

Launch of St Johns Restoration Appeal by Mrs. Dorothy Houghton M.B.E.

Bishop Paul, Clergy Members, Fellow Parishioners, Guests.

It is indeed an honor and privilege to be asked to launch this most important appeal for the Restoration of St John's.

Some sixty three years ago I began my worship in this church, having come from St Margaret's in Mildura.

Over those 63 years I have seen so many wonderful people come and go. I recall their contributions in worship, in fabric and their wonderful financial support.

This beautiful church was the first in Sorrento, which in our history is "the cradle of the State". Our first sermon in Victoria was preached not far from here, at Sullivan Bay in 1803. The lovable Bobbie Knopwood, "Possibly with a whisky flask in his back pocket", took his theme of the sermon from Psalm 139, and I shall only quote verses 9 & 10

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

This Psalm in entirety was preached to convicts and free settlers on the beautiful morning of 13th November 1803. Those verses are as important to us this day as at that first service in the colony. That site also witnessed the first Baptism, that of Charles William Hobart Thorne.

In this church we have the Martyrs' Chapel and the Prince Consort Window. Saint John's not only plays an enormous role in our community today, with worship, weddings, baptisms and gathering together in grief to celebrate the lives of so many of our very much loved parishioners and our glorious concert recitals, but Saint John's is a national treasure. I recall the Late Harold Holt (Prime Minister and Federal Treasurer of Australia) worshipping here and my children so often rushed home to tell their Nana that they sat next to the Prime Minister. I have witnessed Governors worshipping here. Outside the Metropolitan area, it is the place to celebrate a marriage. This is an all embracing church so expertly ministered by our most loved Rev'd. Catherine Eaton and her assistant Rev'd. Hans Christiansen, who both give so much to all of us for our spirituality. Their compassion, love and devotion to this parish is remarkable.

We must extend this appeal into every area of possible financial assistance. Repair to the leaking roof is the first priority. I repeat Saint John's is of national importance and I remind you that donations through The National Trust are tax deductible

It gives me pleasure to officially launch St John's Church Restoration Appeal on this 13th April 2009. Its future is in your hands!

Dorothy Houghton