

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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17th June 2021

PARISH UPDATE 65

Hello everyone!

What an achievement! What a contribution!

Last week was the 60th anniversary of the Ordination to the Priesthood of Fr John O'Reilly! "And it's been great!" he said. I imagine you can hear that ringing out. That is part of John's contribution to our lives – his positive take on everything, his energy, his enthusiasm. The Parish gave a gift to John with the message:

"The Parish of Sacred Heart-Emmaus-Cana pays tribute to you for your sixty years of Priesthood, largely given in Sacramental, Pastoral, Administrative and Community-building service to our people. We honour you, we thank you, we pray continuing blessings to you always!"

It was a 'weird' experience at Masses last weekend with only fifty people allowed to participate. A year ago when we were limited to five, it was clear that we were in a serious situation, and our focus was intent on that. With fifty, it just felt really odd! Now with the next step in this g-r-a-d-u-a-l easing, we will be permitted to have 75 people in our churches from Friday of this week on. We want to do the right thing, we will do the right thing. When will we experience something like normal?!?

Because of the restricted numbers, booking for Mass is essential. See an attachment with this letter for details and for opportunities to access Mass on TV and online.

During May we participated in the annual MassCount over four weekends, extended this year to include indications of the age and gender of those present. An attachment with this letter shows the figures. They have little value, really. Pre-COVID our numbers for years had been around the 2,400 mark. It's false, it's impossible to try to lift meaningful data from this year's figures.

Schools have been back all week. What a happy sound it is to hear the children in the playground, and reassuring to see the College students heading home at the end of their school day. It has been a broken term once again for students, families and teachers. And the term holidays come along at the end of next week!! Well done to all who have done your best to 'keep it together'!

This weekend's Gospel Reading recognises the experience of 'feeling as if you're going under'. It is one of the stories of Jesus and the disciples being out on the lake when a storm hits. It's helpful, I think, to read the action stories in the gospels as 'parables in action' – and to ask what reflection and teaching they hold for us.

There is so much going on in this Gospel reading: confusion, fear, the sense of 'things going against us', anxiety, the need for Christ and the difficulty of noticing His presence at times; and then calmness and peacefulness, as they 'cross to the other side'.

Each of us could list experiences from our own lives that this gospel may be recognising. And Christ's presence is in it with us. We will come through!

This Reading could readily be chosen for various settings of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. There are various settings proposed for this Sacrament in its official guide: e.g. before surgery, in advanced age, 'general', in serious or terminal illness, for a child. The liturgical settings are several, too: during Mass, as its own liturgical service, in a hospital or 'institution', in a private home, in an emergency.

This list indicates that this Sacrament is to be available to God's people often and at various times of life. Only one of these situations is that of preparation for death. For, like all the Sacraments, the Anointing of the Sick is to touch the presence of Christ into our lives and to help us keep going! This will have various meanings in different situations, only one of which is our awareness that 'the final passing into the Kingdom of eternal life' is approaching.

If you are caring for someone who is ill, if you become ill yourself, don't postpone calling for the Sacrament of Anointing – the official guide says that this would be a serious error. Along the way the Sacrament importantly can be strength for the continuing journey.

Our Parish's efforts to re-start our ministry to those in Aged Care has stumbled again with this most recent lockdown. Our Teams await the opportunity to return!

Another week comes towards its close. What a week it has been for many – I'm thinking of the damage to so many people's lives through the storms at the end of last week.

By this time next week, we'll be heading towards summer with the 'winter solstice' having given us the least amount of sunshine. The only way is forward!

Blessings. Keep safe and warm and well and hopeful! Make the most of this next easing of the restrictions.

Maurie Cooney
(Parish Priest)