

Dear Parishioners,

Some might wonder will the Church be a casualty of the Covid-19 pandemic? Many are aware church attendance has been on the decline for a couple of decades. There is real fear that numbers will drop further.

Some interesting conversations are taking place around the world apart from Covid updates. The pandemic is affecting global health, and its impact is felt in the social fabric of all population segments. It started with the elderly and the economy. We are now aware of the effects on youth, students, small businesses, travel and hospitality, farmworkers, the disabled, family life, indigenous community, and recently mental health.

Though most people are not busy, yet struggle to be motivated. Restrictions and fear have robbed our freedom. It is hard to plan, make choices or find balance in life. It feels surreal; priorities and focuses are changing quickly. Some conversations don't make sense; when India was dealing with the Delta variant outbreak, we discussed either to get Pfizer or Astra Zeneca in Australia. Most developing countries don't have vaccines! Now, discussions are centre around vaccination as an exchange for the freedom to go to hairdressers, pubs and café. There is a real social crisis facing the world. Unemployment, inequality, discrimination, poverty, refugees, instability may increase in the post-Covid-19 world.

As Christians, we believe resurrection follows suffering and death. Crisis presents the opportunity for positive change to happen. Though churches are closed for worship, we are finding new ways of connecting and communicating. Most of us miss going to Mass, gathering with others to worship and socialise. Faith and community are two reasons for embracing and adopting new technologies—tools for ministry, pastoral care and community building.

As people of faith with experience, skills, and education, who value social justice, we need to engage society in conversations that shape good policies and contribute to the narrative for the common good. Keep listening, reflecting and discussing. Engage people in transformative conversations. As people of God we have a lot to offer the world. *Fr Anthoni OFM*

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

12th September 2021 (Safeguarding Sunday)

Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you, that your prophets be found true.

Hear the prayers of your servant, and of your people Israel.

Opening prayer Look upon us, O God, Creator and Ruler of all things, and, that we may feel the working of your mercy, grant that we may serve you with all our heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

First Reading

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

I gave my body to those who struck me.

The Lord has opened my ear. For my part, I made no resistance, neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. The Lord comes to my help, so that I am untouched by the insults. So, too, I set my face like flint; I know I shall not be shamed.

My vindicator is here at hand. Does anyone start proceedings against me?

Then let us go to court together. Who thinks he has a case against me?

Let him approach me. The Lord is coming to my help, who dare condemn me?

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Responsorial Psalm

I love the Lord for he has heard
the cry of my appeal;
for he turned his ear to me
in the day when I called him.

They surrounded me, the snares of death,
with anguish of the tomb;
they caught me, sorrow and distress.
I called on the Lord's name.
O Lord my God, deliver me!

How gracious is the Lord, and just;
our God has compassion.
The Lord protects the simple hearts;
I was helpless so he saved me.

He has kept my soul from death,
my eyes from tears
and my feet from stumbling.
I will walk in the presence of the Lord
in the land of the living.

Second Reading

A reading from the letter of St James

Faith without good works is dead.

Take the case, my brothers, of someone who has never done a single good act but claims that he has faith. Will that faith save him? If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, 'I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty,' without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead.

This is the way to talk to people of that kind: 'You say you have faith and I have good deeds; I will prove to you that I have faith by showing you my good deeds – now you prove to me that you have faith without any good deeds to show.'

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia!

My only glory is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
which crucifies the world to me and me to the world.

Alleluia!

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

You are the Christ ... the Son of Man was destined to suffer much.

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say I am?' And they told him. 'John the Baptist,' they said, 'others Elijah; others again, one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he asked, 'who do you say I am?' Peter spoke up and said to him, 'You are the Christ.' And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him.

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God's way but man's.'

He called the people and his disciples to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.'

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Reflection from Fr Anthony ofm

One of the existential problems humans, religious or non-religious, face is the experience of suffering. Natural catastrophe, physical illness, human words and actions can all cause pain and lead to mental anguish and stress. We know pain!

Today's readings invite us to reflect on sin and suffering. Sin is evil, moral evil, while suffering is a painful fact. Imposing it on someone may be evil, but it can be transformative when someone chooses to embrace pain for love of the other. We wish for a happy life for all, and occasionally sacrifice is needed for good outcomes.

Conflicts and struggles can also bring out the best in humans: the strength of character, courage, trust in oneself, imagination and creativity. We have witnessed some heroic actions of people in the course of history. Stories of courageous acts of many men and women during the second world war abound. Not only in conflicts but even in daily life, we can experience compassion, concern and care. Mutual love and service, sharing structures, building lives and restoring hope—qualities that enable humanity to cope with pain and find meaning in suffering.

That's is why believers need to live in conformity to Christ. Faith without good works is dead. The question, 'who do you say I am?'" is an important one. If we believe he is the Christ, we must learn to take up our cross and follow Him. Our hope is in God, who will make all things new and bring everything to fulfilment. All people can fully experience God's goodness and generosity in the life of the kingdom.

Profession of faith followed by Prayers of the faithful

Presider: Jesus Christ, you suffered and died for our sakes. God our father we pray for the grace to understand the value of suffering in life.

For the persecuted Church and Christians – that all may learn to unite their pain with those of Jesus, and be a powerful source of grace to renew the world from selfish ways.

For Christian politicians - that they may have the moral courage to stand up for truth and for common good.

For people of Afghanistan and Myanmar - that regimes built on repression and violence will be transformed by the desire for trust and peace.

For the Church – that she will be ever-vigilant in protecting and safeguarding the children and vulnerable people in its care.

For Holy Spirit – to guide the church in Australia to listen humbly with open heart as it prepares for the 2020 Plenary Council.

For an end to the pandemic- that rollout of the Covid-19 vaccines may proceed smoothly and equitably around the world and that poorer nations will not be left behind.

For those who died – may they find life in the eternal kingdom, especially Angela Catherine Egan, Marcia Jackson (nee Keenan), Michael Gearin, Sheila Dillon and Peter John Little

Presider: Lord God, exhorted by your word and the example of your Son, you have shown that life's meaning is not found only in ourselves. May our prayer lead us closer to you and one another. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer.

Notices

*-Visiting a church is not permitted, but please do not hesitate to **ring the parish office** (leave a message on the office phone) **if you have any pastoral or spiritual needs.***

- Zoom is easy to use, if you wish to participate, create a group, and get in touch.

*-Sign up for a **free digital copy of the Catholic Weekly** while in lockdown.
<https://www.catholicweekly.com.au/churches-should-be-for-all-not-just-the-vaccinated/>*

*- **Maintenance:** Lights are being fixed at St Francis Church. Conversations have begun with the architect on refurbishing St Joseph Parish Hall. We are consulting for better live streaming equipment. I apologise for the poor sound quality!*

- Mass at St Francis of Assisi Paddington will be live-streamed on Sunday at 10 am. You are welcome to join by Facebook page - www.facebook.com/StFrancisStJoseph