

# Rector's Letter

7 March 2021

The time for the Parish Mission is drawing close. The term “mission” can have different meanings in the context that it is used. The St. John the Evangelist, Gordon Parish Mission, where Bishop Michael is the Missioner, is a style of mission for the further edification and equipping of those within the faith.

In short, it is designed for all of us to take further steps in Christian maturity. The other style of mission is evangelistic, which has the aim of reaching those who have little or no understanding of Christ and helping them turn to God. Both styles of mission complement each other. Bishop Michael is looking forward to coming and serving as the Parish Missioner. I know he enjoys the fellowship and sharing with members of St. John's as he conducts the Parish Mission. God has been particularly good and gracious to St. John's by bring Bishop Michael into its community. I am personally impressed that he is a gifted communicator and a good scholar.

This year, we are attempting to include in the Parish Mission small groups. I am looking for people to host a small group at your home, where Bishop Michael will come and share with you and your invited guests. Some suggestions you might wish to consider are: inviting others to your home for morning or afternoon tea; if you are a bit more adventurous, you might invite guests for a lunch or the evening meal; the really adventurous could invite friends for breakfast. Whatever you do would then flow into Bishop Michael's teaching, which will be edifying. If you would like to host such as group, could you please let me know ASAP by contacting the parish office. If you are not in a position to host such an event, but would like to attend, could you also let the parish office know. Thank you.

If COVID-safe protocols permit, there will also be a larger gathering in the parish hall for a more traditional Parish Mission presentation.

I can remember with great fondness my first Parish Mission, aimed at building up members of the church I attended when I was a youth worker in Gippsland. The three evening event was hosted by a neighbouring parish. Melinda and I accompanied our then-Rector to the event. God was good to the people of that parish, and that Parish Mission became a pivotal and rewarding time for the life of the people in that parish.

I would ask you to pray for Bishop Michael as he prepares. Pray for the parish of St. John's as we embrace again the opportunity to be edified in our faith. Give thanks to God for this opportunity and quietly ask God, "Should I be a host for this parish mission?"

St. John the Evangelist, Gordon is both a collective church as at the same time being a village church. It is obvious that many people travel to attend Sunday services and participate in the life of the church. It is also obvious that local people still see the importance of St. John's, attending and supporting and embracing St. John's as "their" church. What I have just shared to some of you may be very obvious. This reality does affect how we fellowship with each other and the great importance of Christian fellowship. God in His wisdom has called you and everyone else to attend St. John's. God has called you to make this your spiritual home.

There is no doubt the pandemic has strained the fellowship between members of St. John's. For some, Christian fellowship has, at worst, been fractured or, at least, been placed on hold. It is our collective responsibility to start reaching out to those who cannot attend church because of health concerns.

As the vaccine begins to be rolled out, I would encourage everyone to make the decision to attend Sunday services a priority. I must stress, only when you think it is safe for you to do so. Remember, God has called you to make St. John's your spiritual home, and when it is safe for you personally to return, please do so.

Last week I mentioned the whole area of NSW Health restrictions regarding singing in the church would be discussed. Singing in church services requires every congregation member of that service to wear masks. We are going to trial congregational singing, alternating between the 8:00AM and 9:30AM services.

This week, 7 March, congregational singing will be at the 9:30AM service. The 9:30AM congregation will be required to wear masks. This also means that there will be no congregational singing at the 8:00AM service and no requirement to wear masks. The following week, 14 March, we will swap around, and there will be wearing of masks and congregational singing at the 8:00AM service and no congregational singing and no masks at the 9:30AM service. You may wish to alternate each week between the two, but that is your choice.

As we have transitioned back to services in-person, that is back to some sort of normality. The rosters will require to be updated. If you would like to volunteer for the sidesmen's roster, please speak to John Brandon. If you would like to volunteer for the Bible reading roster, speak to Chris Russell.

The Op Shop sales will be returning to twice a month. They will re-establish their pattern of the second and fourth Saturdays in the month.

Thank you to all who responded, indicating you would like to assist in giving the Sanctuary a bit of loving care. You are invited to join me in cleaning the Sanctuary and various elements on Saturday, 20 March. We will commence at 8:30AM.

In all the parishes in which I have served, I used this little phrase which I believe to be true: By your attendance at church today, our worship of the LORD has been enriched. I am looking forward to when many more parishioners of St. John's will be able to attend Sunday worship.

Today's Biblical reflection is based on the BCP lectionary Psalm for this Sunday, Psalm 27:1-7.

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1-2 ESV)

The opening verses of Psalm 27 are well known. At first glance, we can all appreciate the importance of the Psalmist acknowledging the sovereignty of the LORD, who is the one true God. When you dig deeper into this text, it reveals it is the sovereign LORD who is the Psalmist's light and salvation.

The rest of Psalm 27 reveals that the term "salvation" is being used in two different ways.

One, the one who saves him out of his dilemma.

Secondly, the source of his salvation—which is linked to light which emphasises that God had rescued him, and he belongs to God. He is redeemed.

For the Psalmist, the LORD is his God, and he is the "sheep of his pasture". These opening verses have also been a great comfort to countless people down the ages. The LORD being their light and salvation assures

them nothing can stop that reality. The Apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote:

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
(Romans 8:38-39 ESV)

I do encourage you this week to continue to reflect on the sovereignty of the LORD God and how nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Can I also suggest in your reflection you may allow the reality of the sovereignty of the LORD and the love of God to further influence your prayer life.

May the LORD continue to give us all opportunities for Christian fellowship.

Father Robert H.