



Most Rev Anthony Randazzo
Bishop of Broken Bay

Message for BBNeighbourhoods
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My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Have you ever noticed that some people are incredibly passionate about issues in life? Issues such as the family, work, religion, politics, the environment, beginning and end of life, racism, justice and peace – the list is endless. The Oxford Dictionary defines the word passionate as “having or showing strong feelings of enthusiasm for something or belief in something”. Yet, the word itself means so much more than having strong feelings. It is derived from the Latin word *passio*, which is a term found in Christian theology from the Latin word *pati*, meaning suffer. It is linked to the word compassion, which means to suffer with.

Looking around our Church and society, we do not have to go far to see or experience human suffering. Many people are doing it tough at the moment, and so it is good that as a community, we have strong feelings of enthusiasm towards life issues. It is even better that as a community of the Church we can stand alongside others and, in Christian solidarity, suffer with them.

Saint Paul spoke about suffering on many occasions. One of his most beautiful instructions can be found in his Second Letter to the Corinthians. Reminding the Christian community that we are never to lose heart but always to be filled with hope, he said, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies”. ([2 Corinthians 4:8-10](#))

For Paul, and indeed for all Christians, the paradigm of suffering is Jesus Christ, who underwent the agony of the cross and died for our salvation and the life of the world. The Apostle reminds us to put things into perspective by always placing Jesus and his cross at the centre of our lives. By doing so, we do not succumb to some sort of vague spiritual escapism, as the non-believer might have us think. We do find ourselves in communion with Christ – through his life, death, and resurrection.

Each day brings a deepening of that communion if we open our minds and hearts to the Spirit of Jesus. In the community of the Church, no one need ever be alone because we are one in Christ. This week can I encourage you to keep an eye out for those who might be alone and suffering? Through our faith in Jesus, we will be able to reach out to others. With the compassion of Christ, we will be able to suffer with them. In our love for Jesus, we will be passionate about issues of life over death, good over evil, and hope over despair.

Blessings on your week ahead.

+Anthony