

Welcome! Haere mai!

St John's Anglican Church, Otumoetai



Sunday 4 July 2021
14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Friends

Towards the end of today's epistle Paul talks about the 'thorn in the flesh' that he has been given. Then he says 'Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.' That sounds too easy doesn't it. Perhaps it's in the same category as deeply unhelpful comments such as 'you know, God has given you this bad fortune or awful situation to navigate so that you can really learn who you are'. Comments like that are never, ever appropriate. It is one of the most difficult challenges of Christianity: believing at the same time in a God of love and living in a world of pain and sorrow and disappointment and trying to work out how we navigate the latter whilst believing in the former.

At first glance, it sounds as though Paul believes that God has done something to him which brings him pain or discomfort or upset. Or at least God does not take it away. There is something in Paul's life which he wishes wasn't there, which detracts from him being able to live his life the way he would wish to live it. Three times he prayed that it would go away and it didn't. We might get the impression that God said 'no'. But the text does not say that. What the text does say, is that Paul hears these words from God: 'my grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness'. And there's a huge difference between that and 'live with it'. Paul sees the thorn in his side as functioning to remind him that his power does not come from himself; instead, it comes from the Lord.

We are right in the heart of human experience here. I imagine that if any of us said to an individual we know who had just received a life-changing diagnosis or to a group of people who had suffered a tragedy of great proportion, never mind, don't forget 'whenever I am weak, then I am strong', the reaction would be one of anger. They would say, in strong terms, that it does not feel like that at all. It would be like saying something along the lines of 'God has given you this to make you stronger' which is very bad theology.

The key, I think, to navigating this very difficult territory is to remember that what Paul is trying to say is that when we – you and I – experience weakness, illness, sorrow, injustice, persecution, it is not that we find our power or strength there, but that we find *Christ's* power and strength there. The point of faith in Christ is recognising that we stand in God's strength and not our own. The reason we know that Christ is powerful when weakness and sorrow and fear seem to be winning, is the cross.

At the heart of the Eucharist, the priest holds up a broken piece of bread. That is the ultimate symbol, the sacrament of how God's love works, what God's love looks like. When we hit rock bottom, we might be able to find through the grace of the sacraments, through the prayers of the church, through the support of our friends that we have hit the beginning of yet more of the boundless and amazing graces of the peace of God which passes all understanding.

Arohanui,

Sue (Vicar)

WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY: 4th JULY 2021

Sentence

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest,' says the Lord. 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart.'

Matthew 11:28-29

Collect

**Caring God, you equip us with all we truly need
in the business of our daily lives.**

**Turn us to you in prayer that we might
trust in your provision,**

and hold only to those things that give us life.

Through Jesus Christ our Liberator,

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. Amen

1st Reading *Ezekiel 2.1-5*

2nd Reading *2 Corinthians 12.2-10*

Gospel *Mark 6.1-13*

Prayers of the People

Today we pray for the Diocese of Polynesia's Water for All projects
and for the Waiapu Anglican Centre staff.

We pray for those in need, especially those who have asked for our
prayers: Mike, Annaliese, Bridget, Max.

AAW SOUP & ROLLS LUNCH

Ladies of the parish are invited to the AAW Soup and Rolls lunch to
be held at 12 noon on Tuesday 13 July. The cost is \$10 per person.
Raffles will be available.

PARISH MAGAZINE CONTRIBUTIONS: FINAL CALL

The theme for the next edition is **Taonga / Treasure(s)**.

Please use your imagination! We look forward to your contributions.

Photos welcome! Please send your contributions to Lynda, the Parish
Administrator, by **5 July**.

PLAYGROUP

Debbie Handforth has resigned from her job as Playgroup Leader. She will finish at the end of this term. She has some complex family concerns which mean she needs flexibility over her working week so that she can support members of her whānau, including her youngest daughter. We have been pleased to have her enthusiasm and energy while she has been doing the job and we wish her and her family well. We will not lose contact as, happily, she will continue as our cleaner.

This Week Beginning: 5th July

Monday	9.00 am	Walking Group
Tuesday	3.00 pm	Communion at Radius Matua
Wednesday	10.00 am	Mid-week Eucharist
	2.00 pm	Golden Age in the Hall
	4.00 pm	Music Group practice
Op Shop	10.00 am - 4.00 pm	Monday to Friday (ph. 576 2422)
Playgroup	9.30 - 11.30 am	Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
Toy Library	9.30 - 11.30 am	Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday

Services for Sunday 11th July – OT15

8.30 am Holy Eucharist
10.00 am Holy Eucharist

Contact Us

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