

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

11th December 2020

PARISH UPDATE 38

Greetings all!

All of a sudden things are so busy, it seems. End-of-year activities have resumed in a modified way, Christmas preparations have picked up speed, re-measuring of our churches is happening to see how many people we can accommodate for Masses, plans for Christmas Day family gatherings are being sorted.

And at the same time we continue to hear of the situations in other countries where the virus is wreaking havoc: our prayers reach out to them still.

One important activity for our Parish has been our calling young Parishioners into the Sacrament of Confirmation. We have had eight ceremonies so far, with a further two next week. The Archbishop formally delegated Parish Priests to confer the Sacrament in small groups. His concern was to arrange for the Sacrament before our Year 6 students move into different pathways when they finish at Primary School. Our ceremonies have had a proper sense of 'being part of something sacred', a fitting atmosphere for the Sacrament.

Significant news for our Parish is that our second Priest, Justel Callos, has been appointed by the Archbishop to the position of Administrator of the Parish of Holy Family, Mount Waverly. When he came to us, we were told that he would stay for about 1½ years. As it turned out he gave us his presence and service for a little more than that. Justel moves on Tuesday 29th December. Thank you, Justel: our prayers reach out to you for fruitful ministry to the people of God!

We have begun to be used to two Priests amongst us – with George and then Justel. We now revert to having one Priest. Some quick work has to be done to ensure that all our Masses will be covered!

Following the Premier's announcements last weekend of more restrictions being eased, there has been re-working of the spaces in our churches and re-designing of the schedule to provide opportunities for Mass.

See attachments for a full listing of times of Masses that we are now providing (note especially that the Sunday times at Emmaus have changed to 9am and 10.30am.

There is a separate attachment with times for Christmas Masses.

Both our churches are now permitted to seat 160 people at each Mass.

Bookings continue to be required so that we don't exceed our allowable limit.

We have a QR code at the doors to facilitate entry.

Hand sanitising is required. Masks are optional but recommended; and necessary when the 1.5 metre social distancing is compromised.

It has been customary to gather for Advent Prayer and Reconciliation in these weeks before Christmas. That isn't possible this year. You may find it helpful to take time with

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the attachment 'Advent Prayer' as part of your Advent reflection and preparation for Christmas.

Opportunity for individual Sacrament of Penance returns: at 10.30am on Saturdays at Sacred Heart church.

John the Baptist came to last Sunday's Advent readings and does so again this coming Sunday. As we build up to Christmas, I like this reminder that the birth of Jesus into our midst is only part of the story of his life amongst us and for us:

We are people of Advent and of Easter, of waiting and of taking hold of the new life we have been given. We are people of heaven and of earth. Like John the Baptist we look for signs that this is true – that the new life of God-with-us is already amongst us.

In his apostolic letter of December 2019 Pope Francis reflected on *the meaning and importance of the nativity scene*. He opened with the following statement:

The enchanting image of the Christmas creche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realise that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him. Pope Francis, December 2019

A further Advent reflection, 'Waiting and Hoping' is another attachment.

At this time of year there is usually a 'special collection' in the Parishes of Melbourne to support 'Melbourne Overseas Mission'. Amidst our concern for our own wellbeing, our Archdiocese has reached out to and supported Parishes and their Australian personnel (lay people, religious sisters, priests) in Peru and Papua New Guinea. Our Parish will contribute \$2,000 from your Thanksgiving contributions to match our donation last year. If you would like to contribute directly: send the word "**GIVE**" to the number: 0488 854 436. This prompts an immediate reply which provides a link to a platform to make a donation.

There's a lot going on, isn't there!!

During it all, blessings for 'good Advent-ing'!

Maurie Cooney
Parish Priest