



Week two: For a time such as this

Rev Dr Jenny Tymms

We read in the daily news that the “curve is flattening” and we overhear ourselves thinking how glad we are to be living in Australia at this time, “despite everything”. Yet each night we see the statistics from around the world. We know that behind these numbers and curves on the graph are countless individual stories of death, grief and loss; stories of exhaustion and despair.

How can we savour, without a sense of guilt, the big and small joys that continue to unfold in our own daily lives when we know that there are so many other people still suffering?

One way is to remember what “mercy” means. When we pray with the psalmist and in our Service of Communion, “Lord, have mercy”, we are interceding for the whole, hurting world and not just for ourselves. Everyone is gathered into the wide embrace and mutuality of this prayer.

Our prayer for mercy is our longing for love and forgiveness, for compassion and blessing. It is another word for the God we have come to know in Christ. It has its earliest origins in the Etruscan *merc* and is linked to an understanding of the deep value of mutual exchange. Our longing for mercy unites us with others and when we pray, “Have mercy on us, O God”, we are praying for God’s compassionate, forgiving, all-embracing love and presence to be felt, not only by us, but by those who are dying, anxious or in despair.

Yet “mercy” is also connected in its origins to the French word *merci* which means “thank you”. In the very same breath and with the very same word, we turn to God with our grateful songs of thanks and praise for all that God has done and continues to do for us. We need only to look at the Psalms to see how closely these two movements of prayer are held together.

So, in this Easter season, let us pray “mercy”. Let us pray *Merci*. Two heart-felt prayers hand-in-hand.