

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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4 Winifred Street
ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

4th March 2022

Greetings again everyone!

COVID regulations have been eased for churches:

- Masks are not obligatory.
 - *(The exception for masks is for those who are 'ministers of Holy Communion' at Mass, and the Priests – masks are required for that ministry.)*
- QR or manual check-in is no longer required.
- Indication of vaccination status is not required.

WELCOME IN, EVERYONE!

The 'big event' this week in Parish life has been Ash Wednesday. Large numbers gathered in our churches, nudging 500 for the evening Mass at Emmaus !!

There's renewal happening – our feeling more at ease about gathering in our churches. It may also be suggesting that we're going to appreciate this opportunity to 'take Lent seriously together'. See a reflection for the beginning of Lent later in this letter.

People came for other gatherings, too: in four funerals this week we handed those deceased into the new life of Resurrection – which will take hold of us all a little more in our Holy Week-Easter liturgies. We had two very joyous weddings. There were two extra Masses last Saturday for First Communion children. During the coming week we have three gatherings for children in our Cana School for their first experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Fr Peter Hudson and Fr Tom Cleary are joining us for those) – this is the final 'catch-up' from postponements caused by last year's COVID lockdowns.

There are many signs around that we are emerging! And there continue to be amongst us those who suffer from COVID and its effects – we hold you in our prayer.

Looking beyond ourselves, what distress through the floods in Queensland and New South Wales! And Ukraine and Russia! This prayer comes from our Australian Bishops:

PRAYER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN UKRAINE

God of peace and justice,
who can change the hardened heart
and break the power of violence,
we entrust the people of Ukraine to you.

Protect them in this time of peril;
let them know not death but life,
not slavery but freedom.

You are Father of all;
we are brothers and sister.

Give us the strength
to live that truth in love,
choosing peace not war.

Amen.

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Yes, Lent has begun. What a great 'new beginning' it will be if we use Lent as a time for re-consideration of 'coming to Mass', 'celebrating Eucharist together'.

Our being a Parish comes from the sense of community and the experience of being together in our worship, our listening to the Word of God, our sharing in the Meal of the Lord, and our together committing to be on the mission of the Gospel as disciples of the Lord. This is who we are: part of the 'People of God', parts of the 'Body of Christ' – we identify as that and grow as that so much when we gather in the celebration of Eucharist!

This reflection at the beginning of Lent knows that we are people of faith, that we have Jesus Christ as Presence and Life, that we do live in the way of the Gospels – and continues with a perspective for Lent:

We are people of faith, but not completely yet. We know Jesus Christ, but not altogether yet. We live in the way of the gospels, but not perfectly yet. The Season of Lent focuses us on the incompleteness of our lives of faith, with the invitation to continue to grow in faith, in knowledge of the Lord, and in action for the sake of the gospel of Christ. We can achieve all this, because the grace of Christ will be renewed in us.

Step out of your routine; and look into that routine - are you happy with it?

The Season of Lent has begun for our Church during the past week – it calls us to five weeks of humble and honest reflection and renewal in the life of Christ, which we will celebrate anew at Easter. The Season's first Sunday invites us to 'go into the wilderness' away from our usual patterns and to begin to reflect on our lives in relation to God's love for us.

There's a chance that the call to repentance during the Season of Lent may not move us much – we might argue that it doesn't really apply to us.

For we are not bad people. We try to live decent lives, do our jobs, solve our problems, make ends meet, and deal with people fairly. Oh, we have our faults and are in no way perfect, but we are basically good people trying to make the best of it – our paths are pretty straight.

..... Have a closer look. Most of us usually consider ourselves 'decent' because we basically have no *major* moral failings. But like a house that is neat but left untouched for a little while, we may not notice that a fine layer of dust has settled in the nooks and crannies of our lives. The sins of good people are 'dusty' kinds of sins, rarely noticed without a closer look: complacency, smugness, gossiping, repeated procrastination, taking people for granted, self-preoccupation, chronic complaining, envy, pettiness, rudeness, ingratitude, laziness, not putting out a hand to help someone when the need and the chance are there.

Dust! Soft, fine dust – settled into the corners and cracks in our lives: not making them bad lives, not listed in the Ten commandments perhaps - but not really 'loving one another as Christ loves'. ... sinful conditions that are in need of repentance.

Mass Times:

Sacred Heart

Tuesday—Friday	7.30am
Saturday	9.00am, 5.00pm
Sunday	7.30am, 10.30am
Sunday	Polish 9.00am
Slovene 2nd Sunday of month	at 5.00pm

Emmaus Church

Saturday	6.30pm
Sunday	9.00am

LENT

Lent Prayer and Reconciliation

Wednesday 6th April: Emmaus at 7.30pm
Thursday 7th April: Sacred Heart at 7.30pm

Stations of the Cross

Fridays during Lent: Sacred Heart at 7.15pm

Sacrament of Reconciliation:

Sacred Heart English Saturday 10.30am
Maltese every 4th Saturday 4.00pm

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So much in our lives: this prayer from St John Henry Newman might be a 'steadier':

May God support us all the day long,
till the shades lengthen and the evening comes,
and the busy world is hushed,
and the fever of life is over,
and our work is done!

Then, in His mercy may he give us
safe lodging,
a holy rest,
and peace at last, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

(St John Henry Newman Sermon, 1843)

Best wishes and blessings to all!

Yours sincerely

Maurie Cooney
(Parish Priest)