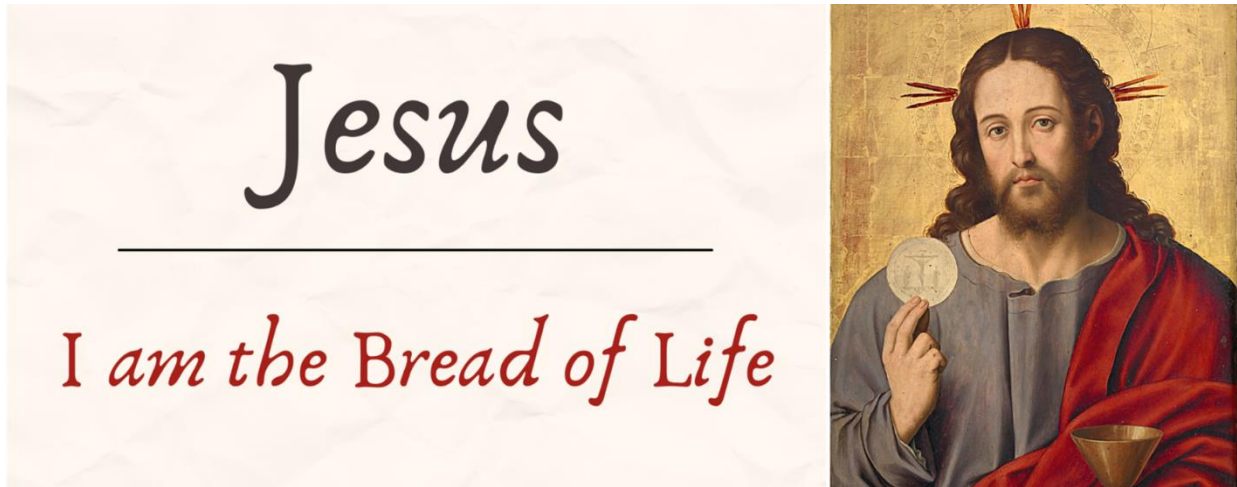


OUR STRUGGLE TO IMITATE GOD'S JUSTICE, TRUTH & COMPASSION
DURING THE PANDEMIC

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 1 AUGUST 2021



Christ the Saviour with the Eucharist by Juan de Juanes 1545 – 1550

THE WORLD OF COVID

How have we kept going since March last year?

The world community is still learning about

- the developing strains of COVID,
- the human qualities of patience, endurance and perseverance
- making sacrifices so that others can be safe and survive,
- continually adapting to changing circumstances
- admitting our fear, our anger and our frustration
- acknowledging the mental health issues during the Pandemic

At the same time, we have had opportunities

- to thank those people who have worked so hard to protect the community
- to learn from people in other countries
- to examine our own lifestyles and re-evaluate our priorities in life.
- to reflect on our weaknesses
- to act with courage.

WE CAN REMEMBER

We can remember back to March and April last year, with scientific medical advice in the media, emphasising that developing COVID-19 vaccines could take many years.

We can remember stories of COVID denial by some civic world leaders.

Yet *we experienced a miracle* with the greatest sharing of information that the world has ever seen.

And the development of COVID vaccines.

WE HAVE PRAYED & WE HAVE ADAPTED

Throughout this time, we have prayed and we have adapted.

Drawing upon God's strength, growing in faith, hope and love, we have been called to act with justice, truth and compassion, in loving our neighbour during the Pandemic.

CHALLENGES THAT THE CHURCH FACED IN THE 1960s.

Many decades ago, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council. It was an act of courage and faith.

The weeks leading up to the Council were a very tense time, with the enormous threat of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The threat of nuclear war was serious.

Pope John XXIII was one of several world leaders, working with the USA and the Soviet Union behind the scenes, for a peaceful resolution.

While peace initiatives were being pursued, some Church leaders continued their preparations for the opening of the Council in October 1962.

A PREVIOUS ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE | FRANCIS RUSH

The Bishop of Rockhampton - and later our Archbishop of Brisbane - **Francis Rush** attended all the Sessions of Vatican II between 1962 and 1965.

Years later, on the 5th June 1991, in reflecting on the Council, he said

"none of the national hierarchies, apart from the Germans, French, Dutch & Belgians, had come with a well-prepared agenda."

Only four countries in the world were well-prepared.

The Second Vatican Council was a lesson in seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in listening to and respecting others, of overcoming fear, of acting with courage.

There were many challenges that they faced.

There are many challenges that face us today.

On the 21st March 1989, Archbishop Rush preached at the Mass of the Oils.

As he remembered those from many countries who were ordained with him, he said

"We may not be expelled from our holy places or killed for the things we believe, like classmates of mine ordained fifty years ago who have been shot or imprisoned or are living underground. We may not be called on to endure that sort of suffering. We are expected to tolerate the difficulties of life, whatever they may be, always struggling to be the sort of church that Christ wants us to be, united with God & one another, battling all the time to imitate his justice, truth & compassion."

Today as Catholics, we are still called to struggle

'to be the sort of church that Christ wants us to be, united with God & one another, battling all the time to imitate his justice, truth & compassion.'

Last week, we read from the first part of Chapter 6 in John's Gospel.

Jesus performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes.

Today as a world family, we are called to help,

not only those who suffer from malnutrition, drought and famine

but also to share the best COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatments

with all members of the world family.

The crowd had intended to forcibly make Jesus their king. (6:14-15)

The crowd had a false expectation of the role of messiah and prophet.

The Gospel passage reads:

"When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself."

What are our false expectations during this COVID-19 Pandemic?

[pause]

GOSPEL OF JOHN 6:24-35

May we now focus on the latter part of today's Gospel passage

"Then Jesus said to them,

'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'

They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'

Jesus said to them,

'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.' "

JESUS IS THE BREAD OF LIFE

Becoming a political messiah was not what God the Father was calling Jesus to be.

Jesus did not need to live out the crowd's expectations and interpretations.

Jesus is the one inviting us.

Jesus invites us to respond in freedom to his love.

Jesus does not want us to be a captive of our fears.

Jesus does not want us to sit on the fence while our neighbour suffers.

Jesus is the bread of life.

Jesus nourishes our faith.

To be just and compassionate in our world, is a major challenge for all of us. Jesus is present with us, loving us and strengthening us in this struggle.

As Archbishop Rush said when he was alive, Jesus calls us and expects us

'to be the sort of church that Christ wants us to be, united with God & one another, battling all the time to imitate his justice, truth & compassion.'

May the love of Jesus set us free to be our true selves.

May the love of Jesus lead us in the struggle to imitate God's justice, truth and compassion. Amen.

Fr Gerry

readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/080121.cfm>

Jesus

I am
the Bread of Life.

Whoever comes
to me will never
be hungry,
and whoever
believes in me
will never be
thirsty.

Gospel of John 6:35

