

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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10th June 2021

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Hello everyone!

In an email I was sending yesterday I used the word 'paltry' when I referred to the easing of COVID restrictions. Then I checked it to see if it was the word I meant: the thesaurus lined up these options – measly, trivial, trifling, miserable, insignificant, mean, poor. In that email I was referring to the re-opening of our churches to fifty people at each gathering. On the other hand, for families and schools/colleges, for hospitality venues, for work-on-site, for sitting outside of home for a coffee or a meal, the easing that comes in on Thursday night is a great relief!

For church going, **masks are essential, and booking is essential** so that we comply with those numbers – an attachment with this letter repeats details for that, and for viewing Mass on TV or online. We reopen for fifty participants on Friday morning at 7.30, and then resume our 'normal' schedule of Masses.

Friday's Mass is on the Feast of the Sacred Heart! Its meaning is summed up for me in that line from the First Letter of St John: "this is the love I mean: not our love for God, but God's love for us when he sent his Son" (4:10). The feast was formally established in the year 1670. However as that Scripture quote indicates, the centrality of God's love for us had been well recognised and celebrated from the earliest Christian times, and for centuries before that as many, many passages in the Old Testament indicate.

Reading further in that Letter of St John you will find: "Since God has loved us so much, we too should love one another. No one has ever seen God; but as long as we love one another God will live in us" (4:11).

That's is, isn't it? We already share in something of the life of God here and now. To be true to who we are we will 'love God and love our neighbour'. And 'who is my neighbour?' That question drew from Jesus the teaching in his parable of The Good Samaritan.

I've mentioned before that I find the saying of ancient Chinese philosopher (either side of 400BC) Confucius helpful here: "Loving something means wanting it to live – and acting that way."

An attachment with this letter is an article from the MSCs (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart) titled *The Heart of God Gives us a Heart for Action* – that names the matter clearly, doesn't it?

As I mentioned a few letters back, the 'social justice' teaching of our Church is a central part of our faith – giving a decent chance at life to everyone. As one of the old songs says: "don't talk of stars shining above, if you're in love SHOW ME!".

The small number of people permitted into our churches this weekend will notice that the liturgical colour turns to green. We enter the long run of Ordinary Time Sundays, taking us through to the end of November when the next Advent begins. 'Ordinary' refers here to an 'orderly' way of opening up (this year) the Gospel of Mark, supported by Old Testament Readings. That's the role of the people of the Church now – to explore further the meaning in our celebrations of Easter, Pentecost, Trinity, Body and Blood of Christ, and to find ways of giving shape to that meaning in our 'ordinary' lives.

Make the most of the easing of the restrictions. Be hopeful, and safe ... and compliant!
Blessings to all!

Maurie Cooney
(Parish Priest)