

One Day at a Time

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

Sunday 22 March

3.45am – And now it begins: I just received a text from a very good friend in the US that her dear mother, 90 years old, passed away two hours ago. Mary Cargian was the matriarch of a large Italian Catholic family in the Syracuse NY area, completely lucid and smart as a tack to the very end. She was a living encyclopedia of everything to do with her beloved town of Jamesville NY, which she had served in several public capacities. Her family was counting on me to preside over the funeral. But now having funerals in the US is greatly restricted – only 10 people allowed in attendance, if they can have the Mass at all. And even if I could get a flight to the US, I'd be in quarantine in the US for 14 days upon arrival, and then 14 more days in quarantine upon my return to Perth – if I could then get a flight back. So all I could do was text a long, heartfelt condolence message to Susan .

I'll offer Mass for Mary this week. Her daughter Susan was my secretary when I worked in the Sydney Archdiocese during World Youth Day preparations 12 years ago, and we became good friends, along with all of her family; I celebrated Susan's oldest son's wedding Mass a couple of years ago, and always had a home Mass for the family when I visited each year for the past 12 years. May dear Mary rest in peace. (I'm waiting for this situation to reoccur if and when some of my own family members pass away during this pandemic. But there's nothing I can do, except pray. It's hard.)

12.30pm – There were 18 parishioners at the 9.00am Mass, all of them very appreciative of the chance to attend and receive Holy Communion. **Peter Quinn**, who attended Mass last night, came back this morning to open the church and prepare for Mass. He was at the door to welcome parishioners and brief them on the new system: pick up your own bulletin and pew sheet, sit only in the designated pews, etc.

Antoinette Torre came after Mass and wiped down the pews that had been used, plus door handles, etc. She was at Mass last evening with her family, so it was very good of her to return this morning. This time she brought cleaning supplies and a page of instructions to follow in performing this task properly.

The virus lives on for 12 hours or so, so it is important that we clean everything thoroughly. Each person takes his or her own bulletin and pew sheet, and if they don't bring them home, they dispose of them in a special bin. I must say that everyone is keen to know what to do, and this information will be very useful for the home as well.

Bill and Noreen Moncrieff were so good to pick up all the loose branches that had fallen in the storm several weeks ago, and put them in the bin for collection this week. And **Andrew Vajda**, ever faithful, picked up the donations contributed at the two Masses thus far, for counting and deposit in the parish accounts.

Alessio and I went out for brekkie at a café on Angove Street that is owned by one of our parishioners. I'm trying to patronise these small businesses owned by parishioners or friends, knowing that they are facing difficult times; I'm sure we'll soon go the way of the US, with no dining in establishments permitted – only delivery or take-away.

Back in the parish office, the **Odorisio family** stopped by to deliver a fresh pork roast, some dry pasta to cook, and a donation for the parish collection. And **Raewyn Hill** took home our two large parish census files – she has put all the parishioners' email addresses into files that I can easily import into

emails and then quickly send out news and announcements to all the parishioners. **Tina Jack** is going to work on updating / completely renewing our parish website.

I am so very fortunate to have such great support from my people – and many others who have emailed with offers of assistance of various kinds. This is exactly why I want to develop various ways for the parish to keep in touch: online Masses, online bible study, RCIA and catechism, and opportunities for parishioners to send in questions and comments. We have a strong sense of community, and I want to keep that alive.

I must say that this weekend's Masses have been quite enjoyable, although with a near-empty church and no collections! But we've had singing, incense, readers, and of course the announcements at the end! Everyone has been most grateful, as I am to all those who came and helped.

6.45pm – I'm back at my desk after having my third and final Mass of the weekend, with 19 people attending. So that's a total of 73 parishioners who came to Mass, plus another 6 who received Holy Communion outside Mass. It all went well, and again I am grateful to everyone who pitched in to help with various tasks.

Following Mass I had a chat with our cantor **Theodore Murphy-Jelley**. He composes music and often sends it to me for comments; he's doing quite well, and I hope that our choir will be able to perform one of his compositions in the future (post-Corona virus, of course). Theo also likes to talk politics and philosophy; like many young adults today, he's convinced that socialism is the way forward. I think he likes the fact that I – having done a bachelor's degree in philosophy years ago – have some awareness of the philosophers, politicians and issues in which he's interested. In any case, I'm happy to have friendly arguments with Theo about something other than religion – and now about something other than Corona virus!

Well, it's time for me to warm up leftovers for dinner – tomorrow I'll do some cooking, in between two appointments I have. Oh yeah – I must first go and get petrol (are there queues of madmen for that, too? I'm afraid to look!).