Feast of St Francis 4 Oct 2024
Installation of Fr Martin Tanti as Parish Priest

In January after Fr Martin's appointment had been announced in Greensborough but not yet in our three churches word spread that the parishioners of Greensborough were very unhappy because their assistant priest, who they thought was fantastic, was coming to be parish priest of Hampton, Hampton east and Sandringham. They were furious at losing a much-loved assistant. We however, were happy and consequently, had high expectations.

And indeed, we were not disappointed.

To be a parish priest is difficult enough but to be a parish priest to three parishes and then to make them one again one parish is not an easy task.

It is difficult to believe that until 1926 were all one parish but then the area expanded, new houses were built, new churches and schools were developed and new parishes evolved. Each parish then developed its own culture and its own history. Now we are to be one parish once again and we have a Parish Priest who is compassionate and sensitive and who goes about the task of combining three parishes with care and thought.

Fr Martin, and his inseparable companion, the faithful Monty have quietly (and I was going to say methodically but I do not want to overgild the lily) indeed brought us all together as one people. He has talked, listened, and prayed with us. He is unfailingly polite and never fails to say thank you. He has a deep understanding of the issues we all face in this modern world.

In Archbishops Comensoli's letter of appointment the archbishop says;

"I pray this appointment will bring rich blessings to the people you are called to serve." In the short time you have been here we have indeed been richly blessed.

One parishioner said recently that on her way out of the Mass on the first Sunday Fr Martin was here she said, "Oh I think we have struck gold" and someone behind her said; "we certainly have".

Fr Martin has quickly grasped that which unites us and he has worked on this. He is unfailingly cheerful although sometimes he says if we are not happy, he can always go back to Greensborough they would be happy to have him back but, be assured, that is not going to happen.

He brings Christ to our lives at every level. In the short time he has been here he has gone out of his way to get to know us. He breaks bread with us on Sundays and then he joins us in our homes breaking bread and sharing wine. He visits the schools daily and has a marvelous rapport with the children. To hear him engage with the children at Mass brings joy to all the congregation. He has become a firm favourite at Mercy Fernhill where he says Mass every month and in the other nursing homes in the area. And, importantly, he has counselled many grieving families on the death of a loved one. Funerals are not easy but he goes out of his way to meet and comfort families and ensure the celebration of life is indeed reverent and meaningful.

And his efforts have not just been to the parishioners, visit any number of coffee shops in the parish area and you will find him chatting to people. Members of the flock or not he welcomes them and is interested in their lives and their journeys.

In his appointment letter Archbishops Comensoli also says; “I pray that you yourself will find joy in living out your priestly ministry”.

I think I can safely say that all us of us, those here and those unable to join us tonight, pray that you, Fr Martin, find joy in continuing to guide us, work with us and lead us.

May the Lord shine his light upon you and always hold you in the palm of his hand.

Kristin Allen

4th October 2024