



## · **Father Paul Writes - 9<sup>th</sup> of March, 2025**

I welcome you on this first Sunday of Lent as we embark on a journey to Easter over the next six weeks. It was good to see about 25 of us at both Ash Wednesday services and to sing “Forty Days and Forty Nights”, which symbolises Jesus’ time in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry. Those six and a half weeks before Easter (excluding Sundays) sometimes seem to be a long time as we think about the various things we aspire to do. Each year, by calling us to turn away from sin and soul-sapping distractions, Lent helps us focus on what truly matters .... our relationship with our loving heavenly Father. This Lent, I encourage you to make extra time for prayer, and to think about prayer as relationship ... not just looking to God for answers.

As we begin the Season of Lent, we hear Luke’s version of the three temptations of Jesus during those 40 days in the desert. The first temptation was about food, the second, power over others and the third for Jesus by doing something amazing by throwing himself off the top of the temple where the angels would catch him. Jesus resisted all these temptations. We will not be challenged as Jesus was, but we will be tempted to sin, to live for ourselves, to exercise power and control, and to focus on success rather than faithfulness. Jesus teaches us through prayer, scripture, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and service to others, that we will be able to resist temptation and be missionary disciples proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

This is all part of the intentional season of preparation for Hope25 between now and Easter. Hope25 is an initiative of the Anglican Church of Australia; in sharing the hope we have in Jesus with others. We are being asked to pray for spiritual renewal, both within our parish and the broader church. We are also being asked to build relationships with others, in investing in meaningful conversations with those with whom you hope to share Christ’s love. Authentic relationships create trust, opening doors for deeper conversations about faith. I encourage you to invest in the next evangelism training session on Monday the 7<sup>th</sup> of April at the church so that we can engage in conversations about Jesus with clarity and courage. Finally, we need to cultivate opportunities to prayerfully extend warm, compelling invitations to church gatherings and social events. A thoughtful invitation can be a powerful step towards someone becoming part of our church community. A schedule of

coming events leading up to Easter are listed in the pew sheet, so think about who to invite. There will be other opportunities between Easter and Pentecost, which we will advertise shortly, including an introductory course over three weeks called "Hope Explored".

The Lenten Study Groups start on Wednesday at 10.45 am after the 10 am Eucharist in the church's meeting room and at 7 pm in the chapel. The layout of the readings suggests the first meeting would be held until the end of next week. So, for next Wednesday, just read the readings for the appropriate days and I will target the discussion to those readings. Please feel free to come to the study groups even if you haven't signed up. I have ordered extra copies of the book which I hope to have with me today (Sunday). If not, I will have copies of the readings for those who don't have a book. It is not essential to come to every session – we'd rather have someone come a few times than miss the entire program. There is a spare copy of the Lenten Book in the narthex if you wish to have a look at the study.

The ABM has launched its Lenten Appeal for this year. The Lenten Appeal will focus on projects which aim to help women break free from violence, injustice and oppression through education, livelihoods and community programs through several of the ABM's partners. They include Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Kenya and the Philippines. The appeal is tax deductible. There are flyers available today giving details of bank transfers, in using your credit card or placing cash or a cheque in the giving envelopes provided.

On Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, after the 10 am Eucharist, our annual vestry meeting will be held at 11.30 am. Nomination forms are available in the narthex for the various positions, as People's Warden, as Parish Councillors, Synod Representatives, the nomination committee and as representatives of the Burnside Inter-Church Council. I encourage you to attend the vestry meeting where the various parish reports will be presented, the positions filled, and the budget adopted for this year. The vestry reports excluding the financials and the budget are available today. The financial report should be available next Sunday.

With every blessing for the coming week,

Fr Paul