

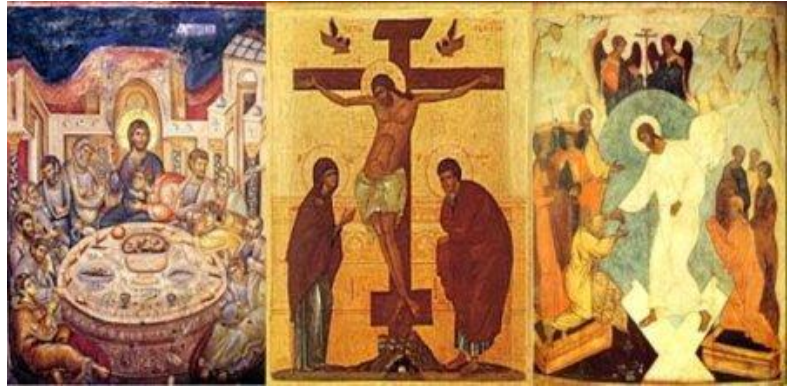


# Newsletter

The Personal Ordinariate of  
Our Lady of the Southern Cross  
Vol 2 No 4

April 2021

**Eastertide**



## Inside This Issue

### Page 2

*Seminarian Snippets*

### Page 4

*Saint Who?*

### Page 6

*Anniversaries & Goings-On*

### Page 7

*April Calendar*

### Page 8

*Catholics after Covid: The Church Emerging*

## The Ordinary's Message

The triptych above portrays the events which we particularly recall at the end of Lent – the *Triduum Sacrum* – the Sacred Three Days being the last three days of Holy Week.

It struck me shortly after Lent had begun that, as with few exceptions indeed, none of our Ordinariate communities in Australia is able to celebrate the Liturgy of the Triduum, as generally we are essentially *tenants* in diocesan church buildings where the Ordinary Form of the Triduum precludes our being able to celebrate the Ordinariate Form.

In discussing this with Bradley Le Guier, our seminarian who attends the Seminary of the Good Shepherd, next door to where

we live, he observed that the Triduum is not generally celebrated at the seminary, as the many of the seminarians, on Holy Week and Easter Week break, are assisting at the Triduum in the mother church of the diocese, St Mary's Cathedral in downtown Sydney. I was delighted that Fr Michael de Stoop, the Rector of the seminary, without hesitation offered the use of the chapel so that we might celebrate and livestream the Triduum liturgy so that the faithful around the Ordinariate might, in many cases, have their first exposure to the Ordinariate Form of the Sacred Three Days.

As it turns out, we were just a little too late in arranging this in terms of having sufficient acolytes/servers and an organist. Bradley and I will do our best to offer the full liturgy; however, certain notable things (incense, torch bearers especially at the Easter Vigil etc) will be missing. Also, as the seminary is not a parish church, they have no font, so the blessing of the water at the Easter Vigil will use the alternative "appropriate vessel" for the blessing.

This also explains why this issue of the newsletter is being sent out / posted a few days early, as 1 April is the first day of the Triduum. The schedule for the livestream:

1 April – Maundy Thursday: 7pm Sydney time

2 April – Good Friday: 3pm



3 April – Easter Vigil: 7:30pm

On Easter Day, we return to our normal 12 noon livestream from our Ordinariate community of St Bede, celebrated in the beautiful church of St Joseph's in Newtown.

The Right Reverend Monsignor Carl Reid, PA  
Ordinary



For those of you located in those parts of Australia who moved clocks forward in the spring, Daylight Savings ends this weekend (3/4 April). Turn your clocks back and enjoy an extra hours' sleep to greet Easter Day!



### Seminarian Snippets

Thoughts from the desk of a seminarian,  
Bradley Le Guier for the Ordinariate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross



*“Be God's true subjects: stand firm against the devil, and he will run away from you; come close to God, and he will come close to you. You that are sinners must wash your hands clean, you that are in two minds must purify the intention of your hearts. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.”*

James 4:7-8, 10; from the Liturgy of the Hours.

Auto-pilot. How often are we on auto-pilot? I seem to turn mine on every morning at the same instant I turn my alarm clock off.

To paint a picture: I switch on auto-pilot on and sit back in the cockpit, put my feet up, read a newspaper, whistle a merry tune, while Our Lord, who has somehow been demoted to co-pilot, is knocking urgently on the cockpit door calling to be let in, as the airplane veers sharply left, now heading to Egypt rather than Jerusalem as planned.

Shouldn't have turned auto-pilot on. And why did I demote Our Lord?

This reading calls us to purify the intention of our hearts. But when we are on auto-pilot, we aren't even aware of what our intention is. We go from one thing to the next, not thinking of a reason or intention. We become deaf and blind to God's love, presence and calling in each moment, and ignorant of how we can respond in love.

We need to pause and take stock of what we are doing and thinking frequently because we want to be in constant relationship and communion with God. This might mean making time to pause and pray before we begin a task, enter a room, pass by the Chapel, a prayer space or religious

image, or some other moment when we can recollect ourselves; and doing this intentionally with the mind of making it a habit.

And as we speak to Our Lord in these moments, we can rediscover and purify that intention we had at the beginning: “Here I am Lord, I come to do you will.”

*(This was originally given as a reflection during the Seminary Community’s Evening Prayer.)*



Is it just me or did Lent seem to pass by surprisingly fast this year?

Perhaps we have gotten so used to Lenten fasting, especially after the ‘Long Lent’ of last year, that this year’s Lent passed by so quickly.

Yesterday a friend remarked how their goals for Lent did not match up with reality. They had planned to do much more reading during Lent, and now on the verge of Holy Week could only look at all the unfinished books in a pile and wonder where those 40 days went. Perhaps even wanting to request a recount!

My Lenten goals included a focus on growing in my relationships and taking up daily morning exercise. I’m now looking back on these and thinking “Oh no, Lord, could you give me a few weeks extension on this? *Give me some more time, and I’ll do a better job!*”

From the Cross, Our Lord says “*It is finished.*” He had not healed everyone, nor had everyone become a follower of his, and I wonder if he had met everyone: indeed, at face value he had not ‘done everything’.

Our Lord came to do the will of His Father, and we will observe the culmination of His obedience to the Father in the coming days. Though His obedience goes further when we reflect on His words: “*It is finished.*” Our Lord was willing to accept that His earthly mission had *ended*. Our Lord did all that His Father had asked of Him, and saw those people he didn’t heal and surrender them to His Father, knowing His mission had ended. He was able to surrender those things he was not called to accomplish.

He had not healed, successfully called, or met everyone because it was never about these things alone: He had done His Father’s will. It was not the ‘key performance indicators’ – ‘KPIs’ – that he pursued, rather the will of His Father.

We often have the desire to spend more and more time on things, to do a better job, or ‘more’ of a job. This year’s Lent is no different. I want more time to do a better job.

I need to accept that I wasn’t able to do everything I wanted to do, but I did try to do what God was calling me to do, and hope that God is pleased with my efforts. I hope that I can have the same kind of faith to say “*It is finished,*” in this surrender everything to God.



*How are things going?*

It’s Week 5 of Semester now – about 8 weeks to go. We don’t have as many classes during Holy Week to facilitate our ability to participate fully in the Triduum, and the Easter Octave is a short mid-semester break. I’m looking forward to a rest next week!

We’re also preparing to live-stream the Triduum from the Seminary Chapel. I invite you to join us in celebrating the Triduum with us – the greatest feast of the year.

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APRIL 2021



*What have you been reading?*

For class, I've been reading some of the writings of the Modern Philosophers, which have been challenging, and also Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. I'm also reading the first chapter of the Book of Genesis in Hebrew, as I'm learning Hebrew this semester.

In my spare time I've been reading some of the short stories of Flannery O'Connor, which I've been enjoying.

*What have you been thinking about most?*

I'm teaching a Catholic religious education class in a public high school this year. I've been thinking about how best I can teach these young people the catechism, but I'm being constantly reminded that it's not at all about how much work I can do, but about allowing the Holy Spirit to work in me and in them. So I've been thinking about writing lesson plans and how I can address this or that point of the curriculum, while also trying to surrender more and more to what the Holy Spirit wants to do.



Please continue to keep me and my formation in your prayers, and know that you are in my prayers also.

*Bradley Le Guier is a seminarian for the Ordinariate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross. He is in his Third Year of formation for the Priesthood at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd in Homebush, New South Wales.*

*Bradley is from Perth, Western Australia.*



## Saint Who?



*Promoting the shining lights of lesser known saints  
Submitted by Didymus Astle*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> of April is the feast of Saint Pedro (Peter) Calungsod, a Filipino missionary martyred on the island of Guam after assisting Bl Diego Luis de San Vitores to baptise the daughter of the apostate Chief Matá'pang at the behest of her faithful mother.

Although exactly which of the Visayan Islands was the saint's home is disputed, it is known that he left his native land for the Ladrone Islands aged 13 before arriving on Guam with Fr Diego, a Spanish Jesuit, on the 15th of June 1668. He was among a group of young men chosen to be catechists because their manners of life served as practical models of Christian virtue. The missionaries strove to evangelise the native Chamorro people in spite of the difficult terrain and climatic conditions. Provisions supplied by the Spanish Queen Regent Mariana arrived irregularly but God



blessed their efforts and many people were baptised. Yet the local pagan leaders envied their success and sought a way to discredit the missionaries.

Their chance came when a few recently baptised infants fell ill and died. They enlisted the help of one Choco, an exiled Chinese criminal, who began to spread rumours that the missionaries poisoned the baptismal waters and so turned Chief Matã'pang against the Faith he had previously accepted.

While searching for their missing companion Esteban, St Pedro and Bl Diego came to the village of Tomhom (modern Tumon) that fateful day. The chief's wife offered her newborn for baptism but Matã'pang aggressively opposed the idea. Supposing his fit of rage to be temporary, they gathered the faithful and began chanting in the hope the chief would calm down. Instead, he went to fetch another pagan to kill the missionaries. Accounts differ as to whether this was a villager named Hirao or another chief named Hurao, who had previously led a war against the Spanish. Either way, at first he refused on account of the present truce, but changed his tune after Matã'pang called him a coward. Meanwhile, Fr Diego had baptised the baby. Furious to learn of this upon his return, Matã'pang threw spears as Pedro dodged them. Those who knew the saint believed he had the skill to overcome the chief had only Fr Diego not prohibited the missionaries from carrying any weapons. Speared in the chest in defence of the priest, he received a hasty absolution before Hurao put a blade to the head of both men whose bodies were then thrown into the sea with stones about their feet. When he was canonised on the 21 of October 2012, the Government of the Philippines issued a postage stamp in his honour.

#### Prayer:

O God, by whose grace and power Thy holy Martyr St Peter Calungsod, whose unquenchable zeal brought many souls without faith from darkness to the light of truth, triumphed over suffering and despised death, grant, we beseech Thee, that through his intercession, we may endure hardness, wax valiant in the good fight, stand steadfast in the Faith, remain constant in the hope of the Gospel he preached and, with the noble army of martyrs, receive the crown of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ Thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.



<b>Saint Pedro (Peter) Calungsod</b>	
Born:	21 July 1654
Departed:	2 April 1672
Feast:	2 April
Patron of:	Guam, Acolytes, Filipino Youth
Image:	Statue of St Pedro with Martyr's Palm
Image Credit:	Photograph of St Pedro Calungsod statue © Copyright Wikimedia User L San Agustin Parish Church & licensed for reuse under Creative Commons Licence CC BY-SA 3.0  ( <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en</a> )

## Anniversaries This Month



### ORDINATIONS

Father Ron Wallis – 4 April

Father Andrew Kinmont – 5 April

Father Gordon Barnier – 26 April

### BIRTHDAYS

(None this month)

O Jesus, Eternal Priest, keep Thy priests within the shelter of Thy Sacred Heart, where none may touch them. Keep unstained their anointed hands, which daily touch Thy Sacred Body. Keep unsullied their lips, daily purpled with Thy Precious Blood. Keep pure and unworldly their hearts, sealed with the sublime mark of the priesthood. Let Thy Holy Love surround them from the world's contagion. Bless their labours with abundant fruit, and may the souls to whom they minister be their joy and consolation here and their everlasting crown hereafter.

Mary, Queen of the Clergy, pray for us: obtain for us numerous and holy priests. Amen.



## Goings On About the Ordinariate



*Lent 4-Mothering Sunday in Newcastle at St Gregory's  
John Paul Young who served at Mass, Mgr Reid and  
Annette Young (JP's mum) who made the simnel cake*



*Fr Stephen Hill at St Bede's in Sydney on  
Mothering Sunday with simnel cake*



*Choral Evensong at St Bede's in Sydney on Palm Sunday*



## April – The Month of The Holy Spirit



For the Readings at Mass and the Daily Offices please refer to either the Prayer Resources tab on the Ordinariate web page ([www.ordinariate.org.au](http://www.ordinariate.org.au)) or: <http://www.ordinariate.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/OLSC-2021-ORDO-Advent-to-Easter-II.pdf>

The Holy Father's Intention for April is "We pray for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and even in democracies in crisis."

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>28 March</b> <b>PALM</b> <b>SUNDAY</b>	<b>29 March</b> <b>Monday in</b> <b>Holy Week</b>	<b>30 March</b> <b>Tuesday in</b> <b>Holy Week</b>	<b>31 March</b> <b>Wednesday</b> <b>in Holy Week</b>	<b>1 April</b> <b>Maundy</b> <b>Thursday</b>	<b>2 April</b> <b>Good</b> <b>Friday</b>	<b>3 April</b> <b>Holy</b> <b>Saturday</b>
<b>4 April</b> <b>EASTER</b> <b>DAY</b>	<b>5 April</b> <b>MONDAY</b> <b>IN THE</b> <b>OCTAVE</b> <b>OF</b> <b>EASTER</b>	<b>6 April</b> <b>TUESDAY</b> <b>IN THE</b> <b>OCTAVE</b> <b>OF</b> <b>EASTER</b>	<b>7 April</b> <b>WEDNESDAY</b> <b>IN THE</b> <b>OCTAVE</b> <b>OF EASTER</b>	<b>8 April</b> <b>THURSDAY</b> <b>IN THE</b> <b>OCTAVE</b> <b>OF EASTER</b>	<b>9 April</b> <b>FRIDAY IN</b> <b>THE</b> <b>OCTAVE</b> <b>OF</b> <b>EASTER</b>	<b>10 April</b> <b>SATURDAY</b> <b>IN THE</b> <b>OCTAVE</b> <b>OF</b> <b>EASTER</b>
<b>11 April</b> <b>SECOND</b> <b>SUNDAY</b> <b>OF</b> <b>EASTER</b>	<b>12 April</b> Eastertide Feria	<b>13 April</b> Eastertide Feria ( <i>St Martin, Pope &amp; Mtr</i> )	<b>14 April</b> Eastertide Feria	<b>15 April</b> Eastertide Feria	<b>16 April</b> Eastertide Feria ( <i>St Magnus of Orkney, Martyr</i> )	<b>17 April</b> Eastertide Feria ( <i>St Mary on Saturday</i> )
<b>18 April</b> <b>THIRD</b> <b>SUNDAY</b> <b>OF</b> <b>EASTER</b>	<b>19 April</b> Eastertide Feria ( <i>St Alphege, Bp &amp; Mtr</i> )	<b>20 April</b> Eastertide Feria	<b>21 April</b> St Anselm, Bishop & Doctor	<b>22 April</b> Eastertide Feria	<b>23 April</b> <b>St George,</b> <b>Martyr</b>	<b>24 April</b> Eastertide Feria ( <i>St Mary on Saturday</i> )

25 April EASTER 4 (GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY)	26 April SAINT MARK, EVANGE- LIST	27 April Eastertide Feria (St Louis Grignion de Montfort, Priest)	28 April St Peter Chanel	29 April St Catherine of Siena, Virgin & Doctor	30 April Eastertide Feria (St Pius V, Pope)	1 May Eastertide Feria (St Joseph the Worker)
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## ***Catholics After Covid: The Church Emerging***

**Sydney Catholic Business Network Luncheon**

**Hyatt Regency, 26 February 2021**

*An address by Archbishop Anthony Fisher. Reprinted with permission.*

### **1. Introduction**

Life after COVID – what will it be like? There’s already quite a literature offering predictions for the home, workplace, retail and the wider economy after the pandemic, for education, health and aged care, for global and more local politics, for travel, IT and customary behaviours such as greetings and hygiene, even for global peace and ecology.<sup>i</sup>

“Will the Church survive COVID-19,” many priests and people have asked me, “and what will it look like?” Well, before diving headlong into such waters, a few caveats.

First, I have no crystal ball,<sup>ii</sup> nor any particular magisterium about the post-COVID world.<sup>iii</sup>

What’s more, the Church is first the Body of Christ inspired by the Spirit. Where He wants to take it next, or at least permit it to go, is a matter for Him. But we know He likes to surprise us.

Thirdly, the Catholic Church is made up of diverse lay faithful, religious, clergy and bishops, who together constitute an extraordinary network of dioceses, parishes, institutions, agencies and ministries, in assorted geographies, ethnicities and cultures. Different corners of the Church might look very different post-COVID, as will other parts of life.

### **2. Acknowledging the downsides**

It’s been a perfect storm for the Church. The relentless march of secularisation through our institutions, cultures and hearts has played out in rising numbers of ‘nones’ and a parallel decline in sacramentally observant and otherwise ‘switched on’ Catholics.

We’ve also experienced the moral slide of the culture, some ugly social legislation, declining confidence in institutions, threats to religious liberty, hostile media, and more.

Then came the child sexual abuse crisis that deeply hurt so many of our own young ones and their families, left many of us demoralised, and radically damaged the Church’s credibility.

Finally, along came COVID-19 and severe restrictions upon places and activities of worship. A first downside of the pandemic for the Church was that it may have *accelerated some bad trends*, e.g. declining church weddings and worship more generally.

Secondly, in the past year 113 million people worldwide have contracted COVID and 2.5 million died of it so far. Maybe half a million of the dead were Catholics, including bishops and hundreds of priests.<sup>iv</sup> Dozens of my fellow Dominicans have died, including a priest I lived with for a time in England, and nine nuns in the one Dominican convent in the U.S.<sup>v</sup> Here in Australia we’ve been more fortunate, with only around 900 deaths and 29,000 cases, largely because of geography,



public health measures, and a very compliant population. But we did not escape *deaths, sickness and anxiety* altogether.

In response, health officials focused on protecting *bodily health* and some politicians upon health of body *and economy*. It was left to the churches and others to plead for people's intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs. More enlightened officials enlarged their concern to include *mental health*, suggesting that those suffering grief and loneliness at this time have mental health issues that need some leeway or intervention.

But being lonely when you are isolated, or grieving when you can't attend the funeral of a loved one, or missing participating in school, university or church, is **not** mental illness: indeed, it might indicate a mental illness if you didn't react in this way! Where real mental health problems have arisen, however, Church agencies have been ready and responsive. So, a third ill-effect of the pandemic has been the *spiritual and emotional cost* of church closures and restrictions, however necessary some of these were. Many have only been able to attend irregularly this year past.

Baptisms, marriages and funerals have been severely curtailed. Add bans on congregational singing, passing collection plates, and the sign of peace, compulsory masks and modifications to the liturgy (including ashes on your crown of your head!), and even those who got to church have found it a very different experience.

'Social distancing' is challenging for Catholics whose life is about *following close behind Christ*, and so *gathering* in families, parishes and communities for word and sacrament, especially to *receive Christ's substance* into our own in Holy Communion, and then *reaching out* to assist the poor and lonely *person-to-person*. We could only give up these things for months on end with very heavy hearts. When anxious and grieving

people naturally turned to church for consolation or assistance, they all too often found them closed. And for the regulars there's been a break in the rhythm of church attendance that some may never recover.

Fourthly, the financial impacts upon the Church have been substantial. Collections, donations, rents, interest on savings and investment income were all significantly affected by the lockdowns, restrictions and economic downturn. The Archdiocese, for instance, had to forego two of its three CWF appeals for 2020 that largely fund its charitable works. Property rents were waived to the tune of \$1.8M. The loss to Chancery was around \$5.3M. Parish first collection income (that funds the upkeep of our priests) fell by \$4M and second collections (which fund the upkeep of our parishes) by \$4.8M. Rental income lost to parishes amounted to \$1.2M. In total, parishes lost approximately \$10M. Some Church agencies also experienced reduced donations and other income. Schools lost some enrolments and had to bear extra expenses for on-line learning and the rest. Catholic university enrolments and income were more seriously affected.

Without the assistance of JobKeeper and the Cashflow Booster stimulus, the Archdiocese and parishes would have suffered the full impact of these losses and had to lay off staff. We are very grateful that this assistance allowed us to keep our staff employed, while providing services that were more important than ever, and in reducing our losses so far to around \$5M. But we have taken a hit and, of course, some of our faithful lost jobs or businesses and will long be affected.

### 3. Appreciating the upsides

They say every cloud has a silver lining and certainly COVID has brought some unexpected positives.

One is that despite dangers and restrictions the Church did not grind to a halt. Priests and congregations adapted. We kept worship, pastoral care, spiritual leadership, education, health and aged care, and welfare provision going, adjusting as necessary to new circumstances.<sup>vi</sup> Many went to great lengths to keep contact with parishioners, especially the most isolated, by phone, email, care packages and so on. Some tried other initiatives in COVID-safe evangelization or pastoral care, some of which will surely continue post-pandemic; the pastoral creativity and generosity demonstrated by our clergy and people will ensure this.

Secondly, we've learnt other important things about our society and ourselves. The pandemic has highlighted:

- how vulnerable we are and how interconnected<sup>vii</sup>
- how isolated and anxious many feel, and how hungry people are for meaning and hope
- the readiness of some authorities to treat church-going as a recreational activity and limit it
- how much Catholics rely upon church as a communal hub for prayer and service, identity and community
- how precious sacramental moments are to the Catholic soul<sup>viii</sup>
- how crisis can occasion new kinds of collaboration.

*Knowing more about ourselves and others will help us serve people better.*

A third feature of the Year of COVID has been a *technological revolution* in many of our parishes. Many have live-streamed Masses, devotions and talks for the first time or more frequently. The numbers watching have been impressive: average weekly views of the cathedral YouTube channel rose from 1400 pre-COVID to over 40,000 per week

for most of 2020, 350,000 during Holy Week. Even now that people are allowed back to church it's around 20,000 per week. Many of these have been newcomers to church and some people who've not joined us for years but are now watching regularly. Online church might not be ideal participation, and many miss the social and sacramental aspects of Mass, but it has kept us worshipping and been an opportunity for evangelising and praying with those we might never have connected with otherwise.<sup>ix</sup>

So, now *I* offer Mass not just with hundreds present but also with thousands virtually, and I try to speak to them all. The Channel 7 broadcasts of St Mary's Good Friday and Easter services, along with the live-streaming, attracted over a million viewers each and more than half the TV audience on Easter morning. Those were two very important acts of worship, as well as *an extraordinary evangelical opportunity*. Going forward, 'online church' will be an additional opportunity but no substitute for being together.<sup>x</sup>

Another technological innovation for many parishes has been 'tap and go' collections and eBanking donations. Many have also taken the opportunity to update their parish databases with information gleaned from registrations for Mass.

Since the pandemic all sorts of church-related Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups have emerged and ministries conducted through the new media. A year ago I thought *Zoom* was something Mazda cars did: now it's the way to meet! Parishes have used such technology for parish meetings, sacramental programmes, scripture studies, youth group meetings, prayer groups and more. The clergy of Sydney have enjoyed a weekly catch-up and formation session via Zoom. Even the elderly gentlemen of the Australian bishops conference have managed to conduct their

meetings this way! There will doubtless be other adventures in e-Worship, digital fundraising, data collection and e-Evangelisation in the years ahead.

Sixthly, Government assistance allowed us to maintain staffing levels across the archdiocese. Our schools and universities, Chancery, parishes and ministries responded with agility and determination. This allowed many of our people to study or work from home for an extended period.<sup>xi</sup> There's now much discussion about 'the new normal' for the Australian school and workplace, a new mix of time physically together, time virtually together, and time working alone remotely with the aid of IT.<sup>xii</sup> The implications of less time together physically and managing staff at a distance, savings of office space and commuting time, flexibility of work-places and hours, are complex. But the Church is not immune to social change and we may, again, find some positives in all this.

#### 4. Catholics After Covid

Last year I echoed Churchill on us not wasting 'a good crisis' and today I've outlined some examples of us doing good things we should probably have been doing already. The challenge now will be *ensuring these new measures enhance relational connection and deepen faith and devotion*, rather than substituting for or reducing them. How will we create the most fruitful experience for people engaging online, while calling them back to Mass and parish meetings? We are still toddlers in this new media realm...

The financial situation has also forced us to look at more serious digital fundraising and development of under-utilised property. Post-COVID we'll be assisting parishes with these both for mission and for income generation. Ticking both boxes will be Church-sponsored early learning and out-of-school-hours centres, hopefully in every

parish. Other initiatives are also being planned.

But many still worry: *Will people return to Mass, sacraments, collections, parish life and community outreach?* Should we stop live-streaming before they get too comfortable with it? I think not. Sure, we don't want any more becoming habituated to non-attendance: six out of seven Sydney Catholics already are. But discontinuing live-streaming would only disappoint the regulars who want it,<sup>xiii</sup> and disconnect us from those irregulars who've lately been joining us that way. Will all this mean smaller communities, as often connected virtually as physically? Well, again, I have no crystal ball but let me make a few points.

First, public Masses have been forbidden five times now in Australian history, including during the Spanish 'flu pandemic. Each time the Church bounced back and practice rates actually rose. Absence makes the heart grow fonder; anxiety and grief raise big questions. But the Church keeps doing what it does best – worship, evangelisation, pastoral care, education, health and aged care, welfare – some of this in new ways.

Secondly, early evidence gives cause for optimism. At St Mary's we've returned to 40-50% of customary Mass numbers, which is pretty good considering the 2m<sup>2</sup> rule, other discouragements, and the absence of tourists in the CBD. Last Sunday well over 100 catechumens seeking Baptism and many more already-Christians seeking full communion presented themselves there, determined to become Catholic Christians despite a year of very disrupted formation. Many parishes reported higher Ash Wednesday numbers than in recent years. Studies around the world have concluded that religiosity has risen during the pandemic.<sup>xiv</sup> The Pew Research Center found far more Australians think their faith has strengthened during the pandemic, than think it has



weakened. A third also think it has strengthened family bonds.<sup>xv</sup>

Social researcher Mark M<sup>c</sup>Crindle and team report that 41% of Australians have been thinking about God more under COVID, 35% praying more and 25% reading the Bible more.<sup>xvi</sup> A whopping 47% have been thinking more about their mortality and the meaning of life. Churchgoers have upped their volunteering and nearly half have invited others to participate in church online.<sup>xvii</sup> If the pandemic has accelerated the pre-existing decline in affiliation and practice, it may also have worked in the opposite direction, magnifying the spiritual hunger of Australians disenchanted with the promise of happiness through affluence, or suffering family breakdown, poor mental health and/or rising loneliness.<sup>xviii</sup> All of which suggests Sydney and Australia are ripe for evangelisation!

With that in mind the Church in Australia will soon conduct a Plenary Council that will hopefully occasion new energies and directions for Church life, especially in family and parish renewal, evangelisation of the culture, and outreach to the needy.

Here in the Archdiocese we've established the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation with big ambitions for bringing Christ to Sydney and Sydney to Christ. We recently launched our pastoral plan, *Go Make Disciples*, which providentially will now also be our COVID recovery plan.

We hope to focus new thinking, energy and resources upon evangelisation, leadership, community, formation and worship.

## 5. Conclusion

Today I've identified some of the effects of the pandemic upon the Church, the response of pastors and people, and early indications of what the Church will look after the pandemic. We know we have [to] be there for a world suffering post-COVID traumatic stress disorders of one kind or another. Instead of asking whether the Church will survive COVID we might better ask *how the Church might best thrive after COVID and what that would look like?*

If we focus on what the Spirit is saying to the Church, what is best about us and what needs are out there, we might just come through this dark night a better church than we were going into it.

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<sup>i</sup> E.g. Brodie Boland et al., "Reimagining the office and work life after COVID-19," *McKinsey & Company* 8 June 2020; Bruce Bower, "What will life be like after the coronavirus pandemic ends?" *ScienceNews* 18 December 2020; Bill Gates, "What will the world look like after COVID-19?" *GatesNotes* 16 November 2020; Brenda Goodman, "Life after COVID: A long road to recovery," *Web MD Health News* 25 January 2021; KPMG, "Webinar: Our new reality: Predictions after COVID-19," 14 May 2020; Rowan Moore et al., "Life after Covid: will our world ever be the same?" *The Guardian* 29 November 2020; Adil Najam, "What will our world after coronavirus look like? 99 big thinkers" *The Conversation* 13 January 2021; Alvin Powell, "What will the new post-pandemic normal look like?" *The Harvard Gazette* 24 November 2020; Joseph Stiglitz et al., "How the economy will look after the coronavirus pandemic," *Foreign Policy* 15 April 2020; Daniel Susskind et al., "Life post-COVID-19: Six prominent thinkers reflect on how the pandemic has changed the world," *Finance & Development (IMF)* 57(2) (June 2020) 26-9.

<sup>ii</sup> While all the Christians share in Christ's prophetic office, I have no crystal ball or special powers of prognostication: put baldly, *your guess is as good as mine*. On the other hand, I acknowledge I have a leadership role in bringing the Church through this crisis and I've probably given this question more thought than most.

<sup>iii</sup> The Vatican has, however, been doing some serious thinking about these matters: see Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* 7, 32-6, 54, 168; *Meditation in a Time of Pandemic*, 27 March 2020; *Address to the Banco Farmaceutico Foundation*, 19 September 2020; *Message to the 75th Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly*, 25 September 2020; *Message for the 54th World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2021; *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Note on the Morality of Some Anti-COVID19 Vaccines* (2020); *Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Message in Time of Coronavirus* (2020); *Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life: In Loneliness the Coronavirus Kills More*, 7 April 2020; *Pontifical Academy for Life, Pandemic and Universal Brotherhood* (2020) and 'Humana communitas' in the Age of Pandemic (2020); *Pontifical Academy for Life and the Dicastery for Integral Human Development, Old Age = Our Future: the Elderly after the Pandemic* (2021); *Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Responding to the Pandemic* (2020).

<sup>iv</sup> E.g. Carol Glatz, "Pandemic claims over 200 priests in Italy," *Catholic News Service* 7 January 2021.

<sup>v</sup> Laura Ly and Theresa Waldrop, "(nuns die of Covid-19 after outbreak at Adrian Dominican sisters campus in Michigan)," *CNN* 31 January 2021.

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- vi This is supported by research: Daniel Burke, “The great shutdown 2020: What churches, mosques and temples are doing to fight the spread of coronavirus,” *CNN* 14 March 2020; McCrindle Research, *The Future of the Church in Australia* (Sydney: McCrindle Research, 2020); Kali Robinson, “How are major religions responding to the coronavirus?” *Council on Foreign Relations* 19 March 2020; Andrew West, “How has COVID affected religious belief in wealthy countries?” *ABC Religion & Ethics Report* 3 February 2021 <https://abclisten.page.link/4YVZfyoZ6FfXd4iz6>.
- vii In *Global Pandemic and Universal Brotherhood* (30 March 2020), the Pontifical Academy for Life noted how modernity’s “technological and managerial euphoria” inclines us to the self-deception “that we are invulnerable or that we can find a technical solution for everything”. COVID-19 has exposed the sham of comfortable postmodern securities, as we have realised how profoundly ill-prepared we were physically, culturally and politically [§§2-4]. Try as we might to resist it, we bump up against “the precariousness that radically characterizes our human condition”, “the limits of our understanding” and the painful realization that we are not entirely “masters of our own fate”. [§§4-8] Related to the myth of human invulnerability is modernity’s valuing of people only for their agency or self-sufficiency. MacIntyre, Hauerwas and others have long challenged liberalism’s view of the human person as a self-sufficient, powerful agent, proposing instead that we are free but vulnerable beings, always needing help from others, and sometimes very dependent indeed (Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Open Court, 2001); Stanley Hauerwas, ‘Reflection on dependency: A response to responses to my essays on disability’, *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health* 8 (3 & 4) (2005), 191-97).
- viii Even if some physical distancing is necessary, we Christians must never distance ourselves socially, emotionally or spiritually from others, especially the needy: ours is a God-come-close religion, a come-close-to-God religion, sacramental, ecclesial, up close and personal. “That which was from the beginning,” John said, “which we have heard [with our own ears], seen with our own eyes... touched with our own hands — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.” (1 Jn 1:1) Because we are bodily, God became bodily. Because we are sensate, God became visible. Because we are hungry, God became food. Because we are substantial, God lends His substance. No virtual reality, spiritual feeling, or ghostly presence: ours is a God in the flesh, body-and-blood, for us to receive.
- ix McCrindle Research, *The Future of the Church in Australia*, p. 10: “Despite these benefits, the future cannot only be online. Churchgoers have enjoyed the practicality of online church (69% extremely/very positive) but have found the social aspect difficult, with two in three (67%) missing the connections that gathering in person provides... Like Zacchaeus, who wanted to see Jesus but not be seen by Him, people exploring Christianity are able to tune in to church online and remain anonymous. Christian leaders have seen other people benefit from online services as well, including new parents, people with disabilities, those with social anxiety, shift workers and many others.”
- x McCrindle Research, *The Future of the Church in Australia*, p. 30.
- xi Boland et al., “Reimagining the office and work life after COVID-19”; Powell, “What will the new post-pandemic normal look like?”
- xii E.g. Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies, “Australians want to work from home more post-COVID,” *University of Sydney News* 28 September 2020; Moore et al., “Life after Covid”; KPMG, “Our new reality”; Roy Morgan, “Nearly a third of Australian workers have been #WFH,” *RoyMorgan Finding No. 8451*, 29 June 2020, Editor, “The shift to working from home can outlast COVID-19,” *Sydney Morning Herald* 14 December 2020.
- xiii McCrindle Research, *The Future of the Church in Australia*, p.30: “As we look to the future, churchgoers would like to see churches learning and growing from the lessons that have been learned during this time. The main thing churchgoers would like to see continuing into the future is treating online services as a way to engage those who might not come to church otherwise (53%).”
- xiv Joseph Baker et al., “Religion in the age of social distancing,” *Sociology of Religion* 81(4) (Winter 2020) 357-70; Michelle Boorstein, “A quarter of Americans, and a majority of black Protestants, say their religious faith has deepened because of the coronavirus,” *Washington Post* 1 May 2020; Lisa Cox, “Keeping the faith: how places of worship have adapted to the coronavirus crisis,” *The Guardian* 20 March 2020; Bryan Goodman, “Faith in a time of crisis,” *American Psychological Association* 11 May 2020; Oliwa Kowalczyk et al., “Religion and faith perception in a pandemic of COVID-19,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 59 (2020) 2671-7; Alfred Lubrano, “Could COVID-19 inspire the faithful? Scholars predict spirituality surge in our future,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* 1 August 2020; Miriam Partington and Sebastian Shehadi, “How coronavirus is leading to a religious revival,” *New Statesman* 27 April 2020; Rajkumar Singh, “Impact of COVID-19 on religion and beyond,” *Geopolitics* 26 June 2020.
- xv Andrew West, “How has COVID affected religious belief in wealthy countries?” *ABC Religion & Ethics Report* 3 February 2021 <https://abclisten.page.link/4YVZfyoZ6FfXd4iz6>; Pew Research Center, “More Americans than people in other advanced economies say COVID-19 has strengthened religious faith,” *PewForum* 27 January 2021.
- xvi Anna Patty, “The meaning of life: Australians praying more during COVID-19,” *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 August 2020; McCrindle Research, *The Future of the Church in Australia*, pp. 15f.
- xvii McCrindle Research, *The Future of the Church in Australia*, p. 35.
- xviii McCrindle Research, *The Future of the Church in Australia*, p. 8.