



We proclaim a crucified Christ

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Weekend, 4-5 January 2020

My dear friends,

On this first weekend of the New Year, we should be focusing on the joy of families, friends and holidays. Instead for so many, the beginning of 2020 has already been marked with loss, destruction, separation and deep sadness; and it would seem there is more to come.

Our skies across Melbourne are filled with the smell and haze of the fires – a steady reminder that our neighbours, so close to us particularly in the Gippsland areas, but also in our bordering States of NSW and South Australia are in dire need. Into these communities too, have come hundreds of volunteers and service organisations who have given up their own family celebrations, and placed their lives on the line to bring help, support and relief where possible. There is something truly remarkable, and exceptionally humbling, about the spirit of our shared humanity that gives its all without question.

As individuals we may feel helpless in the short-term at this growing tragedy. Please know that the Archdiocese has reached out to Government and State services and offered its full support for what may be required. Some of our main support areas such as CatholicCare, Catholic Education Melbourne and St Vincent de Paul are looking to see what can be put in place. In this manner we leave the immediate, on-the-ground work to those so highly skilled in such situations – but remain on alert and ready to provide support, resources or facilities if called for.

For those who lived through the great heartache of the Black Saturday fires, they will know too well that the effects of such trauma will be felt for many months, and even years to come. I strongly encourage you now to direct any donations to the St Vincent de Paul Bushfire Appeal <https://donate.vinnies.org.au/appeals-vic/vinnies-nsw-bushfire-appeal-vic> to ensure that our brothers and sisters have a chance to rebuild their lives after such devastation. Your Parishes may look to direct specific collections this way.

In Matthew's Gospel this Sunday we encounter the journey of the wise men to the infant Jesus. They came from 'far away' - a hard and difficult journey with great sacrifices. They came seeking and in need, and in their encounter with Christ were changed; "...and they returned to their country by a different way." (Matt 2:1-12).

As the Magi journeyed so long ago, may we also bring our prayers to the feet of the Christ child on behalf of our brothers and sisters most in need, that at this very moment they will be kept safe and protected, and that they will find hope and renewal to their lives into the future.

Our Lady Help of Christians, patroness of Australia, protect us and pray for us.

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. A. Comensoli', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Most Reverend Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne