

## *One Day at a Time*

Father Tim's Daily Reflections  
during the COVID-19 crisis

### **Sunday 10 May**

#### **Fifth Sunday of Eastertide \* Mother's Day**

**2.00pm** – A very **happy Mother's Day** to all of our good mothers! I hope you had a good day with as many loved ones as you managed to gather in your homes, and online greetings with all the others.

It wasn't our usual Mother's Day weekend at St Paul's, of course: no orchids for all the mothers in church, no floral arrangements for the oldest and newest mothers at Mass, or for the mothers with the most children present at Mass. But I hope you've accessed our online Mass, with the special blessing plus a beautiful rendition of Ave, Maria by our talented singers, **Eimear Foley** and **Theodore Murphy-Jelley**. You were all remembered in my prayers; the Mass was offered for all of our mothers, both living and deceased.

This past week we installed a **new camera** in church, and mounted it on the wall just below the digital projector. This new installation allows the computer operator to swivel, zoom and focus the camera directly from the desktop – no need to physically touch or move the camera.

This new camera can also turn toward the computer desk, where I will sit to conduct **Bible Study** on Tuesday evenings at 7.30, and **RCIA** on Wednesday evenings, also at 7.30. The view will take in three or four people who can be seated near the computer desk; this will allow for a more 'interactive' presentation. Others will be able to sit in the pews near the organ, and participate in the sessions. I will be using PowerPoint to illustrate various points I'm making. A second camera will also be used to add another view of the teaching. This week will be interesting as I try this out.

I thought of using **Zoom** for these classes, but decided against it. These are teaching sessions, not meetings, so I don't want to be distracted by the "Brady Bunch" screen approach.

Well! I decided to go to **Coles** at 1.00pm, thinking that it would be nearly deserted (I had driven there a couple of times last week, but returned home when I saw the car park was full). I was stunned to find Coles (Inglewood) still fairly crowded – and when I got inside, I couldn't understand why most of the shoppers were women!

I was also dismayed to see that most shoppers seemed to have **no idea about social distancing**: people just barrelled down the aisles, cutting one another off, and piling up in groups in the aisles. I did my best to keep proper distance, but it was a challenge.

Folks, this is why **the Government is hesitant to relax the COVID-19 protocols**. God preserve us from a second wave, but a lot of that depends upon our own behaviour. Please do the right thing, and let's all try to set a good example when we venture outside our homes.

This Tuesday I'm meeting with **Daniel Lynch**, the Director of the Archbishop's Office, to present my ideas for moving forward with **First Holy Communion** and **Confirmation**. Obviously, we won't be able to have the large group celebration of these important Sacraments; but with our live-streaming system, and the new Government regulations **allowing 20 people inside venues** (hopefully including churches – but I'm not exactly sure at this point), we can invite families to attend our weekday 5.45pm Masses, one family each evening, and administer the Sacraments to the children at Mass with their parents, siblings and grandparents present.

We have to remember that **the 20 person limit** includes me, the acolyte, the reader, the computer/camera operator, the organist and the cantor. So the number of family members permitted inside the church will actually be about 14. Please keep this in mind. After I have met with

Mr Lynch, and following the official Government announcement of the relaxed regulations, then the school and PREP administrators and I can meet to finalise our plans and convey them to you.

Even when the churches reopen for services, there will probably be strict limits on numbers, with proper social distancing. So it will probably be a very long time before we see packed pews, people standing in the back and crowding into the choir loft and foyer. I'm even trying to think of **ways to dismiss the congregation** at the end of each Mass: you won't be able to crowd into the aisle and doorway on your way out, as in the past. After all, the airlines are facing the same challenge: how to board and unboard large numbers of people without spreading disease.

I fear that this will be the situation well into the next few years. So, parents, please do not think that if you wait until next year, things will be back to 'normal' and your children can have the 'big' First Holy Communion or Confirmation. The days of 30 children processing into church and receiving the Sacraments amid a full congregation are probably gone. And remember this: if we delay this year's First Communion and Confirmation classes, we will have twice as many children to accommodate next year! Any who choose to skip this year and wait until next year will find themselves at the back of the queue: I will first serve the 2021 class, and then pick up the remainder of the 2020 class. That's all I can do.

But I am trying to devise ways of celebrating these important events in ways that are accessible and beautiful, while at the same time protecting the health and safety of all involved. This week, please keep in your prayers the **special intention of organising sacramental celebrations** for our children that will help them continue on their spiritual journey in a new but memorable and beautiful way.