30th of May 2021

Trinity Sunday

## Marriage Preparation:

I have recently completed the training to be a facilitator in the marriage preparation course -Prepare/Enrich. I found the online training very helpful, and hopefully, it will be valuable in ministry. Currently, I am preparing two couples to be married at St. Johns. Please pray for this important ministry of laying a good foundation for those seeking to be married. As we all know, St. John's is such a beautiful Church Building, and I pray that this ministry will also be a further strengthening to our local community. I have not asked for permission of the couples names to allow their names published at this stage.

## Pastoral Care:

I had an informative and helpful meeting with the Pastoral Care team recently. The Pastoral Care team consist of:

1. Fr. Robert
2. Fr Ernest
3. Jennifer Lum (Jen, as a Pastoral Chaplain)
4. Cynthia Keithly, encourager and co-ordinator.

I have spoken to the members of the team individually. This meeting was the first time as a group. We looked at what had been happening before the Pandemic and the Pastoral Care during the Pandemic. There was a desire to do more, but the reality of COVID-Safe protocols hamstrung many of the efforts. As we are beginning to move into a time of vaccinations, I have encouraged the team to think of how to further develop this ministry creatively.

The Pastoral Care team have agreed to implement changes to enhance the accountability of Pastoral Care throughout the Parish. The various modifications will be monitored through regular meetings. The Pastoral team invites all of you to share as appropriate what is happening in the parishioners' lives.

Everyone has an essential role and responsibility in assisting with Pastoral Care. Unless the team receives information regarding those who require Pastoral Care, all the changes and strategies will be pointless. Anyone can contact the Parish Office or one of the team directly.

Another arm of Pastoral care is what is known as Parish Visitation. Parish Visitation strategies are to enhance fellowship as we strive to get to know each other. Parish Visitation takes time, and I will be sharing more about various initiatives in the weeks ahead.

## Scripture Teachers:

What a joy it is to see members of the Church committed to this ministry. Scripture in School is a vital ministry, which we must not take for granted. In NSW, the teaching of Scripture in Public Schools is an old Act of Parliament. Historically this Act of the State Parliament goes back to the early days of modern Australia. The teachers at the Primary Schools are not to teach Scripture, hence the importance of the team from St. Johns. Let us continue to pray for and also encourage the team who are doing this important work. Our recognition and support of the teaching of Scripture I would expect to be rightly seen as part of the mission of the Church of St. Johns.

The Scripture teachers for St John's for Gordon East Primary School are:

Natalie, Jennifer, Sarah and Angie

*O God our Heavenly Father, who is the giver of life and light: we ask you to help and inspire all who teach Scripture at Gordon East Primary School. Pour upon them the Spirit of unceasing prayer and Service; encourage them with good success; strengthen their faith and purpose when they are weary and discouraged, and fortify them with the assurance that they are fellow workers with You; through Jesus Christ our Lord.* ***Amen.***

## Thursday Communion Service:

The pattern of weekly Thursday Communion Services at 10am have been re-established in recent months. This Worship Service is open to everyone. Mid-week Services were introduced traditionally to support the local congregation further. As Society changed, mid-week Services were an option for those whose employment required them to work weekends. Sometimes the mid-week Service also became an option for those members whose extended family held many events on Sundays. One of the strengths of the mid-week Service is a generally smaller number of congregations members attending.

I know some people are rightly concerned about meeting in large groups because of COVID. I encourage you to give prayerful consideration about attending the Thursday mid-week Service at St. John's. Attending this mid-week Service may be a good step as we move into a more COVID-Safe community.

## Combined Service:

 Today we have one Service at 9am, followed by Brunch. This Combined Service is designed to honour God and give congregational members a broader opportunity for fellowship. A discussion at the young Adults Bible Study revealed that many, if not all, have never experienced such a Service. The choice of date for this Combined Service was to coincide with the 5th Sunday in the month, albeit Trinity Sunday. Trinity Sunday is a golden opportunity for the combined Service on Trinity Sunday, as our focus is on the oneness of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is great to enter into worship of the LORD, with more brothers and sisters in Christ.

## Anglican Residential Colleges:

I wish to bring to your attention the Anglican Residential Colleges: New College at the University of NSW, and St Paul's College of the University of Sydney. The third Residential College is Robert Menzies College of Macquarie University. These three Colleges have had a very successful ministry to international students. The success is in the Pastoral Care shown to their Residents. They have also had a fruitful ministry in the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus. As you are aware, because of the Pandemic, international students have not entered Australia in the same numbers as they were before Covid-19. Please continue to pray for the respective Boards of these Residential Colleges. Pray also for the staff of these colleges who face the uncertainty of stability in their employment. Please continue to pray for the success of the rollout of the vaccination program. In addition, please also pray for the re-establishing of international students allowed to study in Australia.

Robert Menzies College operates Trinity Chapel with Sunday Services for students and the local community. Robert Menzies will be holding a fundraising event on Friday, the 25th of June. Their fundraising target is $250,000. The Guest speaker for this event is Bishop Paul Barnett, a former Master of the College, 1980-1990. If you would like to know more about this event, please contact Jennifer Lum, the Parishes Pastoral Chaplain.

## Communications:

Over the next few weeks, you will notice several changes in how the Office communicates to the Parish. There still will be material sent through the post to those who do not use the email system. The Parish Website will have weekly updates. Emails will continue twice a week.

## Biblical Reflection:

The Gospel Reading for Trinity Sunday is known as the Great Commission: Matthew 28:16-20

***16****Now, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.****17****And when they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.****18****And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.****19****Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,****20****teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."* (NRSV)

Matthew closes his Gospel with Jesus commissioning His disciples to proclaim the Good News, the work that Jesus had completed. Through their proclamation of the work of Christ, others would move from the darkness into his marvellous light. I will not be spending time exegeting the Great Commission in this reflection. However, instead, I will focus on several other aspects of this last encounter the disciples had with Jesus before his ascension.

*And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.*

Some doubted. The revelation of some who doubted is honest. The modern understanding of doubt is aligned with the idea of disbelief. A fuller understanding of what the author meant by doubt would be to use the word hesitation.

Why did some witness hesitate to worship Jesus? This question a critical question to answer:

***Perhaps:***

1. They were not sure that the person they were seeing was the person who was crucified?
2. They were not sure that Jesus has risen from the dead.
3. They thought they might have been seeing a vision.

It is helpful to bear in mind that they were not alone in having difficulties in recognising the risen Lord Jesus.

1. Those on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:37,41)
2. The disciples did not recognise Jesus on the shore. (John 20:14)
3. Thomas, in his grief, refused the testimony of the other ten disciples claiming to have seen the risen Lord Jesus. (John 20:24-25)

Returning to our text from Matthew, the Great Commission: it is rightly believed that the hesitation in worshipping Jesus was not from the Eleven disciples. They had all encountered the risen Jesus. The commentaries refer to the words of the Apostle Paul to give light to who was in attendance. Paul writes that there were over 5oo witnesses (1st Corinthians 15:6). We can rightly say the evidence points to the Eleven worshipping the risen Jesus. Some of the 500 who were in attendance hesitated in their worship of the risen Lord Jesus.

***"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me***. (verse18) Jesus was stating clearly who He is. It is correct to worship Him. As he has all authority of Heaven and Earth, He has no equals. Jesus is no longer the penniless preacher, constrained by His incarnation.

Jesus is now the King of kings and Lord of lords. All authority given to Him revealed this new reality. After Jesus gives the Great Commission, He draws the disciples attention to the great promise: ***I am with you always***. (verse 20b)

 Friends, I pray that my Biblical Reflection on the 'part' of the Great Commission will be encouraging. There will be people we meet who will be hesitant about the true identity of Jesus. I encourage you to be faithful in our acknowledgement and worship of Jesus, remembering He is with us always.

Fr Robert

* The Pillar New Testament Commentary: the Gospel of Matthew. *Dr Leon Morris*