

21 April 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to another weekly newsletter. I hope this finds you all at peace with our current situation.

I was very encouraged by our Holy Communion service last weekend – for those who were able to tune in, we could sing some hymns and follow the service on the screen.

Correspondence received from the Diocese this week has been mainly from the Bishop to clergy. Edith and I had to complete some forms in order for the Diocese to apply for financial assistance under the Job-Keeper arrangements. Hopefully there was an oversight by the government because clergy were not included in the definition of employee under the new regulations. The General Synod Office is following this matter up with the Federal Government.

I continue to be thankful to Lynn for producing, and Marea and Axel who help her deliver, the Pew Sheet each week to those who are not on email. If any of you are able to view our daily transmissions of Morning and Evening Prayer or Mass on Sunday mornings and can share these with those who don't have computers or internet access, could I encourage you to do so please. It is a great way of building community.

I have spoken with the Activities Officer at Opal Raymond Terrace Gardens – Oban – about live-streaming a service to some of the residents. The Activities Officer was open to the idea and will get back to me shortly.

Parish Council met for the first time during this COVID-19 pandemic. Those who were able to be a part of it used Zoom. The meeting lasted for only ½ and hour and we will be meeting again on Wednesday 6 May to receive more detailed reports and to talk about how we move forward when we are allowed to use St John's and the Parish Ministry Centre again. Having a meeting like we did was certainly a different experience; but one I think to which in the short term we will need to get accustomed. (Sorry for sounding like Winston Churchill but I can hear my school-teacher father and godmother saying: "Don't end your sentence with a preposition!"). We are all learning to do things in a different way. Please pray for your wardens and Parish Council as we carry out this important work in these changed circumstances.

In my sermon on Easter Day I said:

"On Good Friday, I spoke of the importance of the Cross – and rightly so. But we must not take up residence at Calvary. JESUS not only died in our place to remove and pay the price for our lifetime of sin, but He overcame death by rising victoriously on the third day – which we call Easter Day."

In the Gospel of Luke, it says this at 24:46-47 –

⁴⁶and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

North American Pastor, author and theologian David Jeremiah has reflected on this passage in this way:

"History is replete with those who have had delusions of grandeur about themselves. Some have been willing to die for their cause. But, like all men, they were defeated by death. If we dug up their graves, we'd find their dead bodies. BUT THAT IS WHAT MAKES JESUS UNIQUE. He predicted His death, predicted His burial, and prophesied that one day He would come out of the grave victorious over death. Three days after His death, He did just that.

The Scriptures recorded it. All who have tried to disprove it have been defeated. Scientists, determined to destroy the Christian faith, have been unable, and many sceptics and atheists have been brought to faith after studying the death and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST. It is one of the most thoroughly documented events in the world's history.

Through His death we are redeemed; and through His blood our sin atoned – [made good] – but all of that is meaningless if He did not come out of the grave. CHRIST’s resurrection validated what He did on the cross.”

I had the privilege during the week of interring Beryl Ingham’s ashes at Raymond Terrace cemetery. Beryl was born to eternal life – or in the words of her family “she grew her wings” on 23 July 2019.

If you would like to explore what’s available in studying the bible more or praying more, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or by text message – 0401 061 789, Facebook Messenger, or email – frsteve@bigpond.com

May GOD richly bless you as you journey with Him this week.

Fr Steve