

## *One Day at a Time*

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

### **Monday 23 March**

#### ***Optional Memorial: St Turibius of Mogrovejo, bishop (1538 – 1606)***

*I have a special place in my heart for **St Turibius**, because he was patron of the parish where I first said daily morning Mass as a newly ordained priest while I was teaching at St Rita High School in Chicago. A Spaniard, he became bishop of Lima, Peru and was full of apostolic zeal: he visited his huge diocese three times – travelling mostly on foot, to personally baptise, confirm, marry and catechise the native people. He organised many local church synods and councils to make the Church's work strong and effective. While he was bishop of Lima, he had four other saints-in-the-making under his pastoral care: St Martin de Porres, St Rose, St John Macias, and St Francis Solano – amazing! (Look them up – each has a wonderful story.)*

*So, as we enter this critical time, I'm invoking St Turibius' prayers to support me in my priestly ministry. I have to devise creative ways to visit my entire parish, not on foot or on back of a donkey, but in various ways online. St Turibius, pray for us!*

**11.45am** – At 10.30 this morning, **Raewyn Hill**, her little boy **Harvey**, and **Jaz**, an IT specialist from Raewyn's workplace, came to my office to set up a group email list that will enable me to quickly contact all St Paul's parishioners. I am a bit of a tech Neanderthal, so I was happy to get the help – and even happier when it took Jas over an hour to figure out how to do this! But it's done, sort of: I'll have to subdivide the list of 300+ addresses into groups of 25, because our system doesn't allow me to send messages at once to any more addresses than this.

**2.00pm** – Just returned from St Paul's School, where I had a free latte from their nice new coffee machine, and chatted with a few of the staff. I passed on to them a couple of tips I've gotten from **Dr Antoinette Torre** for sanitising things and protecting one's health (see elsewhere on this website for information).

Our new principal, **Yvonne Liebeck**, is doing so very well – I'm extremely pleased with her school leadership. She has a good sense of humour, which is so important these days; but she is also very organised and forward-thinking. She and I are in regular contact about everything: school, church, pandemic. I was pleased to know that the students and teachers prayed the Rosary this morning (but only 50% of the students were in school).

**3.10pm** – **Dr Antoinette Torre** just left. She and her husband **Dr Luke Torre** realised that my current blood pressure medication isn't compatible with the virus – it could cause my arteries to contract and give me a heart attack! So they're swapping my med with a different one; she'll let my GP know (they were classmates in medical school). She also brought me more heavy-duty cleaning sprays and wipes, and she took my blood pressure before she left. So I have a private physician who makes house calls – just like the Pope and the Queen!

We're getting conflicting advice and opinions on whether we can have any kind of service in church at all, and even whether we can leave the church open during the day for private prayer. The Torres see nothing wrong with the way we conducted last weekend's Masses: limited numbers, wide social distancing, complete sanitisation of the church afterwards, and no publicity about the Masses. But

I'm waiting to see what the Archbishop says later today or tomorrow. But first I must run around the house and spray everything touched by my visitors!

**4.30pm** – I had a visit from **Yolanda MacFarlane**, who is a seamstress and has done work on our altar hangings, adding Velcro strips for easy changing of colours, and sewing on apparel (decorative bands) on the altar frontals. She has an elderly mother in a retirement facility, and she's worried about her receiving the right care. I've known Yolanda for the entire 23 years I've been in Perth, and I'm grateful that she helps me with the altar hangings (for the front of the altar, the front of the pulpit and lectern, and the missal stand).

Yolanda is a woman of deep faith. For Christmas, she made each of her grandchildren a **personal prayer book** with the usual Catholic prayers, but also pages about each grandchild's patron saint, birthday saint, etc. What a wonderful project! This is something that families could work on during 'confinement' at home. Get paper and markers, download saint's pictures and add them to the pages of the booklet. If you download images that are 'clip art', they are usually black-and-white outline drawings which younger children can colour in. Or you can download full-colour images. You can even compose your own prayers to add to the booklet.

So you can have Morning and Evening Prayers, Grace before and after meals, prayers in sickness, before study and exams, prayers for family and friends, for the nation, for the parish, prayers in honour of the Angels and Saints, etc. You could have a section on the Mass, or bible stories, or saints stories. If you get a file folder, you can add prayers and other material from time to time.

I just realised that I haven't eaten anything all day, except for a cup of coffee and a small piece of cake I had at the school while I visited the principal. I'd better reheat some soup! (*Man does not live on cake and coffee alone!*)

One more thing: after my visits today, I sprayed the chairs and door handles with Glen-20 spray disinfectant. Gotta stay alive!

**10.20pm** – I've been preoccupied all day about a Facebook message I received early in the morning. It was from **Keith Marx**, who I taught in Year 12 (senior year) at **Marian Catholic High School** in Chicago Heights, IL in 1973. I was in my second year of teaching, and I had Year 9 students (freshmen) all year, but the seniors' religion teacher was incapacitated for some reason I now forget, and I was asked to fill in for the rest of the year – less than a semester. I was terrified – I was only 22, and still in the seminary but part-time teaching as part of my preparation (a lot of American priests work as school teachers part-time, which is great training for preaching). But this class of kids who were just 5 years younger than me were great. And one of them was Keith.

I went to a bookshelf and took my copy of the 1973 Mariner, the high school yearbook, and opened it. American students always sign each other's yearbook with various comments; I ended up looking at what the kids wrote in my yearbook for about an hour! The memories came flooding back – and I found several photos of me with my long, dark hair and my slim profile! I looked up Keith's photo, and there he was: good-looking with long, blondish hair swept over the side of his forehead. He played the guitar and composed music; I remember thinking he was pretty average as musicians go, and in those days every other guy played (at) the guitar. Keith Francis Marx (I still remember his middle name) – here's his brief comment in my yearbook, right on the first page: *Brother Tim, I haven't known you very long, but long enough to appreciate your kindness and cheerfulness. Good luck in your studies, wherever they may lead. Keith.*

We got together once or twice many years ago when I would travel from Texas, where I was working years later as a young priest, visit family and friends in Chicago. He had put together a band and has been playing with various bands all his life – they've even gone on tour; so much for my musical

judgment, at least as guitarists go! In any case, he's now suffering from Coronavirus. He writes on his Facebook page today:

*Been dealing with minimal symptoms for about 5 days now, but tonight feels different. No fever or cough yet, but sore throat and odd feeling throughout body. Covid is said to have a long onset. I'm headed to bed shortly. Hope to ride it out. Don't have a smart phone, so if you don't see me on here you'll know I had to seek treatment. And no, I wasn't careless at all; no time spent in crowded situations for over two weeks; haven't been out in 9 days . . .*

I sent Keith a message right away, and I prayed for him at the Mass I offered in church at 5.15pm today. **Alessio Loiacono**, our parish organist, was the reader, and two women who had come into the church to pray privately stayed for the Mass. After Mass, Alessio and I went to the McDonald's drive-thru (restaurants and cafes are now closed) and got take-away chips and drinks, and then returned to the presbytery for a short chat before Alessio went home. I warmed up some minestrone given to me by **Maria Torre**, read the paper, watched some mindless TV (Friends, Seinfeld, Two And A Half Men) – but all the time I was thinking of Keith: a gentle soul, an idealistic young man who poured his heart into his music. For some reason we have remained connected all these past 47 years. He's 65 now, I'm going to be 70 soon. Please say a prayer for him. Thanks, and good night.