



*For all things give thanks.*

1 THESS 5:18

BGM:lt/293

3 January 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters

### **Bushfire Emergency Response**

I write these words at a time when many within your communities have lost so much and many grieve the loss of friends and family. There are really no words that can be said that can take away the pain or the loss that you are suffering at this time, but they are all that I have for you at this moment.

People will ask, "Where is God in all that has taken place?" The answer is simply in those who have stood with you in fighting the fires, who stand alongside you in your grief, and those who provide support where and when it is needed. Those emergency service workers who have worked so hard can only be seen as heroic in their efforts, and courageous in their putting their own lives on the line, and for that we can only be grateful.

The future will not be easy, but as many people have said in the media, "communities stick together and are there for one another." This is the hope and the spirit that will lead your communities forward into the future. There is a powerful prayer that is prayed often in the liturgy, "Lord, for your faithful people, life is changed, not ended." This is a true recognition of what the future will be for you: it will be changed and different. It may not seem like this at the moment, but I hope and pray it will be for all you who have suffered such great loss.

I had hoped that I may have been able to be with you this weekend, but circumstances and advice from those who are responsible have recommended that I wait for a week before coming down to be with you. Please be assured that you are being held in prayer by me and so many people throughout the diocese and beyond.

As we move into another day of catastrophic conditions I pray for you and with you for the safety of everyone who is affected. I pray that we can all care for each other and stand by each other in this particular time of need.

I place these coming days and our circumstances in the hands of our loving God through the intercession of our Australian saint, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop: pray for us and our parched country. May God pour on us the rain we need.

Yours in Christ

Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD  
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

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