



Most Rev Anthony Randazzo
Bishop of Broken Bay

Message for BBNeighbourhoods
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

These past five weeks or so, have triggered unending questions from various corners of the community. Some enquiries are helpful, as they raise awareness around the neighbourhood, they highlight what might be of assistance to others as we navigate new spaces and evolving relationships.

There are some in our community who have a gift for these kinds of questions. They seem to observe the needs of others and are able to engage the space positively between the strict letter of the law and the rigid adherence to protocols. They have the gift of seeing the common good and making a positive contribution to making it a reality. There are some in the community who have the gift of being able to identify issues but are challenged by what they see and hear to the point that they become fearful, distrusting, and sceptical.

If we are honest, we might discover that there is a little bit of column A and a little bit of column B in most of us. No one this side of the grave is the full package or has the complete formula for navigating life.

Our 21st century culture sometimes hoodwinks us into thinking otherwise. However, it is not a unique trap for our generation. Time and again, history records that the human family has yielded to the temptation to be all powerful, all knowing, and all accomplished. Time and again human history demonstrates that this mentality and the behaviour that extends from it is false. It can cause leaders to become despotic, which in turn can elicit disorder and anarchy from the people. The common good is quickly replaced by personal wants and desires. The well-being of others might only be considered after the ego is first satisfied.

One of our great challenges at this time is ignorance. This ignorance is fuelled by the lack of general knowledge, the fear of different cultures, the unwillingness to determine historical facts, the inability to use reason in search of a higher good, and the pride of believing that one can go it alone.



It is precisely in moments and circumstances like this that our Christian faith urges us to look beyond ourselves to Christ, the Lord and Saviour of the world. He is the remedy for the ill that plagues our world.

Over these weeks, our Sunday Gospel readings are taken from Chapter Six of the Gospel according to John ([John 6](#)). Biblical scholars commonly refer to chapter six as *The Bread of Life Discourse*. Saint John reminds us that Jesus gives himself as the bread of life so that the crowds may believe.

I think that the Bread of Life Discourse has come at the right moment for us this year, especially while we are in lockdown under the stay-at-home orders. I am deeply conscious of the pain that many feel because they are not able to receive holy communion, have regular access to the sacraments, or visit our churches for prayer and worship. And yet, in a particular way over the next few weeks, Jesus, the bread of life, is present in a real way through the Gospel discourse.

We do well to notice that the crowds who gathered and followed Jesus had many questions for him, as we often do too. He does not shy away from their inquisitive demands, nor does he ignore ours. Rather, Jesus wins the battle when we ask him questions. Why? Because like the crowds in the Gospel, our questions demonstrate our need for a teacher. We are no different to the crowds in the Gospel. The sick are in need of healing; the sinner is in need of forgiveness; the lonely in need of a friend. And Jesus comes to people according to their need.

When the crowds came looking for him Jesus examined their motives. What was it that they really wanted? They were looking for him, he concluded, not because they had seen the signs, but because they had all the bread they wanted to eat. Their physical hunger had given way to a spiritual hunger, and in this spiritual hunger, Jesus could come to them as the bread of life. The bread of life would only have meaning for them if they were indeed in need of spiritual nourishment, and looking for satisfaction beyond that offered by the material world alone.

The teachings of Jesus will not have their full impact on our lives unless we can see where we are in need. Like the crowd in the Gospel, we can ask questions of the Lord that reveal to him and to ourselves what we long for.

In times of challenge and difficulty, when members of the community are isolated and feel the burden of loneliness, and when friends and loved ones are sick or have died, the Lord of heaven and earth, the teacher of truth, the bread of life is present in our midst to teach us, to feed us, to save us.



So where to this week, my sisters and brothers? Where is God calling us in our lives?

Without a doubt, we will feel unfulfilled and dissatisfied if we wander aimlessly and without purpose. This is not our call. As Catholic Christians, we are called to be people of faith, hope, and love. We are at our best when we feel we have something to offer and can play a part wholeheartedly. We can assess situations we are in and ask ourselves where the Lord is calling us.

How might we use our gifts and our faith to live well this week?

To do something well, we need to be motivated, to see a reason for what we are called to do. No matter how we respond to God's call, we should do so with the words of Saint Paul clearly ringing in our ears: "Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth." ([Ephesians 4:17-24](#))

With these sentiments in mind, with the gift of faith in our hearts, and with a strong determination to cooperate in the work of God, who provides for the people in their great need ([Philippians 4:19](#)), let us pray once more that what God has created may be restored, and what is restored God might keep safe.

Blessings on your week,

+Anthony