

FAREWELL TO FR FRANK SMITH CSSR

On Sunday, September 16, the parish community of Our Lady Help of Christians Wendouree gathered to say farewell and thank you to the founder of the Wendouree West Exodus Community, Fr Frank Smith CSsR. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Paul Bird CSsR and Fr Frank's family and members of the Redemptorist Order were present as well as his many friends, a number of whom travelled considerable distances to attend.

Fr Frank came to live in Wendouree West in 2004. He quickly made it clear that his focus would be on empowering local community members to identify, use and develop their own particular giftedness. Regular formation and the centrality of prayer and reflection were features of what was offered to the community. Evidence of the success of this approach is that in recent years, as Fr Frank's health deteriorated, the Leadership Group and the various ministry teams within the Exodus Community have continued to operate. The Saturday lunch drop-in, which can often have an attendance in excess of forty local community members, the family, children's, women's and men's camps, the after school homework program, the monthly Eucharist and the visitation program, all have continued despite some substantial operational challenges. Malcolm Burns from the Exodus Leadership group thanked Fr Frank on behalf of the Wendouree West Community.



Fr Frank did not confine his ministry to Wendouree West. He was a much loved member of the OLHC Parish Community, often presiding at Sunday Masses and on other sacramental occasions. His Redemptorist training meant that his homilies were always engaging, informative and challenging. The Chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council, Mario Cordioli, noted the influence of Fr Frank in assisting the PPC to develop into a mature and influential leadership group. "The Council was never allowed to dwell for too long on buildings and budgets but Fr Frank always challenged us to return to our core purpose of the message of Jesus" Mario said.

Fr Frank, for a number of years, was a member of the Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission. Again he was most insistent that the Commission meetings always had substantial components of prayer and formation. Fr Frank also was a key member of the organizing groups for the Social Justice forums that were conducted around the Diocese.

The Parish and the Exodus Community presented Fr Frank with an orthopaedic chair. The chair was presented with the hope that *"you are able to relax in it maybe doing some praying and meditating, reading, perhaps even to have a nap but most important of all to watch your beloved West Coast Eagles win the premiership!! (What a prophetic statement given this was two weeks before the Grand Final)*

The occasion concluded with traditional hospitality provided by the OLHC Parish community.