

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

13th November 2020

PARISH UPDATE 34

Greetings all!

Thankfully, the Premier's announcements last Sunday have enabled us to take a few small steps towards opening our churches for gatherings of our people for Eucharist! He indicated that there are likely to be more steps to be taken in a fortnight's time.

For the time being, we have put in place a schedule for 13 Masses each week – one each morning Tuesday to Saturday at Sacred Heart (20 people permitted inside), and 8 on Saturday evening/ Sunday morning at both our churches (50 people permitted, outside, except for the 5pm at Sacred Heart which will be inside – 20 people permitted – which will be streamed). Bookings have to be made for all Masses.

See the attachment with this letter for details, and for instructions for making bookings. I'm anticipating that in a couple of weeks, there will be some changes to this.

Members of our Baptism Team have now begun to contact those families who have been on the waiting list since March for us to re-commence Baptisms.

Do you recall that last weekend's Gospel Reading advised us to 'be prepared'? After you've booked in for a Mass, keep on eye on the weather and kit yourself up with sunscreen and/or sunhat and/or umbrella and/or coat and/or scarf ... !!

A highlight of the week has been that our VCE students gathered on Monday for the largest exam they are undertaking – English. After the year that we have had, it is huge "Congratulations!" to those students, their parents and other family members, the staff of our Colleges: for having guided and supported our young people to get to this stage. So many interruptions, so many adaptations, so many new strategies – always focused on the wellbeing of all and on the belief in the potential of all that can show forth when called for!

An attachment with this letter comes from an English magazine (*The Tablet, the International Catholic Weekly*). It speaks of the experience of a school in England as it reassembled after the first virus lockdown there back in September. If you just change the name in the article ('St Cuthbert's') to Catholic Regional College (St Albans/Caroline Springs/ North Keilor/Sydenham/Melton) or to Sacred Heart/Emmaus/Cana Catholic Parish Primary School, it is clear that our Schools and Colleges are world class in their focus on the whole education of our young people – demonstrated this year in such demanding circumstances!

That article refers to "a charming little book chock full of wisdoms called *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*". A few examples:

"Sometimes," said the Horse. "Sometimes what?" asked the Boy. "Sometimes just getting up and carrying on is brave and magnificent."

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" "Kind," said the boy."

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Another couple of quotes came to mind during the week. Following *that* election 'over there', I remembered Winston Churchill's saying: "No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government - except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

Which brings to mind G.K. Chesterton's saying: "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried."

November began with the feast of All Saints. Nelson Mandela is quoted as saying "I am not a saint, unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying." That's similar to what Justel reminded us of at Mass on the Feast: we are practising Catholics, and we're going to keep on practising until we get it right!

This 'keeping on trying' approach to our lives of faith continues for these last three weekends of the Church's year – Advent begins on 29th November! This Sunday's Gospel reading is the one about 'using the talents you have been given'. The following Sunday gives us that picture of our presenting ourselves to the kingdom of heaven, and being asked 'What did you do when I was hungry? And thirsty? And down-hearted?'

In November we remember and give thanks for those 'saints' who have been part of our lives. Whether they have been recognised formally by the official Church or not, there are remarkable 'saints' who have influenced our lives and left their mark on them. Another attachment with this letter reflects on that: 'we connect with people of the past whose presence has touched our lives'.

As November continues and we keep remembering those who have died and gone ahead of us, there was this strong proclamation in last Sunday's Second Reading, so reassuring when we wonder about death:

We want you to be quite certain, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him. (1 Thess 4:13)

Again, let's hold in our prayer our young people in the midst of VCE and university exams: *Bless them with calmness of spirit, hopefulness of heart, and thankfulness for those who have guided them this far: LORD HEAR US.*

Blessings to all, urging forward in hope as we emerge slowly into further freedoms!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest