

There was a time when nearly every hotel and motel room in Australia had a bible in the bedside drawer. It wasn't that long ago either. I doubt whether you would find too many bibles there today, and perhaps in a multicultural society with a mix of religious beliefs, it isn't appropriate anymore.

However, even the most ardent atheist would acknowledge that there are good, and timeless, messages in the bible, and that it's hard to find fault in a man who stood up for the downtrodden and turned upside down many of the social norms of the day.

This shift away from religion is symptomatic of a society where materialism and instant gratification are the dominant forces and where there is little space for deep reflection and contemplation.

And yet at Easter, it's almost like there is a truce whereby those of little or no faith, and those of faith, acknowledge that the image of Jesus dying on the cross is a symbol of love and hope to which we can all relate.

While there might be a few more sporting events held and some venues open on Good Friday, we still see thousands of people turning up to worship at the Stations of the Cross in the morning or Passion of Christ at 3pm. Similarly, many non-practising Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday.

While numbers are not everything, the fact that we come together to focus on Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection highlights the enduring nature of the Easter story.

It also demonstrates our deep yearning for meaning in our lives, a meaning that doesn't come from material possessions or affluent lifestyles but from the promise of eternal life that God gave us through the death of his son.

With all the hatred, bitterness and sadness in the world today, we could be forgiven for feeling overwhelmed and disillusioned. The Lord asks us not to turn our backs on that but to transform it by allowing the beauty of our lives and our love of Christ to reshape the world in which we live.

We see this acted out very clearly at times of tragedy when individuals and communities rise above adversity to express their solidarity and demonstrate compassion.

We have much to learn from Jesus as we go through life and every Easter we have the opportunity to reflect on his supreme act of love and salvation – his crucifixion - which led to his rising from the dead and being gloriously present among us.

We learn from Jesus the meaning of real power. We learn from Jesus the nature of true love. We learn from Jesus that real life comes from serving others.

There may not be bibles in hotel rooms anymore but the word of God and the teachings of Jesus will remain as relevant as ever if we live out our faith authentically every day of our lives.

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