

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

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PARISH UPDATE 30

Greetings, everyone!

Another song from my late 1960s-1970s playlist came back to me during this week. Joni Mitchell sings “you don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone” in the strangely titled song *Big Yellow Taxi*. She was singing about preserving the natural environment that we’re part of, having gone back to a favourite holiday spot, and seeing a carpark from the window in place of the lush fern forest that used to be there.

The song came back to me as I heard many of our Principals and teachers saying this week how the children were telling them how good School is and how glad they were to be back at School! Imagine!

(If Joni Mitchell isn’t to your taste, that line is also included in *Winter in America* by Doug Ashdown!)

We are all experiencing that sense of loss while we’re still not permitted to gather on Saturday night/Sunday together to celebrate Eucharist. One of our Parishioners expressed it this way during the week as she dropped off her Thanksgiving Envelopes: “It will be so wonderful coming together again, from all that has happened this year , to once again come together as a family for Mass. We’re a community at Mass where all belong, no matter our age, our differences - we have our place sharing the Eucharist as family. I don’t just mean the ‘social’ aspect: I mean the strength and reassurance that comes from being with others who are on this path of faith with you.”

At our Schools and Colleges our Principals tell me that as well as attending to the ‘wellbeing’ of students as they usually do, they are particularly focusing on that in these early weeks of return. It’s coincidental that this week of return coincides with ‘Mental Health Awareness Week’. In the best of times we know in our lives joy, happiness and togetherness and also pain, failure and fear. When our lives are thrown out of their rhythm – as our knowledge of the coronavirus has increased and the lockdown has forced us to change from our patterns - the balance in our lives can go awry: and it’s that balance that we need to keep us more-or-less on an even keel. When that balance is gone, we can ‘lose our grip’.

The First Reading set for Wednesday’s Mass this week said, “What the Spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control.” To live that way always is a pretty tall order, isn’t it? Remember, though that we have been Baptised, in Confirmation we have had the life of the Spirit stirred anew in us, we are renewed in that in Eucharist. However that doesn’t guarantee a straightforward, trouble-free life in all circumstances, does it? An attachment with this letter indicates a long list of where some services are available if you want to reach out for support: *Digital and telephone supports for mental health*

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during COVID-19. Another attachment includes some prayers we can all make, perhaps for ourselves.

In the Gospel Reading in two weeks' time, Jesus teaches that we are to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. Yes: love yourself! Take care of yourself!

Coming up this Sunday is the tenth anniversary of the canonisation of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. The first moves for Mary's being named as a Saint for the whole Church began in 1926, so soon after her death in 1909. After some previously lost documents were recovered, the process re-started, naming Mary in stages as 'Heroic', 'Venerable', 'Blessed', and now 'Saint' for the whole Church. In attachments with this letter there is a 'thumbnail sketch' with a broad outline of Mary's life, a reflection for these times of the virus, and some reflections/prayers from her and in relation to her.

To celebrate this anniversary of the canonisation of Saint Mary MacKillop, there is a free copy available of "*Encountering St Mary MacKillop in Prayer*", which urges us to "take fresh courage..." as Mary did so often. These prayers share details of her personal journey, highlighting Mary's values and spirit, and offering prayers and blessings for our modern world. To order a free copy go to:

www.marymackilloptoday.org.au/prayer-book or phone 02 8912 2777.

For our whole Church, this is 'Mission Sunday', too, reminding us of the injunction from Jesus to 'go to all nations'. In an attachment there is a brief statement from Pope Francis on this. And another article from the Far East in an attachment suggests that in these lockdown days we can be 'missionary' by making efforts to 'stay in touch' with one another. That's what mission is about, isn't it – going out beyond ourselves. As that forthcoming gospel will say: "love your neighbour as you love yourself". And as that ancient Chinese philosopher, Confucius, said: "Love means wanting the other to live". And then doing things to make that happen – in the small things as well as the big picture matters when the opportunity comes.

The central part of Jesus' message is that of 'hope' – which then shapes the whole of Christian faith. As we wait for this weekend's announcements about the easing of restrictions, let's keep strong in hope – for which we have to be courageous, as Mary MacKillop teaches, in the present.

Blessings to all

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest