

Today's second reading is Paul's hymn of praise that witnesses to God's unfathomable riches, wisdom and counsel, revealed in his sending his Son and the Holy Spirit to redeem and renew his wayward creation which has comprised the subject matter of the first eleven chapters of Paul's *Letter to the Romans*, now brought to a conclusion with this prayer. Over the following three Sundays we will continue with readings from the final chapters of Paul's letter that deal with some ethical matters that Paul wanted to raise with the Christian community in Rome.

The hymn's last line, "From him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen." might sound familiar as it has shaped the doxology or hymn of praise of the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass, "Through him, and with him, and in him, O God almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, forever and ever. Amen." Thus, in a way Paul's prayer has become with each celebration of the Eucharist our prayer.

We meditate on Paul's prayer in a time of pandemic. In last Saturday's *Herald Sun* I read the account of Tina Dinh's experience of falling ill with Covid 19: "I just remember lying there being scared, really scared. I was completely alone and I didn't understand what was happening to me. ... I could not breathe. The only thing I looked forward to every day ... they would ... hold my hand. That was the only contact ... and the only reminder that you are still here."

The young Vietnamese woman's experience reminded me of an incident in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus and his disciples were on the Sea of Galilee. A mighty storm sprang up and even a seasoned fisherman such as Peter became fearful and approached Jesus who was asleep in the boat. "Lord save us we are perishing." But Jesus questioned Peter and the others, almost certainly taking Peter by surprise, "Why are you afraid?" It seems Jesus was inviting them to trust him in the midst of the storm. It was one thing to trust him *to still the storm*. It was another to trust him *in the storm*. And that explains Jesus' response to Peter's plea.

It is in the storms that threaten to overwhelm our lives that Jesus invites us to trust in him and so be able to pray with Paul, "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord?'"

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