

30 October 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to our latest weekly newsletter.

I am thankful to all who assisted Fr Chris and Fr George during the 2 weeks Marea and I were away. Services at St John's coming up will be as follows:

Holy Communion

- Saturday at 6pm – **31 October 2020**
- Sunday at 9am – **1 November 2020**
- Wednesday at 9am – **4 November 2020**
- Morning Prayer – livestreamed daily at 8am – Tuesday to Saturday
- Evening Prayer – livestreamed daily at 5pm – Tuesday to Saturday

I begin this week's newsletter with the sad news of the passing of Garry Roth. Garry has been unwell for quite a while. I visited Julie and Garry on Saturday afternoon and gave Garry last rites. He died peacefully on Thursday Morning. As you know, Garry has had a faithful and generous involvement with St John's for many years and will be greatly missed. It is too early to advise everyone of the date of the funeral as we don't yet know the date ourselves. Please keep Julie and their family surrounded in prayer.

I would like to hold a Parish Meeting to discuss how we will move into the future and to talk about the updated COVID-19 requirements. I am looking at holding this on Sunday 22 November 2020 at 10:30am following the 9am service. As most of you may have come to realise, I AM NOT a fan of long meetings – so, if it is not over within an hour, I will be disappointed

There are moves afoot concerning the return of singing in Church. Small singing groups – a maximum of 5 – are permitted in Church under **very strict conditions**. Congregational singing is still NOT PERMITTED but a small group of up to 5 people may sing together in a large, well-ventilated (preferably outdoor) area if:

- All singers face forwards and not towards each other
- All singers have physical distancing of 1.5 metres between each other and 5 metres from all other people including the congregation and a conductor.

Musical groups should rehearse and perform outdoors or in large, well-ventilated indoor spaces. The Diocesan staff are in the process of updating all relevant COVID-19 planning documents – which are part of our legal requirement to be a COVID Safe place. **Application needs to be made and permission needs to be given** for rehearsals and public worship to have singing in strict accordance with these guidelines. So, things are starting to move – but not too quickly.

Bishop Peter has issued an invitation to people in the Diocese to make submissions in relation to the administration of Holy Communion. Given the ongoing nature of the Global COVID pandemic, it is his intention, prior to Advent, to release some revised guidance about the administration of the Holy Communion in the Diocese. He is reviewing the way we might resume the administration of wine in the service of Holy Communion either with intinction of the bread in the wine or the use of individual cups or both. There have been studies overseas and within Australia concerning this which will guide Bishop Peter in his decision-making process. Watch this space!

Under the heading "**Footprints**", I was directed to Isaiah 43:5 – "*Fear not, for I am with you.*"

While stranded on a deserted island, Daniel Defoe's character Robinson Crusoe salvaged a Bible from the shipwreck, read it, and was converted. He grew into a devout Christian. His life, though missing human companionship, was peaceful and prayerful.

But one day he found a footprint in the sand and realised he wasn't alone. Knowing the cannibalism of the local tribes, he grew into a fearful man, looking over his shoulder with every step. He no longer slept peacefully. He altered his habits. He visualised himself being captured and devoured. "That former confidence in GOD – now vanished, as if He that had fed the miracle hitherto could not preserve, by His power, the provision which He had made for me by His goodness."

Crusoe had to go back to his Bible, repent of anxiety, and be strengthened again in his faith. He eventually learned the great lesson of faltering Christians: the things we most fear are likely, in the providence of GOD, to be most used for our good. In the end, those footprints led to his deliverance.

GOD has planned our future from eternity past and guaranteed it with His promises. We can trust Him.

[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)

**Prayer points for this week:**

- A continued and sustained reduction in the spread of the coronavirus around our nation.
- May we all continue to diligently obey the directions of the health department and use caution in all our dealings
- Peace between and within countries in our world and increasing respect for and between people
- Children to be brought for baptism and their families
- For politicians and their advisors, be guided to get the appropriate balance between Public Health needs and the needs of the economy
- Those who travel on our roads
- **People who are on our parish prayer list and those who mourn**

Under the heading: “**Holy Desire**”, I was directed to Song of Songs 5:16 – “*If you ask me why I love him so, O brides-to-be, it’s because there is none like him to me. **Everything about him fills me with holy desire!** And now he is my beloved – my friend forever.*”

The more time we spend with the LORD, the greater our desire for Him. He satisfies the deepest hunger of our souls – yet inflames our beings with longing too profound for words. It’s almost impossible to voice what we sense when He is near. Holy desire will propel us into a life of encounters with His love. His ways are trustworthy, and His plans for our lives are good. As we become fully convinced of this, it will change our prayer lives. No longer will we cry out with prayers that are diluted with doubt. Instead, peace will settle us, and we’ll be more in tune with His Spirit. Faith will explode inside of us as matters that once stole our affection become insignificant compared to His glory. Let holy desire for Him – and nothing more – overcome everything else – and we will discover a life of peace and joy unlike anything we’ve ever known.

*LORD, I lay every burden and distracting thought at your feet. Fill me with holy desire to know You more. Fan away the shadows of commotion inside my head, which disrupt our connection. When we are near, nothing else matters. Let me become so aware of Your nearness that I become tethered to Your heart at all times. Amen*

The Divine Romance – 365 Days meditating on the Song of Songs – Brian Simmons and Gretchen Rodriguez

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

Fr Steve