

## Voice from the Curatage - 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2022

Hello there!

Well, we in Melbourne have been really quite fortunate, this past week, in having enjoyed several days of clear skies and sunshine. (What a rare delight in early July!). And, despite the cold, people around here seem to have been flocking outdoors, making the most of the pleasant weather, while it lasts. (That said, I can't remember the last time I was so grateful for heaters in the church than during last Sunday's 8am Mass, celebrated in a rather nippy 3°C!). Nevertheless, we were especially grateful for the sunshine during today's 'Thursday Lunch' programme, with the clear skies attracting a solid crowd and helping to maintain the characteristically warm atmosphere of the service.

Speaking of the Thursday Lunch, I thought I might use this opportunity to describe in a bit more detail what this parish-run community outreach programme looks like, and how it operates. Some of you will be very familiar with this, already, but I realise that a fair amount of the important work done in this ministry may not be as well known in the context of the broader parish and 'Christ Church diaspora'.

The Thursday Lunch programme began in early-2020, right at the start of the pandemic. Its aim was (and remains), primarily, to simply provide a hot meal – after the customary morning tea



and coffee, of course – and a safe space for community and fellowship to any who need or want it. Some two and a half years later, the service is still going strong – in fact, it seems to be going from strength to strength. On the back of a dynamic, godly, and dedicated team of volunteers from the parish, who manage and coordinate this ministry, the lunch

programme has run every single week since it began. That it has been able to succeed in this way – despite six lockdowns, an abundance of COVIDSafe regulations and protocols, and a move from the old parish hall to the new parish café – is no mean feat, and is an achievement in which this parish community has every right to feel proud.

The team that runs the programme is comprised of (roughly) a dozen volunteers from the parish, supported by a further half-dozen or so who contribute through off-site food preparation. Each week, six members of the team gather at 10am on Thursday morning to prepare for the service, which runs from 11:30am – 12:30pm. Usually, a couple of the team come to the café kitchen on a Wednesday evening to cook the meal for the following day. On the day, we divide up between those in the kitchen, plating up the food; those in the café, serving coffee and morning tea; and, those outside, serving the hot meal and mingling with the folks who come. Numbers have steadily been growing, and we are delighted to now be catering for at least 50 people a week, and often more. And we have been incredibly fortunate, over the past several months, to have teamed up with Jesuit Social Services (based at the Jesuit Ecological Justice Hub,



behind the Brunswick library – an amazing community farm in the heart of town that is well worth a visit!), and with Jobs Advocate Victoria. In addition to the food that we provide, the Jesuits bring 40-50 large bags of groceries and fresh produce (most of the latter grown at their farm), to be distributed to any who need it. Alongside this, the wonderful people at Jobs



Advocate provide another (equally important) form of social support; set up at a little stall, their staff come to directly assist any who need help with navigating the welfare system (i.e. applying for Centrelink payments or housing commission waiting lists), or with employment and up-skilling/re-skilling matters. We are also currently in the process of partnering with BaptCare, in order to be able to provide on-site nursing and allied health support. All of this said, however, the principal aim of the programme remains to provide a hot meal, a safe space for community and fellowship, and an opportunity to receive counselling and pastoral care.

A fundamental component of the programme is that we begin every service with Morning Prayer in the church; this has been the case from week one. That our service of food and fellowship to the poor and needy always begins with worship and thanksgiving to God is at the very heart of this ministry. And, really, that's the important word, here: ministry. For that is exactly what this programme is – a natural (and necessary) extension of the ministry of this parish, which begins at the altar and then takes us out into the streets. As this has become a ministry which is now well-established and well-known in the local community, let us pray that God may be glorified in it and known through it.



Please keep this wonderful, significant ministry of the parish in your prayers, entrusting its ongoing success to the Lord, and praying the intercession of St Francis, patron saint of the poor.

*And finally...*

It was such a joy to gather for worship this past Sunday evening, at our weekly 'Lamb B&B' service, and hear from Nick Harman about his life as a new Christian and his journey to the faith. You will remember that Nick was baptised and confirmed, here, on the Feast of Pentecost. How extraordinary to hear of the various ways in which the Lord calls people to himself. Let us continue to pray for Nick, and all those who were baptised and confirmed at Easter and Pentecost, as they join with us on the paths of discipleship and ministry.

Do join us this coming Sunday evening, when we will hear from Fr Russell Goulbourne about his life and ministry, and journey to ordination. All are most welcome!

With love from the Curatage,

*Deacon Jack*