

One Day at a Time

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

Monday 20 April

Second Week of Easter

4.30pm – I've been AWOL in writing this blog – sorry about that! I kept intending to write each day last week, but you know what **St Teresa of Avila** said: *The road to Hell is paved with good intentions*. Oh well – it's time to take a detour!

8.20pm – As you can see, I get waylaid – and then comes Mass live-streaming – so I'm now back at my desk. Last week was pretty busy, even though Holy Week and Easter Sunday had ended. We always celebrate the entire **Easter Octave** (eight days) with full solemnity here at St Paul's – a full sung Mass with incense, and that's what we did last week. It was the first time in years that I've been able to have the **Easter Sequence** sung in Gregorian chant throughout the Octave. It's such a magnificent poem, both in English and the original Latin, and was always a highlight of my Easter liturgies throughout my formative years and seminary. But not many parishes have the resources to pull it off properly, and most simply skip it, except for Easter Sunday. But **Theodore** and **Eimear** did a wonderful job singing it for us.

There used to be over a hundred sequences for various Masses throughout the year; now there are only five left: for Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, Our Lady of Sorrows ("At the Cross her station keeping") and the Funeral Mass (the famous "Dies irae" which often features as a musical theme in many horror films!). But here at St Paul's we manage to sing the four major sequences. These musical masterpieces originally were acted out, and were the origin of the medieval '**mystery plays**', which in turn were the foundation of drama in Western Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire.

In the Easter Sequence, we can picture a male soloist dressed as an Angel, standing before the altar and singing "Christians, to the Paschal Victim offer your thankful praises!" A few verses later, we can envision a woman dressed as Mary Magdalen walking up the aisle and answering the Angel, who sings: "Speak, Mary, declaring what thou sawest wayfaring." She responds in a beautiful soprano voice, "The tomb of Christ, Who is living – the glory of Jesus' resurrection . . ." And then Mary and the Angel join the whole choir in singing with jubilation, "Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining . . .!" Magnificent liturgical theatre!

But I digress! Last Tuesday, the Archbishop's Assistant, **Daniel Lynch**, paid me a visit on my veranda to learn how our Easter Sunday Communion-in-the-driveway went. He was pleased that it all worked out well and was so well attended (and that I wasn't arrested or given a \$50,000 fine!).

On Wednesday, our Principal Cantor, **Theodore Murphy-Jelley**, turned **25**. The live-streaming team came to my veranda to share a bit of ice-cream cake and sing to Theo. He adds so much to our Masses, and he's really a part of our parish family now; this Easter was his third at St Paul's. Congratulations, Theodore!

On Thursday I received one of our RCIA candidates, **Abby Tierney**, into the Church. She made her First Confession, made a Profession of Faith, was Confirmed, and received her First Holy Communion. She and her fiancé **Declan Walsh** are marrying this weekend at St Joseph's Church in Subiaco (a small wedding, of course), and wanted to marry as Catholics, so I was able to accommodate them, again with a small Mass. Abby had been a Methodist before becoming a Catholic, so she wasn't included in the prohibition against having Baptisms except in cases of emergency. It's a shame that our other RCIA students couldn't be baptised at Easter, but that's the Archbishop's policy during the pandemic.

Hopefully we'll be allowed back in our churches sometime in the near future, and then we can baptise these young adults who are very eager to join the Church.

Also on Thursday, our **shattered church window** was finally repaired, and the workers did a fantastic job replicating the 'sword' of St Paul as well as replacing all the leadlight.

On Friday, **Grace Yap and her son Noah** came by to pick up half of our altar servers' albs and take them home for cleaning; they'll do the other half next week. We had a nice visit on the veranda before they left. Let's remember to keep the youngest child, **Joseph**, in our prayers; he's being treated for cancer and is now undergoing his second round of chemotherapy.

In addition to last Saturday's 4.30pm Vigil Mass, concelebrated by our friend **Fr Brian Limbourn**, we had a wonderful **Divine Mercy Holy Hour** on Sunday at 2.30pm, with Adoration and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament framing the beautiful Divine Mercy Chaplet and Litany. As always, our live-streamed liturgies have been watched by many people in a variety of countries, and they are very complimentary.

BTW, we're still working on fine-tuning our **live-streaming system**. Very soon I hope to have a sound technician visit us to determine how we can connect the PA system in the sacristy to the mixer near the organ, and to connect the organ to the mixer as well. If we can get this done, our sound will be much crisper. Just be patient!

Some people have suggested that we use '**double screen**' to show the action at the altar as well as the words of hymns and prayers. But having looked at live-streaming from several parishes that are doing this, I notice that it looks okay on a laptop or TV, but if you're watching the Mass on a phone, the texts are very small. Also, I prefer not to be 'on camera' all the time – sometimes, when a song is being sung, I have to walk around to make sure someone or something is 'right'. So it's convenient for me to be 'invisible' at times. Not having altar servers, it's hard for one acolyte to be doing everything, and sometimes I have to 'pitch in'.

I've also noticed that some parishes are locating their cameras very close to the altar. One of ours is in the choir loft, the other is closer, on the side near the organ. Yes, having a camera close to the altar gives a 'bird's-eye view' of the altar, and it does look very nice. But when the pandemic ends, I intend to continue live-streaming everything – and for this, the cameras need to be out of the way. These other parishes – if they continue to live-stream – will have to move their cameras.

One more thing: last Sunday, **Xavier Torre**, who has been 'running the show' for us – switching between Camera 1, Camera 2 and the PowerPoint – celebrated his 13th birthday. So after Divine Mercy devotions, the crew went to my veranda again, this time for cupcakes. I managed to get chocolate icing all over my clean clerical shirt, so I had to do laundry that night. Happy birthday, Xav!

That's all for now. Tomorrow, one of our RCIA candidates, **Aaron Senzio**, is coming for a chat – all the way from East Fremantle! Later tomorrow, I have to follow up on getting the sound tech out here to improve our system.

Don't forget: this Friday, 24th April, immediately after the live-streamed 5.45pm Mass, we'll live-stream a special **ANZAC Day service** which then can be viewed anytime on Saturday. We'll have readings of "On Flander's Fields" and "For the Fallen" (The Ode – the complete version), the National Anthem and the Silence, plus Alessio playing his stirring organ version of The Last Post, and Theodore singing "The Lads in Their Hundreds" by A E Housman and George Butterworth. This is a very moving vocal tribute to those who died during World War I and never returned home. ***Lest we forget.***