

'MENTAL & SPIRITUAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN AUSTRALIA'

3rd Sunday of Lent 2020 ~ 15 March 2020



Christ and the Woman of Samaria | Guercino c. 1640 – 41 | public domain

ARCHBISHOP JOHN BATHERSBY

Advising people not to go to a funeral of a popular Bishop.

Not what you would expect.

But Archbishop John Bathersby's funeral Mass at St Stephen's Cathedral is on this Monday, the first day of the Australian Government's new coronavirus measure of limiting gatherings to 500 people.

It is webcast at 11am on Monday at archbne.org/bzw

At all parish Masses weekend, we remember Archbishop John and share some details of his life. At 9am Mass, Terry shares some memories.

After the homily today, I shall give a further update on proactive protocols and decisions in our Archdiocese.

Some are in the newsletter and on parish social media.

Others were enacted yesterday.

MENTAL HEALTH

One of the areas in which to take precautions, is our mental health.

During the past two weeks, some have asked about mental strategies to cope.

Queensland Health have a helpful article titled:

['How to look after your mental wellbeing in a crisis'](#)

It begins

"It's important to find balance while staying informed during a crisis.

In a crisis, the endless stream of news headlines can sometimes feel overwhelming.

It's on TV, social media, newspapers and magazines,

*and it's often talked about in our social circles too.
News is now 24/7, and we're more connected to it than ever before.
While there are benefits to staying up-to-date with the news,
too much can take a toll on our mental wellbeing.
Here are a few ways to find balance while staying informed during a crisis."*

Its headings include:

- Read trustworthy news sources
- Set news limits
- Read good news stories too
- Keep perspective
- Helping children cope
- When to get support

SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Today's Gospel invites us to a conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman at a famous well. Conversation turns into an invitation to know God more clearly. The Samaritan woman knows the restrictions, the cultural separation, the negative views between Jew and Samaritan. Yet the conversation continues and turns to faith in God.

The woman becomes a witness by going and sharing the Good News of Jesus to the people in her village. They come to see Jesus for themselves. They rely not only on her testimony, but now they encounter Jesus as well.

Coronavirus precautions are very important and we are told that the precautions in Australia will increase.

Being inspired by Jesus in today's Gospel, we can uplift the spirit of others. And witness to Jesus who accompanies us in love during this difficult time. Part of our mission is to witness to the depth of God's love, as we work together for the physical, mental and spiritual health of the community.

Some in future isolation, will have more time for prayer, for phone calls and social media contact with friends and community members, for reading books and listening to music, for cooking and crafts and other home-based hobbies. Some will need encouragement and a listening ear.

We ask God in prayer this week about our spiritual health over the weeks ahead. Today we take the place of the Samaritan woman as we hear the encounter unfold.

She has the courage to ask and question. Her dialogue with Jesus develops, she changes, she shares, she invites others.

The Samaritan woman at the well becomes a disciple.
She carries the 'Good News' to her village.
Through a deepening of her spiritual health,
other people also become more spiritually healthy.

GOSPEL OF JOHN 4:5-42

Let us ponder some points in the conversation in today's Gospel.

'The Samaritan woman said to him,

'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?'

(Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her,

'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'

Both Jesus and the Samaritan woman break down
the male/female and Jewish/Samaritan taboos, and speak to each other.
Both Jesus and the Samaritan risked so much to even dialogue.
They could be penalised heavily for having a conversation.
Both were vulnerable.
We too are vulnerable during this COVID-19 Pandemic.

Dialogue for us at times can involve

- courage,
- hope,
- energy,
- a desire to understand and make a difference.
- and recognising the vulnerability of each other.

We recognise during this COVID-19 time that we are vulnerable.

A freedom ensues as Jesus and the Samaritan woman talk.
A freedom in overcoming gender and ethnic and cultural and religious prejudices.
We claim our freedom to make a difference.

Let us continue reading some of the Gospel passage.

"Jesus said to her,

***'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,
but those who drink of the water***

that I will give them will never be thirsty.

***The water that I will give will become in them
a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'***

Jesus offers *living water*, a gift of God.
We take time to recognise the living water with us.
It quenches our spiritual thirst.
It moves as a spring of life within us.

'Jesus said to her ...

***But the hour is coming, and is now here,
when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,
for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.
God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.'***

One of the essential parts of our spiritual health is to worship in spirit and truth. Take time at home and read Matthew's Gospel in full over the next few weeks. All weekend parish homilies are available on our [HOMILIES & REFLECTIONS](#) page. New parish prayers and petitions are available on our [PRAYER](#) page. For those with health conditions and are unable to participate and pray in the parish Mass, the recommended online Daily Masses and Weekend Masses are

- [Archdiocese of Brisbane Sunday 10am Mass – live and recorded](#)
- [Mass on Demand – live and recorded - every day at 9am \(10am AEDT\)](#)
- [Mass on Demand website](#) is also on the footer of every page of our website
- [Pope Francis 7am Daily Mass from his chapel at Santa Marta at 4pm](#)

YOUTH GROUPS

Our youth group and our children's group won't meet for a while physically, but Emma and her team are preparing other ways to connect fortnightly.

WE PRAY TO YOU JESUS

Last week we prayed [a longer COVID-19 awareness prayer](#). Today we pray [a shorter parish prayer](#) together from our newsletter.

COVID-19 TREATMENTS & VACCINES PRAYER

We pray to you, Jesus,
for all involved in the search
for Treatments and Vaccines for COVID-19.
We pray for the medical scientists and researchers.
We pray for the safety of people during the trial phases.
We pray for health authorities responsible for approval processes.

We pray to you, Jesus,
that we remain proactive in our health precautions
as we await the development of effective treatments and vaccines.
Amen

Fr Gerry

Readings <https://universalis.com/Australia/20200315/mass.htm>

