

“Behold I make all things new...” Rev 21:5

First of all, I would like to acknowledge the three people whom we prayed for in the memorial service today – the late Con Costi, Milia Kriketos, and Panayioti Papalevisopoulos. Two were members of our Parish of St Therapon and the other from long ago. All were people I knew well. That is the blessing of St Therapon. We know each other and are like a family. It is indeed very fitting that on my last day at this blessed Parish we should have Con, Milia and Panayioti with us in spirit.

They were such different characters, iconic of the variety of people I had come to know over the last decade serving here as Parish Priest. We pray that the Lord will lay them to rest. We pray that He grant their families peace and the assurance of their future reunification in Paradise were the pain of their initial separation will give way to the joy of beholding their renewed beauty.

In the book of Revelation, our Lord Jesus Christ meets his Church at the end of time and proclaims joyfully “Behold, I make all things new..” Rev 21:5 Therefore, for a person of faith, every end even death is an opportunity to behold the mystery of a new beginning. We believe that with every pain of separation whether it be thru the loss of the people we love, through death or separation, if we allow the grace of the Holy Spirit to abide in the pain, He will grant us new life, a new beginning, a higher perspective on things.

Today’s epistle reading reminds us, the Upper or New Jerusalem is our mother and she is free. Therefore every earthly separation, every death and resurrection is a step closer to our journey towards God’s everlasting Kingdom – our true nation and home where we will be truly free.

Since I received the blessing of His Eminence our Archbishop Stylianos to be the founding priest, I have seen this Parish begin, I have seen this Parish nearly die before it even had a chance to start. I have born with all of you the trauma of the birth of a parish in a cultural climate antagonistic to the Church – a culture with is seeking to redefine itself in a post modern, post Christian age. And I can tell you with no uncertainty that it has truly been a miracle.

This was never my church or your church. I, we are God's earthen vessels – This was, is and always will be God's Church. We are all co-workers with God for we are his Church – the people of God, which is the Body of Christ – the New Jerusalem uniting Heaven and Earth. We are here because God Himself willed it and we will be here for as long as His will be done. He calls us to come together, to build and contribute and we can respond freely. He also calls us to leave when the time is fulfilled – to grant us the knowledge of letting go and moving on, so that the church can grow with new energy. This is how churches are built.

We can choose not to respond, we can remain apathetic, and we can remain distant, letting other things take precedence. We can stubbornly hang on persisting with our old perspectives thinking we own the church and preventing others from fulfilling their calling. This is how churches are undone. I pray that with the coming of a new priest, a new beginning, a new chapter, will give the parish of St Therapon a chance to make all things new.

It has been a blessing to have the opportunity of getting to know you all. There are many people to thank – too many to mention both past and present. To Drs Phillip and Christina Katelaris for initially inviting me to be a part of their vision, Mr and Mrs George and Maria Harris, our current president and his wife for their legendary contribution and dedication to this Parish, and all the

members of the current committee Spiro K, Nick R, Neville Z, Dennis P, Jim E, Effie P, Robby H, Panayioti S and their respective families for their unique and valuable contribution. To Mr Vasili and Olympia Sarlas for their daily support. Our hard working Ladies Auxilliary – Maria H, Maria C, Vassiliki F and Gina Z. You have been a fantastic committee to work with! and our chanters Con G Chrysoula, and Effy T for their dedication at the pslatiri. To the many members of our parish who have volunteered their time, energy and money. I truly love and appreciate all you have offered. There are many people here today outside the parish who have made the long journey from other parts of Sydney and even Canberra to say goodbye for which I am deeply thankful.

Lastly, it is you the people of St Therapon, the people who have attended Sunday by Sunday, who have come to hear the teachings of the Holy Gospel as best as I have tried to share it with you , who have allowed me to pray for you, baptize, marry, confess, commune, bless and bury your loved ones over the past twelve years. These mystical relationships we have created and shared together through the working of the Holy Spirit will never be forgotten You will always be in my prayers .

Last but not least to my family, my Presbytera Stella and our boys Alexander and Stephen and my extended family, who have supported me in this new chapter of our lives.

I would like to share with you in closing some words of St Paul which have helped sustain me through tumultuous changes in my life which I hope also will sustain you'

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come : The old has gone, the new is here" 2 Cor 5:17