

July 2023 Parish Report



Mid-winter in July certainly seems to have a negative effect on people's moods and lives, if the rate of parish outreach is any indication. Visits, meetings, telephone calls and other forms of accompaniment by the parish priest, the pastoral ministry leader, the Legion of Mary and various community visitors were quite high this month. We go out with the words of St Teresa of Kolkata in our hearts with hands to serve and hearts to love. Our outreach is a sign to those who are isolated, lonely, ill or anxious that they are not alone or unwanted. Sometimes our visits are difficult and frustrating but our calling is to be accepting and patient. Sometimes we are definitely doing small things with great love, and sometimes we see the need for a bigger response, such as our planned monthly coffee and chat morning group, which we hope to roll out in the Spring.

At our monthly gathering with the St Kilda Ecumenical Group, we continued to discuss how we might share resources and collaborate in bringing attention to the issues around the Indigenous Voice to Parliament, so our respective parishioners are able to cast an informed vote. We have shared the Catholic Social Services webinars with them, while we are being invited to hear Wiradjuri man, Rev. Glenn Loughrey from St Paul's Cathedral when he addresses the local Anglican community. The Baptists are also holding a Congregational Service, from which we hope will bring further ideas to our collective ecumenical table.

Meanwhile members of our Discernment Group addressed a parish meeting at Mt Carmel/St Joseph in Middle Park/Port Melbourne about the journey and the process we have been taking in response to the Archdiocese call that parishes join together in Mission structures, sharing resources and personnel (Take the Way of the Gospel). While we were initially expected to partner with St Mary/St Coleman (East St Kilda) and St Joseph/Holy Cross (Elsternwick/Caulfield South), this has not eventuated. We have been exploring options with Mt Carmel/St Joseph. However, their parish meeting has just taken place and while they had a lot of questions of our representatives, we are still waiting to receive an update from their parish priest. We always knew it would be a long and complex process and now the Archdiocese has accepted this and are speaking of it in terms of it being as an organic evolution more than pragmatic restructuring.

As we look to how the future church will be, the PLDT invited parishioner Vivien Williams, who has formation and passion around the principle and practice of synodality to make a presentation to them. The Pope has called on the universal church to embrace this principle – that is walking together as laity, religious and ordained in dialogue, in deep listening to one another and being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the Church grapples with a future of falling numbers, whole unchurch generations, dwindling priests, ageing buildings and differing spiritual approaches while having to meet the never-ending need for spiritual and pastoral care, and worship. Vivian's experience was enlightening and motivational, and it is hoped that we can call on her knowledge in forming the wider parish and eventually and hopefully, putting this principle into action.

Interestingly, our RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) group has seen a growth in people enquiring about entering our faith tradition or completing their sacramental initiation. The group is blessed to have previous RCIA catechumens as supporters of the new enquirers, who continue to meet faithfully every two weeks on a Saturday afternoon. While, funerals, weddings, baptisms, children's sacramental preparations remain constant work of the priest and parish workers. Fr John left on a week's retreat and we were fortunate to have our residential retired priest, Fr Mal and our religious and pastoral ministry leader taking care of masses and liturgy services. The very popular Passionist priest, Fr Erick led our weekend masses, and with his homily symbols of a saw and wood, told us that, "I come in peace not pieces!" And that we were safe! Indeed, we were fortunate to have such a warm, pastoral heart as our presider who never forgets names and always gives time at the back of the church to those seeking his presence, despite being a visiting priest.

Back in the office, our office manager, Jane undertook a serious clean-out of papers and documents which stretched back decades. There was so much of it, we kept checking in on her to ensure that she didn't end up buried under a cascade of documents but in her true, efficient form she came through wondering what the fuss was about! There is light and space in the back office that we have not seen for some time! Jane continues to move our admin system to a new Archdiocese system, which is a demanding task, while ensuring, as conveyor of the Safeguarding committee that the complex demands of compliance is in hand.

July ended with a great parish social activity – movie night! We managed to fill the theatre we booked and enormous thanks must go to the Social Committee of Adrian Copley, Toni Vatta, Jeferson Almeida Souza and Marita Dalton for the immense organisation which resulted in a fun night of connection and new friendships.