



Family

By Suzy Caruso

At the beginning of each year in Pittwater Parish, we introduce a theme that we can concentrate upon and explore in the months ahead. In 2019, we focused on the virtue of love, trying to discover the practical possibilities to show the love for God and for one another in our daily lives. Last year, our attention was on prayer and accepting the invitation from God into a relationship with Him that is both personal and communal. This year, in 2021, we will join with Pope Francis and set a year-long focus on the family.

This year dedicated to the family will be inaugurated on the Solemnity of St Joseph on 19 March 2021. It was on this day 25 years ago, 19 March 1996, that I went on my first date with my husband... and my "family" as I knew it, changed. There have been many other times that our family has significantly changed since then. There were the times that we welcomed our three beautiful children into the world and the times that we lost our grandparents.

But family has come to mean so much more to me than Mum, Dad and the kids. It has grown to include our "school family" that began when our children started school, our "parish family" and especially our "Salvatorian family" under whose care our parish is entrusted.

St Paul writes often of all Christians together being one body. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 is a wonderful reflection on this reality. Verse 26 reads: "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it."

My families, in whatever form, are also one body to me. When the children come home from school or work, I never know what to expect. Did things go to plan today? Were they prepared enough for their exam? Did their presentation go well? There's the phone calls of elation when they were elected captain or ministry prefect or the time when I've had the phone call "Mum ... don't freak out, but I'm at the hospital and have cut my leg with a chainsaw". (I freaked out!)

So too, each and every day is different in parish family life too. You just never know what to expect when you pick up the phone or someone walks through the door. As the parish secretary and sacramental coordinator for our parish, I consider myself so blessed and fortunate to be able to share the rejoicing and the suffering with our parish families. How privileged I am that I can share with families their joy as they prepare for their wedding or organise their newborn baby's baptism or work with them as they prepare their children throughout the sacramental program or support them and share their grief as they prepare to farewell a loved one.

This year of family comes at an opportune time for our parish. Throughout the last 12 months we have developed and strengthened our domestic church; especially in our parish

when we were locked down due to COVID-19 for both of the major seasons in the Church - Easter and Christmas. So, as we emerge from this pandemic, this is the perfect time for us to reconnect physically with our extended families.

This year is also a very special year for our Salvatorian family for three different reasons. The founder of the Salvatorians, Fr Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, will be beatified in Rome on 15 May. It is the 140th anniversary of the Salvatorian order's foundation on 8 December and also the 60th anniversary of the Salvatorian order in Australia.

I pray for a wonderful year with your families.