the strong recommendation of Queensland Health and our State Government's decision to lockdown the Greater Brisbane region for 3 days. The aim of this action is to get us and our health systems completely on top of the potential spread of the very transmissible UK variant of the Covid 19 virus that has recently been detected here in Brisbane. Going after this virus hard, early and with a clear and strong purpose is what's kept us and our State ahead of the curve so far, despite abdications and failures at the national level. If this latest lockdown achieves this aim then our sacrifices and inconveniences over the next few days, currently until 6.00pm Monday 11 January, will be well worth it.

When the news of this lockdown broke earlier today, Friday 8 January, I must say news that didn't surprise me at all, my mind quickly turned to alerting you as best we were able and to guiding our Parish and my staff. With Masses and Sacraments now suspended until a least Monday night and our Parish Office similarly shut, I urge all of you to focus at home on the wonderful scripture readings for the celebration of the Lord's Baptism. These readings speak of a powerful life-changing religious event and experience. They tell us that after his baptism in the River Jordan by John, filled with the Spirit and the affirmation of God, Jesus prepared for his public ministry of teaching, healing, forgiving and saving.

What we know, and what's particularly striking for us, is that immediately after His Baptism Jesus left the waters of the Jordan and the company of

the crowds for the silence and emptiness of the desert. This ought speak volumes to us who are now being called into some days of isolation from others and from our usual routines and expectations. Just like Jesus entered into his time of discernment filled with the Holy Spirit, we go into these coming days with Jesus alive in us, for we are baptised and reborn into no one less than Him. He is with us as we imitate, albeit in a different way, His 40 days of fasting, prayer, temptation and His ultimate triumph over Satan's voice of selfishness.

Our identity and life is to be sought nowhere but in our Lord for He has made His home in us. Now we are to consider ourselves as His sisters and brothers, His own family. We are the living stones making up a living Temple for God in this world. We are parts of His body, alive, acting and witnessing in our words, deeds and way of life to Him today. If this witness of ours is for a while to join our brother, Jesus, in some desert silence and isolation overcoming a little of our selfishness so as to serve the self-giving and sacrificial love of God for the good of the entire community, then these days are most surely full of grace for us.

Understood and seen in this light, in the light of the Lord's Baptism that we are remembering, this lockdown is a gain and no loss for us. It's a sudden, surprising gift for deepening our faith, saying no to our selfish egos and a faith-filled yes to our true lives of service in Christ for the common good.

Friends and Parish members, let's try to keep this in mind, planting it deeply into our hearts during these days and nights, so that Christ can grow within us until He becomes all in all.

Fr. Mark Percival. MA,PP.