

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

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PARISH UPDATE 12

Warming greetings to you!!

A range of native Australian possums, bats, and echidna hibernate for longer and shorter periods during the year, mainly over the winter months –they go inside and save their energy. Now that we've had this week the coldest morning for several years, there's no doubting that the change into this winter season has really come!

Our own usual forms of winter hibernation – staying indoors, keeping rugged up, getting the slow-cooker out for some 'comfort food' – have a sort of tension about them this year. As winter settles in, we really want to go outside and mix with other people even as we turn up the heating at home and 'dress comfy' and settle in front of the screen. With footy starting up and a small number of people being allowed to go along in some places, perhaps we will be allowed out soon??

While we've been largely confined to home over the past few months, there's a new phrase around: watch what you're eating while you're working, studying, playing, getting bored at home – you might be stacking on 'COVID kilos'!

That caution is a variation on the old saying 'You are what you eat'.

It is such a fitting phrase as this weekend our Church celebrates the feast of the Eucharist, the Meal of the Body and Blood of Christ.

There's that other saying that's significant when we think of our gatherings on Saturday nights and Sundays – 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'! We miss gathering at Mass, don't we! The streaming Masses have been a great gift to us, oh yes! Yet we know that it's the gathering with others of faith, in our Parish 'family', to share in the Meal Jesus gave us at the Last Supper, to be energised for the week ahead – this is what Eucharist is about, and this is what we're missing!

Our plan was that our young Parishioners would have been called to step forward and share the Eucharist Meal for the first time at Masses over these weeks. In another Parish a bright First Communicant told me that "it's really like sharing the Jesus Meal now; it used to be like watching them eat in front of others"!

In their preparation our young Parishioners would have become aware that 'Body' talks about someone being really present amongst us, that 'Blood' talks about that person's being really active amongst us.

So much happens as we gather in Eucharist: we're re-introduced to the Lord and one another; we listen to and learn from the experience of our people, the People of God, through the Scripture Readings; we share the Eucharist Meal; we are blessed to go into the new week renewed in the life of Christ. And we head out to be 'other Christs', "for the Mass never ends – it must be lived". For all this, Christ Risen is really present and active for us in Eucharist: thanks be to God!

When will we be allowed to re-gather in Eucharist? The restrictions stay the same at this stage – limiting us to twenty people. Our new 're-opening advisory group' met this

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week and developed a framework that will enable us to have two Masses each weekday and eight Masses on Saturday night/Sunday. We will now establish a 'booking system' using both phone and internet. I'm hoping that I can tell you next week that the system is open and how to use it. It will call for great patience from us all, for it will still enable only a few hundred people to be present while the limit stays at twenty at each Mass.

Following my comments in the last couple of weeks about keeping praying at home, a great collection of seventeen brief prayers came to my desk. Its writer, Michael McGirr says, "Here are 17 images and prayers from recent days. Each one is a reminder to me that Jesus is alive among us wherever we happen to be, whoever we happen to be. They have all been moments of prayer for me." I'm sending them to you with this letter.

A customary 'special collection' at Masses at this time of year is for the works of the St Vincent de Paul Society, 'the Vinnies'. I have such admiration and appreciation for the members of Vinnies! They actually do what we are all called to do – feed the hungry, give shelter to the homeless. "Never see a need without doing something about it" Mary MacKillop tells us. To support the Vinnies this year, through their annual St Vincent de Paul Society Winter Appeal, the best way is by:

- donating online at vinnies.org.au - and here is the link that takes people straight to the Winter Appeal website - <https://bit.ly/2AFtZt1>
- calling with your credit card details **13 18 12** .

'20/20 vision' is the term used to indicate normal sight. In the year 2020 we're having to see things differently from the normal we have known. The really important elements of life remain standard, though. This week's feast proposes many of them as it calls us to reflect on Eucharist: *memorial, community, thanksgiving, sacrifice, reconciliation, presence, covenant, mission, praise, thanksgiving, worship – the presence and action of Jesus Christ in us, amongst us, for us!*

Eucharist blessings to all!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest