

One Day at a Time

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

Tuesday 24 March

Lenten weekday

10.00pm – It's been a jam-packed day, and I'm only now getting a chance to write my journal. (Some people are calling it a blog. What's a blog? How did it get that name? It's an ugly word!)

In any case, before I even showered, I was texting my friend **Susan Miller** in Jamesville, NY. She wanted a funeral Mass for her mother **Mary Cargian** who passed away last weekend, while her four siblings wanted something small and brief at the funeral home. I told Susan (and this is advice for everyone who may deal with a funeral during this crisis) not to push for the Mass, but just have the small service – otherwise there will be bad feelings that will take a while to dissipate, and none of us needs family conflict at this time. But I told her to ask her siblings if they could have a memorial Mass next year on the anniversary of the death – and I will try to get there to say the Mass. Since all the siblings know me, they will hopefully agree to this compromise. Besides, because attendance at funerals is so strictly limited, not everyone would be able to attend. And, finally, Susan's mother is already in eternity and is being looked after by the Lord – we shouldn't worry so much about our loved ones who have been faithful to the Lord in this life. I then said to Susan, "Now go and have a good cry." We're all going to need that once in a while this year, so don't be afraid of that. Tears are a sign of love.

After getting myself together, I was at our primary school at 9.00am to hear our children's confessions in preparation for Easter (!). Three of my brother priests assisted me: **Monsignor Harry Entwistle**, **Fr David Watt** and **Fr Charbel Haywood**. We made quick work of it: at least 50% of the students aren't in school, and taking into account the non-Catholics, we were done in about 40 minutes – years 4, 5 and 6. I was thinking to myself that this would be the last Reconciliation for most of them for quite a while, unless their parents make an appointment for confession sometime during the year.

After confessions, I took Monsignor Harry to get a takeaway coffee at **Alexia Serra's** café in Osborne Park. (Alexia is the sister of my parishioner **Dr Luke Torre**, who has been giving me such good medical advice as this pandemic has unfolded.) Monsignor and I regretfully had to lock our church today, at the order of the Government and direction of the Archbishop.

After dropping Monsignor off, I stopped in the school again to speak to a few of the staff. They're doing such a great, unsung job taking care of fewer and fewer students, while also preparing online lessons – and many of them have their own children to worry about. Teachers are true heroes! But our principal **Yvonne Liebeck** keeps trying to load me down with packets of cookies. I tell her that she is the devil! One of the teachers defended her and said, "No, Father, she's an angel!" I retorted, "Yes, but the devil is an angel – a bad angel!"

I returned to my office to deal with a plethora of emails. Some of them were from my loyal parishioner **Tina Jack**, who is working with our friend Paul Bui to give our parish website a badly-needed revamp. Tina's daughter **Naomi** was able to get back home from Sydney, where she was taking a year-long course, just before the West Australian border was closed. Naomi is good with websites, so she'll join the team.

Meanwhile, **Raewyn Hill** went over to neighbouring parish **St Denis in Joondanna** to see their AV set-up. She and I are going back there tomorrow, to meet with their IT man **Arkar Daniels**. He'll help

us purchase cameras, tripods, cables and an additional computer screen – I'm anxious to get our Mass online ASAP.

I tried to take a nap in the afternoon, but it was not a very good or long one. Then I was going to go to a school board meeting (they wanted to elect officers – why, I have no idea!) but I received a call asking me to administer the Last Rites to a resident at one of the six retirement homes in my care. So I drove to the retirement home and visited the woman, saying all the prayers in Italian, before then driving over to **Luke & Antoinette Torre's** house to have some cheese & crackers plus a good stiff Diet Coke & whiskey!

Good Antoinette reorganised my medications for me, changed my blood pressure medication so I won't have a heart attack (!) and spoke on the phone with my good GP **Dr Glynn Hughes** (again, a med school classmate of Antoinette's). He was happy about the change – I can't see him anyway, because the medical clinic is overloaded with patients coming in for everything imaginable, and the waiting room is now located outdoors.

Poor Luke is so overloaded with work and responsibility at Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital, trying to organise more beds for the expected surge in COVID-19 sufferers. He's under a lot of stress, but I think it was good for me to visit. I brought along my 1973 yearbook from Marian Catholic High School in Chicago Heights, IL (I wrote about that) and the whole family enjoyed looking at photos of me when I was 22 – thin and dark-haired! We also enjoyed the hairstyles of the kids back then.

Keith Marx, the Marian HS senior I taught who contacted me through Facebook to reveal he is dealing with the virus, was very grateful I offered Mass for him and said that he could feel the prayer support over the distance! He's feeling a bit better today, and I'm glad. I can sleep better tonight.

BTW: whoever is posting this on Facebook (I have no idea how to do that), please notice that I have added paragraphs to each day's entry (except today – just one big one), and some people are not getting the entire day's BLOG. I don't want anyone to miss one salient point I make, or a single earth-shattering reflection I make! 😊 Now I'm off to read the rest of the newspaper and then to bed.