

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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PARISH UPDATE 79

Greetings everyone!

*"The current COVID lockdown means that **our churches will remain closed** for the duration of the lockdown – date and details are not clear at the stage. 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."*

Greetings, everyone!

What a week!! Looking good at the start with School holidays and some picnicking – and many people taking advantage of that, I noticed, as I tramped along the paths in Brimbank Park. Then violence and other disruption on the streets of Melbourne. And then earthquake! Oh, what a week!

Our School/College Principals and other Leaders aren't having much of a break: attempting to get the partial return-to-School arrangements in place, trying to manoeuvre through the allowances and expectations for vaccination, tentatively setting new dates for Term 4 in place, ...

And families trying to get out-and-about a little more freely within still tight restrictions.

And no movement on re-opening churches even in a limited way.

What a week!

In the bigger picture, this weekend presents to us World Migrant and Refugee Sunday. So many of our Parishioners have this experience either themselves or within a generation or two: the experience of leaving 'homeland' and coming to this place to make this 'home'.

It seems to be that the first Aboriginal peoples came to this land through what we now call Indonesia. In the past 230 years more and more from more and more places have arrived here from their 'homeland'. Every one of us has the experience of 'coming here', if not in recent memory then in the experience of our forebears.

And it isn't completed yet. Around Mary MacKillop's tomb in the chapel at North Sydney is inscribed a shortened version of one of her sayings: *"How I wish we would only remember that we are but travelers here."* Yes, we are still 'on the way'. As important as we are to life here, and as important to us as everything around us here is, *"our true home is in heaven"* (Philippians 3:20) – that is one of the texts that may be chosen for our funeral day. Another text for funerals is similar: *"We know that when the tent that we live in on earth is folded up, there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting home not made by human hands, in the heavens (1Corinthians 5:1).*

Meanwhile we live in this experience, here and now. As COVID restrictions remind us, we are all responsible for one another. In a broader sense, we all benefit when we work together side by side as equals, recognising each other's strengths and gifts, combining them with our own to make life happen for all, and bringing about change for good.

This has not always been the experience for those coming here as migrants and refugees. Indeed it seems that we give new arrivals a hard time of it. You will have stories to tell about this from your own experience or from stories handed on to you from those who came here before you. The circumstances that had us or our forebears come here vary. The issue is how we make life happen here. This Migrant and Refugee Sunday asks us – ourselves and our governments' policies and actions – how we who have been here for a while receive those who are coming anew.

There are several attachments with this Letter to provide some thinking around this matter. Bishop Vincent Long (who used to be here in the Western Region with us) names his own experience of being a refugee with his family, and asks how Australia is to respond to the situation of Afghan people fleeing their country now.

In a second piece, he looks briefly at government procedures.

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Another writer uses a parable of a stranger from the city who turns up at a country football match, noticing suspicion, caution, distance from the locals to the newcomer.

Pope Francis' message for Migrant and Refugee Sunday is a fourth attachment 'Towards an ever wider WE': some of his words there are:

Our "we", both in the wider world and within the Church, is crumbling and cracking due to myopic and aggressive forms of nationalism (cf. Fratelli Tutti, 11) and radical individualism (cf. ibid., 105). And the highest price is being paid by those who most easily become viewed as others: foreigners, migrants, the marginalized, those living on the existential peripheries.

The truth however is that we are all in the same boat and called to work together so that there will be no more walls that separate us, no longer others, but only a single "we", encompassing all of humanity. Thus I would like to use this World Day to address a twofold appeal, first to the Catholic faithful and then all the men and women of our world, to advance together towards an ever wider "we".

(That may have you humming that great Seekers' song 'We are one but we are many, ...')

These four pieces are written in quite different styles form one another. They all, however, can draw us to the words of Jesus 'when I was a stranger, did you welcome me?'. The full text of Pope Francis' message is available at www.vatican.va/content/migration/documents.

In last week's Letter, I referred to the Archbishop's project to establish 'Missions' across several existing Parishes and some concerns about that expressed at a meeting in our Western Region. Four of our local Parish Priests wrote to the Archbishop detailing some aspects particular to our own area. His response to us yesterday included these comments:

"I am grateful for the respectful and open way that you have brought them (these concerns) forward. ... It is worth noting that any changed arrangements that might eventually emerge from this path to missionary renewal will be – by and large – more noticeable in the older, inner parts of the Archdiocese, where there are many small and closely located parishes. Changed parochial arrangements will be much less noticeable in the outer suburbs and areas of Melbourne, like the outer metropolitan West where your parishes are located. And in some locations, there will be no physical change at all."

This is a very helpful clarification. Nonetheless, the Parish Priests continue to see this as a positive opportunity to call our Parishes to respond to a question such as 'How are we to be the Church well in this area in the years that lie ahead?' The reflection required for this and the planning that responds will best be undertaken when we are able to gather in face-to-face settings.

Included as another attachment is that information about rebuilding our Ministry teams, along with the requirements of the Child Safeguarding context we are in. I hope that everyone involved in Ministry before these COVID lockdowns will re-emerge through this process, indicating that you will continue when that is allowed. I hope that others will take this opportunity to join Ministry, too. Details for indicating your interest and for acquiring the required Working With Children Check are included in the attachment.

The next round of Thanksgiving Envelopes has begun now. The Parish is so grateful to you who have been able to maintain your Direct Debit/Credit Card support and to those who continue to present their Envelopes!

What will next week hold? Remember "Emmanuel – God is with us!" and "I will be with you always!" says the Lord. (Go Doggies!)

Maurie Cooney
(Parish Priest)

With this letter come attachments –

Our moral duty towards Afghan refugees

Our brothers and sisters should be welcomed

Of football and welcome of the stranger

Pope Francis' message for Migrant and Refugee Sunday

Ministry recruitment process

Accessing Mass on TV and online