

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

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ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

21st August 2020

PARISH UPDATE 22

Greetings everyone!

A week with hints that Spring is trying to break through – then thwarted by wintry grey clouds and rain re-asserting themselves. Life, eh – show us the way, will you!

That language straightaway recalls “I am the Way!”, “I am the Light!” from our Gospels. They are, of course, Jesus proclaiming his own presence. This weekend’s Gospel has Him asking others “Who do **you** say I am?”

When Mother Teresa accepted the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1979, she opened her speech to the world’s media by saying: “By blood and origin I am all Albanian. My citizenship is Indian. I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the whole world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus.”

‘Who am I?’ There’s much more in response to that than those sorts of words Mother Teresa said about herself. It was the ‘much more’ that had her canonised as a saint ‘St Teresa of Calcutta’. That’s true of all of us. There’s much more to every one of us than descriptors like neighbor, son, grandmother; tradie, teacher, hairdresser; Victory supporter, cricket tragic, jogger.

There are those shows on TV ‘Who do you think you are?’ “Where did you come from?”, and those ads for ‘Ancestry.com’. At funerals the eulogies speak of the qualities of the person who has died, their characteristics, the impact they had on our lives. What will they say about you on that day? And we’ll miss hearing it by just a few days!!

The international cello player, Pablo Casals, 1876-1973 (what extraordinary events happened across those 97 years through which he lived!) observed in his long life of travelling all over the world that “Each person has inside a basic decency and goodness. If each person listens to it and acts on it, that person is giving a great deal of what the world needs most. It is not complicated, but it takes courage for that person to listen to their own good.”

Across the stories in the gospels, I can hear people answering Jesus’ question “Who do **you** say I am?” with words from their experience of Him, like friend, hope, salvation, brother, new life, help, support, encouragement, healer, teacher, mercy, compassion, forgiver; as well as with the more formal titles son of Mary, Son of David, Son of God, Lord, Saviour.

This weekend’s Gospel Reading asks **us** Jesus’ question: ‘who do you say I am?’

“Yes, you: who do **you** say that I am?” *I know what the Church teaching says, I know what other people say. What will I say? In **my** heart? In my heart of hearts? Hmmm... .*

The question is an opportunity to reflect on the stage of faith we have come to so far, and to keep on exploring our sense of Jesus being real in our lives now.

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It is Peter in this weekend's gospel, who answers with the titles 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!' and Jesus responding by calling him 'Rock'. Can you imagine the others standing around? 'He must be joking,' they might have thought! They knew Peter well. A rather mediocre fisherman ("they fished all night and caught nothing"), husband with his mother-in-law living with them, there at the centre of things ... but can you really rely on him? They may not have been too surprised later that Peter would deny that he knew Jesus, or that he ran away when the going was tough. But, then, they would all run away too!

Jesus saw into Peter's heart, recognised his generosity of spirit, his enthusiasm for the cause, the importance to him of family and friends and faith. He recognised also that Peter knew his own faults and failings and weaknesses – and isn't that wisdom and strength, to know yourself well.

Peter - strong at times, and weak; enthusiastic and courageous at times; unreliable and sinful; reaching to Jesus calling 'Lord, save me!' We see that mixture publicly in our Church at times and we see it in ourselves, too: for 'we are Church'.

As part of this Church, as a person of faith, within all the descriptors, 'Who are you?'

In a recent audience teaching Pope Francis reminds us to see and respect 'the human dignity in every person' (see attachment). This is good preparation for next Sunday's being Social Justice Sunday, whose focus this year will be 'mental health'.

Another attachment finds in the Old Testament an image of what we are experiencing during the COVID lockdown – the Exile. God's people had been taken from their key reference points - their city and their Temple which had been destroyed by invaders. When they were able to return, the underlying question is 'now that we're through this, will we rebuild the way we were that was taken away from us?' or 'will we build a new way?'

Through these months, the continuing generosity of Parishioners through Thanksgiving is wonderful! As DirectDebit/Credit Card/ CDFPay continue, the next set of Envelopes will be sent out at the end of August. If you would like to change to DirectDebit, ring or email the Parish Office about that. If you would like to change to CDFPay, look at the Parish website (<http://pol.org.au/stalbanssydenham>) in the Thanksgiving Link for guidance into that. See the attachment for this and some other reminders.

And a Blessing for these times:

*God be good to you in all your days,
God be kind to you in all your ways.
God give strength to you when crosses lean,
God send light to you the clouds between.
God give peace to you in times of strife,
God bless everything that fills your life.
God send joy to you when grief is o'er,
God make way for you at Heaven's door.*

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest