

MISSION within the CHURCH!

For as long as I can remember I have had an extraordinary interest in facts and figures and names and places. As a boy I could readily recall the batting and bowling averages of Australia's test cricketers. Then as a young priest I would be fascinated in knowing things like who are the cardinals in the Catholic Church.

A particular interest that I have at the moment is the place of religion within the wider world. This is where *Doctor Google* is very helpful. The current world figures reveal that about 31% of the population in the world could be called *Christian* of which 19% would be Catholics. The next major religion would be *Islam* it is growing and is now 24% of the world's population. Then 31% of people would belong to the *Buddhists, Hindus* and other religions. This then would leave 16% of the world's population who would openly profess to having no religion.

By far the world's population of about 7.5 billion people would not at all connect themselves with the Christian faith. Historically this would not be a new reality. Pope Francis (and his recent predecessors) have made it a priority in their ministry to build bridges of dialogue with people of all and no religion. This isn't an easy mission yet it's essential in making real the challenging words of Jesus of Nazareth; "*I have come to be the light to the WORLD.*" (John 8 verse 12) *Fr Martin R Maunsell*