

October 2023 Parish Report



The office staff, including Fr John all benefitted from having a short break in late September/early October. It's probably not a bad idea to have a break after a long year and before the hectic season of Advent/Christmas begins. Recharged and rejuvenated, everyone was back on board, feeling good to return to working in the parish, working with the vulnerable and working with children.

We were thrilled to participate in the opening of the new build at the Mission, after half a dozen years of imagining, seeking funding, planning and building, the Campus of Care opened with a wonderful ceremony of speeches, smoking ceremony, ribbon cutting, tours of the new facilities, music and food. Former staff and new staff, parishioners, supporters and mission service recipients all sharing in the joy of achievement, aimed towards the care of those in need. It was Fr John's second day back from leave, and as he stood to deliver his speech, he received a 'rock star' welcome from those he so diligently and compassionately serves and accompanies.

Fr John, Karen (Mission) and Christine (Parish), with levels of support by members of the Bereavement Team and other parishioners, soon found themselves back in the thick of funerals (4), memorials (2) and one internment of ashes into our crypt at Sacred Heart. While these, especially with the Mission funerals, are simple liturgies, they are profoundly moving, especially when family members, who may have been estranged for one reason or not, attend. They often express gratitude for not only the dignified farewell but for the care their relatives received in our Mission and Parish.

On the other end of life, we have been busy preparing for sacraments, running two groups: one of older children preparing for Baptism and one for Reconciliation. Some of the children are in both groups and it wonderful to see them building group bonds, welcoming each other from different schools and feeling eager about their upcoming Baptism and other sacraments. A group of adults continue to prepare for their Rite of Christian Initiation into our church. Some of them have been preparing for over a year, and last weekend, as we noted that Easter will be early in 2024 (28-31 March), the excitement factor in the room reached a whole new high.

The Parish House continues to buzz with groups such as the PLDT, Liturgy, Discernment, Finance, Parish-School who meet to deal with the running of parish and worship; as well as groups concerned with spiritual nourishment, such as Jesuit Spirituality groups, Small Christian Church, the Legion of Mary; and our friendship group which meet for monthly coffee mornings.

With the news from the parish of Middle Park/Port Melbourne that they will not join us in forming a Mission, as in 'Take the Way of the Gospel' directive of the Archdiocese, because they wish to spend time on their own internal discernment, our Discernment Group's group met and decided to forge on ahead with our long-term visioning plans. You may remember that we held a parish meeting last Pentecost Eve, where they presented this plan, known as the parish roadmap. At the time we were directed to consider joining with the parishes of East St Kilda/Balaclava and Elsternwick/South Caulfield. This did not eventuate either. [Recently, Elsternwick/South Caulfield passed into the care of the Pallotine Order.] We need to now forge ahead with our visioning plans. At this time, we can say that the parish will be asked to participate more in the way forward. Details to come later.

Members of our Liturgy group and others attended a workshop at the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry to learn about Aboriginal spirituality and liturgy. It was a rich and valuable learning experience. Fr John also attended a MACS (Catholic Education) information session on what's new in Catholic education and parish-school relationships, now and into the future.

If anyone would like further details about what was raised in this report, feel free to approach Fr John or Christine. That's a wrap for October!