



Most Rev Anthony Randazzo
Bishop of Broken Bay

Message for BBNeighbourhoods
31 August 2021

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Over the past few weeks, I have heard and seen some of the struggles and worries that are being shouldered in our community of the Church. I have been asked why I don't speak out more and defend the Church, especially with reference to the closure of our church buildings.

I understand the burden and would simply ask that at all times when we engage in this conversation, that we maintain a sense of respect and charity towards each other. There is never any need to vent publicly on social media, nor is there justification to mail anonymous and abusive letters. This is the behaviour of uneducated, uncharitable, and pusillanimous people. It is directly opposed to the teaching of Jesus who said, "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34). Sledging and sniping is certainly undignified behaviour from someone who professes to be a disciple of Jesus and a member of His Church.

It is rather naïve to think that angry public demonstrations and rude letter writing campaigns are the best way to have a voice in our society today. By all means, as citizens, each one of us has the right and the duty to make known our concerns about our community and society, but always in charity and with respect. Our civic leaders are dealing with a once in a century pandemic. No one has the perfect road map to navigate our way through this time. Mistakes will be made, but much good will also be achieved. Certainly, communication between Church and State can be improved, but to presume that no conversation is happening is simply false and misleading.

I am very mindful that the negative impact of this situation is not only physical and emotional, but also spiritual. As your bishop my greatest concern is your spiritual wellbeing. A small number of people have demanded that I reopen our church buildings. To do so at this time would place vulnerable people at risk. I am not prepared to do that. Mass is being celebrated throughout the Diocese on a daily basis by myself and the priests. They are not private Masses, as Mass is never a private affair. When the Mass is celebrated, the whole Church celebrates, and every member of the Body of Christ is present at the altar of sacrifice through the communion of saints. To argue otherwise is to misunderstand the very nature of the Church and the mystery of the Mass. In the ritual offering of the bread and wine, the priest gathers up and offers the prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of every member of the community of the Church.



My brothers and sisters, I urge you to remain strong in these challenging times. As soon as is reasonably possible, I will reopen the churches throughout the Diocese, however, in the meantime, I would entreat you to ensure that you have done everything reasonably possible to ensure that you are fortified against the COVID virus. Each member of the community must take responsibility for his or her own actions in caring for the whole community of the Church and of society.

As the community of the Church, it is important that we focus on our spiritual life by creating meaningful engagement with God and with each other, despite the lockdown limitations. I encourage you to continue to pray, to make spiritual communion, to read the Scriptures, and to sanctify each day through the power of the Holy Spirit.

My words this week may seem rather direct. I mean no offence. My prayer is for your wellbeing and that of your families and loved ones. Together we must endure the sufferings of this time and unite them with the sufferings of Christ on the Cross. In the communion of the Holy Spirit, we are one in the Body of Christ.

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