

A Few Thoughts from Debbie

I was able to spend a little time in my garden this afternoon, sun shining, birds chirping, weeds growing, it was just beautiful. As an unexpected effect of lockdown, I enjoyed some unrushed, leisurely time in my own home. I have discovered a love for dancing with growing things in my 'mature years', sadly waiting until I am old and stiff to discover my new passion... I am sure I could do wonders as a gardener if I were still sprightly and bendable! The potential was always there for me, but I did not spot it earlier.

As we approach Holy Week, to our deep confusion, we can't attend Mass, or receive the Sacraments, and we will not be able to physically gather to worship together as a parish family. To 'miss' the Easter ceremonies is a great, great sorrow for many of our parishioners, as it is for millions around the world who love God, no matter their nationality or creed. As very blessed Aussies, this may be the first time ever that we have been forcibly denied the luxury of freedom to worship as we wish. We love our routine, and this year, we are denied what we have always previously found so fulfilling. We face the reality of entering into Spiritual Communion with our God, alone or with the few who live with us, rather than participating in the Holy Week ceremonies in our beautiful church. One of our challenges therefore, is to seek out the potential that has always been there, 'unspotted', and to let God do his work in us, even if it is not in the way that we would prefer.

We are experiencing personal, serious hunger, an unexpected but precious gift of the Holy Spirit. Thank God, literally, that we are grieving being denied our public worship. It means that our communion in the Lord is real, and deep, and that we are experiencing awareness of his constant invitation to love, and encouragement to value his gifts as precious. Our souls stretch for him, yearning for closeness that we can feel, hear, taste, see, and even smell, for we are used to using our senses to love God through our beloved liturgy.

To satisfy our hunger as best we can, we need to look deeply, beyond what we cannot do, to the possibilities opening before us, drawn by the Holy Spirit to love God in ways that are different to the way we have responded to him in the past. Wisdom borne of pain leads us to untapped potential. As we accompany Jesus this Easter, we have the opportunity to do so personally and intimately, in our own time, in our own homes.

From our dining rooms, we know the unimaginable love of Jesus as he hands his apostles the unleavened bread which is now his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, and we open our own hearts to receive Spiritual Communion from Jesus himself. Jesus drags his impossibly heavy cross through our hallways, slowly staggering onwards, so close that we can see the sweat and blood dripping from his face. As we sit on our own couches, or lie on our beds, we stand at the foot of his cross, entering into his suffering, seeing the tears of Our Blessed Mother rolling silently down her cheeks, standing firm with St John, who remains faithful to his friend when others flee, and hearing the sobs of Mary Magdalene, inconsolable in her grief.

In the powerful moments of Holy Week, we do not look away, faithfully remaining with Jesus in his Passion. Jesus did not back away from the truth, and neither do we. Our personal prayer may be centred in our homes and in our hearts this year, but our prayers still join the stream of prayers that flow from millions of others who remember Jesus' death and resurrection this Easter. As one people of God, we share heartfelt compassion for our saviour, and together we rejoice in his resurrection, grateful for the gifts God lavishes upon us so freely.