

Dear Parishioners,

When I was still studying to be a priest, one question people would ask me is why do I want to become a priest. Almost automatically I would answer: *'I want to serve God and serve God's people, the Church.'*

With the news about Cardinal Pell's conviction (*note: the appeal process is still underway as of writing this*), my commitment to serve God and God's people was put to the test because of the pain and the sorrow I feel personally about the whole situation.

It hurts and saddens me because it involves not only the Church that I promised to serve and which I loved but more so because of the pain and the wounds that the sexual abuse victims, their families and their friends had to re-live once again as this news unfolded and as the judicial process continues.

In the words of Archbishop Peter Comensoli in his statement for the Archdiocese of Melbourne:

"You have every right to hold your own personal understanding of what has unfolded. I ask that you be mindful of the judicial process still underway. Our opinions must remain respectful of this process, and our speech offered in charity. As in all things, and at all times, let our actions and words be offered in truth with love (Eph 4:15)."

The Archbishop continues: *"In all this we must never forget those who walk with this pain every day, whose lives remain devastated by the impact of sexual abuse inflicted on them in their vulnerability. **To the survivors, [my emphasis] to their families, and to their friends and colleagues, I again offer my deepest apology for wrongs that have been done by those who have abused their position of ministry and care.**"* (end of quote)

Friends, brothers and sisters, we live in hope. We are people of hope and we have reason to hope that if we resolve to make things right in our efforts and our commitment for truth, justice, and healing, and in our policies to safeguard our children and the vulnerable that our parish is trying to be, we can see the light in the midst of this challenging time for our faith and for the Church. We are Easter people. And we know, the joy of Easter is always preceded by the Friday of suffering and even death.

Let us 'never give in' so St Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15. Let us 'keep working at the Lord's work always, knowing that, in the Lord' our works are never in vain. (1 Cor 15:54-58).

While we acknowledge that everyone is equal under the law and respect the Australian Legal system, we hope and pray for the healing of those who are hurting, for the truth to prevail and for justice to be served rightly.

Moreover, let us pray for ourselves. Our faith may be challenged because of this. We might be shocked, saddened, disoriented, disillusioned, and confused. Let's keep up and keep going. God is always beside us walking with us in this journey.

Again, to quote from the Statement of Archbishop Comensoli: *"We will each experience any amount of confusing and conflicting feelings. At this time please reach out for support if you feel you need it, and be present to those around you who may need to talk, or even to have space, as they come to terms with what this means for them personally. Especially, can I encourage you to pour out your heart to the Lord, who holds each of us tenderly in His love and care."* (end of quote)

Let us stay close with Christ, because he knows so well, he understands so well how difficult it is to suffer with those who are suffering and to bear the burden of our sins, and forgive us still even if we don't know what we are doing. May this Easter remind us and motivate us that in Christ we all have reason to hope. Easter hope means **hold on pain ends** or **hang on problem ends**. Amen.