



CHRIST THE LIGHT

CATHOLIC PARISH
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17 July 2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

I write to you during this difficult time within the life of our community. Up until recently we had seemed to be addressing the situation reasonably well and restrictions began to be eased with members of families being able to visit each other again and other small group gatherings being able to take place. Within the parish itself as well as continuing to have our live-streaming mass we were able to have a small number of people attend. The parish website also became one of the important ways of keeping in touch with our community and our parish staff organized a Zoom app for our parish meetings.

However, we also knew that it was still an anxious and uncertain time for families. This was especially so if a family member lost their job. Families with school children and their teachers were having to adapt to new ways of working on line with their children. All of these concerns added to the stresses being experienced by people in the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Now again, we are at a new turning point because of the increase of those affected by the virus and the Government having to implement a new lockdown. This has brought on a new level of frustration and despondency adding further to the hardships and suffering within our community.

In the midst of all of this it is only natural that some deeper questions are also being evoked within us. Why is this happening to us? What is the meaning and purpose of our lives in this world? Even the very reality of God can seem to be absent or distant from the suffering we are now experiencing. Our faith is being tested anew in the face of the pandemic. We are being called to a deeper reflection on our lives in this universe. It is as if we are being drawn to reflect again on the story of God in the bible.

There we see a God who is not distant from our world but whose very presence enters into the very history and substance of our life on this planet. Indeed, at the heart of our Christian faith is God sending his Son into our world. Jesus is sent to reveal the fullness of God's loving presence. He embraces our humanity including its joys and sufferings including death itself. Jesus comes to be in solidarity with us, to be with us now in the midst of this pandemic, in the midst of this lockdown.

Even the very name of our parish - Christ the Light - invites us to recognize that Jesus comes to be the Light accompanying us and guiding us through this anxious and dark time. Christ not only comes to accompany us but even more than that. He has come to live in us through the power of his Spirit, to be a source of strength and hope for us.

During these past few months we have all experienced the reality of lockdown in different ways. Some of the shops and group activities have been closed to us. Even our church buildings are closed for the time being. While physically this is the case, at a deeper level of our humanity we have been

created with hearts not to be closed but with hearts that are open to be in relationship, to be open to the warmth and strength of love. Above all at this uncertain time it is to allow our hearts to be open and responsive to the gentle and reassuring love of God always there for us.

This openness and being receptive to the love of God shows itself in our openness and being responsive to the people around us in family and within the broader community. Reflecting on our Christ the Light Parish logo, we have the yellow rays of light coming forth from the heart of Christ on the cross. It is the light of Christ's love radiating through the members of our parish community who are sent into our world to be beacons of his Light. In the midst of this pandemic have there not been many signs of this revealed within our parish community and into the broader community itself?

Within our parish community there are nurses and others working in hospitals and age care centres. A few days ago one of them spoke to me about her experience at this time. The increasing workload and tiredness are real yet her faith gives her the strength to give of herself for all those in her care. We give thanks for all those on the front line. They are examples of the Light of Christ's love being reflected through them.

People have spoken of the phone calls they have received or some form of contact being made to them. One elderly person in her lockdown spoke of members of her family regularly keeping contact reassuring her of their love for her. In these days when the shadow of darkness can hover around us, we give thanks for all those who reach out in various ways to people in need including the members of St Vincent de Paul, and the Care Call Team. The Light of Christ's compassionate presence is being revealed in very simple but real ways.

We give thanks to all in our school communities, teachers, children and their parents for again being willing to adapt to new circumstances. Your generosity of spirit in this endeavour becomes a beacon of light for all on this journey of learning.

During these times we can all feel our own vulnerability, our own limitations and weaknesses. This is part of the reality we are going through. Yet, in the midst of this pandemic and our attempts to cope with what is happening, we are being invited to recognize that we are not alone. The Lord is with us. He is our true Hope that we can rely on. St Paul tells us that nothing can separate us from the love Christ has for us not even death itself. He is the Lord of life, of the Universe. He is that Light accompanying us and guiding us. How important it is to keep our relationship alive with him through our regular prayer and our reflecting on the Word of God. May our faith, hope and love be a source of strength and encouragement for us all within our families and the broader community. In the world of our time may our Christian lives give witness to the hope that is within us.

May we pray for one another and for the healing and peace of our world at this time. May the Lord be close to you and bless all your families within our community of Christ the Light parish.

With every blessing

Fr Martin Ashe PP

Fr Shymon Thekkelathungal