



December 2016 – March 2017
Pastoral Care Newsletter

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Hello! I hope this newsletter finds you well.

WORDS OF APPRECIATION...

I do this every year, thank all the wonderful people who are involved in the various pastoral roles within the parish, our ministers and leaders, facilitators, those who support others, carers, people we visit, aged care facility staff and so on. It's important to acknowledge and thank you and others for your time, your gifts and the quiet unobtrusive way in which you minister and care, not for acclaim but to walk the steps of Christ and be of service to others; even during difficult times. We also acknowledge the people who are now resting in God's loving care.

Thank you to all the **wonderful parishioners of St Declan's** and those who support and care within this community.

The **visitation ministers** and **bereavement group** who quietly give so much to others. Without your involvement many people would feel isolated from the church and lose their connection to a community of faith. Your presence, support and the offering of prayer gives hope, affirmation and love. This is also evident at our Anointing Masses and Remembrance Mass each year – thank you for your prayers and involvement.

To the **staff and residents of the five nursing homes** who open their doors to us; thank you for giving us the opportunity of sharing the good news and the sacraments of our faith.

Thank you to the **Hospital Visiting Group** and **Friendship Club**, for your enthusiasm and activities, not to mention fun! A special thank you for organising and participating in the masses at each of the care facilities four times a year – always a life-giving experience!

Over 2014 & 2015 pastoral care took on a special project – **Days for Girls**. I am delighted to say that we came together this year to help Beverley pack more kits for Libby and these have been sent to Timor.

Beverley and Peter De Meur flew to Timor in October this year to see first-hand what Libby's project was all about. To meet the faces of those we have been supporting in such a small but life-giving way. If you would like to continue with or get involved in DfG project, please contact Beverley De Meur on 9594 4898. Thank you Beverley for your support, generosity, friendship and energy!!! We continue to wish Libby energy, and God's blessings throughout her life-changing work for others.

DECLANCRAFT saw five activities held during this year. Nearly all activities consisted of two or more sessions. *Crochet* was extremely popular and so much fun; *Jewellery Making* saw some creative designs; *Cards & Games Morning* became very competitive with 'Dominoes' and 'Mahjong'; *Card Making* and *Painting on Canvas* both made a return this year and were extremely popular (and quite a few laughs were had by all). Stay tuned for activities in 2017. Thanks to those who facilitated these classes especially Kim Corallo and Ingrid Micallef for sharing your incredible skills and talents with us.

Thank you Gail and Brad for three years of service so far doing the **Gardening** in the Church grounds, the grounds

Fire burning brightly...

Lord,

Help us to keep the Fire of God's Love burning brightly in our hearts. Through the grace of our Baptism, may we continue share this gift of the Holy Spirit to those we meet, to those who need our care and to those who thirst for spiritual nourishment. Amen.



look fabulous. Keep up the great work!

Thank you to the **Parish Staff** for their continued support, love, friendship, guidance and assistance towards pastoral initiatives and events throughout the year; you enrich pastoral ministry and the life of this parish! Farewell to Fr Moses and Fr Allan who are now serving others; Moses in Daceyville Parish and Allan in Papua New Guinea. We wish them blessings for their future. A special note of thanks goes to **Fr John**, for his incredible and unwavering support and care over the last 16 years. We have been blest by John's leadership and we will continue to be blest by our priests.

I'd like to thank the **school community** from St Declan's Primary School and Marist College. May God continue to enrich your leadership, teaching and support roles within the parish community.

A heartfelt note of thanks goes to those who, after some discernment, have retired from the various ministries. You have been an incredible source of hope and strength. We wish you God's continuous love and strength. *There are many of you that may wish to move into a different life direction, please contact me if you would like to have a chat. I'm always happy to listen to your story and support you in whatever direction your life goes.*

I will endeavour to nourish the pastoral ministries and will call for further support early 2017.

Thank you for your continued support, love and commitment!

WELCOME...

From November 2016 we have the pleasure of welcoming Fr Hoa Nguyen (Assistant Priest), along with Frs Simon Kitimbo, Arthur Givney, Danny Meagher and Bishop Richard Umbers who will be with us until 31 January. We thank them for their time, ministry and guidance. May they continue to receive many blessings throughout their life and their vocation.

From February 2017 sees us with four newly appointed priests who are of the Missionaries of God's Love. These being: Parish Priest, Chris Ryan and his Assistant Priests: Adam Crouch, Isuru Weliwatte and one other priest yet to be appointed. Fr Steve Fletcher will be Administrator while Chris completes his PhD. We keep Fr Chris in our prayers that he completes this well (and quickly). We hope that through God's grace the future for us all will continue to be filled with God's blessings. It will be a good year!

Chris and his fellow priests are open to all ministry and especially service to those who are marginalised, isolated or need a loving hand to support them through the tough times. Chris is inspired as to what St Declan's offers to the community and will support the spiritual nourishment and formation of this community.

2017 DATES

Ash Wednesday

- Wednesday, 1 March 2017

For those who distribute the ashes to Fairlea, Ferndale Gardens, Gannon Gardens, Shangri-La, and Nunyara Nursing homes, and for home visitations on Ash Wednesday, please let me know by **Friday, 24 February**. Ashes, prayers and lists of residents will be provided and ready for **pick-up on Ash Wednesday from 6.45am Mass** onwards in the sacristy. Thank you for doing these visits, your service is inspiring!

Anointing Mass

- Saturday, 25 March at 10.30am. Followed by a cuppa.

Aged Care/Nursing Home Masses

Ferndale Gardens: 33 Jersey Ave, Mortdale

Shangri-la: 107 Carrington Ave, Hurstville

Fairlea: 11 Hawk St, Penshurst

Gannon Gardens: 53 Gloucester Rd, Hurstville

- Tuesday, 14 March – Ferndale Gardens
- Wednesday, 15 March – Fairlea
- Tuesday, 21 March – Shangri-La
- Tuesday, 28 March – Gannon Gardens

Nunyara: 8 – 12 Neilson Avenue, Peakhurst

- First Tuesday of the month at 11am in the chapel

Visitors MUST sign in/out when visiting a care facility.

PASTORAL CARE RECORDS **IMPORTANT!**

Visitation ministers & bereavement group...

Please contact me if there are changes within your ministry, if you require information, support or if your visit situation has changed. Pastoral Records must be recorded and updated.

REFLECTION

Sensitivity, Vulnerability and Religion

Ron Rolheiser OMI, 19 July 2009

Daniel Berrigan once quipped: Before you get serious about Jesus, first consider carefully how good you are going to look on wood.

There's a hard truth. Classical spiritual writers tell us that one of the ways we can tell whether our faith and religious practices are authentic or whether they are just another form of rationalizing and justifying our own motivation and will, is that, if our religious practice is real, we will be unable to protect ourselves against a certain amount of pain which we formerly were able to block out. If our following of Jesus is real, we will find ourselves sensitive and vulnerable in ways that leave us unable to protect ourselves from duties, involvements, and humiliations that we could formerly avoid. True religion leaves us anything but cool.

Why? Classical spiritual writers explain it simply: Look at the way that God handled Jesus and know that, if we give God permission, God will handle us in the same way. If we open ourselves deeply to God, we should expect that some of the painful things that happened to Jesus will also happen to us. Openness and love led Jesus to the cross. Should we expect anything else?

It was interesting to see the reactions to Mother Teresa's journals when they were published and the world learned of her deep inner struggles, doubts, and pain. The common reaction was: How could this have happened to a woman of such integrity and faith? The classical spiritual writers would have reacted in the opposite way: Why would this not have happened to a woman of such integrity and faith? She opened herself radically to God and asked

Jesus to make her feel like he felt. God just took her at her word. Her diaries are descriptions of precisely what Jesus felt like during a good part of his life, especially towards the end of it.

We should be careful what we pray for, or at least not surprised if God gives us what we ask. If I say to God: "Let me be as Jesus was", and mean it, I should expect not just that a deeper happiness and peace will flow into my life, but also that this new sensitivity will allow deeper pain to flow into my life as well.

John of the Cross, in his book "The Ascent to Mount Carmel", offers a series of counsels for anyone who wants to enter more deeply into the spiritual life. In the first of these counsels, he challenges his readers to strive to more actively imitate Jesus. And, for John, this means trying to imitate Jesus' motivation rather than his appearance or even his actions. Ask Jesus, he says, to give you his motivation, to let you feel as he felt.

And how will we know if this is working? We will know that we are imitating the motivation of Christ and not rationalizing our own, John says, when certain pains begin to flow into our lives and we find that we are unable now to avoid certain difficult and distasteful situations which formerly we could avoid.

He expresses this in a curious axiom: Be endeavoured to be inclined to be suspicious, he says, when your own will and God's will habitually coincide, when your religious practices always fit quite smoothly with what you want to do in your own life. To choose God's will is precisely to not always choose our own. And the proof of this will be that we will now be dragged into feelings and situations which formerly we could avoid.

But he adds an important warning: Don't try, as is the perennial temptation in some spiritualities, to choose what is more difficult and distasteful just because it is more difficult and distasteful. That's masochism, not religion. Things aren't necessarily good for you just because they are difficult. Choose to do God's will, whether it appears tasteful or distasteful. But, he says, if you choose God's will rather than rationalizing your own, you will invariably experience new vulnerabilities in your life, new pains that you could formerly avoid, and new duties from which you could formerly absent yourself.

And you won't always look good either. Jesus didn't. He loved others beyond what was in it for him and this brought great depth and joy to his life, but it also led to humiliation and crucifixion. Sometimes he didn't look good at all. When we do God's will rather than rationalizing our own in the name of God and religion, we won't always look good. Cool is the opposite of vulnerability and genuine sensitivity.

Sometimes, paradoxically, just when we are trying our hardest, just when we are most sincere, just when we are most honest, just when we finally stop rationalizing, our lives seem to fall apart rather than come together. Our spontaneous question is: Why? What's the matter?

Perhaps God is the matter! Perhaps for once we are doing things right, but we don't like how we look on wood.

Visit Ron's website on www.ronrolheiser.com/index.php

PRAYER

Blessings... Throughout 2017, may God continue to bless us within our life, our families and friends, our ministry, our work, our play, our dark moments, our joy, our sorrow, our travels... Amen.



Thank you and take care.

Yours faithfully, *Paulineke*

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Pastoral Care... responding to the needs of St Declan's Parish

Pastoral Care aims to provide spiritual nourishment, social interaction and support to parishioners who are bereaved, lonely, aged, infirmed, sick, disabled and are unable to take part in parish Eucharistic celebrations by:

- involving parishioners to minister to others & share their faith
- creating a community of care
- developing a strong parish network.