



From the Bishop re 150th anniversary

7 May 2020

Dear all

Some of you may be aware that 5th May 2020 marked the 150th anniversary of our diocese. Dr Samuel Marsden was installed as the first Bishop of Bathurst on that day, and on the following day, he proclaimed All Saints parish church as the cathedral of the new diocese.

You may well say 'well Mark, you're sending this too late'!

Yet, I wanted to delay marking that date for a reason.

These past 10 or so years have been remarkably challenging for our diocese. We cannot just simply say 'let's celebrate!'

As we acknowledge such a significant anniversary, we must surely lament the

1. Financial challenges which have resulted in our dependence now upon another diocese
2. Unwise decisions which exacerbated the already precarious financial position
3. Sexual abuse which has left those abused scarred and forever damaged
4. Ongoing redress demands which mean we still need to sell more property as we try to make some sort of difference in the lives of those abused
5. Conflict between leaders which have left many scarred and hurt

In my first six months here, I've heard much of this from you yourselves. I have felt the pain and sadness first hand. Some of you still smart from the impact of decisions and actions of the past. And let's be honest, there are accounts of mismanagement and impropriety of various kinds, that go well back into last century.

So how do we mark this anniversary?

First, with humility. We name the failings of the past. We grieve what we've lost. We search our hearts and seek forgiveness for any wrong doing or ungodliness on our part. We realise that our current financial situation means that we are on our knees, in total dependence on God for our future. We release any hold or entitlement we have on any property, knowing that the sins of our (collective) past and our duty to lives ripped apart, means that we may one day need to surrender that which we now hold dear. That would be a great way to mark this anniversary.

Second, with determination and dedication. A determination not to repeat the faults of the past and a dedication of ourselves into our Lord's hands to be used in his work and for his glory. We offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. We commit ourselves afresh, to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind and love our neighbours as ourselves. In every way, we seek to commend the good news of Jesus to others. We come with heartfelt dependence on God in prayer, asking him to transform us into the people and the church he would have us be. That would be a great way to mark this anniversary.



Anglican Church of Australia Diocese of Bathurst

Third, with thankfulness to God. We thank our Lord that despite our failures and through many challenges, there is still a church in central and western NSW; God is still on the throne and we have the best news in the world to proclaim! We thank God for clergy and lay people who remained faithful and hopeful through difficult times. We thank the Lord for those who have become Christians, grown in him, and lived in the service of our Lord. We thank the Lord for the deed of release and now for the generosity of Sydney Diocese so that we can keep going. We thank the Lord for a new chapter in ministry with a new bishop. And we look to God to help us build a new future marked by clarity in Bible teaching and passion in gospel proclamation; marked by godliness, gentleness, faithfulness and generosity; marked by creative and clear leadership and God's vision for what can happen here.

So dear brothers and sisters, all that being said; happy anniversary and to God be the glory!

I finish with a portion of Psalm 13 which picks up the appropriate themes of both lament and thankfulness.

Psalm 13

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

²How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

⁵But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.

⁶I will sing the Lord's praise,
for he has been good to me.

And may this verse, which I shared at synod via video last year, resonate with us all the more:

Romans 15

⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶ so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In fellowship,

Mark

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