

"If you do feel down try thinking about someone else. Ring them, pray for them, write to them, text them. Doing something with someone else seems to fix the blues."



Archbishop's Message
Archbishop Christopher Prowse

Walking together in hope - Synodality

PART 1

The word **SYNODALITY** is frequently used in our Catholic circles these days. Pope Francis uses it very often as indicating a way to evangelise. We do that by "walking together." The Emmaus scene in the Gospel of Luke (24:13-35) is a great biblical example of this.

In the immediate aftermath of the "scandal" of Calvary, two disciples in the evening of the day walk dispirited away from Jerusalem. Before meeting the Risen Lord, their interior attitudes are summed up by the expression they use: "we had hoped."

Chastising them for their lack of faith, Jesus instils hope in them. At a kind of Eucharistic meal they share with Jesus, their "eyes were opened" and they recognise that the one walking alongside them is, in fact, the Risen Lord.

Filled with a joy so strong, they comment that their hearts were burning with fervour for Jesus. Their attitudes are completely changed. What they thought was a death with no hope has become new life in Christ. They return to the very place they were running away from filled with the Gospel imperative to affirm the faith of others that "He is Risen." They put to death their own narrow priorities and take on the priorities of the Kingdom of God.

We hope that the upcoming **Plenary Council of Australia** will take us on an Australian Emmaus walk of hope and conversion. May we too die to ways that lack evangelising zeal and be joyful in opening ourselves up to new panoramas and methods of making Jesus known and loved in our own time and place. We pray that it will be truly an experience of synodality.

Next week: Archbishop Christopher summarises the meaning of synodality through the lens of Pope Francis' latest book "Let us Dream - The path to a better future" (Simon and Schuster, 2020)

CATHOLIC VOICE

ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN
www.catholicvoice.org.au

What do Frs Mark and Thonn do in lockdown?

BY FR MARK CROKER

It is somewhat like a quiet retreat for us. By 7am it is time to let Mighty Moe the town sheep dog off his chain and into the recently built yard. Then it's time to speak to God in prayer with much directed towards the miracle of solving the pandemic. This takes about 30 minutes depending on whether meditation turns into a deep sleep.

Then it is time for porridge! Empty the dishwasher! Wipe the benches! Don't forget your medicines!

This week has allowed for spring cleaning! The shed got a thorough spring clean. Moe resides in the shed in his kennel at night at this time of year. His toilet habits are improving. However, he still has a fascination at ripping soft toys to pieces not to mention other new challenges he sets himself. He extended the door on his kennel by chewing the front wall. Other notable achievements include chewing the garden hose in two as well as the hose on the gas line of the



Fathers Mark and Thonn doing the hard yards

barbeque. With the shed now organised in a way to keep him at bay he still managed to disintegrate a plastic bucket which we thought was safe. He needs a thousand big wethers (sheep) to muster to tone his energies back a bit.

This forced shutdown is a great opportunity to dial a neigh-

bour. I am grateful for those who have rung me. Let me know if you want to chat.

Lockdown! Time for a cook up. Last night I did the beef-burgers which were far healthier than a Big Mac. These are known as Big Mark's! Beef, bacon, eggs and salad. Low in cholesterol high in energy. To-



Father (AKA Colonel Sanders) Thonn

night, Fr Thonn will cook a roast chicken that Colonel Sanders would be proud to call his recipe.

Evening prayer is preceded by walking the dog for an hour, followed by some TV. I love watching the Voice not to mention a bit of footy and the Indian victory over the English against all odds in the cricket.

Five minutes with Bishop Pat

What is one of your happiest memories of the priesthood?

I was ordained to the priesthood in my home parish in Queanbeyan on 17 July 1965, aged 23. Then, on 18 April 1986, I was ordained bishop in St Christopher's Cathedral, aged 44. In both places, I was very much "at home". I had done all my early education in St Christopher's parish and spent my first five years of priestly ministry there. As I was leaving, I told the parishioners that they were the happiest five years of my life. When I left Goulburn two years later, I told the parishioners there that the two years spent with them were just as happy.

What do you do in retirement?

I decided to retire in 2012 at the age of 70 rather than 75, saying that I was leaving behind meetings, bureaucracy and church politics to continue with the pastoral ministry that drew me into the priesthood in the first place. By and large, I have been

able to do that by "supplying" in parishes, giving the occasional talk or retreat, and continuing with the pastoral contacts from my earlier life.

It is a joy to walk down the street in Manuka or Queanbeyan and meet with friends from my earlier life. My hair has turned from black to grey and sometimes my old friends have to jog my memory with details of the past. But it is satisfying to be able to recall those earlier years. I have been involved in 28 funerals this year. When people say to me, "that must be depressing", I reply that, on the contrary, it is a time when so many positive elements are revealed in the life of the deceased person and there is the opportunity to help family and friends to experience it all in the context of Jesus' resurrection.

Any regrets?

I can genuinely say that there has never been a day in my life when I

haven't thanked God for the gift of being called to be a priest. That is not to say that there haven't been a few tough times, but they have been easily outnumbered by grace-filled days.

Any advice for those considering the priesthood?

The biggest challenge, I believe, facing young men considering a vocation to the priesthood today is that of celibacy. The decision to renounce the opportunity to marry and have a family is enormous. About half of my ordination class of 1965 have resigned from active ministry, not through loss of faith or love for the priesthood but because they concluded that they might have had a vocation to the priesthood but not to celibacy. I too, have had issues to face in all this, but I thank God for my family and for the wholesome pastoral



friendships which have sustained me throughout 56 years as a priest and 35 years as a bishop. On Father's Day, I am glad to be "Father Pat" to those who know me best.

PS My little pup, Clara, is a great companion in these COVID days when otherwise I would be living alone.

To give to the **2021 Archdiocesan Father's Day Appeal** go to www.cgatholic.org.au/donate

Lockdown lights fire of hope



Central Canberra parishioners gather via Zoom for the after Mass "virtual coppa"

BY DON SMITH

Locked down parishioners have shown their wish for community and prayer in answer to an invitation from Archbishop Christopher Prowse to join him for the Rosary online.

With the churches closed, several hundred people last week on more than 250 devices logged on for Friday afternoon Rosary.

Beth Gibson, a participant who left a comment on the Catholic Voice website, said: "it's lovely to think of so many people finding a sense of community and belonging in this time of lock down!"

Parishioners can take part every Wednesday and Friday at 4pm during lockdown. To access the Rosary via Zoom go to www.catholicvoice.org.au

Online Mass is also attracting a wide and eager audience, with a livestream from St Christopher's Cathedral at 12.15pm Monday to Saturday, and 11am

on Sunday.

Mass is increasingly being celebrated by individual clergy in their parishes on Facebook or on Zoom.

At Central Canberra parish, Fr Emil Milat celebrated Mass last Sunday with a live congregation on Zoom with more than 50 people participating. A "virtual coppa" followed with many staying on, real cups in hand (including a goat called "Cheeky" – minus the cup).

Fr Milat described the online Mass as a "great joy", for which he drew inspiration from Pope Francis's latest publication, *Let us Dream*.

"A big theme in the book is that...individualism has taken away our common story," he said.

"COVID is starting to build us a common story together, a common journey."

It was a similar theme at the Cathedral last Sunday where Archbishop Prowse said we could use the tough times as "a

moment of greater closeness, coming together in affection towards Jesus.

"Focussing on that gives us not fear or gloom but actually gives us an encounter of hope; an encounter of love with the Lord Jesus."

Parish committees and prayer groups have moved online, outreach to the vulnerable has taken place, "care freezers" restocked and a myriad other little things are taking place to keep parishes ticking over.

Parishioners have also stayed in touch with their priests, phoning for a chat or asking if they could send over a cake or a bottle of soft drink or two.

St Benedict's Narrabundah parishioner Sue Hancock sees the positive side of the COVID lockdown, as Archbishop Prowse previously described it, as the "breath of the Holy Spirit" at work.

"Where there's darkness, God brings light," she said.

Deep pockets spread wide

Last Christmas' Archbishop's Appeal has enabled the Archdiocese to help those in need across the world. Archbishop Christopher expressed his great appreciation and heartfelt gratitude at being able to offer nearly \$50,100 for many overseas projects. Thank you to all who supported this Appeal.

Locally, almost \$5,600 was provided for projects within the Diocese of Wilcannia Forbes. Globally, \$10,000 has been given to assist the Diocese of Otuokpo, Nigeria in Africa, whilst in India \$6,000 was given to the Society of the Oblates of the Sacred Heart (OSH), \$6,000 towards projects within Thamarassery Diocese, and \$6,000 to the La

Salette Matha Province and their assistance to the poor.

The Appeal also provided \$5,000 for student assistance to those in need at Bethlehem University in the Holy Land and a similar amount was provided towards the construction of a multipurpose hall at a school for migrant children from Kiribati and Malaita in Nusabaruku, Diocese of Gizo, PNG.

Further support within our region is also being achieved through the ongoing \$6,500 assistance to the ecumenical Christmas Bowl Appeal. This Appeal provides the funds for the National Council of Churches in Australia's (NCCA's) Act for Peace's projects.



Milestones

Baby Oliver Moore with his parents Lauren and Steve (third and fourth from the left) and three Godfathers



Baptisms

- Oliver Moore, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, North Belconnen, weekend of 8 August
- Alexia Hope & Ariela Jade Miranda, Blackfriars Parish, Watson, weekend of 15 August

Anniversaries

- St John Vianney primary school, Waramanga, 50th anniversary, September
 - St Thomas More primary school, Campbell, 60th anniversary, September
- (Have a milestone coming up? Email catholic.voice@cg.org.au)

Preserving uplifting tales of lives well lived

BY FIONA VAN DER PLAAT

Linda Laker laughs a lot in her volunteer role with the Palliative Care ACT Life Stories project.

The hours she spends, usually in bite-sized sessions over about 10 weeks, with people in palliative care are not so much about sad ruminations over lives drawing to a close as often uplifting reflections on lives well lived. As Linda says, "we all have an amazing life, even if we think it might be hum-drum".

Life Stories allows people with life-limiting illnesses to document their own legacy. The result might be anything from a chronological account of their life to a snapshot of a moment in their lives, or even a compilation of others' thoughts about them.

Linda, who has been transcribing life stories for people mainly in home-based palliative care for about three years, feels



Clare Holland House volunteers L-R - Wendy May, Barb Stevens, Evelyn Walkden and Sandra Bamford.

privileged to be part of the process.

"I don't usually find it sad or harrowing," she says. "Sometimes it can be deeply moving, but usually there's more laughter than anything else. Often we'll segue into some unrelated and really interesting conversation."

And that is a welcome result

in itself. Palliative Care ACT CEO Tracy Gillard says the Life Stories program is "as much about the process as it is about the end product".

Linda agrees, saying the time she spends with the storytellers is often a chance for them to step away from their illness and talk about other things with



Helen Merritt and her story writer Tracey Bajenoff (Left)

someone who has nothing to do with their health. "It's also a reflective tool to help them think about their life," she adds.

The volunteers don't write the life stories, as such. They record and transcribe the conversations, then arrange and change the content under guidance from the storyteller.

Linda says her role is to be a non-judgemental listener and to ask questions to keep the story going if need be. This can have the happy side-effect of sparking memories or prompting the person to talk about things they hadn't thought about.

"One of the nice things is when the person tells me something their partner or family haven't heard before and it's great to see the other people's reactions," she says.

The important thing is to keep the storyteller's voice. Linda recalls having to resist the temptation to correct the grammar of a man with a "quirky way of talking". "The best compliment I've had is when a friend of his said she could hear him saying it all," she says.

• For information on the Life Stories project, go to <https://www.pallcareact.org.au/life-stories/>