



## Parish May 2023 Report

May saw our parish busy with our usual ministries of funerals, memorials, Baptisms, committee and network meetings, plus the important pastoral visits and connections carried out by Fr John, the Pastoral Ministry Leader, Legion of Mary and our various Religious Sisters.

Our yearly cycle of Sacrament preparation began with the Sacrament of Confirmation. There are twenty-eight students being prepared from St Columba Primary school plus other primary and secondary schools in the parish, including some from the Elsternwick parish as they still do not have a priest in residence. The sacrament will be administered by our Bishop, Tony Ireland on 1 June.

An approach by Fr Paul from the Carmelities (Middle Park) and St Joseph (Port Melbourne), curious about how we have responded to the Archdiocese's new proposal of restructure called, Take the Way of the Gospel (TWG), led to him being invited to attend the Discernment Group meeting in early May. Before Fr Paul attended we sent him our parish profile, the workings of the Discernment Group and our response to the Archdiocese - the Parish Roadmap. Fr Paul, newly appointed to his parish, is looking for guidance in how to develop conversations in his parish to forge ahead. He is interested in our approach and a possible relationship with us, if his parish is interested in doing so. The Discernment Group have offered to speak at their masses and any further assistance they require.

In the last weekend of May, Melanie, representing the Discernment Group, presented the first Report of the Group to our Parishioners. This report contained responses from interviews with our Parish Leadership and Development Team identifying 'burning issues' facing our Parish. A number were identified but two main ones were parish identity and the need for adult faith formation. The next step in the Roadmap is to draw out a framing question from these issues, which will lead our visioning into the future. However, the Discernment Group decided to pause this work as we wait to see if the Carmelities/St Joseph are interested in pursuing a relationship with us. The Group offered to go and speak at their Masses about our approach, and provide further information or guidance.

Meanwhile, the planning team who brought us the Parish Retreat in February met to discuss formation ideas for the PLDT, expected to be held later in the year. Speaking of formation, there was quite a bit of it in May. Our newly titled, Office Manager, Jane and Fr John attended a day of formation on new Administration practices for parishes at the Archdiocese. Fr John also continued his online formation with Ron Huntley as part of formation for priests promulgated by the Archdiocese. Fr John, Christine and Jane attended the Catholic Social Services online webinar on the Indigenous Voice to Parliament, the first of three sessions, while Fr John and Christine, along with some



parishioners attended the very informative webinar on Synodality – what does it mean? How will it work at parish level and the wider church? Some more practical, hands-on formation began for new Ministers of the Word, eagerly taken up by members of our Brazilian Community, accompanied by Christine.

Our May ecumenical ministers meeting saw an exchange of resources on the Voice to Parliament, with a decision by all parties to explore these resources and at our June meeting to make a decision on whether we issue a joint statement on the Voice to Parliament.

The Liturgy Committee decided that this year, Mother's Day would not only honour mothers and mother figures but also have a focus on mothers in the struggle of life. To this end, we invited speakers from agencies such as the Good Shepherd and Sacred Heart Mission to give us insight on the mothers they serve and the services they provide. At the 9.00 a.m. Mass at St Columba, the Brazilian community provided an extensive and delicious morning tea, and presented each woman in the church a gift of chocolates.

We finished May in grand style honouring our volunteers at all the Masses in prayer, with a small gift, and a video snapshot of volunteering across the parish, plus an ongoing invitation for new volunteers. On the Sunday of this weekend, we held our local 'Dine with Heart' lunch of soup and dessert. We last held one of these events as a dinner in 2018. The Social Committee decided to move it into a daytime slot to allow older people to come out. The efforts of the social committee resulted in a wonderful feast of good food, supplemented by donations of desserts by attendees. There was a wonderful mixing of parishioners across the various Mass groups with about 45 people attending. Further, we were able to ensure generous donations will be made to both the Sacred Heart Mission Meals program and the Parish. Well done to all involved.