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THE ADVENTURE OF ADVENT

Greetings St Barnabas Family

Happy New Year! Or could I be saying 'Happy Epiphany' instead? All the Sundays in January have been in the season of Epiphany. This season is a bit overlooked here because it is summer, and after Christmas many people leave town for their summer holidays. Epiphany is the season focused on the visit of the Magi to see Jesus - to show that Jesus came for all, not only for the Jewish people. Epiphany is also defined as 'a sudden and surprising moment of understanding' (Oxford Dictionary). During the summer holidays and the New Year period, people sometimes take time to review the year that has been and make plans for the year ahead. I wonder what 'epiphany' or realisation has occurred in your life to make plans for the year ahead?

During my summer holiday, I read a number of books, one of which was by Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*. Richard Rohr is a Catholic priest, ordained in Kansas in 1970. He says "I was always happily Catholic, but curiously Protestant and Pentecostal. I knew early on that there were different kinds of knowing. Words divided reality between either and or, but my living experience was always both-and."

The main point of this book was to encourage seeing in a non-dualistic way. He talks about dualistic thinking - right vs wrong, conservative vs liberal, good vs evil etc. - being a limiting factor in the development of deep faith. Early faith involves ideas like 'my body and self-image are



The Reverend Cath Growcott

who I am;' 'my external behaviour is who I am;' and 'my thoughts/feelings are who I am'. He suggests that a major defeat, shock or humiliation must be suffered and passed through to get beyond these early stages of faith.

The next stages of faith involve ideas like "My deeper intuitions and felt knowledge in my body are who I am;' 'my shadow self is who I am;' and 'I am empty and powerless'. This includes what has been called 'the dark night of the soul'. Without guidance, grace and prayer it is easy to return to earlier identities.

The final stages of faith involve ideas like 'I am much more than who I thought I was' (John of the Cross calls this Luminous Darkness), 'I and the Father are one' (or as Teresa of Avila says 'One knows God in oneself, and knows oneself in God'), and "I am who I am" - fully detached from self-image and living in God's image of ourselves - which includes and loves both the good and the bad.

Fr Richard says in his introduction to the book: "All saying must be balanced by unsaying, and knowing must be humbled by unknowing. Without this balance, religion invariably becomes arrogant, exclusionary and even violent."

All light must be informed by darkness, and all success by suffering. St John of the Cross called this Luminous Darkness, St Augustine, the Paschal Mystery or the necessary Passover, and Catholics proclaim it loudly as the mystery of faith at every Eucharist. Yet it is seldom an axiom at the heart of our lives.

The early but learned pattern of dualistic thinking can get us only so far: so all religions at the more mature levels have discovered another "software" for processing the really

big questions, like death, love, infinity, suffering, and God. Many of us call this access "contemplation". It is a nondualistic way of seeing the moment. Originally the word was simply 'prayer'.

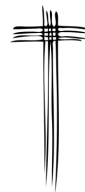
It is living in the naked now, the "sacrament of the present moment", that will teach us now to actually experience our experiences, whether good, bad, or ugly, and how to let them transform us. Words by themselves will invariably divide the moment; pure presence lets it be what it is, as it is."

This book encouraged me, in my understanding of faith, because I have often found it difficult to 'take sides' in any argument or discussion - I find it easy to see many sides of a story or an argument. In

the conversations I have, in the books I read, in the people I listen to, I often think 'wow, there is more', there is another way to view this. There is always so much more to faith and understanding that I am glad it is an ongoing journey and that we are granted a lifetime to be present and discover what we can.

For us, in the context of Epiphany, and the beginning of a new year and a new decade - what do we see that encourages us to go deeper into our faith, to be able to live more fully and more authentically as followers of Jesus? My prayer is that we will be able "To see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly and follow thee more nearly, day by day."

With love and blessings
Rev Cath



ARE YOU BEING CALLED?

We have advertised for a children's ministry team leader, for an inspired person who can lead a programme of spiritual development for our children alongside parents. It is a paid position for 4 hours a week involving planning and leading forty minutes of material for our Sunday services. The applications will be received by Rev Cath.

We are hoping to begin in Term 1 of 2020, targeting children in Primary School (5 - 10 years of age). Preschoolers will be able to attend the children's ministry if they are accompanied by a parent.

It was very interesting that at the Carol Services before Christmas 2019, that a number of parents showed a lot of interest in bringing along their youngsters to a Children's Programme at St. B.'s



BEING SHRIVEN AND GETTING READY FOR LENT!

After the exuberant celebrations of the birth of the Messiah, Lent, as a time devoted to prayer, abstaining, repenting, fasting, etc. is not quite so joyous. But just as Advent is a season of preparation for Christmas, there is also a period of preparation, for Lent - Shrovetide, the four days before Ash Wednesday.

There were, and continue to be, two acts of preparation. In old English, the term "to shrive" referred to the confessing and receiving absolution. In the "[Ecclesiastical Institutes](#),"

recorded by Theodulphus and translated by Abbot Aelfric about AD 1000, Shrovetide was "...the week immediately before Lent everyone shall go to his confessor and confess his deeds and the confessor shall so shrive him as he then may hear by his deeds what he is to do in the way of penance."

The second act of preparation was, and continues to be, to use up foods that would be abstained from during Lent, particularly meat, fish, eggs, fats (butter), sugar and milk. Originally in

the Catholic Church and a tradition carried on in the Church of England and sister Churches around the world, the easiest way of using up the last three of these was to make pancakes, and have a great feast of them.

Both acts of preparation have at their centre the aim of starting Lent with a focused mind, body and spirit - focused on what we need to change to be more Christ-like in how we live, share with, and care for each other.

THE GREAT CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS

The Great Celebration of Christmas really is a two-parter—first is Midnight Christmas Mass, or Christmas Day Mass, and then second, a foody feast-day celebration with family. In the first, there is awe, wonder and joy of God's great gift of his Son, born unto us into our family as a babe at Bethlehem. In the second we merge our spiritual sense of family with our physical sense of family. The family is where we celebrate with selfless giving and sharing.

In 2018, Bishop Tom and Kate Churchill led a team to prepare and share a St. B's family Christmas celebration at the Roseneath School Hall after the Christmas Day Mass. It was a great success and encouraged the dynamic duo to look to repeating the event in 2019. A coordinating team was set up by Bishop Tom and Kate and a great celebration of God's special gift to us all was the result. As Julianna Tocade who was one of the participants commented:

"...warmth and love made this the most Unforgettable Christmas for me. The glorious food and drinks was just gorgeous. Often we think of Christmas with worldly things like crazy buying, gifting, and loose the real reason. The Immanuel, JESUS is the reason. Wishing everyone a magical 2020."

The thanks of the whole Parish to Bishop, Tom, Kate, and the team who volunteered their time, talent and treasure to make this a special birth-day celebration.



WHERE SHOULD WE BE “BIG”?

“Editor’s Note: A number of years ago, the Parish and its leadership chose a statement, short, pithy, and truly defining: Open-Handed, Open-Hearted and Open-Minded. We have used it here at the bottom of each page of the St. B Bulletin. It is telling of what sort of community we strive to be, that is generous, welcoming and sharing, reflecting Christ’s teachings and God’s love. Interestingly, in a recent article in the [Australian Anglican Focus](#) magazine, these very ideals are discussed by the Reverend Mark Vincent of St. Paul’s Anglican Church, East Brisbane. His article is reprinted below with kind permission from the Anglican Focus editor, Michelle McDonald.



The energy given in worship, the discipling of members of the congregation, the welcome accorded to visitors, attitudes towards new ideas, the nature and frequency of outreach – these are measures of a church’s health.” The Rev’d Mark Vincent from The Parish of East Brisbane, Queensland Australia.

[International bestselling author of [Small Church Essentials: Field-Tested Principles for Leading a Healthy Congregation of under 250](#),]...Karl Vaters proposes that instead of using the term ‘church growth’, it is better to use the less catchy but more useful expression, ‘striving to increase our capacity for effective ministry.’

Most churches throughout history have been small. Really small. But that never stopped them from being effective. Whether healthy or sick, successful or failing, effective or anaemic, most churches have been, are, and will be small congregations.

Too many priests, pastors, ministers and churches labour under the false impression that their church

can’t be great until it becomes bigger. And, they become discouraged as a result. Because a church is small does not mean it is broken, lazy, visionless, ingrown, poorly led or theologically faulty. Small churches are not a problem to be fixed, a virtue to be applauded or an excuse to do shoddy work – maybe, just maybe, there are so many small churches because that’s God’s will, not our failure.

God does not check attendance, instead delighting in continued faithfulness. Putting it bluntly, we need to go beyond measuring ‘butts and bucks’, gauging ‘success’ in terms of church health and vitality, rather than merely growth in numbers. The energy given in worship, the discipling of members of the congregation, the welcome accorded to visitors, attitudes towards new ideas, the nature and frequency of outreach – these are measures of a church’s health.

A church does not need to be big to do the ‘Jesus stuff’ well and, as Karl Vaters argues in his blogs and books, the Jesus stuff is all that matters. Many of the growth principles outlined in current books and seminars apply to big churches and have limited application to small churches. Big churches tend to prioritise vision, process and programs, while small churches tend to prioritise relationships, culture and history.

Vaters proposes that instead of using the term ‘church growth’, it is better to use the less catchy but more useful expression, ‘striving to increase our capacity for effective ministry.’

How then does a small church create and nourish its capacity for effective ministry? By becoming strategic, planning for success, welcoming the world while nurturing seekers, tackling internal is-

sues, focusing on what it does well, becoming more outwardly focused (i.e. ministry not just in the church but ministry from the church) and focusing that ministry on health, not just growth through numbers.

The backbone of a strong, healthy, effective church is discipleship. When a church is making disciples and following the pastoral mandate to “equip God’s people for works of service” (Ephesians 4.11-12) a whole lot of problems get better or go away – including finance issues.

Why? Because of a simple, logical three-step reality:

- when church members are disciplined, they do more ministry.
- when church members do more ministry, the church needs less money.
- when church members do more ministry, they give more generously.

If you disciple more members, and raise up more volunteer workers and leaders, it is possible to do more ministry with less money.



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REMEMBER THESE DATES

SERVICES

Sunday Masses 08:30AM and 10:00AM

SPECIAL SERVICES

26 Feb — Ash Wednesday 7:30PM

SAINTS/FEAST DAYS

02 Feb — Presentation of Jesus at the Temple



The Azulejos (ceramic tiles) in Gilmonde, Barcelos, Portugal depicting the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple

JERUSALEM RETREAT

If you are interested in participating in the Retreat at Hiruharma (Jerusalem) out of Wanganui, planned for the weekend of 15-17 February, please feel free to contact Anthea Mullis (021-234-5907.

As many others have found, this is a wonderful opportunity to share your faith, with others be uplifted, refreshed or restored by the calm peace of God's presence in special place.



LENT FOOD COLLECTION

During Lent, we will be collecting food for the Wellington City Mission to include in their food boxes for those in need. Can you help please? Collection boxes will be placed in the church Narthex. Tinned vegetables and fruit, pasta, toiletries etc would be very welcome. Please direct any questions

to Janet Brown (022 1761633) or Jane Hill (027 9797732.) Thank you.

