Reflections • Friday 5 June 2020 • By Bishop John Roundhill

What have you seen?

I think it is a fair comment to say that many of us have been spending more time than usual on the Internet in these last few months. I can recall times when I was told “you are spending too much time on the Internet” as an insinuation that I was not doing enough ‘real work’. Much ‘real work’ and an increasing amount of recreation time have been spent online since March, in the wake of COVID-19.

The web has become a place to read about and see the impacts of the virus. Images of PPE-wearing nurses will surely define 2020, yet it is also an image that could be from any part of the globe. The whole world has been affected by this virus – we are all in this.

So, at times what I have read and seen on the Internet has been confronting. Whether it be reports about doctors in the UK being overwhelmed by the numbers of patients, or images of empty cityscapes from almost any city in the world. Or, of course, the ubiquitous coronavirus chart with its difficult-to-tame curve.

Yet in addition to the confronting, we are also witnessing a blossoming of creative talents. This is true in the life of the Church, as anywhere else. I have seen wonderful initiatives that might have even been called ‘stunts’ in the past, including a puppet-wielding priest in Manchester teaching his congregation from his home couch and collaborative services held from rooftops, parks and pulpits that bring people together across continents. Here, too, in our Diocese there are extraordinary things going up online every week, such as well-produced Sunday worship and ministry content that makes use of platforms like Zoom, allowing for congregation input. Many of these services have elements that took all week prior to produce.

We need to care for each other ever more as restrictions ease, but expectations for online worship remain.

There is one image of this time that I hope to treasure. As cities have locked down, many businesses have struggled. One has been billboard advertising, as advertising has rushed online. So, when I drive into the city, I am now seeing new advertisements that say things like ‘Thank you nurses, frontline workers, essential workers, doctors, teachers’, etc.

It turns out these ‘thank you’ billboards are not just found in Australia. Looking online at the news, it appears that other places in the world have been putting up ‘thank you’ billboards.

Might this culture of publicly saying ‘thank you’ be something that remains once COVID-19 passes. What would our world look like if such grateful messages endure beyond this time?

We are a community of gratitude, a Eucharistic community. Might our world emerge from this time more grateful, thankful, Eucharistic.

For live-streamed or recorded Sunday worship services in our Diocese, visit the ACSQ website.
Sunday Devotions • Wednesday 10 June 2020 • By The Rev'd Stewart Perry

Sunday Devotion: 21 June 2020, Third Sunday after Pentecost

Nothing to hide

Main Readings: Genesis 21.8-21; Psalm 86.1-10, 16-17; Romans 6.1-11; Matthew 10.24-39 [Jeremiah 20.7-13; Psalm 69.7-10 (11-15) 16-19]

Supplementary Readings: Psalm 93; Romans 1.20-35; Psalm 69.7-19; Genesis 21.22-33; Matthew 10.9-23

“...for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.” (Matthew 10.26)

As one of the main speakers at a large youth camp was speaking, I noticed a small group of teens chatting amongst themselves and not paying attention. Being a responsible young adult at the time, I went over to see why they weren't listening to what I thought seemed like a very engaging and personal story. When I approached the group I asked if everything was ok…they whispered back… “Yeah, but we've heard this story before – in an email!”

It seems they'd caught out the speaker passing off someone else's story as his own. As much as this Gospel passage reminds us we can't hide anything from God, it also seems like it's pretty hard to hide something from a sceptical teenager. Jesus is calling us to be authentic, open and honest.

The fact that God knows us so intimately and completely that nothing can be hidden can sometimes be scary, particularly when we often pass ourselves off to the world as something more than we actually are. It can, however, be liberating when we realise we can just be who we are and who God has called us to be. God is used to using broken people, in fact God seems to prefer us to be that way and pretending that we are something other than we are won't fool God, and it also won't fool most people!

Rejoice in who you are and allow God to be the one who changes your story – there'll be no need for embellishment.