



Catholic Archdiocese of
Canberra and Goulburn

Media Statement | Easter Message 2016

A TALE OF “TWO CITIES” – CANBERRA AND THE HUMAN HEART

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we prepare to celebrate the Easter season, I would like to reflect on how life presents itself to us on various levels. Recently here in Canberra, commentators wrote that “Canberra has become a tale of two cities”. On one level, Canberra is an affluent city of great natural beauty, however, on another level, there is a dark underside to our beloved city.

Specifically, housing here has become largely unaffordable for up to 50% of us who earn \$100,000 or less. About 20,000 households in the ACT face housing stress. Women escaping domestic violence and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are hardest hit. Too many people find themselves homeless in this fair city. There has been a 70% rise in homelessness in the ACT since the 2011 census. This is the dark side we often do not see.

The Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn is trying to help those who live in this shadow world in our local community. Last year **CatholicCare** assisted over 10,000 individuals and families with emergency accommodation and assistance to find long term accommodation. The **St Vincent de Paul Society (Vinnies)**, has helped 12,250 people through its Night Patrol and temporary accommodation. Last year over 26,000 phone calls for practical emergency assistance were received by St Vincent de Paul Society; an increase of over 40% from the year before.

The lights and shadows of life in Canberra can be symbolic of our own personal lives too.

We all complain about the speed of our lives. It has a suffocating effect on going deeper in our relationship with God. But living a superficial life is not an option. There is also the fear factor. If we go deeper into our motivations and values, will we like what we may find? But just as we cannot live complacently in a city of such light and dark, neither can we live our lives in inner conflict.

EASTER presents us with opportunities to move from inner conflict to inner peace and hope.

For Christians, the hope is that the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ can truly make sense of our own sufferings and joys. This requires some quiet time to ponder at depth on our lives.

In reflecting, together with the mind and heart of Jesus, we can find hope. We find shelter in the storms of everyday life. We are not alone. Jesus has gone before us. He has nailed our darkness to the Cross at Calvary. His mercy has freed us from our dark inner conflicts in his Resurrection.

At Easter, living in the life of Jesus is a life healed and at peace.

By finding a home in the heart of Jesus ourselves, we are given great motivation to help truly, for example, the homelessness of Canberra. We can be the light in the darkness for so many in our fair city this Easter.

I extend a warm welcome to all to attend our Churches over this Holy Week. I wish you all a very happy and Holy Easter.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse
Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn