

2020 Christmas Message

The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index has thrown up some interesting findings in this extraordinary year of COVID 19. It reveals that 95% of us are more grateful for the things we have in life than we were before the pandemic; 91% say they are living more simply; and 96% have more empathy for others. Almost 8 in 10 say they are finding a better work-life balance and 87% are spending more quality time with their family.

It strikes me that these are all qualities and attitudes that we have long associated with Christmas when we make a communal effort to refocus on what is important in life: faith, family, friendship, helping others, and a sense of gratitude.

This 'silver lining' to the cloud of the pandemic, whilst encouraging, does not negate the terrible evil of the pandemic: the many lives lost, livelihoods shattered, and vulnerable people adversely affected.

The problem of evil – why it exists, and what to do about it – has been with us a long time. We Christians do not pretend to have all the answers, in fact we still refer to evil as a mystery. But our faith does provide us with some answers.

The colloquial saying “every cloud has a silver lining” has a deeper reality which we Christians often express as “God can bring good out of evil.” I’m sure we have all witnessed this many times this past year.

Of course, the greatest of all evils in our world is human sin and the terrible pain and destruction it can cause. The greatest good that God brings out of that sin is salvation which is what we celebrate with joy at Christmas: that God does not abandon us when we sin and do evil, but tears opens the heavens and comes down to us (Isaiah 64:1).

May you experience the blessing God’s love and salvation this Christmas.

Most Rev Michael Kennedy
Bishop of Armidale

