

Blessings on you and welcome once again to my chapel. I wish you joy and peace at this time of Easter.

The Gospel of today's Mass, from St Luke chapter 24, relates how two of Jesus' disciples were on the road to Emmaus. They were downcast and mournful. Jesus joined them, although they did not recognize him - it would only be later in the breaking of the bread that they would know him. As they were walking He explained the Scriptures to them and their hearts burnt within them. And then, in verses 28 and 29 we hear:

*"When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening' they said 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them".*

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father,

We know that you are always with us, but at times our hearts are closed to you. Now, as with the two disciples, we invite you to come and stay with us. Help us to open our hearts to you, Lord, that you may always find us willing to open the door when you come to knock, so that you will find a home within us. In times of anxiety, uncertainty, aggravation and difficulty we ask you to be especially close to us, to strengthen us to have faith and to stand firm. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, who lives and reigns...

Even though it was to be expected, I'm sure that the extended lockdown came as a disappointment and an additional hardship to many of you. My heart goes out especially to those who are living in very cramped conditions, to those who have no income with which to buy food to feed their families and themselves, and to those who are afflicted by an intense loneliness. Whatever your situation is, we take strength and courage from this time of Easter, the time of Christ's triumph over death, sin and evil. We may feel discouraged like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, but we also take comfort as God continues to reveal himself to us and "walks with us" on our journey of life.

This is what really struck me anew at the Easter Vigil which I celebrated alone, yet with a deep consciousness of your presence, here in this chapel on Saturday night. Reflecting on the Scripture readings of the Vigil that recall creation and the history of salvation, I was deeply struck by the powerful message of hope. God created the world and looked at what he had created and found it to be very good. But even the wonder and beauty of creation is surpassed by the miracle of our salvation – God became man and gave his life for us in order that we may be reconciled to God and have new life.

I think we sometimes lack this understanding and experience of being part of God's plan for salvation. We lack the sense that we are role players in the history and the present reality of God's salvific action. Christ himself – even before he became flesh – spoke through the prophets to teach, inspire and lead his people. And He continues to teach, inspire and lead us today. We are part and parcel of that long chain from the time of creation leading to Christ's final victory when all will be accomplished, the time of the heavenly Jerusalem. We are part of history, of the present and of the future.

Throughout the history of salvation, in every era, this message has been given to God's people: Be strong, stand firm in faith, take heart, have courage, do not be afraid. Certainly this is God's message to us at Easter time; we must be strong, courageous, firm in our faith. Despite the hardship and frustrations of the present time, the Risen Christ is with us, leading us forward, assuring us that this too will pass. He is calling us to new life and to be strong and courageous on that journey to new life.

In ending, I would like to acknowledge the role that is played by those who put their lives at risk in order to safeguard their brothers and sisters and to ask you to pray for them: think of the nurses, doctors, health care workers, police and army, fire-fighters, taxi drivers, journalists, those who work in supermarkets and the food chain – to name just some. Let us always keep them in our prayers asking God to protect them.

I would also like to thank all those who have responded so quickly and generously to help those in dire need of food by contributing to the covid-19 food parcel campaign. Distribution of food should begin soon, once the issue of permits is sorted out. Thank you for thinking of others and reaching out to them.

Let us now pray for God's blessing.

The Lord be with you.

Heavenly Father, look kindly on us your people. Pour the life of the Holy Spirit into our hearts, give us the hope and joy of Jesus' triumph over sin and death, that despite whatever cross we have to bear we will be given the strength to bear it bravely and with the knowledge that to follow your Son always entails the Cross. Bring us, our families and loved ones, to the light and life of resurrection, through Christ our Lord, amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, amen.

Stay in the peace of Christ, alleluia alleluia

Thanks be to God, alleluia alleluia.