

PARISH AND SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT — YEAR A — SUNDAY 29 MARCH 2020

Message from Fr Duane

Firstly, I miss you all very much! I wish to thank everyone who has sent messages of prayer and support to me. I am sorry I haven't been able to reply to all your messages yet, but be assured of my continual prayers for you all, especially at the altar when I offer Mass each day for you all. Let us remember the words of Pope Paul VI who stated that even the Masses a priest offers in private are not truly "private" when he stated: "Each and every Mass is not something private, even if a priest celebrates it privately; instead, it is an act of Christ and of the Church ... for every Mass that is celebrated is being offered not just for the salvation of certain people, but also for the salvation of the whole world." (*"Mysterium Fidei – The Mystery of Faith"*).

And on that note, please feel free to contact me with any special prayer intentions for yourselves and loved ones, which I will then place on the altar during my Masses.

While a number of Parish ministries are paused for now, there will be many new needs arising at this time, under an umbrella term which I call "Corona ministries". (Let me know if you can come up with a better term!) Corona ministries may include for example bulletin drop offs to those without email, delivery of other essentials to the vulnerable and those less mobile, even phone calls to people to check on them during this time when many vulnerable people can easily become isolated. The specific tasks will become clearer over time - for now if you would like to join this flexible ongoing ministry at this time please email us with the subject "Corona ministries". Even if you can't join these new ministries, please consider if anyone you know may be interested in receiving hard copies of these emails, or may have other pastoral needs, and (with their permission) contact us. Or if you have any pastoral need yourself please do not hesitate to contact me either via email at duane.fernandez@dow.org.au or call me on **0414 626 357**.

The present crisis is calling forth from us new ways of expressing our love for one another, guided by the love and creativity of our God – and with God always on our side I know we are up to the challenge!

Creating Space and Time for Prayers in the Home:

The Church speaks of the family as the "domestic Church" – the Church in the home (cf. Lumen Gentium, 11). This is especially true in our time; and whether you live by yourself or with others may your home become a place where you feel the presence of God more and more tangibly. To this end, I encourage all of you to create a "sacred space" in your home, with sacred images that help you to pray. We are, after all, a Sacramental Church, since God knows that we are physical beings and need physical aids to our spiritual life. Using that sacred space as a focus, choose a time to dedicate wholly to God. Use whatever resources you find helpful, either in the links provided, the Sunday readings in the bulletin, the homily, Children's Liturgy resource provided (thanks to Lauren and Rebecca Hall), or other resources you can find. We encounter God most wonderfully when we gather together for the Eucharist – and how I look forward to gathering again with you when the time comes – but until then, remembering Jesus is with you in your home, seek to make the time and space to allow him to make his love and closeness known to you. In the words of St Mary Mackillop: "there where you are, you will find God".

Fr Duane Fernandez — Parish Priest

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Anniversaries

Ruth CHURCHILL
Peter SPEELMAN
Michael LAVELLE
William DREDGE
Janina SEWERYN



PARISH OFFICE — COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Parish Office staff are currently working limited days/hours — **call 4271 1068 only (please do not visit)**. Magda is working on Mondays/Thursdays, and Sue (who is at high-risk of contracting CoVid-19) is self-isolating and working from home on Fridays only.

— The Church is the People of God —
PASTORAL STATEMENT BY BISHOP BRIAN MASCORD

Updated parish directives as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) — 25 March 2020

To my Sisters and Brothers in Christ

The changes surrounding the sacramental life of our Church are evolving daily as a result of COVID-19. Following further directives from the Prime Minister, the following increased sacramental restrictions will apply from midnight 25 March 2020. These directives will likely change again shortly following further advice from the National Cabinet.

Weddings

Weddings can continue to be held with a maximum of five (5) people in attendance. The five people consist of the celebrant, bride, groom and two witnesses. Under no circumstances can this limit be exceeded.

Funerals

Funerals can continue to be held with no more than ten (10) people in attendance including the celebrant. Under no circumstances can this limit be exceeded.

Baptisms

Baptisms should be delayed. If there is a risk of death, the child should be baptised with not more than six (6) people in attendance which includes the parents, two godparents, the celebrant and the child being baptised.

Confession

The Sacrament of Confession will be suspended during this time of pandemic. Physical and moral impossibility excuses a person from confession, in which case reconciliation may be attained by other means, for example an act of perfect contrition (Canon 960). An act of perfect contrition can be made by saying these or similar words: "My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. I should love you above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin".

I know these changes may cause sorrow and pain and my thoughts and prayers are with all those affected.

Please continue to join me in prayer for all those impacted by this crisis.

Yours in Christ
Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD
Bishop of Wollongong

***** Due to the current pandemic, all churches are now closed, even for private prayer, and reconciliation has been suspended. Bishop Brian has stated in his most recent directive: "The Sacrament of Confession will be suspended during this time of pandemic. Physical and moral impossibility excuses a person from confession, in which case reconciliation may be attained by other means, for example an act of perfect contrition. (Canon 960) An act of perfect contrition can be made by saying these or similar words: 'My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. I should love you above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin'." You are encouraged to join the email list and Facebook page. *****

Prayer of "spiritual Communion", given to us by St Alphonsus Liguori:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

STAYING CONNECTED WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER

- Encourage others to join our emailing list by contacting unanderra@dow.org.au and ask to be added to the list.
- Join our new Facebook pages: "Immaculate Conception Unanderra Parish" and "St Therese West Wollongong Parish" - tell others too!

Other Resources:

- Sunday Mass with the Bishop launches this **Sunday at 9am**, through the Diocesan website (www.dow.org.au) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/WollongongCatholic)
- For those without internet, televised **Sunday Mass** is available weekly on **Channel 10 at 6am**.
- The key website for our diocesan response to the Coronavirus, including prayer resources: www.dow.org.au/covid-19/
- A national Church website on the Coronavirus at: www.catholic.org.au/coronavirus
- On the same national Church website – resources for praying at home, including daily Mass options at: www.catholic.org.au/prayathome

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

Many Australians are experiencing financial hardship as a result of "lockdown" measures. If you or anyone you know is experiencing urgent need for any reason please do not hesitate to contact Vinnies as below, or to contact Fr Duane outside of those hours. A big thank you once again to our wonderful Vinnies volunteers.

A MESSAGE FROM ST VINNIES

Unanderra Vinnies Conference is available for assistance for any parishioner finding difficulty due to the Coronavirus. Assistance is available in the form of Woolworths food vouchers, some basic household items, electricity and rental assistance in some cases. For assistance ring Coniston Welfare Centre on 4228 9355 between 9am and 1pm Monday to Friday. To limit face to face contact the Conference is currently doing visitations on Wednesday afternoons only until the crisis is over. All calls will be attended to by our volunteers.

PLANNED GIVING

Some have asked how they can continue to donate to the Parish, in the absence of collections at Mass.

The Diocese has provided the following link to facilitate any contributions that people still wish to make, in the absence of collections at Mass, and explains where the money goes.

If you do wish to contribute through this link, please also inform the Parish, for accounting purposes www.dow.org.au/plannedgiving/

Homily from Fr Duane

During the week, I came across an article which described the present global situation through the lens of "grief". There is indeed so much to grieve at this time: for us as Catholics we grieve together the loss of the opportunity to worship together and to receive the Sacraments. For many there is the grief of loss of employment, the loss of the chance to gather with friends, the loss of sporting and recreational opportunities, the loss of so many normal routines that we have enjoyed and often taken for granted. For many children, the loss of school will be a source of grief (although this may be assuming too much!). How very fitting that at this exact time God speaks to us in our Sunday readings about His deep compassion and closeness to all who are in grief! David Kessler is one of the foremost experts on grief, and he speaks of the "stages of grief": "The stages aren't linear and may not happen in this order. It's not a map but it provides some scaffolding for this unknown world. There's denial, which we say a lot of early on: This virus won't affect us. There's anger: You're making me stay home and taking away my activities. There's bargaining: Okay, if I social distance for two weeks everything will be better, right? There's sadness: I don't know when this will end. And finally there's acceptance. This is happening; I have to figure out how to proceed. Acceptance, as you might imagine, is where the power lies. We find control in acceptance. I can wash my hands. I can keep a safe distance. I can learn how to work virtually."

As Catholics, we can add more to the final stage of "acceptance": for example, "I can show love to those around me in countless little ways; I can reach out in love to those in my community in creative ways". And most importantly of all - I can pray! I can still remember that I am loved by my God, who is with me always. God does not need to "socially distance" Himself from us! That may sound like one of my lame jokes, but it is so deeply important: He is always close; and especially at this time He longs for you to know His closeness to you. We can wonder in times of grief and suffering - "where is God in all this"? We can even subconsciously wonder - has God forgotten us? Abandoned us? Does he not know, or care? In the Gospel, we see this same question in the hearts of Mary and Martha - why did you wait so long? Why did you let our brother die? Why let us grieve like this? And then, two powerful answers from our loving God. Firstly, the shortest verse of all of Scripture: "Jesus wept". Where is our God in our suffering and grief? Close to us, weeping with us, embracing us in our sorrow. And secondly: he raises Lazarus from the dead! God has the power to raise us from the deepest grief, indeed from death itself. Suffering, loss, sickness and death are never the last word: He reminds us of this now, when we most need to be reminded. And in the coming weeks we and the whole world will remember that God did not simply speak this promise to us - He willingly entered into suffering and death himself, to reveal the resurrection, and wipe away every tear forever!

(Source: <https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief?fbclid=IwAR2K5Dn0VVrX3nK9-10k-omPwzBoKvFUNBskMGE2FGDs5r9sH5HcRvR2> (accessed 23rd March 2020).

BRANCHING OUT – WITH SR KERRY

No doubt many of you are feeling the strain and tension of these difficult days. Since I am now working from home, I have adopted a new ministry: Each day I have been sending an email to parishioners on my contact list. If you too would like to be on my daily email list please contact me on kerry.gardiner@sosj.org.au

The email may contain a prayer, a good website ... anything that will help us through these days.

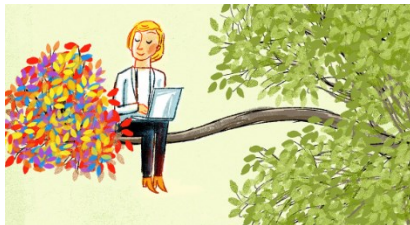
Let us hold each other in prayer.

I am a phone call away should you feel the need just to hear another voice. At any time I can be contacted by email. I no longer have a landline, so please call my mobile: 0421 463 871.

Please know I am with you and you are held in my daily prayers.

Rest in God resting in you.

Sr Kerry



PROJECT COMPASSION



Tawonga is a 10-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.

Please donate to Project Compassion 2020 to so this transformational program can continue to empower vulnerable women, men and children, and strengthen the communities around them.

Let's Go Further, Together — when we Go Further

Together in love and compassion, the whole world thrives.

You can donate through Project Compassion boxes and/or envelopes or by visiting www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion or phoning 1800 024 413



THE JOURNEY

CATHOLIC RADIO PROGRAMME

– AIRS SUNDAY 29 MARCH 2020 –

This week on the Journey, Bishop Brian Mascord proclaims the Gospel and Sr Anastasia Reeves provides some great Spiritual Direction for Lent. You'll also hear some uplifting music and encouragement.

Go to www.jcr.org.au or www.itunes.jcr.org.au

where you can listen any time and subscribe to weekly shows via email



PRAYER – 7PM EVERY EVENING

A Call to commit to Prayer

during the Pandemic every evening at 7pm

The faithful across the Diocese of Wollongong are urged to join with other members of the National Council of Churches, so that all Christians pray 7pm every night through until Easter Sunday during the Pandemic crisis.

PRAYING FOR OUR WORLD, AMIDST COVID-19:

Gracious God,

We give thanks anew for your providence and presence.

We prayerfully seek your grace,

amidst COVID-19 here and overseas.

We pray for those in need of healing.

We pray for your peace with those

who are anxious or grieving.

We pray you will continue to strengthen

and sustain all those who are serving in response.

We pray for your Holy Spirit's discernment

amidst the many choices and decisions facing

our national, community and medical leaders.

We pray we each might see quickly what more we can do to help those who are vulnerable.

This prayer for our nation in the family of nations,

with all that is on our hearts,

we gather now and pray

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



EASTER CARDS

Easter Cards are now available for purchase from Aid to the Church in Need (ACN). Each packet contains 12 Easter cards and envelopes. Prices: First packet \$23 (includes postage); and extra packets \$15 each. The Easter cards feature the religious paintings of Swiss artist Bradi Barth and include a Bible verse inside. Proceeds raised go toward ACN projects that support the Church where she is unable to support herself. You can order over the phone on 1800 101 201 or online at www.aidtochurch.org



SUNDAY 29 MARCH 2020 — FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR A)

First Reading — Ezekiel 37:12-14 — *I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live.*

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 — *With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.*

1. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!
O let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleading. R.
2. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, Lord, who would survive?
But with you is found forgiveness: for this we revere you. R.
3. My soul is waiting for the Lord, I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord more than a watchman for daybreak.
(Let the watchman count on daybreak and Israel on the Lord). R.
4. Because with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption,
Israel indeed he will redeem from all its iniquity. R.



Second Reading — Romans 8:8-11 — *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he will give life to your own mortal bodies.*

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 — 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 — John 11:1-45 — *I am the resurrection and the life.*

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.