

Some good news amidst the bad

Mary Mother of the Church, Catholic Parish Ivanhoe
John Costa, Friday 22 March 2019



Amidst all the bad news around us, and sometimes as a consequence, new encouraging signs do emerge from time to time. In case it might be of interest may I draw your attention to the attached letter recently sent to our brothers and sisters at neighbouring Elsedeaq Heidelberg Mosque from the Catholic Community of Ivanhoe. In part it says:

" On behalf of the Catholic Community in Ivanhoe may I offer our deepest condolences in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Christchurch New Zealand last Friday. Together with you we mourn the loss of innocent life; share the grief of the family and friends of the victims; and the fear and despair of Islamic communities both here and abroad. None of us must ever be defined by the evil acts of others and I hope that together, as people of faith in the One True God, we can witness to that peace and harmony to which God calls us. We remembered you all, and the wider Islamic Community, in our prayers at Mass on Sunday and we continue to keep you all in our thoughts and prayers at this time. May the All Merciful and Compassionate God bless you all with peace. as-salaam 'alaykum, Fr. Bill Edebohl, Parish Priest."

This letter follows an extraordinary event last Saturday. By sheer coincidence of timing just one day after the horrendous massacres at Christchurch's Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre a group of 26 parishioners from Mary Mother of the Church, Catholic Parish Ivanhoe visited the Islamic Museum of Australia in Melbourne as prearranged some time before. It was originally arranged as part of an experience of fellowship and learning about other faiths with whom we share common heritage.

As a courtesy at the very least following Friday's devastation in Christchurch the Parish phoned in advance and asked if the museum would like to cancel the event? On the contrary the Museum made very clear that they particularly welcomed it at this distressing time. To cut a long story short the engagement turned out to be very powerfully uplifting and mutually supportive for all present.

There were unsurprisingly no other museum visitors that particular day and the museum staff were extremely appreciative of the strong and personal expression of support they were unexpectedly offered by a group of Catholics otherwise unknown to them. In return and apart from recognising areas of similarity in faith and appreciating the richness of Islamic culture over the centuries the Ivanhoe parishioners were touched by the extent to which their gesture of goodwill above simply wanting to visit the museum highlighted our closeness, and that we are all brothers and sisters in faith and goodwill. Sharing a wholesome meal at the museum after the tour provided further cultural opportunity and time to appreciate each others' company, particularly at this deeply difficult time.

Photo: Islamic Museum of Australia