



November Parish Report 2023

In November the church traditionally commemorates Remembrance month. In our local parish, the Liturgy Committee placed the focus as Sacred Heart Church in the Memorial area, where the magnificent wooden sculpture captures the role of community in holding the vulnerable in death. Jim from the Liturgy Committee built a small bookstand for the Memorial Book, where people could remember the names of their loved ones. This will be a permanent feature in the Memorial area. Using the image of the Memorial sculpture, we created Remembrance Cards with a prayer. People could take these home to pray with or write the names of their loved ones and place in a basket in the Memorial area, or at St Columba, under the Memorial cloth. The Legion of Mary had previously organised all the funeral booklets into yearly books and these were put on display for people to look through in both churches. Ancita from the Liturgy group used her calligraphy skills to record the names, in a separate book, of those, who in Fr Ernie's time were homeless and without family and had been buried in the Emerald cemetery in donated plots. Similarly, a separate book was also created for those whose ashes are held in our crypt in Sacred Heart.

It was a busy month for sacraments. While school and parish worked together to prepare grade three children for Reconciliation, a number of older children were also being busily prepared by the parish for Baptism, to enable them to undertake other sacraments with their classes next year. A fair few families were also prepared for their infant or toddler baptisms. While the RCIA group, those preparing to enter our Catholic tradition, attracted two more members, so now we have a group of five people and several parish supporters, working towards their welcome into the Church next year.

Fr John spent a couple of days with the Mission Board on their annual 'think tank' on planning and strategising. He was also invited to be part of an assessment panel of a pastoral care seeking to work in hospitals. He was kept busy with a handful of parish and Mission funerals; and the pastoral care of the parish and Mission through visiting, along with the Legion of Mary and parish community visitors.



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The Archdiocese, through its office now known as 'Proclaim: The Office for Mission Renewal' held a three-day forum on prayer, praise, formation and inspiring keynote speakers seeking to engage and equip Catholics to bring the joy of the Gospel to their own local communities. Parish staff participated in one of the three days, taking part in the workshops entitled, *Small Group Discipleship* and *Leadership* styles as we look towards our future as part of the Archdiocese 'Take the Way of the Gospel' restructure.

On this note, the Discernment Committee are preparing to move into Stage II of 'The Parish Roadmap: Visioning'. You may remember that last year, the Discernment Committee came up with a tool known as the 'Parish Roadmap' to use in exploring and building/consolidating our future parish as a vital and vibrant parish. This was presented to a whole parish meeting last Pentecost Eve. That meeting also gave parishioners the opportunities to voice its views on issues and opportunities we face as a parish. All members of our leadership group, the PLDT were then interviewed and information sourced determined the next step in this Roadmap plan. We came to a halt as we waited for the Parish of Middle Park/Port Melbourne to discern whether they wished to partner with us, and unfortunately, this did not eventuate. Thus, we will be moving into Stage II proactively during Lent, involving more PLDT and greater parish participation in 2024.

As we approached Advent, once again the Liturgy Committee busied themselves in thinking and executing ideas for our parish during this time. By now, you would have seen the wonderful wreaths in the churches, a change of colour to purple and our theme for the season: 'Be bearers of hope'. This is a call to us all as we get ready to celebrate the Lord entering our human history, bringing hope, joy, peace and comfort – things most needed in our world at this time.