



AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PARISH

Friday March 20th 2020.

Parishioners and friends of the parish,

Our Lenten journey has taken a feared but not totally unexpected turn. As we pass the mid-way point on our path to the brightness and joy of Easter a dark shadow appears to be encompassing our world. Many we know will be suffering and experiencing deep concern about their physical, mental and financial situation. The wider community is also coming to terms with this same reality.

The suspension of Masses and gatherings has profound consequences for parish life. While our numbers at worship probably fall within permissible government guidelines, the spirit of the Bishops' directive errs correctly, I believe, on the side of caution and we would be wise to follow. The bishops have clearly stated that all the faithful are exempt from their Sunday obligation.

There are many questions. How are we to sustain our prayer and sacramental life during this uncertain time ahead? How are we to provide for the pastoral needs of those in our community outside worship time? How will we maintain contact with fellow parishioners? Might we be able to avail ourselves of creative means to record and access our own parish liturgy online using social media? You will have your own thoughts and questions.

I am concerned about our volunteers and parish staff. Many will be feeling vulnerable and worried about their own situation and that of family. The immediate financial viability of the parish itself is not in question but we will have to be prudent with our resources in order to sustain what we have in place.

While public masses and prayers, except for occasional baptisms, marriages and funerals where special arrangements can be made, are not permitted, parish clergy are tasked with offering mass for the faith community, even if celebrated in private.

One simple thing we can all do is ring a neighbour or friend and ask simply, "How are you?" How we all emerge from the trial ahead will be as much a test of our faith as perhaps any we have faced.

I conclude with a quotation from St Augustine:

*"Bad times, hard times, this is what people keep saying;
but let us live well, and times shall be good.
We are the times: Such as we are, such are the times."*

Fr Brian Buckley OSA