

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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PARISH UPDATE 47

Greetings all!

Another start to the 'new year' came into place during the week. Our Colleges and Schools have begun to assemble their total communities to celebrate Eucharist together – for the first time in almost a year after COVID-safe restrictions. I was part of two such gatherings – at Catholic Regional College Sydenham, and Catholic Regional College North Keilor.

Here is a strong expression of the identity of our Colleges as 'Catholic' – that we celebrate Eucharist together. This is why so many of us continue to grieve the loss of the opportunity to gather in our churches each Sunday: for it is an essential element of Eucharist – that we are *together* to share the Word, to be encouraged by one another's faith, to partake of the Meal of Eucharist.

Sydenham has as its theme for this year "Never pass by a person in need, for you may be the hand of God to them (Proverbs 3:27)". North Keilor will be focussing throughout the year on 'Respect' as one of its core values.

In this context, both gatherings provided an easy opportunity to refer to Pope Francis' teaching last year titled (in Italian) *Fratelli Tutti* - 'Brothers and sisters all!' Francis wants us to acknowledge that whatever the particular make-up of each of us, we are in this experience of life together. And we should be living this way. His worldview includes all elements of God's creation in this: and so he talks about the environment, for example. He argues that big-picture planning and activity are to express that we are 'brothers and sisters' – through international relations, through economic activity, through government policies; and through the attitudes and behaviours of all individuals with one another. An attachment with this letter has a very brief overview of the document.

Another 'new year' comes to us at the end of this week. On Friday it is 'lunar new year', and all around St Albans there will be the sounds of fireworks and music. You may have noticed from the attachments with these letters over the months that I find the magazine from the Columbians, *The Far East*, to be a good read. Attached with this letter is an article from the current issue 'Who knows what this year holds?', referring to the lunar new year as it asks that demanding question.

And wait there's more! Our next preparation for Easter begins next week with Ash Wednesday – that signals the beginning of the Season of Lent, that period of renewal that culminates in our celebrating our life in Christ through Holy Week into Easter. What forms will our ceremonies be allowed to take this year? Already we know that our Good Friday Stations of the Cross will not be held in the shopping strip along Alfrieda Street this year. We are making plans for an acceptable alternative. I don't hear any signals that the numbers will be changing soon of people allowed to gather in 'places of worship' – our permitted numbers remain at 160: that is why it is essential to book. We must comply with regulations, and it is considerate of others to let them have the chance to book, too. See attachment for 'how to book'.

We will have **four Parish Masses on Ash Wednesday**. Our Schools will have further gatherings on the day. The times of our Parish Masses are:

Sacred Heart – 7.30am and 7.00pm; Emmaus – 9.30am and 7.00pm. BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL.

Next week's letter will contain more on our participation in the Season of Lent. For now, blessings to all for calmness and hopefulness!

Maurie Cooney (Parish Priest)