

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

ABN 56 751 544 850

Telephone: 9366 2146 Fax: 9366 9876

Email: stalbans@cam.org.au

Website <http://pol.org.au/stalbanssydenham>

4 Winifred Street

ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

2nd October 2020

PARISH UPDATE 28

Hello everyone!

Yes, October – who would have thought?!?

There was anticipation about the Premier's announcements last Sunday. However the easing of some lockdown restrictions didn't affect Parish schedules and activities at all. We're grateful for any opportunity to mix a little more with one another – but there's still a way to go, isn't there?

One aspect of Parish life that the announcements affected is our Schools and Colleges. Already – and remember that it's 'school holidays' – our Principals and leadership teams have been in planning discussions about the staggered return to on-site learning during the week of 12th October. For the Years 7-10 Colleges whose students continue with off-site learning, their issue is how best to shape, schedule and plan for the customary fourth term activities without knowing when face-to-face meeting with students will recommence.

It never passed through my mind when I was trying to sort my life that I might be a School teacher – I don't know how they do it!!

One of the ministry groups in our Parish gathered via Zoom during the week – our RCIA group. That's the 'Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults'. We have three people who have been guided by our RCIA Team since last August (2019) as they discerned and then chose to be initiated into the life of our Church through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. They came as close as being presented to the Archbishop at the Cathedral on 1st March, with just the weeks of Lent and Holy Week to go before they reached their goal at Easter. Soon after that ceremony at the Cathedral, all gatherings in our churches were called off. The Team and these three continue to keep in touch with one another, sharing discussion, reflection and prayer, waiting for the opportunity to be 'initiated'.

This RCIA process is based in the standard process for 'joining the Church' from our first several centuries. Then we baptised only adults (and children only if a whole family group was being initiated at the same time). Those were the days when the risk of publicly being Christian was that you could be arrested and sentenced to death in one or another of some gruesome torture methods. So asking for Baptism was a most serious consideration. As well as that risk, you would be expected by the community to leave your occupation if you were in the military, or taught in one of the (pagan) schools. Not for children, this choice ... only for those who could make a deliberate decision after a lengthy period of consideration and preparation.

That all changed as Christianity became the 'accepted' religion of the Roman Empire, and Baptism became 'the thing to do'. The later concerns about 'original sin' led to our

SACRED HEART/ EMMAUS PARISH

ABN 56 751 544 850

Telephone: 9366 2146 Fax: 9366 9876

Email: stalbens@cam.org.au

4 Winifred Street

ST ALBANS VICTORIA 3021

baptising babies. That is the custom which we now practice, making the role of parents, Parish, and Schools so important. Whereas preparation and reflection and prayer were prior to Baptism originally, now those essential aspects of a life of faith must be facilitated after the Baptism.

That makes the ministry of our Baptism Preparation Team such an important part of our Parish's life. In these days of lockdown we have to put families 'on hold' when they enquire about Baptism for their child.

This 'coming to faith' continues throughout our lives. We are people of faith differently at different stages of our lives: because of our experiences, our reflection, our listening to God's Word, our noticing others, our recognising the Spirit in our lives, our appreciating what is happening in the Sacraments, ... St Paul reminds us that this 'coming to faith more' is not completed until finally we share the life of Christ fully – (have a look at his *Letter to the Philippians 3:13-14*).

The attachment 'God speaks ...' shares stories of some people's coming to the Catholic Church. Another, 'A sower went out to sow ...' talks about the importance of looking for 'signs of God' all through our lives.

Archbishop Comensoli was in the media during the week. One approach was to note his urging the Premier to ensure that the reopening of our churches is clearly a priority of concern in the 'road map'. Another was a reflection on important elements of 'being human' and this experience of lockdown. "Both prayer and play are deeply humanising realities. Work and the care of others are good for humans," he writes. "Family, religion, work, education, care and leisure: these should be our first and foundational priorities, the human measures upon which our pathway forward ought to be framed." The full text is in an attachment.

A week ago, the First Reading on Friday gave us that familiar text 'there is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven' (*Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*). Way back in the 1960s its words came in 'Top 40' songs, (*The Byrds, Turn, Turn, Turn*) covered by several bands! The reflection in another attachment proposes that whatever situation we are in, there are some essential parts of life that matter, come what may. And by holding to them, "we often find inner strength, new gift and talents, new friends, new relationships".

This is God's Holy Spirit at work amongst us, surely. Other 'basic' parts of life may change – the AFL Finals in October!! Daylight Saving changing our clocks this weekend!! All along, there is God's Spirit speaking to, enlivening our own spirits. One of the tasks, and gifts, of being people of faith is to keep alert for and to keep responding to this presence and action of God in our lives.

Stay of good spirit, keep aware of one another – and of yourself, have a laugh at times!

Blessings and best wishes to all!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest