

# *A Coffee with Alessio*



Welcome to 2021!

## Lectionary:

First Reading: Job 7:1-4, 6-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 146(147):1-6

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

Gospel: Mark 1:29-39

Happy New Year to you all and welcome to the coffee column for 2021. I hope your Christmas music and celebrations helped you and those in your faith community to celebrate with great joy the birth of the Lord! I also hope you had some downtime over the Christmas break and an opportunity to have some "me-time". Some of you who read this column are involved in education and I hope that you had a chance to catch your breath during the Christmas break! I had the opportunity to work with some very talented musicians over the Christmas season who helped me and others pray in thanksgiving for the gift of God's Son coming down to live among us on the first Christmas. I had the opportunity to visit some different cafes and try out some different deserts as well. I will share those with you along the way.

This Sunday has been designated by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference as "Word of God" Sunday. At the time of writing this column, we are in the five-day lockdown and are unsure what will happen next. Regardless of whether we have public Masses or livestream Masses, the Word of God is an important part of the Mass. In the Mass we have the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. So, what is this Word of God Sunday about.

*Setting aside a Sunday as the "Word of God" Sunday is intended to encourage the celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God. Through the proclaimed biblical readings in the liturgy, God speaks to his people and Christ himself proclaims his Gospel; Christ is the centre and fullness of all Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments. Listening to the Gospel, the high point of the Liturgy of the Word, is characterised by a special veneration expressed not only by gestures and acclamations, but by the Book of the Gospels itself. (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 17 December 2020.)*

Each day in *The West Australian* at the bottom of the page with the letters to the editor there is a verse from Scripture. Recently, there was some conjecture as to whether that Scripture verse should be published in the newspaper. Thankfully, that phrase has continued to be published. Perhaps reading and meditating on that verse could be one way to pray and meditate on the Word of God.

We listen to God's Word and we are strengthened by it – to help us live out what God is teaching us to do in our daily lives. The Word of the Lord in the Scriptures is a signpost for us how to live our lives as followers and witnesses to Christ in the world. Doing so is not always easy, but that is what we should aim for. The final line in this Sunday's Second Reading from Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians gives us a good summary of "Word of God" Sunday. He says that he has made himself all things to all people for the sake of the gospel and to have a share in its blessings. Yes indeed, being a sharer in Christ's Gospel can bring us many blessings. I often think of those times when things seemed to go pear-shaped. In those times hanging on to the Lord and His Word were very helpful. This week we have seen how things can change in an instant. On Saturday everyone was going about their normal routines and activities. Didn't that change on Sunday morning. We are now in a five-day lockdown, masks are compulsory and perhaps most of the things we had planned this week are out the window. Let us turn to the Lord in prayer this week for the person who has been infected, for close contacts and also for ourselves and family and friends – that strengthened by the Lord's Word we will be able to witness to Him even in the midst of crisis. At the same time as we have been in lockdown, I am mindful of all those people affected by the bushfires. We really need to keep those people in our prayers and assist them in whatever way we can (mindful of other restrictions). The Collect for this Sunday's liturgy is so pertinent in light of the past week:

Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care,  
that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace,  
they may be defended always by your protection.

Perhaps, the words in the Collect above can be our prayer this week for those affected by the bushfires.

I am mindful that there are many topics on which I could be writing this week. School going back, the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Australia becoming a federated nation (I'll say more about that later in the year), back to school (I'll hold on off that till we know what is happening there) and Lent beginning with Ash Wednesday on Wednesday 17 February – less than two weeks away. I'll say more about Lent in next week's column. Tomorrow, Saturday 6 February will be the 69<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II accession to the throne. We should pray for her, her representatives and all parliamentarians in this country, that they continue to remember to serve the interests of the people they elected and that they have a duty to serve and not be served. It is interesting to note the barbs that are often traded between parliamentarians and the differing views on how things should be handled. We will soon have an election in this State. Perhaps this Sunday affords us the opportunity

to be mindful of casting our vote for those people who truly live out the Word of God.

Two hymns that work well with Word of God Sunday this weekend are "Take the Word of God with you as you go" and "God has spoken by His prophets", (which can be sung to the tune of 'Ode to Joy').

As we again enter uncharted waters, I hope and pray that 2021 will be a better year than last year. May it be a year of blessings for us all, with opportunities to be faithful to Christ and the Church. May we be bearers of His Word, so that when we are dismissed from Mass we may "go in peace and announce the Gospel of the Lord."

As for a coffee and cake, since (at the time of writing) we are in take away mode, I suggest a takeaway coffee and a muffin from Muffin Break. When you are having your coffee, hopefully you will have a few minutes of silence where you can catch your breath and say a brief prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord: "thank you Lord, for all that you have given me."

Till next week, stay safe and enjoy your coffee and cake!

Mr Alessio Loiacono  
Music Field Officer

Friday 5 February 2021