

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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PARISH UPDATE 8

Continuing Easter greetings to everyone!

I remember writing way back while we were still in the Season of Lent that this new experience – as it was then – ‘is as though we are being put in a cave away from life as we have known and experienced it. We want to hear the call that Lazarus heard, “Here: come out!”

Six weeks on from then, there have been a few signs this week that ‘the call’ may be getting closer now – the announcements about schools, the permission to visit one another (in limited numbers), some other relaxation in the numbers allowed to do things together, the arguments about AFL restarting.

Now in the Season of Easter (still), there are another couple of images from our story of faith that come to mind. There’s the story of ‘passover’ that reappears through the Old Testament, is shaped anew by Jesus, and proclaimed in the letters of the New Testament. They are stories of ‘passing over’ from one experience into a new, more promising time. The beginning of that is the people’s being pinned down before they head out of that towards the ‘promised land’ with Moses. Easter is all about our passing ‘over’ with Jesus into the new life of his resurrection when that stone at the tomb was rolled away. In a fortnight we will be celebrating Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the ‘passing over’ into that new era of God’s Spirit being the driving influence for our own spirits.

In all of those instances, coming through a ‘passover’ the people live differently in some ways from the time before. I continue to wonder: what parts of this experience of lockdown are we finding to be valuable, that we will keep as new parts of our lives when we’re through this. In the movie ‘Hacksaw Ridge’, the young soldier stood his ground, knowing with great conviction what he believed about life and would live out come what may. Reflect on it, I encourage you: what ‘life values’ am I learning that will continue to be part of my life? What ‘faith values’ have I taken to that I will continue even when we’re allowed back to church? Another book of the Bible, Revelation, presents as an ‘uncovering’ of the way things will be. How do we want things to be given our experience in this virus time?

Amongst the relaxation of numbers permitted at gatherings, there has been small impact on Church life. The numbers allowed at funerals has increased – to twenty. The size of our own Parish means that the restriction on most other gatherings to ten/twenty people means very little to us. We were gathering eighty or so at weekday Mass at Sacred Heart before the lockdown. Our Sunday numbers at Masses in May 2019 were: Emmaus 6.30pm – 430, 9.00am – 340, 11.00am(Iraqi) –

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335; at Sacred Heart we were: 5.00pm – 435, 8.00am – 305, 9.00am(Polish) – 90, 10.15am – 400, 11.30am – 400, 5.00pm(Slovene) – 50. Those are admirably large numbers for our Parish; ominously large, too, when the relaxation of numbers permitted to gather is coming so slowly!

Of course our life of faith is not restricted to our gathering at Mass. There is our prayer, our 'carrying forward the life of Christ under the lead of the abiding Spirit' in all aspects of our lives: and that can be tested in these days of the strange mix of close-to-one-another living at home and separation from one another everywhere else. A dynamic for us as people of faith is that image of 'passover' – always to be reaching forward beyond the current experience.

In the midst of that, *A Simple Prayer*

Lord,
May the day go gently.
May the events of life not overwhelm me,
my anxiety not determine my mood or spirit.
May tasks be done without stress or hurry.
May most expectations be fulfilled by this never to be repeated day.
And may today be a simple and pleasant day;
Free from complexities or dramas, and filled with peace and joy.
For each day, Lord, brings with it the promise of Your support in all that we do.
Amen

And a reflection from Australian writer David Malouf:

Always to be pushing out like this,
beyond what I know cannot be the limits –
what else should a person's life be?
What else should our lives be
but a continual series of beginnings,
of painful settings out into the unknown,
pushing off from the edges of consciousness
into the mystery of what we have not yet become.

'Passover' blessings to all!

Maurie Cooney
(Parish Priest)