

7 July 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to our latest weekly newsletter.

I am thankful to Susanna Denham, Heather Buckingham and Don Denham for the music, flowers, and the intercessions respectively for Mass at the weekend. Thanks also to Lynn Mulley who continues faithfully in her ministry of giving us a Pew Sheet every week. Services at St John's this week will be as follows:

Holy Communion

- Saturday at 6pm – **11 July 2020**
- Sunday at 9am – **12 July 2020** – livestreamed
- Wednesday at 9am – **15 July 2020**
- Morning Prayer – livestreamed daily at 8am – Tuesday to Saturday
- Evening Prayer – livestreamed daily at 5pm – Tuesday to Saturday

With the livestreaming of Morning and Evening Prayer, there is a Mobile Phone app available for download called "Epray". It is free and has the service and readings all in one neat package. If you would like to join us for these services, I encourage you to download this particular app. For i-phones it is from the app store and for android devices, from the Google Play Store.

This week has been a quieter week – with some time to begin catching up on the paperwork and emails.

Claire Bell and I started a Grief Awareness Course called "Seasons of Grief" at the Community Centre in Woodberry back in March. It was to go for 4 weeks and we were only able to attend 2 sessions when Lockdown occurred. We have been contacted by the co-ordinator of the course and it is to re-start at the end of this month – in a bigger room that allows for appropriate social-distancing. We are looking at starting a Grief Support Group for those who may be interested later in the year.

Under the heading "**The Compassion of GOD**", I was directed to Psalm 71:6 – "By You I have been upheld from birth, You are He who took me out of my mother's womb."

We have the theology for prosperity down pat, but sooner or later our prosperity will give way to adversity. If we don't have our theology fine-tuned for that part of our lives, we won't do well. Unexpected, unannounced, uncharted, unplanned – adversity comes to everyone.

Every believer should be able to review the compassion of GOD. Stop and think about all the paths GOD has led us down like a shepherd throughout our spiritual lives. GOD has been faithful to us! Is there any reason we have to doubt His faithfulness now? As the psalmist says, from our mother's womb GOD took us, and He has upheld us from our birth.

Even if we have been a believer for only a matter of days or weeks, the grace of GOD has brought us life and health and strength. GOD's past faithfulness and compassion toward us is a heritage upon which we build our faith in the future.

[David Jeremiah – *Morning and Evening Devotions* – Thomas Nelson Publishers]

I continue to encourage you to consider a **Gratitude Journal**. I have been using one since the middle of May. All I do each day is to record **THREE** things for which I am thankful. You can always record more but 3 is the suggestion. By doing this exercise each day, we build up within ourselves an "attitude of gratitude". Why not give it a go?

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](mailto:frsteve@bigpond.com)

We are looking to re-open our Parish Pantry ministry on Monday mornings. As Heather Buckingham has advised us in last week's Pew Sheet:

"We have been given permission by the Diocese to reopen our Parish Pantry with the following conditions in place. **1. We must follow all Social Distancing (and personal hygiene) Requirements. 2. Any volunteers who are over 70 years of age or have underlying Medical Conditions are required by NSW Health to collect a form from St. John's and obtain Medical Clearance from their G.P.** If this causes any difficulties, please talk to Fr. Steve or Heather Buckingham. Until this happens, we unfortunately cannot reopen Parish Pantry and resume our Emergency Food Programme."

There are some of our volunteers who are unable to continue for the moment with Parish Pantry. If you have never been a part of the Pantry ministry, would you pray about it and consider it please? It is an important ministry of our parish in its connections with the wider Raymond Terrace community.

Like everything in a “COVID-19 world” there is usually a form to be filled out – partly a cynical response but overall a true statement. This one is called “Anglican Diocese of Newcastle **Health and Medical Declaration Form – Volunteer Role During COVID-19.**” It is our responsibility as Church to maintain a safe environment and this is a part of this responsibility.

We are beginning to receive enquiries concerning baptisms. We are due to have our first one in 2 Sundays time and another two in the second half of August. The biggest challenge for the families is to keep the maximum number of guests within the social distancing rules.

If you are connected to the internet, I continue to 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.
- Peace within countries where there is unrest and strife
- Respect for all people
- People who have become unemployed because of COVID-19
- The people of Victoria as they enter another extended period of 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.

Under the heading of “**The Garden of our Heart**” the bible in the Song of Songs tells us “My angry brothers quarrelled with me and appointed me guardian of their ministry vineyards, **yet I've not tended my vineyard within.**” *Song of Songs 1:6*

Nothing matters more to JESUS than the condition of our hearts. Our lives are like a vineyard; a precious garden where He meets with us to share secrets, stories, and love. Garden walks – these moments of devotion, worship, prayer, and simply resting in His presence – aren't only enjoyable, but they are a vital part of our relationship with the LORD. Taking care of our vineyard means nurturing our personal communion with GOD.

Weeds of sin, distraction, busyness, and lukewarm affection can quickly overtake the garden of our souls. We need to tend the fires of passion that burn within and never let them grow dim. When we feel the gentle tug of the Holy Spirit, we mustn't ignore it. We need to delight in the LORD and nourish and protect our relationship with Him. Nothing is more beautiful than spending time with Him!

*JESUS, meet with me in our secret garden. I turn my heart to you. Speak to me, lead me, hold me, and laugh with me. Throughout my day, let my thoughts continually land on You. Help me to keep my heart soft and pliable in Your hands, so you can mould me into the person You have called me to be. I want to break away from everything that hinders my relationship with you. AMEN*

[Taken from *The Divine Romance*– 365 Days Meditating on the Song of Songs]

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

Fr Steve