

Kia tau te rangimarie ki a koutou,

Just before Easter we received from Rome the text for a Mass in the Time of a Pandemic. The Opening Prayer (Collect) for this Mass is very beautiful. It says:

Almighty and eternal God, our refuge in every danger, to whom we turn in our distress; in faith we pray look with compassion on the afflicted, grant eternal rest to the dead, comfort to mourners, healing to the sick, peace to the dying, strength to healthcare workers, wisdom to our leaders and the courage to reach out to all in love, so that together we may give glory to your holy name. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

The Prayer is asking God to

- look with compassion on the afflicted,
- grant eternal rest to the dead,
- comfort to mourners, healing to the sick,
- peace to the dying,
- strength to healthcare workers,
- wisdom to our leaders and
- the courage to reach out to all

The remarkable and incredible gift is that you are all doing so many of these things. I am hearing wonderful accounts of the way that you are showing compassion, praying for the dead, comforting not just the mourners, but also those who have lost jobs and livelihood, and supplying food and friendship. There are wonderful examples of support being given to healthcare workers, sharing wisdom and reaching out with courage to support those who are lonely, struggling, anxious and sometimes desperate.

These challenging days are helping us to respond with Gospel courage in new ways. They are showing us how priests, lay pastoral leaders and parishioners are able to work together collaboratively, with creativity and imagination. The Gospel is being lived in the reality of the Covid-19 situation.

I am very aware that many people are anxious to get back to public Masses. We may know over the next few days what we are able to do. We may also have to wait patiently for a while longer.

This can also be an opportunity for us. Much has been written and spoken about this as a time of “**going into the desert**” (Hosea 2:16). The People of Israel lost the Temple, the sacrifices and the work of the priests. They had only the Word of God with them, through prophets such as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah. God’s word helped them experience this time of exile as a time of conversion. For us this is a time to enter more deeply into the Scriptures. It’s an opportunity.

You are already making the most of this opportunity. I have heard inspirational stories of the way priests and parishioners are working together to reach out to parishioners and to their neighbourhoods. This is what the Gospel asks us to do.

I know people are missing Mass. However, the Second Vatican Council reminded us in the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbterorum Ordinis*) that “**it is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishop to preach the Gospel of God to all.**” (No 4)

This is an opportunity to stop and engage in deep reflection before God and with God on how we are making preaching the Gospel our first task.

With sincere thanks for all that everyone is doing.

Every blessing. Naku noa

+ John

“Times of scarcity need to be met with generosity, times of fear with comfort, times of uncertainty with presence. When we care for those around us, we create a field of love.”

Thomas Hubl

Father Michael O’Dea has been moved into full time hospital care at the Summerset Rest Home on the Kapiti Coast. Under the current Covid-19 restrictions visitors are not permitted. Fr Michael McCabe has been allowed in to anoint him and take Communion. Please remember Michael O’Dea in your prayer

Peter’s Pence Collection We have received information from Rome that the annual Peter’s Pence collection, usually taken up on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul on 29 June, will be transferred throughout the world to the 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time, 4 October

Moving to Level 2 As soon as news is made available about what Level 2 means for us I will communicate with you about what this will mean for us liturgically, whether we will be able to celebrate Masses or not, and if so, what we will be required to do to ensure the safety of all