

# 22 MARCH 2020 – YEAR A

## 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT

### St Brigid's Parish, Feilding

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Email: [stbrigids@xtra.co.nz](mailto:stbrigids@xtra.co.nz)

**Rev. Fr Manoj Mathew IC** (Parish Priest)

**Rev. Fr Robin Kurian IC** (Assistant Priest)

### St Mary's Parish

69 Ruahine Street, Palmerston North

Phone: 358 5614

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**Rev. Fr Manoj Mathew IC**

Parish Priest St Mary's Parish

Co-Chaplain Syro-Malabar Community

**Rev. Fr Robin Kurian IC** - Assistant Priest

Superior of the Rosminian Community

Co-Chaplain Syro-Malabar Community

### Cathedral of the Holy Spirit

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**Fr Joe Grayland** - Parish Priest (Acting)

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**Monsignor David Bell** (in residence)

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### Kotahi Ano (Together as One)

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish

Sacred Heart Rongotea

St Mary's Foxton / St Joseph's Shannon

Phone: 358 3667

Email: [office@lourdesparish.nz](mailto:office@lourdesparish.nz)

Website: [www.lourdesparish.nz](http://www.lourdesparish.nz)

**Priests:** Fr. Joe Grayland & Fr. Kevin Neal

Email: [priest@lourdesparish.nz](mailto:priest@lourdesparish.nz)

**Parish Coordinator of St. Mary's Foxton/Shannon:**

Eleanor Jacobs

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The focus for today's Gospel is predominately on the man born blind. Interestingly, we have not only his interaction with Jesus but also with the Jewish authorities. As a Jew he does not have the benefit of the New Testament, the example of our parents or other sources that we have when we come to rely on in faith. Rather, he can only go on what he has experienced in his encounter with Jesus. he reasons thus: "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." (Jn 9: 30-32) This highlights that for everyone who wishes to become, or to remain, as a Christian and grow in discipleship that the encounter with Jesus is foundational. Our faith is not a "head trip," a fantasy or a self-help guide of collective wisdom. It is about a first hand experience of the person of Jesus Christ, his revelation of the Father and gift of the Holy Spirit. St Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God." (1 Cor 2: 4-5)



*Dear Parishioners*

*The Bishop has acted quickly and decisively in response to the new government directives concerning the Coronavirus. As expected, it will seriously affect both sacramental and pastoral activities within our parish and all parishes in the Diocese for some time.*

*Let's continue to look out for one another, especially the vulnerable within our parish and to offer practical assistance wherever possible.*

*Know that you are in our prayers and thoughts during this time. Please keep us in your prayers too as we all face the pandemic crisis.*

*From Fr. Joe Grayland and Mons Dave Bell*

### Children's Corner

Today we hear how Jesus helped a blind man to see again. God has given us the gift of sight to see all the wonderful things that he has made in our world. But we also need to open our eyes to things that are wrong and try to do what we can to change them.

God has given us five senses to learn about the world that is around us. Do you know what those five senses are?

We can see and touch all the beautiful and wonderful things that God has created like birds, trees, flowers, fish, family and friends.

We can hear lovely music and the birds singing.

We can smell flowers, and the sea, and grass when it has just been cut.

We can taste yummy food and drink.

Let us pray for the world, especially for places where there is much suffering, that the people may not be blind to the suffering of others.

**From your Parish Offices**  
**We are open as per usual until further notice.**

**FROM YOUR PARISH HOMES**

**The Cathedral**

The Cathedral, your parish home, will be open for private visits from 9am to 5pm.

Please take some quiet time to pray and reflect.

Information regarding pastoral support will be available on the notice board and you may complete a form and place in the box provided if you want to go on our emailing lists or our telephone pastoral list.

**Kotahi Ano – Our Lady of Lourdes, Sacred Heart Rongotea, St Mary's Foxton**

OLOL parish home will be open for private visits from 9am to 5pm.

St. Mary's Foxton parish home will be open for private visits on Thursday and Friday from 9am to 4pm.

Please feel free to come in and take some quiet time to pray and reflect and ensure your distance is kept as per government advice during this unsettled time.

When the church is open, information regarding pastoral support will be available on the notice board and you may complete a form and place in the box provided if you want to go on our emailing lists or our telephone pastoral list.

**St Mary's PN and St Brigid's Feilding**

Each parish home will be open for private visits from 9am to 5pm. Please feel free to come in and take some quiet time to pray and reflect and ensure your distance is kept as per government advice during this unsettled time.

Information regarding pastoral support will be available on the notice board and you may complete a form and place in the box provided if you want to go on our emailing lists or our telephone pastoral list.

**Notices:**

Further information regarding the COVID-19 and its impact on our Parish life from the Cardinal, our Bishops and Parish Priests will be distributed via email, websites and will also be displayed on the noticeboards.

Please take the time to read and if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact each individual parish office.

If you need to drop any notices, envelopes, please use the allocated secure slots in each parish home eg: please use the newspaper secure slot in the Cathedral foyer. The Cathedral Parish is happy to receive all parishes notices/envelopes and will distribute back to the other parishes.

**Prayer in the midst of Pandemic**

*by Cameron Wiggins Bellm*

May we who are merely inconvenienced,  
remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors  
remember those most vulnerable.

May those who have the luxury of working from home  
remember those who must choose  
between preserving their health or making their rent.

May those who have the flexibility  
to care for our children when schools close  
remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel travel plans  
remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our profit margin  
in the tumult of the economic market  
remember those who have no margin at all.

May those who settle for quarantine at home  
remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country,  
let us choose love during this time  
when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,  
let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to and with our neighbour.

Amen.





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20 March 2020

Dear parishioners

In the current COVID-19 emergency it is very important that we play our part as good citizens. It is our Christian duty to do everything we can to protect ourselves and others from harm.

As Catholics we have many gatherings and practices which potentially pose a risk this situation, especially to the elderly and those whose health is compromised in some way. The government's restriction of indoor gatherings to 100 people requires us to take action immediately. For the duration of this health emergency, the following instructions are to be implemented in all parishes and chaplaincies (and where they apply, in schools) throughout the Diocese of Palmerston North.

**Masses and public liturgies**

All public Masses and liturgies in the Diocese are suspended from 20 March until further notice, both weekday and weekend Masses. Some churches will be open for private prayer, and social distancing should be observed if people are doing this. Since public Masses are suspended in the Diocese until further notice, all Catholics in the Diocese are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass (Canon 1248). You should stay home for your safety and the safety of others. Many people may feel sadness at not being able to participate in the Mass, but you should not feel guilty for not going to Mass. We are looking into livestreaming some Masses but it may be even more fruitful for families and households to gather together to reflect upon the readings for Sunday and to make their own forms of worship. I have asked all the priests of the Diocese who can to celebrate Mass every day privately for the intentions of the people and the alleviation of the crisis.

**Funerals**

The immediate family of the deceased (which must be fewer in number than 100 or the Ministry of Health's future minimum number) may gather for the funeral rite, taking great care to practice social distancing. There are to be no prayer vigils the day before a funeral. The Rite of Committal will take place at the cemetery with the immediate family only. There will be no Requiem Masses at this time.

**Marriages and Baptisms**

Marriages without Mass and Baptisms may take place with immediate family members, provided they follow the regulations established by the Ministry of Health. Marriage preparation courses are suspended.

**Parish activities**

All parish gatherings are suspended. This includes meetings; sacramental programmes; the conferring of First Holy Communion, First Reconciliation and Confirmation; Lent programmes; RCIA programmes; and the Second Rite of Reconciliation. Reconciliation will be available by appointment or at set times if it can be conducted in a safe way.

**Visits to the sick and housebound**

Your pastoral team will make arrangements to ensure that those who are sick or housebound receive spiritual care. They will also keep in contact with those who are in self-isolation, and you should advise them if you are in this situation.

**Parish Offices**

Parish offices may make their own decision about remaining open, but must enforce social distancing with any visitors. If necessary, the office may be closed to visitors but be accessible through its phone and email systems. There will be a way to contact a priest.

This is a Lenten journey without precedent. In all its challenges there will be opportunities for spiritual growth as a community; for finding new ways of being Christ to one another; for caring for those who are marginalised or disadvantaged; for the discovery of new gifts in our midst; for rediscovering the heart of community and family. For each of us personally there may be opportunities for discerning what is really essential in our spiritual journey; for finding a new appreciation of those who are very familiar; and for deepening our prayer and the ways we pray.

You are all in my prayers. Please look after yourselves, and care for one another and your neighbours.

Yours sincerely in the Lord

✠ John A Cardinal Dew  
**Apostolic Administrator**  
**Diocese of Palmerston North**

20 March 2020

***Pastoral letter to parishioners from the Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand regarding the Covid-19 coronavirus-related suspension of Mass***

The psalm we pray together at this weekend's Masses for the Fourth Sunday in Lent is perhaps the best known and most loved of all the psalms. For almost three thousand years those who know God have prayed this prayer in times of comfortable peace and from the heart of the battlefields of life when anxiety, persecution and sickness threaten to overwhelm us.

We often pray this prayer especially as a hymn, when we gather to bury those we love. And today, in union with our brothers and sisters of every nation on earth, together facing the threat of the new coronavirus, we call to God with deepened awareness of our need and with confident hope:

*Even though we walk in the dark valley, we fear no evil for you O God are with us giving us courage.*

In recent weeks we *your bishops* have communicated to you the people of our Catholic community in Aotearoa New Zealand the professional advice from the Ministry of Health on how to keep ourselves and all people, especially the most vulnerable, safe, and protected from this virus. We are grateful to all who have immediately implemented the necessary restrictions, especially those who find the required changes most difficult.

Now that it is no longer possible for us to gather for Mass and the sacraments it is important to remember that the church and the ministries of the priest remain open twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. It is our hope that church buildings remain open for personal prayer, even when the liturgy which gathers people together is not able to be celebrated. If you know of people who need the ministry of a priest for any reason do not hesitate to make contact with a priest or diocesan office. In these days, even when the liturgy is not able to be celebrated together, side-by-side, the life of Jesus Christ communicated to us through the church remains open to us.

Diocesan websites are being constantly updated as new information, restrictions and resources become available. Please make sure that all parishioners have access to this important information.

While the visible present fear is a biological virus, the fact is that we humans face fear every day. While in these days we are wisely focused on keeping people safe from the present threat of infection, in our families and friendships and local communities we continue to accompany those who are facing fears that are not related to the coronavirus; those who are struggling with a relationship break-down, and financial anxiety, and those who are terminally ill, and those who care for them.

We live in an age when it seems possible to believe that modern opportunities, education, medical care and technology can deliver us the happiness we seek. When we are faced with a fear that threatens to overwhelm us, we become aware of the fact that we remain vulnerable creatures, dependent on a God who is greater than us for everything, including every breath that we take. Without God this vulnerability is a problem to be suffered and solved. In personal and shared faith in Jesus Christ we understand that the reality of human vulnerability is a gift that opens us to receive and to give love.

May these difficult days be for all the people of our land an opportunity to realise anew that when we dwell in the "House of the Lord" here on earth, goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life.

Perhaps our mantra for these difficult days can be our psalm for today prayed as a simple repeated line when you are not sure what to pray:

*The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.*

Then as a communal prayer:

*The Lord is our shepherd; there is nothing we shall want.*

Yours in Christ,

✠ Patrick Dunn, Bishop of Auckland and NZCBC President

✠ Steve Lowe, Bishop of Hamilton and NZCBC Secretary

✠ John Dew, Cardinal Archbishop of Wellington

✠ Paul Martin, Bishop of Christchurch

✠ Michael Dooley, Bishop of Dunedin

✠ Michael Gielen, Auxiliary Bishop of Auckland