

December 2023 Parish Report

December is always a mixture of the race to get all parish business finished while joyously preparing for the wonderful celebrations of Christmas. This was evident in all group/committee meetings during December, including PLDT, Liturgy, Small Christian Community, Jesuit Spirituality Groups, Legion of Mary, RCIA and the St Kilda Ecumenical Group. We were sad to farewell both Baptist ministers from our Ecumenical group, who have worked closely with us over the years in sharing pastoral care of people in St Kilda, and doing some Lenten liturgy together. Fr Mal also left St Kilda to move into priest retirement accommodation in Clifton Hill. He will be missed as he had become quite a gentle presence in our community.

We managed to squeeze in some late sacraments for children who had missed out on making their sacraments with their class cohort earlier in November, and at the end of the year, conducted several baptisms. Sadly, some families and friends were to spend a sad Christmas as we farewelled their loved ones at funerals. Community visiting at this time is critical and Fr John, Christine, the Legion of Mary and our small group of community visitors ensured that they touched base with those who are frail, lonely, ill and house-bound.

St Vincent de Paul were buoyed by the response to the amount of donations they received for their Christmas hampers, and the volunteers that turned up to pack and deliver hampers to those on our list. Left-over hampers were put aside for those who come to our door of the church and parish, or who we hear about that could use a Christmas hamper. There were ample hampers for all, and then some – shades of feeding the five thousand. Parish staff and parishioners joined Sacred Heart Mission for their Christmas celebration held in the church, with great music and a morning tea to follow. We also joined in the celebrations of the 'End of School Year' Mass. For those who have been around for some time, it was amazing to farewell the grade six students who we remembered when they entered the ranks of the preppies.

The Monthly Morning Cuppa social group met with smaller numbers but no less significant in terms of creating contacts and a meaningful social outlet. Thanks to the Legion of Mary who always offer transport to this gathering, so as to make it more accessible for people.

The Social Committee outdid themselves with two consecutive events on 10 and 11 December. The first being the Parish Christmas BBQ, with about 80 people attending and bringing salads or desserts to share while the Brazilian worked that BBQ into a frenzy! These numbers were an increase on last year as the word has spread about our Brazilian type BBQ and next year, we may have to factor in a bigger space in which to hold this event. The festive spirit was further enhanced when Silvana, choir leader from Sacred Heart, led a combined choir, and those present, in Christmas song. The BBQ did not negatively impact people from attending our parish community carols at Sacred Heart Church the very next night. About sixty people turned up, most of whom mingled on afterwards at the light supper. We were curious about the anticipated turn out and were delighted with, not only the numbers but the wonderful atmosphere of celebration. Both events engendered a feeling of closeness, inclusiveness and great joy for the season.

Finally, the big celebrations on Christmas with its four masses, and preceding Christmas Eve Carol nights were upon us. The work of the Liturgy Committee and the preparations by two parish choirs, with the assistance of volunteers ensured some wonderful celebrations of the birth of our Lord. All masses were packed, and as is always the pattern, most regulars turned up to the Christmas Eve Masses, while the Christmas Day Masses at both churches were filled with people we rarely see - but all were welcomed in the same manner: "Welcome, thank you for joining us. Merry Christmas!

The office reduced its operation during the month of December and staff, and priest, took turns in taking some time away to rejuvenate. Thanks to Sr Brigid who covered the phones in the absence of the staff.

A busy, fruitful, joyous and a little sad in places, is how we ended our year 2023!