

Easter Vigil

Tonight, we come to the end of our Lenten journey, a journey that has prepared us to celebrate the new life of Easter. We may look back over these last forty days and wonder how God has prepared us to receive what he has to offer us tonight.

My own Lenten journey has been a little different than usual. For much of Lent I was not engaged in pastoral ministry but caught up focusing in on my own health as I underwent surgery and then took the time to recuperate from that. During that time, I was very much aware of your support and prayers for me and for those who cared for me. But I had a sense that I was taking Lent a bit too easily and it was good to come back and join you on the last part of our Lenten journey.

But even tonight we have needed to do things a little differently. This has probably been the hottest Holy Saturday that we have had for over a hundred years and the first time that I can remember that we have had a total fire ban on this day. We were not able to light our normal Easter fire. But maybe God was saying that we have had fires enough in the last week or so. When those two semi-trailers collided yesterday morning killing both of their drivers, one of the trucks burst into flames. On Wednesday morning we woke to hear of a bushfire burning in the Black Hill conservation park. But it was

the fire that we woke to hear of on Tuesday morning that moved us most. The whole world was saddened to see the Notre Dame Cathedral in flames. Much has been written about that fire and Bishop Greg O'Kelly reflected upon it as part of his Pastoral letter for Easter

He writes, "Dear Sisters and Brothers, the world has been riveted by the sight of the Notre Dame Cathedral burning in Paris. It is the greatest symbol the French have, and has been with them for almost nine centuries. The timbers had the marks of medieval saws and hammers. There was modern IT and close circuit television as well, wizardry of modern technology cheek by jowl with hand crafted ancient artistry. It was a Cathedral that spanned the ages; so much of it was reduced to ashes. It will be built again, rising from the destruction.

In a way it is an image of the Church, much of which has been damaged in recent times. It will rebuild through the Spirit and our fidelity, rising out of the ashes of disillusion.

The rising of Jesus on Easter Day destroyed all death and ushered in new life. Christ's Resurrection rebuilds us in hope. His Body in the world is the Church, the body of the faithful baptised. May Easter continue to assure us that Christ makes all things new, and life is His gift that He gives forever."

I share Bishop Greg's words with you tonight as we go to the tomb with the women disciples to discover that the tomb is empty. Those women are told, "Why look among the dead for someone who is alive." Too often we look among the dead for someone who is alive. We keep looking at the destruction and the rubble when the rebuilding has already begun. We look at where a bushfire has been without seeing the new life that is already bursting forth.

That we are here tonight ready to renew our union with Jesus first celebrated at our Baptism is a great sign of hope. The rebuilding of the Church is the work of the Spirit. We are saying yes to the gift of that Spirit. Aware of our weaknesses and sinfulness we are asking the Lord to make us faithful. Together may we experience the joy of this night knowing that Jesus is alive and at work in each one of us.