

Dear Friends

Today's gospel of the resuscitation of Lazarus by his friend, Jesus, speaks to us on many levels.

We witness the **profound humanity** of the protagonists who express their love, their loss and grief, their uncertainty and doubt, and, finally, their surrender to the mysterious presence of their God in their friend, Jesus.

We hear the words of **divine revelation**, I AM the Resurrection and the Life. Just as the Lord God revealed himself to Moses on Mt Sinai 1200 years before, now Jesus reveals that he is God - "I AM".

We enter into the experience of **faith of an early Christian community** – a small parish that suffered many difficulties just as we do. Their prophet/preacher/priest has cast the account of the miracle so that it reflects the way that the parish lived their faith. They care for one another, they share grief, they seek to believe when faith is challenged, they prize the sacrifice of their Lord ("Let us go and die with him" said Thomas.)

The threat to the lives of Australians is not so clear as, for example, in Italy, Spain, or the United States.

Instead, there is uncertainty.

The uncertainty of what lies ahead weighs on all of us. There is the exception of the crowds at Bondi Beach, St Kilda Beach, and Point Addis who appear to have a certainty of their own immortality, hitched to ignorance of basic science.

In his blessing to Rome and the world on Friday night, Pope Francis spoke of solidarity. *Love your neighbour as yourself.*

So many exemplary companions, even though fearful, have reacted by giving their lives. This is the force of the Spirit poured out and fashioned in courageous and generous self-denial. Our lives are sustained by ordinary people, who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time, people who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves.          Pope Francis, Blessing 'Urbi et orbi', Rome 27 March 2020

This Sunday, the loss of our Eucharistic assembly and of our communion in the Body and Blood of Christ assume the contours of a true sacrifice for the good of our neighbour. “Where have you put him?” is the question, no longer on the lips of Jesus entering Bethany, but on our lips.

Our Lenten penance has come to us in the will of God, not by our own decision. Let’s pray for one another that we can grow more mature in our following of Christ who did not hesitate to “give himself for us” (Gal 2:21) as we accept God’s mysterious will that it is not possible at present to be in sacramental communion with our Saviour.

The raising of Lazarus was physical and for a time.

The Resurrection and the Life is spiritual and eternal.

The Resurrection and the Life makes itself visible in our response to the stirring of the Holy Spirit who inspires us to be sacrificial and filled with charity towards our neighbour.

Our charity may appear to be simply inaction. In reality, not acting (not mingling, not shopping, not playing, not barbecuing) is overflowing charity to vulnerable sisters and brothers of ours.

Fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons. Pope Francis, *Urbi et orbi*.

Christ is with us. “Fear not”.