



Dear Clergy, People and Friends of the Diocese of Wangaratta

## **Holy Week & Easter**

Thinking back to last year, I am very grateful to God that we were able to meet for Palm Sunday yesterday and will continue to do so with great faith, hope and trust throughout holy week. I look forward to celebrating the Chrism Mass tomorrow with all our clergy and some of our lay people. I am excited about participating in the 'Stations of the Cross' or a Tenebrae service, as well as the celebration of the institution of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday and, where possible, the 'foot-washing' ceremony. I also look forward to the adoration of the cross on Good Friday, celebrating the Easter liturgies, the lighting of the new fire and Paschal candle, the chanting of the Exultet and the first Alleluias for Easter. I am excited because, last year, we were all deeply disappointed when we could not meet for these special services and I would therefore encourage you to spend time with your family and friends at as many of the services as you can and at family gatherings. The sudden five-day circuit breaker announced a few days before Ash Wednesday, meaning we were unable to mark this day in the usual fashion, is a reminder of how quickly things can change, so let us make use of this wonderful opportunity before us.

## **Easing of Covid Restrictions:**

The easing of restrictions in Victoria almost approaches a COVID normal situation, with many of our former service arrangements able to be in place. A condition for us to meet under the one person per 2sqm density quotient is the use of the approved QR Codes for recording attendance. Do not be alarmed if your phone does not work or is not compatible, someone in the Parish will assist you. In saying all of this, please be aware that Covid is still a reality, even with the methodical rolling out of the vaccine, so please make sure that you keep safe especially over Easter. I am aware that many people are rather frustrated with some of our present DHHS advised Church restrictions, especially regarding Communion in one kind and no 'Common Cup' but I would ask that you exercise patience as we wait for advice in the coming weeks from Health Professionals. I will be talking to clergy in more detail at our annual retreat later in April about certain possibilities which are already happening in some Parishes and Dioceses. We need to work towards longevity rather than a rite of a moment. We are almost there.

## **Jobkeeper and growing challenges:**

We have been blessed to have been part of the government Jobkeeper scheme which assisted Parishes over the past 12 months. The real challenge is now before us, as we will no longer receive this. This will place our parishes under tremendous strain over the next few months. It is also true to say that some of our Parishes had been struggling even before Jobkeeper and that, in some ways, this payment was a bit of a lifeline. We cannot deny that our financial viability will cause us to re-define, re-design and re-structure our present Pastoral and Administrative arrangements. It is fair to say that we will have to look seriously into more cooperative ministry arrangements and build on new models of ministry to ensure ongoing ministry vitality within all Parishes of the Diocese. This is not a Wangaratta challenge, but a challenge for the Church throughout Australia and in many parts of the world. It is, however, more challenging for us within a regional rural context and that is why we are continuing to shape our Ministry/Mission Action Plans, which will be a focused area of discussion at the next Synod.

I would like to encourage all of us, where we are able, to share our financial resources through tithing or dedicated giving to the local Parish where we serve. Understandably we are all faced with financial



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29/03/2021

From the Bishop

constraints, but I do believe that giving is part of our responsibility to ensure the ongoing mission and outreach of the Church. I really hope that with renewed vision and energy we will be able to navigate a plan of action for all parishes within our Diocese to grow in our ministry together.

## **Parish Treasurers & other meetings:**

To discuss further financial planning and action, I am calling all Parish Treasurers to join me, the Diocesan Treasurer, the Registrar and the Accounts Manager for a strategic meeting on Saturday, 10 April from 10.30am to 1 pm at Purbrick Hall, Holy Trinity Cathedral Wangaratta. This will enable us to engage in a Diocesan approach, so that we can work collaboratively and transparently as a team. Of course, we will continue our engagement regarding our Mission Action Plans over the coming weeks, especially as I still need to have intentional conversations with 12 Parishes at their invitation before the end of April. Area Deans will be in touch with you regarding Deanery workshops that will also take place over the next few weeks.

## **Second Session of the Fortieth Synod:**

God willing and Covid permitting, our Synod is to be held from 21-22 May. The Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia and Archbishop and Metropolitan of Adelaide, The Most Rev'd Geoff Smith will be our guest for the weekend. The Synod Eucharists over the past few years have been mainly attended by Synod Representatives, but I would like to extend an invitation to all in our Diocese to this Eucharist, so that many can meet the Primate and enjoy good food and fellowship following the event. More details will be sent through later, but I ask for your prayers as we prepare for our Synod, especially for the process of developing of our Mission/Ministry Action plans that will be a key focus for discussion and interaction.

## **Gardening Party at Bishop's Lodge:**

On 16 February we moved to the Bishop's Lodge in Cusack Street, our fifth move in six years. A month later, within Covid restrictions, thirteen people from a few parishes in the Diocese joined us for a Gardening Party to start shaping the Lodge Gardens, which proved to be a great success. The day included a bit of gardening and as always good food - three meals within 4 hours. Now that we can have up to 100 people at a private residence, we would like to extend an invitation to any who would like to, including family and friends, to join us for another Garden Party on Easter Monday, 5 April, at any time from 8.30 am until 1pm when, after tea, toast and preserves, scones, jam and cream we will serve you a full 'Easter Barbeque'. All you need to do is book your space with Michelle (0457093415) by Saturday, 3 April and bring along some gardening tools of your choice, a fold up chair if possible and we will supply the rest. To 'qualify', you only need to pick up one leaf or acorn, but if you just feel like joining for the fellowship and enjoying the surrounds of the Lodge Garden and the Bishop's Lodge itself by relaxing in the lounge, making a coffee in the kitchen or enjoying the serenity of the Chapel, you will be most welcome.

Be assured of my prayers and blessings for all of you, your family and friends during this Holy Week.

Every Blessing

The Rt Rev'd Clarence E Bester  
Bishop of Wangaratta