



Together

The Newsletter of St Michael's Meals
Issue 1
2020

Welcome to the first of what we hope will be a bi-annual newsletter of St. Michael's Meals. Why did we decide to call the newsletter 'Together'? We felt that it captured so much of what St Michael's Meals is about. It is God's love for us and the church that brings us **Together**. It is our common desire to make a difference that brings us **Together**. When people are in need, whether they are our homeless brothers and sisters or people we see at church, it is **Together** that we can support one another and create community. In this issue our feature story places the spotlight on the state of homelessness in Australia. We will be providing a snapshot of activities, chat with our friend Jane about her heart for the homeless and share a little bit about the lives we touch and those that touch our lives.

The Editors

Our Mission Statement

Members of St Michael's Meals treat others with unconditional positive regard, listen to them with care and empathy, and are genuine in offering their services.

Our Vision

- Feed the Hungry with God's love.
- Keep offering the homeless weekly meals and genuine friendship.
- Increase the number of the days the meals will be provided.
- Reach out to the elderly, the sick and those with special needs.
- Aim to open a centre to feed, house and clothe people on a regular basis.
- Create a mobile team to reach out and help the less fortunate.

Our Story

St Michael's Meals' is a core group of dedicated parishioners, led by the Parish Priest and Dean of St Michael's Melkite Catholic Cathedral.

This group visits Central Station on Wednesday nights at 7.00 pm to feed the homeless; our aim is to build a trusting relationship so that we not only feed their bodies, but also their souls. The relief, gratitude and friendship of the people we reach is our reward. No-one chooses to be on the street, we look into their eyes and see the person inside. Each has a story, we know the regulars by name and even know their likes and dislikes. So many have an intellectual disability, who are we to

judge the circumstances that pushed them onto the street? The church asks us to imitate the life of the saints, so let's listen to their words:

St Mother Teresa cautions us "If you judge people, you have no time to love them." Our own Australian St Mary Mackillop encourages us to "Never see a need without doing something about it".

It is so true that when we give, we receive so much more. Not only do we feel that we have made a difference to the lives of the people we feed, but it has created a real affection and camaraderie between the people who show up every week to serve our fellow Sydneysiders.

Our motivation is simple and can be found in the Gospel: Matthew 25:35-40.

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink...³⁵, The righteous will ask, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?'³⁷

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'⁴⁰

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How you can be a part of St. Michael's Meals

- Pray for us.
- Become a member
- Prepare meals
- Join the team in distributing food and clothing
- Donate money (donations of \$2 and above are tax deductible).

HOMELESSNESS IN OUR BLESSED COUNTRY

The issue of homelessness differs from one country to another and from one city to the other, but generally it describes people – men, women and often children of all ages, who have no access to adequate housing, food, clothing and security. Over 116,000 members of the Australian community are experiencing homelessness according to the last census and the number is rising. Homelessness can be the result of one or more of the following reasons: domestic violence and family breakdown, being kicked out

of home, addictions, mental illnesses, gambling, financial difficulties, poverty, housing affordability, unemployment, difficulties facing refugees, and the list goes on.

In 2008 the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd promised to halve the homelessness by 2020, stating that "A country like this should not have this problem, so large and longstanding, without being addressed. It's time we had a decent solution to this problem that has been around for a long time." 2020 has arrived, and the number of

homeless people has not been halved, reduced, or even remained as it was. It has been systematically going up. The Australian government as well as several philanthropic organisations have certainly provided all the help they can, but obviously the problem is not disappearing, or even declining. However, like all other social problems, the responsibility should be shared by the whole community. We cannot close our eyes and pretend the problem does not exist or does not touch us. Something must be done! N. Kanawati

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

St. Michael's Meals is blessed to have a growing number of supporters. We want our supporters and readers to get to know each other better. In this issue we interview Jane Karame, a founder and strong supporter of St Michael's Meals.

- **Tell us a little about yourself.**

I was born in Armidale, NSW and enjoyed all the benefits of a country childhood. When I was 17 my father was appointed to work for the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations in Argentina. Getting to know another language and culture was a real eye opener for me. I did a French major at university but ironically ended up teaching mainly English. My late husband was Lebanese and I have 3 children and 4 grandchildren. It has been a joy being immersed in the Middle Eastern culture in Australia.

- **What does your faith mean to you?**

My faith is very important to me. It gives me the strength to carry on in the face of adversity. Being part of St Michael's congregation has made me feel welcomed, accepted and loved.

- **Is there a Bible verse you can share with our readers and why did you pick it?**

This is not a Bible verse but a traditional Irish blessing which resonates with me.

"May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sunshine warm upon your face,

The rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again

May God hold you in the palm of His hand. "

- **What made you get involved in St. Michael's Meals?**

I was very happy to be involved with St Michael's Meals because of the wonderful leadership provided by people such as Abouna, Randa and Roda at its inception and because of the camaraderie of the team. It is great to know we are helping people less fortunate than ourselves. To give is to receive many times over.



JANE KARAME



DISTRIBUTING CLOTHING TO HOMELESS FRIENDS.

THE TEAM'S EXPERIENCES ON THE STREET

Hear my story

Phil was one of our friends who we interviewed in August 2019. He is a warm, gentle and quick-witted man who has lost much to alcohol addiction but in the last four years was able to remain completely sober. He has suffered a number of heart attacks and has a pacemaker. Around the time of the interview he discovered that he had a brain tumour. We understand from others close to Phil that late last year he was admitted to hospital for surgery. We have not seen him since and have no news concerning his wellbeing. Please pray for Phil.

"It's really tough to find nutritious food. Fruit, an egg, you have no idea how much of a blessing having that little boiled egg makes. You know, a bit of variety. You can't pick your own menu but variety sort of helps. You can't live off sausage sandwiches five nights a week, believe you me I've tried. Coming across people like yourself that go out of your way to come and feed us, you know, that brings a smile to my face. I wish there was something I could do in return, you know, maybe help volunteer or something."



RODA WITH A HOMELESS FRIEND WHO HAS A SPECIAL STORY.

A heart-breaking experience

It was 7.50 pm and we were packing up, having just finished feeding approximately 50 of our friends, the homeless. She arrived in a rush, pushing a pram with a two and half-year-old shivering daughter in a partly torn T-shirt, on a particularly cold night, and accompanied by a nine-year-old son who was loaded with three plastic bags containing all their possessions. The three were hungry, thirsty, dirty and above all visibly frightened. They begged for help, but what help? The woman, in her forties, informed us that she had to take the two children and escape from domestic violence, from an excessively

abusive man. She has no money at all and does not carry any identification documents, yet somehow managed to travel from Brisbane to Sydney. Most certainly we wanted to help but did not know what to do. The three were visibly exhausted, they needed above all a place to shower and have some sleep. Contacting shelters for women with children, we had no answer; no wonder as this was Christmas Day. We contacted a nearby Bed and Breakfast place and found a vacancy. We were thrilled. One of our volunteers had a teddy bear in her car, she gave to the young girl which made her very happy. She hugged it and immediately named

it Henry. Arriving at the B&B, the boy was the first to unload and throw himself on the bed saying: at last I can rest and have some sleep. The official asked for the woman's ID and when he learnt that she has none he demanded that she and the children leave. We pleaded with him to no avail. There was nothing more that we could do. We gave her what money we could afford and left, but with very heavy hearts. As Fr Gerges stated: "In helpless situations we only have our warm prayers to send to the person in need".

ACTIVITIES

The activities are organised by Norma and team.

Our seniors' monthly gathering where we share a meal of friendship.



We desperately needed a bus/van to transport the food and the volunteers into the city, so we commenced fundraising. We had an Easter Raffle which was very successful, and then approached Bunnings Alexandria to see if we could host one of their famous BBQs. What a fun day we had, the atmosphere and camaraderie were amazing.



An activity was held at St Michael's Cathedral joining homeless and seniors for a non-denominational service followed by a sumptuous lunch.



SAMIA PREPARING THE SAUSAGES AT BUNNINGS.

Apart from the fundraising we are moved by the generosity of our members and the St Michael's community who regularly contribute financially, and for this we are truly grateful.

A grant application was made to the Sisters of Charity Foundation and they have given us a grant of \$15,000.00 which has helped us to buy the bus. This bus is also used to transport our elderly each month to the Founders Day Mass, and we look forward to taking them on several excursions during 2020.

As an outreach activity all the members and supporters of St Michael's Meals managed to raise much needed funds to support people affected by the recent bushfires.



Our weekly food run to Central Station Sydney.



NORMA PREPARING AT HOME FOR THE WEEKLY RUN.

RICHARD, A VOLUNTEER, SHARING A MEAL WITH ONE OF OUR HOMELESS FRIENDS.

JOHN KANAWATI WITH JACOB, WHO USED TO OFFER US PROTECTION AND SUPPORT.

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