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PARISH UPDATE 61

Hello everyone!

A new word for me recently is 'liminal'. It tries to name the experience of being between one stage and another, of being 'in transition'. In a very general sense I suppose that our experience of life is 'liminal' – we are living it between our birth and our fulfilment in the kingdom of heaven, and between all the stages along the way, with every moment nonetheless being 'real'.

For our Church, the separating of the feasts of Resurrection–Ascension–Pentecost puts us in a 'liminal' situation in between those life-giving 'events'. This separating isn't as clear-cut in the gospels. John's gospel seems to have the coming of the Spirit with Jesus' death. Luke's gospel seems to have the Ascension on the same day as the Resurrection and the Emmaus story! And then last Sunday's First Reading had the Ascension forty days after the Resurrection. (We're familiar, aren't we, with the use of the number 40 in our Scriptures – always symbolising that 'a new beginning is being made. Think of the forty days of the Flood and then God's creation being renewed;. Think of Moses on the mountain for forty days and then the People of God being given new identity; think of that People's journey in the desert for forty years and then reaching the Promised Land; think of Jesus' fast in the wilderness for forty days after which his new ministry began. And there are more examples. Say 'forty', and you're talking of 'a new beginning'.)

Whatever about all that, the Scriptures are expressing that through Jesus' Death, Resurrection, Ascension and Sending of the Spirit, a new era has begun.

Next weekend we will celebrate with the coming of the Holy Spirit 'the birthday of the Church' whose "solitary goal is to carry forward the life of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ came to give witness to the truth, to serve and not to be served, to save and not to sit in judgement" (*Vatican 2, Church in the Modern World, 3*).

We are that Church, living as that Church between that first Pentecost and the fulfilment of that work of Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven!

There are 'liminal' processes underway in the Archdiocese. I've shared information through these letters about the transfer of management of Catholic Schools to the new company 'Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools'. And there is the Archbishop's plan to establish 'missions' in which several Parishes may be drawn together. As I observed above, perhaps we are constantly to be 'liminal'. That can be a hard place to be at times.

The forthcoming ordination of two Auxiliary Bishops for the Archdiocese was announced this week. They are currently the Parish Priests of Mernda-Whittlesea-Kinglake (Fr Martin Ashe) and Doncaster (Mons Anthony Ireland). They haven't been allocated to a particular Region yet. One impact of this is that there are now two more Parishes needing a Parish Priest!

Pentecost, this weekend, is one of the very significant days for the Church. An essential part of the Feast's celebrating the coming of the Holy Spirit for the beginning of the Church is the declaration that the role of this Church is to go out beyond itself in service. An article with this letter insists on that, *We Are a Missionary Church*.

During the week we had a meeting of our ministry teams who take Holy Communion to residents in our five local Aged Care places and to Parishioners who are confined to their homes. It's a great ministry of 'reaching beyond ourselves to those in need'. We recognised that these ministers are so appreciated for bringing their own companionship to others as well as the Blessed Sacrament.

Pentecost is worth a further reflection:

In the early days of transport in Australia, horse-drawn coaches carried passengers over many routes – including through our area to the goldfields of Bendigo.

Passengers could purchase first, second and third class tickets. People with a first-class ticket could remain seated if the rig broke down. Those with second-class tickets could get off and watch. Third-class passengers got out and worked to get the coach moving again.

The Holy Spirit has purchased third-class tickets for us! We are blessed with the Holy Spirit and are now charged to make our communities better places for all. That's the message of Pentecost Day as we remember and celebrate that we have been blessed by the Holy Spirit and empowered therefore to do our piece for what the Church exists for – to carry forward the life of Christ!

Let's leave the comfort of 'first class' and 'second class' passengers to others, and all be people who are giving life to our faith, to the life of our Church and to the world we are part of, confident that we will be doing that with the strength, wisdom, hope of the Holy Spirit.

Best wishes and blessings to all!

Maurie Cooney
(Parish Priest)