

PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT 2008

I write with thanksgiving in my heart for the many great blessings that we have experienced in the past year. Read these reports and see how our community lives out our faith and expresses it through service to the community and beyond. These reports give a greater insight into our community, and of all the activities that are going on in the parishes. Through the generosity of many, our parishes continue to be a vibrant worshipping community. My special thanks to Parish and School Staff for their commitment to the mission of the Church, to our Finance and Maintenance committees for your ongoing support and expertise, to the various people who are involved in Sacramental Preparation and RCIA, and to those who continue to spread the Good News and help others to grow in faith. Thank you to all parishioners for your ongoing support and encouragement to me as pastor and for your contribution to our parishes.

Celebrating Community

Last year Fr Bob's fiftieth ordination anniversary celebration was a great tribute to him, but also a wonderful reflection of our community. I treasure the day, the participation during Mass, followed by a great celebration in the parish hall with Fr Bob's family and friends. For me it was a healthy community at its best, celebrating and showing hospitality, all together, the young and the not so young. There were a few people who contributed to the evening but were unable to join in for various reasons. Special thanks to the Social Committee for organising in such a way that enabled many to be involved. There is always something to celebrate and I believe through all these great celebrations we are getting to know people and forming better relationships in the community.

Our liturgies continue to nourish our lives: thank you to our musicians, lectors, communion ministers, collectors, altar servers, sacristans and all who look after the linen, flowers and our two churches.

A strong community like ours has its issues and conflicts, different opinions, tensions through personality, hurts by words and actions. I admire you for the way forgiveness is celebrated through reconciliation and in a few cases through acceptance and the magnanimity of those involved to move on. There are wonderful people in the community who are blessed with the gift of building community.

Pastoral Care

I believe that we do provide wonderful care to our parishioners. Fr Bob, Fr Ben and Liz Clark together with various members of our community care for parishioners with deep commitment. Our sick and elderly especially are not forgotten. I hear great stories about parishioners supporting and caring for others in the community.

Hospitality and Welcome

Many new families have moved into our parishes and we do welcome them and show hospitality. Curry nights, morning teas, Chinese New Year celebrations and other occasions have proved to be great opportunities in welcoming others. I encourage you to continue to welcome others into our community, remembering it is important to move around and speak to others outside our own circle of friends. Our pilgrims who were with me on the pilgrimage to Italy in 2006 have been great in the way they have moved around at social functions; it says a lot about our inclusive and welcoming community. I believe the group that needs our attention now are the young adults and foreign students. How can we nourish them?

Youth

'The Basement' at St Clare's is nearing completion. The Whitefriars College students have been instrumental in the refurbishment process and this year they are working in the quadrangle area. Julian, Kathy and Di are planning a few things for our youth and they have been instrumental in organising billeting for pilgrims during 'Days in Dioceses' in Melbourne, prior to World Youth Day 08 in Sydney. Congratulations are due to those young people who presented the 'Youth Stations of the Cross' for the Cross and Icon event at Our Lady of Victories on 2nd May.

Future Plans

In January I was struggling with the workload and trying to keep up with all our commitments with difficulty, especially with staff on holiday. Fr Ben and Fr Bob are very generous with their time and are very committed to parish ministry, but they too are getting tired and age is catching up with them as well. I am aware that we are not able to keep up with all our present commitments and sooner rather

later some things will have to change. Liz has indicated to me that she has been thinking about cutting her work hours and I will not be here forever, so some realistic planning for the future is necessary. It is also demanding trying to run two separate parishes, so we have slowly put in place a framework that is helping to streamline the organisation of the parishes. We don't lack ideas, but we need suitable people who are willing, and the time to translate words into action.

Congratulations to St Clare's parishioners for the way they have accepted the partnership and have moved forward, however I am aware of their grieving process. I believe both communities have come a long way. I am inviting you to take the next big step in organising our parishes and training people for ministry with realistic expectations. I know it is not easy and as your Pastor I am responsible to help you to prepare for the future. We have to sacrifice some things in order to have a more life giving experience of our faith.

***Fr Anthony Selvaraj ofm
Parish Priest***