

I began this week, perhaps like many of you, trying to make some sense of the horrific events in Orlando, where (yet another) mass shooting this time specifically targeted those people in the gay community. Having spent much of my nursing life working amongst this community I felt this shock intensely. But it is difficult to know how to respond to such a situation, especially because, to our shame, the church has generally been so poor at caring for and including those from the gay community in its communal life. So the risk is that any response is seen as trite, or hypocritical. As well as contacting the 2 main organisations in our area where gay people gather to express our love and prayers, I hope to bring news soon of a memorial event, to which we would invite people from the community.

Many people have asked as to how Kathryn is going in Israel. I had email contact with her this week, and share her greetings below...

*Dear friends at Hawksburn, just a short note to say that all is going well here in Jerusalem, and I'm learning an enormous amount. There are five priests, a smattering of Nuns and a whole lot of school teachers and Principals in the group, and everyone is getting along wonderfully. We've had a service at the Holy Sepulchre (6am before the crowds) visited Bethlehem and the Church of the Nativity, spent some time in the desert and will be off to Galilee next week. Before I arrived we had very little information about what we're doing, but the description 'walking in the steps of Jesus' was a pretty good summary. Days are jam packed, and in addition to the Gospel work we're doing we're learning a lot about the Old Testament from a Jewish perspective as well as how it relates to the Gospels. I have a wonderful view from our terrace at Ecce Homo where I'm staying in the Old City. We're between the second and third Stations on the Way of the Cross so there's a regular stream of singing pilgrims passing by while we do our classroom time here. (Our lecturers are terrific) I do hope that you're all well, and I look forward to seeing you again in a few weeks, All the best, Kathryn.*

The Victorian Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee has just released their report on "Inquiry into end of life choices", commissioned by the Parliament 12 months ago. The Committee received 1037 submissions, 925 from individuals in a private capacity and 112 from organisations. It is an important document which recommends (there are 49 recommendations in total) changes to palliative care services to make them more available to all Victorians, a greater emphasis on the use of advanced care directives, and sweeping changes to the medical treatment and crimes acts, to allow for assisted dying under some strict circumstances. There will no doubt be much debate around this in the coming time.

May Alban, John the Baptist, and all the Saints walk with you this week... Sam