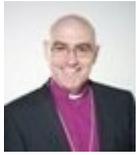


Thu 14 March 2013



A vision eternal: Promulgation Homily

(this is the **sermon** delivered at Diocese's 150th anniversary Cathedral service 9.30am 14/3/2013. The civic ceremony **speech** follows below.)

On this great day I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the gathering place upon which we ourselves now gather for worship and in so doing honour elders past and present.

Sisters and brothers, most distinguished guests, '**vision**' is what brings us to this celebration on this glorious Goulburn morning.

Our forebears – those 18th and 19th century pioneers who first encountered the rolling plains at the head of the Southern Tablelands – the country of the ancient Mulwaree, Tarlo, Burra Burra and Wollondilly people - saw in their mind's eye the opportunity for a fresh start in life; for prosperity, for security, for a new identity as pastoralists and merchants and agriculturists and labourers and the like.

That's vision.

And it was often costly...drought, fire, flood, infant mortality, pestilence, blight and isolation sorely tried and tested their hopes and dreams.

And from this amalgam of enterprise and excitement, of naivety, zeal, unmet longings and plain hard work, arose an attendant need – often acute - for spiritual refreshment, pastoral care, and for a vision that would transcend the ephemeral, the transitory.

Faith-filled, enthusiastic and doggedly determined lay men and women *and* a handful of clerical leaders – people the calibre of pioneer Church of England priest, the Reverend Robert Cartwright, and our founding Bishop, the Right Reverend Mesac Thomas – began, in God's strength, to address that specific need.

They were people who themselves were driven by a compelling vision – not for a glorious Cathedral – though it is quite true that Bishop Thomas laboured diligently and tirelessly for the greater part of his Episcopate towards the construction and completion of this our wonderful mother church – a spectacular legacy (that both defines and adorns our city)....

No, the vision that *ultimately* shaped their lives is found in the Revelation to St John (the Divine) in chapter 21: the "new heaven and the new earth".

That's the vision, beloved; a renewed humanity. Let me explain:

Many of you will recall Jesus' promise in John 14. Having told his friends that he was leaving them (a reference to his crucifixion and death) he then said, "In my father's house there are many rooms – I am going there to prepare a place for you..."

This then – Revelation 21 – is a description (in part at least anyway) of that place.

A place where the old order of things...pain, mourning, regret, betrayal, brokenness and tears – is no more.

A place where the forgiven people of God stand radiant before him (like a bride on her wedding day); they will know him, and they will enjoy him forever. And that is because, through Christ's death and resurrection, the last great enemy – death – has been put down.

"I will take you there", says Jesus in John 14. "I am the way."

That's the sustaining vision, dear people: unsullied, uninterrupted, unfettered celebration and fellowship in God's presence, with God's people, through God's Son - the Lord Jesus.

150 years on, nothing has changed: That vision, I submit, is still before us.

As Cartwright and Thomas (and the generations that followed) lived as ambassadors and citizens of that heavenly city – and in so doing loved, served, and blessed those with whom they toiled and struggled, may we - as conduits of God's love and grace similarly serve and bless the people of this great community; and may these *150th celebrations* fuel our longing for that great and glorious *eternal celebration*; in God's presence, with God's people, through God's Son. That's the vision!

Amen.

City and Church: a shared story

(speech delivered at Goulburn 150th civic ceremony 10.30am 14/3/2013)

The past, present and future of Goulburn and the Anglican Diocese that shares its name are entwined. We have followed parallel paths, born in the same moment 150 years ago.

To understand the origins of our journey, you must reimagine a world very different to ours. It was the world of Queen Victoria. An Empress that ruled lands stretching around the globe. She could write law in a distant colony by her command: a city had to have an Anglican Cathedral, and that meant a bishop as well.

So, in 1863, Queen Victoria commanded:

"And We do further by these presents ordain and constitute the Town of Goulburn within the said Colony of New South Wales to be a Bishop's See and be the Seat of the said Bishop and We do ordain that the said Town of Goulburn shall henceforth be a City and be called the City of Goulburn."*

Today, the Anglican Church is committed to the future of Goulburn on many levels.

It is nearly 65 years ago that the Anglican Bishop left Goulburn to set up his office in Canberra. Now we are reopening the old bishop's office our "See" city of Goulburn because the City is an increasingly strategic centre for ministry. The wider Southern Tablelands has some of the fastest growing rural districts in NSW. Two new ministry areas have just been created by the Church this year: Sutton Road and Mulwaree Anglican Ministry District based on Collector.

Goulburn's Anglican Cathedral is in many ways our secret jewel, regarded by architectural experts as one of the most beautiful in Australia superior to those in most larger metropolitan cities. As Dean Phillip Saunders reminds me, St Saviour's historic value makes it Goulburn's most significant tourist attraction.

Yet, the Cathedral must be the living, spiritual heart of the city not just an historical curiosity. We want the people of Goulburn to see St Saviour's Cathedral as their Cathedral. We hope that more community groups will come to use the building especially given its ideal dimensions and acoustics for musical events and civic occasions.

It is important that the Cathedral, together with our parishes of North Goulburn and West Goulburn, cater for the diversity of spiritual needs within the City. It is for this reason that myself and Dean Phillip are supporting a new contemporary Sunday afternoon congregation serving those people who may once have been involved with church – but for whatever reason, have disconnected.

Anglicare is also key to the Anglican Church's vision for ministry to Goulburn across the whole of southern NSW. Anglicare's spiritual and material assistance to members of our community in times of need is a core ministry of the Anglican Church.

Nevertheless it is timely on this occasion to reflect on the importance of the Goulburn community to the vitality of Anglicare's current work right across regional NSW.

The origins of Anglicare can be traced back to the community care provided by Anglican parishes as they were established across the Southern Tablelands over 150 years ago. Yet Goulburn is the key community in the formation of a charity that now operates across two-thirds of NSW and the ACT.

The founding of St Saviour's Children's Home in Goulburn in the 1920s is the key date. During the Great Depression children were the victims of increasing social dislocation, and so the work of caring for families and children in need was formalised and the organisation we know now as Anglicare was born.

Today Goulburn is the regional headquarters for Anglicare for the entire southern part of NSW down to Victorian border. To give you a sense of the scale of the Anglicare's work co-ordinated from Goulburn – the local office employs 83 staff while overseeing a further 300 employees located in over 20 other NSW towns. From Goulburn, Anglicare administers \$23 million worth of community services including children's services, disability services, homelessness services, counseling, and out of home care.

To express the historical link between the foundation of the city and the foundation of our Anglican Diocese and our agencies like Anglicare, the cathedral community would like give each member of the Council Staff a brass bookmark of the cathedral tower.

By **Bishop Stuart Robinson**