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PARISH UPDATE 73

Greetings everyone!

*“The announcement that extends COVID lockdown means that **our churches will remain closed** for the duration of the lockdown. There will be no activity in our churches over that time. See attachment for information for accessing Mass on TV and online.”*

There was a flurry of phone calls yesterday afternoon following the announcement that the lockdown is continuing for another week. In terms of Parish ‘gatherings’, I was at the Parish diary to re-schedule – again – dates for First Communions, for Baptisms, for Funerals, for a Wedding, for a meeting of the Finance Committee, for visits to our Grade 4 students in preparation for their First Communion. And spreading the word that there are no Masses again this Saturday night/Sunday (and on weekday mornings, too).

Let’s all do what will keep everyone safe, hoping and praying that we will get through this still with a measure of hope and calmness! ‘Take courage’ as it says at the end of this letter!

This Sunday (15th August) is the feast of the Assumption of Mary. As well as honouring Mary, the feast is a reminder that Resurrection through death into eternity life is for all – not just for Jesus, Son of God! The feast of the Assumption of Mary to heaven is another proclamation of God’s promise of eternity life – which is not only for Jesus, raised into new life through death, but for us all: modelled here in the life of the woman, the mother who shared in so much of the lives that we know well today.

Mary – wife, mother, friend, neighbour, who enjoyed a wedding reception, who worried about her son, who ‘toughed it out’, who cared for others in their need, who suffered as her son suffered, who was keenly aware of God in her life and keen to discover her place in the life of God, ... and more: in all this is the path to Resurrection through death!

This feast of the Assumption of Mary takes precedence over the usual Sunday’s prayers and Readings as did the feast of Mary MacKillop last weekend. Here is a reflection on one of the Mary stories - her visit to her cousin Elizabeth, all of which have much to teach us:

Mary appears to us as the first missionary, the ‘first messenger of the gospel’: the first human being to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to another; and she does it simply by carrying Christ within her. She reminds us that mission begins not in delivering a message in words but in the journey towards another person with Jesus in your heart. She testifies to the primary importance of simply carrying Jesus, even before there are words or deeds to show him and explain him.

So there is good news for all of us who seek to follow Jesus’ summons to mission in his Name; and good news too for all who find their efforts slow and apparently futile, and for all who still can’t find their way to the ‘right’ words and the open commitment. Our first and overarching task is to carry Jesus, gratefully and faithfully, with us in all our doings.

And if we are faithful in carrying Christ with us, something will happen, some current will stir, and those we are with will feel, perhaps well below the conscious surface, a movement of life and joy which they may not understand at all. And we may never see it or know about it; people may not even connect it with us, yet it will be there – because Jesus speaks always to what is buried in the heart of men and women. Keep on carrying Jesus and don’t despair:

*mission will happen, in spite of all, because God in Christ has begun his journey into the heart.
[Rowan Williams, former Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury]*

Without the feast, this would have been the Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, on which we would be having the fourth set of Readings in a continuing exploration of the significance of the Eucharist. The Gospel Reading would be proclaiming from Jesus:

**"My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.
Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me and I live in them."**

Isn't there an empty gulf in our lives when we can't gather and share in this Meal of Eucharist together!

These Reading would be linking us strongly with our young First Communicants – if we were able to have those celebrations and if we were able to be gathered for them and for the Meal!

Nonetheless, let's hold them in our prayer.

(With this letter comes Part 2 of the reflection 'How the Eucharist Evolved'. Part 1 was with letter number 71.)

There are reassuring signs around us that things can change: on a into Brimbank Park early in the week I saw that the Wattle trees are beginning to show off their wonderful, rich gold-on-green flowers. It's easy to see how the green-and-gold are Australia's Olympic colours!

So blessings for staying well and being hopeful and keeping calm and for being 'of courage'!



Maurie Cooney
(Parish Priest)

With this letter come attachments –

- *How the Eucharist evolved – Part 2*
- *accessing Mass in TV and online..*