

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

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PARISH UPDATE 23

Greetings to everyone!

This isn't a false start to Spring, I hope – it's still early, but there are some promising signs. A friend said to me 'Why are you interested in the weather forecast? It's not as if you're going anywhere!' It's the feeling of Spring that can brighten our spirits, I think – warmer air, bluer skies, longer days. Ah, but this year ... beyond our at-home-with-us families, where are the people to enjoy this change of season with?

Another Parish occasion when we would have gathered Parishioners together went by this week. We had six celebrations scheduled for the Sacrament of First Reconciliation for our young Parishioners and their families. In past years we've explored this Sacrament together by talking about the sport of archery: 'hitting the mark' and 'missing the mark'. There are various reasons why we 'miss the mark' of living out our faith in the ways that Jesus showed and taught. Amongst them is that sometimes we just don't bother trying; we want to get even with someone; we refuse to let go of old hurts and remind that other person of what they did to us; we put up with habits in ourselves of the ways we speak, the attitudes we've developed, the things we keep on doing – even though on closer examination we might admit that they are a bit 'shabby' if we're trying to take the Way of Jesus as 'the mark' we're aiming for.

And all the while, God continues to love us, to call us further into Life – and so forgives us: 'start again, have another go!'

When I've referred to the reflection on an attachment ('Dusty Sins') at Mass, people have asked for a copy. With it are some 'acts of contrition' from the Rite of Penance. Of course it's not only through the Sacrament of Reconciliation that God reaches into our lives with forgiveness. We pray, with trust and confidence, at the beginning of each Mass "Lord, have mercy!" In our own personal prayer, too, we can be touched by God's re-creating forgiveness. 'Examination of conscience' is a helpful part of our Tradition: 'what did I help to go well today?'; 'what did I spoil today because of my attitude, speech, action?'

This Sunday, the last one of August, is named Social Justice Sunday in our Church each year. Our Australian Catholic Bishops publish a 'Social Justice Statement', choosing a particular issue to explore each year. This year's Social Justice Statement is: *To Live Life to the Full: Mental Health in Australia Today*.

The Statement calls us to enable all people to an abundant life that engages the whole self physically, psychologically, and spiritually. It acknowledges that God created us all out of love and for love to live life to the full in community. It examines how our social, economic and cultural life can be welcoming and inclusive of those who live with mental ill-health. Understanding mental health will help us to be aware of those who need our support. The Statement encourages us to reject stigmatisation, to work for the transformation of social determinants of mental ill-health, and to call for policies and service provision that meets the needs of the poorest and most marginalised members of our community.

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It also offers ways of supporting people when they are most vulnerable, and it explores how to sow hope and opportunities for all people to thrive in body, mind and spirit. In the attachments with this letter are a 3-page introduction to the Statement, a Prayer related to the issue, and the full text of the Statement. You can download the Statement at http://bit.ly/SocialJustice_2020.

Coincidentally, this week's Word of God indicates that encounter with Christ – which we have been taught about over the past three weeks - is to be carried into action, broadly described as 'walking the way of Christ'. Our faith is to be lived in action, not left at feelings of the heart or words of acclamation in our worship. At the end of Mass, don't we always say "The Mass never ends, it must be lived ... !"

Following his teaching last week that 'every person is a person of dignity', Pope Francis continues this week to say "giving priority to the wellbeing of the poor and marginalised is not a political or ideological choice; it lies at the very heart of the Gospel." He relates that to ensuring that a vaccine for COVID-19 must be available to all people, not just those who will be able to afford it. See attachment for his comments.

Our annual contributions to Project Compassion are one of the ways we reach out to others. The report for this year indicates that "*The people of Melbourne contributed **\$1.216 million** this year - a truly outstanding result which speaks to generosity, and the willingness of so many people. To put this year's figure in context, it compares with the \$1.524 million donated in 2019, a very different time when many of us were in very different personal circumstances.*" Well done!

The next set of Thanksgiving Envelopes went into the mail today. We're hearing of long delays in delivery – hopefully they will be with you by the end of next week when they are scheduled to commence. Our Direct Debit, Credit Card and CDF Pay contributors continue – thank you! See another attachment for info about this and a couple of other notices.

The final attachment this week comes from one of our Colleges, CRC Sydenham. It is a reflection on this experience of 'what we're going through': "We are in the same storm, but not in the same boat".

Best wishes and blessings to all! May true Spring come soon!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest.