



# Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Suva

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January 2021 Newsletter

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Peace be with you.

TC Yasa gave us traumatic transition from 2020 to 2021. 2020 was a very challenging year with COVID-19 and TC Yasa. COVID-19 is a game changer and has changed the world and consequently how to be Church in the post COVID-19 era. With the New Year festivities gone I slowly settle into the 2021 and give myself sometime to reflect on the Church of the future.

## **Church Beyond COVID-19**

COVID-19 has challenged our theology of Church and liturgy. During the social restrictions period Catholics in Fiji continued to worship outside of the physical church and with no priest. We learned new ways celebrating the Sabbath through the Liturgy of the Word of God in families and small Christian communities. We reached out to people through online Masses. We discovered social media (Facebook) as a new tool for reaching out to people and creating a virtual community. Some communities did bible sharing through the messenger. Today we have a Sunday TV program called Katolika TV 'Faith in the World'.

The internet and social media are now considered the church's front and side door and its a big door. The internet is now the new mission field. Online writers are also making the statement that the internet and social will be important platforms for the Church. COVID-19 has definitely introduced a new way of being Church in the world.

Pope Francis asked the COVID 19 Commission to prepare the future instead of prepare for it. What should be the role of the Catholic Church as an institution in this endeavor?

How can we be Church of the future? This questioned challenged me to find a theological tool and a framework for planning for the future. I revisited my studies of the Jewish understanding of time – apocalyptic time; that time has an end, namely the coming of God's kingdom. Knowing the future helps us to prepare correctly for the future.

My research led me to a book called 'Leading from the Future' written by Mark W. Johnson and Josh Suskewicz, (Harvard Business Review Press 2020). Mark and Josh developed a strategic planning process called 'future back' planning. In 'future back' planning we define a future state and convert that vision into a strategy. This enables leaders to open the way forward—to imagine new businesses and business models for the future that can be invented and tested today.

On 15<sup>th</sup> January I was invited to the University of Fiji Roundtable meeting. They were also using a framework similar to the 'future back'. The Roundtable meeting looked at the future economy, identified the industries that will boom in post COVID-19 era and the subsequent labour market. The labour market will then determine the contribution of universities to education.

The 'future back' planning process has been used in theology, economics and academics. Therefore, it is a tool that can effectively guide the Church's mission beyond COVID-19. So, what are some pastoral realities of the future Church in Fiji? What is our vision of Church beyond COVID-19?

## **How Will COVID-19 Shape the Church's Future?**

Three issues will be part of the future Church in Fiji:

### **1. Internet and social media**

- Internet will be the 'Church's front door'. If you continue to behave like the world doesn't live online, you'll miss the very people you're trying to reach.

The internet is your new front door—not a back door—and it's a big one. The church website and, when applicable, online church, have become the front door for many people thinking about attending a gathering. In the future church, if you care about people, you'll care about digital church.

- The Church will shift from a Sunday to everyday Church through social media. Starting now, Sunday-focused churches will become every day-focused Churches, because people need to live out their faith every day. When it comes to discipleship and evangelism, every day is more important than Sunday. The Internet is the Church's new mission field

### **2. Health: Building a Healthier Future**

Although Fiji has only 56 COVID-19 cases and two deaths, health is still a serious concern. World Health Organization (WHO) 2017 Report states that noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) diabetes and cardiovascular disease are important concerns in Fiji. WHO reports that cardiovascular disease, and not diabetes, is the leading cause of death in the country.

Cardiovascular disease is more likely to develop in people: who smoke, have an unhealthy diet, are not physically active and/or misuse alcohol, people with raised blood pressure, elevated blood sugar, and overweight or obese. Health, Wellness and Mental Health will be important agenda for the Church. How does the Church bring health and wellness into its pastoral ministry?

### **3. Economic Crisis**

Fiji's N0.1 income is tourism and N0.2 is Foreign remittance. COVID-19 has affected both. Small and medium businesses have also been affected. On top of these Fiji has an 8-billion-dollar foreign debt. Fiji is heading for a big economic crisis. With economic crisis comes social problems, stealing, prostitution, child-labour, poverty, and trauma.

What will the Church in the Economic Crisis look like? How does a priest minister in an economic crisis, in poverty, and social problems? How do we respond to companies who exploit our natural resources for 'short term gains'?

During December 2020 I called together COVID-19 Think Tank Group made up of economists, specialists in the Tourist Industry, theologians and medical experts to reflect on our pastoral response to COVID-19. The Group came up with a post-COVID-19 Church vision:

*A vibrant, relevant, well-informed compassionate Church, centred in the Kingdom of God, working towards the wholistic development of a sustainable and resilient community which seeks to proactively address the challenges arising from COVID-19.*

### **The Archdiocese Pastoral Plan through lenses of COVID-19**

Because we are in a new context, we had to review the Archdiocese Pastoral Plan in light of COVID-19 and the future. The Vicar General Fr. Sulio Turagakacivi, Fr. Arthur Leger and I are conducting another final round of consultation on the Pastoral Plan. We should be able to have the Final Strategic Orientation of the Archdiocese Pastoral Plan in March and send it to parishes. The Archdiocese Commission will implement components of the pastoral plan that falls into their ministry. Parishes will also implement components relevant to the parish.

### **Chrism Mass Dates**

- West 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 5pm
- North 26<sup>th</sup> March, 5pm
- Central Eastern 30<sup>th</sup> March, 5pm

### **Pope Francis proclaims “Year of St Joseph”**

Pope Francis has declared 2021 to be a special ‘Year of St. Joseph’. In his Apostolic Letter “*Patris corde*” (“With a Father’s Heart”), Pope Francis states that the Year of St. Joseph will also celebrate the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. The “Year of Saint Joseph” began from 8 December 2020, to 8 December 2021.

The Holy Father wrote *Patris corde* against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, which, he says, has helped us see more clearly the importance of “ordinary” people who, though far from the limelight, exercise patience and offer hope every day. In this, they resemble Saint Joseph, “the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence,” who nonetheless played “an incomparable role in the history of salvation.”

### **Prayer to St Joseph**

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,*

*Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

*To you God entrusted his only Son;*

*in you Mary placed her trust;  
with you Christ became man.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us too,  
show yourself a father  
and guide us in the path of life.*

*Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage,  
and defend us from every evil. Amen.*

## **How to Celebrate the Year of St. Joseph**

I will be calling the Liturgy Commission to prepare for diocesan events and programs to celebrate the Year of St. Joseph. Below are some online resources that you can use for your parish, small Christian community and family celebrations.

Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter, Patris Corde:

[http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap\\_20201208\\_patris-corde.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html)

A summary of Patris Corde in Vatican News Website

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-12/pope-francis-proclaims-year-of-st-joseph.html>

Resources for celebrating the Year of St Joseph for individuals, families and parishes:

<https://yearofstjoseph.org/celebrate/>

12 Ways to honor St. Joseph this March

<https://aleteia.org/2020/03/01/12-ways-to-honor-st-joseph-this-march/>

I take this time to thank you for your support and prayers. Thank you for your generous donations towards the TC Yasa Appeal.

May God bless the good work he began in you.

**Have a graced Lent Season.**

Yours sincerely in Christ,



+PeterLoy Chong

