

Easter Message – Adelaide Archbishop Philip Wilson

In the aftermath of Cyclone Debbie there were stories of holiday makers stranded, communities isolated without electricity and massive damage to homes, crops, livestock and infrastructure.

It also was reported that in some towns abandoned homes had been looted within hours of the cyclone passing. When interviewed on radio, the owners of a caravan park expressed their shock and dismay that people could do such a thing.

But in the same breath, the couple spoke of the amazing response of local community groups, churches and individuals who turned up with buckets, mops and trays of home-cooked sausage rolls. Similarly, two young girls whose own home had been damaged, but not as badly as others, were out distributing sausages in bread to their neighbours.

This contrast between people's capacity to do good and evil, and the hope that arises from despair, is very much a part of the Easter story of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection.

When we remember the death of our Lord we do so through the prism of his resurrection. We don't gather on Good Friday to mourn and weep over the Lord as if we had no hope; we gather to mourn with our hearts filled with hope because we know what happens at the end of the story.

God has never been more powerful than when Jesus was crowned with thorns, scourged and robed in purple, because in his vulnerability God entered all the experiences of the world and filled them with His power and grace, so that we who follow him are able to live in that power and with that hope.

Our responsibility is to become the agents of that same power by our strong commitment to the work of love, justice, reconciliation and peace.

This isn't always easy. How are we to respond to the recent terrorist attacks in London and St Petersburg, or to the devastation of a cyclone and the tragic death of a mother and her two children in floodwaters in northern New South Wales?

But we have a choice: we can be filled with anger and bitterness or we can respond with love and capacities that are given to us by the Lord who entered this life, suffered and died for us and rose from the dead. That presence of Christ gives us hope, even in the midst of the most terrible things, to work for the lives of our brothers and sisters and to be faithful to the Lord as his disciples.