

## ST MICHAEL'S PARISH IN 2020

I think it's fairly certain that not one of us could have imagined the year that was 2020 ~a pandemic which altered everything we do, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

And so, we are now grateful to be able to again attend Mass in our beautiful Church; so much better than no Mass, or only being able to watch Mass at home. And what a God-send those online Masses were to us at the time. It's nice to again be meeting members of our community at Mass and having the opportunity to reach out with love and see and speak with each other.

We began our year being concerned and praying for all those whose lives were upturned by extraordinary bushfires, there was such a large amount of land and homes burned, people displaced from their homes, whole communities destroyed.

We celebrated our 'reading Luke' with a barbecue in January; it was a great chance to discover how reading Luke had given us all different perspectives.

In February, we were blessed to welcome Fr Elio Capra as he spoke over three weeks and gave us an enlightening and entertaining approach to Lent.

And our Year 4 children who went through the preparation sessions to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion, only to have the Church locked down before the celebration could take place. We are all hopeful that they will be able to celebrate their First Holy Communion on February 5, 6 and 7 this year.

Fr Francis had us taking part in 'Operation Study Your Bible', we hope he will guide us back along that path in the coming year. Our Prayer Groups had to stop meeting, our Icon School also, and our Parish Office has had to remain closed. In February, we welcomed Fr Ajin to the parish, from Kerala. He'd no longer arrived than he had to go into lockdown. He's not yet experienced our parish being 'normal', and has yet to have the pleasure of meeting so many of our parishioners. A most unusual introduction to life in Australia.

We were fortunate to celebrate the Mass for Opening of School Year, with staff from the Catholic Primary Schools in the Latrobe Valley and from Lavalla Catholic College in attendance; after Mass they enjoyed a 'cuppa' together. Our Plans for the renovation and improvement of our Parish Centre have also had to go on the back burner.

The Diocese advised all the Parishes that Child Safety measures have been increased, and that all volunteers must have a Working With Children Check, have signed the current Parish Code of Conduct and completed an online Safety of Children and Adults at Risk Module. It all sounds daunting, but it's not so bad in reality, and we are very grateful to our volunteers who have done what is asked so that they may continue to serve God in their ministry.

On March 22, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liddiard Road level crossing School Bus accident was commemorated, albeit with greatly reduced numbers.

Our Youth Ministry were looking forward to an exciting year, and all the planning had to be put aside also. The leaders of the SMY@L group have resigned, we thank them for their time, energy, enthusiasm and dedication.

A number of volunteers have retired also during this time of lockdown, we thank them all for their many years of service to the parish, and wish all who have retired or resigned every blessing in their future.

March 18, our churches were closed as part of the restrictions to minimize the spread of Covid19.

Easter without Masses, whoever would have thought it possible? Our livestreamed Easter Mass, another first.

Bishop Pat leaving us to become the 9<sup>th</sup> Archbishop of Adelaide. Fr Peter Slater, administrator of the Diocese for six months. And the appointment of Bishop Greg Bennet, the ordinations of Fr Paul Zaher, Fr Jithin Anto and Fr Confidence Masvosva which the Diocese was mainly able to share virtually.

Weddings postponed, baptisms postponed, funerals held with very few in attendance, such very difficult times for the families involved.

Masses in the carport for 10, then in the church for 20, and now we are allowed 180. We hope and pray that this may continue, and perhaps there'll again be a time in the future when our numbers will not be restricted at all.

We even managed three or four liturgy prayer evenings via Zoom. They were wonderful, prayerful experiences. . . 2020 has certainly brought many changes.

And so we are now planning for 2021, and hope that our plans may reach fruition this time.

We pray for all those throughout the world who are affected by this pandemic. So many people who are grieving, living with unemployment, and coping with this insidious virus.

*May each of us consider in awe, the amazing gift of the baby Jesus, our Lord and saviour. May we look on the gentle, generous and strong responses of Mary and Joseph, and may we all be blessed with humility, courage, forgiveness and faith as we strive to be Jesus' hands and voices in life in 2021.*



*Wishing all our parishioners and all those you love,  
a holy, safe and peace filled Christmas time.*

*With best wishes from  
Fr Francis, Fr Ajin,  
Deacon Tony and Sr Doreen.*