

# SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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## PARISH UPDATE 60

Hello everyone!

Continuing Easter greetings to everyone – for the last time this year!

This coming weekend has the feast of the Ascension, followed the weekend after with Pentecost. As one of the prayers of Sunday's Mass puts it: 'Christ has now moved beyond our sight, not to abandon us but to be our hope'. Ascension opens that transition to the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout our lives.

One of the activities during the month of May in the Catholic Church throughout Australia has been the annual MassCount – conducted in churches at all Saturday night/Sunday Masses of the number of people who are present at Mass across four weekends. Over the years this data has given an estimate of what is happening with Church attendance, and has given broad assistance to those who plan for application of the resources of the Church. This planning looks at current participation and also at 'trends' by comparing figures year by year.

This is another activity that the pandemic has affected. In our Parish we are restricted to allowing 190 people into our churches for each Mass. Last year we were in lockdown and were allowed five people for each Mass. For the last 'proper' MassCount we had an average of 2352 people at Masses on the weekends of May 2019. So useful comparisons can't be made with data from 2020 and 2021.

Two new elements in the MassCount that have been introduced for this year are that this weekend we are asked to estimate the male/female mix. And then the following week we will be asking those present to indicate their ages (within 10-year cohorts)! In 'normal' circumstances these figures would have some point after several years – to see if any 'trends' are showing. (One Parishioner 'of a certain age' told me that she won't be booking in for Mass on the weekend when we collect data on age: "that's my business," she said!)

Our Baptism Preparation Team is meeting this week to re-start a regular roster and a regular inclusion of part of the Baptism ceremony in Saturday night/Sunday Masses. We will invite the parents and the godparents to a weekend Mass and introduce them to the community, then sign the child-to-be-baptised with the Cross and the Oil of Catechumens. On the first and third Sundays of each month we will proceed with all the other elements of Baptism (centring on the pouring of Water) at 12noon at either Sacred Heart or Emmaus church, when parents can invite family and friends to join in and celebrate. This is a great Ministry – opening the way for families further into the life of Christ and the life of the Church!

You will remember that in Letter 58 I shared with you information about the Archbishop's plan to group Parishes together into what he is calling 'Missions'. Fr Gerard Keith, Parish Priest next door at Resurrection, Kings Park, has invited the Parish Priests of the Parishes in our area to discuss this "so that we're active in the play and not overrun by it". Great initiative, Gerard!

Another reorganisation that is nearing completion is the Archbishop's creation of a company (Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools – MACS) to oversee, monitor and manage Catholic Education in the Archdiocese. This was mandated by the State Government following recommendations from the Royal Commission into abuse. Important elements in this re-structuring are that Parish Priests are no longer the employers of staff in Catholic Schools; and the establishment of School Advisory Councils for each School and College. These Councils are to be in place by the end of this year, operating within prescribed Terms of Reference. This sort of governance has been in place in many parts of Australia for quite some years. The transition is asking a lot of extra energy and attention from our Principals as they re-orientate into the new system.

Best wishes to all! As we come to the end of the Easter season for this year, remember the thread that has gone through the stories we have heard from the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles: 'He is risen ... and they are changed!' Blessings as we continue to live out that renewal!

Maurie Cooney  
(Parish Priest)