Dear Friends,

Greetings! It was with great joy that I received the news a few weeks back that I would be appointed Parish Priest of St John’s here in Heidelberg. I know it to be a community of great history and beauty and I feel so privileged to have been entrusted with its care. Though having been here for only a few days, I have already experienced the wonderful warmth and hospitality of the people here, but more importantly their prayerfulness and sense of devotion. It gives me great joy to know that the Holy Spirit is alive and well in this place.

My beginning at St John’s does mean the completion of Fr Mario’s time here, to whom we wish every blessing as he takes up a new mission in the Philippines. The strength and activity of a parish is a reflection of the hard work and fidelity of its leaders, and so we thank Fr Mario for the time he has put in helping the parish become the fine community it is today.

I am sure we will all get to know each other in time, but until then a little information about me:

I grew up in Gladstone Park and attended the local Catholic primary, the School of the Good Shepherd before heading to St Bernard’s College in Essendon. Off to university, I completed a Bachelor of Business at RMIT and also a Diploma in Education, which had me working both in industry and then as a school teacher at Penola Catholic Secondary College. I was constantly discerning my vocation during this time and after some months of prayer and direction I entered Corpus Christi College Seminary, finally completing my studies in 2015. I was ordained a priest at St Patrick’s Cathedral in September of that year.

Archbishop Hart sent me to the parish of St Macartan’s in Mornington for my fist appointment as assistant priest, and then St Peter’s in Epping, before I was invited to be Administrator of the parish of Brunswick this past year. All were wonderful and enriching experiences. My favourite saints seem to always be Jesuits, which is rather interesting: Francis Xavier, Edmund Campion, Isaac Jogues and Peter Claver to name a few. I think it’s because they had such an unshakeable faith in the power and efficacy of the sacraments. I have a real love of sports with golf being my favourite. I barrack for North Melbourne in the AFL and have a soft spot for Melbourne City in the A League. I am a bit of a petrol head, but with my daily drive being a Nissan Pulsar you wouldn’t know it!

We’re living in strange times indeed, so though I would love to meet you all in person soon, that might not be possible for some time. We are looking to provide the opportunity for people to attend weekend masses as of Sunday July 12, with attendees booking ahead either online or by a call to our parish office. The aim is to give our faithful the chance to attend mass at least once over the next month or so, with the hope that restrictions ease in time as we get on top of this virus.

Through the intercession of St John the Evangelist, may we continue to show our love for one another by acts of kindness and generosity, and most especially by keeping one another in prayer.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Joel.