



*From the Bishop*

17 December 2020

To the people of the Diocese of The Murray

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As this year draws to a close on our Fiftieth Anniversary year, I reflect on the extraordinary year that has been 2020. With bushfires devastating our beloved Adelaide Hills through to the impact of the Pandemic, this year has been a test to all of us and I want to pass on my thanks to you all for your amazing responses to the various challenges. This year has shown to us that we are connected to each other as a nation and as a world. Our isolation from the world as an Island does not mean that we are immune to what happens overseas.

The year really started off with the terrible fires Australia wide. We, of course were impacted by the Cudlee Creek Fire. It was terrible that parishioners in Onkaparinga lost homes, people lost their lives and livelihoods. While fire is a natural part of our Australian life, the devastation is no less impactful. I was so impressed with the work of the parishes of Onkaparinga Valley and Mount Barker under Fr Peter, Fr Thomas and Fr Daniel's aegis, and all the hard-working parishioners of those areas in making sure that appropriate responses were made. I would also like to make mention of Fr Thomas' involvement in BlazeAid, and the wonderful support that he gets with the people of the parish. It is a great way to show to the wider community that the community of faith is there for the wider community not just themselves, so well done everyone and thank you.

No sooner were the fires out, then we were impacted by COVID-19. To say that this disrupted what we do as church would have to be the understatement of the decade! To see the way in which parishioners and clergy responded to the challenges of the pandemic has given me great encouragement for the future of our Diocese. The way in which everyone simply got on with it, was fantastic. The development of online services, and other innovative ways to connect with people, especially during the lockdown, was simply fantastic, and I am so proud of you all, and want to say thank you to you all from the bottom of my heart. This could have gone in a very different way had you all not responded in the way you did, so, again, thank you. The responses have also been helpful in helping us recognise that we do not have to do things the same way as was in the past.

The Pandemic, of course, impacted our ability to celebrate fifty years since the inception of the Diocese. This is disappointing, however, I think that something more important was discovered in our Diocese this year; that we are resilient and we have a good future. Yes, it is important to give thanks for the past, but it is irrelevant to do so if we cannot look forward with great hope and expectation to the future. I think we can do that, having weathered this year.



This brings me to Christmas. The Christmas message, one of them at least, is that God is capable of doing what he needs to do in order for us to relate to him, in different ways, in surprising ways. For our Lord and Saviour, the Lord of Life, the second person of the Trinity, to be born of a woman in humble poverty, is so outside the expectations of how we might perceive an all-knowing, all-powerful God to operate or expect him to behave it should cause us to stop and think. How should we as people who profess to be disciples of this Lord Jesus conduct ourselves in relation to one another, and the wider world we find ourselves a part of? What changes will we need to make in our walk of discipleship, knowing that 2020 has shown us we do not have to stick to the same ways for ever?

Alice and I trust that you will have a blessed, safe and holy Christmas, and that the New Year brings you new opportunities and new vistas by which we all may follow our Lord and Saviour in new and exciting ways.

With prayers and good wishes,



The Right Reverend Keith Dalby  
Bishop of The Murray

