

# Lazarus Centre Chaplaincy Newsletter

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## Farewell Pete!



Recently Pete Burns resigned as a staff member at St Mark's Community Centre feeling the need to follow a calling to seek out further challenges and opportunities. I have known Pete ever since I took up the position as chaplain to the Lazarus Centre Breakfast Program in 2012, first as a participant, then as a volunteer and finally as a staff member.

Pete has been a tireless supporter of the Breakfast Program and its participants. He constantly sought ways to encourage others and saw his work with the breakfast program as far more than handing out food. He worked hard to build a sense of community and was always ready to jump in to quell a disturbance or support a distressed person.

Pete was also a supporter of chaplaincy. We shared many conversations on the problem of homelessness and he could always be trusted to know when a new initiative was underway. He was a great believer in 'what works' programs. He was ready to accept invitations to link with the parish and offered his wisdom in parish seminars and in worship at the St Peter's longest night commemorations. I am thankful to have come to know Pete as colleague and friend and prayerfully wish him well for the future.

Fr Philip Gill

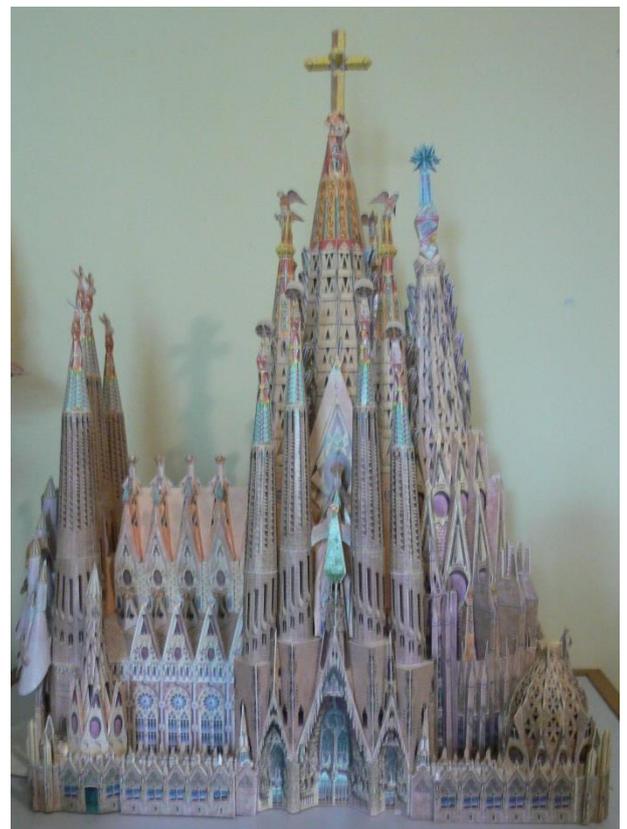
## The Christmas Story: From no room at the inn to inspiration for an architectural masterpiece

We know the Christmas story well: Joseph and Mary must make the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and because they can't find accommodation they settle in a stable. It is here, far from home that Mary gives birth to her son, Jesus. The blessings that have flowed from this birth are innumerable but one of the great symbols of the significance of the life of Jesus is the conception and building of *la Sagrada Familia*, a large church or basilica still under construction in Barcelona in Spain.

The basilica was designed by renown architect Antoni Gaudi and construction was begun in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gaudi knew that his masterpiece would not be completed in his lifetime and he is reported to have said, 'That's alright, my client is in no hurry'. Gaudi died in 1926. It is believed the basilica will be completed in 2026 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death.

The picture at right is my 1/300 scale model of *La Sagrada Familia*. Facing is the Nativity Façade, the only section of the building completed in Gaudi's lifetime.

Fr Philip



# A reinvigorated discussion: Universal Basic Income (UBI)

Is it time to consider a Universal Basic Income (UBI)? A universal income means people are paid money regardless of whether they are working or not. Like most ideas many people have already thought of it. Some have fully embraced it while others see it as bringing about the end of society as we know it. The UBI in its purest form, consists of three components. It is truly universal, that is every adult citizen receives the payment. It is unconditional in that there is no means test and no requirements to seek paid work. It is adequate because it is an amount on which people can live with dignity.

There are several reasons for considering such a program. Technological development means many jobs have already disappeared and many more, and not just menial tasks, will disappear in the future. People are forced to look for work in a shrinking market and suffer the stigma of 'not contributing to society'. The current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fragility of a paid-labour-focused society. Lock-down would have been far easier if people had the confidence that they could live without work. Other perceived positives include more time for creativity, leisure and social interaction.

The very suggestion of a UBI raises questions immediately.

How much is it and who pays for it? Much depends of the levels of payment and how many recipients there are. There are generally considered two main streams of funding for the UBI. One is the saving made by elimination or reduction of welfare payments and the bureaucracy that goes with it. The other is increased taxes. Contributions from industries and services that benefit from the use of robotics and artificial intelligence could be levied to alleviate any shortfall. There could also be other social gains such as reduced crime, increased health and wellbeing, better school attendance and enrolment in higher education.

Won't such a scheme mean that there will be shortages in the labour market? It has been argued that the introduction of a UBI would cause people to drop out of the labour market and therefore reduce productivity and weaken the tax base that is the very means of support for the scheme. There

are serious moral questions around who can be expected to do the jobs 'no one wants to do'.

Won't the UBI drive inflation because people can afford to pay more for housing, food and utilities? This is a common criticism and while small scale studies have shown that there is little or no direct effect on inflation it remains to be seen what the economic effects would be if a UBI was rolled out across an entire national economy.

Some intriguing results came out of a longitudinal study into the wellbeing of children in one US community. During the study, participants who were first nation children became beneficiaries of payments from the profits of a casino. The payments, like a UBI, were ongoing and given without strings but were not substantial enough to live on. Researchers found that over time many recipients showed improvements in health and wellbeing, better school attendance and college enrolment as well as reduced involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour. By the time the children had reached their thirties, research leader Professor Jane Costello of Duke University, found that benefits outstripped costs by three to one. Professor Costello offers an outline of the program which is both moving and thought provoking at <https://academicminute.org/2014/06/jane-costello-duke-university-sharing-the-wealth/>

There is renewed interest in UBI in Australia. A 2016 federal government research paper made the comment that two trends had brought UBI into public focus. One was the effects of the global financial crisis and the other was the possibility that automation would permanently reduce the demand for labour. The report also noted that policy makers were wary of possible disincentives to work and, '...that voters will resent the idea of paying higher taxes to able-bodied citizens who choose not to work'.

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Universal Basic Income is a difficult program to afford – it is also one we cannot afford to ignore.

Fr Philip