

Archbishop's Message
Archbishop Christopher Prowse

COVID-19 Health and Work

During this pandemic the key words on our lips centre on health and work.

In our hearts, at the same time, the key sentiments seem to revolve around hope and peace. What gives us hope, comfort, consolation and peace in this "veil of tears"?

Over the centuries when people have been inwardly troubled, like we are now, they have found great comfort by turning to the image of God as the Good Shepherd celebrated in the psalms.

"The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want. Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose. Near restful waters he leads me to revive my drooping spirit." (Psalm 23/1, 2)

In the Gospel of St John, especially chapter 10, Jesus appropriates this key image to himself. He is "the shepherd of the flock ... he goes ahead of them ... the sheep follow him because they know his voice." (v.3)

Jesus protects us, his sheep, from all harm. In this pandemic during the "stay at home" stage, let us ask Jesus, our Good Shepherd, to protect us from all harm to our health and work.

Let us also plead that Mary, the Good Shepherd's Mother and Help of all Christians, may lead us to Jesus.

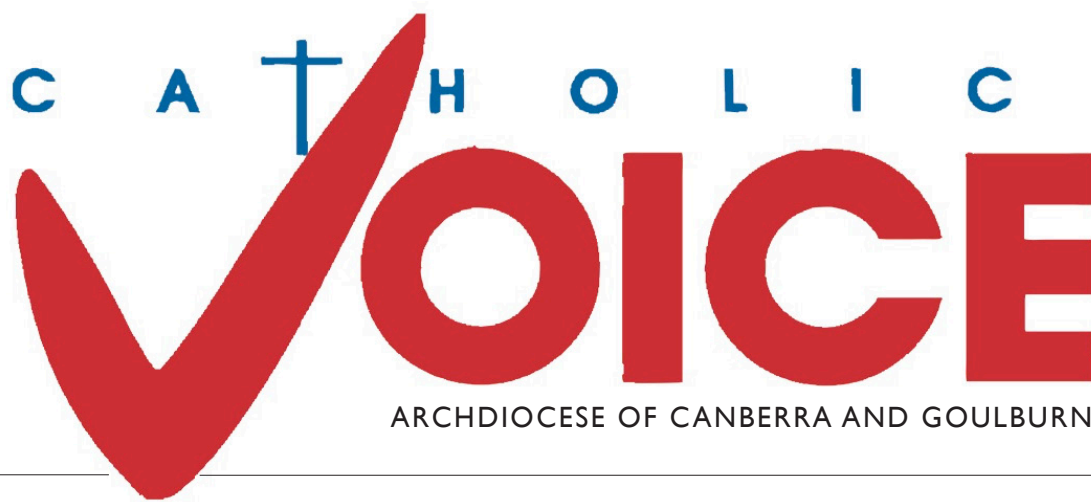
This Gospel chapter also offers us another insight into the Good Shepherd. Jesus describes himself as "the gate of the sheepfold ... anyone who comes through me will be safe ... (will have) life and have it to the full." (v.9, 10)

Jesus is referring to one sign of care that shepherds of antiquity demonstrated to their few sheep grazing in the dangerous pastures at night. The shepherd may build a little circular fence from nearby stones and place brambles on top to fence them in. He would be at the entrance and sleep there.

Literally, he would become the gate. Any straying sheep or, more importantly, wolf or wicked shepherd who plans to steal, would have to climb over the resting Good Shepherd. No harm would come to them as their shepherd would "lay down his life for his sheep." (v.11)

This is our strong and loving God made present in Jesus, the Good Shepherd. It gives us great hope to know that in the Lord we can find true comfort and peace in the midst of our troubles. Let us trust Jesus deeply during this Coronavirus Pandemic.

Lastly, the Good Shepherd is often associated with priests and religious leaders who mirror the protection and leadership that God gives us. Let us pray that the Lord raise up more priests and religious vocations.



ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN



Imagine the scene at Marist College next Monday as a cavalcade of 1660 young scholars charge the gates reuniting with teachers and chums. Learn well, young men. As Mahatma Gandhi said, 'Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.'

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Church comeback plan

BY FELICITY DE FOMBELLE

A THREE-STAGE plan to reopen churches and allow Masses has been put to the Prime Minister and ACT Chief Minister by Archbishop Christopher Prowse.

People were missing practicing their faith, the Archbishop said, and allowing services would "generate tremendous hope and inner strength".

The Archbishop proposed a phased return to services in letters to ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr and Prime Minister Scott Morrison late last month.

Anglican Bishop for Canberra and Goulburn Dr Mark Short and

the president of the ACT Churches Council, Rev David Campbell, co-signed the letter to Mr Barr.

Archbishop Christopher also co-signed a letter to NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian from Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher and other NSW bishops with a detailed plan for reinstating church services.

Archbishop Christopher's plan to the Prime Minister comprises:

1. Reopen churches for private prayer,
2. Allow outdoor Masses,
3. Allow Masses in churches.

Religious services would be subject to the following conditions:

- Maximum of 100 people,
- Physical distancing, no hu-

man contact and place markers for parishioners,

- Hygiene practices entering and leaving the church, and
- Advising elderly people or those with health concerns not to attend.

Archbishop Christopher praised the Prime Minister's "exemplary leadership" on the pandemic which he said had resulted in Australia's low infection rates.

"The community now talk of a recovery plan," the Archbishop wrote.

"I would like to humbly include a phased return to church services.

"People are truly missing the practice of their faith ... religious

practices generate tremendous hope and inner strength in people.

"These qualities are needed more than ever in Australia where so many people feel fragile, lonely and isolated."

In the letter to Mr Barr, the three church leaders said they would welcome auditing by government officials and argued the modest recommendations would mean a lot to church goers.

"The health and well-being of so many would be enhanced by these simple signs of real practical hope."

The Prime Minister has said he could not see large church services being allowed but praying in a place of worship could be possible.

Marist College leads the way

BY FELICITY DE FOMBELLE

MARIST College will be the first Canberra school to reopen to all students next week as headmaster Matthew Hutchison pulls up stumps on remote learning.

A total of 1660 Marist boys will don blazers and file into classrooms next Monday in a considered move the school leader said offered the best learning and care for students.

"It is a risk of course," Matthew said.

"We considered all the ramifications but what really led our thinking was that Canberra currently has no COVID-19 cases. The community are sometimes looking for us to lead in these areas."

School leaders were particularly influenced by the nation's chief medical officer who has consistently argued it is safe for schools to open. Marist will implement protective measures to avoid an infection outbreak.

Mum-of-four boys Anna-Louise Kimpton has three sons at Marist and said the whole family is delighted school will soon be back.

"My husband and I work so it will relieve enormous pressure on us with work, home and family," Anna-Louise said.

"Our boys range in age from a five year old in kinder to a 14-year-old in Year Eight and managing their different needs has been a challenge. To get back into the school routine will be great."

An ex-Daramalan student who taught at his alma mater for two years before forging a 30-year



Hughes Mum Anna-Louise Kimpton with (clockwise from top left) Jamie 5, Charlie 14, Edward 11 and Archie 9. The three older boys attend Marist College.

career in Sydney and Melbourne, Matthew said students had effectively missed out on a chunk of learning.

"It is true to say that teachers will have to re-teach a significant amount of the material they have taught since schools were shut," the experienced educator said.

The real value of face-to-face teaching, he explained, was being able to check for understanding.

"I teach a Year Nine maths class and in a classroom you are forever scanning, walking around seeing the work students are producing and looking at their body language," Matthew said.

"The critical part is that informs whether you continue what you are teaching or you realise you need to



Marist Headmaster Matthew Hutchison

re-introduce the concept.

"That ability to check for understanding is really very difficult online. I could have the boys playing video games while I teach them and I say 'How are you going boys?'

All Catholic students back by June 2

PRINCIPALS at Canberra's 29 Catholic systemic schools will determine which children return when they reopen on Monday May 18. It is likely all students will be back by Tuesday June 2.

Students at the Archdiocese's 27 New South Wales schools will begin returning from Monday May 11.

and they say 'Yep, yep, fine'."

Brighter boys could probably manage but the father-of-three said his focus was the big cohort of boys in the middle.

"It's that middle group that often need a bright light shone right into their academic life and close monitoring and checking, a degree of accountability," Matthew said.

"They can go hiding. There's an attitude 'don't ask much of me and I won't ask much of you'."

Marist College will closely monitor staff and student health and respond as required.

"It could be a bit like Bondi beach," Matthew said. "If something goes wrong it goes back to online learning.

"Overall there has been a positive response from parents but you never get full consensus."

Truth in a fractured church

BY BETH DOHERTY



AS the Book of Ecclesiastes says, 'there is a time for every purpose under heaven'. (Eccl 3:1)

And so it was that 2017 seemed an opportune time to begin composing the book "*All the Beautiful Things: Finding Truth, Beauty and Goodness in a Fractured Church*".

Launched last month by Bishop Pat Power, the book takes as its theme 'beauty from ashes' from Isaiah 61:3, and has been written 'while the Catholic Church and its people are reeling from years of scandal'.

Working in media relations for Australia's Catholic bishops, I was no stranger to an intimate understanding of that scandal, sometimes fielding late night or early morning calls from abuse survivors and angry Catholics.

I was in the role when then Prime Minister Julia Gillard called a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Catholic Church was significantly, indeed, overwhelmingly represented in the findings of that inquiry, and faced a reckoning that threatened to topple its foundations.

And yet, arguably, it was a breaking that needed to happen.

Yet, I was aware as I wrote that pithy, silver bullet answers are not enough for many Catholics anymore.

It was important to delve deep into the stories, to enunciate in some way the sense that Catholics have of not being able to shake the "dust from their feet" from this institution that raised them, but of deeply yearning for change and reckoning.

It was a project that led to much personal questioning. At times, I doggedly kept practising, often with little consolation.

Now the writing journey is over, but in many ways, the questions are open ended.

I end the book with a call to action and a personal commitment in the epilogue.

The book is available for \$24.95 from the publisher's website and amazon.com.au.

<https://atfpress.com/product/all-the-beautiful-things/>

Marina in the middle

BY FELICITY DE FOMBELLE

Croatian mother Draga Manenica was not able to see or hold her third child when she was born and knew something was wrong.

It was in 1977, almost 43 years ago, a different time when having a baby with Down Syndrome was confronting even for medical staff.

"After one or two days the doctors told me Marina had Down Syndrome," Draga said.

"I started to cry. I didn't know what that was so it was a shock. So I asked God, please help me to accept this.

"If you don't accept these things, it's not good for you and not good for your child. It's not easy but you must."

Draga and husband Jure had only recently moved from Melbourne to Canberra, where Draga's sister lived. Today her sister has 11 children and Draga and Jure have seven.

Hard working migrants, Jure would leave home early each morning for his construction job and return at 3pm to mind the children as Draga set off to clean offices, to bring in extra money.

Life is calmer now with Draga in her early 70s and Jure his early 80s. The proud pair have forged a family fired by love, with Marina at its centre.

"Isn't she gorgeous?" boasts Draga, wrapping her arms around Marina. "Down Syndrome children are lovely. If you give them love, they give you back double.



Clockwise from above: Marina playing the keyboard in her bedroom, with older sister Paulina and a cuddle with Mum Draga.

"I got pregnant with Ana soon after Marina was born and the doctor asked me if I wanted to have the test for Down Syndrome.

"I said why would I have the test because I would never abort my child. It was hard when Marina was young and I had the other children but you don't complain."

Draga chuckles as she recalls Marina's pranks as a youngster such as the time she lost one of her new handmade shoes in the supermarket.

"Marina was in the trolley and I was going up and down the aisles to find the shoe," Draga said.

"Then Marina pointed to the freezer section. I opened one of the freezer doors to discover Marina's shoe inside!"

Sending people cards is one of Marina's favorite pastimes. Occasionally Draga has to settle Marina's account at the post office as Marina hands over cards to post with insufficient postage.

"Marina is the boss," older sister Paulina laughs.

"Down Syndrome people love people. Every Sunday we have a family lunch and one time I couldn't make it and it was like the world had ended for Marina. She loves the family being together and rings to check we are coming."

Marina's weekly routine includes one day a week as a volunteer at the University of Canberra childcare centre and two days at community group Koomarri in Belconnen. Marina takes the bus



and adores the children.

There is daily Mass with Mum at St Thomas Aquinas in Charnwood and a weekly keyboard lesson.

All of the activities are on hold due to the pandemic so the family have encircled Marina to keep her company and take her for walks.

"Marina has a tendency to get depressed so we are more attentive to her needs," Paulina said.

"Marina and Mum pray a lot together and Marina loves music too. It soothes her.

"The silver lining is that we are all connecting better as a family. We need to go back to basics and enjoy time with family and that is what we are doing with Marina very much in the centre."

Temora on the air

TEMORA'S Catholic community has taken to the airwaves and joined four other local Christian churches to host a faith radio program every Sunday.

Parishioner Anne McCrone is a member of the local Christian Leaders' Group (an initiative strongly supported by the late Fr Phil Harding) that developed the program for TEM-FM 102.5.

Father and daughter Dennis and Anne-Maree Sleigh, both former teachers at St Anne's Central School in Temora, develop materials for the 30-minute Catholic slot.

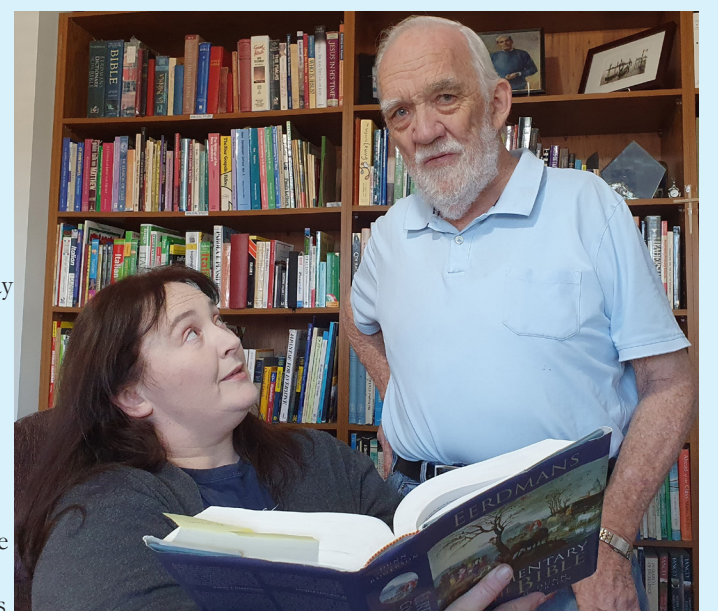
The five churches each prepare a half-hour segment of a program called The Lord's Good Word which kicks off

at midday. The churches have fixed timeslots with the Catholics on air at 1.30 pm.

In its fourth week, The Lord's Good Word has received praise from listeners of all denominations who say it adds a new dimension to a day of spiritual reflection.

As for preparing the material, Dennis and Anne-Maree admit it is a challenging exercise but also very satisfying.

"We have been called on to use brain cells we haven't really used since we studied together at ACU for Master's degrees in Theology fifteen years ago," they laughed.



Former teachers, Dennis and daughter Anne-Maree Sleigh

Catholic Voice doing the rounds



Canberra's hospital patients are enjoying the *Catholic Voice*, particularly with the book trolley out of action.

"People appreciate it and keep it for the week," said Deacon Joe Blackwell, who does the hospital rounds with chaplains Fr Johny Abraham and Fr Joshua Scott.

"Volunteers are no longer allowed so the book trolley and chocolate cart have gone. It's good to offer the *Catholic Voice*."

L-R: Fr Johny Abraham visits patient Branko from Wallaroo while Deacon Joe Blackwell gives the *Catholic Voice* to Bernie from Golspie in NSW.