

St. Francis Table Ministry

These parishes incorporate 4 churches, St Francis (West End), St Mary's (South Brisbane), St Ita's (Dutton Park), OLPS (Fairfield) with each individual communities which are vibrant, welcoming, multicultural and fast growing. At the same time there are so many of our vulnerable Elderly living by themselves and families are having a very tough time during this Covid-19 pandemic.

As the Pastoral Coordinator I work in collaboration with the Capuchin Franciscan Friars within the four Churches of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Fairfield, St. Ita's Dutton Park, St. Francis of Assisi, West End and St. Mary's South Brisbane being deeply involved in providing spiritual and pastoral care to the community, helping in the education of the faith through the following Pastoral ministries:

- Sacramental Program (for Children)
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
- Children's Liturgy
- Visitation and give Holy Communion to the sick and homebound and in the Nursing home
- St. Francis Table Ministry to the Elderly and families in need

As Pastoral Coordinator through my weekly visits taking Holy Communion to the sick and home bound, I have seen and felt a great need to provide more assistance and support. This is needed due to the increasing problem of isolation, loneliness, anxiety and depression among our vulnerable seniors living by themselves and also for some families experiencing difficulties in our local community.

St. Francis Table Ministry to the most vulnerable Elderly, the homeless and struggling families especially during this difficult time of Covid -19 Pandemic, has been running since 2015 and fully funded by the parish and donations, with the exception of last year we received a \$5000.00 grant from the Catholic Foundation.

Our Ministry of giving back to make a positive difference, continues to spread love, kindness, care, hope, joy and compassion. It is the heart and centre of what we do to help people lead a happier and healthier live not only physically but most important spiritually.

Since the Pandemic begun in the early year of 2020. We have seen a high rise of those greatly affected emotionally, financially, spiritually, feeling the burden of isolation, fear, loneliness and struggling sick people young and old. Our Team of dedicated volunteers have given their all to be of service to the most vulnerable in our community supporting people who are recovering

from operation, cancer, depression as well as a few international students. A single visit, a little meal to share and a friendly chat/conversation twice a week certainly lifted their spirit, brought hope, courage, strength and great joy.

Throughout the Pandemic to the present we have witnessed so many positive changes in the people's lives whom we have served. The bond of connections as brothers and sisters is constantly growing deeper and deeper; No matter what faith they believed in, truly love and friendships triumph and kindness multiplied among neighbours and beyond.

Among the many positive feedbacks we received were overwhelming. A Lady in her 90's always look forward to see us deliver the meal and she would always give us a little note of thanks and a few dollar donation coupled with her beautiful smile, a flying kiss and a parting word "I Love you so much" This lady is not even a Christian by faith but in one of the thank you card she wrote: *"Thank you so much to all your team of volunteers for looking after us. Thank you for feeding not only our bodies but our souls too."*

Another Man and a woman also in their late 80's shared that because of the pandemic they really felt heavily the burden of isolation, fear, uncertainties and loneliness, that their only option is to end their lives or commit suicide because even their own children and families seems don't care anymore. But when the team of volunteers came to visit them, deliver meals and had a friendly conversation their outlook in life totally changed. It brought them hope and joy knowing someone out there still loves and cares for them.

While others have been there in the neighbourhood for 3 decade or more but they never knew each other and they never cared for each other, but whenever we deliver the meals everyone's head comes out of their door waiting for meals. When the Covid restrictions started easing they also started to come out a few steps out of their door but of course ensuring everyone observed and maintained social distancing we shared little stories of laughter and jokes to cheer up everyone. Little by little the whole community in the Housing village from the ground floor laughing contagiously the people in the second floor were all looking down and shared the laughter too. Now everyone becomes friends and whenever one is not around during meal deliveries they always secured a meal portion for their next door friend. It is an amazing experience to be a part of this team and ministry.

But of course we cannot run this service without the funding received from organization like Catholic Campaign.

Because of the Grant money and little donations we received we're able to provide meals for 150 people every week and basic food supplies for those struggling families and international Students.

This ministry is 100 percent funded through donations and grant and this grant means we can feed more people in the local community and beyond with more nutritious meals every week and be able to provide basic needs for struggling families who have lost jobs, lost their loved ones and those who are

recovering from operation or illness.

During the Lockdowns the team minister through delivery of the meals to their homes. Once lockdown finished the Ministry slowly started to bring them back to the parish hall once a week on an alternate weekly basis for prayer, fun, games, fellowship and a hot meal. They feel this is a safe, secure place for them to make new friends and share in the love of God. For those housebound the ministry and meals are still delivered on those weeks. The volunteers use their own cars and petrol to do these deliveries. The Grant funds are used purely on provision for the meals.

St Francis Table proudly displays their Food Licence and strict Safeguarding and Covid-19 Hospitality Training Standards

Our Hopes and dream is to continue this mission of spreading God's love and compassion to our most vulnerable brothers and sisters.

One goal for 2022 is to be able to hire a bus to bring the housebound along to join in the Ministry in the hall each week. This importance of bringing the lonely and isolated out of their homes, into a safe and fun environment, has a huge impact on them emotionally and physically.

For our Children's Ministry we offer Children's Liturgy each weekend during the mass. We find the time invested into the children has great impact with the families coming closer to God and changing into more loving caring Christ like families. We seek to continue the work started and be able to have more children attend in the coming year.

We have just received news that the Catholic Foundation has approved a Grant of \$12,000.00 to St. Francis Table Ministry to the Elderly and \$200 to the parish Children's Liturgy Program.

Thank you to the many people who give generously of their time, money, donations without the team this ministry would not be having the huge impact it currently has.

A Massive thank you and acknowledgment to the Catholic Foundation for such generous support.