

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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PARISH UPDATE 17

Greetings everyone!

"It's time to brush your teeth." "Why?" "Because we brush our teeth at bedtime." "Why?" "Because we want to have healthy teeth." "Why?" "So we can chew." "Why?" ... and on it goes.

They tell me that three-year olds do this persistent questioning – "Why?" Perhaps they are already very much like the rest of us in wanting to 'join the dots' and make sense of what's happening around us

Why are there earthquakes and bushfires and floods? Why are there illnesses and diseases and ... viruses? Why do bad things happen to good people?

That's a question that has been with us for a long time. Sometimes it's put as 'the problem of evil' as philosophers and theologians across the ages reach for a sensible response.

In our Old Testament, the figure of Job struggled with this in his life. In the end, he puts his finger on his lips and tells himself 'Ssshhh: perhaps there are things that I'm not able to understand yet', and humbly opens his life to God as the turn of life continues.

Even with that humble approach, not being able to join the dots can breed an insecurity in us: one of the attachments with this letter reflects on that within our present situation of lockdown.

What set me thinking in this way is the gospel we have coming up for this weekend's Mass. In it there is Jesus' parable about weeds growing amongst the good wheat that was planted. "Why has this happened?" they ask, "How has this happened?" And in the parable the farmer doesn't pull out the weeds straightaway. A parable for our times, eh!!

Following last week's reference to George Harrison (Beatles), a Parishioner suggested that I listen to his 'Isn't it a Pity'. It fits with this experience of life not always working out right. Sometimes that's because we ourselves and people around us cause that. Sometimes we sin, which so often is expressed in the way we are with others.

I've put the words of that song on an attachment (Sometimes It's Us), along with St Paul's reflection on this experience from his Letter to the Romans (7:14-24 - *Though the will to do what is good is in me, the performance very often is not: with the result that, instead of doing the good things I want to do, I carry out the sinful things I do not want.*). Also you will see there words of a prayer of contrition from the Sacrament of Penance.

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A further attachment raises for me another consideration of the Plenary Council for the Catholic Church in Australia, postponed to next year. When the Bishops decided to convene this gathering of reflection, insight, review, planning, and action, one of their statements was 'It can't be business as usual'. That statement framed their question 'What is God asking of the Church in Australia in these times?'

We shouldn't be too cautious about considering change in the way our Church strives 'to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit'. That is the 'solitary goal' of our Church according to the teaching from the Second Vatican Council, which Pope John Paul II referred to as 'the sure compass to lead us ahead'. That teaching continues: '... Christ came to give witness to the truth, to serve and not to be served, to rescue and not to sit in judgement' (*Church in the Modern World*, 3). The attachment I've included is an observation from the Church in Fiji – things are done differently according to situations and needs and resources: what does that mean for the Church in Australia?

Our Parish weekly bulletin – which was always available at Sunday Masses before the lockdown – is available on our Parish website each week. There isn't much news there about activities, and no rosters; however it continues to have a reflection on the Scripture readings of the weekend's Mass. Go to <http://pol.org.au/stalbanssydenham> and click on a weekend date under 'Parish Newsletters'. Our newsletter is always prepared with great attention: not so with the entries from some other Parish newsletters that are included in another attachment with this letter!

Remember as the lockdown restricts us in many ways *Not Everything is Cancelled*:

*Sunshine is not cancelled
Spring is not cancelled
Love is not cancelled
Relationships are not cancelled
Reading is not cancelled
Naps are not cancelled
Devotion is not cancelled
Music is not cancelled
Imagination is not cancelled
Kindness is not cancelled
Faith is not cancelled
Conversation is not cancelled
Hope is not cancelled*

Blessings, best wishes to all. Stay warm ... stay well!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest