

Parish Report

Fr Wayne Bendotti – Parish Priest

Good evening everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to share with you this Parish Report.

If 2020 was the year of disruption, then 2021 has been the year of re-connection and re-building.

The extended lockdown of 2020 and subsequent restrictions to Church life had a huge impact on Parish life and was a major disruption to life, faith and the sense of belonging for many in our community—especially the elderly.

The resumption of Weekend Masses ended up being quite gradual, with Masses only at Dardanup for the first 10 months, due to St Louis' Church, Boyanup, being too small to re-open under both the “four-square-metre” and even the “two-square-metre” rule. We were finally able to re-open Boyanup for Mass on Easter Sunday this year – after a 54 week closure.

As a Parish, we are small in active participant numbers, but what we lack in personnel and structure, we more than make up for in enthusiasm and a sense of belonging. While our weekend Mass congregation may demographically “lean” a little towards the elderly end of the age spectrum, we are also incredibly blessed with the very active presence of several young families, who with their children bring much life vibrancy and joy to our celebrations and gatherings. It is especially beautiful to see the growing faith of these children.

With the further easing of post-lockdown restrictions, this year we re-commenced our monthly Parish Morning Tea (held after Dardanup Mass on the third Sunday of each month); and also the celebration of Children's Liturgy of the Word, providing an age-appropriate celebration of the Word of God, at all Dardanup Sunday Masses during School Term. These have both had a positive effect in strengthening our sense of community and belonging.

Other highlights of the past year have included:

- **Live-streamed Sunday Mass** once a month, as a way of reaching out to those with whom we connected during the 2020 lockdown; and also as way of encouraging connection with church and faith for those who may not participate in Sunday Mass.
- **Parish Feast Day** celebration in December
- **Reconciliation Services** during Advent last December and Lent this March.
- Our wonderful **Christmas Eve outdoor Carols, Mass and Christmas Party** on the big front lawn.
- A surprise 5-day snap **COVID lockdown** in February, which thankfully didn't cover a weekend!
- Our Saturday night **Outdoor Community Welcome Mass and Sacrament Commitment** to begin the School year.
- Our usual **Sacrament Preparation Programs** – with family formation workshops, Sacrament celebrations and thanksgiving Masses.
- Moving celebrations for **Holy Week and Easter**.
- Celebrations and blessings for **Mother's Day, Father's Day and Grandparent's Day**.
- A **“Bring and Share Parish Dinner”** and a **“Dinner at the Dardy”** after Saturday night Mass during winter.
- Annual **All Souls Day Mass** at the Pioneer Cemetery
- And of course, just recently, our EPIC **Curry Night** last Saturday night, which a great crowd attended and enjoyed ... and which dozens of families also enjoyed at home, thanks to a mountain take-away orders!

This weekend we begin the cycle again, with the first Sunday of Advent (... and three Baptisms after Sunday Mass!), then the lead-in to Christmas and the start of a new year.

This year the Parish employed Rebecca Clemons as a one-day-a-week Administration Assistant. Commencing in July this year, Rebecca produces the weekend Parish Bulletin and Mass Commentary Sheet, maintains the Parish Sacramental Registers and records, and performs other administrative tasks as necessary from week to week. This has relieved Fr Wayne of these tasks and thus given him more time for his core pastoral role in the Parish. The Parish is deeply grateful to a parishioner whose generous commitment to fund this position on an ongoing basis, made it possible.

Our Parish Music Ministry has continued to grow in confidence and skill over the past year, under the dedicated leadership of Carolyn Johnston over the past year. We recently purchased a new stand-alone PA system to further enhance the Music Ministry's contribution to weekend Masses ... and I'm delighted to say that our recent Curry Night was so successful, that the cost of the new PA System has been more than covered!

A few statistics for the year just gone ...

Since we gathered for this equivalent meeting last year:

- 14 children have been Baptised.
- 14 children have received Holy Communion for the first time.
- 13 children have been Confirmed
- 15 children celebrated the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time (*... with one more to come!*).
- I presided at 11 funerals of parishioners, family and friends – tragically including that of former OLOL student Alice Carter.
- ... and I presided at one Wedding in the Parish!

So as you can see ... life continues to busily hum along!

School-wise ...

- We were able to resume the celebration of Class Masses and Liturgies this year, after these were suspended in 2020
- Some of the younger classes had Church visits to explore the different spaces and things in the Church.
- I continue to attend School Board Meetings and P&F Meetings, unless other commitments prohibit.
- And, of course, I try to spend as much time around school as I can, continuing to get to know students and staff alike, and offering whatever support I can, when the need arises.

On that last point, I would also like to say that I know this past year or so has been a very difficult time for many people in many ways ... and that many families and individuals have and are facing higher levels of stress, worry and concern than they may have faced in the past. If this is you or someone you know, please know that I am here for you.

As Parish Priest, my role extends beyond the Church and School grounds, to include all of you. So if at any time you could do with the support of a confidential, independent and non-judgmental listening ear, ***please don't suffer in silence ... and please don't hesitate to contact me.***

In conclusion, I offer an enormous and heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who gives so much to make this School the amazing place and community that it is. It really is a shining light in our community – and that's only because of the care and generosity of so many. So without singling anyone out, a big THANK YOU to you all.

May God continue to guide, bless and watch over us all.

Fr Wayne.