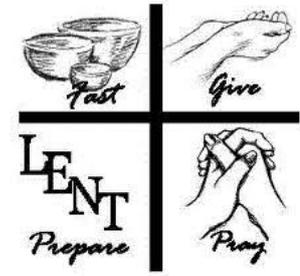


Message from Bishop Rachel

from the Weekly Bulletin -16th February 2021



⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:4-7)

Tomorrow we begin our Lenten journey. As we lived our first lockdown during Lent last year, I referred on several occasions to those wonderful words from the Lent preface to the Eucharistic prayer about 'learning to be God's people once again'. It is lifelong learning with Lent being a particular season for reflection and lament, yet with the hope of the empty tomb even now on the horizon beyond the place of crucifixion.

As I prepare to enter Lent, and reflect on all we have been learning over this past year about what it means to be God's people, I have been thinking about the place of thanksgiving. Even amid the pain, loss, and weariness of recent months there is much to be thankful for, and I pray that the enlarging of our hearts with thankfulness might be a significant part of our learning to be God's people once again.

The tradition of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday came from the fact that it was the day when people used up all the luxury fats and eggs in their home to feast ahead of the fasting, abstinence, and penitence of Lent. It was a day of tasting the goodness of rich food not to be tasted again until Easter Day, yet I pray that whatever we each choose to do during Lent to focus our hearts and minds on God, we will taste and acknowledge all that is rich and good in our adventure with God, individually and together, even amid the struggle.

I am immensely thankful for all the many ways the love and hope of Jesus Christ is being revealed and shared across our diocese through the life of worshipping communities in parishes, our schools, chaplaincies, and fresh expressions ([just look at some recent stories](#) to get a little taste). Over the next couple of months, the leadership team want to strongly encourage you to share your stories with our communications team. No story is too small.

As we continue week by week to share news of national and diocesan kingdom-shaped initiatives (eg [The Archbishops' Commission on Housing](#), or [OneLife](#), or [Hearts of Love](#), or [eco diocese](#) etc), Bishop Robert and I are acutely aware that ultimately all this is being lived out in the 'local' and amid the many different ways, traditional and new, in which people are seeking to be God's people. Furthermore, it is not about us celebrating a string of initiatives and activities but rather it is about being thankful for the growth and fruit which continues to emerge from the soil of our LIFE vision (as well as being honest and vulnerable about the places where we have struggled or stumbled).

It is a privilege to share in ministry with you; and the generosity of people's hearts and minds, including financial giving, does not go unnoticed, not least when the going is tough.

Of course the most important investment in our life together is that of prayer, and as we journey into Lent, still living with so much uncertainty, may we commit ourselves to prayer that we might discover yet more of what it means to be God's people together across this diocese, desiring to ever more deeply participate in God's kingdom work of transformation amid our pain and joy.

As we walk into Lent, Bishop Robert and I hold you in our prayers with thanksgiving