



The partnered parishes of

Sacred Heart, Newport & St Margaret Mary's, Spotswood

26 March 2020

Dear parishioners,

I write to you at a critical period of the Coronavirus pandemic and am mindful of the effect it is having on you, your families, friends and our parish communities. My thoughts and prayers are especially with those who are struggling whether physically, economically or spiritually during this time of uncertainty. Please be assured that you are all in my thoughts and prayers at daily Mass.

Someone commented recently that it feels like the end of the world is coming. In a sense it is – the horrendous bushfires, COVID-19, economic crisis, closed churches and suspension of Masses. Our world has been turning upside down because of the COVID-19. As a result, many people are feeling anxious and panicking. We already see signs of that restlessness and panic in the empty shelves of our supermarkets, of being selfish rather than selfless, of being self-centred rather than others-centred. Yet “when I is replaced by We, even Illness becomes Wellness.”

Further, that temptation of panic must not lead us to an abandonment of our hope and trusting faith in God’s providence. While so much is changing around us, one thing always remains the same: God is with us. We are reminded in the first reading on the feast of the Annunciation that God is Emmanuel, a name which means “God-is-with-us”. God’s grace and blessings overshadow us, and his invitation to love and serve one another as Jesus did still strongly echoes in our hearts.

Although public Masses have been suspended, I still celebrate Mass daily to pray for your intentions and for the alleviation of this crisis. And although we may not be able to gather in our parish churches, but we can recreate the Church in our homes. Long before any celebration of Mass, the early Catholics in Australia gathered in their families to pray the rosary and to reflect on the Word of God. Even though we may not be able to greet each other before and after Mass, we can ensure that those who are lonely and afraid are not left to themselves, even if all we can do is ring them on the phone and ask if they need any assistance. We may not be able to offer each other the sign of peace at Mass but we can offer each other the gift of our sincere prayer.

To assist you and your families to pray with and for one another in the times ahead, our parishes have put together various material to assist you in this task. You can also check our parishes’ webpage for updates and resources, <http://pol.org.au/newport/Home.aspx>

“Do not be afraid” were the words addressed to Mary by the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation. They were also the words addressed to the fearful disciples by the risen Lord on the evening of his resurrection. In the midst of the health and economic crisis that we are in, these words are addressed to us: “Do not be afraid. Take courage. I am with you.”

We know the Lord is always with us. When we are overwhelmed with worry and fear, let us draw strength and courage from each other. When we are drowning in loneliness, let us recognise the presence of God in every step of our lives. When we are burdened with thinking about the future, let us be comforted by the prayers and the fellowship of our parish communities. And above all, let us pray for those who are selflessly putting themselves at the service of our communities at this difficult time.

May the Lord bless and protect each one of you, your families and loved ones.

Fr Binh

Ps. If you would like to have a Mass said for your intentions, then please either ring Ivana, our parish secretary, on 0414 936 082 or drop a note in the mailbox at the presbytery or send me an email at binh.le@cam.org.au