

Together

The Newsletter of St Michael's Meals
Issue 2
2021

Welcome to Issue 2, 2021 of Together. Unlike the preceding ones, each of which was devoted to a special group – the Homeless, Seniors and Youth – the present number combines all the activities of St Michael's Meals and accordingly is addressed to all our community. In the past few weeks, we experienced our second lockdown which certainly had its negative effect on many people. It became difficult - and still is - even to buy the essentials and many activities which were planned sadly had to be put on hold. Whilst all this is upsetting, and limits the freedom we are accustomed to, there is a positive side to it. Let us think of a couple of months ago when many countries were reporting huge numbers of infections and deaths, Australia was in the envious position of living in almost complete freedom. This was the result of the first lockdown, which ended by reaching zero infection rate and we were able to go about our normal life without fear. So, the present lockdown is restrictive, yes, but let us look at the positive side for God willing we will return to our normal life, and all this will be in the past. The sun of happiness will shine all over again and fill our hearts with promises of better tomorrows.

The Editors

THE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP

We all need positivity in our lives! Life's ups and downs are inevitable but with a positive outlook and the right attitude we can weather any storm. In these difficult times of lockdown and great uncertainty, we can all add a little sunshine to someone's day by showing an act of kindness, by ringing to say hi, by just being compassionate and understanding. Mother Teresa said in one of her memorable quotes that "life is a challenge we should all face up to it, a piece of happiness we should earn and an adventure we should attempt". To achieve that we need "a little kindness, a little care and a little prayer".

There is nothing like a good friend to walk beside you through the peaks and valleys of life. It is often difficult to find the right words to tell our friends how much we appreciate them. When we sow the seeds of friendship carefully and tenderly, cultivate the new growth like precious blooms, an abundant gathering of love will result. One of the highest compliments ever spoken of another individual contains the words, "this is my friend". It is impossible to estimate the impact, the meaning, the deep appreciation, and the love conveyed by these simple words. It is possible to sense the affection, the acceptance, the honest approval implied, as well as the trust, confidence and mutual respect suggested.

A friend is ready to assist you, to comfort you, to defend you, to encourage you, to forgive you, to listen to you, to share joys and sorrow with you, to sympathize with you, to be happy for you, to congratulate you without a twinge of envy, and to remember the good and pleasant memories of experiences mutually shared. To have one such friend in a lifetime is truly a gift. To have more than one is a treasure beyond compare. So, value, honour, guard and hold, in high esteem, your precious friends and remember that friendship is a package of feelings that nobody can make, nobody can explain. We can only feel it! Robert Louis Stevenson noted that "So long as we love, we serve. So long as we are loved by others, I would say we are indispensable; and no person is useless while she or he has a friend".

Roda Kanawati



FRIENDSHIPS FORGED IN THE HOLY LAND.

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POEMS CELEBRATING FRIENDSHIP

What follows is an array of poems celebrating one of God's gifts to us: Friendship, offering an insight into making, keeping and sustaining friendships. As you read these inspiring thoughts you will want to share them with someone whose friendship has been a blessing to you, or wants to grow closer to you as time goes by.

Life's Gift of Love

If people like me didn't know people like you
Life would lose its meaning and its richness, too
For the friends that we make are life's gift of love
And I think friends are sent right from heaven above
And thinking of you somehow makes me feel
That God is love and He's very real

A Friend is a Gift of God

When we need some sympathy
Or a friendly hand to touch
Or an ear that listens tenderly
And speaks words that mean so much
We seek our true and trusted friend
In the knowledge that we'll find
A heart that is sympathetic
And an understanding mind
And often just without a word
There seems to be a union
Of thoughts and kindred feelings
For God gives true friends communion.

A Friend like you

In this troubled world
it's refreshing to find
Someone who still has
the time to be kind.
Someone who still has
the faith to believe
That the more you give
the more you receive
Someone who's ready
by thought, word or deed
To reach out a hand
in the hour of need.

Compiled from Helen Steiner Rice, *The Poems and Prayers*, Revel, 2006.

Friendship is a Golden Chain

The links are friends so dear
And like a rare and precious jewel
It's treasured more each year
It's clasped together firmly
With a love that's deep and true
And it's rich with happy memories
and fond recollections, too.
Time can't destroy its beauty
For as long as memory lives
Years can't erase the pleasure
That the joy of friendship gives
For friendship is a priceless gift
That can't be bought or sold
And to have an understanding friend
Is worth far more than gold
And the golden chain of friendship
Is a strong and blessed tie
Binding kindred hearts together
As the years go passing by.

Whatever adversities life brings, whatever condition we find ourselves in, God understands all. We should always remember: "Somebody loves you more than you know and will always be with you wherever you go".

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

At a time of difficulty and great uncertainty, we draw our strength and hope from our faith. Our Mother Church offered us various coping strategies to help us deal with the challenges and struggles of our everyday life. When it comes to dealing with epidemics, the only strategy suggested by the Church lies in praying to God for a heavenly intervention.

The following prayer is an extract from "the Paraklesis", a Byzantine service of supplication for the welfare of the living, held in preparation for the Feast of the Dormition of our Lady the Theotokos (the Mother of God), also called the Feast of the Assumption:

"We pray that every city and country place may be spared from famine and pestilence, earthquake and flood, fire and sword, foreign invasion and civil war, that our loving and good God may be gentle, merciful and placable and that He may avert from us all threatening danger and save us from His just anger that hangs over us and that He may have mercy on us."

Praying does more than asking for a heavenly intervention,

it raises our awareness of our spiritual nature,
it enhances our spiritual wellbeing, thus lifting our morale,
it affirms our FAITH in our principal values
it connects us to the Holy Spirit that dwells within,
it boosts HOPE in our heart for a brilliant future
it preserves a strong spiritual bond with our Creator,
it nurtures the seed of LOVE that the Word of God planted in us,
and it strengthens our patience that is most required during this hard period.

We turn to you God of Mercy, Healing and Hope, to fortify us in this time of need. May we not falter and may we approach every day in faith and peace, trusting in the truth of your Goodness towards us. Abouna Gerges

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

Rev 3: 20

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)

Membership Corner

Become a Member



Renew your Membership



PLACE AND TIME AND PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

St Michael's Melkite Catholic Cathedral has a very interesting address, 23-25 Golden Grove Street, Darlington. It is located in an area that is not only culturally important to the indigenous people of our country but has historical significance to the earliest European settlement of Australia. My personal story also links to this area. Like with so many places across the country, and Sydney in particular, one can see today their history reflected in the names of streets and suburbs, especially in and around the vicinity of St Michael's Cathedral. Note the names like Golden Grove Street, Rose Street, Rose Lane, Ivy Street, Chippendale, Redfern and others. Have you ever wondered where the names come from?

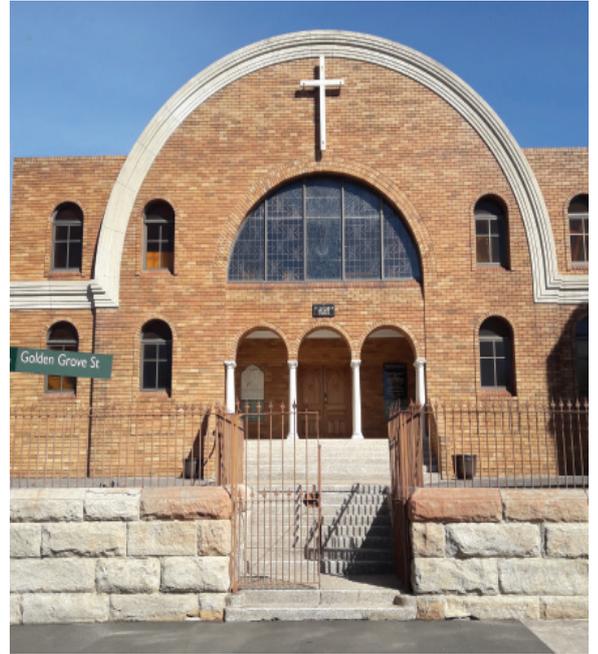
The *Golden Grove* was a store ship that accompanied the First Fleet arriving in Botany Bay on the 20th of January 1788 before sailing onto Port Jackson on the 26th. It was built in 1780 and named the *Russian Merchant* but, due to sensitivities about Russia that were around even at that time, it was renamed in 1782 before its departure on the 13th of May 1787 to the new colony from Portsmouth. She carried 22 crew and among her 4 passengers was the first chaplain in the colony, Rev. Richard Johnson. Its cargo contained various tools, tents, and the first animals that were sent to the new colony. She brought cattle, horses, sheep, goats, pigs, poultry, dogs, and the Rev. Johnson's cats. Most of the animals were purchased in Tenerife, Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town on the journey. Rev. Johnson is credited with saving the seeds from oranges he bought in Rio de Janeiro and growing the first orange trees in the colony from those seeds. In September 1788, the *Golden Grove* sailed from the colony to Norfolk Island with provisions and free settlers, as well as 21 male and 11 female convicts. In November she returned to England arriving in 1789. She never returned to Australia and after 1804 her fate is unknown. For a while an urban area was named after the *Golden Grove*, however, later that area became known as Darlington; the only geographic location today, which carries her name, is the street where St Michael's is located.

The first Aboriginal inhabitants of Darlington were the Cadigal people who belong to the Dharug language group. The earliest recorded British

history is linked to school needs when in 1789 Governor Arthur Phillip was instructed to set aside land in the new penal colony for church and school use. So, in 1801, 500 acres of land south of Parramatta Road (eventually the name *Grose Farm* was generally applied to that area) was granted to the trustees of the *Female Orphan School*; the trustees began clearing the land and the money raised by the timber-cutting supplied a regular source of income to the school – the land reverted to the Crown in 1826. The timber that was cleared was Turpentine and Ironbark. Turpentine is a highly durable straight timber used for poles and wharves; it is marine invertebrate and termite resistant. Ironbark is a very dense timber and has been used for railway sleepers, heavy engineering, construction and poles; and even for archery bows.

One of the indigenous forest communities of the Sydney Basin Bioregion, in particular the Inner West, including Darlington, is the Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest (STIF); this type of forest typically contains trees around 20–30 m tall with a ground cover of flowering shrubs (for example, Sydney Golden Wattle) and native grasses, in a fertile clay soil derived from shale. Today the Forest is critically endangered and there are now only small bushland remnants nestled among the suburbs

During Governor Lachlan Macquarie's administration in the 1820s, some of the land to the south-east of Newtown Road was granted to various individuals: William Hutchinson, who had arrived in 1799 as a convict and became a successful businessman, received 52 acres which he called *Golden Grove*, he used the land to pasture cows destined for the Sydney meat market; a parcel of 28½ acres went to Thomas Shepherd, a horticulturist, who established the Darling Nursery; 17½ acres went to Robert Cooper to set up a brewery; and 95 acres went to William Chippendale who ran cattle and grew potatoes and barley on his grant. By 1844 the Hutchison estate, some of Shepherd's nursery and a portion of the land grant given to William Chippendale comprised much of present-day Darlington. Street names such as Ivy



THE PRESENT ST MICHAEL'S MELKITE CATHEDRAL, DARLINGTON.

and Rose, are believed to reflect the Nursery, and in turn Darling Nursery gave its name to Darlington.

The 1850s saw the beginning of residential, educational and commercial development. In 1850 the University of Sydney was founded and in 1854 it was granted possession of 120 acres at *Grose Farm* in the north of Darlington. The first Darlington Public School was established in 1877 on Darlington Road in the section now renamed Maze Crescent. It was built to meet the needs of the growing community. By 1880 education had been made compulsory; rapid subdivision continued and with the building of the Eveleigh Railway workshops between 1882 and 1897 the effect on the school was dramatic. Sections in Golden Grove/Darlington were subdivided and sold for workmen's dwellings. The continued growth of Darlington as an important centre of employment, including a growing population of Aboriginal people working at Eveleigh, saw the numbers at the school increase three-fold. By 1891, Darlington was the most densely populated area of Sydney.

The Municipality of Darlington was a local government area proclaimed in 1864 with an area of 44 acres and was the smallest municipal council in Sydney. The council was amalgamated with the City of Sydney in 1949, except for a couple of periods between 1958–1982 and 1988–1992.

Now to my personal connection! My grandfather, Vic Crum, was a 16-year-old boy in Newcastle when he obtained

Place and time and personal connections (cont.)

a blacksmith's apprenticeship at the Honeysuckle Point railway workshop in 1901. In April 1905 he was presented with a valuable box of drawing instruments, a *Molesworth Engineer's Manual* and a useful pocket-book on the eve of his departure from Newcastle to finish his apprenticeship at the Eveleigh railway workshops in the Locomotive Branch, the building is preserved in the area known today as Carriageworks. He gained his Blacksmith's ticket in 1906 and lived the rest of his life in Sydney, however, he did return to Newcastle in 1910 to marry his sweetheart Eliza on March 16th. The happy couple left that evening for Sydney and their first home together at 16 Golden Grove Street, Darlington, not far from the Eveleigh workshops and adjacent to the church building which eventually became St Michael's in the late 1970s. They rented the home from a Mr William Best who was an alderman on the Darlington Council for 20 years and the mayor in 1903 and 1915. Today 16 Golden Grove Street forms part of the land occupied by the Darlington Public School.

Vic and Eliza had four children who were all born in the house at 16 Golden Grove Street; the youngest born in 1917 was my mother, Enid. In 1912 the family purchased a block of land in Concord West. They built a house and moved there in late 1918 when my mother was one year old. Vic continued to work



WEDDING OF VIC (SEATED) & ELIZA CRUM, 1910.

at Eveleigh until his retirement in 1952.

During the 1950s the University of Sydney was given permission to purchase 36 acres of land in Darlington, which included the old Darlington School, for expansion. In 1975 the school closed, and a new school, constructed on a cleared block of land between Abercrombie Street, Golden Grove Street, Rose Lane and Darlington Lane, was opened.

That land included 16 Golden Grove Street which appears on aerial photographs from 1943 and on a City of Sydney survey map in 1950 (see Map) where it is evident that it was a terrace house. Council records show the lodgement of two Development Applications: in 1961 it was proposed to use the property as a café and for the sale of mixed goods, and in October 1972, an inspection was carried out by Alderman Murphy regarding the demolition of the building. So, by late 1972–1973, to facilitate the building of the new school, my grandparents' former home no longer existed.

The Darlington Public School is renowned for its connection with the local Aboriginal community and has an emphasis on teaching Aboriginal culture and promoting awareness. The school is currently being upgraded to provide new facilities and to provide for a growing student enrolment.

For me as I'm exploring all this, I am finding even more personal connections. My home at Wahroonga is located on the border of a protected small pocket



Drawing based on City of Sydney Archive and History Resources 1950 map: Darlington with additions.

of the Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest just like the one that used to stand near Golden Grove Street; and these trees also grow in my garden. The name Rose Lane means much to me as I have a unit in a street called Rose Lane in Melbourne!

So, as you can see, my ancestry is dotted around St Michael's Cathedral and history holds many interesting facts for me, perhaps my association with Together 'was meant to be'. Leonie Donovan



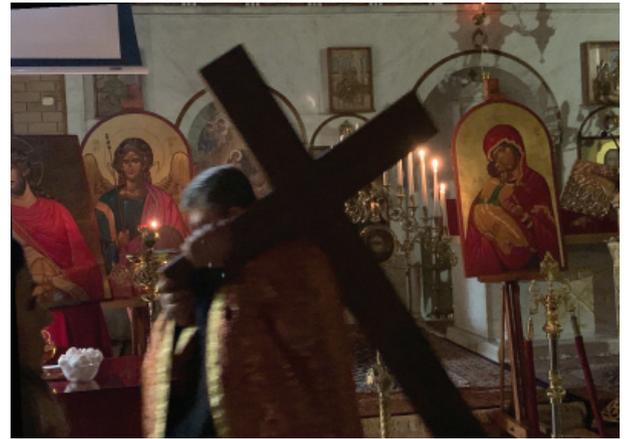
THE FIRST MELKITE CHURCH IN WATERLOO

YOUTH GROUP ACTIVITIES

Since last year's relative normalcy, many of us had erroneously assumed that the worst of the COVID-19 situation was behind us, here in Australia. Expectedly, it was immensely disappointing and disheartening for me to hear the news a few weeks back that we would be entering another lockdown, especially because I knew the primary ramifications for me would mean ceasing activities I love so very much. Other than the commencement of remote learning and major adjustments to my school, family and social life, I was most upset by the fact my regular volunteering with St. Michael's Meals, which I consider to be the highlight of my week and something I look forward to with great enthusiasm each Wednesday, would stop, along with my attendance at the Sunday Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral. When I was approached to contribute this article for 'Together', my initial reaction was to be perplexed. I was deliberating and started to devise some potential topic ideas but quickly decided that the best input I could make would be to reflect over the

activities of the Youth Group and youth involvement with St. Michael's Meals that occurred from the last publication until this current lockdown. For many months, we were privileged to hold our monthly meetings which start with an English Liturgy and feature a spiritual lecture provided by Abouna Gerges Al Butros. One of the most memorable for me was the discussion on the historicity and accuracy of the Bible, an often-contested debate among religious and secular scholars. We examined the reliability of the Bible through the Bibliographic Test, Internal Test and External Test and the facts raised provided many valuable insights. As always, the questions posed by the youth after the lecture were intellectually provoking and welcomed.

In late January, the Youth Leaders arranged a special day at the beach near Dolls Point where we had various activities and a barbeque. In addition to our own activities, the Youth Group was well-represented and attended Julie Maakrun's Liturgy for Social Justice and also a meeting of all the Melkite Parish Youth Groups at St. John the Beloved Church in Greenacre. At the latter event, we were fortunate to experience an



ABOUNA GERGES AL BUTROS CARRIES A WOODEN CROSS IN A PROCESSION THROUGH ST MICHAEL'S CATHEDRAL FOR THE HOLY THURSDAY LITURGY.

insightful sermon by Rev. Fr. Gerges that dealt with the issue of Christ's mission being incomplete and that it was in our hands, as his followers and people, to continue that mission and assist in completing it. The discussion tied very well into our mission at St. Michael's Meals as the social concerns of homelessness and poverty were brought to our attention and we were encouraged to act upon them. Potentially the biggest highpoint of the Youth Group was the 'Seven Churches Visitation' on Holy Thursday. We began with the Melkite Liturgy at St. Michael's before congregating outside and moving to St. Maroun's Maronite Cathedral, St. Joseph's Maronite Church, St. John the Beloved Melkite Church, St. Rita's Melkite Church, St. Charbel's Maronite Church and finally,

Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church. At each stop, we gathered and a member would recite a Bible passage. Then, we would all separate and dedicate a prayer, before tying a knot in a white piece of string. By the end of the night, that string was a complete rope and tied around our hand for symbolic reasons (such as the 7 Stations of the Cross and 7 Sacraments of our Catholic faith). This was the most spiritually moving activity and was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended, leaving a strong imprint in our minds for the rest of the year. We all hope that the lockdown and restrictions will end soon, so that we can resume our activities and share many precious memories with one another.

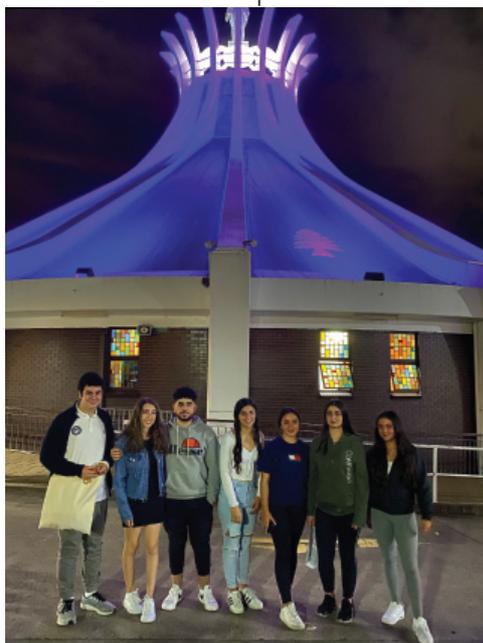
Jack Bettar



YOUTH GROUP GATHERS IN COMMUNAL PRAYER AT ST MAROUN'S MARONITE CATHEDRAL FOR THE HOLY THURSDAY VISITATION.



YOUTH GROUP AND YOUTH LEADERS STANDING OUTSIDE ST CHARBEL'S MARONITE CHURCH FOR THE HOLY THURSDAY VISITATION.



YOUTH GROUP OUTSIDE LADY OF LEBANON MARONITE CO-CATHEDRAL FOR THE HOLY THURSDAY VISITATION.

BITING THE BULLET

After a lot of hesitation, mainly the result of the fear instilled in me by the media, I decided to be vaccinated and had my first injection on Monday the 21st of June and the second on the 27th of July. I heard so much about the preference of the Pfizer vaccine and the dangers of the AstraZeneca one: pain, swelling, fever, headache and most seriously the possibility of blood clots. However, what are the chances of suffering the worst, particularly in my age group? Almost nil, so I decided to have it, and the discomfort was negligible, just some fatigue in the first day, the second day I was fine. In fact,

I had worse reaction to the ordinary flu vaccine.

It is our duty to be vaccinated, yet only about 50 percent of NSW population has received at least the first jab. As a result, we live in fear, wearing masks, obsessed with social distancing, and some refusing to shake hands and touching elbows instead. The government is also worried that an outbreak may get out of control, requiring hospitalisation on a large scale and resulting in many deaths. Therefore, they impose a lockdown. As in the first lockdown, people reacted by panic buying of everything they can

carry. Yet we were assured shops will be open every day of the week and that we are allowed to leave home at any time to buy essential goods that we need. Perhaps we should be more considerate towards the others while filling our trolleys with unnecessary items. Better still, perhaps we should seriously think about getting vaccinated. With a greater proportion of the population getting the jab, there would be no need for wearing masks, keeping our distance, greeting each other with the elbows, or even the lockdown and the panic buying.

Naguib Kanawati

THE PANDEMIC AND THE EXPLOSION

I come from a small Mediterranean country named Lebanon. I work as a veterinary doctor in a clinic in the suburbs of Beirut.

As COVID surged worldwide, we (the residents) became terrified, and we urged the government to impose a total lockdown. We had zero cases back then. Our dormant politicians kept the airport wide open to everyone coming back to Lebanon, while we were confined in our homes.

Day by day, local cases started to show up, yet people were very cautious. You had a headache? Head to the first hospital for testing. You had a dry cough? Head to the nearest lab for testing. You broke your leg? It might be COVID... We used to gather on our balconies every Sunday night, at 8 sharp to applaud the medical team for fighting the pandemic. We had around twenty daily cases at that point.

I used to enjoy driving to work at that time, no traffic, everything was closed, supermarkets were empty, the drive-through at McDonalds was deserted. I used to feel superior when I passed checkpoints showing the officers my syndicate card. I was free to roam the empty streets of the capital, loud music, and my KitKat McFlurry with extra caramel next to me... At that

point I started questioning myself, how can taxi drivers survive? How can retail employees survive? Online shopping? We are suffering from an economic crisis here and inflation. How are other people managing to survive? I began to have anxiety attacks. I am getting special treatment and free stuff wherever I show up wearing my scrubs, but there are people struggling to provide their families with the necessities.

August 4 came, a huge blast shocked the country and our neighbours as well. I stayed till the early morning hours in the clinic trying to help people with their injuries. I remember making 22 small operations that night. I told my team that we are here to save lives, no matter whether human lives or animals! We were doing this for free. I was very scared to catch the virus, yet I barely had time to take precautions and ask people to put their masks on. People were in shock as a result of the blast. We were not ok, and we are still not ok...

Cases surged again after that date; people were angry because the government stored explosives in the centre of the city. How can we obey their lockdown and safety measures? Our government killed us in one of

the biggest non-nuclear explosions ever, how can we care for our lives and health? Poor people became poorer, the middle class became poor, and the richest left the country. I had mixed feelings about my country. I cannot blame poor people for not respecting the measures, yet I cannot blame our government for imposing stricter measures. That's where I had anxiety attacks, insomnia, and severe stress.

Long story short, the pandemic showed us that we are all equal when it comes to death, yet we are not equal in how we can afford to protect ourselves from the virus. You can't be in your mansion tweeting that you can feel for other people while others are struggling to find bread for their children. You can't boast about getting a new iPhone while some old people are rationing food portions while they have zero income.

This pandemic should have taught us that a small viral particle could eliminate our race if we keep on acting in a narcissistic way, when we can easily combine our power and energy to allow everyone in this world to live in dignity, happiness, and safety.

Jean Chalhoub

Doctor of Veterinary Medicine
Beirut, Lebanon

A MESSAGE FROM FR PHILIP DIMITRELLOS, GREECE

I believe the lockdown did not only affect but also shattered our false spiritual expectations. The lockdown was a test that brought to the surface the lack of faith and finally showed that fear and insecurity prevailed in a lukewarm faith in God. It was a spiritual

test that, almost, proved that we are all carriers of the "disease" of doubt and lack of love for God and fellow human beings...

Fr Philip Dimitrellos
Priest at St Panteleimon
Kiato, Greece

Spiritual Strength

Life can't always be a song
You have to have trouble
to make you strong.
So, whenever you are troubled
and everything goes wrong
It is just God working in you
to make your spirit strong

EPIPHANY ABOUT HARD TIMES AND HAPPINESS

I had an epiphany about hard times and happiness.

I was driving to work one morning, reflecting while I listened to someone dear to me over the phone. She was flat. She sounded down. It had been a long road of sadness, frustration and disappointment. It had not been days or weeks or even months. It had been years. And my inner reflections while I listened taunted me with similar thoughts. My challenges and adversities had been ongoing too. She implored me as she implored the universe, "When would it end and happiness begin?"

It was in that moment that I understood. This is the mistake we fall into all too often. Fairy tales and films promise an end. Narrative structures suggest that we are in one state, (not an unhappy

one) and then something happens that is unplanned, we labour through it and if we hold on long enough and get through it all, everything will be okay, eventually.

But this is not the way it goes.

There is no end to challenge, adversity and tragedy. But there is no end to happiness either. They travel with us simultaneously and it is within us to determine whether we find opportunities for happiness to take hold. Happiness may be captured in an Olympic victory after a long, gruelling road to glory. Most of us will never be Olympians or close to it. And yet, the pure joy of sunshine on your face is as deep and authentic. Its feeling also lasts about the same time.

The point is, if we keep waiting for the tough times to be over and the

happiness to begin, we have missed the point, the opportunities and most importantly, we diminish our resilience.

And this is what I remind myself when anxiety taps on my window. All those who have known unexpected grief, become fearful when things are going well. They fear what is waiting around the corner. They try to anticipate the direction from which the dark cloud will emerge. But we cannot live like this. We have to remember that life is not all bad or all good. We just have to acknowledge and be grateful for the good that is in our lives daily. This is how we honour our blessings. And we just have to remember that when the challenges come, we have the strength to face them.

Isn't this what living lovingly achieves?

Zena Dabaja

Principal, Birrong Girls High

ST MICHAEL'S MEALS ACTIVITIES

Thank You

On 16 December 2020 St Michael's Meals had a Christmas Party on the Streets for the Homeless. We started in Martin Place at 6pm and then went to Pitt St under Central Station at 7pm. We sang Christmas Carols and distributed hampers to all the homeless and under privileged who were there.

We wish to sincerely thank the students and staff of St Pius X College Chatswood who donated 120 Christmas Hampers that were distributed on that night.

Norma Ghattas



LEFT: DONATIONS FROM ST PIUS COLLEGE, CHATSWOOD.



RIGHT: THE STUDENTS WITH NORMA.

An outing of the Friendship Group to the Tennis Club

A very memorable outing this year for the friendship group was to the Tennis Club (better known to us as the "Greek Club") in Rockdale, in early June. Many came by van, very capably chauffeured by Abouna. On arrival, we discovered a pop-up shop had been set up in a private room with shoes and handbags on display. What Middle Eastern lady does not like shopping? Lunch orders were taken and soon vast platters of food appeared. Afterwards, a very animated game of bingo was played, and a raffle drawn, interspersed with cries of "it's rigged!" much to everyone's amusement. Elham sang and Gaston snapped away on his camera. A good time was shared by all.

In the midst of lockdown, we look back on that time, wistfully, as if it were another era. Many thanks to Abouna, Roda and all the organisers of this event.

These gatherings, usually held at St Michael's on the first Friday of the month with a mass and a luncheon, are a highlight of the church's social calendar. We never plan the menu and it always ends up being a feast. A great deal of fun, laughter and friendship to be had by all!

Jane Karame



OUTING AT THE TENNIS CLUB

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

A heart to heart chat with Marie Mitri.

- Could you please introduce yourself to our readers and tell us about your background?

My name is Marie Abu Shehadeh Mitri, the descendant of a well-established Lebanese family, with strong commitment to the church, both religiously and socially. I immigrated to Australia at the beginning of 1970 and pray God to bless this beautiful country and protect it from any harm.

- Tell us about your contribution and the role you played in the St John's Ladies Fraternity and in the Melkite church in general.

Before my involvement with the Fraternity of the Myrrh-Bearers of St John's church, I was devoted to serving St Elias' church for a long time, where I was one of the first dedicated members. Following my affiliation to St John the Beloved, I was entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the church and maintaining the altar, with all the associated responsibilities of planning, organising, sewing, etc. Due to my multiple obligations, I had to withdraw from the Fraternity of the Myrrh-Bearers.

- How did you become involved with St Michael's Meals and why?

I learnt from Abouna Gerges Al Butros, may God grant him long life and good health, about the charitable work of St Michael's Meals, I was informed about their activities in feeding the needy on a regular basis. I was very impressed with such initiative and expressed my wish to contribute. This seemed the least I could do for the homeless, the hungry and the poor. I believe that this is our duty as Christians, according to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, Glory be to Him.

- As someone so committed to the church and to helping others, what advice would you like to give to St Michael's Meals to improve its services and increase volunteers?

I have no specific advice to offer to such an active group, but I hope that the members will remain as committed and continue to move forward in this most worthwhile social initiative. I also pray that the Lord blesses all the volunteers in their charitable work.

- In these difficult and challenging times of lockdown, how do you keep busy and what are your hobbies?

For me, the lockdown due to the pandemic is not a real problem, for a home is like a factory where work never ends. When weather permits, I devote some time to working in the garden, looking after my roses. I also spend time reading the Holy Scriptures and the Lives of Saints.

- Any final advice you would like to convey to our community?

My advice is not to be afraid, or to allow the past to hinder you in any way. Put your trust in God and rely on Him in all that you do. I ask the Lord to grant you the best of health in addition to His abundant blessings. As you love the homeless, also love each other. I pray God to bless you and help you in your mission.



A conversation with Helen Verona Pidgeon Ch, Santa Maria de Las Condes, Santiago Chile.

- How did you celebrate mass during lockdown?

Given that the quota of people allowed to attend mass inside the church is severely limited by government restrictions, and in spite of there being space for many more to attend with safe social distancing, a group of us decided we would participate in mass from the footpath. Since this is public domain, the only limitation which applies is social distancing, and not the peculiar regulations the government may, at any time, invent. (At one stage there was a quota of 5 in a building which can seat 400!)

Our priest, Father Nicholas, was delighted with the initiative and leaves the three double doors wide open. He puts a loudspeaker right in the middle of the open space in front of the church. Then he and the deacons bring the host out to the fence and we receive holy communion through the railings of the fence.

Helen is formerly from Armidale NSW and has been a resident of Santiago since 1973.



PRAYING IN THE STREETS IN SANTIAGO, CHILE

KITCHEN CORNER

Norma Ghattas

About 5 years ago my eldest grandson asked me how they will know how to cook the food I make for them after I go to heaven. We had a small discussion and I told him there are a lot of recipes on the internet. He replied but I want your recipes, so we decided to write a cookbook and with his and my daughter's help I produced a cookbook for my family with their favourite recipes.

There are many good cooks in our community and we sample their food over and over again each week when they cook for our homeless run, but everyone cooks a little bit differently. This is my recipe for Potato Pie.



Potato Pie

Ingredients:

- 1 Basic Mince Recipe
- 6 large potatoes
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup bread crumbs
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon

Basic Mince Filling

Ingredients:

- 250g lamb or beef mince
- 1 small onion chopped
- Handful of pine nuts
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine (you may also use cooking oil)
- Sprinkle salt and pepper to taste

Method for the Potato Pie:

- Wash and peel potatoes and cut into squares. Place in a saucepan and boil until cooked. Strain water and mash, allow to cool.
- Add 2 eggs salt, pepper and bread crumbs and mix until all combined.
- Butter a baking dish and spread half of the potato mixture into baking dish, spread mince filling on top and spread the remaining potato mixture over the top and smooth out. Make a diamond pattern on the top, sprinkle another handful of bread crumbs over top with a further 2 tablespoons of butter and bake in moderate oven at 180 degrees for 1 hour.
- Remove from oven and allow to cool for 10 minutes then cut into squares and serve with salad of your choice.

Method for the Basic Mince Filling:

- Melt butter in a frying pan, add onions and cook until soft. Add mince, salt, pepper and pine nuts and cook until brown.



GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

I love Middle Eastern Culture

After my husband and I met and I finally accepted his proposal of marriage, I decided that I would definitely have to learn Arabic. This was because all his friends were Lebanese and he was far more comfortable with his first language. Plus, I knew people were talking about me and I wanted to know what they were saying! It ended up being a good decision, both the marriage and the language learning! Whenever we had visitors they could speak Arabic comfortably, I could get the gist of the conversation, didn't feel bored or excluded, and all was well. Languages are my forte. But I had never encountered a language as challenging and as complex as Arabic. Forty-three years later and I am still learning!

Okay, that's the language side. What about the culture? Formal visits, a ritual of serving different items in a set order. Drinks, then fruit, coffee, then sweet. At the time I struggled to follow all the protocols. What's the phrase you say when you're at someone's house and put the empty coffee cup on the table? "Hamdilla al salame" when someone returns from Lebanon. The house must be spotless for visitors. How to do this when you're teaching full-time and have small children? Help! Luckily my husband did.

That was then, this is now. Our children don't bother with those formalities. They just drop in, in the Aussie way and in the way practised all over the Middle East. Much more comfortable for all concerned!

Still, I'm glad I had that rigorous training.

I do love Middle Eastern culture!

Jane Karame

SPIRITUAL CORNER

THROUGH HIM

My heart was made with love, and to love.
Sometimes, My heart hurts.
It burns and it aches.
But don't ever forget, My heart has faith.
Through Him, My heart is one that beats.
With patience, comes peace.
It is a heart that heals.
Do not pressure what needs time.
Do not overwork what needs rest.
Your heart isn't supposed to hurt when it beats.
Let it run at its own pace.
Distance it when it needs some space.
Allow it to grow.
Allow it to have hope.
You must. Never. Forget. That.
Hold onto your heart.
Hold onto it tight.
Learn from Him - the one who will never let you go.
Your Heart is a piece of His.
My dear, it is beautiful.
Love it and listen to it.
Trust me, you won't regret it. Jamie Kanawati

God's love inspired the author to write this at midnight. This poem reminds us to put our trust in the Lord because we know He is there and will lift us up.

God is everywhere

He is the rain after a long drought
He is the warmth of the sun on a cold winter's day
He is the bird singing his morning song
He is the first sip of the morning coffee
He is the gentle wind blowing in the trees
He is the waves lapping on the seashore
He is the scent on the sea spray
He is within you. He is within me.

Ashley Al Butros



A LEAP OF FAITH

I grew up in Armidale in northern NSW. My mother was Presbyterian and my father, Church of England. The local Presbyterian minister, once I was born, annoyed my mother by saying to her, when she discussed my baptism with him, "But yours is a divided marriage!" Mum was most incensed by this, and decided that no baptism would take place.

So, when my future husband and I made an appointment with the late Abouna Haddad to arrange our wedding, there was a problem: no baptism certificate. After much to-ing and fro-ing, it was decided that Abouna Haddad would baptise me 2 days before our

wedding. I had to go to confession but my husband avoided it. Our wedding was mostly in Arabic; I think my grandmother would have turned in her grave if she knew I was marrying a Catholic. But as my aunt pointed out, there was a big difference between a Roman Catholic from Ireland and a Melkite Catholic from Lebanon. So, all was well.

My husband and I were not great churchgoers and one of the priests remarked that he wouldn't hold his breath waiting for us to come to church. Ironically, he completely left the church himself not long afterwards. When we did attend church, it always

felt completely foreign to me. I couldn't understand the formal Arabic and struggled to understand the rituals. I was always scared of making some terrible mistake.

I felt as if I gained true understanding and acceptance in the church after my husband had passed away. The pilgrimages I went on which were organised through St Michael's and Harvest were a wonderful introduction to the loving parishioners of St Michael's.

How blessed we are to have each other to lean on in difficult times such as now. Jane Karame

CONGRATULATIONS

Julie Maakrun's role in Education is well known to many of us. She was the first Principal of the Holy Saviour School at Greenacre before moving to The University of Notre Dame, where she now holds the position of Senior Lecturer. Julie has received many University awards and is the author of a number of scholarly works. Recently Julie completed her doctorate obtaining her

PhD in the area of the development of intercultural competence in pre service teachers, through their involvement in international immersion programs.

On behalf of the Editorial Board of Together and the whole community of St Michael's, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Julie Maakrun. We are all so proud of your achievement.

Well done Dr Julie!

We care about your opinion and appreciate your feedback. Please email your comments and suggestions to Roda at the following address:
roda.kanawati@gmail.com



IN LOVING MEMORY...

Forever in our hearts – on their fortieth memorial

Bassam Haddad



Bassam was a devout Catholic who loved to serve the church and instilled the importance of God and religion in his home. Bassam loved people and made many friends. He was kind and generous and spent many years of his life in the church. If Bassam was not praying, he was serving during mass, or providing some type of manual labour, whether it be cleaning, repairs to the church or hall, driving clergymen around, rallying donations, preparing for barbecues or organising fund raising parties. He would seek out people in the community who he knew could afford to donate and pleaded with them passionately. He knocked on every neighbour's door and asked all his relatives and friends to pitch in and help the church. No task was too hard and nothing seemed impossible. He considered the church was his first home and family and he was prepared to do whatever was required and if he could not do it, he made sure he found someone who could.

May he Rest in Peace.

Rafik Bahari



For our father, Rafik Bahari, St Michael's Church instilled passion, boundless energy, and ignited strength to overcome the most daunting obstacles in his life. It was about dedication, love and faith that became his own personal cause. Through a shared spirit of community, faith, commitment, and hard work, St Michael's church was a lifelong passion. Lifelong friendships were created that became family. The church gave him a deep sense of belonging, through his community & committee work, fundraising events, choir practice filled with laughter and support for his spiritual leaders.

St Michael's Church gave our dad a place to continue his spiritual growth, faith and share traditions with his children and grandchildren. He was a proud Melkite and stood strong in his beliefs and love for the church. St Michael's was his second home. He had deep gratitude for the church, its people, and the Eparch. St Michael's Church was the one constant in his life, other than his wife.

The church bestowed him with the highest honour, the Cross of Jerusalem which he humbly accepted and continued his commitment and love for the church in a quiet manner, building the parish. St Michael's Church meant many things to him. It was a pillar that shaped all aspects of his life. Thank you, St Michael's Cathedral and the loving community that surround it.

Cathy, Marianne, Michael, and Joe

Peter Giokas



Peter Giokas was involved for several years with St Michael's Meals, supporting the weekly Food Run. He always believed that everyone should be able to afford the essential things in life, and for that he wanted to help those less fortunate, who have not been given the same opportunities as others. He felt that giving to those in need warmed his heart with a sense of fulfillment. Each week Peter and his wife Angela looked forward to cooking food and biscuits, then waited patiently for Roda to arrive and collect what they had prepared. Peter believed in reaching out to those in need by providing them with food with the hope of putting a smile on the faces of those who did not experience much joy in their lives. His wish was to make it a little lighter for them by at least not worrying about the food which otherwise they did not have.

The Giokas Family

A Prayer for our family

Lord, I pray that you will be with us, that you will be seated with us at our table, stand beside us as we do our work, walk with us in the coolness of the evenings, and speak with us in the first light of the morning. Mend and blend our hearts until we are a strong unit that does not fear the present, the past or the future. Go with us, Lord, and live with us. Amen

A rainbow of hope

The rainbow is God's promise
of hope for you and me
And though the clouds hang heavy
and the sun we cannot see
We know above the dark clouds
that fill the stormy sky
Hope's rainbow will come shining through
when the clouds have drifted by.

You're never alone

There's nothing we need know
If we have faith wherever we go
God will be there to help us bear
Our disappointments, pain and care
For He is our Shepherd, our Father, our Guide
You're never alone with the Lord at your side



MOTHER TERESA AND THE ELDERLY

The amazing Mother Teresa has helped people suffering from every disease, including some very serious and dangerous ones: leprosy, AIDS, tuberculosis, cancer, etc. She was once asked what is the worst disease she had ever seen. Her immediate answer was "loneliness is the worst". "We can cure some physical ailments with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness and despair is love".

We are living at a time when the Coronavirus pandemic forced the world into social distancing, and spread division, fear of others, distrust of everyone. We are forced to wear masks even when we are alone in an open place. A friend or a neighbour is now a threat. The media chose to frighten the public; this serves their purpose; it makes people listen more to them. When Tom Hanks got the

coronavirus, it was heavily reported, but the fact that he had hardly any symptoms was not even mentioned. While careful preventative measures were wise to take and certainly needed, this kind of reporting resulted in drastic reaction by governments and individuals, and now led to devastated economies, and we see countries bending backward to return to normal. A more sensible, balanced approach from the beginning would have been more appropriate.

In such circumstances the elderly, the poor and the homeless would be the first to suffer. How would Mother Teresa have reacted to the Coronavirus pandemic? Most probably she would have said that we should not fear each other, and that attention be given to the elderly and the poor. At this difficult time, we can do no better

than listen to Mother Teresa's warning about the danger of loneliness, and about our need for each other. A world without communication, without companionship, without love, without kisses and hugs, without handshakes, as the one we are experiencing today, is a sad world indeed. Humans cannot live like this, for while social distancing may decrease the spread of the virus and the need for hospitalisation, it will come at a very high price of loneliness and deprivation; the main casualty will be the spirit, particularly of the elderly. They cannot be kept in glass cases, deprived of their children, grandchildren and the people they love. If Mother Teresa could manage the risk of washing the wounds of lepers, we can certainly find ways to deal with the Coronavirus.

Naguib Kanawati

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. This special care is also offered to the elderly as well as the youth in the community.

Our Story:

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

The group splits on Wednesday nights at 7.00 pm to feed the homeless at Central Station and Martin Place. Our aim is to build a trusting relationship with our friends, the needy, 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

Our Vision

- Feed the Hungry with God's love.
- Offer the Homeless weekly nutritious meals and genuine friendship.
- Increase our reach by adding locations or increasing the number of days of our meal service.
- Reach out to the elderly, the sick and those with special needs.
- Involve the youth in our activities and prepare them for future leadership.
- 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.
- Extend our meal services to those in homes who are experiencing food insecurity.

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 also created a real affection and camaraderie between the people, who show up every week to serve, and the regular disadvantaged on the streets of Sydney.

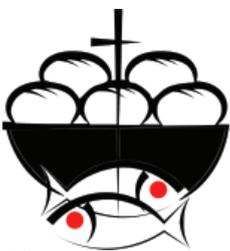
The disadvantaged are not only our brothers and sisters who live on the street but also many of the elderly, who suffer from loneliness, isolation and frequently experience difficulties in communication. Our aim is to establish

regular contact with these senior individuals and lend them a hand whenever needed.

With the youth being the future of our society, their involvement in our activities is essential in preparing them to carry the flag and build a better, happier world for everyone.

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. The righteous will ask: Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?... 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."

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St Michael's Meals Inc, Incorporated Association, INC: 1700314, ABN: 90 281 315 670

Address: Suite 1, 125-127 Canterbury Rd,
Canterbury, NSW 2193.
Mail: St Michael's Meals,
PO Box 4, Canterbury, NSW 2193.
Phone: Norma 0401683948 or Charbel 0405133690
Email: info@stmichaelsmeals.org

Bank Details:
Commonwealth Bank of Australia
Account name:
St Michael's Meals
BSB: 062 158
Account no: 10472614