



I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.  
Phil 4:13

# The Witness

Catholic School of Evangelisation Australia Inc.

September 2020 Newsletter

## CHRIST OFFERED UP PRAYER

By Ann Serong

A few days ago we celebrated the beautiful feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. The readings from the Mass of the day included this short passage from the letter to the Hebrews (5:7-9)

***“During his life on earth, Christ offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard. Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation.”***

Throughout His life on earth Jesus instructed and encouraged His disciples to pray in faith and we who claim to also be His followers must, in obedience, do the same. I am writing to implore and encourage you all to pray constantly for the SCHOOL and in particular for each program, the team members and participants. The prayers that are offered before, during and immediately following each of our programs are such a vital component of the ministry of evangelisation. Every participant in a course, no matter which one, is invited and offered many opportunities to experience a personal encounter with Jesus or if this has already happened, to make a deeper surrender to Him and a greater commitment to His call.

During his Regina Caeli prayer – May 2020 – Pope Francis said “The enemy will say to us: “Close yourself up in yourself ... do not be trusting!” I believe the evil one uses these same tactics with those who come to the SCHOOL. Many obstacles present themselves before and during the running of a program and very often the participants, after an initial feeling of warmth and exhilaration, on returning home can then experience doubt and fear. When a course has been covered in prayer the blessings are abundant and lives are changed forever.

An excellent recent example was

when team members gave the teachings from ‘7 Young People in the Gospel’ to Fr. Adam Samsel and his team in Goroka PNG via zoom and they in turn presented it to a group of parishioners. This was a very difficult undertaking and many obstacles arose, but the outcome was amazing as can be seen by the joyful smiles of all participants.

I sometimes hear people who are going through trauma and difficulties say “Oh, all I can do now is pray” as though they are coming to prayer as a last resort when all else has failed. I am asking you to make prayer for the SCHOOL your first resort and to include our intentions in your Masses and rosaries as well.

On the first of each month Jivraj Nazareth sends a list of prayer requests to all who are listed on our E-prayers database. A huge THANK YOU to all of you who always pray for these and a reminder to others of just how important it is that you pray, before, during and immediately following each course for God’s protection and blessing. If you would like to be included on this list please contact Jivraj or me.

Below: Participants in PNG who zoomed into the 7YPIG course in August.  
See page 6 for more information and Testimonies.





# Love and the Gift of Suffering

.... By Carmen & Fr Josy

Below is a summary of the teachings presented to us by our Spiritual Director Fr Josy Sebastian at the **Renewed Seminar** on 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2020. After having spent months being unable to hold retreats because of Covid19 it was with enthusiasm and a thankful heart that we opened our doors to our past participants who were eagerly awaiting an opportunity to be 'Renewed'.

For many people suffering because of Covid 19 has become very real so we pray that Fr Josy's words will bring comfort and peace.

In his words -

My life experience convinces me that love and suffering are to be used to enrich our lives as Christians.

Suffering is real and can derive from human egoism, false sentimentality, and rebellion against God. Suffering can manifest from sources outside the self, such as disease, disaster, failure of self or others, persecution, and the death of loved ones etcetera. People may suffer at the prospect of offending God, or the perdition of souls, or national calamity. Suffering can be destructive or it can be redemptive.

The exercise of patience is a key to countering the destructive effect of suffering because patience introduces endurance and love, and love can vanquish suffering.

Suffering is essential for purifying a human in their journey of Christian love. St James taught his Church to be joyful whenever suffering tests our faith because endurance will ensue.

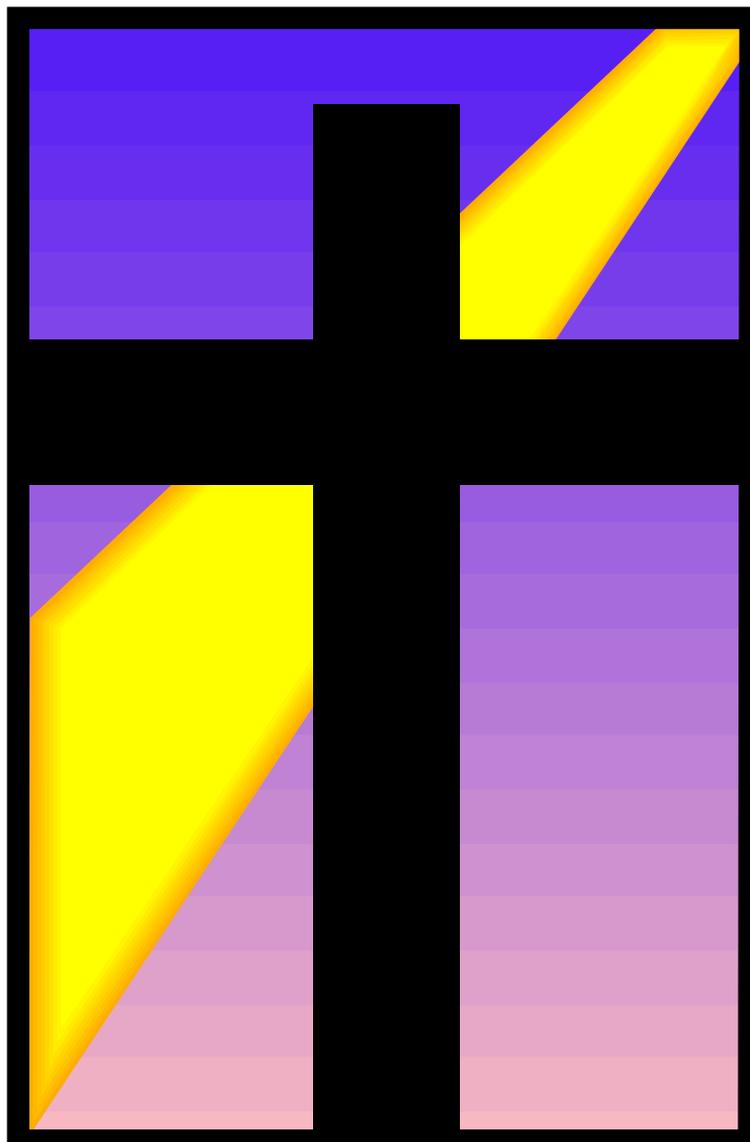
St. Paul taught in Romans 3 that tribulations are to be exulted over and furthermore, in 2 Corinthians, that Jesus directly told him, "***My grace is all you need, for my power is strongest when you are weak***". Paul

rejoiced in the weakness that enabled him to experience Christ's power.

Analysis of the Greek of Romans 5.3 reveals that St Paul intends his reader to experience knowing cognitively and intuitively that tribulation will bring patience and endurance to full realisation in a person. Later in the periscope "***For we know that God causes all things to work together for good to them that are called to His purpose.***" (Romans 8.28)

Suffering turns the whole world into a classroom wherein the Christian can learn to walk in faith with Jesus. Suffering is necessary to make love true and genuine. In the periscope 1 Peter 1-6, St Peter uses the refining of gold with fire as a dramatic metaphor for the testing of faith by suffering. As fire burns away all that would obscure the gold, suffering burns away all that would obscure faith in Jesus. When Christians suffer, they suffer with Christ who is always present. No Christian is ever alone.

Embroidered in the pain produced by suffering, anyone has the opportunity to rail against God, or to apply patience. In John 14 Jesus told all of us that He would not leave us orphans but would bequeath us the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit can provide all the power that is needed to make suffering transformative and redemptive. **A tried and tested means of opening the self to the operation of the Holy Spirit is to exercise gratitude.** Be thankful for everything that God gives. If a heavy Cross is offered, grasp it tenaciously and let the Lord Jesus carry you through it all. The original meaning of martyr is witness. Let Jesus give himself to you for eternity and you will witness His love for you and you will be a witness of His love for others.



# DISCERNING GOD'S WILL ..... By Carmen Sylvester

Earlier this year oblivious to the impending disaster of Covid 19 we were looking forward to gathering again after our Christmas break. It was such an exciting prospect for many of our participants who had been waiting for our two days on the subject of **Discernment**.

We had run a survey on our website and the results came back with an overwhelming interest in a deeper understanding on the art of discernment. As God is always a great provider, we got to know that one of our favorite retreat speakers Fr Selva Raj was the Director of an Ignatian Spirituality Center in India before coming to Adelaide.

Very graciously he accepted to present us with teachings on Discernment over two days.

I have personally participated in several teachings on the art of discernment but I found Fr. Selva's simplicity refreshing and not overwhelming. As one person commented to me, "He is the best of the best." I pray sharing his insights would bring you new insights into the art of Discernment.

### Some of his insights:

Spiritual discernment is calling on the Holy Spirit to lead or give direction on a matter that is important to our life.

It is a gift from God more than just a skill. It is not just a process to be completed, but there is a spirit at work leading us, even pulling us by the nose ring. (his words)

St Ignatius of Loyola tells us that for spiritual matters we can still apply certain disciplines, methods, processes, lessons, means and tools which the spirit can work through to help us discern rightly.

### Guidelines that St Ignatius gives those who are seeking God's Will in their lives.

- Discernment of spirits always involves choosing between goods and not between good and evil.
- Discernment of spirit only makes sense in the context of a personal love relationship with God.
- It's only in this love relationship with God that the question of how we know God's will is meaningful.
- Discernment of spirit comes out of spiritual warfare and struggle.

### Basic attitudes or qualities required for entering into an authentic Discernment process:

#### 1. Openness

- We must approach with an open mind and an open heart.
- We should leave all our attachments. This means no condition, no prejudices.



2.

#### Generosity

- Requires generous spirit to put no condition on what God might call us to do. Like handing over a signed blank cheque for God to fill in.

#### 3. Courage

- Such openness and generosity requires courage.
- God might be asking something difficult, challenging, and risky of us.

#### 4. Interior freedom

- To make such a prayerful, generous, courageous decision requires interior freedom.

### Three types of people differing in their approaches to decision making:

#### ◆ All talk and no action.

This kind of person is full of good intention but remains so distracted.

#### ◆ Does everything but the one thing necessary.

These people may do all kinds of good things in their life but don't face the central issue of what God is calling them to.

#### ◆ Who is truly free.

Their whole and deepest desire is to do whatever God's will is for them with no conditions attached. This is the attitude necessary to authentically find and follow God's will for us.

#### 5. Habit of prayerful reflection on one's experience.

- We must first pray.
- Put ourselves in God's presence.
- Listen to what God is saying to you.

### Examine of Conscience

- Being aware of God's presence with us and ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Ask ourselves how God has been present in the events and encounters of our day.
- Look at how Christ has called us and how you responded.
- Thank God for the blessings of the day.
- Beg God's forgiveness for any failures.
- Ask God's help to respond generously to Christ's call.

# DISCERNING GOD'S WILL

Continued . . . .

## 6. Having one's priorities right.

Things such as opportunities, experiences, and relationships are to be valued and chosen only in so far as they contribute to our goal in life.

- Reject in so far as they deter us from that goal.
- We need the ability to respond freely to God.
- The important thing is to seek and to find how God is calling me at this time of my life.

## 7. Not confusing ends with means.

There is an attitude of putting God into second place.

- First our desires, needs, achievements that are self - centered attachments.
- They mix up the order of an end with, means to that end.
- What they ought to seek first and above all, they often put last.
- They want God to come into their lives after first choosing what they want.

### Discernment means.....

1. Seeking and finding God in all things.
2. The source of spirituality is the revelation of God's will through the event of our times.
3. We need to discern our vocation.
4. Daily examination of conscience and spiritual guidance are important means to help us discern better.
5. Apostolic discernment is the ordinary way of discovering how best to bring Christ's presence concretely to our world.

### These are the main things to look for in discerning about something.

- \* It is governed by love, if it is not, it's worthless. (1 cor. 13;1-3)
- \* It centers us onto Jesus and his good news. (1cor. 12:3)

- \* It directs us to scripture, not away from it. ( Is. 8:19,20 )
- \* It builds up the church and its members, giving it power, wisdom, character, boldness, and unity. (Eph 4:11-12)

### When discerning . . .

- \* We must keep in mind why we are doing it. Ask yourself, if I raise this issue, how am I pointing people to Christ? How am I helping them grow in the Spirit? In what way am I loving them?
- If there is no answer to these questions, or weak answers then it is best not to speak.
- \* The spirit wants us to study, to trust, and to shape our lives according to what is in Scripture.
  - \* Without Biblical discernment, we can't accurately recognize what is from God, or tell it from what is fake.
  - \* Discerning God's will is not just the work of an individual person. The spirit acts within the gathered believers (the church) so they can discern what to do and be.
  - \* Within this context, specific persons may be gifted in leading the church as it discerns.
  - \* This community teaches each other, recalls history, shares their experiences, and affirms each other's value.
  - \* The spirit did not give a sense of God's purposes only to you but also to others, in a slightly different way for each of us.
  - \* Your role in discernment requires checking and re-checking and cross-checking.

As part of the two day retreats we were given the opportunity to workshop as well which helped us. As the saying goes - practice makes perfect.

## A PRAYER FOR DISCERNMENT

My Lord God,  
I have no idea where I am going  
I do not see the road ahead of me  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.  
Nor do I really know myself,  
And the fact that I think that I am following Your will  
Does not mean that I am actually doing so.  
But I believe that the desire to please You, does in fact please You  
And I hope that I have that desire in all I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this, You will lead me on the right road  
Though I may know nothing about it.  
Therefore, I will trust You always.  
Though I may seem to be lost  
And in the shadow of death,  
I will not fear, for You are ever with me  
And You will never leave me to face my struggles alone. Amen.

(Thomas Merton- Trappist Monk)

# P.N.G. Zoom into C.S.O.E. Courses.

I, John Kambaso a youth member from Asaro Parish with other youth representatives of Goroka Diocese, would like to say thank you to Fr. Adam and his team for bringing us this course titled: The Seven Young People in the Gospel. Mostly school students, a total of 27 youths male and female attended the course held at Kefamo Pastoral Centre on 28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> August 2020. They come from several parishes of our diocese: Yonki, Punbibasa, Kainantu, North Goroka, Tafeto, Yamiufa, Kefamo and Watabung. The content of the course – Rich Young Man, Puppet Girl, Young Man Raised to Life, Boy Made Miracle Possible, Palace Doorkeeper Girl, John Mark the Evangelist and Young Man Dressed in White – made a great impact on us.

We were very interested with the short sessions of the course, from which we learnt something new. The examples of the seven young men and women in the Gospel have inspired us with a new beginning of life. It



also gave us strength and courage to make our own decisions. We made vows to make our own decisions and not let others make decisions for us. We learned that we could give what we have, even the little we have, and Jesus would make the miracles.

Another important message had an impact on us - to let Jesus enter in our heart and never let Him go. For how many times we let Jesus enter and then let him leave our heart! We also saw that God has given us a second chance and that we cannot erase the past but



we can redeem it with new chapters.

In coincidence Jesus is at our doorstep, willing to walk within and to proclaim the Gospel. With Jesus Christ our Lord we can turn the impossible to possible... After the course we have a passion to evangelise, to bring this message to young people, to tell them that together we can climb very slippery mountains, that means the challenges waiting us in our life. And we will succeed, because we know that the mountains will not grow anymore but we will grow to overcome them.

May our good Lord bless you always,  
John Kambaso.



## TESTIMONY

From Sr. Rosemary Babate FMI

It was a blessing for me to attend Seven Young People in the Gospel course via zoom. I personally experienced that some areas of my life were uncovered while going through the sessions. I was journeying through moments of recollection and I was inspired to share with others.

From our PNG team, I had the opportunity to give two sessions: The Puppet Girl and the Palace Door Keeper. There were 25 youths and a religious sister who participated. I pray that we continue to evangelise in this mission.

Thank you CSOE for being our sponsor in this course. God bless.

# TRUE WORDS OF WISDOM

By Carmen Sylvester

On the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2020 we enjoyed a Healing Seminar with Fr Patrice Ndemasi our very own dynamite.

With the Covid19 restrictions we were expecting fewer people to our healing seminar but of course God had other plans. There were some anxious moments when people who had not registered kept coming through the door but thankfully, they stopped at 65. Never thought I would be thanking God that no more people came. I was truly grateful that everyone took great care to keep the social distance and when they forgot we had our capable Covid Marshall, Hiacinta to remind them that social distancing is a requirement.

We had no doubt that Fr Patrice would be dynamic in his presentation but what he presented was inspirational. Using the theme from Mat 8: 15 -17 ***“He cured all who were sick” .... “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.”*** He began to walk us through the Word of God to show how God’s desire is for all his people to be whole.

It was obvious from the start that Fr Patrice had put a lot of effort, time and reflection into this seminar when he started handing out booklets he had prepared for all of us so he could walk us through, to come to a deeper understanding of the heart of our God.

His Opening words, “Today I like to honour each and everyone of you for taking the time to come here today to meet Jesus and to experience the Power of Jesus, the remedy of Jesus and to encounter God in a special way. It is a promise that whoever encounters the Lord will not remain the same. I believe that we are going to experience the hand of God in our lives today.”

He reminded us that the booklet he gave us was not just for the seminar but to take it home with us and continue to reflect upon the stories of the people that encountered Jesus in scripture and how they were forever changed. He suggested that we could use it more like a GPS to get us to the desired destination of encountering God in our lives and be healed by Him. As he said we may not be physically sick but there could be emotional, spiritual or psychological wounds that only God can heal.

He jokingly told us that one of the biggest challenges for him was deciding what to include

in the booklet so it could give us practical principles for life rather than rewriting the Bible.

He asked “Is there a possibility that you can forget yourself, forget your reputation?”

I am sure in everyone’s mind the question was... Why?

An interesting observation he made was that 99% of people, if not all who encountered Jesus, were embarrassed. They were embarrassed about their past; embarrassed about what they have done; how they had lived. But the power to conquer the fear that kept them in bondage was already within them. They had to forget themselves, forget about what people thought of them, forget what they thought of themselves and come to Jesus..

Jesus would often say ***“Your faith has healed you”, “Your faith has made you well.”***

Faith is something within, the power to be healed is already within us but it must manifest itself; for those who wait upon the Lord will fly like eagles.

Some people were healed and some were not. What is the problem? Is Jesus the problem? Are the people the problem? He reminded us that God is sovereign and has his perfect plan for each of us and even if physical healing is not what He chooses for us if we go to him with our needs, our humble faith, he will perform the miracle that is most needed in our lives.

All this wisdom and more was in the introduction and then came the opening prayer which I feel is worth sharing with you.

Fr Patrice said, “Let us pray ....

God our loving Father, I thank you for this day, I thank you for this community, thank you for this is our day you have given us as individuals, as a community and as a family. Thank you for this privilege for us to stand before you.

May you direct my heart, according to Your Divine Will.

Give me the words to say, direct my heart to be like Jeremiah as he said - “When I try to be quiet

there is a burning in my heart that cannot be contained and I am unable to restrain myself from speaking your Word.”

Give me wisdom Lord that I will speak only that which pleases you, that which is in accordance with Your Divine Will.



Fr. Patrice’s dynamic preaching

Continued page 8 . . .

## TRUE WORDS OF WISDOM

By Carmen Sylvester

Continued from page 7 . . . .

Our heavenly Father may your favour be with us, may your forgiveness be with us. Let your faithfulness shield us and protect us. Help us Lord each and every one of us. There is no temptation that is beyond human nature to conquer.

For every temptation Lord you give us an open door. May you open our eyes, the eyes of our Spirit. May your mighty hand be with us. As Luke says where ever Jesus was, the mighty hand of God was with him so he could heal all those who were sick because on the Cross Jesus bore our sickness, our failures, our sins.

Lord Jesus Christ open the eyes of our spirit so we can be given perfect knowledge of how to move through all our challenges, our sufferings, our failures.

Lord Jesus Christ may your healing power be upon us, upon this family you gather here today.

For the things we have been praying for even for years and years and we see no way through, we even feel exhausted so that sometimes we are fainting, we are so weary, that even we cannot pray any

more.

Lord this is our day. May you meet the needs of your people, the desire in our hearts.

Turn our cry, our mourning, our embarrassment into the Glory of God.

Use me for your glory and your honour.

All these we ask from you Father in the power of the Mighty name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

And all shouted.... Amen, Amen to this heartfelt prayer.

The mood was set for the day and everyone's heart was touched and expectantly waited upon the Lord to touch us all in a mighty way.

The day was a banquet of scriptural reflections sprinkled with some humour, adoration and healing service with the final banquet of the Eucharist.

With so many Blessings and Graces no one left the hall that day with a burdened heart.

As Fr Patrice says, **All Glory to God.**



Fr. Patrice

## Are You Open To Zoom In? Part 2

By Emilia Sacchetta

I'm sure many people have heard the parable - like story about the man who waited for God to rescue him as he sat on the roof of his house while floodwaters rose about him. The story goes that a man in a rowboat came by and offered to save him, then another in a motorboat and a helicopter overhead; all three offers of help were rejected. The man waited for God...and waited...and waited, until he drowned.

I think of this as I ponder on these current times. Over these seven months we have seen and continue to experience the impact of COVID-19 as it leaves in its wake an ocean of suffering on so many different levels. Like others here and around the world, I wait for 'normality' and the freedom to come and go as we were once able. Yet, bleak as it is God reminds us He is still at work in the world and He calls us to continue to work with Him with what we have and is available to us. He asks us to step out of our comfort zone and allow Him to use us in new ways to reach out and bring others to a knowledge and experience of His healing presence.

In the previous *Witness* you may recall I shared how our creative God revealed the significant role Zoom would play in the CSOE during these challenging times. The commission to, **"Go into all the world and proclaim the good news"** (Mark

16:15) remains the same – it would just look different. Although not as engaging as face-to-face or personal encounter, Zoom has nevertheless enabled connections to remain active, accessible and productive. This became evident when Fr Adam Samsel (Papua New Guinea) and his leadership team participated in the **7 Young People in the Gospels** course presented by the Melbourne CSOE in May. The PNG team's participation via Zoom resulted in their presentation of the course to a large number of young people in PNG, who in turn expressed eagerness to take it out to their own parishes (see testimonials on page 6).

Needless to say, difficulties experienced by the PNG leadership group prior to the course not only anticipated its success (we usually gauge a course's success by its degree of difficulties!), but also emphasised the importance of prayer cover and the invaluable role of our intercessors (see Director's Report page 1). Although not entirely ideal, Zoom has enabled us to continue to gather and pray together, take God's Word out to others and offer a means of connectedness with God and each other. God only asks that we be willing to be open to new ways and each opportunity He sends along as we look forward to the floodwaters of 2020 subsiding throughout the world.

# In the Chaos there are Blessings

By Carmen Sylvester

I am sure you have all got a story to tell about Covid 19 and the chaos it caused but I pray that you also experienced God’s Blessings and protection . . .

My own experience of trying to sell a house and downsize to an apartment had its own challenges but I must say many many Blessings. To start with I would have never had that much time to pack and to literally get rid of 10 trailer loads of what I owned. It was such an experience of freedom to let go of what had been accumulated over the years and it was such a great joy to see how much pleasure others were getting from receiving my goods. I am also sure some people unknown would have received great joy in what was given away to charities, in some instances still unused and in original package.

Spending time at home made it possible to pray more with my husband which has now become a habit that gives us both great joy and comfort as we continue to face our challenges in life.

I was totally flabbergasted by the spiritual banquet presented to us through the Pentecost Pilgrimage online as well as the beautiful Pentecost Vigil that Charis initiated from Rome. Daily Mass without any distraction of rushing and others disturbing your prayer time as can happen in church was a blessing.

I must say that experiencing the Easter Triduum so close up moved my heart to tears at the beauty of the Liturgies of our Church.

Not being able to receive daily Eucharist was my greatest heartache yet even in that God provided me with a deeper appreciation and intimacy that I pray I will never lose now that I can again go to daily Mass.

As I write this I am acutely aware that Victoria is back into lockdown and my heart goes out to all of you in your suffering. Of course that may still come again in SA but until then I am trying my very best to never lose the awe and wonder of this great gift of Himself that Jesus gave us at the last supper. Indeed his name is Emmanuel, God with us.

In Adelaide the team made it a point to meet via skype and pray every two weeks. It was a blessed time for us and photos and recordings of the prayers were posted on our website to let our participants know that we were holding them in prayer.

Through the wonderful skill of Joanna our technology whiz we did our best to keep our people spiritually fed through postings on our

website of all that was being offered online and also special posting from some very generous priests who prepared videos and audios especially for the Catholic School of Evangelisation in Adelaide.

We have been so blessed to receive a two part video reflection on the ‘Road to Emmaus’ by Fr Mario Micallef who now resides in Canada but was gracious enough to accept our invitation to send us some spiritual insights on the story of the two travellers as they walked in despondency to Emmaus after the crucifixion of Jesus.

Our guest speaker scheduled for our Pentecost Weekend recorded for us teachings in line with New Life and presented over 9 days as a Pentecost Novena. The production was amazing and we are forever grateful.

Our Charismatic Mass Celebrant recorded reflection on the Gospel of the day, when we were scheduled for our Charismatic Mass and also each Sunday’s Gospel. Very generously he continues to do that.

Now as we move back into some sort of normality even though with acute awareness of Covid19 still lurking in the background I pray that we continue to heighten our awareness that God is always there to see us through our chaos and mess. One of the greatest miracles is that we sold our house within 3 weeks of going on the market at a price that I never envisaged. God is Good all the time.

Many Blessings to all.



## FAITH

★ “Faith is to believe what you do not see. The ★  
★ reward of faith is to see what you believe.” ★  
★ - St. Augustine. ★

★ “I believe though I do not comprehend, and I ★  
★ hold by faith what I cannot grasp with the ★  
★ mind.” - St. Bernard. ★

## HOPE

★ “We must have confidence in God, who is ★  
★ what He always has been, and we must not be ★  
★ disheartened because things turn out contrary ★  
★ to us.” - St. Philip Neri. ★

★ “God guards with special protection a ★  
★ confiding client and such a one may be sure no ★  
★ evil will betide him.” - St. Vincent of Paul. ★



