

13 May 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to our latest weekly newsletter.

I am thankful to Susanna, Marea & Lorraine for the music, flowers, and prayers respectively for Mass on Sunday. It is good to be able to sing praises to GOD when we can. We will not be able to sing hymns because of possible health regulations when we return to St John's.

We had a Zoom meeting with Bishop Peter on Wednesday. As we have mentioned before, there is much to learn and to consider before we can return to having services together at St John's. Apart from the regular cleaning which must occur before and after every meeting, we need to keep records for every group entering our building – name, address, telephone number and email address if applicable so that if anyone tests positive to the COVID-19 virus we can communicate with all who may have had contact with them. There will be alcohol-based hand sanitiser at every entrance to our building and people will be encouraged to regularly wash their hands with soap and water. Holy Communion will still be in one kind – bread – only until further notice. The Bishop has stated that not even single-use individual cups may be used. In order to return to worship at St John's, we will have to make application to Bishop Peter in each of stages 1,2 and 3 – coinciding with stages 1,2 and 3 of the NSW Government's regulations.

On Monday we had a requiem funeral at St John's for a lady from Lemon Tree Passage who died. The Social Distancing Rules and maximum number of people in the congregation had to be observed both at the Church and at the Sandgate Cemetery – a vastly different experience. From the perspective of being your Parish Priest, it felt good to be standing behind the altar again presiding for the Eucharist.

As you probably all know, visiting restrictions have been eased – where Home Communion with the bread only is now possible – but care must still be taken with physical distancing rules still in place. We are also required to keep extensive records concerning each visit

For those who may be interested, I would like to investigate the possibility of starting up some Zoom Bible Study Groups. I have interest shown by a small group of people and we should be able to get at least one started in the next couple of weeks. Zoom is becoming more widely used, Zoom Bible Study groups have been trialled in other parishes and seems to be working well. A connection to the NBN is important and I can see that the use of such technology as part of the ministries we offer going forward will become necessary. When current restrictions are either eased or removed, I can see daily live-streaming of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer and at least 1 Holy Communion Service through the week still making up our "suite" of services being offered.

North American Theologian and Pastor David Jeremiah, in his book: *Morning and Evening Devotions*, looked at Matthew 10: 29 and 31 – *"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will Do not fear, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."*

GOD is the God of the individual. He is the GOD who would spare Sodom if someone there could demonstrate faith. When the destruction came, He got His people out because of His love for the individual. He was the one who saw Nathanael, sitting under a fig tree, and later talked to him one-on-one. He's the one who cares about Cornelius, who was praying by the sea. He's the one who sent two messengers to Rahab so that she could know what to do before the judgement came. **GOD KNOWS WHO YOU ARE!** He sees you in the massive crowd on this over-populated globe! He knows you; He loves you, and He cares. The same GOD who is the God of patience is the GOD of passion for the individual. He is the only one who can take us as we are and not only keep us from judgement but also lift us up out of the mire and put our feet upon the Rock. He'll give us all we need to become all He ever wanted us to be.

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

If you are connected to the internet, I encourage you to visit our parish website and have a look around. The internet address is:

<http://www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org>

Prayer points for this week:

- Our Bishops and Diocesan staff who are working to get information to parishes on how we should structure ourselves as we gradually come out of lockdown
- People who have been diagnosed with COVID-19
- Families physically separated internationally due to this pandemic
- People who are working on the front-line such as doctors, hospital and aged-care staff, nurses, pharmacists, police, fire fighters, emergency service personnel, grocery store employees, retail workers and truck drivers
- People who have become unemployed because of COVID-19
- People who are struggling because of the isolation of having to live in lockdown
- People who are on our parish prayer list and those who mourn

Thank you for continuing to support our parish financially. It is important that we all continue to support the Church through our giving. If you have internet access, you might like to consider making a direct deposit into our parish account. Thank you to those who already use this method. The parish account details are as follows:

BSB 705-077 and the Account Number is 00041040 – and our account is with the Anglican Savings and Development Fund. If you don't have internet access or prefer not to give electronically, give our Treasurer Edith a call and she can work with you on the best way to do this.

If you would prefer to make a **DONATION**, it may be done as follows:

At the top of the webpage there are 7 headings – the first of which is Church. If you click on Church, another menu appears. The 7th topic on this menu is DONATE. If you click on that, there are some steps to follow on that page in order to donate.

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

Fr Steve