

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

ABN 56 751 544 850

Telephone: 9366 2146 Fax: 9366 9876

Email: stalbans@cam.org.au

Website <http://pol.org.au/stalbanssydenham>

4 Winifred Street

ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

22nd January 2021

PARISH UPDATE 44

Greetings all!

What a calm week it is around the Parish Office!

Not so for everyone, I notice: ads for 'back-to-school' equipment on TV and billboards, American political action disturbing, tennis stars making a noise, Indian cricket fans celebrating, continuing questions and cautions about COVID and restrictions, the usual January holiday away reduced to a memory for many this year, and relaxation and discoveries of new things to do for many, too. Although I took a couple of days away last week, I wouldn't take a chunk of annual leave in January – it's so easy-going around the Parish during this month: 'take leave when things have got busier and worn you down a bit' is the advice I follow!

One noticeable feature of Parish life is that Fr Peter Hudson has begun to join us for two weekend Masses each week. Peter had been Parish Priest of Horsham (western Victoria, Diocese of Ballarat) for nine years before retiring just after Christmas. As he eases into retirement he is living not too far from here, and offered to assist if needed. I recall a retreat I made many years ago when the leader acknowledged that coincidences happen, but that sometimes the Holy Spirit may be at work when things fall into place and turn out well! Over the next few weeks until the end of February Peter will be at each of our Masses at some time or other – thank you Peter Hudson!

Meanwhile I am working on a longer-term plan to arrange for us to have two Priests for weekend Masses throughout the year.

See attachment for the timetable of Sunday Masses.

We have taken to the green vestments and decoration at Masses again as 'Ordinary Time' takes us on from the Christmas Season. The term is supposed to suggest that we will be reading one of the Gospels in an 'orderly' way now, not that it all becomes plain and dull! It is the Gospel of Mark for 2021. As we start into it, Jesus is calling those around him into discipleship - to come to know him, to learn from him, and then to take on His life and do the same things as He does. And there is the caution that it is not always so easy – indeed at times we may need to repent and begin again.

As we reflected two weeks ago on the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus, our own Baptisms initiated us into the community of the Church, whose one goal is 'to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit'. All of us who have been Baptised into this role! From a survey some years ago:

The role of the laity emerges as a major issue, and sometimes with great passion. The Church is the people of God. It is not just the Pope, Bishops, Sisters, Brothers. We will only become a dynamic Church when this vision becomes a reality and produces an enthusiasm amongst us for the Church.

The increasing involvement of the laity is not to be seen as an option. It is at the heart of who we are as Church. It is not only a necessity as the number of Priests diminishes. It is a necessity by reason of the Church's faith that all are called and

enabled to participate in the Church's life and mission. This is a theological doctrine, a principle, and it needs to be applied to actual daily living in the Church. The people are to be involved in a meaningful manner in every aspect of Church life: in ministries, in leadership and in every level of decision-making.

When we emerge into the next easing of restrictions, we will begin to re-gather our Ministry Groups, and re-start those early steps we took a year ago to form a Finance Council and a Parish Advisory Group for our Parish.

In a recent book, *Let Us Dream*, Pope Francis wrote

Rather than seeking confrontation, declaring war, with each side hoping to defeat the other, we need processes that allow differences to be expressed, heard, and left to mature in such a way that we can walk together without needing to destroy anyone. This is hard work; it needs patience and commitment – above all to each other. Lasting peace is about creating and maintaining processes of mutual listening.

I select that paragraph in the context of the changeover of leadership in the United States. And also as we take a day off next week for Australia Day: the situations our First Nations peoples who have been here for 40,000+ years and the coming of the Europeans in 1770/1788, and our recent statements about recognition, reconciliation and justice have not yet come to a stage of 'fair for all'.

Around Australia Day, let's pray for our great country and all our people:

A Creed for Australia:

- We believe that this ancient land, with its unique creatures, is a precious gift from a loving God, whose mercy is on all his works.
- We believe in God's care for the people who have treasured this land through unnumbered generations across 40,000 years; in the One who grieves in their suffering and rejoices in every noble aspiration.
- We believe in God's compassion for the patchwork of refugees who for two hundred and thirty years have come to this continent looking for a place to call their home.
- We believe in God's steadfast love for this nation and all its children; that God is creating a new people from many races, colours, and gifts, to fulfil a high destiny.
- We believe that the best way forward is the way revealed by Christ - of faith, hope, and love; where no needy person is neglected, and no bidding of the Spirit is ignored.

Bruce Prewer, Australian Accents

Back to that message of our all being part of the Church. I like the reflection in another attachment 'Why Am I Catholic?' Let's hang on in there even when it's confusing – for there is so much for us through the Word, the Sacrament, one another's faith as we form the community of the People of God!

Best wishes and blessings as we get closer to the 'real' beginning of the year!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest