

### **Love and Truth in the Time of COVID-19: Some Pastoral and Theological Reflections (3)**

Dear sisters and brothers,

I write this on the other side of Easter Sunday, mindful that this was an unusual celebration for us all. Our inability to gather physically, the need to prepare liturgical and teaching material while navigating changing patterns and places of ministry and the opportunity to connect with the online world all made it one to remember.

I wonder if you've had time to reflect theologically on that journey. Were there aspects of the Easter narratives and message that resonated with your experience? For me, it was the dynamic of absence/presence in the gospel accounts that struck home. At times Jesus seems very much isolated – betrayed and deserted by his followers, condemned by the authorities, forsaken by His Father. Yet it is in the cry of dereliction recorded in Matthew 27:46 and parallels that we begin to see that all is not as it appears on the surface. For the Father is present as the One who hears the prayers of His beloved and, in time, answers. With the resurrection of Jesus we have a different paradox. One of the first reactions of His followers is to 'hold on' to Jesus (Matthew 28:9, John 20:17). But this is to misunderstand the nature of His ongoing presence with them, which will be experienced not in staying and holding but in sending and going (Matthew 28:20, John 20:21-23). To be on mission with and for Jesus, wherever we are, is the surest guarantee of His experienced presence.

Below are a couple of extra resources you may find helpful in your ongoing ministry:

The Calvin Institute for Christian Worship has compiled a collection of worship resources for these times at <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/covid-19-and-worship-resources-for-churches-adapting-to-social-isolation>.

The Reverend Emma Street has drawn my attention to this short training course on COVID-19 which has been made available to all Defence Chaplains. You can access it at <https://covid-19training.gov.au/index.html>.

Please let me know of any resources you have found helpful as you serve Christ's mission and I'll include them in subsequent updates.

In the Risen Jesus,

+Mark

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