

# From the Director

## Spirit matters

Churches closed on Sundays! No Sunday Mass! It is a shock. Yes, many people had stopped going to Mass for different reasons, but to have the official church telling priests not to have public Masses in their parishes was a remarkable event. Since this new regime came in I have been keeping an eye out to see if there is a silver lining to the whole situation.

Some writers have challenged us to see in these events a promise similar to what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well. She had asked him where one ought to worship, was it in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim? His response was that true worshippers will worship *"in spirit and in truth"* (Jn 4:23). In other words you will not have to go into a particular building to worship God.

God is with us wherever we are and we can worship God whenever we wish. God has come to be with us forever. We were told that while we may have had the habit of going to Mass on Sunday, we do not have to go into our regular church to worship God. We were encouraged to add some other ways to be with God in prayer.

This is similar to the change in mentality that the disciples of Jesus had to make when he had died and ascended to heaven. They thought that this was the end of their relationship with him. His message to them was that of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is with us and comes to us in power and love.

We are inclined to the idea that if I cannot see it then it does not exist. It is a bit like the young child playing peekaboo. When you hide yourself from the child there is anxiety that you are gone. When you appear again there is delight and the anxiety is removed. So too with the disciples. When they could see Jesus they were happy. When he died and his body disappeared they were anxious. It took him forty days of appearances to help them to trust that he would always be with them. It is the same for us.

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Earlier this year I visited the Columbans working in Fiji. Visiting the parishes of Raiwaqa, Ba and Labasa was a great experience for me. In a couple of places we drove for about an hour and a half into the hills to reach a village for Mass.

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The people, with the help of our Columban supporters, had built a small structure which was decorated for the Mass. The singing was marvellous. The building, the flowers, the way people dressed were all expressive of their spirituality.

We need these visible things for us to remember the invisible. They do not have Mass every Sunday as there are too many villages for the priests to get to them every week. Despite this the faith of the people remains strong.

May the Spirit of Pentecost continue to bless these communities and also our own.



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