

THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF IVANHOE

PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM (PLT) – End of Year letter from the Chair of the PLT. December 2009

Dear Parishioners, School Parents, Staff and Visitors

As 2009 draws to a close, it is time to reflect on our Parish, our achievements through the year and the challenges that we face in 2010.

Parish Overview

Each week 400 attend Mass in our churches. We have over 500 children in the three Parish schools. There were 57 Baptisms, 77 First Eucharist and 68 Confirmations during the last 12 months. The Korean community, based at West Ivanhoe regularly has over 200 at Mass. We have a Parish Leadership Team with 17 members from across the Parish and the schools, an Executive of 6 - Liturgy, Outreach / Wellbeing, Finance, Communication and Maintenance teams, as well as the Parish Youth Group and Parish Playgroup. It is the role of the PLT to lead, guide and plan for the future of the Parish.

As in the past, Fr Len Thomas has assisted our Parish Priest, Fr John Cunningham. The three Principals, supported by the staff, have led our Parish Primary schools. Fr Marie Joseph Youn is the Chaplain for the Korean community.

Enrolments at the Parish schools are strong. However, numbers attending the Parish Masses are falling. We are strong in Outreach and Parish Youth Group although the number of young people actively participating in the Parish is low.

Most of us are involved in the Catholic Parish of Ivanhoe because we see and believe in the good it has done and can do for people in the future. There is no doubt that the Church of the future will be very different to that of the past and even of today.

Our Priests

Fr Len Thomas has announced that he is planning to retire next year. As I write this letter, he is recuperating after an illness and we wish him well. As Mental Health Chaplain and assisting in the Parish, he has done more than a full time job for many years. His retirement will have a major impact on the way the Parish operates.

Fr John assures us that he is a year older and that he will continue as our Parish Priest as he needs the money. He cannot need much money, as our finances are not strong. His dedication to the people of Ivanhoe is outstanding but he too must retire one day. We celebrated the 50th year of his ordination this year.

On the occasions our priests are on leave or are unable to say a weekend Mass, we have been fortunate to obtain a priest (a Supply) for the Mass. We thank the Parish Secretary, Ruth Villani for arranging the Supply, and the priests who generously assist and support our parish in times of need. Most of these priests are retired and hence they have no obligation to the Parish. It is not always easy to find an available Supply priest, a task that will become more difficult in the future.

Some Highlights

The Parish Youth Group continues to grow with another two leaders commencing recently. The Sunday 5.00pm Mass is open to all but has a focus on the young and their approach to the Church. (There will be no 5.00pm Masses in January 2010)

The Outreach group has established an ongoing involvement for the more senior people with regular luncheons, excursions and other activities that are strongly supported and looked forward to by many. The re-establishment of Mary Immaculate Hall as a theatre venue was confirmed by the AFL Grand Final event.

The Parish Dinner Dance was a resounding success, fully booked and attracted people from all corners of the Parish. Arrangements are underway to hold another event in 2010, building on the success of the last. The Men's group was established during the year and is well represented and supported.

Two of the three churches now have modern multi-media facilities that provide state of the art audio and video to support the Liturgy. Thanks are due to John Costa and those who assisted with the installation and who also assist every week with the preparation of the liturgy. Our multimedia liturgy is also being used by other parishes in Yarra Deanery.

Communications

The Parish web site: www.ivanhoecatholics.com.au was created by John Costa who also maintains and updates the site regularly. This site is the envy of many as John ensures that its content is relevant and current. It also includes items of interest for the Church and the Parish. Again we must thank him.

Regional Bishop's Visit

Monsignor Les Tomlinson was recently appointed Regional Bishop, and in November visited the Parish. His Lordship met with the PLT executive, visited schools and led Sunday Masses. As Vicar General he had previously met the PLT Executive, and is supportive of the changes we are progressing in the Parish.

Parish Master Plan

The Draft Master Plan has now moved into the active phase with the planning, engineering and architectural aspects of the Ford St development under way. As we do not have the funds, we have applied for and received a loan from the Catholic Development Fund to support these works. The intent is to provide accommodation and generate funds that will give the Parish the ability to support itself into the future. Our current funds do not enable us to undertake many activities and our major assets are not being maintained. Interested Parishioners are invited to assist with the management of the project.

School Upgrades

The Federal Government's Building the Education Revolution fund has provided \$2 million to each of our three schools for classrooms, libraries and multi purpose buildings. With other funds for works at Mother of God School, the total exceeds \$7 million. The money has to be regarded as an investment in both general and Catholic education. These schools were provided by the previous generations to ensure that children of Catholic parents received a good all round education and had a foundation in Catholic and Christian values. These objectives remain current today, and are why the PLT wants the school communities and the general parishioners to be close and work together.

New Principal

After many years as Principal at Mother of God School, Paul McEntee will move to Craigieburn in 2010. We thank Paul for his leadership and welcome Louise McGrath as the new Principal.

PLT Operation

The Parish Leadership Team meets regularly with the dates advised in the weekend newsletter and on the Parish web site. The Executive meets every two weeks and at other times as required to address the ongoing management of the parish.

The last year has seen a strengthening of our teams with the finance team now having revised procedures for budget and expenditure control. We ask all teams to provide a budget for the forthcoming year and to ensure that the finance team is aware of proposed expenditure before any commitment is made.

The membership of the PLT is open to all parishioners. In the New Year applications for persons wishing to join the PLT will be called. Please consider if you would like to be involved in setting the direction and the objectives for our Parish.

Finally

I would like to thank all who have assisted in the running of our Parish Churches, Office and Schools over the last year in any way whatsoever. Everything from arranging the most significant events to putting out the rubbish requires someone to take responsibility and cause things to happen.

I wish you all the blessings and joy of Christmas and good health and prosperity in the New Year. Remember Fr John's comment, that whenever you come to The Catholic Parish of Ivanhoe, you are always welcome.

Pat Kelly

Christmas 2009