

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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PARISH UPDATE 31

Greetings to everyone

Great disappointment, expressed by many following the Premier's announcements last weekend: there was nothing there to enable us to gather again in our churches for Eucharist. And great frustration with the inconsistencies across the various regulations. Amongst that, perhaps the easing of the distance limit to 25km has enabled you to be in face-to-face contact with some family members again after so long. One Parishioner is relieved that she can now clear the silverbeet from her garden and take it to her mother-in-law!

Our 'Re-opening Team' met during the week to ensure that arrangements are in place for us to gather at our churches when these restrictions are eased. I dearly hope that I can tell you about that in next week's letter!

An attachment with this letter is headed 'Don't let go when life seems too hard', reflecting that that can be hard work itself!

A letter from one of the Vatican departments expresses how important gathering for Eucharist is: 'we cannot live, be Christians' without it! That is included in an attachment.

Straight away that raises again the vexed issue that even in 'the good times' many people are denied the Eucharist because of our own limitations on the ordination of Priests who could lead us in Eucharist. They are Baptised by lay catechists, and we don't follow through by providing the opportunity of Eucharist! And there's the basic insistence by St Paul that in the community of the Church we are not to separate those who can and those who can't!

Our Church teaches that we experience the 'real presence' of Christ in Eucharist through the Holy Meal, through the proclamation of the Word of God, through the company of one another's faith, and through the Priest who leads our gathering. We experience the presence and action of God in our lives in many ways outside Eucharist – in our prayer, in our taking in the Word of God in the Scriptures, in our being 'like Christ' with others, in our looking for signs in our world of God's Spirit. Thankfully we can experience that still in lockdown.

The Gospel Reading for this Sunday is the one where Jesus responds that the greatest commandment is to love God, those around us, and ourselves. I continue to find the explanation of the ancient Chinese philosopher, Confucius, helpful. 'Love' he said, 'means wanting something to live – and acting that way.' St John writes 'If you say that you love God and I don't see you love your neighbor, then I will call you a liar!' Our love for God will show up in our actions, attitudes, thoughts, the way we speak.

St John elsewhere writes that the first love is God's love for us. In Confucius' terms, that means that God wants us to live, and acts accordingly. Consequently Jesus can say

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“I have come that you may have life and have it to the full”. Jesus’ coming amongst us is God’s great act of love!

All the ministries in our Parish are a response to this. We know that we are parts of ‘the Body of Christ’, and we express that in our involvement in ministry by reaching into others’ lives: that they may have life. Whatever ministry you are part of, you are enabling ‘life’ to happen more than if you were not involved – and this surely is the work of Christ!

Last week was Carer’s Week. Now there’s an example of love expressed in action! So many in so many ways care for those around them. There’s an attachment with this letter - ‘A Prayer of Celebration and Thanksgiving in Carer’s Week’.

Following the mention in last week’s letter of the tenth anniversary of the canonisation of Mary MacKillop, a Parishioner asked for some information about Mary’s life. There would be others, too, who have come to us in recent years and may not be familiar with her story. An attachment with this letter gives ‘15 things to know about St Mary MacKillop’.

You may recall that a few months ago the weekly Letter had some information about changes in the governance and administration of Catholic Education in our Archdiocese. The basic change is that Parish Priests will no longer be the ‘employer and manager’ of Parish Primary Schools and Regional Colleges. This role is being transferred to a company that has been set up – Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS). This is an outcome of the Royal Commission and of Government expectations and regulations. Priests have been involved in several rounds of consultation throughout the year. The final stages are underway with documents being prepared that will underpin the change. Parish life and the Priests will continue to be part of our Schools and Colleges in their pastoral, faith development and Sacramental roles for staff, students and their families. An attachment with this letter has the Archbishop’s announcement about the establishment of MACS.

This weekend is a long weekend, with the public holiday on Friday – whatever that means in these circumstance of continuing restrictions!!!! The title of that attachment I mentioned above is so important – ‘Don’t let go when life seems too hard!’

Best wishes and blessings to all!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest.