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*Bishop of Broken Bay*

Message for BBNeighbourhoods  
28 July 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Over the past fortnight, we have seen an escalation of COVID cases, not just in the State of Victoria, but also in parts of Sydney. It is worrying, but not unexpected.

Some of the most vocal critics are the very same people who advocate large public gatherings and demonstrations, as well as those who seem to flaunt the physical distancing recommendations and precautionary hygiene measures.

My dear people, now is not the time to relax our vigilance as a community of the Church. The Government measures that have been in place and that we have adopted as a Diocese are for the protection and well-being of all. I would like to thank you for implementing these measures and I urge you to continue to be observant and respectful of them. As a Catholic community, it is important that we take a leading role in good citizenship.

I was reminded this week that the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918 swiftly spread around the world and was not “under control” until 1920. While the COVID-19 Coronavirus is different to the Spanish Flu, there is much for us to learn as a community regarding how we might contribute to the safety of our society.

The Flu took a heavy toll on family life. Community wellbeing was threatened continuously over a three-year period. The economy was damaged as businesses closed, workers found themselves unemployed, and basic services such as mail delivery and garbage collection were hindered due to flu-stricken workers.

Thanks be to God, we have a much stronger health system in 2020 than in 1920. We also have access to cleaning and sanitising products that were simply not available to the masses 100 years ago. However, family life is just as vulnerable now as it was during the Spanish Flu because human lives and relationships are always vulnerable in moments of crisis. Likewise, the economy and the availability of gainful employment is currently under threat.

Being aware that members of the community are at risk or in danger is one of our major efforts at this time. Our Parishes, Catholic Schools, and CatholicCare communities are particularly well placed to be alert to risk and they are places where people feel secure. They are for many a safe harbour in the storm.



This week, I urge you to renew your efforts to ensure that you and your family remain attentive to the need for good hygiene, at home and when you are out and about. By being attentive, you will help limit the risk in the community of the Church and therefore in our neighbourhoods and social communities. I also encourage you to pray for an end to this time of trial.

*“The plague that prowls in the darkness you will not fear” (Psalm 90: 5-6)*

The words of the psalmist invite us to remain faithful and to take refuge in God’s unwavering love. Central to our belief as a Catholic community is that God never abandons His people in time of suffering and hardship.

My prayer this week is that God will protect you and bless you; keep you safe and defend you from all evil; and that you may persevere always in God’s love.

+Anthony