

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

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PARISH UPDATE 36

Greetings all!

I hope this letter finds you well.

Our Parish Priest, Maurie, is currently away for a short break, so he asked me if I could write the Parish Letter for this week. So I hope you don't mind me sharing my reflections!

It has now been a couple of weeks since we celebrated Masses outdoors at both our Churches. While we've had a few "drizzles" especially Sunday mornings, it was generally a great success. Thanks to our 'Opening Planning Committee' and volunteers who worked hard to make it possible for us. Most people were appreciative and just delighted of the fact that we could gather again as a parish community, albeit in smaller numbers compared to prior COVID. Some told me they haven't been to a Mass since March! Nonetheless, given the Premier's announcement last Sunday, we are now able to worship indoors again. Although the government technically allows for up to 150 people indoors, because of the '4 square metre rule', we can only accommodate slightly more than 75 inside the Church. Please note that all attendees are still required to book online for the Weekend Masses, but not for Weekday Masses. However, you still have to sign in, wear your face masks and observe physical distancing in the entire duration of Mass. More information about our new Mass times is attached in this email.

This week, I have visited all our Grade six's in our three primary schools who are preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. While it will be quite different compared to previous years due to the current restrictions, most children are excited to take another step in their Christian journey, 'confirming' the faith in which they were baptised. I encourage everyone to please keep them in your prayers and send them your best wishes as they transition to high school. May the Holy Spirit be their friend and guide.

Last Sunday, we celebrated the Solemnity of Christ the King, which marks the end of our Liturgical Year and a signpost for the next liturgical season, which is Advent. Noticeably, the official liturgical colour will change from green to purple and the Advent wreath will make an appearance at the altar. These are joyful signs that Christmas is indeed fast approaching!

In today's first reading we get a glimpse of the difficulty people face when their waiting for God seems to be in vain. The exiles have returned from their captivity in Babylon, spurred on by fresh hope that God will adopt them again as his people. But Jerusalem is a heap of ruins, God seems to have fallen in love with long distance, and the people can see no signs to confirm their hope. They became exhausted with waiting; they grow tired of hearing nothing from God.

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But when the people remember God as their Redeemer they bring the past into the present, and that sacred mystery acts like a light in the midst of darkness. *The memory of God's love is life*; it gives the people a reason to wait; it builds up their hope. They remember to hope.

Perhaps the experience of the Israelites is a lesson for us all especially during this time of pandemic, that not everything is doom and gloom! We need to keep reminding ourselves to hope! Indeed, we have been blessed with good news in recent days, with the virus almost eradicated in Victoria, families being reunited with the opening of borders and businesses are starting to recover in what has been a very dark year. Of course, it is not over yet. There's more we still need to do. There's a lot of uncertainty about the future. But as the Season of Advent reminds us, we don't have to sleepwalk into the future. We have to remember the story of Jesus again, and that memory of love becomes the ground of our hope. The future holds hope only because we are convinced of God's actions in the past. We can measure up the challenge of the first reading: to practice honesty and integrity in the land. And to dwell in confidence.



Fr Justel Callos
Assistant Priest