

## REFLECTING ON THE YEAR 2020

31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

*John 1: 1-18*

On the last day of the year 2020, the Gospel brings us back to the beginning of all time. This helps us look back to learn from our experiences of the dying year and look forward in hope. The gospel opens with the word, *'In the beginning was the Word'*. We may ask ourselves when was this *'beginning'* being referred to here? It is difficult to locate it in time because the reference is to that mysterious moment before creation began. The Word was with God, before God created the universe. We are told that everything was created through the Word, *'through him all things came to be'*. If all things came to be through the Word, then, in some way, all that exists speaks to us of God. With the worldwide pandemic we have to listen to the word God has been speaking to us in the 2020 pandemic. As we listen, we are bound to ask some very deep questions about life. As Christians the pandemic has brought us to speak about death and the things eternal. These are not the kind of things we are comfortable to think about, but, at the same time, they are deeply Catholic. As a people of faith, we need to listen and to hear what God has to say to us in this pandemic which is threatening the whole world. Perhaps it is an opportunity to take stock and to make some changes. Has God been reminding us that life is fragile and that there were some things in life that we are neglecting? I really do believe that God brings light out of darkness, even when it's a rampaging virus. Where is God in all of this? When we had the first lockdown, very often when I sat in church, I wondered what the impact would be on the people of the parish having no access to Sacraments. 'Would people come back?', I wondered. 'Would faith grow or fade?', I asked myself. Most of us, priests found ourselves jumping into the deep side of the pool called technology – a thing that was so remote to me personally. All of a sudden, we were putting together livestream Masses and started zoom meetings to connect with larger groups of people. It was, of course, not the same as the real thing but it was the best way to stay connected. Pope Francis reminded us that livestreaming Masses was a temporary necessity and not a replacement for Mass celebrated together, priest and people. A lot of people told me how nice it has been and continues to be, to attend Mass almost anywhere in the world, visiting new places and hearing fantastic homilies. Other parishioners, however, have told me how, even with live streamed Mass, it was just not the same. As much as people have enjoyed and continue to enjoy livestream Masses, whether from our church or from elsewhere, I am glad to hear from certain quarters of the parish that it isn't enough. It's good for now, but not forever. In 2020, families have been impacted financially by the virus and this has had a negative effect on parishes. Many parishes, like families, struggle to make ends meet. Priests, however, continue to do their priestly ministry. Confessions are heard, Mass is celebrated, anointing for those who are dying and counselling for people who find these times very difficult. Masks and physical distancing are a must even in church, and we wash or disinfect our hands continuously. We had a special experience of celebrating one of the Christmas Eve Masses out in the cold. People brought their own chairs and umbrellas. Livestream Masses continue. Through all this I am reminded that faith is not so easily abandoned. Parish life and faith are all the stronger in our parish. We will get through this. The Church has gone through rough times from the very beginning and I suppose

will until the end of time. But in each trial and over centuries, Christ has never left us and the Church has grown into a stronger witness of faith. He is here now, He will never leave us, and he will continue to be here with us in 2021.

A Happy and Blessed New Year to all the people of the parish!!!!