

Parish Luncheon - enjoyed by all



A delightful interlude of entertainment given to us by.....Sarah and Luke



120 Parishioners enjoyed a Sunday spit roast luncheon and friendship together as family in the Parish Hall. Monies raised goes to the charities we support in Timor Leste and Dr Mark Ellis's Eye Surgery Program in Soumba.

Conversation was lively and although a chilly day the warmth in the room could be felt by all who came along.

Churches are special places

Recently we were blessed and had a holiday visiting parts of Poland and Eastern Europe. We enjoy our travel and discovering countries, cities and meeting people who live there, their customs, food and the way they live.

One of the highlights (and there were many) were the number of functioning active churches that are often within 500 metres of each other. The churches are so ornate and so well preserved. Each church we visited had something special and unique about it.

The church of the Infant de Prague where tourists flourish, as they do in St Stephens in Vienna, St Stephens in Budapest with relic of his hand, St Vitus in Krakow with its special altar of Pope John Paul II, and all the awesome little chapels carved by miners in the Salt mines, some 300 metres below the surface.

Some churches were draped in purple for lent with swathes of cloth around the crucifix; St Stephens in Vienna was beautifully lit with purple lights reminding us of the sorrows, times of change and joys of Easter to come.

One of the best discoveries was as we wound our way home to the little hotel in Prague at midday after a three hour walk, we heard beautiful singing. On investigating we pushed open the door to a wonderful church/chapel extremely ornate right next to the hotel and mass was underway with Grey Sisters singing

God was obviously calling us to prayer. The singing drew us to this special church. We would not have known it was there as there as it had no outward sign that it was a church just a building with a solid door.

After that we visited "our" corner church every day when it was open. We later learnt the history of the chapel and the hotel.

In 1950 the convent was taken over by the State Secret Police of the Communist regime and converted into a police headquarters complete with in interrogation cells. (Before we left the hotel the owner took us down to the basement and showed us the cells).

In the late 1970's one of the prisoners there was Mr Vaclav Harval - later (1990) he became the initial President of the country. After the fall of the communist state Harval returned the convent to the religious order and helped to restore it. Not that many years ago!

We are always enriched by our travel experiences and learning the history of what had taken place in this very special hotel further added to our enjoyment of Prague.

Many people have fought so hard for their freedom and the right to express their religious beliefs. How lucky are we that we have the freedom to worship when and how we like. And to be part of St. Johns parish in Heidelberg.

St Johns is not a grand ornate church like those in Europe. By Australian standards it is old, unique and quite beautiful, it is ours; and therefore our responsibility to care for and cherish now and for the future.

In the coming years we hope to renew, paint and renovate St Johns, yes it will cost, but as plaster is falling from some walls the cost of doing nothing cannot be considered.

The travellers