

## March 2023 Parish Report to the PLDT



Funerals and pastoral care were certainly a big part of our work in the month of March. In all Fr John, with the support of Sr Karen (Mission) and Christine (Parish) prepared and conducted six funerals and two memorials. It was timely then that we held a meeting to resurrect the Bereavement Support team. Around ten people expressed interest in coming on to the team and taking on various roles. Some had been on before and some were new to the team. People were interested in participating in a number of ways. Some are keen to attend funerals as a prayerful supportive presence and also assist with hospitality; others are happy to call on the bereaved post funeral; others are happy to organise condolence and remembrance cards. The team's work is dependent upon the interests, skills and willingness of those who form the group. We did decide to design our own cards with the assistance of one of our parish artists. We also discussed the type of formation people would like to undertake, such as listening skills necessary when accompanying those who are grieving. Up to this point, the Legion of Mary, Passionist Sisters, plus Sr Trish Kelly have been the backbone of a prayerful presence at funerals. When we have made a call out to parishioners to also come along to funerals of those who have no one, we have had a wonderful response, indicative of the caring heart that lies at the centre of our parish.

The visit of our regional Bishop Tony Ireland required a tremendous amount of preparation and organisation for the three days he was in our Parish. He began with Wednesday morning Mass with the Legion of Mary, the Passionists and grade six children from our school. He then went on tour of the school and Mission, lunched with the CEO of Sacred Heart Mission and met some members of the board. He returned to meet with the office staff before taking afternoon tea with the Passionist sisters and that evening dined with the PLDT. He returned on the weekend where he met with members from various committees, and one of our catechumenates (those preparing to enter our faith tradition), a cross-section of parishioners in a forum and visited house-bound parishioners. On the last leg of his tour, he got to mingle with people from the streets of St Kilda as they flowed into Sacred Heart church to share in the light lunch put on for him. Parishioners who met with him were candid about issues facing the parish and the church, as well as speaking of the sparks of light and hope to be found in this parish.

Preparations for Easter has also been a major focus this month. The Liturgy Committee met to discuss the planning of the Triduum, and set about putting things in place while the combined Easter choir dedicated themselves to a packed rehearsal schedule. All these plans, with the assistance of volunteers is anticipated to reap a wonderfully rich, liturgical celebration of our most holiest celebrations. Part of our preparation has also involved the ecumenical ministers of St Kilda, which will see a combined service on Good Friday morning at the St Kilda Baptist Church, with Fr John giving the homily and the Passionists reading the psalm. Apart from us and the

Baptists, the Uniting Church, the two Anglican churches of St Kilda and the Salvation Army will also be involved.

Speaking of ecumenical activities, Christine attended the multi-faith network, which is auspiced by the City of Port Phillip. We, along with the Good Shepherd sisters from the Catholic arm, while others representatives are drawn from the faiths of Islam, Judaism, Hindu, Buddhist, the Uniting Church, the Salvation Army and Planetary Healings Artists. We are currently writing a submission to the Victorian Multicultural Council for a grant through their Festival and Events program to stage an event in September, with the working title of "Sharing Voices". The day will see speakers on refugees, climate justice and gender equity with song, dance and food of many cultures to consume.

The Discernment Group has wrapped up Phase One of the Roadmap to Mission and the Issues Report, drawn from this phase will be presented at all masses during the Easter Season. Copies will be made available in the churches and on the website. As you know, Lent provides us with opportunities for slowing down and journeying into deeper encounters with God. Parishioners took up the formation opportunities provided via the weekly Lenten Groups run by the Passionist Sisters; the virtual Lenten Scripture series provided by the Yarra Theological Union and the other Gospel exploration groups of our parish: the Small Christian Community and the RCIA.

Staff and parishioners went along to celebrate the Sacred Heart Mission(SHM) Easter event, entitled "New Beginnings with Hope". Many SHM staff attended alongside residents from the Hostel. The latter have been turning up to Hostel funerals recently, so it was good to see them there for a light-hearted celebration and to catch up with them for chat over hot-cross buns afterwards.

Our month ended with the first of our parish social events, bowling at Zone bowling in Moorabbin. While it was a small crowd, reportedly this did not hamper the fun of the afternoon. The Social Committee are hoping that increasing numbers of parishioners will attend the future events planned over the rest of the year. We cannot over-emphasise how these events are crucial in keeping us connected as a parish.

In and around all these activities, Fr John, parish staff and community visitors continued with community visiting, pastoral care, sacramental preparation and conferrals, attending school and SHM board meetings and undertaking formation and training in various areas. Spare a thought for Fr John who is undertaking some formation online with other priests with a facilitator that zooms in from Canada, and because of time differences, it's an early start for Fr John!

And that was a wrap for March in the Parish!