

# ECHO

The magazine of St John's Catholic Parish Heidelberg



April 2015

## ***JOURNEYING TOGETHER***

### **Message from Fr Mario**

Dear parishioners, visitors and friends,  
Greetings!

#### Easter Celebrations:

As a community we have just celebrated the most important feast in our Church year: the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' resurrection after his death concludes and is the fulfilment of the story that started in Bethlehem. God became human so that we could come to know and relate with God; Jesus is the bridge between God and ourselves. Jesus' death on the cross is the ultimate sign of God's love for us humans; Paul tells us that Jesus went all the way, not only becoming human but also dying on the cross like a common criminal. The Christ story does not end on the cross; the greatest victory is his resurrection. Paul again reminds us that unless Christ rose again, our faith would be empty. Death is not the final answer, the resurrection is! Even in our life, the pain and suffering is never the final answer, we need to look forward to our own resurrection. I once again thank all those who contributed in various ways to ensure that these celebrations are enriching in our life.

#### October Synod:

In October Pope Francis will be convoking the 14<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Church. Since the close of the Second Vatican Council popes have regularly called synods every three to four years in order to discuss different aspects of the life of the Church. Over the centuries it has always been the role of the Church to help us understand God's Word in our life and find relevant ways how to live this Word today.

We are all aware that cultures change and new pastoral situations arise. One reality that we are aware of today is the high incidence of breakdown in marriages and people who move on into second marriages. In this year's synod the Pope is asking the

Church to reflect on "The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world." New questions are today being asked and it is the role of the Church to look carefully at God's Word and suggest new pastoral responses to these questions.

This might sound a new and strange process, but it has actually always been part of the process of the Church. The history of the Church is full of examples where it has looked at the questions being asked, tried to understand them and provide new answers. One of the first of these questions is recorded in the bible where Paul challenged Peter about which rules from the Jewish religion the new Church was bound with.

As we listen with the Church to God's Word, the Pope invites us to pray. This is a process of the Holy Spirit and as a believing community we need to join in prayer as we ask the Holy Spirit to continue leading the Church into better understanding God's Word and faithfully living it today.

***May God bless us always***

**Fr Mario**

### ***Reflection on our Christmas 2014 and Easter 2015 Ceremonies.***

Christmas 2014 saw the first combining of the 6pm and 8pm Mass with the new time of the combined mass being 7pm.

The venue was Our Lady of Mercy (OLMC) Gym. Some were hesitant at the combining of the masses and also the venue. The OLMC venue proved to be a winner and the Christmas mass was a true celebration of family and joy.

Fr Mario had organised for a baby to represent the baby Jesus at all masses. The babies (and their parents) excelled at the representation of Christ's Birth and it added much to our ceremonies.

The overwhelming comments after the event were those of praise for how well it all worked.

Santa too was welcomed and joined in the giving of gifts which gives so much pleasure and celebration to Jesus birthday.

### **A personal story**

On the 25th of December 2014, our little family played the role of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus for the Christmas morning mass. We felt so excited when we were first asked, especially for having our 8 month old baby Clara playing the role of baby Jesus.

Having recently become new parents, it wasn't difficult to imagine what Mary and Joseph would have gone through during the birth of their son. As we know, things would have been much more challenging considering the circumstances at the time. Unlike us, they had no hospital, no kind midwives, no comfortable bed, let alone a warm crib to lay their son in; yet God chose a stable as the birthplace of our Saviour and King.



Playing the role of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus reminded us of how blessed we have been in our journey as a family. It was also a big reminder to us of

the miracle of life that Clara has been to us. Sitting beside the altar, at the exact place where we sat during our wedding celebration 18 months prior, was an overwhelming experience as we have now been gifted with our own baby Jesus.

We want to thank Fr Mario for inviting us to be a part of this celebration, we really enjoyed this experience and what it allowed us to reflect upon.

**Leo, Wendy and Clara Hernandez**

**The journey to Easter** -As we journeyed towards Easter 2015 prayer groups met over the Lenten time.

**Easter ceremonies** were all well attended and this year Fr Longinus washed the feet of 12 parishioners. We were reminded on how dirty the feet of those that journeyed with Christ through the dirt streets and fields in sandals would have been in those early days.



The choir is to be congratulated for their efforts for all the ceremonies and the practice and time they put in to this in the lead up to these special times. New members are most welcome at any time.

The Way of the Cross on Good Friday morning was organised by Elizabeth Williamson. Elizabeth has undertaken this mammoth task of setting up the Stations of the Cross around the grounds and organising the ceremony for many years.



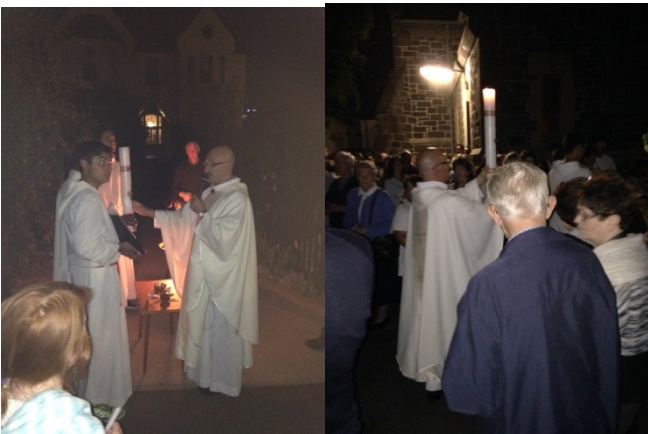


Held outside in the school yard it gives children and adults alike a really good understanding of the journey Jesus made to his crucifixion. Different family groups carry the cross to the different stations and children and adults read at each Station.

The 3pm service was again held in OLMC Gym and well attended. The service of veneration is very solemn and moving. The large cross passes over the crowd and all reach out to touch it to be part of the journey with Christ.



The Easter fire this year was in the garden near the side chapel. One small member of our parish whose eyes were shining largely in the anticipation and dark night was heard to say "Jesus is going to bless the fire".



Parishioners followed the light of Christ with their own candles into the darkened church which then became alive with the light of Christ.

### Colin's Story – the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) Program

I was baptised into the Methodist Church in Camperdown, Victoria in the 1950's and attended Sunday school regularly till I was 10. After this my church attendance was irregular until I met my wife Mary in the mid 80's. From then on I would attend mass with her intermittently, always at Easter and Christmas and occasionally during the year.

However in the last six years I have been attending church with her much more regularly and in early 2014 after much thought and deliberation decided that I would like to become a member of the Catholic Church. After an initial chat with Father Ted I approached Father Mario and my RCIA program began in July 2014.

We met every two weeks in the Presbytery and after the initial meeting which was with Father Mario and Sister June, I was joined by my wife and another parishioner Tim who was also keen to learn more about the Catholic Church and progress his knowledge of his faith. Sometimes another Parishioner, Sally, attended who was also interested in learning more about her Catholic faith.

Our sessions started with a reading of the Gospel from the previous Sunday and clarification of any matters which were unclear. After this the conversation could and did go in many different directions as questions were raised and answered. I gained an historical perspective of the Catholic Church in relation to other faiths and their similarities and differences were discussed. We learnt about the Labyrinth in the Church garden, its symbolism and meaning and subsequently Mary and I often walked it as a form of meditative prayer in the course of the program finding it both a peaceful and energising exercise. We also learnt of the existence of the Catholic Bookshop in Camberwell and were prompted to visit it and the beautiful Catholic Basilica nearby.

Some of the things we learnt about included useful web sites such as "Sacred Space"; Lectio Divina; what Ordinary Time means; the significance of the priest wearing different coloured vestments at different times in the Liturgical Year and that the