

## *One Day at a Time*

Father Tim's Daily Reflections  
during the COVID-19 crisis

**Thursday 09 April**

**Holy (Maundy) Thursday**

**10.30am** – Yesterday evening was our third session of open-air confessions; in a half-hour I'll be going to the church patio for the last session. I'm grateful to **Fr Brian Limbourn**, who assisted on Monday morning, and **Fr David Watt** who has joined me in hearing confessions on Tuesday, Wednesday and today. And I thank all parishioners who have availed themselves of the Sacrament of Penance.

I was very moved last night, sitting under the full moon – the **Passover moon** – to see parishioners come to me with tears in eyes, they were so happy to see me and to have a moment on 'normality', as one person put it. And it was actually lovely to sit outside and enjoy the fresh air as I shared with my people the gift of Christ's forgiving love.

After confessions last night, it was back to work. I put together a PowerPoint prayer service for the school to celebrate the **end of Term One**. It is being used today by the staff and the few students remaining at school, but also in the homes where most children are settling into their new routine of online learning.

I also spent some time consulting with some parish experts as I put together a document outlining my rationale for distributing **Holy Communion on Easter Sunday** to parishioners in their vehicles passing through the church driveway. Key points from the **Government's Emergency Management Act** that I am addressing are these: (1) yes, people in a car are limited to two – unless they are members of the same household; (2) a household is not only closely related members of a family – it also includes a nanny who lives in the home, or four backpackers who live together in a unit, etc.; (3) a gathering is a group of people staying in a fixed place, indoor or outdoor, for an organised activity – but our Communion plan is similar to people queued up in a **Hungry Jack's driveway**: one car is ordering, one car is examining the menu, one car is picking up food, and several cars are waiting their turn. Similarly, parishioners queueing up in the church driveway are not gathering in the car park, and there is no formal service being offered – simply people driving through to get the Bread of life. Well, that's how I see it.

**Pope Francis** has encouraged priests to be creative and innovative at this time in the Church's life. If we take only a strict interpretation of the law, we would have problems. But if people can queue up at Hungry Jack's for food, I don't see why people can't queue up for a few minutes to receive Holy Communion and then return home. I may go to jail for this, though! I promise to write more later.

**1.00pm** – Fr David and I had a steady stream of penitents coming to confession this morning. Over the past four days, some 50+ people received the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I'm very happy, and I will try to do this again sometime in the future.

After confessions, I started preparing the sanctuary for this evening's Mass of the Lord's Supper, Stripping of the Altar and Tenebrae (*shadows*), which is the service of psalms, readings and prayers for Holy Thursday. There are so many things to do, and in this pandemic situation, it's more difficult as I mentally rehearse what needs to be done and what must be omitted due to the circumstances.

Every day is a bit of a challenge. Celebrating daily Mass used to be a fairly simple task: our sacristan David Cleary had everything prepared, our acolyte Jerry de Mello brought the tray with the chalice, water & wine, bowl & towel, to the altar just before Mass, and Anne Marie Leahy extinguished the candles and returned the tray to the sacristy. Now I'm doing most things on my own, plus meeting

with the musicians and IT staff to make sure we're all on the same page. And I prepare a PowerPoint for each day's Mass, so that you can follow the prayers, responses and hymns at home. 'In the olden days', I only prepared a PowerPoint for the weekend Mass. Now I'm spending several hours each day just getting ready for Mass! Hopefully I'll get used to this new routine.

This is the challenge for us all: developing new routines, and looking forward, not backward. We'll never go back to the old way of doing things. Now that we're online, we'll stay online with daily Mass, plus bible study, RCIA and catechism. But the positive side of this is that many of you who wanted to attend weekday Mass or our educational programs in the past, but could not because of home responsibilities, are now able to 'tune in' to the parish every day, at a time convenient to you. People have told me that they're gathering together each day to pray the Mass; some have set up nearby the TV a table with a cloth, candle, crucifix or statue, etc., creating a home altar as a prayer focus in the home. Wonderful! And as we tune in to daily Mass, we will become more aware of the rhythms of the liturgical year.

I have several books about celebrating the liturgical year at home, with ideas for craft projects, special recipes, etc. Perhaps – when I settle into my new routine, and we get the new website up and running – I can share some of these ideas with you, as your home becomes a true 'domestic Church'.

And now I must make some lunch, prepare tonight's PowerPoint, and perhaps run to the supermarket for some milk and what-not. God bless!