

BE NOT AFRAID NOR TOO ANXIOUS

At the time of the recent bushfire crisis, I was watching ABC News 24's coverage for a while. During the coverage the focus switched to Mallacoota in Victoria. A man was interviewed who was very emotional. He said he actually prayed as the flames roared towards him and his home. He added that he had been an atheist for 20 years. He prayed that the wind would change. As the fire was almost engulfing him the wind did change and he with his home were saved. He could hardly get over it! He was very thankful to God.

The man's joy was entirely understandable. But I felt that there was an aching gulf between his thanks and the fact that the fires had destroyed the dreams and livelihoods – indeed the very lives of so many others. Why would God spare this man and not others?

I think prayer is very important. It is us communicating our needs, deepest needs, to God. We can be disappointed when prayer fails to receive the answer we want and ecstatic when it does. It is very important that we leave the answer to God – always. Prayer draws us closer to God both in fact and within our hearts.

In this world created by God nothing is inevitable - neither good nor bad outcomes. We live in a complex and sometimes hostile world environment. What really matters is the way we emerge from hardship. Will we allow the present situation to destroy us or will we be confident that it will eventually pass and we shall be able to resume our lives, albeit much wiser than before. How will we emerge?

What, if anything, do we fear in this Covid 19 crisis? It seems that we shall all have enough to eat, our beds will remain warm, and very few of us will run out of money. Some people will have enough toilet paper to last the rest of their lives. People whose employment is suspended will probably be looked after. The vast majority of people who contract Covid 19 very often recover.

Suppose one of us or someone we know were to die from Covid 19. The real sadness belongs to those who are left. Death in itself is not to be feared. Our sins are forgiven. God is there to welcome people into the heavenly presence. We are baptised and our subsequent sins have been forgiven in the Mass many times since then.

But why did the Mallacoota resident survive while others did not? God has created a universe and our world within it where many things happen at random. There is good fortune and ill fortune for us all. It is the way we come out of adversity and good luck which always matters. God's judgement is never to be found in people's misfortune. There is no inevitability. The resurrection of Christ at Easter puts paid to inevitability.

Interestingly, the way we deal with Covid 19 ourselves can inform the way we deal with our present Parish situation. The way we emerge from these troubling times can be a resurrection for everyone.

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