

**5<sup>th</sup> S. of Easter, Yr B.**

**29-4-18.**

**Vine and branches.**

I'd like to share an e-mail with you I received from the RCIA group I started in Coorparoo 10 years ago. It fits in marvellously with our readings today, especially with St. Paul's efforts to share the joy of his new-found faith, and Our Lord's comparison of Himself and us as Vine and Branches.

"We had an unusually large contingent complete the program this year – 9 in all. 6 Baptisms and 3 for Confirmation and Eucharist only.

The Baptisms were: -

- \* A young lady who has a Catholic boyfriend and attends Mass with him. She has been impressed by the faith that drives him.
- \* A young lady who has taught in a Catholic school for 9 years and has been attending Mass for the last 2.
- \* A newly-married couple (computer analyst and a doctor) who used to go to Mass sometimes with friends in Korea.
- \* A lady who has raised all her family as Catholics (and attended Mass) along with her recently deceased Catholic husband.
- \* A young man in first year University searching for meaning in life.

The 3 for Confirmation only, included a married couple who, until recently, have been Uniting Church goers, and a young man who attended a Catholic school after being baptised in the Anglican faith. He has been attending Mass ever since (12 years!).

As you can see, except for the university student, the others have a history of religious practice. That makes me very hopeful of continued observance. I think I have said before that I am always doubtful about the ones whose sole reason for joining the programme is a desire to send the children to a Catholic school. I am pleased to say the 2017 cohort are not only practising but are also contributing to church ministry in one form or another. I have come to see that getting them involved in ministry, no matter how small a role they take on, is really important for the support it provides when we finish. I know that should be self-evident, but it hadn't really hit me until I took over from Ron and Anne.

I think that such a large cohort was probably a flash in the pan. Anyway, I continue to get good support from my team of 3 young adults, who are not only people of deep faith but also able to express themselves very well. I am also lucky to be able to call on good people for the Gospels and topics.

So far the e-mail. What impresses me particularly is the mention that the 2017 cohort are not only practising but also contributing to church ministry in one form or another.

It shows how well the understanding of the comparison Jesus made of himself and of all those who follow Him, as the Vine and the Branches, has taken foothold in those newly-welcomed members of the Church.

And that's not all, for I think we have a wonderful example of that here in our own parish as well, in the young adults who have formed themselves into a truly vibrant group, which through their participation in the Liturgy, providing the music and singing at Mass on most Saturday evenings, as well as doing the readings and setting up the slides on the screen there, are making a great contribution to our celebrations.

They are also involved in serving on the Foodstore on weekends, visiting the elderly and housebound people in their homes and bringing them H. Communion, and are ready to do the same in the Alfred on Sunday mornings. Two of them have become members of the Parish Pastoral Council, and that's apart from their social gatherings and meeting for prayer, spiritual input, and planning what's next.

It's wonderful to see that happen for that is positive proof that what our faith has to offer is life-giving and that this does attract younger people when they are given the opportunity to put their faith into practice. It should also be an encouragement to all of us to look for ways in which we can help our own faith to grow and be supported.

Marshall McClune's dictum that "No man is an Island", is secular and positive affirmation of what Jesus taught us in today's likeness, that apart from Him, and each other, we can do nothing.

Let's take some time to reflect upon that today.