



Kia tau te rangimārie ki a koutou

Lent begins next week. Lent is always a time to pay closer attention to the Word of God, a time of grace and reconciliation. This year Lent is again observed in the context of COVID-19, Delta and Omicron. There are tensions for us as protestors throughout the country call for end to the vaccine mandates. It has been a nerve wracking and disturbing time for those of us living close to Parliament grounds, as it is for many people whose families are having difficulties because of tensions about vaccinations and the various efforts we are using to keep everyone safe. Maybe the gift of this 2022 Lent will be focussing on looking for and accepting the grace of God at this time of COVID and the protests, with all kinds of events being cancelled, and a general apprehension and nervousness.

I read a few days ago *“We come into the world to align our souls with God,”* those words which challenged me, I know will be a focus for Lent.

Often at Friday Mass I pray one of the Eucharistic Prayers for Masses of Reconciliation. For me they are beautiful prayers. I share with you below a few phrases from those prayers which I hope will assist you on your Lenten journey, and in coping with COVID and its challenges, and with those who do not agree with what we have been asked to do to stay safe and healthy.

- ***“... you do not cease to spur us on to possess a more abundant life...”***
- ***“... now you set before your people a time of grace and reconciliation, as they turn back to you in spirit, you grant them hope in Christ Jesus and a desire to be of service to all, while they entrust themselves more fully to the Holy Spirit.”***
- ***“... though the human race is divided by dissension and discord, yet we know that by testing us you change our hearts to prepare them for reconciliation... by your Spirit you move human hearts that enemies may speak to each other again, adversaries may join hands, and peoples seek to meet together.”***
- ***“By the working of your power, hatred is overcome by love, revenge gives way to forgiveness, and discord is changed to mutual respect...”***

Prayerful best wishes this Lent as together we use this time of grace and reconciliation and rely on God’s grace ***“to align our souls with God.”***

Nāku noa. Nā,

+John



NOTICES

- Please keep in your prayers all our clergy. The frail and those who are experiencing ill health at present are Frs Frank Mcguire, Peter O'Connell and Mons John Carde.
Last night Fr Mathew, Rector at Holy Cross Seminary informed me that David Dowling is in hospital under observation. Please keep David in your prayers.
- **On Monday 14 February** Fr Colin Durning, the oldest priest in the Archdiocese died. Colin was a late vocation and served most of his time in Porirua until his retirement from active ministry in 2003. Please remember Colin and his family in prayer.
- **Disruption at the Hill Street complex.** Staff at the Catholic Centre are now all working from home due to the ongoing protests in Wellington, with some encounters taking place outside the Centre. St Mary's College has closed until next Tuesday as the area has become very unsafe. It is a difficult for all of us. We hope the protest will soon be resolved and we will all be together again.
- **Guidance for Ash Wednesday and Lent 2022**
This advice is offered as Parish Liturgy Committees prepare for our upcoming liturgical celebrations. As we are aware, our ability to actually celebrate will be dependent on the government's rules for gatherings at the time of the celebrations.

Ash Wednesday

Last year the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments published this advisory:

“Note on Ash Wednesday: Distribution of Ashes in Time of Pandemic

The Priest says the prayer for blessing the ashes. He sprinkles the ashes with holy water, without saying anything. Then he addresses all those present and only once says the formula as it appears in the Roman Missal, applying it to all in general: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel”, or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”.

The Priest then cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask, and distributes the ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places. The Priest takes the ashes and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything.”

For the Archdiocese a local amendment to the above note, would now be that the priest will be always masked, other than during the praying of the Eucharistic Prayer. The sprinkling on the head of the ashes is different to our usual method of applying the ashes to the forehead. However, this will be the most ‘contactless’ method. Naturally people present may prefer not to receive ashes. These people could either not go forward, or if the priest/minister comes to the people, they could indicate by such means as arms crossed over their chest, that they do not wish to receive the ashes.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

The celebration of Rite One Reconciliation over the weeks of Lent, at the regular times and possibly during an evening, say Wednesdays (as in the past we had “The door is open for you”), will assist in the availability of the Sacrament while not gathering many priests and parishioners in the one place. Masks are required to be worn by both priest and penitent.