



Archbishop's Message
Archbishop Christopher Prowse

Corona (Crown) of Thorns

A FEW months ago, none of us had heard of coronavirus. Now it is our uninvited Easter guest.

It seems the whole world has become sick due to its global presence.

We cannot get away from it. It has turned our world upside down. We are anxious and fearful. Even in supermarkets we appear suspicious of each other.

We are trying our best in our home isolation. The experience so far is one of mixed blessings. New routines are not easy to navigate on our own. Families and others are negotiating a new way of daily life for the next few months.

"Corona" is a Latin word meaning "crown". This pandemic has become a crown of thorns for us all.

In the hours before his death, Jesus too knew of a crown of thorns. It became one of his terrible sufferings before his death on the Cross of Calvary.

Jesus suffers with us in our sufferings. This is the meaning of the key word *compassion*.

The Easter message is clear: by suffering with the suffering Jesus we enter by Grace into the hope of Resurrection in Him.

Doing this is not something of mere human initiative. We surrender to the Grace invitation of Jesus. The Risen Lord awaits our YES coming from our deepest selves. We do this as Church through, with and in Jesus. Mary and all the saints participate in this saving encounter. We are never alone.

This Easter will be celebrated in unprecedented circumstances. Our churches are closed. Many people can participate via online platforms but not everyone. It will be so new to us. Yet this pandemic will eventually be contained. Hope insists on this.

We want, however, from the quasi-monastic anchorage of our homes, to encounter Jesus more than ever. Our lives are in flux. Only Jesus remains forever. Alleluia!

Our new found Easter faith insists that it be expressed in practical charity. We help people struggling and thank the medical professionals, cleaners and volunteers, emergency forces, priests and religious, lay faithful and all who lead us in this time of need for human closeness and the caress of the Lord who rises in our midst.

Happy Easter and every blessing to you all!

CATHOLIC VOICE

ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN



and courage over Easter."

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Getting our lives back on track

BY FELICITY DE FOMBELLE

THE pandemic penetrating our days is an invitation to seize this time of trial, decide what really matters and get our lives back on track.

That was the theme of Pope Francis' recent blessing to the world where he linked people's fears of the coronavirus to the frightened disciples in the boat pleading with Jesus to save them when the storm hit.

The Pope said we had become "dull and feeble" to what nourishes and strengthens us, referring to our faith, families and relationships.

"You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing*," a lone Pope Francis said from an empty St Peter's Basilica in Rome.

"It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time

to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not.

"It is a time to set our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others."

Archbishop Christopher Prowse described the Pope's 'Urbi and Orbi' (to the City and World) blessing as a beautiful meditation and used it for a recent Lenten Reflection.

In the bible story when Jesus calms the storm, Christ asked his disciples why they were afraid and said they had little faith.

Jesus is saying the same thing to us, Archbishop Christopher said.

"We're in a storm and we're frightened too," the Archbishop said.

"The storm reveals our vulnerability. The disciples think Jesus is not interested in them and that would have shaken Jesus too. He, more than anybody, does care about

us.

"Jesus is asking us, why do you doubt me?"

"So where is God in all this mess? It will take a long time to answer that but we do believe Jesus is with us."

Archbishop Christopher said he was unsettled by not having his normal routine and struggled with the decision to close churches.

"It is quite confronting to be thrown off your routine and I'm still not really used to it," he said.

"We are somewhat slaves to our routines but Jesus is pulling the rug from under our feet.

"We can become so self-sufficient to the point of arrogance. We only go to Jesus when the wheels fall off. But faith and prayer means trusting Jesus.

"It's hard isn't it? I never thought as a bishop I would be closing about 200 churches as I

did last week. It was one of the most difficult days I have ever experienced as a bishop. I felt like a Judas."

Pope Francis said storms like the pandemic crisis expose our vulnerabilities.

"The storm uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities," the Pontiff said.

"It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our communities."

Archbishop Christopher urged Catholics to embrace Jesus on the cross as our anchor, rudder and hope.

"We have been healed and caressed so that nothing and nobody can separate us from the redeeming love and tenderness of God."

Back-to-basics for family of five



L-R: Jack reads to Mum with Hannah and baby William looking on; Millie at her computer and Imogen preparing lunch.

MUM-of-five Amber Maher had a meltdown with the pressure of home schooling.

But while it has been overwhelming, Amber said she was less stressed as a Mum because life no longer revolved around the clock.

"We are always on the clock, in and out for school and me pulling the baby out of bed to get to netball or music," Amber, 37, said.

"Now time doesn't matter which is a nice relief. I am enjoying the slower pace and feel less stressed.

"I have also realised how much we have been rushing around."

Three of Amber's brood are at Mt Carmel school in Yass - Millie in Year Six, Imogen in Year Three and Jack in kinder. There's also three-year-old Hannah and five-month-old William.

Husband Matt leaves for his

construction job at 5am and William is breast-feeding and has just started solids and crawling.

Home schooling has added another load.

"I couldn't stretch myself between each child," Amber said.

"I had a bit of a meltdown thinking, how am I supposed to educate these kids well and give my youngest the attention they need?"

"It's too much for one person. I felt teary and overwhelmed and a bit of a failure too."

Amber has now settled into a routine. Life is still ridiculously busy but she is coping.

"I'm over the initial shock," she said.

"I take it one day at a time. When I think too far ahead, like having to do this for all of next term, it's too scary."

One of eight children, Amber and Matt moved to a 10-acre property at Yass one and a half years ago to give their kids a rural upbringing.

"This is like a 'back to basics' time and that's nice," Amber said.

"The kids have written letters to people at the nursing home and Matt's grandparents in Sydney."

The morning routine is still the same but no longer rushed - breakfast, clean room and family prayer.

"We pick a story from the children's bible and talk about it," Amber said.

Being isolated has also introduced new routines.

Each day Millie and Imogen take turns to make lunch for the family.

This week it's been potato wedges, pancakes with maple syrup, salad sandwiches, wraps and snack

plates with cheese, crackers, olives and cucumber sticks.

Also new is FaceTime Rosary with Matt's Mum and family. He has five sisters; two with children.

"It started as a novena for the virus and we've continued it," Amber said. "We usually check in around 7.30pm when the younger kids have gone to bed and we can settle with a cup of tea.

"Matt's Mum really enjoys it and I feel more connected to his family. I'm also doing a Zoom sharing group with the Disciples of Jesus."

Amber's sister Isabelle Irwin got married in Nowra last week and the family watched via Zoom.

"It was bizarre but at least we got to watch it," Amber said. "And it was strange and sad not to celebrate with them afterwards. But so much has changed now."

Pell: the sad truth

BY DENIS O'BRIEN

The unanimous High Court judgement that acquitted Cardinal Pell is astounding for the way it demolished the reasoning of the majority judges of Victoria's Court of Appeal.

It is a blight on Victoria's justice system that deficiencies revealed by the High Court led to an innocent man enduring over 13 months in jail.

It says much about Cardinal Pell's character that he said he held no ill-will towards the complainant and did not want his acquittal to add more hurt and bitterness.

The incidents which led to charges were said to have happened in and near the priests' sacristy at St Patrick's Cathedral following Sunday Masses in December 1996 and February 1997. The complainant was a cathedral choirboy.

When the details came to light, I and many friends, some non-Catholic, thought it improbable the offending had taken place.

Many of us wondered about the integrity of the police investigation and our concerns have been vindicated by the High Court.

In a criminal trial the jury must be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt of the accused's guilt. The High Court found that the jury ought to have entertained reasonable doubt as to Cardinal Pell's guilt on each of the charges.

It was not enough for the jury to assess the complainant's evidence as credible and reliable. That had to be weighed against all the evidence such as the Cardinal's practice of greeting people on the steps after Mass, that the Archbishop was always accompanied when robed and the hive of activity at the sacristy after Mass.

The sad truth about this case is that the botched prosecution does nothing for the victims of child sexual abuse within the Church.

Their interests are not advanced by such serious breakdowns in our justice system.

Nor does the case assist us as a Church to rid ourselves of the blight of abuse, to bring compassion and healing to those who have suffered and reform our structures and training to ensure catastrophes are not repeated.

Perhaps in these Easter days we should take a leaf from the Cardinal's book, put rancour and bitterness behind us and rededicate ourselves to those tasks.

• *Denis O'Brien was the Chief Lawyer of the Truth Justice and Healing Council.*



Dear stretched hanging-in-there parent,

How goes life in lockdown? And home schooling?

It's one thing to have the kids during school holidays. They're in and out the door with sleepovers, boot camps and grandparents.

The key point is it's holidays so time off from the books. Or Chromebooks.

Unless you're a Tiger Mum drill sergeant and I'm not totally against a rigorous regime of rote learning and strict discipline. But I digress.

Remote learning does that to a parent. It drives you batty.

COVID-19 has claimed us all. It's made the parent the teacher, or at least that's how it feels; turning our kitchen tables into study zones and homes into classroom battlefields.

To the mother or father embracing the opportunity to sign up for an online drawing masterclass with their gifted child, make macramé plant hangers for the neighbors, bond over cooking sessions using native ingredients from the backyard or revive the ancient art of Hellenistic painting, this missive is not for you.

We have little in common.

To the Mum or Dad who relishes the morning school run because it means farewelling our kids at the other end, the harried parents who struggle enough with school notices, excursion payments and stuffing the lunchbox with healthy treats each day, we're in this together.

At a 1.5 metre distance.

We miss school.

We need school.

Take back our kids!

Don't get me wrong. I cherish my kids, couldn't love them more.

And I am quite partial to home schooling, but have no patience and too much of the Tiger Mum drill sergeant (see above) in me.

But this feeling that I am now somehow responsible for their learning ... which parent ever signed up for that?

My respect for teachers has soared. How they manage to do every day, with a truckload of kids, what I struggle to muster for half an hour is beyond me.

Call me a dinosaur, but to me, online education is an oxymoron.

For many of our kids it

screams invitation to endless hours of YouTube or Google Hangout or any other online chatroom they can scurry into where time turns to mush and learning goes out the window.

I admire the frankness of Marist headmaster Matthew Hutchison who warned parents that the biggest risk was allowing a student to simply 'kick it all away'.

"We know some boys are experts in hiding, hoping nobody will notice them," he added.

But, parent comrade-in-arms, listen up and lean in. I have found the solution, for me anyhow. No, alcohol is not involved.

My goals are small. But they are realistic and manageable and I think that's the key.

Here's what I've concocted:

1. A spelling test after breakfast every morning. No one can spell any more so my kids will shine. I even try to make them sound out the word (Tiger Mum drill sergeant - see above),

2. Times Tables - yep they matter. If my kids can remember the words to the Top 20 hits (or whatever they're called nowadays) they can know their

Times Tables. I might even push them to 13x,

3. Books - we're so old-fashioned we have a library at home, you know with shelves, and thank goodness the boys love to read. So read and roam my sons,

4. Writing - the kids are writing summaries of what they have read and we're giving them topics to prepare arguments for and against. I've thought of a debate but fear it would end in fisticuffs. Well, it would.

It is working. Sort of. And best of all, we are sane.

No calm parenting podcasts yet. No need for the 101 hyperlinks the school has sent me with well-being tips and mindfulness classes.

And there is learning! Each day my kids' scores ratchet higher on those spelling tests, I become a bit more the smug home schooling parent.

Still desperate to fling them back to school, but taking it one spelling word at a time,

Yours in home schooling tribulations,

Felicity de Fombelle



L-R: Justin 13, Olivier 11 and Arnaud 9

An Easter montage

THE parish of Mary Help of Christians in Pearce is like a family to Xavier and Aurelie Simonet and their five children.

At a time they would normally celebrate with their parish family at Easter, they feel cut off.

"We're missing our parish family," Xavier said. "Easter is such a special time and our family is there with Fr Richard."

With his First Holy Communion cancelled, youngest child Arnaud and brothers Olivier and Justin made a montage of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Xavier will be taking a pizza and bottle of French wine to Fr Richard Thompson for Easter Sunday.

"He is a great priest and close to all the people," Xavier said. "He is in isolation but you need some socialisation as well, from a distance."

History accelerates in crisis

FR TONY PERCY VG

MARTIN Wolf from the *Financial Times* acutely observed last week that "History accelerates in crisis."

COVID-19 is a crisis. But as always, there is opportunity. It is opening new horizons in the way we work, socialise and rest.

We now have the technology to work from home or anywhere for that matter. The industrial revolution did just the opposite.

The 19th Century saw the end of an agrarian society where people lived and worked at home. Separation from partners and children for long hours became the norm as industrialisation progressed rapidly.

Now the pattern is reversed.

Interacting with people in the workplace, forging friendships with colleagues and doing meaningful work is thrilling.

Work is meaningful on a number of levels. Pope John Paul II devoted an encyclical (1981) to the topic.

The meaning of work is perennial, but workplaces are not - they change.

COVID-19 is accelerating historical change. In Australia, very few awards provided for people to work from home. In a short space of time our country has witnessed changes to industrial relations laws that have been largely stagnant for 30 years.

The flow on effects should not be underestimated. Travel time and costs will be reduced. Less traffic congestion will be welcome.

We can be more present to our children, parents and grandparents.

Quantity, and thus quality time, with our loved ones will be on offer. We will build bridges with intergenerational interaction.

Significantly, outcome-based not time-based work will emerge with greater clarity. Productivity should certainly rise.

Why should we require people to work set hours each week?

Rather, we simply require that outcomes are achieved. Some weeks this may take 37 hours, other weeks more, but usually less.

A deeper sense of community may well emerge. There is an opportunity to rebuild our society with families that are more united and local communities that are reinvigorated due to new-found freedoms, enabled by more flexibility in hours worked and location.

During the depression (1931), Pope Pius XI brilliantly annunciated and developed the principal of subsidiarity. It holds that any activity which can be performed by a more decentralised entity should be. Subsidiarity acts like a check on the state, if you like.

Equally important is the call that subsidiarity issues to citizens.

It encourages people to participate in local communities and groups, particularly when social participation dries up, as it had done in the 1920s.

Subsidiarity thus operates as an antidote to individualism, leading to deeper forms of solidarity.

Perhaps this is what it felt like during the industrial revolution in the 19th Century. The old order passing away, the new one being ushered in, even if the skeleton was just visible.

Is history repeating itself? It is a legitimate question.

In *The Rise of Christianity* (1996), Rodney Stark observed that one of the sociological reasons why the Christian faith advanced so quickly in the early centuries was due to how Christians responded to ancient plagues.

Christian communities were selfless in caring for others and so had greater survival rates. There was an influx of new converts and new energy.

COVID-19 might well be a crisis that sees a strengthening of Christian communities, with the consequent benefits for the civil order.