



We proclaim a crucified Christ

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01 September 2020

Dear friends and colleagues,

My greetings of grace and peace to you all in the Lord Jesus.

I am sitting down to write to you on this first day of Spring, in a year like no other. In a normal year, each of us will have personal and family journeys – with their griefs and sorrows, hopes and joys – in which the lives and stories of those around us are not necessarily joined to ours. But in this COVID year of 2020, we have come to share a common story and journey, even while experiencing it each individually. We can empathise with our neighbours and work colleagues; we readily understand the stresses and strains being experienced; we share in the fatigue and worry that is now part of our daily lives; we each yearn for and treasure those moments of joy and warmth and comfort and relief.

As we enter this fourth week of Stage 4 restrictions in metropolitan Melbourne, Spring is emerging. It is my hope that this change in seasons – from death to life, from the old to the new – also marks a move towards a better accommodation with COVID. Case numbers do seem to be steadily lowering, even as the tragedy of those who have succumbed to the virus continues.

While I may not know each of your personal circumstances, I have been particularly mindful of the various relationships which have taken on new or deeper significances for you over these past six months. There are those of you with elderly parents and grandparents who you have not been able to see or visit over this time; grandparents who have been separated from their children and grandkids; even children you yourself may have been separated from. Those of you in spousal relationships have experienced lengthy periods in close quarters with each other, and all that that has revealed. Many of you are in family circumstances with children living at home, especially the younger ones, and the delights and challenges that has generated (and the shifts in appreciation of teachers that has emerged!). The disconnection and sadness that has come with the physical separation of extended family, close friends, neighbours and work colleagues. The few of us who live alone have also felt what it means to be unable to see friends or have people visit.

I want to acknowledge your resilience and flexibility during these unprecedented times, and the great stresses these days may have brought to you and your families, but also the gifts that have been revealed. Whatever our personal circumstances, this time of honest revelation also offers a great moment for renewal and growth; to discover what is important, and to put aside what can consume us but which is unfruitful.

Words from the Prophet Isaiah have come to me as I write, which I now offer to you. *For as the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before watering the earth, fertilising it and making it germinate... so it is with the word that goes forth from [God's] mouth.* (Isaiah 55.10-11) The Lord has a good purpose for each of us in this difficult time; it may remain hidden for the moment, but it will grow and sprout and bear fruit for us. For the Lord has promised: *Look, I am making everything new.* (Revelations 22.5)

My friends, be assured of my closeness in prayer and kindness as this season of Spring opens up to us, and as we continue to navigate our way through all that 2020 has thrown our way. May St Joseph – that Godly man of faith, trust and courage – accompany you!

With every grace and blessing, I remain,

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter A. Comensoli', with a small cross symbol to the left of the first name.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne

