

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

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PARISH UPDATE 26

Hello Everyone!

When we heard this week that the restrictions for regional and rural Victoria are being eased, I wondered if some of us Melbourne people might have reached back into our playlists for these words, especially with 'school holidays' (!!) starting this weekend:

*Stuck inside these four walls, / sent inside forever, / never seeing no one / nice again
like you, / Mama you, mama you. / If I ever get out of here, / if we ever get outta of
here*

Where are those words from? They're the opening words of that 1973 song 'Band on the Run' (*Paul McCartney and Wings*)! If you remember Letters 16 and 17 when I referred to George Harrison (Beatle) that might suggest which era is my reference point for popular music!

However the music I have playing most at my desk comes from a jazz website with all sorts of styles available. Yesterday they advertised two new opportunities to tune to: 'Holiday Jazz' and 'Holiday Smooth Jazz' – as I write they are currently playing 'Frosty the Snowman' and 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town'!

For a quite different perspective, this month's issue of 'Far East' includes an order form for the 2021 Columban Calendar with its classical religious artwork. The calendar is a favourite of many Parishioners, usually available at our Piety Stalls. I'm including the order form as an attachment with this letter – just in case the Piety Stalls aren't allowed to open in time.

When will our churches open? Another attachment is a letter from Archbishop Comensoli with references – but no answers – to that continuing question. He clearly identifies the disturbance that we're feeling (and that 'Band of the Run' expresses!).

Our Schools and Colleges will be opening in stages next term. One of their questions is about how to arrange for end-of-year activities and ceremonies, particularly with those levels where this is such a significant transition time, like Year 6 and Year 12. As one of our first-year teachers said to me during the week, "They didn't prepare us for this at University!" Nor did the experience of our older staff members. Nor did the 'how to be a good parent' seminars and books. And how all have managed that so well!

While taking charge as best we can, we still have to be in the 'wait and see' mode. In another attachment the writer reflects on the expression 'it is what it is' – a grim giving-in, or a making-the-most-of-where we are'.

As the Archbishop says in his letter, we're missing the strength and hope that gathering for Eucharist can give us. One of the Columban Fathers reflects on an attached article 'How can we be people of Eucharist if there is no Eucharist?'. He recalls that essential parts of our Eucharist are our listening to the Word of God and reaching beyond ourselves to support and enjoy the company of those around us.

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As well as tuning in to streaming or TV Mass, are you finding your way into reading and praying over parts of Scripture? Are you 'listening' during some prayer time? Are you being a support to those around you? These are questions through which we can still be 'Eucharist people' somewhat, even though we are not sharing the Lord's Last Supper meal physically present with one another. (There's a prayer/reflection about 'listening' attached.)

Some of the characters in the Gospel Reading for this Sunday feel that 'it's not fair!' It's Jesus' parable about the workers in the vineyard who had been hard at it all day, and others who turned up late in the day – and everyone was paid the same.

This teaching was recorded in Matthew's Gospel when there was great antagonism between the Jews who became followers of Jesus and the non-Jews, the 'Gentiles' who also had become disciples of Jesus. Jewish Christians looked at their long history of hardship preparing for the coming of the Messiah. And, now, here were these Gentiles who had done nothing by comparison, and God was granting them the same welcome into the Kingdom! The First Reading names it: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways – it is the Lord who speaks! ... The heavens are as high above earth as My ways are above your ways, My thoughts above your thoughts."

'But we know the way things should run', we might protest.

However this can be really Good News for us if we haven't been perfect all through our lives, and are a bit like those 'slackers' who turned up late – God welcomes us all into the New Life that Christ brings: think of Zacchaeus, for example! Think of the wayward son who returns and is embraced by his father! Thank God that God's ways are different from ours!

We thank You that heaven is not earth, and especially that Your grace does not abide by our rules. We are grateful that Your ways are not ours!

This weekend is named as Catholic Social Services Sunday. It draws to our attention the 7,000 committed staff and 17,000 volunteers across Victoria in 45 Catholic organisations and the 200,000 people they together work to serve each year. The prayer from their recent seminar is included in one of the attachments.

A change this weekend is that our Schools and Colleges, their staffs, students and their families go into 'school holidays'! That does that mean this time? All of us seem to change gear in the usual school holidays, including those who have no direct connection with a School. Remember that: if things have become a bit too stressed, try to take a break from this 'usual' for the next couple of weeks. And then we'll see what lies ahead!

Best wishes and blessings to all!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest