

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

20th November 2020

PARISH UPDATE 35

Greetings, all!

As I write, I'm looking out the window to great holidaying weather – alas, not the time for that ... yet!

There are signs that we are heading quickly to the end of the year, though, aren't there? Christmas is decorating the shopping centres, TV ads are using it to get us spending.

Last Sunday was scheduled to be our annual Parish Fair Day, always at this time of year. Instead of that we had our first Masses outdoors – set up at Sacred Heart in the place where in other years the Trash & Treasure stall had crowds gathering early on Sunday morning to snap up the bargains.

Masses commenced outdoors at Emmaus, too. There the chairs that had been set out were quickly stacked and taken under cover when the rain came, then set up again, and then taken in again, and then ... the wind!!

At Sacred Heart we had to scurry for any sort of cover just as we were praying the 'Our Father' before Communion; then got sunburned as we were setting the chairs out again, and then got blown apart during the next Mass. Saturday evening's Masses were in near-perfect conditions – including the quietness at Emmaus with the road closed off and trains cancelled!

We will have the same schedule repeated this weekend (21-22 November) – see attachment for details - bookings are essential. The hope is that numbers permitted for 'places of worship' will be eased further in announcements this Sunday: if so we will be back inside our churches in a limited way. Our cleaning teams have been at work in both churches, the aircon has been serviced. I will send an email early in the week if changes are being allowed.

Baptisms have commenced again! Some families had completed the required preparations back in March, and are only now permitted (with limited numbers present) to present their children for initiation into the life of Christ and of the Church community of faith through the Sacrament. New enquiries about Baptisms have begun to come in.

And we had a wedding last weekend and another coming up on Saturday – couples content to proceed in the recent (slight) relaxation of restrictions.

The current newsletter from the MSCs (see attachment) opens with a Christmas greeting, and quickly extends into a reflection on "how we will (the Church) be 'on the other side' ... it will undoubtedly be a different world".

Another attachment, 'Nurturing Resilience', presents a more personal reflection on the experience we are coming to as restrictions are eased little-by-little: the experience of being aware and careful 'so that we can build up a new life, remembering what we have learned in the past months', perhaps for the long-term.

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The writer was the Bishop of Mauritius and former Primate of the Anglican Church of the Indian Ocean recently appointed as the Archbishop of Canterbury's Personal Representative to the Holy See. I like being reminded to think broadly when considering 'the Church'!

This weekend is the annual feast of 'Christ the King'. It signals that the current 'liturgical year' (A) is ending, with the next year (B) about to begin on the following weekend with the Season of Advent and its purple colour.

(By the way, how do you work out if it's Year A or B or C? You add up the digits of the current calendar year – 2020=4, 2021=5, 2022=6; the Year whose digits add up to a number that is evenly able to be divided by 3 is named as 'C', and the others fit in around that in the A-B-C sequence!!! Now that's trivia for you!)

With Advent (the first Sunday of the new Church Year B) starting on Sunday week, that makes this weekend something of a 'New Year's Eve' for the community of the Church. That suggests the custom of making New Year's resolutions.

The name of the feast and its Readings offer the basis on which we might consider being renewed in our life of faith next year. The title itself and the Second Reading name Jesus Christ as the centre of our world view – be resolved to focus on that anew next year. The First Reading and the Responsorial Psalm suggest that the way of this Christ is that of 'shepherding the flock'. The Gospel demands bluntly the way that this faith in Christ is to show: "when I was hungry, what did you do?", "when I was a stranger, what did you do?", when I was lonely and broken-hearted, what did you do?"

To have this Gospel reading on the feast of Christ the King is a powerful reminder of how Jesus envisaged the Kingdom of God. For Jesus, the Kingdom is not a rule of power and status but the reign of justice and peace for even the lowliest.

It is a fitting conclusion to liturgical year A as we consider 'New Year's resolutions' for our being people of faith. As St Ignatius said (and it is quoted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no.2834): "Pray as though everything depends on God; and at the same time act as though everything depends on you." Resolve to be 'new' in those two basic elements of our faith in Year B!

Let's continue to hold in our prayer our young people, their families, and their College staffs as they come through their 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.*

One of our Colleges took a quote from Martin Luther King Jnr to express admiration and appreciation to all our School and College people: "The ultimate measure of a person is not where they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge and controversy".

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

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest