

Letter from Archbishop Peter A Comensoli

Friday 1 March 2019

Archbishop Peter A Comensoli

Dear Friends in Christ,

At a time when the early Christian community was at a very low ebb, experiencing internal shame and external criticism, St Paul acknowledged among his fellow believers that "if one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Cor 12:26). In this past week of great pain and shame, of bewilderment and disheartenment, has not our own experience as members of the Church in Melbourne been one of great suffering together?

The release of the news regarding the conviction of Cardinal George Pell for child sexual abuse has polarised our society on a broad level, from which none of us are immune. I want to acknowledge the devastating impact this may have had on each and every one of you, both in the release of the details and in how this news has been publicly received. Your heart is hurting; and your home of faith is hurting!

We will each experience any amount of confusing and conflicting feelings. At this time please reach out for support if you feel you need it, and be present to those around you who may need to talk, or even to have space, as they come to terms with what this means for them personally. Especially, can I encourage you to pour out your heart to the Lord, who holds each one of us tenderly in His love and care.

You have every right to hold your own personal understanding of what has unfolded. I ask that you be mindful of the judicial process still underway. Our opinions must remain respectful of this process, and our speech offered in charity. As in all things, and at all times, let our actions and words be offered in truth with love (Eph 4:15).

In all this, we must never forget those who walk with this pain every day, whose lives remain devastated by the impact of sexual abuse inflicted on them in their vulnerability. To the survivors, to their families, and to their friends and colleagues, I again offer my deepest apology for wrongs that have been done by those who have abused their position of ministry and care.

To all of you, I renew my commitment to work assiduously to bring justice and healing where needed. I also invite you to join with me in building up our local Christian communities in every way whereby our children, young people, and all who are vulnerable can safely and securely flourish in faith, hope, and love.

We can never do enough in this regard, for it is the true way of the Gospel. At the end of this letter you will find contact information for reporting and personal support, I strongly encourage you to use these if required.

You read this today having come to pray and join each other in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. You have gathered not merely in a building but as followers of Christ and friends in the Lord. The Eucharist is our greatest Sacrament of healing; may today bring you closer to the healing presence of our Lord and brother, Jesus. For "you are the body of Christ and individually members of it," and you do not stand alone (1 Cor 12:27).

May our Blessed Mother Mary, Untier of Knots, accompany us towards the light and hope of her Risen Son.

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