

In this Sunday's gospel (Matthew 10: 16-23), Jesus, "having himself made a tour round the villages, teaching," summons the Twelve, and sends them out in pairs "giving them authority over the unclean spirits ... they set off to preach repentance; and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them." It is stating the obvious to say that there is an enormous irony to this gospel episode given, our present COVID virus lockdown situation: in so many ways we cannot go out!

Nonetheless, and staying within the COVID rules, Michael Walker and I went on a tour of the parish boundary over two days during last week (for exercise). It was interesting that we had contrasting impressions of the demography of the parish at the conclusion of our excursion. Michael, who lives in one of the many streets in the parish occupied by well kept townhouses, said that he was surprised with the extent of public housing in Surry Hills. In response, I said that I was surprised by the extent of attractive leafy streets occupied by bright, homely townhouses! Of course, I live on the parish property, proximate to the extensive public housing complex at Surry Hills. I tend to spend my time in the area close to the church and on the main streets, whence my biased impression of the demographic makeup of the parish.

Another significant demographic shift at Surry Hills over the last five or six years is a very big increase in the presence of families with young children. This is proved by official and anecdotal evidence.

In this Sunday's gospel, it is noteworthy that both Jesus and the Twelve are out and about: concerning their mission to announce the Good News of forgiveness of sins, healing of souls and bodies and eternal life - they go out. They don't stay in one place and wait for people to come to them. This raises the issue of how we strategise in terms of the New Evangelisation, which takes the form of the "Go Make Disciples" project in this Archdiocese?

The actual physical presence of the priest and parishioners on foot around the parish is irreplaceable at a time when we are so used to travelling everywhere inside vehicles. We also have available to us powerful online media unknown to the Church and the world until recent decades. We need to review our use of these media in terms of mission, i.e. in terms of the New Evangelisation and Go Make Disciples. Having grown up with the emergence of IT, the Young Adults Group are already adept in this area in various ways among themselves and at our Sunday Evangelium meetings.

All that said, we won't be effective as missionaries if we are not firstly properly formed ourselves in the knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith. Recent popes have increasingly emphasised that ALL Catholics are missionaries by virtue of their baptism. Baptism in the Catholic Church presumes a thorough formation in the knowledge and practice of the faith. For various reasons many of us have gaps in that formation. Therefore, the parish offers ways of helping people address those gaps. When we established the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in Saint Peter's Parish in 2020, I tried to emphasise that the RCIA program is not only for adults who wish to become Catholics, but is also a great way for us Catholics in the parish, with the essential help of God's grace, to revise our own knowledge and practice of the faith. I take the

opportunity to thank Brigid, Geneviève, Grace and Patricia for their devotion and professionalism in making the RCIA already so effective in its debut year.

Another parish group of Catholic formation is the Christian Life Community based on Ignatian spirituality and conducted by Michael Walker. This program focuses on the cultivation of one's personal prayer life with the support of a group, and the integration of prayer and daily life.

I would thoroughly recommend your attendance at either or both of these meetings. RCIA meets fortnightly on a Thursday at 6.30pm in the Duffy Hall. CLC meets fortnightly on a Tuesday at 7.30pm in the Benedict XVI Centre. We are looking at Zoom meetings for these groups if the lockdown continues. In the meantime, please do register your interest in one or both of these groups via the parish email address which is: admin@stpeterssh.org.au. It is often helpful if you leave your phone number when you send an email, if this is agreeable to you.

In terms of Sunday Mass, I do of course continue to offer the *Missa pro populo*, the Mass which the parish priest or administrator is obliged to offer every Sunday for the people of the parish. You can join any of your own specific Mass intentions to my Mass intention which is for your well-being in body, mind and soul, for your eternal salvation and for your prosperity in this life. The Sunday Mass obligation is obviously suspended during the lockdown for all Catholics in Sydney, except the priests. Please do take advantage of these strange times to listen to Archbishop Fisher's homilies via the Archdiocesan website. Simply google "Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney".

"Partaking in the Eucharist commits us to others, especially the poor, teaching us to pass from the flesh of Christ to the flesh of our brothers and sisters, in whom He waits to be recognised, served, honoured and loved by us." (Pope Francis Catechesis on the Mass 2018)

From an eerily calm Saint Peter's,
With best regards and prayers,

Fr. John Macdonald.