



October 2022 Parish Report to November Meeting of the PLDT

October was a month characterised by unexpected disruptions and creative responses. We began the month in the knowledge that Jane was taking long-service leave and Fr John, his annual holiday. We planned for these two events, Sr Brigid stepped in to deal with administration issues; Frs Terry and Mal to preside over Masses, and Srs Trish and Karen, and Christine to conduct Communion Services at Sacred Heart Mission Hostel and weekday liturgies.

School-Parish began the sacramental program of the term: Reconciliation. A number of adults are also undertaking sacramental or initiation preparation through the RCIA, including participants from St Joseph/Holy Cross, and St Patrick's Mentone, as these parishes do not have RCIA groups. Discussions are underway with St Joseph/Holy Cross to assist them in setting-up an RCIA group.

In the absence of Fr John, groups continued to meet including the PLDT and Liturgy. Prospective new members attended the PLDT meetings as observers while they ponder whether they would like to join this committee. Teachers and catechist also met to map out Family Reconciliation night and activities for the Preparation Masses. The Discernment Group began interviewing the members of the PLDT as part of Phase One of the Roadmap. The Pastoral Associate held meetings with the Executive Officer at St Joseph/Holy Cross, as part of keeping communication lines open with one of our proposed Mission partners in the 'Take the Way of the Gospel' model.

During this time, we also farewelled our popular French family, the Watines from St Columba as they headed for new adventures in Hong Kong; and had the opportunity to honour Fr Terry's 50th Anniversary of priesthood at Sacred Heart. Further, we put out a call for donations to Fr John's birthday gift. Thanks to generous donations we were able to purchase him a subscription to the National Gallery of Victoria, The Fringe Festival and an Efpas card.

The Pastoral Associate, the Legion of Mary and Sr Trish visited, telephoned, accompanied and took Communion to those who are ill, lonely or in crisis.

Towards the end of the month, unexpected events took place. Jane came back from her holiday not fully well but Sr Brigid and the Pastoral Associate managed to hold the fort a little longer, with a few calls made to Jane! Fr John's mentor and friend, Bishop Hilton Deacon died and Fr John returned from interstate to be part of the funeral while still on holiday. We had some deaths in his absence but between Sr Karen (for the Mission) and the Pastoral Associate (for the Parish), we planned with the families and funeral directors as we awaited Fr John's return. Fr Terry was able to assist us with one of the funerals.

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Upon Fr John's return, we had a further flurry of meetings: 40th Anniversary Committee; Parish Retreat; Parish 2023 group (formation group); pastoral and staff meetings. Jane had also returned to full health, so it was busy in the parish house. Within the space of two days, Fr John managed a wedding, funeral, memorial service, First Eucharist, mid-week Baptism, pastoral visits, and of course, Masses. However, not long into his return, Fr John was diagnosed with Covid on the Saturday. It was too late to organise a priest for Saturday Mass, so we held a Communion Service, led by six female parishioners. Fr Mal returned to preside over Sunday Masses and undertake the monthly baptisms on the Sunday. We cancelled Family Reconciliation night; and while leaving the Reconciliation Preparation Masses in place, the Deputy Principal and catechist decided to re-organise the ritual prepared for the Mass, so that any priest could make it a special moment for the students. As the week progressed, Fr John showed signs of recovery and was able to zoom into a funeral planning meeting. A week later he was no longer testing positive and returned for the Reconciliation Preparation Masses. Still recovering from the after-effects of the virus with low energy, Fr John is attempting to take things slower. Hopefully, it won't be long before he is back to his old self.

One of the highlights of the month was on Saturday, 22 October when Silvana, choir leader from Sacred Heart, led the Sacred Heart Choir, known as One Voice for God, in participating in the Festival of Glass, being held by the St Kilda and Balaclava Presbyterian Church. By all accounts, the day was well patronised and our choir well received. New friendships were struck and there is talk of collaboration as an ecumenical singing group. Presbyterian Pastor, Luke was heard to say that he wished he could keep the choir for his Sunday services – not a chance! 😊