

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

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PARISH UPDATE 16

Greetings to all at the end of a week that has drawn us further into the seriousness of the pandemic crisis that we are amongst.

In terms of general Parish life, the impact of the Premier's directives this week mean a continuation of the lockdown we moved to a week ago when we were identified as one of the 'hotspot suburbs'. This week's announcements, however, has drawn us into an acute awareness now of how gravely serious the situation is. The direct impact of that is already being felt by our Schools and Colleges, our Principals and all staff, our young people and their families as they must develop new plans for next week and possibly beyond.

The Archbishop names the continuing spread of the virus as "sobering news. It is truly disheartening, and will bring renewed distress to so many families and individuals." (See attachment for the full text of his letter.)

In that letter the Archbishop refers to one of the Psalms: *In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.* Our trust is that we will come through to the other side of this, and that God will continue to bless us with hope, with charity for everyone expressed in our following regulations, with resilience that holds on to and celebrates the good things of life.

A response I received from a Parishioner after last week's letter expressed so much: *"I know that even though it has been hard, for some more than others, this time has really highlighted to me the importance of faith, family, friendships and community!"*

An interesting survey result came across my desk during the week which sits neatly beside that comment: *'Togetherness makes the heart grow fonder'*. It indicates that more Australians say that their relationships have improved during COVID-19 than those who say their relationships have worsened. Sometimes this takes commitment and discipline. And what a great, strengthening gift when we appreciate one another more and in new ways!

One of the sobering stories during the week was the total lockdown of the public housing towers in Flemington and North Melbourne. Catholic Social Services Victoria and many other bodies want a review of the quality and number of places available to those in need of accommodation. This is faith at work. Our lives of faith have their four dimensions: worship/pray; teaching/understanding; moral/behavioural; and as importantly their social/community dimension – how do we put in place the respect justice, equality for all which Jesus preached?

Another response from a Parishioner led me to George Harrison's (Beatles) song 'All Things Must Pass'. What great lines for the time we're going through:

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Now the darkness only stays the night-time
In the morning it will fade away
Daylight is good at arriving at the right time
It's not always going to be this grey
All things must pass.

(see attachment for the full text)

When we have come through this pandemic, what will its passing have done to us? Another attachment with this letter is a response to that question by (retired) Adelaide Priest, John Swann, which he wrote during the first wave back at Easter time. It's interesting reading about some impacts he foresees on Parish life.

That question reaches into all aspects of our lives. Unlike George Harrison's song, there are some parts of our lives that we must not let pass – such as faith, family, friendships, community as that Parishioner wrote earlier. What are they in your situation, those parts of life that you will *not* let pass away?

There also are parts of our pre-virus lives that we may be glad to let pass away – is that true for you? Are there new aspects of life or variations on old aspects that you have taken to during the pandemic and which you want to keep long-term?

Talking of long-term, I'm including yet another attachment – this one on ageing. We're being told to take particular care of our 70+ years old relatives, friends, neighbours, strangers. This article doesn't speak of their vulnerability to the virus; rather of the wisdom and treasure those older in our lives are in what they give to us.

Amongst all this, is there room for a light-heartedness – even to Scripture? Another piece came to my desk, suggesting comments around famous names in our Tradition for a time of virus:

“Stay calm and don't lose your head.” (John the Baptist)

“Wash your hands often.” (Pontius Pilate)

“Avoid greeting people with a hug and a kiss.” (Judas)

“Don't touch your eyes, nose, mouth or any open wounds.” (Thomas)

“Pets and other animals do not spread this condition.” (Francis of Assisi) !!!

Best wishes and blessings to all. There is much to hold in prayer. Stay strong of spirit, and hopeful of heart, and well in body and mind!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest