

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

11th September 2020

PARISH UPDATE 25

Greetings everyone!

As the Psalmist (no.13) cried out:

“How long O Lord, how long?
How long O Lord must I wrestle with my stress everyday?
Look on me and answer O God –
bring light to my darkness before I fall.
I trust ... give me your strength of spirit!”

Did you feel like that with the Premier’s announcements on Sunday about extending the lockdown. Of course we want to ‘stay the course’ and come through this – but ‘how long’?? In his presentation to the Fathers’ Day Breakfast at our Catholic Regional College St Albans last Friday, Tim Costello acknowledged “everyone is a fragile human trying to get by – let’s find ways together to do this”.

His presentation was directed to families of the College, with examples from his own life that he had some understanding of their situations. If you would like to see that, enter < <https://twitter.com/TimCostello> fathers day 2020 > into your search engine: it goes for 18 minutes.

Also from CRC St Albans this week came ‘Beatitudes for these times’ – see attachment. One of the original sets – Matthew’s gospel has one, Luke’s has another – was the Gospel Reading for Wednesday of this week. The CRC version remind us of the importance of seemingly small things we can do ... that can have great effect for others. That’s also expressed in another attachment ‘Simple measures’. The writer recalls the Old Testament story of Naaman who was disappointed when the prophet Elisha advised him to do just a few small things to mend his situation – he was looking for grand gestures.

The Premier’s announcement last Sunday about ‘safe and steady steps’ to take us through the restrictions in place has continuing impact on Parish life. There is no change to the way we are celebrating Mass (those details and other examples are on an attachment again).

With the indication that larger numbers will not be permitted indoors at least up to the end of the year, we will not be permitted to offer First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation to our young Parishioners and their families this year. The Principals of our Catholic Parish Primary Schools and I will include that in our planning for 2021 as soon those restrictions are eased. The Principals of our CRCs at St Albans, North Keilor and Caroline Springs have indicated that they will work with Parishes to facilitate celebrations of Confirmation during 2021.

One of the features of Parish life over the years (for over 50 years!) is our annual Parish Fair held usually in mid-November. The Fair Committee this week acknowledged the

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regrettable position that the Parish Fair will not be permitted this year because of the limits on numbers allowed to gather. Fran, the leader of the Committee, writes: "The possibilities of having an early social event (BBQ, Picnic etc.) in the Parish in the New Year 2021 would be appealing to our Parish and hopefully able to proceed without the rules, curfews and other safety issues we have at present. I am hoping that with all our energy we can be part of organising and being part of such a day of celebration."

This week has been 'Child Protection Week'. An attachment contains a message from the Archbishop and information about the establishment of a Child Safety Committee for our Parish. The Committee has been formed in line with the position of the Archdiocese. We have a Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct for our Parish – these were announced earlier in the year with copies on our church noticeboards. The plan had been to address these developments at Masses over several weeks during the Easter season, including the impact this has for all involved in all ministries in our Parish – that the Code of Conduct is to be signed by everyone, and a Working With Children card is required. Implementation of this will be part of our 'formation for ministry' processes that we were intending to have during this year, which will now be held as soon as we are permitted to gather again.

A central part of the teaching and action of Jesus is 'forgiveness'. This is how God is, Jesus repeatedly taught and showed in his encounters. At the end of another attachment is a photo of a carving on Chartres Cathedral in France. When I first saw it I thought it was a depiction of God's forgiveness, perhaps from the parable of The Prodigal Son/The Forgiving Father. However it's titled 'Creation'. And that's what forgiveness does – forgiving someone creates a new beginning: things can start again as they are intended to be!

In this weekend's Gospel Reading Peter acknowledges that this forgiving attitude and action are to be part of our lives, too. For we are part of 'the people of God', we are 'of Christ' – and so we, too, forgive. This will be a new beginning for both the person forgiven and for the person who does the forgiving. Peter also know that this is not so easy! The attachment explores what forgiveness is and, importantly, what it is not.

Thursday's weather has been great Springtime weather – I hope you were able to enjoy at least a little of it:

*May the gentleness of Spring soften the tensions within us
and the calmness of Spring steady and strengthen us.*

May the beauty of spring open us to the mystery of nature.

*Let the music of the birds and the richness of the colours delight us;
and the simplicity of our natural surroundings reassure us.*

May our ever-creating God continue to us to bless us and be our inspiration.

Amen, Amen, Amen!

Best wishes to all!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest

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