

Bishop Michael Morrissey
2021 Easter Message

All of us remember well our experience of Easter 2020. There was no travel, and many businesses were closed. We were asked to stay home to keep ourselves safe and well due to the Covid19 Pandemic. The biggest shock for people of faith was the closure of their places of worship which has never happened before in Australia, even in war. The experience left us feeling apprehensive, even to losing our hope that life would get better. We worried how this world Pandemic would affect our families and friends living interstate and overseas with little hope of seeing them face for face for a long time.

After one year, it is amazing how our lives seem to have come back to near normal! The possibility of travel within Australia and being able to gather has given encouragement and hope to many people. This hope for normality is fragile though, as lockdowns are still happening even here in Australia. The pandemic has not gone away, and will be here for some time, despite the hope vaccines offer us.

“Who will roll away the stone for us? This question confronts the women as they approach the tomb of Jesus early on the first Easter morning. Asking the question of ourselves, can we roll away the stone and let the light of the Risen Lord into our own life?

Pope Francis writes in “Fratelli Tutti””*(The Good Samaritan) approached the man and cared for him personally, even spending his own money to provide for his needs. He also gave him something that in our frenetic world we cling to tightly: he gave him his time. Certainly, he had his own plans for that day, his own needs, commitments, and desires. Yet he was able to put all that aside when confronted with someone in need. Without even knowing the injured man, he saw him as deserving of his time and attention*”.(63) The Good Samaritan stopped what he was doing! And in doing so offered the gift of friendship, healing and hope, rolling away the large obstacle of helplessness and impending death that had fallen upon a stranger.

The Pandemic is like a large stone too, sitting in front of us, blocking movement and connections.

This past year saw many good Samaritans in our communities discover and develop new ways of enabling connections between family and friends, offering important supports for the vulnerable, the fearful, the lonely.

Imagine being part of a community, where families, individuals and our Parishes, take time to be intentionally present to each other and to listen and hear each other’s stories. To deliberately roll away the stones that hold back love, compassion, generosity, and forgiveness.

For some, the burden of the Pandemic and the consequent fallout, can be overwhelming: people have suffered the loss of family, friends, work and mental anguish from lockdowns; as the Easter people that we are, we can reach out and roll away these large stones, simply by stopping and offering the gift of friendship, a listening ear, a kind word, bringing healing and hope to those we come across.

The Prophet Ezekiel says.... **“I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you”**. Easter is about the rock of fear being replaced by the risen Christ with the light of hope! Easter celebrates the eternal gift of Hope, Jesus who suffered and died, is risen! We do not live in vain: this is the message of Easter in 2021. We are the hands and face of the risen Christ, instruments of his hope in the midst of uncertainty and despair.

Jesus Christ is the Morning Star, Redeemer and Saviour. May his blessing and peace be upon you, your family and friends this Easter and always.