

# Saint Mary's Newsletter: July

**Vicar:** David Smithson 027 4213200 Fridays

07 8492761 Afterhours

**Peoples Warden:** Sally-Ann Riddell 07 8243850

**Vicars Warden:** John Heaton 07 824 3996



## SERVICES FOR JULY

### Sunday 7<sup>th</sup>:

10am Family Communion Service with St Paul's Huntly joining us

**Refreshments:** Rosalie Jennings

**Readings:**

**Intercessions:** Gael Levin

### Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>:

10am Family Communion service.

**Refreshments:** Melanie Holdsworth

**Readings:** Melanie Holdsworth

**Intercessions:** Sally-Ann Riddell

### Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>:

10am Family Communion Service

**Refreshments:** Karen Boyer

**Readings:** Karen Boyer

**Intercessions:**

### Sunday 28<sup>th</sup>:

10am Family Communion service.

**Refreshments:** Majella Heaton

**Readings:**

**Intercessions:** Majella Heaton



**Calf Fundraising Scheme:** Donate a calf (if you are a farmer), or townies can donate \$220 which will cover the costs of purchasing a 4 day old bull old calf and rearing costs. Or you could wait until the calves are sold and donate the average cash price of what all the calves sold for. It is an easy and low maintenance fundraiser that has the potential to raise \$450 per calf sold. The better the calf, the higher the price we get for it. The last 2 years we had a good number of Friesian bull calves made available for you to purchase from the Riddell's and were reared for us and sold as weaned 100kg calves at the sales in late October. We are hoping to buy surplus calves again this year and do the same. This is a major fund raiser for St Mary's to make it sustainable for the future. Forms and info on the table in the porch, or see Sally-Ann & Richard

**Barnabas Fund** Our Parish donates directly to Barnabas Fund that assists persecuted Christians around the world. Please feel free to take home a Barnabas Fund magazine from the table in the church porch



## WHAT SETS CHRISTIANITY APART FROM ALL THE OTHER RELIGIONS?

There are many different religions in the world. Some estimate that there are around 20 major religions with these 20 divided into around 300 subdivisions. Each one believes that they are right and everyone else is wrong or that their beliefs are compatible with the beliefs of others. What sets Christianity apart from other religions? What are some of the unique aspects of Christianity that differ from all, or some, of the other major religions?

### Works cannot make us right with God

Many religions, even some sectors of so-called Christianity, believe that, if a person can do enough good, they will be approved by God. Dr. Steve Kern writes, "World religions are self-helps on how man can pull himself up to God establishing his own goodness" Contrary to the beliefs of these false religions, the Bible tells us that man can never do enough to work his way to heaven.

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV).

*"...be saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit..."* (Titus 3:5 ESV).

*"...who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace..."* (II Timothy 1:9 ESV).

Jesus Christ died on a cross to pay for our sins (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; I John 2:2, 4:10). There is nothing we can do, apart from trusting in Him, that enables us to have our sins forgiven and begin a new life with God. "No other religion in the world teaches our need for God to save us by His finished work. They are all based on man working to develop his own righteousness by good deeds" (Kern, p. 235).

### Religions seek escape from the world, Christianity seeks to influence it

The goal of many religions is to attain some condition or destination in which they no longer interact, nor are they burdened, with reality. The goal of these religions is escape, or detachment. Conversely, Christianity seeks to bring the truth of the good news of God's love to people and help them know God in an intimate personal way. Evangelism, witnessing, and missions are a few of the ways Christians are involved in introducing others to Jesus Christ.

### God Seeks Sinners

For those religions that do believe in some sort of god, the god they believe in is usually impersonal, aloof, and standoffish. Their god is 'up there' while we are 'down here'. This is not the case with the God of the Bible. It is God who initiates the process by which we are brought back into a right relationship with Him.

*"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost"* (Luke 19:10 ESV).

*"For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out"* (Ezekiel 34:11 ESV).

These verses make it clear that God loves us enough to seek after us, to draw us to Him. He has not abandoned humanity and left us to fend for ourselves. He has not left us without evidence of His love and power. This evidence is even seen in the creation around us (Romans 1:19-20).

### The claims of Christianity make sense of the world we see around us

Everything we see in our universe makes sense when interpreted by the biblical record. People's actions only make sense when we see that God created humanity good, but we rebelled against Him. Those who are without a relationship with God are torn between what they are and what they were created to be.

Drug use, alcoholism, and many other issues that take a toll on society are the result of rebellion against God. As long as a person rejects God and attempts to live by self-made standards and ideas, that person will experience emptiness in his or her soul that they will try to fill with all kinds of false answers.

Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, thus corrupting the perfect relationship they had enjoyed since they were created. Since that day, humanity has been separated from the holy God by our sin. However, God loves us so much that He gave His only Son to die on a cross in order to restore holiness to those who would repent and follow Him.

### The main thing that sets Christianity apart from all other religions is the person of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, is the centerpiece of the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament tells of the initial goodness of Creation, of man's rebellion and fall, and of God reassuring Adam and Eve that He would provide the way to make things 'good' again. The remainder of the Old Testament is the story how God's strained relationship with His people. They would follow Him for a while, and then decide that their ideas or desires outweighed His lordship, and they would rebel. This reveals that any time we attempt to live our lives apart from God's grace and power, we will fail. God is holy (Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2; Joshua 24:19; I Samuel 2:2, 6:20; Psalm 99:9; I Peter 1:16), but we are not. We are unable, as was mentioned earlier, to keep God's holy standard or to make ourselves holy enough to mend the separation that began in the Garden of Eden. On our own, we will remain forever separated from God.

However, God did not leave us without hope. He knows our shortcomings and inability, so He provided the way by which we can re-establish that wonderful relationship that was lost so long ago. Payment had to be made for the sin of humanity. Punishment must be dealt for that sin; the Bible says that, "...the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). This means that the life we live in rejection to God *earns* us death. Death is required as payment for our sin.

This is where that famous, most-often quoted, verse tells us, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16 ESV). A sacrifice was required for the sin of humankind. God loves us so much that He not only drew us to Himself, but also provided the sacrifice for us in the person of His only Son, Jesus Christ. This is the example of perfect love.

### Conclusion

What makes Christianity different from other religions? It is the love of God. His love separates false religions from the Truth of the Gospel. The sacrifice of Jesus is the ultimate example of that love. God, working through the Holy Spirit, is calling everyone to experience the love He offers. God calls each of us to respond to that love. Jesus endured agony that you and I cannot understand. Not only was He beaten, spat upon, humiliated, and finally crucified on a cross, but also He did it willingly...voluntarily. He did it for you and me. God asks for nothing but what is due Him. As Creator, Sustainer, and Saviour He is worthy of our love, worship, and allegiance.

## Parish Bank Account:

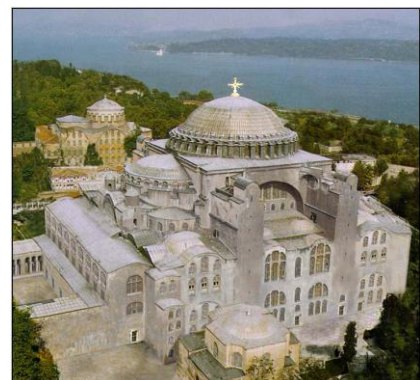
02 0410 0103053 00 Thanks for your weekly A/P contributions to keep our Parish running!

## A Scripture for you:

**1 Corinthians 13:2** *And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

## This Month in Christian History:

**6 July 1054:** The Church suffers a permanent fracture when the Eastern patriarchates (Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch) break with the patriarchate of Rome, marking the beginning of the Great Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.



What the Eastern Orthodox Church of Constantinople looked like before it was turned into a mosque ☹