

Blackfriars Parish 2024 – a year of continuity and change

As 2024 draws to a close, Blackfriars Parish can look back on a year of continuity as well as change. An illustration of this was the 12 September Welcome Mass for the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, hosted by Holy Rosary Church, that brought together parishioners of longstanding Inner North parishes (St Thomas More, Canberra Central, St Joseph's and Blackfriars) as part of the newly formed Canberra Inner North Catholic Community (CINCC). Highlights of the Mass included the combined parish choir.



Here are some other highlights of the year for the parish.



The Parish Renewal Team coordinated an Inner North Alpha, a space that helped build connections across the CINCC parishes over videos and small group discussions about Christian faith, accompanied by good food. Alpha is a way to facilitate evangelisation which, in simple terms, is making Jesus known and loved. At the Welcome Mass, Archbishop Christopher Prowse said there 'are huge opportunities now for evangelisation in these parishes'.

The Renewal Team organised, on an Archdiocesan wide and ecumenical basis, The Marriage Course which is designed for couples seeking to invest in their relationship and build a strong marriage.

Also on an ecumenical basis was the 21 September 'Sustaining our Future' Festival organised by the 'Holy Roundabout', comprising Holy Cross Anglican, St Margaret's Uniting and Holy Rosary Churches. The festival's theme was *Active Travel: Good for You and the Planet*, a highlight of which was the artwork of environmentally friendly travel produced by Year 6 students at Rosary Primary School. The following day was the Holy Roundabout Celebration of Service held outdoors against the background of the cherry tree at St Margaret's and Holy Cross.



During the year and leading into the Archdiocesan Assembly, parishioners were invited to participate in the Year of the Holy Spirit Roundtable Series. Topics included caring for our common home, the equal dignity of men and women, and reconciliation and First Nations. The Parish Pastoral Council identified and invited a number of parishioners to register for the Assembly itself.

Immediately preceding the Assembly was an ecumenical prayer vigil at St Christopher's Cathedral that included worshipful singing and dancing by members of a multicultural choir. The Assembly (on 19 October) focused on the three fundamentals of evangelisation – encountering Jesus, discipleship and mission – through small group Conversations in the Spirit involving prayer and preparation, listening and sharing, reflecting and responding, and open and respectful dialogue. This process of discernment and journeying together in faith reflects that used in the universal Church's recently concluded Synod 2021 – 2024 *For a Synodal Church*:

Communion, Participation, Mission to discern ‘what seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us’ (Acts 15:28). A process that it is hoped can be used as part of the parish’s faith journey.

The Assembly included 3 parish evangelisation stories, including ours. Here are the online links:

South Tuggeranong Parish Link: <https://youtu.be/EsNq9jxfwcU>

Goulburn Parish Link: <https://youtu.be/owEBjXiWcg8>

Watson Parish Link: <https://youtu.be/Hpzrh-Tt9wY>

Our deepening connection with the other CINCC parishes has been fostered by our joint bulletin that has highlighted, for example, healing Masses at St Brigid’s, deepening our understanding of the Creed at St Joseph’s, and hearing expert speakers on topical matters of faith at the St Thomas More Forum. At the 24 November CINCC Assembly held in the Holy Rosary parish centre, St Vincent de Paul was noted as an example of inner north collaboration.

The recently started RCIA program welcomed participants from all CINCC parishes. The program, held at St Brigid’s, uses *Evangelium*, a resource that aims to teach the good news of our salvation in Jesus Christ, based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church and organised into the following areas: Creed, Sacraments, Morals and Prayer.

Another recent CINCC initiative is Youth – Inner North, which has been very active in hosting youth events, including Alphas, across the inner north. Run by three youth ministers and supported by the Archdiocese and Fr Renoir, the activities were both fun and faith-filled.

The liturgy roster was refreshed this year, with both women and men encouraged to become acolytes. At Holy Rosary, fittingly the Rosary is now being said just before the 10am Mass. Also at this and the Vigil Mass, a Filipino choir adds to the existing wonderful music liturgy.

The recently inaugurated Hospitality Committee and Grounds and Maintenance Committee have been active, respectively organising, for example, monthly welcoming BBQs and a pre-Welcome Mass St Dominic’s Garden working bee.

The parish is blessed by all those who, in so many ways, serve and give of themselves in the parish community. Their contribution was marked by a Thanksgiving for Service Mass and morning tea at the Feast of Christ the King 10am Mass on 24 November.

A parish group going for 40 years out of friendship and a shared interest is the Craft Group, recognised in the latest edition of the *Catholic Voice*: https://www.catholicvoice.org.au/holy-rosary-craft-groups-40-year-legacy/?mc_cid=fb44fcff4d&mc_eid=17a710c6d3.

During Advent, the parish was treated to the Nativity Festival display in the parish centre and was part of the Holy Roundabout Christmas Carols and BBQ.

As we look forward to next year’s Jubilee Year of Hope, we take the opportunity to thank Fr Renoir for his guidance and support this year, and wish all parishioners a Happy and Holy Christmas and a safe, joyful and peaceful New Year.

Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Renewal Team