



GOOD FRIDAY

Hope in the Midst of Suffering

We are currently celebrating our second COVID Easter. For many of us the Easter Triduum last year was celebrated at home in lockdown as our churches were closed. We prepared family celebrations and here in Fiji many Christians decorated their homes in keeping with the church's remembrance. We learned again the meaning of domestic church.

This year we might be able to celebrate, if not fully, at least with some of our church family – unless of course there is another outbreak. We will come together in silence to relive the solemn but triumphant memorial of the suffering and death of Christ. Our churches will be stark and barren, we will again proclaim our ancient scripture readings and prayers as we have continually done over the centuries. The wood of the cross will be processed and raised for all to see. An empty cross because Christ does not die again, he died once for all.

Suffering and loss have been prominent and constant this past year. Across the world the pandemic has been on every news medium, on everyone's minds. Fear and uncertainty have mingled with sickness and death. Significant milestones have passed without family and friends being able to gather and celebrate. So many have been unable to mourn and bury loved ones, not just directly because of COVID, but through locked

borders that have stopped people travelling. Many are stranded from their families and homelands, either unable to return or caught at home and prevented from going to their workplace or study.

In parts of the world, other natural calamities have struck. Here in Fiji, with an economy already in chaos due to locked borders, where usually thousands of tourists would visit and many locals are left unemployed, we have endured three major cyclones in the past few months. Harold, Yasa, and Ana have pounded our islands with incredible winds and heavy rain, leaving behind a path of destruction. Homes and schools have been flattened, infrastructure destroyed, vegetation battered, huge trees uprooted and most significantly crops have perished. People have observed the Lenten fast for many months now, not through fervour but of necessity, without food to put on the table.

When the cross is raised and the cantor sings 'behold the wood of the cross on which hung the Saviour of the world' let us imagine who is hanging there with our Christ. It is we who suffer and die in Christ and hang from the wood of the cross. It is we who constantly die to our sinfulness. Let us join our suffering to Christ this Good Friday, and live in the faith and hope through the promise of the resurrection.

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