

SACRED HEART PARISH SANDRINGHAM

SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORT 2019



Jesus Dies on the Cross, Aboriginal Stations of the Cross (Artist Joh Dunn)

When he celebrated Mass for the 2019 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis denounced the “globalisation of indifference” and said that “as Christians ... we cannot remain insensitive, our hearts deadened, before the misery of so many innocent people. ... We must not fail to respond.” This year, the Social Justice Group has continued to respond to the needs of both our First Peoples here in Australia and the people of Remexio in Timor Leste as well as asylum seekers in our community.

INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Activities included:

Regular emails of the Nungalinya College enewsletter, keeping us informed about the activities and progress of the college in Casuarina in The Northern Territory.

Selling of Aboriginal Catholic Ministry of Victoria “Stations of the Cross” booklets at Lent (we sold 30 at \$15 each, the money going to ACMV). The artist, John Dunn, is a member of the Stolen Generations.

NAIDOC Week (7-14 July 2019) Our masses at the parish on the weekend of 7 July acknowledged and celebrated NAIDOC with music, our message stick and prayers. The theme of NAIDOC for 2019 was Voice. Treaty. Truth. Let's work together. Following the masses, collections were made for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

The SJG Facebook page is frequently updated with posts on Aboriginal issues such as anniversary of Apology to the Stolen Generation Feb 13th, Closing the Gap Aboriginal health reports, National Aboriginal Reconciliation week.

Discussion were held on the status of Uluru Statement from the Heart; NT justice system and extremely high rates of children in custody; Deaths in Custody and Killing Times on historical massacres (based on *The Guardian* online-data bases; the development of First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria: formation of roles, elections and members in Nov 2019.

REMEXIO - TIMOR LESTE

The parish continued to support education in Remexio, paying the salaries of four volunteer teachers and providing scholarships to senior secondary and tertiary students. We sponsored three female students to complete their High School studies, which they did with high marks. Isabel has joined the Dominican sisters, Ediana is studying English and Imaculada has gone on to university to study Civil



Engineering. Continuing tertiary studies are Quintiliano who is studying Computer Science and Fidelio studying Bio-medical science.

The Christmas Appeal again provided funds for compassionate care packages for the elderly and unwell and for primary school students. These were distributed by the local Dominican Sisters to

the most disadvantaged in the outlying areas of Remexio.

Our other projects for 2019 were focused on providing clean water to the community. We were able to fund the installation of a clean, drinking water filter system in the Junior High School and a community water system to cover 400+ inhabitants. Both of these were delivered with locals being responsible for their construction and maintenance. We had a very generous donation to support these projects.

Heather travelled on her own this year and had the luxury of staying in the convent with the Dominican sisters. Her regular visits ensure that our relationship with our twin parish is maintained and that projects are completed satisfactorily.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

We were in touch with our local member, Tim Wilson, and the Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton, regarding the "Medivac" legislation, the Murugappatan family (Sri Lankans who are the sole detainees on Christmas Island) and children on Nauru. We protested about the increasingly cruel and inhumane treatment of refugees and asylum seekers by attending rallies and signing petitions. Thankfully, there are now no refugee children on Nauru but the "Medivac" legislation has been overturned and thousands of people remain in limbo awaiting a decision on their futures, despite being in the country for up to ten years.

Our members have continued to support individuals and families through family visitation, visits to those in detention, English language conversation and teaching sewing. This year we also held an appeal for cleaning products and, thanks to the generosity of our parishioners, delivered a ute-full of these items to the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project (BASP) for distribution to those in need. Two tables from the parish also attended the fundraising Trivia Night for BASP in August.

Keeping up to date with issues regarding asylum seekers and refugees was a priority for the group which received regular newsletters from BASP and the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA). Members regularly attended BASP discussion evenings (held three or four times a year) and other forums, such as those hosted by CAPSA. Often, a feature of these gatherings was the lived experience of individual asylum seekers and refugees, shared openly with those who attended. They were stories of arbitrary decision-making, confusing and variable processing and a total lack of certainty which have a huge mental and physical impact on those who have to wait years for decisions about their futures. Many have lost hope.

A harrowing example of the treatment of refugees is the book *No Friend but the Mountains* written by Behrouz Boochani, a refugee from Iran who spent six years on Manus Island and used a mobile phone to write the book about his experiences. The book received four prestigious awards in Australia, despite the author never having been on the Australian mainland. He was refused permission to come to

Australia to receive his awards. Members of the SJG have read this book and highly recommend it to others.

FINANCIAL

Thanks to the generosity of parishioners, their friends and family, and the support of the school families, a sum of \$20 352 was raised for the Social Justice Group. The major income was derived from the Parish raffle (\$7 460), the Christmas appeal (\$5 750), the Stephen Gravina fund raising run (\$5 740), the coffee sales (\$2 660) and various smaller individual donations. The major expenditure was for education, paying wages of four teachers and subsidising the tertiary fees of three students- \$8120.00. The Christmas appeal money - \$5740.00 provided for small parcels of food and household goods that were packed as a gift and distributed by the Dominican Sisters. An amount of \$7330.00 was used using local labour to provide a much needed filtered water system to the local community.

The parish also donated \$500 to the Music Brain Foundation

COFFEE

Parish sales of Timor-Leste coffee were boosted this year when we wrapped the packs in Christmas paper for gift-giving and sold approximately 20 packets. Only a few packets were sold at the Sacred Heart School Market. St Joan of Arc in Brighton have purchased 30 - 40 packets every couple of months and we also sell coffee at Bluff Rd Physio. Proceeds are used for our Remexio projects.

OUR THANKS

To the many who supported our activities and donated to our appeals over the course of 2019 our heartfelt thanks. Without you we could not have achieved so much in improving the lives of the disadvantaged.