

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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PARISH UPDATE 45

Greetings all!

It turned out to be a busy week in my part of the world, triggered by return-to-work by the staffs of our Schools and Colleges on Wednesday. During the day I was part of Prayer Service and Masses at two of our Schools and two of our Catholic Regional Colleges. Isn't that impressive – that they want to commence the new year in prayer and worship and thanksgiving, and calling for the blessings of God on the year that is opening up.

Our Catholic Schools and Colleges are such important elements in the mission of the Church. The mission of the Church, of course, is 'to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit'. And that work of Christ, as Jesus says in one of the Gospels, is 'that they may have life and have it to the full'. That's what Catholic Schools are for.

The Canon Law of our Church knows that this 'life' extends to all aspects of our young people's development: "(806.2) ... the formation given in Catholic schools is (to be), in its academic standards, at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area".

In one of his teachings, Pope John Paul 2 expressed that in these words: 'In order to be a good Catholic School, it must firstly be a good School'.

Our former Parish Priest Fr John O'Reilly established such a fine network of primary and secondary Schools for the families of our Parish and beyond. We are so grateful!

You may be interested in one of the attachments to this letter that is a copy of two pages from the Students' Diary from one of our Catholic Regional Colleges. It places 'prayer' as a standard part of the life of the College and urges that for every student's life.

Another teaching of our Church is that 'parents are the first educators of their children'. Yes, in those earliest years and as role models through their lives, parents are 'right there' with their children – and wasn't this emphasised through last year's lockdowns!

That relationship of parents to their children never ceases, I notice. Parents rejoice in their adult children's successes, and their hearts break over their adult children's problems. It's good that we have on the list of Saints of our Church Joachim and Ann, parents of Mary, and Joseph and Mary, parents of Jesus. There's that homely phrase in the gospel where Peter is concerned for the wellbeing of his mother-in-law. There are several stories of Jesus' being at home in people's homes – Zacchaeus, Martha and Mary, the Pharisee, Remembering that, call on that presence in prayer for your family!

Part of the busy-ness of our Primary Schools is that we are setting dates on which to provide opportunities for our young Parishioners who missed out on First Reconciliation and First Eucharist last year to celebrate those great Sacraments. Their scheduled celebrations for last year were cancelled because of the COVID lockdown. I imagine that we will be doing something similar to what was permitted for Confirmation at the end of last year – limited numbers permitted in several gatherings for each of the Sacraments.

Another attachment is a point-of-view about Australia Day: it's an important discussion to continue with, I think.

Best wishes and blessings as the return to School puts some structures into our lives: have a good year!

Maurie Cooney (Parish Priest)