



St Mary of the Cross Catholic Parish

EMBODYING CHRIST'S LOVE

19th March 2020

Pastoral Letter to Parishioners of St. Mary of the Cross Catholic Parish, Mordialloc and Aspendale

Dear Parishioners,

We are living in unprecedented times with changes to how we live every day. The COVID-19 pandemic is challenging all of us to readjust how we live and interact with each other. It is causing major changes to our everyday lives along with anxiety and confusion. Many of us, particularly the elderly and vulnerable will have feelings of loneliness, isolation and fear. Please know that this is a normal reaction and hopefully will subside as we move into our new reality. This change will be an opportunity for us to be more vigilant in our hygiene practices and how we look out for each other as parishioners.

On 18 March 2020, after prayerful consideration and reflection, the Bishops of Victoria announced the suspension of public liturgies and celebrations of Mass, until further notice for the health and safety of the community. In light of this, all Catholics in Victoria are dispensed from their Sunday obligation until further notice (canon 1248).

I would never have thought that in my lifetime Sunday masses would be suspended. As I still get my head around this change, I know that we will maintain a level of connectedness in other ways. We may not be able to attend a public liturgy, but we can still look out for each other and call one another. May I suggest using a video communication medium like Facetime occasionally to call each other rather than just an audio call. Seeing the person at the other end of the conversation is readily available and more of an encounter than just a chat.

For those able to access the internet, then I would suggest checking in on the parish website often as a way of know what is happening in our parish (www.cam.org.au/mordiallocaspendale). The website will have links to the Archdiocesan news as well as ways to access online Mass and other resources to assist you with prayer and other opportunities to maintain your spiritual life. For those who don't have access to the internet then please pop into the parish office to pick up any printed material that might be helpful.

At this stage, the parish office will operate its normal hours. If this changes then be assured that the phones messages and emails are monitored. Feel free to email or call the office for any questions you might have.

At this stage, baptisms, funerals and weddings can occur following the guidelines of a carefully limited congregation and distancing between participants. Confirmations, and first Eucharists are postponed. First rite Reconciliation is available by appointment. St. Louis' church will be open during business hours so feel free to pop in for a prayer. It may be possible that the two churches will be available (limited times) on the weekend for private prayer but I will inform you if that is the case.

As we head into this fourth week of Lent and listen to the gospel of the man born blind seeing for the first time, we are asked to see with new eyes what is happening around us. What are the new opportunities for prayer and connection? How will I experience the God who is with us in this new reality? Let's remember that Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt. 18:20). Remember too that the church is not a building. It is the community so gather your family and reflect on the readings or join a group of friends and reflect. Do this during your normal mass going time? There are some masses that can be viewed online so maybe watch them as a way of prayer?

How many times does Jesus say, "Do not be afraid"? Jesus, then, understands all the fears and worries that we have. Jesus understands us, not only because he is divine and understands all things but because he is human and experienced all things. Go to him in prayer. And trust that he hears us and is with us.

St. Brigid.... pray for us.

St. Louis.... pray for us.

St. Mary of the Cross.... pray for us.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Andrew

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