



# Letter to the People

From the Bishop

6 August 2020

Dear People and Friends of the Diocese of Wangaratta

On 18 March I wrote to the Diocese sharing information regarding COVID-19 and the implications for corporate worship. Two weeks later I informed parishes that all services would be suspended temporarily and that our holiest week within the Christian calendar was not to be the way we were used to. Two months later, we were excited about the prospect of being able to join for corporate worship, even with small numbers of attendees. There were hopes that the number would be increased and then came the Melbourne and Mitchell Shire lockdown and now Stage 4 for Melbourne and Stage 3 restrictions for the rest of Victoria.

I had hopes and dreams, strategies and plans of how we were going to navigate a collaborative ministry approach within the Diocese, which I started to outline just after my consecration and enthronement as the 11th Bishop of Wangaratta. We started with intentional conversations with Parish Leadership Teams, strategic planning meetings with Bishop-In-Council and the appointment of those who would support the work of the Bishop in order for us to navigate the future together and to help shape ministry in order to fulfill our call and task as God's Church within the world.

The next six weeks will be difficult for many, but we can all play our part to bring about the much-needed change we would like to see for ourselves, our loved-ones, the State of Victoria, the Country and the world. The message is a simple one: stay at home, wash your hands, keep your distance, mask up, get what you need to in order to sustain yourself or your health and together, though separated we can make it. This is no time for a 'blame-game'. This is the time to make it happen by not being anywhere but mostly at home.

I write to you as people of faith who believe in the power of prayer. I write to you as the people of God who, as part of our worship, join in intercession for the world and for all people. I write today asking you to strengthen this important ingredient in our spiritual lives and, in fighting this pandemic, to raise our voices like fountains before God as we recall our present situation.

I ask that on **each day at 12 noon**, we ring the bells of our Churches where possible for one minute, or as per the angelus and that all our people join in the prayer below or any other intercessory prayer for our communities, our State, our Country and the world.

## **PRAYER DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

God of hope, we give you thanks that you fashioned the universe in love and care for all creation.

In this time of anxiety, uncertainty and hardship, we entrust to your tender care all those who have contracted COVID-19, that they may know your comfort and peace and may find relief and recovery.



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We pray for doctors, nurses and all who are caring for the sick that, through their skill and care, those affected by coronavirus may be restored to health. Give skill, wisdom and resilience to medical researchers and those searching for a vaccine.

We pray for the vulnerable and the fearful, for those who are isolated through current lockdowns. In their loneliness, be their hope and give us strength to be bearers of your compassion to others, even in the midst of our own fears and disquiet.

We pray for our homes and families, our schools and aged care facilities; for our local community, that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship and not of fear and suspicion.

We pray for those who are guiding our nation and our state at this time; for the leaders of the nations of the world and all who guide public health policy during this pandemic, that they may not be guided by partisan politics, but may look to the welfare and care of all their people.

To your love and protection we commit each other and all those we love and this world that you love and for which your Son came and gave his life that all may live, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

(based on prayers from the Church of England)

It is also my intention to arrange for a weekly zoom prayer service on Wednesdays at 9.30am which will be led by different clergy and lay people within the Diocese as well as a Diocesan Zoom Service on Sunday, 30 August. Zoom link details will be sent in due course to all on our mailing list, as well as posted on our Facebook page and website.

Prayers and Blessings,

Clarence E Bester