

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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PARISH UPDATE 52

Hello everyone!

A Parishioner commented the other day that I seem to keep a close eye on the weather given the number times in a year's span of letters that I have mentioned it. (Nonetheless, autumn is a terrific time of year, don't you think?) Another Parishioner said that the way I write is like the Scottish comedian, Billy Connolly – "you start somewhere, then wander all over the place, and somehow it comes together at the end!"

I suppose a year's supply of weekly Parish Update Letters might give an insight into the approach of the person who is writing them!

What a year! The whole reason for these letters and their attachments is the lockdowns that started a year ago, and the restrictions on gatherings that still continue. What a year! Our ways of being in contact with one another for communication, support, prayer, socialising have been severely altered. And just as the temptation to become casual about it all raises its head, news comes of the suffering in other places, this week in New Guinea. Parishioners with family and friends in other countries are keenly aware all the time of the continuing risks of COVID-19 and its variants.

A two hundred years' block is worth noticing. Catholic Education Week this week is acknowledging the 200th anniversary of Catholic Education in Australia! When the first Priests arrived in Australia, they found that there was a flourishing Christian faith life already here, brought and developed by the early European newcomers. Of course, as recognised and celebrated by Pope John Paul I when he visited, the 40,000+ years of Aboriginal spiritual life is to be held in honour.

The formalisation of Catholic Education into schooling, the commitment of members of Religious Orders and of lay people who were paid almost nothing for their expertise and service faced severe obstacles at times. Mary MacKillop was one of Catholic Education's champions: it had to be outstanding education as well as education in faith.

The development of the vision of 'lifelong education' now reaches through pre-School, through Schooling, to University. This vision is found shaping Parish life through Adult Education resources and local endeavours.

Catholic Education is the mission of the Gospel of Jesus (and so the mission of the Church) in action! An attachment with this letter is a prayer around the anniversary.

Many of those throughout the story of Catholic Education have had St Patrick and the Irish as part of their heritage. His feast came during this week. Do you recall that prayer of his -

*I bind unto myself today
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, his might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need.
The wisdom of my God to teach,*

*His hand to guide, his shield to ward;
The word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.*

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.
Amen*

Another of 'the greats' has a feast during this week, too – St Joseph. Joseph is such a strong figure in the early pages of Luke's and Matthew's gospels, though given very small space. Yet he is a towering figure with so many of the qualities that make up a person of faith. A reflection with this email admires Joseph greatly! Mary MacKillop's community is often referred to as 'the Josephites'. No wonder, given that around her grave at North Sydney are inscribed the words 'In St Joseph's Care I Leave You'.

We're coming into the Fifth (and last) Week of Lent for this year. Remember our Lent Prayer and Reconciliation Services:

- Sacred Heart church: Tuesday 23rd March at 7.30pm
- Emmaus church: Thursday 25th March at 7.30pm

with Individual Confession available following the Prayer.

For all of us this Psalm is an important prayer as we approach Holy Week:

*Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.*

*A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.*

*My offences truly I know them;
my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned:
what is evil in your sight I have done.*

*Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervour sustain me.
O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth shall declare your praise.*

An attachment indicates the times of the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies at Emmaus and at Sacred Heart. **BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL** – details are on that page! We must comply with the COVID-safe restrictions of limited numbers and details for contact tracing!

Good Friday 3pm at both churches are already fully booked:

**>>>>> come to the *Good Friday Stations of the Cross, 11am, Sacred Heart Oval*
– a large number of vacancies still available: *BOOK NOW***

So another Letter done. I hope there was something in there to help you feel 'connected'!

Blessings

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest