

## Parish Priest's Report 2010-2011

Excitement tinged with regret was still palpable in both parishes when I arrived on the 7<sup>th</sup> February, a full week after Anthoni and Ben's farewell Mass. They'll continue to be greatly missed after such a long presence among you, nine and twenty-three years respectively. Bob and Peter Tran met me at Tullamarine and together with Peter Cantwell, all four of us dined that Monday evening at the RSL. I like to think that so began as lively and mutually supportive a little franciscan community at 1087 Whitehorse as the one it replaced.

Well, it's now a touch under four months since that day and what an introduction I've had to this exciting cluster of parishes that is St Francis Xavier and St Clare! The obvious faith and devotion evident at the weekday and weekend Eucharists is striking; the lively social activity; the efficiency coupled with a warm welcome that makes up the parish office team of Monique, Di and their generous volunteer helpers which, in every parish, is the hub of its life; the expertise, long service and interest evidenced in the finance committee members, education board members, pastoral councillors and the list goes on including especially Carmel Purdey and her staff and the beautifully-appointed school that is St Francis Xavier. I'm sure to forget to mention so many aspects of life in St Francis Xavier and St Clare that have made such an impression on me, but I can't neglect the obvious and well-founded expectation generated by Antoni's planned renovations of the Box Hill Church and freshening up of that in Box Hill North and very soon to be realised.

You may remember the lector's first words at Mass on 1<sup>st</sup> May, the week after Easter: *"The whole community remained faithful to the **teaching of the apostles**, to the **brotherhood**, to the **breaking of bread** and to the **prayers**".* With these words, written around 80AD describing life in the little house churches of 35AD, Luke may well be describing the practice of the christian community to which he belonged all those fifty years later. It certainly describes life in so many parishes including our own Box Hill cluster – *the **brotherhood** (and sisterhood) of mutual support and care, the central place the **Mass** (or breaking of bread) holds in our lives, the **prayer-chair** we'll be encouraged to slide into regularly, if not daily, with our favourite prayerbook, New Testament, Bible (or even just the humble daily Mass-sheet) and finally, you could number on one hand the parishes world-wide hosting a facility as brilliant as Yarra Theological Union in Bedford St within walking distance where all of us, especially those retired with time and interest, could deepen our knowledge of **the teaching of the apostles**, thereby kindling in our hearts the fire of love and devotion for Our Lord.*

**Peter McGrath ofm**