

A Take-away Coffee with Alessio



Prayer resources while churches are closed, and public liturgies suspended

As I mentioned last week, I try to make my column relate to current events. I had planned to write a column about the Eleventh Station of the Cross – Jesus is nailed to the Cross – this week, but in light of the latest National Cabinet meeting, I thought it would be a good idea to give you some options for prayer at home. So, my apologies if you were expecting the next column in the series on the Stations of the Cross. That series will resume for Lent 2021.

It's early morning on Monday 30 March, and I've bought my take-away coffee from Pimlott and Strand and I'm having a browse through today's (Monday's) *West Australian*. Two things caught my eye in the paper - an editorial about adapting to the current situation we find ourselves in and a letter to the editor.

The editorial was talking about how we've had to change our hobbies and ways of doing things. Like the person who wrote the editorial, I do like go out for coffees - sometimes on my own for some downtime, and at other times with people. An interesting comment the writer made: that she should have developed other hobbies other than going out to eat. Of course, now is the time to try new hobbies out, but they will have to be activities that can either be done by oneself (if you live on your own), or with other members of your household. Joining the gym or going to the pool is not an option. Nor is going to the cinema or joining a book club or a choir. So, if we can't do those things what can we do. Probably downloading an app where you can do exercise, find a book or two to read and if you're like me, get some flowers and herbs into your garden. At least you're getting fresh air. Perhaps we can try baking a batch of muffins (so we have a snack ready when we need a treat). I have to say I do like baking sweet muffins. Self-isolation, or the new rule of "gathering of two" can, as the writer said, go one of two ways when Covid-19 ends - either we'll be thirsting for connection with others or we will be stuck to our screens and become totally introverted. Hopefully, the former and not the latter will be the case. While we aren't able to undertake the activities we normally enjoy, perhaps those things on our long to-do list might be able to be achieved and ticked off the list. I hope to get to some of those things during the next little while. So, let's use this time

given to us for the next few weeks wisely, so that when things start to go back to normal everything is in order and we will have some different topics to engage (with others) in conversation about.

We heard on Sunday about the further restrictions implemented by the National Cabinet - in particular gatherings of two - as the saying goes, "two is company, three is a crowd". Just as the rest of the world must adapt and conform to these new regulations, we in the Church have been doing that for the past few weeks.

Since public Masses continue to be suspended and we can't go into Churches for personal prayer, our prayer life will need to happen at home.

There are various Masses that are being streamed daily and on Sundays. Again, that requires a different approach for us, but if you are watching a streamed Mass, I encourage you to join in the responses and adopt usual postures we do at Mass, so that the experience is authentic as possible for you. I don't think it's helpful to be watching or praying a streamed Mass, if we watch it in the same way as we watch an AFL match. I suggest watching the Mass in a quiet space!

Also, there are various daily prayer resources. One of the riches of the Church, is the Liturgy of the Hours - that is a series of columns in itself. The two main forms are morning prayer and evening prayer. There is an app which can help you to pray these hours - *Universalis*. I would suggest taking one of the hours and trying to pray that.

The Church has a treasury of prayers, some of which may have metaphorical dust on them. One of my favourite prayers is the Angelus. You can either pray this prayer on your own, or with others. Perhaps that could be a prayer we pray during this time of Covid-19.

In addition to Masses being streamed, Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York streams the Stations of the Cross. That provides another option for home prayer. <https://www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/most-recent-mass>

Speaking of prayer, one of the letters to the editor questioned the point of prayer and said it would be no help to our current crisis. Prayer must first change us (ourselves), then change others. There are four forms of prayer:

- Adoration:** Praising **God**.
- Contrition:** Asking for **God's** forgiveness.
- Petition:** Asking **God** for a favor.
- Thanksgiving:** Showing **God** gratitude.

The four types of prayer are another set of columns in themselves as well. In the meantime, I really do think we should pray those who are sick, the medical and other

staff looking after them, and again for all those people who have lost their job. Let's also pray for teachers who are doing their best to keep classrooms and online classes running simultaneously. The Lord always hears our prayers, but He may not always answer them in the way we would like.

Prayer is extremely important at the moment – we are all grappling with new ways of doing things with little time to do so. Teachers have been preparing lessons online and are working to a full online model for term 2. For some people that is easy, for others it is a challenge. For me it has been a challenge, but I have been blessed with good people who have been willing to help me. I hope and pray they are blessed with good things. For parents, “home-schooling” their children that isn't easy either. So, keep up your wonderful work - you are juggling so many variables all at the same time. School work is definitely a partnership between school and home. Whether we are teachers and parents, may we look to the Crucified Christ to help us bear our challenges and crosses.

Next week's column will be a reflection on the liturgies of Holy Week and will hopefully be posted on Monday or Tuesday.

One more comment before I finish this week. As you know I've written about Religious Orders before and in particular the Presentation Sisters. Another Presentation Sister went to her eternal reward last week - Sr Clare Sciesinski PBVM. She was a good, faith-filled woman, who served the Lord and His people in various ways, always committed to her vocation in the Religious Life. In addition, she had a beautiful voice which she so freely gave back to God in the liturgy. Rest in Peace Sr Clare – we will miss you!

Till next week - enjoy your take-away coffee!

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