

Voice from the Vicarage 25th May 2023



Dear All,

It's some years since our some time pastoral assistant Peter Cotterill designed this banner. It's one of the first things an observant visitor to our open church will see. I suppose those of us who have lived with it for a while don't notice it so much, but it couldn't be the bearer of a more important message, to both those who enter for the first tentative time, and to us who dare to call ourselves Christian.

Pentecostal Fire!

Of course 'WELCOME' is central to the message of the great Feast we celebrate this coming Sunday. It's not simply the message that all are welcome, but that all are welcome to be filled with the same Spirit, the Spirit of the living God. In the story of the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) tongues of fire rested on the heads of each of the disciples. But be clear, many tongues there were, but only ONE FIRE. The banner depicts many tongues of the other variety, but ONE WORD made flesh unites us by incorporating us into his Sonship, his Body, the Church.

More sameness than difference...

It is particularly symptomatic of western culture to emphasise our individuality, defining ourselves, 'self identifying', finding our security or more often, insecurity on the basis of comparisons with others, or by our difference from others. It's not all bad, but it's not the whole story by any means. The Christian understanding of the individual has a different emphasis. A person's value, dignity and identity rests on their being made in the image of God, and further for the Christian, that they are 'in Christ'. If you and I, by our baptism are 'in Christ', the identity Paul mentions 65 or so times in his letters, then we are 'in Him' together, for there is only one 'Him'. Those two 'samenesses' are more profound and more identity forming than our differences. I'm no biologist, but since God made us to live in communion with each other, it's perhaps not surprising that we are more genetically the same than we are different. Did you know that you and I are 99% the same? Look for the sameness before you look for the difference!

Such a way of seeing could help deliver us from the evils of the various, generally divisive isms that bedevil our world, and is the real starting point for any healthy self understanding or self identification, and for negotiating life together. 'I am what I am'; we are who we are, because of the one who is the great and all loving 'I AM'. I enjoy the song 'I am Australian' but it comes some way down in the pecking order of the 'I am's' of a Christian's life.

On Sunday at the 10 am mass, in a very beautiful way we shall put our delightful differences into the right perspective, when some folk will come forward and pray the Lord's Prayer in different languages. Same prayer, different tongues, united in one voice. A beautiful unity. And we will then be blessed by the same prayer being chanted in Aramaic, the human language in which the Word made Flesh, our beloved Saviour spoke the Divine Word. Then we will, as we always do, approach the same Altar for the same Food.

AND MORE JOY, for at the mass, three new Christians will emerge from the sacred font filled with the Holy Spirit. **Lan, Mary and Henry**. They will look the same to the naked eye of course before and after their baptism, but in reality there will be more to them, for they will be mightily different. They will be 'in Christ', filled with his Spirit, washed in his Blood. And our **Liviane** will be Confirmed with that same Spirit with the lovely guarantee that she can rely on his Spirit to loosen her tongue for the work of evangelism. I am filled with love and happiness at the thought of it all!

And finally, thank you to the clergy, to Cara and all those who sustained the daily prayer while I was away in the U.S. with my Oratory brethren. And a big thanks to Donna Davis and the team who kept the show well and truly on the road in 'The Lamb' café. I enjoyed the time away all the more knowing all was in good and reliable hands! Really hope to see you on Sunday...

+Lindsay

HERE'S AN IDEA! If you come from another land, (or even Aus!) why not bring a little taster plate of food from your homeland to add to our Morning Tea refreshments after Mass?

It will add joy to our gathering!