

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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PARISH UPDATE 74

Greetings everyone!

*"The announcement that extends COVID lockdown means that **our churches will remain closed** for the duration of the lockdown – until Friday 3rd September. The exception is for funerals, with ten 'mourners' permitted. There will be no other activity in our churches over that time. See attachment for information for accessing Mass on TV and online."*

With this week's announcements of the extension of lockdown, once again there was a rearrangement of schedules for Sacraments for our young Parishioners and for weddings. We have had seven funerals over the past ten days. Trying to make sense of life, eh!
A saying from Mary MacKillop is bold: "Keep up your courage!" (*St Mary MacKillop 30.11.1868*).

There was a 'meeting' by Zoom on Tuesday night, convened by the Archdiocese for our section of the Western Region. It was a follow-up meeting to the Archbishop's plan which I reported on back in Letter 58. His plan is that the resources of Parishes can be of more value for re-vitalising the Church when Parishes work closely together: he calls these groupings of Parishes 'Missions'. To this end he has engaged a team who have analysed a wide range of data about Parishes, and have come up with suggested groupings. These were shown at Tuesday's meeting. One Parishioner was invited to join the Parish Priest at the meeting. I asked Les Milroy to join me. He has a background in planning projects from his working life, and would be helpful in interpreting the outlines that are presented. The suggestion for our Parish that was presented showed us relating closely with the Parishes of St Albans South, Keilor Downs, Kealba, Kings Park, and Deer Park. Already we have good relations with those Parishes: the network of Catholic Regional Colleges draws us together, our Parishioners participate in the Vinnies Conference based at Keilor Downs, our Priests assist with Sacraments at times, our people participate in Mass occasionally in these other Parishes.

These are early days for this project. The Archbishop sees this as a '20 year plan'. However he wants several of these new 'Missions' established across the Archdiocese during next year. There is much exploration into the implications of this that we have to undertake. We will have to find ways of talking together to see what responses and questions and cooperations and challenges and alternatives we want to raise and become involved in.

Our meeting was the first of nine that are to be held across the Archdiocese in the next month. As more information comes to hand I will share that with you. I will keep in touch with our surrounding Parishes to stay alert to their conversations, too.

Alongside this confusing plan emerging from Archdiocesan headquarters, and amongst our frustrations and anxieties and burdens with the prospect of a further two weeks in lockdown ahead of us, is there room for prayer and compassion for the wider world human community that we are part of?

In the small Caribbean nation of Haiti, the people have suffered extraordinary hardship - the assassination of their elected leader, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake and an impending tropical storm. All this has occurred in the wake of an earlier earthquake from which they have still not recovered. At the same time, families in Afghanistan have worked with international forces for the past 20 years to resist the Taliban. And this week following the withdrawal of foreign troops, we see the Taliban overrun the capital, and the President is in exile. And those pictures of desperate people clinging on to overloaded planes!

A total of 41 Australians were killed serving with the Australian Defence Force on operational deployments to Afghanistan. A total of 249 ADF personnel have also been wounded while serving. These figures do not count those who have returned suffering from post-traumatic stress. These world events give us perspective on our circumstances in Australia. Yes, life is not going smoothly, and it has become rough and overbearing for some. We will rebuild and reclaim and create life as we want it. Most of us have a warm home, loved ones who care for us and a stable democratically elected government. Let's find room in our awareness for 'the world', and room in our prayer.

The Gospel Reading for this weekend's Mass is the last of five weeks' exploration of the Eucharist. This week's attachment with this Letter focusses on Jesus' words that 'this is my body *given for you*; this is my blood *poured out for you!*' The article names the fact that celebrating Eucharist is not to remain behind in the church when we leave. For if we have shared in the Body and Blood of Christ, if we have taken His life into our own, then we, too will be *giving of our lives to others*. That's how we send ourselves from our gatherings at Eucharist, isn't it? "The Mass never ends – it must be lived. So let's go in peace to love and serve the Lord." And 'loving the Lord' is shown in our giving of our lives to others.

Recently our Parish gave donations to CatholicCare and the St Vincent de Paul Society in response to their annual appeals. It's wonderful that they do the works they do. That's not to be instead of us – all who share Eucharist are to be 'giving of our lives for others'.

Best wishes and prayers for all as we enter the next two weeks of lockdown.
And a repeat from last week:



Maurie Cooney
(Parish Priest)

With this letter come attachments –

- *Being the body and blood of Christ*
- *accessing Mass in TV and online..*