

Rising from the dead.

Bishop Peter shares his Easter reflection.

MY children are now aged 14 and 12 and, as a result of much improved telecommunication and because of world events in their life time, they seem more aware of the transitory nature of life than I and my peers were at their age.

They live in the world of massive terror attacks at the heart of western civilisation. They have heard of terrible bushfires. Theirs is the world of massive earthquakes followed by tsunamis in Asia sweeping thousands to their death. In their lifetime Australian troops have served in two theatres of war. By the time I was in upper primary school Australia had pulled out of Vietnam. When disaster struck such as Cyclone Tracey or a ship colliding with the Tasman Bridge it was reported differently. Yet in every generation people have been struck by personal tragedy when family or friends grow ill or suffer in an accident.

Just recently I watched the film *The Bucket List* again. It tells the story of two men battling cancer who make a list of things they are going to do before they 'kick the bucket'. They create a list which involves some exhilaration and some hedonism. It is also a list in which reconciliation and true humanity play a significant part. One of the characters tells how when he was in college a lecturer asked them to make such a list. When I was studying pastoral care at theological college the class members were asked to write our own obituaries. The theme of these exercises is simple – in the face of dying you can choose the quality of your living.

Death is a central theme for Christians. We acknowledge that we cannot escape death and that we must come to terms with it. But, we do not do this without hope or purpose, for resurrection is also a central theme for Christians.

We believe that as Jesus Christ died and rose again so we too will die and rise again. As he suffered so he is with us in our suffering. As he lives again so will we live again. In the face of the mystery of death we choose a quality of kingdom living which is fashioned around living as a disciple of Jesus. The theme of our bucket list is simple – to do and be what Jesus wants us to do and be.

As people of Easter we are shaped by the reality that death is not the end but the gateway to eternal life. We have confidence in the promises that God has made to us in Jesus. We have been offered the great gift of hope which infuses our thinking and shapes our living.

Our churches are called Sunday by Sunday to echo the joy of the Day of Resurrection. To find in Christ our crucified and risen Saviour “a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope and the assurance of sin forgiven.”

This Easter faith that we have received is not a treasure that we store up for ourselves. Unlike silver or gold the more we speak of it the more it seems to grow. My prayer this Easter is that the people of the Diocese may happily speak of their Easter hope with their children and grandchildren, friends and relatives. Death is a reality for us but so is the promise of the world to come.

+Peter