

The Christmas Experience

The Christmas experience in the northern and southern hemispheres is very different.

In the north, in places such as the United Kingdom, Europe and North America, it's winter. It's cold, dark and perhaps even snowy. Here in Australia, it's summer. It's hot, blindingly bright and at times, like the present, tragically dry and scarred by bushfires in so many parts.

In Australia, Christmas is also the end of the year in many respects beyond just the calendar. For us, Christmas heralds the summer break. It falls at the start of the big school and university holidays, and many people take well-deserved breaks from work and other activities.

In the northern hemisphere, my experience was that Christmas constituted more of a pause than a new beginning. The year really began around September, people would pause for things such as Christmas and then Easter, but then normal programming resumed.

If what I felt to be the case in the UK is true, then perhaps the Australian Christmas experience may actually reflect more of our religious understanding of the significance of Christmas.

At its centre, Christmas heralds a wonderful fulfillment and beginning.

God's intention from the beginning, to share in our humanity so that we may take on something of his divine glory, is fulfilled in the birth of the poor child of Nazareth at Bethlehem, the baby Jesus. The waiting, the longing, the hoping for is over. The child Emmanuel is finally here. And the advent of the Christ-child begins the extinguishment of all that separates God and his created.

Therefore for all Christians, Christmas is hardly a pause in normal programming. It's the end of the period of longing and estrangement, and the beginning of something divinely wonderful and new.

The Rector





DECEMBER 2019

In this issue

- A Christmas Message from the Rector 1
- Christmas Services ad 1
- An extract from the Sermon by the Ven. Dr Brian Douglas at our Patronal Festival of St Luke, 2019 2, 3
- Wine Drive 4
- Christmas stocking fillers 4
- Upcoming events 4

**ST LUKE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
MOSMAN**

Christmas Services 2019



Sunday 15 December, 7pm Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
Christmas Eve 24 December, 5pm Family Service
Christmas Day 25 December, 9am Sung Eucharist

Corner Ourimbah Road and Heydon Street, Mosman
Telephone: 9969 6910 • www.stlukesmosman.org

Anglican Parish of
St Luke
Mosman

An extract from the Sermon by the Venerable Dr Brian Douglas at our Patronal Festival of St Luke, 2019

A Patronal Festival is a good time for us to consider how we are called and sent by God into the world to be God's people, God's arms and legs, hands and feet, eyes and mouth. Perhaps this is just the time for us to look beyond our desires and interests and to realise that our very Being has been contaminated by the search for possessions and the concentration on what we want.

Let's take the story set for our Gospel today. Luke (10:1-9) tells us that Jesus sends out the seventy besides the twelve disciples. He sends them out in pairs to every town and place where he intended to go. It was as if they were to do some preparatory work, softening up perhaps, before he got there or perhaps Jesus wanted them to have some practical experience of front line ministry. We can imagine that some of the seventy were thinking things like this as they were sent out – *Do I really want to do this? Is this really what I*



*The Venerable
Dr. Brian Douglas,
Archdeacon of
South Canberra*

want? Ok, I'll do this but I don't like it; What can I get out of this job? What if someone asks me a question I can't answer? Will they like and accept me? or Do I have the skills to do this?

Being sent out to do a job, including ministry, is not always easy. We sometimes doubt ourselves and we fear what we might meet. Ministry sometimes leads us to places we may not always want to be.

You and I are called to Christian ministry just like those seventy who were sent out by Jesus. Our task in ministry is to share in God's mission, not our mission but God's, and to proclaim Jesus. We do that through tolerance, understanding and love.

We never do that with hatred, bigotry and violence. St Francis of Assisi once famously said: We are called to proclaim Jesus by every means in our power and if necessary to use words. This is so true. The way we live our lives in the world, not just on Sundays, is a vital witness to Jesus and his love for all people.

The example of our Lord, proclaimed for us by St Luke, impels us to that sort of ministry. Our baptism impels us to ministry since it is through baptism that we are made one with Christ and placed in fellowship with all of God's people. God has given us the gift of faith and graces our lives with the abundance of word and sacrament. In that power we are called to find ways of sharing that faith with others.

Perhaps we can open doors for others – not just physical doors but doors of acceptance and love. We can show the reasonable face of religion through dialogue rather than argument. We can open doors of loneliness for those who are shut in. We can encourage those who are sick and comfort those who mourn. We can feed the spiritual hunger in others by the hand of friendship and love – not always with words but more often with loving action. We can include people in, not tell them to leave



Fr Brian addressing the Patronal Lunch

simply because they do not agree with our predetermined model of the Christian faith.

The tasks we have in living our life of Christian faith are just the same as those seventy Jesus sent out with the twelve and just the same as those faced by St Luke. First though we have to know that we are graced and called to ministry and second we have to know what we are called to do.

Now this is not always easy. Sometimes it's risky. We will always find reasons for not doing the work God has called us to do – I'm too busy, I don't know what to do, I don't have the skills, I have something else to do, we have always done it another way – whatever. If we are truly realistic about our call to ministry we will realise that there are things holding us back, but at the same time there are things driving us forward. Jesus gave words of encouragement to those seventy he sent out and when they returned he gave them further words of encouragement. "Blessed are the eyes that see you", he said, and look at the wonderful things you were able to do. We too receive the



Joyous singing at our Patronal service enhanced by our choir and guest musicians

encouragement and love of Jesus. What more do we need?

If we are going to be effective in that ministry then the image we present to the world needs to be authentic.

We cannot stand here in prayer and then act in the world with bigotry, exclusion, intolerance and abuse towards our fellows. We cannot stand in judgment on others but that doesn't mean we have to accept their uncritical thought or their manipulation with meekness – rather we have to challenge it in ways that are authentic and loving. We cannot act in ways that condone violence

or injustice. We cannot present an image of our faith that suggests we are unthinking or irrational. We cannot act in childish ways and threaten God and others. We must engage justly with the world, respecting God's abundance and not despise it and using our possessions wisely and well. We must engage in dialogue with other people not in aggression and the arrogant argument of exclusion. Above all we must follow the message of Jesus and proclaim his love in all we think and say and do to all people – not just the ones that agree with us. This is our baptismal calling.

Ultimately though it needs to be realised that ministry comes from the gifts God gives us. These gifts are gracious and abundant and there to be shared. Not all gifts are the same, but together these gifts are used in the service of the body of Christ.

Jesus words are true for us today as they were for St Luke and for the seventy sent out with the twelve. God uses us to do God's work in the world. God gifts us for that work. We see a glimpse of the kingdom as we come together to share this Eucharist and when we use God's gracious and abundant gifts. Perhaps others to whom we are sent see it as well. As we minister and you minister in the parish of St Luke in the power of Jesus' risen life we are blessed, and pray God others are blessed too.



The Patronal Lunch in the Seddon Hall



St Luke's Wine Drive

Wine Direct has pledged to donate \$50 per dozen bottles purchased to St Luke's parish general mission giving. Order your wine for Christmas early! This special St Luke's offer is available until midnight on 30th December 2019. Order forms are available in the church vestibule. Please hand your completed forms directly to Paula Turner on Sunday mornings or to the Parish Office, Monday to Friday.

St Luke's stocking fillers



This Christmas, why not give your friends and family the gift of a St Luke's mug, a framed photo of our St Luke's window, or *St Luke's Fare*, the reprint of our archival cookbook? These are unique gifts to pop in their Christmas stockings at very reasonable prices:

- **Framed Photo** \$5
- **Mug** \$10
- **Cookbook** \$15

There is a limited supply of all these items, so please see Paula Turner to buy yours before they all disappear!



UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER

8 Advent 2 and Pastoral Visit Bp Chris Edwards

9am Church

Pub Lunch

12noon Lower Duck,
Hotel Mosman

15 Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

7pm Church, Lower Hall
and Courtyard

24 Family Christmas Service

5pm Church

25 Christmas Day Eucharist

9am Church

Remember you
can follow
St Luke's on



St Luke's is a place of rich and diverse liturgy, where life and faith connect.

We are a progressive community that welcomes all people regardless of gender, age, race, sexual orientation or religion.

We support the full and equal role of women in society and in the ministry of the church.

The Parish is in association with the Mosman/Neutral Bay Inter-church Council and the NSW Ecumenical Council.

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To stay in touch at St Luke's, check the weekly pew bulletin regularly, read the quarterly *Parish Life*, check our digital noticeboard in Bridgepoint and our website www.stlukesmosman.org and follow us on

