

Pastoral Letter III, April 9th, 2020: Resurrection Sunday

Hi Everyone

Last week I wrote to you about my work in the south of NSW in the wake of the fires and explained some of the challenges that the church and the broad population faced. I also confirmed that as soon as we are free to abandon our homes and come back out into the light of day, we will begin a process of building friendships with these communities. In the meantime, the Canberra Regional Presbytery, is, in the light of my communication with them working toward resourcing the Mt Dromedary Parish into the near future.

We now find ourselves at the tail end of Holy Week and most sadly we are missing the liturgical life which we have shared and love to share during this period: Maundy Thursday, Holy Friday and Sunday of the Resurrection. In order to allay the deficit, I have sent out to you today along with this letter, liturgies for both Holy Friday and Resurrection Sunday. Each has its own continuity with last year but also differs a little in the light of changing events: I hope you find them helpful. I have also prepared homilies for each of these days. Usually, Holy Friday is marked by readings, prayers and poetry along with the use of imagery, however this time, I have prepared a homily for Holy Friday which focuses upon the idea of Jesus as the model for humanity and directed this idea to the place of integrity and civility in the Christian life. In a world marked by demonstrable brokenness in the face of undeniable climate change, identity politics, and global illness, the very act of being Christian demands high standards of us in the way we live as individuals and in community with others. The Sunday homily looks at the way we think about resurrection as life before the grave not just after it, referring to the readings and to the film “Life is Beautiful”. I have also prepared recorded streaming of the homilies to be available to you all from 9am on Friday and Sunday mornings.

May I now turn just briefly to the central idea of Easter, the experience of resurrection and what it suggests. I do not want to become engaged in the theological debate over the historical nature or otherwise of the resurrection of Jesus: that has its place, but has often missed the point. Rather I want to think for a minute about the idea of Jesus’ resurrection and what it implies in terms of the way we think about ourselves, others and the world.

What we refer to as Jesus’ resurrection and think about as his own personal destiny, is really more about reality itself, reality as a whole. In the resurrection of Jesus, we actually draw the conclusion, that already everything has become different, in the true and decisive depth of all things. His resurrection is like the first eruption of a volcano that shows within the interior of the world, that God’s fire is already burning. The idea is that the new forces of a transfigured earth are already in place and at work. Because Jesus Christ began the process not just symptomatically, but at the innermost roots of things – confronting futility, brokenness and death – this change is not altogether obvious, especially if we only read things superficially. Of course, there is reversal – both personal and collective, existential and historical – indeed we are witnesses to some of this currently, as the world seems to be barely afloat. That said, Jesus’ resurrection is about the redemption of the innermost centre of earthly reality. It is about the liberation of not just us, as individuals, but of the world, and beyond – the creation in its entirety.

This Easter, look at the big picture, employ your imagination, as you think about resurrectional faith in a suffering world!

Geoff