

Dear All,

I sometimes remind myself of the advice I was given by my 'training incumbent' - the name given to the priests who have the arduous task of taking the newly ordained and gently and sometimes not so gently harnessing their more foolish enthusiasms while appropriately encouraging their discovery of the great gift of ministry entrusted to them.

"You can't do everything. Just get on with the next thing..."

Later, when, as a young assistant bishop, I asked my diocesan bishop, 41 years older than me how he was, he never answered, "I'm good" (a peculiarly Australian answer reflecting a confusion between physical health and the moral life!) or rarely "I'm well". Just, **"Getting on with the next thing."**

Maybe it was the general advice and attitude of a wiser generation!

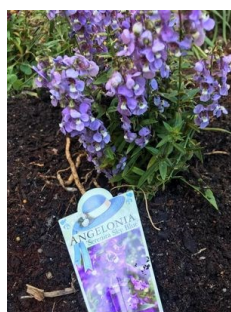
Come to think of it, when, as was often the case, I was freely passing comment on what one of my siblings was doing wrong, my mother would say, **"You get on with what your doing,** and mind your own business." For some odd reason, which remains something of a mystery to me, she thought my siblings could live without the benefit of my wisdom and insight..

Anyway, in a priest's life there are times when you have to get on with the next thing, and the 'things' can be very different, and the change of circumstance demanding emotionally and spiritually. I suppose it's true for all of us.

In a small and fairly unremarkable way, last Sunday was a case in point. Celebrating and preaching in the relative stillness of the 8 am Mass, followed by the usual gathering of servers and musicians and clergy around the vicarage kitchen table; then a time spent in front of the church greeting folk as they arrive; then a really lovely and lively in the best sense 10 am mass at which I was the preacher. Then afterwards, with the other clergy, making sure that those present were appropriately greeted and encouraged, and invited to 'The Lamb'. That time at the door always involves a little bit of banter with some, though others have pastoral needs of various kinds. It requires intuition and concentration without looking concentrated! I think to myself how glad I am that there are very few moans after mass here, not so of every parish! Maybe there's not much to moan about, or those who might, have learnt that it's a waste of time and energy to moan at me! I am my mother's son..

Then the privilege...

Then immediately, once those going to 'The Lamb' had gone, my green stole was replaced with a purple one. Our dear Mary Hillman's family had come to do the last thing that could and should be done for her and for her late husband Henry. The priesthood is full of privileges. To be the one who gently commits to the earth the mortal remains of a person, in this case of two people whose lives had been entwined for so long, with beloved family and dear friends standing silently by, never fails to move me deeply. At times I have to admit I see not only those mortal remains, but momentarily 'see' my own and who might have the same task, and when...Mm. John Donne is surely right. *'No man is an island...The bell tolls for thee..'*



During the week this Angelonia was planted by the place where Mary and Henry' ashes were buried..

No time to dwell...

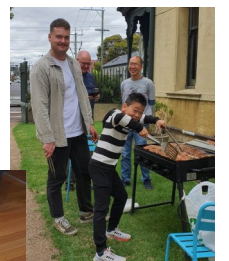
But no time to dwell on it, for the next thing is to go immediately to 'The Lamb' and be chatty and attentive to those who have gathered there. I'm not so good at small talk, but I love the sight of folk talking over coffee, and seemingly in no hurry to leave..

Then a bit of a Barbie...

I thought it would be a good idea to have an impromptu, everyone muck in, BBQ after mass, part of a plan to offer some hospitality to



the congregation over the year ahead. It was of course a good and happy occasion and indeed, everyone did, 'muck in', and seemed to enjoy each other's company. And in the midst of it there were some good conversations about matters spiritual. I love playing 'mine host'. It's energy giving, but also energy sapping.



After cooking for this lot, Henry deserves to eat!!

Of course it was Fr Patrick's last day with us (wasn't it good to hear the Gospel in Swedish on Sunday?) and although he got over the disappointment of no kangaroo on the barbie, he was still hungry after others had left so our Cecilia cooked something up for the three of us. Helped by a little wine (for my stomach's sake), I was somewhat tired.. Evening Prayer muttered in bed is not to be recommended, but I pray the Lord understands. I take comfort with words that apparently Pope John 23rd used to say at the end of a busy day: "Well Lord, I did my best. It's your Church. I'm going to bed."

I was tired but it was good tired. I felt myself a fortunate priest. Thank you Lord. Thank you Christ Church.

And finally, Wednesday week (22nd) marks the beginning of Lent and our 40 days of preparation for the Feast of the Resurrection of Jesus. Lent is not to be missed. **More of our plans next week!** But to start with, masses with ashes @ 7, 10 and 6.30 pm on ASH WEDNESDAY. Much love, +Lindsay

