

Message from Bishop Patrick Dunn for the Third Sunday of Easter 2020

Kia Ora. ANZAC DAY each year is the day when we remember those who have made huge sacrifices to defend our nation, and those who serve in this way still today supporting people in time of war or natural disasters. It is important to remember, because it is so easy to forget.



In all the busyness of our present-day lives, we can forget the sacrifices of past generations: the Loss of loved family members in war, life-changing injuries, food rationing, time served as prisoners of war, months and years of anxiety wondering if life will ever return to some form of normality, and so on. Many recent migrants to NZ are all too familiar with such experiences.

A time like this ANZAC WEEKEND helps us to put into perspective the challenges we are currently facing with the COVID.19 Pandemic. We are facing restrictions on our freedom and worries about the future for us and our families, for our country and the world as a whole. ANZAC weekend reminds us that our forebears at various times faced similar challenges, but eventually the human spirit finds a way to re-establish the patterns of normal everyday life.

On Tuesday this week our nation moves from Level 4 to Level 3.

More people will begin to return to work, but the Prime Minister has said that the first priority is simply to **STAY HOME & STAY LOCAL**. So, Level 3 is still very much like Level 4. This means that our churches will still remain closed for the next few weeks, just to ensure that the Coronavirus does not begin to spread again.

In one slight relaxation, we can now have “up to 10 people” present for a funeral or a wedding, always with appropriate distancing. But these situations are still very exceptional.

My hope is that we may be able to reopen churches in some way once we get to Level 2!

The Gospel for this Sunday, the THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER, is St Luke’s masterpiece: the encounter between Jesus and the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus on Easter Sunday. They had been devastated by the crucifixion of Jesus the previous Friday: *Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free.*

They were so devastated by their own shattered dreams that they failed to recognize the One who was walking alongside them.

Perhaps there are similarities for us. We have all had plans for 2020 turned upside down by the Pandemic. Is it possible that we are so rocked by these events that we fail to hear the voice of the Master as he walks with us through these days?

“Speak Lord, your servant is listening”. That is always the prayer of the disciple.

God bless you.

+Patrick Dunn, Bishop of Auckland