

Parish Report for the Month of April 2020

By the start of April we had totally moved into a new way of connection via zoom and other online modes of communication. All our committees: the PLDT, Liturgy, Care Committee, Parish-School team, Parish Pastoral team, Small Christian Community, Young Adults and RCIA started and have continued meeting via Zoom. Fr John also meets the SHM Board. The Mission organised a iPad so residents can speak to people outside and Fr John has used FaceTime to touch base with some of the residents. We were able to maintain our participation with the Friends of the Elwood RSL annual ANZAC Day service, which was held as a virtual event via Zoom and live-streamed through their Facebook page. Our parish, represented by our Pastoral Associate began the proceedings of the day with a prayer.

Unfortunately, all baptisms, weddings and the RCIA initiation, plus other sacraments were put on hold in April, and have continued this way. We have had a number of funerals and memorials, mainly at Sacred Heart Church for either Hostel residents or service recipients of the Mission. We held one funeral for Ray Monagle at St Columba Church with only immediate family present. However, the family organised recording and FaceTiming so other family members and parishioners could join. The details went out in our Friday email to people.

We have been able to continue recording two masses a week: the Sunday Mass, recorded in Sacred Heart Church and a simpler, Tuesday Mass, recorded in Fr John's study. This provided us with a wonderful opportunity to hold our Triduum masses (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil), which were well received and much appreciated. We are fortunate to have Adrian Crolepy leading this recording initiative and he is now regularly supported by a pre-production team, musicians and Carlo Marcon, so that the recording of these masses can continue, which are uploaded to our website and accessed through YouTube. We still struggle with sound issues from time to time but Adrian continues to research how we can best solve this issue. We are able to gauge how many people view our masses via YouTube and discovered that the Easter Vigil attracted 44,000 views. It has now dropped back to a more modest number. We have received and continue to receive a lot of positive feedback and support for these masses.

The Parish Pastoral team, along with some volunteer co-ordinators continue to maintain regular telephone contact with parishioners, especially those who do not have internet access or who are vulnerable for a number of reasons. All those who receive calls are thrilled to have this contact and for us it's a good way of gauging how people are coping and if we can provide any further assistance. Our mailing list is quite dated and when we regather physically, we will need to spend time on a system of registration and maintain ongoing registration. Perhaps it would be best done at our weekly masses. For now, we keep asking people through our notices at our recorded masses, email or telephone conversations whether people know anyone who we can put on our email list.

We have got into the rhythm of sending out two large emails per week, one on Friday, loosely as a e-newsletter and then at the beginning of the week, we send out a transcript of Fr John's homily for those who do not get to watch it on the website/YouTube. We replicate a lot of this information on the website. Thus, apart from the Mass, there are prayers, reflections, health tips, information from groups or events, such as the Young Adults and our Faith and Environment section. In all our communication modes we continually urge people to either view our website or contact us if they want to put their name on our email list, or let us know if there is someone who would benefit from being on this list.

Similarly, we highlight in both modes how people can continue to pledge their offerings or give donations. People are getting more accustomed to using our online facilities such as the Tithely App

or direct debit. We have been successfully registered the Parish team for the Job Keeper scheme and this should start flowing within the next few weeks. The Archdiocese successfully applied for the priests to be catered for within this scheme.

At the end of April, we held our first Zoom social activity: A trivia night. With about 14 people participating, it was not only a lot of fun but so heart-warming and emotionally comforting for all to see faces or hear the voices of the fellow parishioners. We hope to extend our type of activities and increase the numbers who participate. Our Care Committee meets regularly to ascertain how we can keep in touch with our parishioners and what type of resources, information and activities we can provide to look after our people during this time of isolation.