

CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT



OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY

News around the Diocese

No. 72 March 2024



Catholic Diocese of Ballarat

Community
Remember *Revitalise*
Hope

150 years



*Be joyful in hope, patient in
affliction, faithful in prayer*

Romans 12:12

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OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY (ODC)

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The next ODC will be in July 2024.

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Songs of our Diocese

In the course of 2023, I met with a group of people from around the diocese to consider how we might mark our diocese's 150th anniversary. One suggestion was to have an anniversary song. Musicians responded enthusiastically. So much so that we now have three anniversary songs.

While the original thought was to have one song, we realised that one song could not express all that we wanted to express about the anniversary. Three songs can convey more about the life of our diocese. Having several songs for the anniversary also reflects the fact that, in a sense, there are many songs that make up the life of our diocesan community. We could say that we have as many songs as there are people in the diocese. Each person's life is like their song. Each of us has a story and, as our story unfolds, it is as though we are contributing our voice to the chorus of voices that make up our diocese of Ballarat.

Some of our songs will be songs of success as we rejoice in our personal achievements and the achievements of our community. Some of our songs will be songs of sadness as we mourn the losses that bring sorrow to our lives. All together, our songs express the joys and sorrows that colour our personal lives and the lives of our many local communities.

The three songs for our 150th anniversary reflect some important aspects of the life of our diocese.

One of the songs is entitled "Together, we build our place." The words were composed by Roger Hillman in close collaboration with Sr Anne McMillan, a Sister of Mercy who gave many years of service to our diocese. Roger set the words to music.

The song highlights ways in which we can work together to build a home that we can call "our place". The chorus speaks of our being called to be the hands of Christ as we build such a home.

***We are called to be your hands, we are called to be your feet,
called to reach out with your love to everyone we meet,
be strength to all the broken, light to all who seek your face,
to walk your ways, to live each day. Together, we build our place.***

The first verse refers to the links between us as we share our gifts.

***Each of us has come to share our story,
to share our gifts, our wisdom, faith and love,
to celebrate the work we do together,
linked with others journeying in faith.***

Another of our anniversary songs was composed by Fr Andrew Hayes, drawing images from the Mallee district of our diocese.

***There's rain in the Mallee.
It's got to be told.
When it's raining in the Mallee,
it's a time to behold.***

A dry season can make the country seem lifeless, but rain brings new shoots of grain, new life.



**Golden Spirit grain
gives life anew again,
to die, to live, to reign,
to live is our refrain.**

The third of our anniversary songs, by Gerry Vytilingam, echoes phrases from our diocesan vision statement about our being “a community of communities, from the Murray to the sea” and our call to reach out “in joyful and humble service”.

**From the Murray to the sea,
we hear the gospel call us,
gathered to listen to the Spirit,
moving our hearts to serve.**

**We reach out in humble service,
sharing what we have with one another,
humble service, reaching out as sisters and as brothers.**

As we mark the 150th anniversary, we can look back on the years that have passed, we can take stock of where we are now, and we can look ahead to where we would like to be. The song touches on the past, the present and the future, and links these with Jesus who is a constant presence with us as the years go by.

**We remember the past,
we live in the present,
we look to a brighter future.**

**We trust in Jesus who's the same
yesterday, today and forever.**

Each of these songs reflects aspects of our life as a diocesan community. May the songs enrich our celebrations throughout this anniversary year.

I am grateful for the contribution that each person makes to our diocese. Each one's life is like a song, sometimes sad, sometimes glad. Our lives are joined in the faith that we share. Our lives together are the songs of our diocese.

+ Paul Bird

Bishop Paul Bird CSSR



EXCITING YEAR AHEAD

More than 18,000 students and 2,200 teachers and staff returned to fifty-two Catholic primary schools and eleven secondary colleges across the Diocese of Ballarat, from Mildura in the north, Portland in the south, and west to Edenhope and Nhill, at the end of January. “On behalf of Catholic education in the Diocese, I extend a warm welcome to all students, staff, and families, particularly those joining our school communities for the first time,” Executive Director of Catholic Education, Tom Sexton said. “We look forward to an exciting and productive year ahead, where every student has opportunities to flourish fully in their learning in schools that are safe, caring, committed to excellence and live out the Catholic faith, in partnership with families.”



Four new Principals have taken up positions in the Diocese this year. Welcome and best wishes to Clare Scanlon (St Mary's Primary School, Clarkes Hill), Tegan McDonald (St Patrick's Primary School, Koroit), Louise Chesterfield (Saints Michael & John's Primary School, Horsham) and Bettina Bird (St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Stawell).

In an important initiative, Catholic Education Ballarat has secured the services of internationally renowned Finnish educator Professor Pasi Sahlberg, to work with its system of schools. Professor Sahlberg is a former Director-General of the high-performing Finland education system. He has advised schools and education system leaders around the world and been a visiting Professor of Practice at Harvard University. Professor Sahlberg will work with Catholic Education Ballarat schools, leadership and Board to drive the development of a new DOBCEL strategic plan. He will be assisted by another prominent education leader Dave Runge, CEO of Future Schools Australia.

Gerard Delaney (DOBCEL Manager Communications and Marketing)

Laudato si'

The Australian Catholic Bishops encourage each Catholic parish, diocese, eparchy, educational institution and organisation to join the Laudato Si' Action Platform by 2024 and develop a Laudato Si' Action Plan.

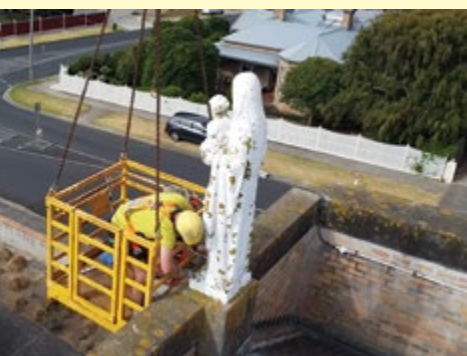
In his encyclical Laudato Si', Pope Francis reminds us that everything is connected. Our relationship with nature is not separate from our relationship with God and others. This concept of integral ecology encourages us to care for the Earth and each other. It calls us to action.

An offering from Caritas Australia's Catholic Earthcare program, the Australian Guide to Laudato Si' Action Planning outlines a 4-step cycle of self-assessment, reflection, planning and action that complements the global Laudato Si' Action Platform. It is designed to help you initiate practical, meaningful change within your parish, school, household or organisation as you plan and take action to live Laudato Si'.

To learn more go to <https://www.caritas.org.au/catholic-earthcare/>

The Diocesan Social Justice Commission, in collaboration with Caritas (Diocese of Ballarat), Earthcare Ballarat and the Pastoral Ministry Office, provides monthly Laudato Si banners for use on bulletins, newsletters and correspondence to all communities. The banners include a quote taken directly from the encyclical with the reference number provided for parishioners to look up and read more deeply about that area. All are encouraged to promote the Pope's message by using these banners as they are designed to help reflect upon and respond to the encyclical and foster faith and action.

Also provided is an idea of action/thought to encourage people to change the world!



MARY IS BEING MOVED

After thirty five years watching over Warrnambool, the statue of Mary holding an infant Jesus has been brought down from her position on top of the Rice Campus in preparation for her move to her new home at Emmanuel College Warrnambool's new Edmund Rice Centre.

Now standing at ground level we are getting close ups of the elegant statue of mother and child. A close inspection reveals that other than a good clean, restoration work will only be required for Mary's hand.

Originally set in place during the Marian Year (1987-1988), meaning the Year of Mary, the project was initiated by Principal of then CBC Warrnambool, Br John Wright. In among teaching the school community about the values Mary teaches us, he invited students to raise money for the purchase of the statue. Some may recall that in the lead up to the statue's arrival, Br Wright created excitement by taking out a series of ads in the Warrnambool Standard with intriguing headings that read simply, "It is coming!"

Arriving in Warrnambool by train, the statue was greeted at the railway station by the entire student body and staff, festooned with streamers. The College then processed the statue to St Joseph's Church to be blessed, before walking it to the College grounds.





Acknowledging 150 Years

As we gathered for Mass recently at St Brendan's Cororooke with Fr Michael O'Toole, we began our Mass by acknowledging the 150 years of the Ballarat Diocese. Sr Gerri Boylan, representing the Good Samaritan Sisters who have had a strong presence in the Diocese and especially here at Coragulac, carried the candle to the front of the Church. Maureen Finn, Parish Moderator, then lit the candle as the congregation read the Anniversary Prayer.

The candle will be lit each week in both of the parish churches of St Brendan's and St Joseph's Pirron Yallock as a reminder of the rich history of our diocese, and in memory of those who have gone before us whose faith and dedication built this diocese. We remember too that the Ballarat Diocese connects us all as we move into the future with faith in Jesus Christ.

Liz McGuane



In a special presentation at the end of the Mass, Sr Veronica Lawson rsm presented Mercy Values posters to our House Leaders who will distribute them to each Teacher Advisor so they are displayed in each classroom in our school.

This year we aim to be people who espouse Mercy values, and we look forward to what 2024 brings.

We are grateful for the talents of our school choir who contribute so beautifully to our Masses, as well as all those who read or participate in processions.

Sarah Boswell - Leader of Marketing & Development

Living Mercy

Friday, February 23, 2024 saw the official opening of our school year at Damascus College Ballarat with Mass celebrated by Fr Justin Driscoll.

We were pleased to be able to welcome guests including members of our parent body, board members and Sisters of Mercy who joined us for this occasion. During Mass we focused on the theme of 'Living Mercy'.

Sharon Lehtonen, Assistant Principal - Catholic School Culture wrote in the College newsletter: The theme "Living Mercy" calls us to action. Insights of what this can mean to us in our daily lives were shared through Fr Justin's homily and other reflections throughout the Mass.

"Living Mercy" calls us to be compassionate people who not only see a need but do something about it. It calls us to seek justice, not only for ourselves but for all of God's people, to "love our neighbour" and care for all creations as God calls us to do.

The call to live the Mercy values is a challenge which requires us to show courage: being the people we need to be is not always easy.



INTERFAITH



In celebration of **World Interfaith Harmony Week** (February 1-7), the Ballarat Interfaith Network hosted a Flag Raising Event on Wednesday, February 1, 2024 to celebrate religious and spiritual diversity across the city. Harmony Week, an initiative of the United Nations, was founded in 2011, following the recommendation of King Abdullah II of Jordan at the time. The aim is to bring together people of all religions, and those of no religious persuasion, to recognise that our common core belief in harmonious living as members of the worldwide family of humanity, far outweighs our differences.

Building bridges of understanding and respect between people of different religions and spiritual persuasions is also a core mission of the Ballarat Interfaith Network.

Musical performances, together with prayers for peace and wisdom from various religious representatives were a feature of the day. Attendees were welcomed by Deputy Mayor Cr Peter Eddy.

Keynote Speaker, Sr Veronica Lawson rsm, from the Sisters of Mercy, addressed the gathering calling on people to listen and pay attention to one another, as well as encouraging the mantras of “love of God”, “love of the

good” and “love of the neighbour” in the development of interfaith.

The morning concluded with the Ballarat Interfaith Network’s flag being raised to represent the goodwill of the Ballarat community in showing tolerance and understanding.

An excerpt of Sr Veronica’s address can be read below:

I would first like to express my gratitude for the invitation to address this gathering on “interfaith values from my faith’s perspective.” What of my faith? I am Catholic with a mixed heritage of Irish Catholic, Scottish/Cornish Presbyterian and Assyrian Orthodox I grew up in Macedon where there were very few Catholics so that ecumenism is in my DNA, even if I had no real interfaith experience until the 1970s when I lived for two years as a student in East Jerusalem and forged friendships with people of Islamic and Jewish as well as diverse Christian traditions.

So, what of interfaith values from my faith’s perspective, the perspective of the Catholic Church? Before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), there was little real dialogue between Catholics and those of other faiths. With Vatican II, however, the Church began to engage in serious dialogue with other world religions. This stance was affirmed by successive Popes. Our present leader, Pope Francis, speaks of interreligious dialogue as a “providential” sign of our times. In a 2023 document, Promoting Theology, he calls for a contextual theology involving dialogue with people of all faiths and none. He not only advocates serious dialogue. He goes out of his way to demonstrate what that means.

More of Sr Veronica’s address can be read in Edition 126 (Feb 26) of the e-News on the diocesan website.

Jo-Anne van der Voort - Ballarat Interfaith Network Member
Photo originally posted on Ballarat Interfaith Network Facebook



Staff of the Hampden Catholic Schools Network (HCSN) gathered on Monday, January 29, 2024 at St Thomas’ Church, Terang to begin the new school year with a Mass and morning tea.

Twenty nine staff were recognised and thanked for their years of service to the network, in particular Michael Saunders and Kym Penry who have both achieved thirty years of service and Natalie Stephenson who has achieved thirty years of service to Catholic Education.

Staff from Mercy Regional College Camperdown, St Patrick’s Primary School Camperdown, St Thomas’ Primary School Terang and St Colman’s Primary School Mortlake were recognised and thanked for 5, 10, 15, 20 and 30 years of service.

*Toby McKenzie - Mercy Regional College: Marketing, Communications & Community Engagement
Our Diocesan Community - March 2024*

Five [!] minutes with Fr John McKinnon



Where were you born. Tell us about your childhood.

I was born in Glenhuntly, a suburb of Melbourne, in 1933 and continued to live there until I was nearly six. Mum and dad lived with mum's parents. My sister Marg was my only sibling; she was three years older than I. Dad was a Clerk of Courts in Moonee Ponds and commuted there every day by train. Grandpa had already retired. So I did not lack company. Grandpa had come from Ireland when younger and had worked as a wool-classer in a wholesale wool-store on the other side of Melbourne. He took an interest in me and I certainly admired him. After my sister started school, she took it on herself to teach me what she was learning. She was a born teacher and went on in that vein as a nurse-educator in her later career in nursing. Cousins would regularly come over with their parents to visit the grandparents on a Sunday. Everyone would stay for dinner and the adults would play cards together in the afternoon and evening, while we kids played together in the large

back-yard — much to the unbounded joy of our pet Australian terrier. Just before the outbreak of the 2nd World War in late 1939, Dad was transferred to Horsham — so the family moved up there and thus I made my first contact with the Ballarat Diocese. We stayed there all through the years of the war and afterwards until 1948. Marg and I went to school at the Brigidine convent. The biggest influence on me by far was the then Parish Priest, Fr John Coughlan. I loved him (perhaps he became a “grandfather” substitute); and, as I look back, I think that he took a real liking to me too. I became his key altar-server and on most Sundays, he would take me out with him to serve Mass at one of the outer churches of the parish, either Natimuk or Dimboola, along with two of the Sisters who would take the children for Catechism after Mass.

They were innocent years. Due to the war, there were few men left in the town. We children had no organised sport and had to entertain ourselves. I remember gathering mushrooms in season and yabbing in a nearby channel. Marg was a girl and three years older, so we were rarely competitors. We just took each other for granted. When I was about 14, dad was transferred to Ballarat, so the family went with him. There I went to St Patrick's College for my secondary schooling. I found the Brothers decidedly different from the Nuns. I personally carry no bad memories of my time there. Generally, they were men dedicating their lives so that we might have a chance to do better with our lives.

When did you know you wanted to become a priest? I continued serving Mass at the Cathedral and enjoyed it. Mass became a familiar element in my life. Generally I admired the priests I met in Ballarat — the chaplain at the College, the priests attached to the Cathedral. The thought of my wanting to become like them planted itself in my developing sense of who I was. I remember toying at times with the idea of becoming a doctor, and even, when I was younger, a sailor. But those inclinations did not last. During the last couple of years at the College, the hope of becoming a priest firmly implanted itself.

When and where were you ordained? I was ordained in Rome in late December in 1957. That was something I had never anticipated. Fortunately, before the offer of Rome, I had studied for two and a half years in the Victorian Regional Seminary at Werribee. There I came under the influence especially of two of the Jesuits who staffed Corpus Christi College, Werribee. One was the Rector, Fr Charlie Mayne. He had taken it upon himself to inspire the students as much as he could to support the Lay Apostolate flourishing at that time in Victoria. He gave me a compelling vision of priesthood. The other was Fr Jim McInerney who, in our first year at the Seminary, was trying to deepen our appreciation of our English tradition by exposing us to some of the great poets of past and present. I remember his asking me in class what I thought of a particular poem. I had never been challenged to give my own thoughts before. At St Pat's, my teachers at that time gave us the answers that would get us through our exams. For me his question became wonderfully liberating. I think it was when I started to grow up. In 1953 I was fortunate to be given the offer to go to Rome to continue my studies at the International College run by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. There were places there for fifteen or twenty students from different dioceses here in Australia. I kept studying in Rome for a further six years. They were the pre-Vatican II years, but the winds of change had begun blowing, particularly in France and Germany. I made wonderful friends in Rome, from all over the missionary world. I came to feel increasingly a member of the universal Church and a citizen of the wider world.

If you were a colour, what would it be? Why? The colours that do something to my heart (don't ask me what) are particularly the colours I associate with the Flinders Ranges in South Australia — the browns, shades of orange and

continued next page

gold, the ochres of the hills, along with the faded green leaves and the grey/white bark of the eucalypts in the dry creek beds. I have camped in those ranges on numerous occasions, once staying there quietly by myself for three peaceful weeks in the company solely of the God who had been creatively sustaining them across the millennia.

But if I were a colour, what might I be? I'm not sure. Temperamentally, I am more intuitive than sensate. For some reason, I am drawn to royal blue. It seems to have a depth to it, and strength, with a restrained brightness. Perhaps it captures my aspirations.

Where have you been as a parish priest? My heart has always been in the diocese, but it is not only parish work that has been my focus and source of inspiration. After my return from Rome in late 1959, my first appointment as curate was to Swan Hill where I worked with two very good priests. We got on well together. My memories from there include weekly catechetical classes with the Catholic children in the little State Schools (thirteen, I think) dotted around the district — having been taught nothing myself about teaching and nothing about catechetics. Fortunately, in the lead-up to Vatican II, there were good resources I could draw on that got me through. It was also the time when our bishop insisted that we give twelve hourly instructions to all non-Catholic partners desiring to marry a Catholic, irrespective of whether they were interested or not in becoming Catholics. And in those days, there were a lot of them. So - catechetics during the day and instructions often of an evening.

After two years or so in Swan Hill, I was transferred to Ballarat to join the staff serving the Cathedral parish. I was appointed the live-in chaplain to St Patrick's College, but also had to do the other things expected of curates. I stayed in Ballarat for about eight years, from 1962 to 1969. These were the years of Vatican II, followed by a period of adjustment when some of the practical consequences of the Council began to be implemented. They were restless years — some people were resistant to change, others enthused, and most perhaps were not quite sure but prepared to "have a go". Vatican II was a decade too late. Just as the Church began to implement its recommendations, the secular world and its culture changed radically. It was the era of the "Beatles" and of a breakdown of "authority", of the Vietnam War, conscription and the political divisions it highlighted, of TV and other technological novelties, of a general "motorisation" of society — the list goes on.

After Ballarat, I was sent to Ararat in 1969, still as curate. I was there for about two years, before being made Parish Priest of the newly constituted Beaufort parish, where I stayed for another five years or so. After Beaufort I returned to Ballarat half-way through the 1970's to be chaplain to tertiary students — both Catholic and others. I also lectured at the Institute of Catholic Education [forerunner to the Australian Catholic University].

Towards the end of the 1970's, I was called back to look after the parish of Redan. I stayed there for a couple of years. After Redan, I was appointed to Wycheproof parish, where I stayed for another three years. Then, in 1985, I became involved full-time in the newly established body set up by the Australian bishops to work on the on-going education of priests. My time was divided between working on the national scene as well as here with the priests in the diocese. Early in the 1990's I returned to parish ministry and was appointed to Warracknabeal where I stayed for five years. During my time there, I chaired the Diocesan Pastoral Planning Taskforce, eventually producing, after much consultation, "A Shoot will Spring". I then volunteered to be appointed to the Mildura parish to work as the second priest on the Parish Ministry Team operating there. Finally, after experiencing problems with my heart, I left busy Mildura and went to Horsham to work once more as an assistant priest with lesser responsibilities. When I turned 75 at the end of 2008, I retired and have come here to Hamilton as guest of the Parish Priest where I work(?) on a very-much part-time basis with no parish responsibilities.

What are some of your favourite memories? They are many. I became diocesan chaplain of the Young Christian Workers movement early in my time in Ballarat. Its "See, Judge, Act" was a wonderfully formative and maturing technique. Its emphasis on the Gospel as the basis for "judging" our world brought the young workers very much into personal contact with Jesus. The whole experience, especially my friendship with the leaders, contributed very much to my personal maturing. I also enjoyed lecturing in moral theology and sacramental theology at Aquinas. The College allowed interested adults from around Ballarat to attend the lectures. They usefully added their life experience to the mix. The Marriage Encounter movement proved helpful also for me, alerting me to my feelings and to the realisation of the importance of loving in my parish ministry.

I was appointed the bishop's liaison priest to the diocesan Charismatic Renewal. What I found particularly helpful was its emphasis on the "healing of memories". It was also wonderful to see so many people developing a new joy-filled and liberating relationship to Jesus.

Late in the 1960's and from then on, I used also to be asked to give an occasional retreat to religious and to become involved in some informal spiritual direction. This led to my attending a three-month course in 1981 at the Jesuit House in Pymble devoted to spirituality and spiritual direction. It was then that I did the Ignatian 30-day retreat, which I found very helpful indeed. That led in time to my being invited to join the retreat-team at the newly-formed St Peter Centre in Canberra, set up by the bishops to provide opportunities for sabbatical renewal at home here in Australia for priests and religious.

I think that the most fulfilling time of my life, however, was from the end of 1984 to the beginning of 1990's when I was involved full-time in a program designed for the on-going support and further formation of priests in their home dioceses. Over time, the program came to be adopted by most of the dioceses of Australia. My time was divided

between the national scene and here in our own diocese. The Australian director of the program was a great man, a visionary and a very competent entrepreneur. I was the one largely who “sang the song”, who gave the talks, introduced the program to the priests, preached the retreats, etc.; and along with another priest from Melbourne, the three of us did most of the forward planning and follow-up. In the process I met and worked with, and was nourished and stimulated by, some of the best priests around Australia.

What was the best thing about becoming a priest? I believed in what I was doing; and generally I have found it a source of constant joy. I was motivated to stay close to God. And through it I have met and worked with and been inspired and helped by some truly wonderful people.

What was the hardest thing about becoming a priest? I realised when my sister died about six years ago that I did not know and love her as well as I might have, as the wonderful person that she truly was. That in turn led me to realise that I could also have known and loved mum and dad more deeply than I did. Distance and work commitments tended to keep us separated. (Pre-smartphone days!)

If you chose a song which most represented you at this time, what would the song be? Why? In the 1970’s (ancient history now?) an American artist, Joe Wise, composed and sang a song for use at the Offertory of the Mass. The lyrics of the chorus are: “Here is my life, myself the bread that I bring. Here is my soul, my wine the song that I sing. Take it for gift and take it for granted, sprung from the seeds that I’ve washed and I’ve planted so long ago and even ‘til now, and even ‘til now.” The other verses are equally pertinent. I have suggested it be sung at my funeral.

If you could choose anyone from any time, who would you most like to be in conversation with and why? A hard one! But over the years, at least since the 1970’s, I have appreciated the steady flow of practical books and recorded talks that an American Franciscan priest, Richard Rohr, has produced. He has kept growing and expanding his vision and eventually set up an organisation called “Center for Action and Contemplation”. I would particularly like to say “thank you” to him and to reminisce together over our life journeys.

How do you find retirement? It’s a retirement cut to suit my situation — and I like it. I am slowing down, getting forgetful by the day and deafer. Fortunately, I still feel reasonably healthy, even if slowly deteriorating. The company here in the presbytery in Hamilton is stimulating. Thankfully they are very patient with me. The current situation is probably becoming less and less likely to last this way much longer. I shall be quite happy to move on into some form of care. “There is a time for every purpose under heaven”. In the meantime, I shall continue to do my best to “bloom where I’m planted!”

What are your hopes and visions for the Catholic Church in the Ballarat Diocese? That we shall listen to the guidance of the Spirit. At least as far as the Church is concerned, I think that we are, as Pope Francis suggests, facing a change of era, no longer a mere era of change. We are not sure what the future holds. But I trust that God does, so I do not worry. I am glad, as Pope Francis also insists, that we as Church are beginning to implement a radical process of synodality that will enable us to discern better the will of God. That is the crucial thing and we still have much to learn before it becomes second-nature. As the mediaeval English mystic, Julian of Norwich, was keen to repeat: “All will be well!”

FINAL MASS AT ST MICHAEL'S LALBERT



On Sunday, October 16, 2023 we were delighted to have over sixty faithful join us for the Final Mass of Thanksgiving in St Michael's Church Lalbert. We had former parishioners return from Ouyen, Cobram, Eurora, Mitiamo, Bendigo and Melbourne (and I am sure I have missed a few!). There was a group photo after Mass, before we moved to the Community Centre for some fellowship and plenty of stories and laughs.

My sincere thank you to everyone who made this day so special; for the locals who prepared the Church and Community Centre and had them looking spick and span; for all those who brought food to share and for those who helped lay out the tea and coffee and cleaned everything up afterwards; for all those who helped pass the word around so well - it was amazing how it travelled; for those who brought photos and memorabilia and for those who shared some stories. It really was a community event.

I would also like to add a sincere thanks to our Lalbert regulars for keeping the Church alive and open for as long as they had, but also for the maturity in making the call on its future. There is real sadness in closing a building that houses so many memories, but I think there is also room for some healthy pride - for the vision and generosity of the pioneers who established and built the Church, for the way in which it has truly fulfilled its purpose in being a home for faith and community, and for the dedication and energy of the faithful over the many years.

Fr James Kerr - Parish Priest

For more please see <https://northeastmallee.org.au/2023/11/15/last-mass-st-michaels-lalbert/>
Photo by Jan Power

Diocesan Liturgical Commission

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the first document produced by the Second Vatican Council in 1963 directed that each diocese is to have a Liturgical Commission, "By way of advancing the liturgical apostolate, every diocese is to have a commission on the sacred liturgy under the direction of the bishop." (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, par 45).

The Ballarat Diocesan Liturgical Commission is an active group in the diocese and undertakes the following tasks:

- Advises the Bishop on liturgical matters.
- Keeps abreast of the liturgical situation in the diocese.
- Promotes liturgical development in the diocese.
- Liaises with Parish Liturgy Groups throughout the diocese.
- Provides diocesan and regional seminars and workshops in liturgical issues and practice.
- Liaises with other Diocesan Liturgical Commissions and the National Liturgical Council.



Membership and meetings:

Membership of the Commission includes the Bishop and representatives from priests, religious and laity from throughout the diocese. Membership is for an initial term of three (3) years. The Commission meets at least five times per year.

Activity of the Commission:

- Assumes responsibility for Diocesan Liturgical Celebrations (in conjunction with the Cathedral Parish) – The Rite of Election as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age, the Chrism Mass (Mass of the Oils), Episcopal Ordinations, Ordinations to the Priesthood and Ordinations to the Diaconate and the annual celebration of Clergy Jubilarians Mass (this Mass is co-ordinated in conjunction with the Council of Priests and the Cathedral Parish).
- Provides support for other Diocesan celebrations, including funerals for Diocesan Clergy.
- All works of the Commission are undertaken at the direction of the Bishop of the Diocese.

Sacraments of Initiation:

The Commission provides the following for parishes:

- Sacraments of Initiation for Children Policy Statement
- Catechetical Resources for preparing children for Sacraments – Baptism; Senior Reconciliation; Confirmation; Eucharist; Catechist Handbook.
- Diocesan Sacramental Certificates for the Sacraments of Initiation for Children (tri-fold certificate); Initiation of Adults; Reception into the Church.
- Sacramental stoles and accompanying symbols for the Sacraments of Initiation.
- Policies and Guidelines: Altar Servers; Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults; Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults with Children of Catechetical Age; Diocesan, Cathedral and Episcopal Liturgies; The Use of Visual Display Systems in Liturgical Celebrations; Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion; Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest; Manual for Lay Leaders of Sunday Assemblies of Word and Communion; Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament; Pastoral Care & Funeral Ministry; Sacrament of Reconciliation for Children; Proper Care and Use of Holy Oils. (All policies, guidelines and other resources are available from the members' area of the diocesan website www.ballarat.catholic.org.au. Registration is required to access the members' area and is available to those in the Ballarat Diocese via the website).

Liturgical Formation:

The Liturgical Commission has undertaken a continual program of liturgical formation, offering workshops for ongoing education in various centres throughout the diocese.

Contact Information:

Ballarat Diocesan Liturgical Commission, email liturgy@ballarat.catholic.org.au or ph. 03 5337 7159



Nine reasons to love ACU Ballarat

Away from the bright city lights, Ballarat has a reputation as a town that mixes country charm with historical elegance. But what's it like to live and study there? We talk to ACU nursing and paramedicine student Brooke O'Brien to find out.

"There are so many reasons to love this campus," said Brooke. "Not only because of the opportunities it's given me academically but also the location and facilities. Here are my top nine reasons to love it."

1. The campus is small, but modern - "There is no doubt that the Ballarat Campus is small compared to other major universities, but that was one of my deciding factors when I chose to complete my tertiary education here. With just over 1,000 students I know people across all year levels, from all degrees. We have a great sense of community. You can walk across campus and almost always see a familiar face. Additionally, a smaller campus allows access to a number of resources including practical rooms to prepare for exams and academics who provide any support that I may need. This campus makes you feel like a person, not like a number."

2. The uni accommodation feels like home - "Moving out of home straight after high school was a very intimidating experience. But the transition into the Camillus Residence was easier than I ever could have hoped. The support offered by Residential Services was so focused on the transition from home to university that I knew I was never alone. Having Residential Advisors available gave me the confidence I needed to get through those tougher times. They are ACU students too, who were also able to help with assignments and any other questions I had. The accommodation facilities are modern and you can have your own space while getting constant support from others in the same situation as you. You figure things out together. The social side of university accommodation is also a highlight. Residential Advisors host events twice a week so there is always something to do."

3. Being able to make friends for life - "As Ballarat is a small town and ACU is a small campus, I know people in different courses and in different years. You are exposed to so many individuals from all walks of life and you can make great connections."

4. Getting a degree that is truly unique - "ACU Ballarat is the only university in the state that offers a double degree in nursing and paramedicine. Obtaining both degrees

really opens up my career opportunities. It allows me to have a choice whilst also making me more employable which is ultimately my goal for attending university in the first place."

5. The teaching facilities are amazing - "I can say with confidence that the lecturers who teach me are passionate about my success, the profession and will provide any support I need to reach my goals. At my practical classes, I have qualified paramedics providing me with the most up-to-date and relevant information on how treatment occurs on the road. At our campus we are lucky to have access to 'Code Black' which is a disaster simulation where emergency services within Ballarat come to campus and we simulate a disaster situation. This allows final-year students to treat 'patients' while under pressure in conjunction with other emergency services. They put the skills learnt during their degree into practice in a controlled and supportive environment."

6. The grounds are beautiful - "The Ballarat grounds are really unique. There's lots of gardens and quiet spaces to study or hang out between classes. There's a real sense of history here too. But I love that hidden behind those walls is high-tech equipment and modern facilities."

7. There's a lot of support - "No matter what you study here there is a huge amount of support on offer. That includes academic support and counselling. The campus also provides a safe, caring environment - I feel comfortable to go to uni every day."

8. You can travel overseas during your studies - "ACU has given me the opportunity to study overseas in Rome for two weeks. I was lucky enough to complete a unit in Italy with people from across Australia studying at ACU. I now have friends in Italy, the USA, Canberra and Sydney. I get to live in this beautiful town, but I'm also connected to the rest of Australia and the world."

9. It's the place to be my best - "ACU Ballarat gives me the resources I need to be the best version of myself in my chosen profession. You will spend years at a university getting your degree, so it should be one that will help you to thrive."

*Original story courtesy of Australian Catholic University's Impact - <https://impact.acu.edu.au/>
At the time of republication, Brooke has graduated from Australian Catholic University.*

RE program seminar days

St Joseph's College Mildura Seminar Days allow entire cohorts to spend quality time together, share experiences and focus on their personal faith journeys. They are a component of the Religious Education program at the College. Students participate in team-building activities and form strong bonds with their peers that they can draw upon for support during secondary school and beyond. Students in Years 9–12 enjoyed full days of workshops.

Year 9 students met with Chris Doyle from Karis Ministries. This was Chris' twenty ninth visit to the College in as many years. His unique blend of music and humour engages students and motivates them to get involved and learn about the Gospels and behaviours that demonstrate honesty and integrity.

At the same time, the Year 10 cohort learned about values, ethics and respectful relationships from Beck Neale and David Kobler of Your Choicez. Your Choicez conducted the day with a focus for the boys on healthy masculinity, pornography, consent and healthy relationships, while the focus for the girls was on qualities that matter, the 'helpers', consent and healthy relationships.

Students in Years 11 and 12 participated in two full days of seminars. Chris Doyle also led the Year 11 cohort in a series of workshops designed to build upon those the students experienced in Year 9. The Class of 2024 began with Gen Bryant, a young contemporary Catholic musician who works with youth and schools all over Australia. This was Gen Bryant's fifth year leading Seminar Days at St Joseph's College. On the second day, the Year 12 students focused on Indigenous culture and experiences, learning about local Aboriginal culture and traditions from First Nations presenters Taya Philp, Wayne Coe and Will Hannah.

Mrs Marg Blythman - Principal



Backflips Against Bullying

On Friday, February 16, 2024 Luca and Charlie from 'Backflips Against Bullying', flipped, jumped, and did tricks, all while teaching students at St Mary's Primary School Swan Hill a very valuable lesson – bullying doesn't make you tough!

The presenters role-played different scenarios which allowed the students to reflect about what is expected and what is unacceptable and showed the students some appropriate ways to deal with situations. They spoke about spreading rumours, the downside of spending too much time on technology and strategies to stand up to someone who is being mean or bullying others.

There was such high energy in the gym as the hour-long demonstration took place, and the students thoroughly enjoyed learning an important message in a fun and exciting way! These are important messages to be shared.



Kate Quin – Principal

A special gift of God



A new baby is a very special gift of God. Babies make a difference to the life of their families, in many different ways. As people of faith, we are called to see God acting in all the events in our lives. The arrival of a new little person is such an event. In having an effect on the family, this little one is speaking God's word to them and inviting them to grow, as people of faith.

The family is the first place where a child will receive the love of God. It is the child's first experience of the church. A way of describing the family is the 'domestic church'. This is not only in terms of 'religious' things. All the love and care in the family is the foundation of the child's faith. Every cry responded to, every feed given, all the cuddles given, all the oo-ing and ah-ing that may bring a smile, every time a nappy is changed, fosters faith. All this care leads to a feeling of being loved, which is foundational to religious faith. The psychologist Erik Erikson declares that "trust, born of care is the foundation of faith." It is in the domestic church of family life and care that the faith-journey of each child is begun.

The 'domestic church' provides the atmosphere for the child to learn what it is to be a Catholic by "doing what Catholics do." Through hearing the Christian stories, through being encouraged in appropriate 'God-talk',

through simple family prayer rituals, through celebrating Sunday Eucharist with a community, through gradually understanding who God is for the family, a child will learn the Catholic way of being in the world. Parents are also called to go forward on their own faith-journey, which continues throughout each person's life.

The sacrament of Baptism is the first Sacrament of Initiation and welcome into the Christian community. Through this Sacrament, the 'domestic church' is linked into the larger church of this parish and the universal church. For its part, the community promises to support the family in its responsibilities towards the child. Celebrating baptism is part of fulfilling the mission entrusted to us by Jesus. "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Recently, Ben Collins and Molly O'Loughlin asked for baptism for their twin daughters, Frankie and Oakleigh. Frankie and Oakleigh were baptised at St Alipius Parish Church by Fr Kevin Maloney. Family members joined in this beautiful celebration. Godparents of the twins were aunties and uncles. Jacob Collins and Billie O'Loughlin are Frankie's Godparents and Rhiana Collins and Sarah Stuart are Oakleigh's Godparents. Ben and Molly want their children to grow up in the Catholic Faith, to be part of something bigger, to have faith and a connection to God. It was important for them to continue the tradition of being Catholic, to have the sense of belonging to the Catholic Community.

Baptism is not just a ceremony. It also marks the start of a way of life. For baptism information, please contact your local parish. Information on contacting your parish can be found at <https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/parishes-people/>

Information sourced from Water of Life Infant Baptism (Bishop Paul Bird's letter) and Baptism: Beginning the Journey: Rosslyn Resources

A NEW ERA FOR CDF BALLARAT

Following much consultation, the Ballarat Catholic Development Fund and the Melbourne, Sale and Bunbury Catholic Development Fund have agreed to merge. This comes after an extensive due diligence process, with the merger completed in late 2023. The Funds have a 50+ year history of working together and sharing resources to offer customers in the dioceses strong and competitive financial solutions.

As Bishop of Ballarat, Bishop Paul Bird gave thanks for the contribution of the Ballarat CDF across the Diocese and has every confidence that the steadfast support the Fund has been able to provide will continue into the future. In recent years, Development Fund mergers, such as those involving the Diocese of Bunbury and the Diocese of Sale, have proven successful in delivering a range of additional benefits to their local communities. The expanded CDF will continue to meet the local demands of the Ballarat Diocese whilst maintaining a prudentially sound and sustainable Fund into the future.

Bishop Paul sincerely thanked all the customers who have made deposits with CDF Ballarat. By doing so they have provided a pool of resources from which parishes, schools and other Catholic organisations can draw, to serve our Catholic and wider community. This support will continue to be important from a larger Fund, as we meet the needs of our growing Diocese while delivering on the collective mission of the Church. Bishop Paul acknowledged the CDF Board and CDF staff for their careful supervision of and commitment to the Fund to date. "I look forward to the new partnership and benefits this will bring to the communities of our Diocese", Bishop Paul said.

The creation of a diocese: Faith, gold and the early pioneer priests

The formation of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat on March 30, 1874 and the installation of Bishop Michael O'Connor as first Bishop of Ballarat arose from the humblest of beginnings. From the early 1830s, immigration was instrumental in bringing thousands of Catholic migrants to Port Phillip Bay. Over the following decades, many settled in western Victoria in search of gold and to start a new life. To support the Catholic population, priests from Ireland and other parts of the world were encouraged to migrate for the Melbourne mission. Many travelled throughout this district to establish the first Catholic schools and churches of the region. Living under the hardest of conditions, they travelled on horseback and lived in tents. Many priests celebrated Mass, baptisms and marriages along the way. Fr Matthew Dunne, wrote of his life experience working within this locality:



The life of the pioneer priests outside of Melbourne during the forties and early fifties was not a pleasant one.... There were no railroads, no roads outside the few towns and villages, no buggies, ...the priests had to carry the vestments before them on the saddle, and they could not reach a homestead station before night, so they would consider themselves fortunate in dropping into a shepherd's hut. They would gladly accept his hospitality of black tea, damper and mutton.¹

Although many priests returned to their homelands, they left behind a foundation upon which to build. Those who did remain became known as the pioneer priests of the western district. It is through their heroic efforts towards establishing the first Catholic missions that the Diocese of Ballarat was eventually founded. This current display in the Diocesan Archives gives a glimpse into the lives of some of the priests and the first bishops who worked and travelled around the diocese.

To view the display contact archives@ballarat.catholic.org.au (maximum 10 per tour). Bookings are essential.

Dr Samantha Fabry - Diocesan Archivist

1. Ebsworth, Re. W. (1973) *Pioneer Catholic Victoria*. The Polding Press Melbourne. Pg. 33

Discovery Day at Monivae

Monivae College Hamilton recently welcomed future families and community members to their annual **Discovery Day**. Held on a Sunday, the school is activated for this one day. A record crowd of guests enjoyed Monivae hospitality while they explored the campus, met students and staff and took home a wealth of information regarding the Monivae offering to families. This event is an integral part of the enrolment process and provides the opportunity for visitors to learn about the innovative pathway curriculum, the multi-million dollar Performing Arts Centre upgrade (due to open mid-2024) and how the Monivae community lives the values of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

Kylie Schurmann - Marketing Co-ordinator



Inspiring

On February 14, 2024 Year 12 students at Emmanuel College Warrnambool focused on the year ahead, their final one together, with a retreat day facilitated by inspiring guest speaker, Sam Clear.

Sam's goal of trying to unite people in the Christian faith by courageously travelling over 15,000 kilometres through numerous countries, mostly on foot, enabled him to engage students and staff with personal stories that were amazing, sometimes unbelievable and very inspiring.

The aim of the day was to provide students with an opportunity for reflection on their own journey ahead, on their interaction with their peers and on the lives of others, from a Catholic perspective. It was an opportunity for both students and staff in attendance, to take a break from our routine and reflect on who we are and where and how we are going.



There were many opportunities to respond, either quietly with an invitation to prayer, or in more obvious ways with team quizzes and whole group activities which provoked some interesting responses! The group also enjoyed lunch together provided by the wonderful team at McMahons,

got into the spirit of the day with many opting to dress to a theme and demonstrated curiosity and empathy with activities and presentations throughout the day.

I thank students for their enthusiasm and staff in attendance for their support, particularly Sean Fitzgibbon, all of which contributed to an enjoyable and successful day. Some student reflections below:

- Sam's story resonated with me as he was able to persevere through adversity to try and make a change in the world and spread the message of unity.
- If he walked across the world, in poor, unstable and dangerous conditions and didn't let that stop him, what is stopping every individual in this world from achieving what they set out to do? (people without real barriers).
- He was very relatable, and I feel like he demonstrated the ups and downs of life throughout his session. He snuck a couple of life lessons in there too, for example: don't focus on the bad; #dontpunchthepig; persistence; decision making.
- If anything, he has motivated me to stay optimistic. Life will sort itself out and don't stress so much on the future or the unknown. He is really inspiring.

Jacinta Skilbeck - Director of Faith & Mission
<https://www.walk4one.com/sam-clear>

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY GATHERING

In early December, sixteen people connected with Ignatian Spirituality and Christian Life Community gathered at St Peter's Catholic Presbytery in Daylesford and shared Mass celebrated by Fr Justin Driscoll.

Following Mass, people enjoyed catching up and sharing a delicious meal together. Later in the evening, those who escaped washing dishes enjoyed a tour of the presbytery, church and the spacious grounds including Fr Justin's very productive vegetable garden. Attendees came from Ballarat and Charlton.

During Mass we reflected on the readings and highlights of the past year and shared those experiences. It was a time to become still, and in particular, a time to ponder what was stirring in our hearts and hear what the Spirit is inviting us toward in preparation for the special celebration of the Christmas season and the year ahead.



Doreen Roache



St Brigid's Church Snake Valley

On February 3, 2024 a supper was held following evening Mass to celebrate the **100th anniversary** of St Brigid's Catholic Church, Snake Valley.

Organised by the congregation, the event brought together past and present parishioners to attend the service and enjoy an evening together.

St Brigid's was constructed in 1924. It replaced St Mary's, the original Snake Valley Catholic Church, that was situated along Snake Valley-Smythesdale Road and built in 1871.

St Brigid's was built on a large, central town allotment.

The orange brickwork distinguishes it from other buildings in the area. The church was partially financed by robust community fundraising including dances, Queen carnivals and bazaars.

When St Brigid's opened in January of 1924, the foundation stone was blessed and laid by Reverend Daniel Foley, Bishop of Ballarat from 1916 - 1941.

Members can refer to Edition #126 of District Diggings to read more about the history of the Catholic Church in Snake Valley in an article written by Joan Wilson.

*Article written by Esther Yeoman
Photos taken by John Kavanagh*

Mass to begin the year!

St Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill celebrated their first Mass together as a 2024 community on February 16. This is always a joyous occasion as the College commissioned their 2024 College Captains and student leaders into their positions and presented them with their badges.

Thank you to Alison Wright, Director of Faith and Mission and Rianne Quaife, Choir and Band Coordinator, for all the preparation in the lead up to the Mass. It was also wonderful to hear from our College Captains as they addressed our school community for the first time in 2024.

A big thank you to Fr James Kerr for leading us in the celebration.

Michelle Haeusler - Principal



Women are, by nature, workers. Mind you, they are talkers too!

Sew & So....., now in its seventeenth year, combines the two. Since 2007, gatherings have been held every month, on the second Thursday, in the foyer of St Columba's Church Ballarat North. It is a friendly group and not all knit or crochet. We have a chat and a cuppa and, of course, solve many of the world's problems!

One of the exciting offshoots is the making of items, incorporated into bundles, for mothers of new born babies in East Timor. An added objective is to encourage the mothers to go to the clinic for immunisation.

Ladies (in or out of St Columba's and Our Lady Help of Christians Wendouree) knit sets of jumpers, socks and beanies in 8 ply acrylic yarn, and also knit or crochet rugs of 85cm. If anyone is interested in being part of the East Timor program contact Lauren Rhodes (0405277778) for patterns or for more general information contact Margaret Ranger (0409533140).

Diocesan Pastoral Support Group

On October 22, 2023, the annual gathering of the Diocesan Pastoral Support Group took place at Halls Gap. It is always a relaxing, joyful time in a beautiful setting at the Pinnacle Lodge, Budja Budja. Margaret Hill was our guest speaker and the topic was "Our history 236 years - 65,000 years". It was very relevant as it followed the Referendum but this also made it a quite difficult and emotional experience. Margaret has a great passion for justice and has a long term commitment to justice for Indigenous people.

Drawing on books, articles and programs we have read or seen, we prepared with three questions in mind: What we learnt? What surprised us? Do we view our country differently now, and why?

Books we had read were placed around the centrepiece and were used for our group discussion...and pondering.

Margaret skilfully led us through the day referring to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, several video clips and other challenging activities. Margaret's dedication and presentation were greatly appreciated and we came away moved and enriched by our experience.

The BBQ that we gathered for on Sunday afternoon and the dinner we enjoyed on Monday evening 'book ended' the great support this group shares.

Sr Maree Holt csb



St Brigid's Feast Day and Opening Mass



On February 1 each year the feast day of St Brigid is acknowledged. This year, as it was also our second day of our school year, we were fortunate enough to be able to join our feast day and opening Mass in the one celebration at St Brigid's Primary School Ballan.

Fr Justin Driscoll was our celebrant and we gathered with the whole school, new staff, families and friends and our parishioners to celebrate. The children participated in parts of the Mass and we reflected on the life of Brigid and how she helped others in need and gave away her possessions to others less fortunate. We also focused on the St Brigid's cross that we know was made from rushes to represent the life of Jesus.

We displayed the beautiful St Brigid's roses that we have growing in our garden and celebrated her life along with the opportunity to celebrate the start of the new school year.

We thank all those who contributed to a wonderful celebration.

Therese Winter - Religious Education Leader

Celebrating our Faith



At Trinity College Colac, we celebrate our Catholic tradition in word and action and we commenced the year by gathering in the beautiful St Mary's church to celebrate our faith and receive the blessing of our Parish Priest, Fr Michael O'Toole.

We welcomed our special guests, Member for Polwarth Mr Richard Riordan, Executive Director of Catholic Education Mr Tom Sexton and Mayor of Colac Cr Marg White, before our 2024 Student Leaders entered the sacred space, holding aloft the Trinity and House banners and reminding us all that we are united in our mission to make a difference. Our talented music students were our choir, with Deputy Principal Ms Rachel McGennissen playing the organ and Charlotte from Year 12 accompanying on guitar.

New Trinity staff were also welcomed at the Mass in a poignant commissioning ceremony where they promised to be true to the spirit of our College founders, to cultivate learning and act with justice, mercy and compassion. The Class of 2024 Year 12 students were then presented with badges that were blessed by Fr Michael, honouring the final year of their Trinity journey and for being part of the College's rich history. Fortified by our prayers and hope, we headed back to school to enjoy the day and be grateful for the privilege of being part of our wonderful community.

The very next day was Ash Wednesday and our students were called to think about how they can help make a difference in the world at a special Liturgy. Marking the beginning of the Holy season of Lent, Ash Wednesday is a reminder of our mortality and invites us to foster a deeper spiritual connection with God.

Led by our Year 12 cohort, our students gathered in year groups to receive the sign of the cross on their foreheads, inviting them to use the Lenten season to focus on generosity and service to others. At Trinity during Lent we support Project Compassion, which is an initiative that raises funds for Caritas, an organisation that provides incredible service for people in need. Students are encouraged to drop their spare change in the Project Compassion boxes in their homeroom and reflect on the aspects of their own lives for which they are grateful.



Cherie Butcher - Communications & Development Leader

Long serving parishioner

East Wimmera Parishioner, Shiela Powell (nee Credlin) was baptised in St Michael's Church Wycheproof in 1932 and is our longest serving parishioner. Shiela has served on many church committees over her ninety-two years as a parishioner and continues to be an active member of St Michael's Guild. She helps out wherever she can, setting up for season celebrations including the Advent wreath and Christmas nativity scene as well as contributing to the working bees around the church.

She, and her late husband Clem, provided great support to priests and for decades held an annual fundraiser around Melbourne Cup time. Shiela continues to support East Wimmera Parish, St Michael's community attending every week and embracing parish innovations including the broadcast Masses.

Jacinta Miller

Our Diocesan Community - March 2024



A DAY OF IRISH FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

Recently the Diocesan Archivist presented at the Ballarat North Community Centre for a one-day conference titled, 'A Day of Irish family history research'. Held on February 10, 2024 the conference was a combined event between the Ballarat & District Genealogical Society and the Irish Ancestry Discussion Circle, Genealogical Society of Victoria.

Archivist, Samantha Fabry, highlighted the significance of the Ballarat Diocesan Historical Commission archives and discussed how the collection was originally established in 1874. She reflected on the first historians and archivists of the archives and focussed on the 150th anniversary of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat. Over fifty historians and researchers attended the conference from all around Victoria. Other presenters included Dr Kevin Molly (State Library of Victoria), Mary Darcy and Philip Moore (Ballarat

& District Irish Association), Independent researcher Gavan Keating, Carol Armstrong (Ballarat and District Genealogical Society) and Rebecca Landy (Library & Resources Manager, GSV).

Dr Samantha Fabry - Diocesan Archivist



Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer

Romans 12:12



The staff of Catholic Education in the schools and offices of the Central Zone gathered at St Patrick's Cathedral on Monday, January 29, 2024 to ask God's blessings on the 2024 year of learning. Mass was celebrated by Bishop Paul Bird with Frs Ed Moloney, Eugene McKinnon, Con Bagaoisan and Eladio Lizado concelebrating. Approximately eight hundred educators gathered, with an energetic and spirited hum of conversation and reconnection filling the sacred space. Tom Sexton, Executive Director of DOBCEL, and Jason Spark, from St Alipius Primary School Ballarat East, led the Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome.

Readings were proclaimed by Felicity Knobel and Jarrod Ryan, both from Loreto College Ballarat. Elizabeth Jerram and Lucy Quinlan from St Patrick's Primary School Gordon brought forward the Gospel. Prayers of the Faithful

were read by Christine Meneely from St Francis Xavier Primary School, Ballarat East, with Emily Clarke and Jaci Commons from St Alipius Primary School Ballarat East bringing forward the gifts.

The theme of the 150th anniversary of the diocese, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" Romans 12:12, was shared as a touchstone for the year ahead as it reflects various elements of our vocation as a Christian community. The words are drawn from a passage in St Paul's letter to the Romans in which the apostle lists qualities appropriate for a community inspired by Christ. As the years go by, the community experiences times of trial as well as times of gladness. Through it all, their trust in Christ makes them joyful in hope and patient in affliction. They recognise that they need God's help in all they do and so they are faithful in prayer, seeking God's help day by day.

We are invited to consider our school communities, that in our trust in Christ we are never without hope, that we can be patient in times of trouble or uneasiness and that we never fail to pray, and to keep praying.

The concluding rite and dismissal was led by Carmel Hanley from Lumen Christi Primary School Delacombe, Paul McDowell from St Patrick's Primary School Gordon and Chelsea Brennan from St Brigid's Primary School Ballan. All staff were invited to stand as their school's name was called with one staff member going forward to receive a symbol of the year. All those new to Catholic Education were blessed, along with a blessing for all who minister in Catholic Education. "May God bless you and keep you" was sung as part of the celebration. May our words, actions and demeanour show others that God loves them. May we know that this love calls us to work together in Catholic Education as we pursue fullness of life for all.



Jo-Anne Bond - Education Consultant: Central Zone



Project Compassion 2024 Launch

Social Justice Leaders and supporters from the Central zone Secondary Colleges and Cathedral Parish Primary schools attended the 5pm Mass on Sunday, February 11, at St Patrick's Cathedral to launch Project Compassion 2024 and be commissioned as Caritas Ambassadors.

Through partnering with Caritas Australia, the school communities are committed to being people of hope, bringing Jesus' message of compassion, dignity and concern for the poor into the world today.

Bishop Paul Bird celebrated Mass and blessed the communities represented who generously offered themselves to promote this year's PROJECT COMPASSION campaign to bring about a more just world for all future generations.

This year, the theme is 'For All Future Generations'. The theme asks us to reflect on the great yes that Mary freely gave when the angel told her she was to become the mother of Jesus. The great prayer she shared with her cousin Elizabeth says, 'all generations will call me blessed'. This Lent we too are encouraged to bless future generations with love and compassion from our own hearts.

Michael McGirr from Caritas Australia was guest speaker. Read below his address:

Two little boxes - It's wonderful to share the Eucharist with your community and to be able to thank you for your support of Caritas Australia and Project Compassion over so many years. In fact, this year marks our sixtieth anniversary. I know for a fact that many families in Ballarat have been with us from the beginning. We are so grateful for your witness to hope in a world that can sometimes feel heavy and dark.

The Gospel today (Mark 1:40-45) is a perfect reminder of what we are all about. Jesus comes across a man with a dreadful skin disease. That man must have had a lonely life, being required to stay outside his community.

But he hasn't given up hope. 'If you want to,' he says to Jesus, 'you can help me. Jesus' response is emotional. 'Of course I want to,' he says.

May I suggest that there are many people who are asking for help. Like that man, they are out of sight. They are in places such as Malawi, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Myanmar and many others. I know that your response for so many generations has been 'of course I want to help.' And you do.

In 1964, our first collection raised two thousand pounds with which we bought a fishing boat for the community on Bathurst Island. Last year, you enabled us to directly impact the lives of 860,000 people through the projects you support. If you add to that those in Humanitarian Emergencies, the number almost doubles. Yet the needs of God's family are still enormous. Please keep walking with us. Please have a look at our website for great stories about all the things you are doing.

It is great to see students here from so many Catholic schools in Ballarat. In a moment you will be commissioned to take the challenge of Project Compassion back to your communities.

But first I want to show you two boxes. They are about the same size. The first comes from a well-known gourmet chicken establishment. It will feed you although to be honest, it may not feed you all that well, but never mind.

The second box is our Project Compassion Box. It won't just feed one person. It will feed thousands of people. Along the way, it will feed you too. It will feed your mind and heart.

Guess what! You can have both boxes! Enjoy your best life. Help others enjoy theirs.



WELCOME The Diocesan community is thrilled to offer a warm regional Victorian welcome to Irish secondary school teachers Jimmy and Fiona McGovern and their three children, James, Conor and Sarah. In the true spirit of Irish adventurers, the McGovern family have travelled from Portmarnock Community School, Dublin North, to join the team at St Mary MacKillop College, Swan Hill. We trust their time with us will be both personally and professionally rewarding and that more international teachers will join us in the future.

Gerard Delaney - Manager: Marketing and Communications
Our Diocesan Community - March 2024

THE PEOPLE YOU MEET AT THE PORT FAIRY FOLK FESTIVAL

Port Fairy is famous for many things, particularly the annual Folk Festival, held over the March Labour Day weekend. Thousands of music fans come from near and far to listen to some of their favourite local and international artists, some unknowns and some in between!! The secret to success is the age old "be organised, get there early each day if you can and grab a seat near your chosen stage".

So, back in March 2018, early on the Saturday of the Folkie, great minds thought alike. There in Stage 5, at the front with an hour to spend before the first act of the day, were Tony and Angela Hutchinson, parishioners of St Patrick's Port Fairy and members of the local St Vincent de Paul Conference, and sitting alongside were Frank and Pauline O'Brien, parishioners of St Bede's Balwyn North and long time members of the Rotary Club of Central Melbourne.



One thing led to another, as they say, and cutting to the chase, through this chance meeting, this Rotary Club through Frank and Pauline has regularly supported the Koroit/Port Fairy Conference of St Vincent de Paul by supplying and delivering brand new goods (from a very generous Melbourne based importer) to the value of tens of thousands of dollars; goods such as childrens and adult clothing, footwear, manchester, sporting apparel and more. These in turn have been distributed by Vinnies far and wide in the South West to families in necessitous circumstances.

Thank heavens for the Folkie, many would say!!

*Contributed by Frank O'Brien, Rotary Club of Central Melbourne & Tony Hutchinson
L-R Tony Hutchinson, Carmel Madden, President of the St Vincent de Paul Koroit/Port Fairy Conference and Frank O'Brien.*

Thank you



During December 2023, Sr Rosemary Graham rsm moved from Mildura to Mercy Place, East Melbourne having come to the decision that it was time to have more support for her health and well-being needs.

Rosemary first lived in Mildura for four years (1964 – 1968 as Sister Marie Pierre) during which time her ministry was as a staff member at Sacred Heart Primary School. (At a guess I feel sure there was more to ministry in Mildura in those days than teaching!)

This present move for Rosemary was significant as she had been living in Mildura (again) since 1997.



Initially, Rosemary carried out her ministry at St Joseph's College in the welfare area; this gave her the opportunity to be involved in the lives of the College families. Following this ministry, her work continued in the care and concern for families in the local area through the St Vincent de Paul Society and as a special minister of the Eucharist to people in their homes.

Over her twenty-six years, Rosemary has been a well-respected and much-loved member of the Mercy and wider Mildura Community. Thank you, Rosemary, for your ministry among the lives of those in the Sunraysia region as you followed in the footsteps of Catherine McAuley and those pioneer Sisters who settled in Mildura, from Wentworth in 1905.

Sr Geraldine Mugavin rsm



St Vincent De Paul Reading Program

The St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria is passionate about helping young people fulfil their potential.

The Education Programs conducted by the Society of St Vincent de Paul are proudly inclusive and welcome all students. They serve young people from families including those experiencing social and economic disadvantage, families who speak English as an additional language and refugees.

The programs assist students with literacy, numeracy and general social, emotional and academic support.

In Warrnambool West, St Vincent de Paul run a reading program which offers children at St Pius X Primary School Warrnambool West the chance to read with a volunteer each week. The program runs each Wednesday of the school term (3:30 - 4.45pm in the library). It is open to any student at St Pius X (prep to Year 6).

Students of all ages and abilities are welcome, from those who need additional support to those who are confident and avid readers. The program provides students with a safe and welcoming environment where they can experience the magic of books, enhance their skills, make new friends and enjoy the support of caring adults. Vinnies would love to welcome some new faces.

Nick Murrell - Principal
<https://www.vinnies.org.au/vic/find-help/education>
 Image: www.pexels.com

RIP Sr Angela Caine

Sr Angela Caine died peacefully at Mercy Place Ballarat on February 13, 2024.

Angela was a Mercy woman of deep faith and love for her Mercy Sisters and her family.

Angela had been a teacher since 1956 in various locations within the Diocese including Ballarat, Donald and Dooboobetic and dedicated her life to others as a teacher and librarian. She was particularly dedicated to helping the disadvantaged as a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Red Cross.

Angela was beautifully cared for by the staff and Pastoral Care Service at Mercy Place, Ballarat. Angela was grateful for the support of Sisters and family through their quiet presence and prayers as they accompanied her to the moment when she was fully embraced into the loving arms of her God whom she served so faithfully.

Fr Justin Driscoll celebrated a Requiem Mass on Thursday, February 22, 2024 at St Alipius Church, Ballarat East.

DOBCEL newsletter #13 – 14 February 2024

Picture courtesy of The Weekly Times (2012)

Sr Angela (left) pictured with her sister, Sr Ursula Caine



The Church needs to listen to the laity, women and men, all called to holiness by virtue of their baptismal vocation: to the testimony of catechists, who in many situations are the first proclaimers of the Gospel; to the simplicity and vivacity of children, the enthusiasm of youth, to their questions, and their pleas; to the dreams, the wisdom and the memory of elderly people.

Letter of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to the People of God

Our Diocesan Community - March 2024

Resurrection or Rejuvenation?

Reflecting on Lent and Holy Week in Yanaoca

The days leading up to Ash Wednesday in many South American countries are filled with merriment and revelry and are celebrated with community festivals. Carnival or Mardi Gras, the other title sometimes adopted, both have meanings found in their Latin roots. Carni (meat) Vale (farewell) and Mardi (Tuesday) Gras (fat or grease). The comparable celebration observed in the parish schools of our diocese would be Pancake Tuesday.

I learned recently that the people of the Andes do not make a connection between Carnival and the onset of the Season of Lent. This time of the year is for anticipating the Cosecha (harvest). The merriment and celebrations are realised in a spirit of thanksgiving for the rain and the life that nature and their land bring to them. There is plenty of water – thrown in any direction and over anyone who happens to be nearby! Not much thought is given to the approaching time of penance, prayer, or alms-giving. The approaching months will be dedicated to the back-breaking work of digging up by hand the potatoes and, with the use of scythes, reaping their crops of barely.

They value the reception of the ashes on their foreheads during Lent, but as many communities celebrate the Eucharist only once a month, the signing with ashes is a practice that continues throughout the entire Season of Lent. My feeling is that receiving the ashes is more strongly associated with their sense of connection to the earth than observance of the Lenten Season. Perhaps we should sign them with the clay of their fields from which they have come and to which they will return?

While for many the weeks of Lent will come and go, the people of the Andes have a strong dedication to La Semana Santa (Holy Week). Palm Sunday takes on a festive atmosphere because, at least here in Yanaoca, the focus is not on the Passion of Jesus, but more exclusively on his entrance into Jerusalem. The young and the old come with branches pulled from shrubs that line the paths they traverse to the Mass, or if they have had time, bunches of flowers from their gardens, and in some cases, the most intricately woven palms. What they carry is blessed at the doorway of the Church, after which the congregation processes around the plaza and back into the Church. At the time of the gospel, it is the triumphal entrance into Jerusalem that is read and not the Passion.

The Washing of the Feet on Holy Thursday evening has a particular appeal to me. The head of the local police may be present, or the mayor and other dignitaries, and these people perform the rite of the Washing of the Feet. The symbolic gesture reminding us of our Christian commitment to serve in the name of Christ is poignant, although it may well be forgotten to some degree later. However, the rite is performed solemnly, and the sandaled feet of those chosen are washed with reverence and respect. Following the Mass, the locals keep vigil before the Blessed Sacrament until midnight.

Good Friday begins at 4:30am as people gather to participate in the Way of the Cross, always scheduled to begin at 5:00am, but rarely beginning on time. This procession is organised and conducted by the young people of the parish who turn up in good numbers, although not all are necessarily present at the beginning but join along the way! Good Friday is by far the highlight of Holy Week. The procession, accompanied by stations and singing, reaches its destination on the top of a steep hill on the edge of the town. It is not a journey for the faint-hearted, negotiating some extremely steep terrain along narrow tracks.

Later in the afternoon, the traditional Good Friday liturgy is celebrated and culminates with the glass-encased image of the dead body of Jesus and an accompanying image of the Sorrowful Mother both paraded through the streets adjoining the plaza.

The sense of sorrow is palpable among the people participating. This is the day they acknowledge with deep love and devotion that their God is a God who walks with them in their sorrow, accompanies them in their struggles and understands pain and suffering.

In recent years attendance at the Easter Vigil has increased with the introduction of an adapted version of the Catechumenate during the Lenten Season. This provides the opportunity for the many adults who have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation to do so. Our average group numbers are around forty and many participants have never received the Eucharist and there are always a number who have not been baptised.

From my observation, the idea of resurrection doesn't seem to resonate with the people of the Andes. The sense of the cycle of life and death encountered within nature is very strong, but somehow the resurrection of Jesus is



Well, after five weeks we developed into a very close knit group sharing our joys, griefs, dreams and hopes. It felt like we were walking together on our faith journey. Taking our cue from one of Fr Chris' homilies we called ourselves - Faith Friends.

At the end of the five weeks Advent was looming and we agreed to meet still via zoom for the four weeks of Advent. And so every Advent and Lent since 2020 we have continued to meet. The time between Lent and Advent seemed to be a long period so we agreed to meet once a month during that time. We were provided with resources from St Declan's.

Six months ago we decided it was time to meet face to face, not just on a screen!! Our Sydney friends organised a trip to Geelong where the Colac contingent would meet up with them.

What a joyful meeting!! We were delighted to meet one another face to face. Everything worked out well. Flights arrived on time, pick up points were arranged and there we were in the Lord of the Isles Hotel in Geelong!! At one stage I remember remarking – this must be what heaven is like!! We could not help smiling at each other. After three hours of jollity and celebration our Sydney friends' pick up arrived to whisk them away to their various departure points and the Colac-ites returned home rejoicing!!

And now we look forward to our next zoom meeting to continue our faith friendship.

God bless Fr Chris for his foresight in enabling such a deeply meaningful experience of walking together in faith.

Clare Arundell - Colac, South Western Victoria

not an absolute focal point of their faith life. They nod in assent to any mention of it, and I am sure they believe that Jesus rose from the dead. It seems to me that the implications of this tenet of faith somehow escape them. By that statement, I am not judging their faith. I suspect they do not have the luxury of spending time contemplating theological notions associated with eschatology or the Parousia, although they do have an integral place for angels within their cosmological sense of human existence.

So, no Easter Eggs, and certainly no Easter Bunny are associated with La Pascua here. Rather a celebration of life as a blessed gift that brings with it hope and joy, along with disappointment and sadness. And of God, who in Jesus makes all things sacred and assures us that somewhere, somehow, the cycle of life will reach its intended conclusion for each one of us.

Fr Michael McKinnon

CONSEQUENCE OF A COVID CONNECT

Early in 2020 when the pandemic raised its ugly head and we were prevented from attending our Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, my friend, from St Declan's Parish in Penshurst NSW, informed me of the livestream of their Sunday Mass. As the days went on this parish livestreamed a Mass every day. I watched the livestreaming regularly. I found myself becoming very much part of their gathering. Even gave the man who lit the candles and extinguished them faithfully each day a name! As the weeks passed and the lockdown continued, Fr Chris announced his idea of forming Connect groups via zoom as a way of keeping in touch faith wise during the dreary lockdown. I shared with my friend that I would like to join such a group. We registered and three other persons were assigned to our group and I invited my friend Mary in Colac to become part of the group.

Fr Chris arranged a five week program whereby participants watched the homily each week and we were provided with some appropriate reflections and a means of exploring our faith.



ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE



Cay Xuan Trinh was ordained as Deacon for the Diocese of Ballarat on Saturday, December 16, 2023 at St Patrick's Cathedral at 10.00am. The Principal Celebrant for the Mass was Bishop Paul Bird CSsR and he was joined on the sanctuary by concelebrants Bishop Emeritus Peter Connors, Fr Marcello Colasante, Vicar General, Fr Ed Moloney, St Patrick's Cathedral Administrator, Very Rev Dr Cameron Forbes, Rector of Corpus Christi College, as well as a number of diocesan and visiting clergy to celebrate this occasion, along with many fellow seminarians of the ordinand.

Cay's family, who are in Vietnam, joined the Mass online and many of his friends were in attendance, to participate in this Mass and to support him on this important step towards his Ordination to the Priesthood, which will be celebrated at a later date.

Dr Peter Morris welcomed all to this celebration and began the Mass with an Acknowledgement of Country. The Liturgy of the Word followed, with Chris Jansen proclaiming the First Reading and Deacon Jim Curtain proclaiming the Gospel. The choir and musicians led the music beautifully during the Mass, inviting all to participate in song. Roger Hillman conducted the choir and Geoff Martin played the organ. Dr Susan Crowe sang the Litany.

During the Rite of Ordination, Cay was Called and Presented by Very Rev Cameron Forbes, Rector of Corpus Christi College, to Bishop Paul for Ordination as Deacon. Then followed the Election by the Bishop and Consent of the People, Bishop Paul's Homily, the Commitment to Celibacy, Examination of the Candidate, Promise of Obedience, Litany of the Saints, Laying on of Hands and Prayer of Consecration. For the Investiture with the Stole and Dalmatic, Cay was vested by Fr Neville Stanislaus and Rev Deacon Cong Hoang. He was then presented with the Book of the Gospels and a Kiss of Peace from Bishop Paul and other deacons in attendance.

During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the gifts were brought forward by Thuy Le and Truong Pham. Towards the end of the Mass, Cay offered words of thanks. Following Mass, morning tea was provided at St Patrick's Hall.

LEARNING IN STEAM

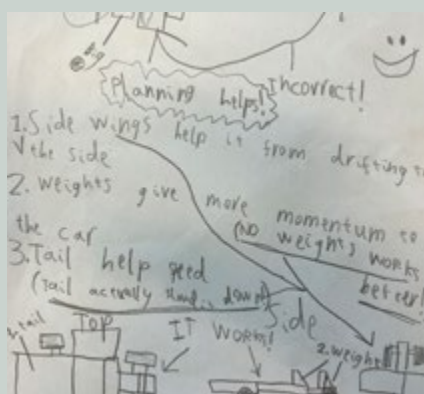
In 2024, St Alipius Parish Primary School Ballarat East students are participating in weekly STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) classes for the first time.

To begin the year, all students across the school took part in a Lego challenge with the goal to plan and build a car that could move down a ramp as fast as possible. Students used an engineering design process to draw a plan of their car and to record their thinking over three weeks. They explored physics concepts such as momentum and friction to improve their models.

It was wonderful to see the finished products and how well students persevered to improve their cars over time. Many cars were able to clear the ramp in under two seconds, including some built by Foundation students!

We love learning that helps us to extend and challenge our thinking in new ways!

Emily Clarke - Principal



AN END OF AN ERA

St Brendan's Primary School, Dunnstown celebrated their history and contribution to the education of many in the local community on November 25, 2023. The school officially closed at the end of the school year.

In June 2023, Tom Sexton, Executive Director of Catholic Education Ballarat, announced the closure. "It is with a deep sense of sadness that Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Ltd (DOBCEL) has made the difficult decision to close St Brendan's Primary School, Dunnstown at the end of the school year."

The decision was based around the context of a forecast 2024 enrolment of eight students across Years 3 to 5, no new foundation enrolments for three consecutive years and a regulatory requirement for a minimum of 11 students. Inez French, Principal, her staff and the families of St Brendan's have been tireless in their efforts to improve enrolments over the past few years. Inez has been part of the school community for around ten years, with the last four as Principal. Families were supported in their preferred school choice for 2024 and all chose to enrol at St Alipius Parish School in Ballarat East.

Catholic education has played a prominent role in the Bungaree Parish and the district of Dunnstown for over one hundred and sixty years. St Brendan's had its origins



Celebrations to recognise the rich contribution of the school and all who played a part in its history were planned for many months and the day was a wonderful celebration. As was reported on the St Brendan's Facebook Page, nothing was going to stop celebrations from going ahead. Despite sun, storms and a power blackout those who attended had the most amazing time.

The school community issued a huge thanks to all who made the day such a wonderful event. To the people who travelled from just down the road or from afar, from the youngest just a few months old to the oldest, Shelia White (100 years young) and to the many, many past and present students, staff and families that attended or sent messages.

Many people came together because of the connections they had to St Brendan's. Nothing could truly capture the atmosphere. There was much reminiscing, joy, sadness, laughter, stories shared and memories recalled. A walk down memory lane for many as people gathered to peruse the memorabilia collected over many years.

The school is and has been an important part of the Dunnstown community, with many families having different generations attending at different times, even one family spanning six generations. It is with great sadness, of course, that the school is closing but at the celebration an announcement was made that the provision of Catholic education at the St Brendan's Dunnstown site will continue, with Damascus College Ballarat working together with the Parish of Bungaree and the Dunnstown community to provide learning opportunities for their students.



in 1858 in a wooden building known as the Catholic School Shed, situated not far from its present site. Throughout its rich history, the school has been served by a combination of religious orders and lay teachers. A great deal is owed to the Josephite Sisters, who taught there for ten years, the Presentation Sisters for forty four years and the Sisters of Mercy for thirteen years, as well as the many dedicated lay teachers and Principals who have taught in the school under the leadership of successive parish priests.

Seminary Visit

On Thursday, November 2, 2023, Bishop Paul Bird visited Corpus Christi Seminary in Carlton to meet with each of the seminarians for our diocese of Ballarat. Bishop Paul enjoyed lunch with seminarians, Cay Trinh, Channa Tilakarathna and Simon Zakari. The lunch group included one of Bishop Paul's Redemptorist confreres, Fr Terry Kennedy, who has recently been appointed as a spiritual director at the seminary. A photo was taken after lunch of the group standing in front of a painting of Archbishop Daniel Mannix.



Rite of Election 2024

The annual Rite of Election was celebrated on Saturday, February 17, 2024 at St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat by Bishop Paul Bird CSsR and assisted by Fr Justin Driscoll, Parish Priest of Creswick, Daylesford and Gordon.

During the Rite of Election, an important step in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) journey, the candidates and catechumens are presented to the local bishop as a sign of their "election" into the Catholic community. It is at this gathering that those wishing to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist make public their intention to continue their discernment and preparation during the Season of Lent.

Nine parishes were represented with catechumens (those yet to be baptised) and candidates (those who have already been baptised but have yet to receive the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation) accompanied by their sponsors/godparents, family and fellow parishioners.

Catechumens were presented from the parishes of Ballarat Cathedral, Colac, Creswick, Daylesford, Redan and Sebastopol with apologies from South West Coast and Sunraysia.

Candidates were presented from the parishes of Creswick, Gordon and Sebastopol with apologies from Ballarat Cathedral and Sunraysia.

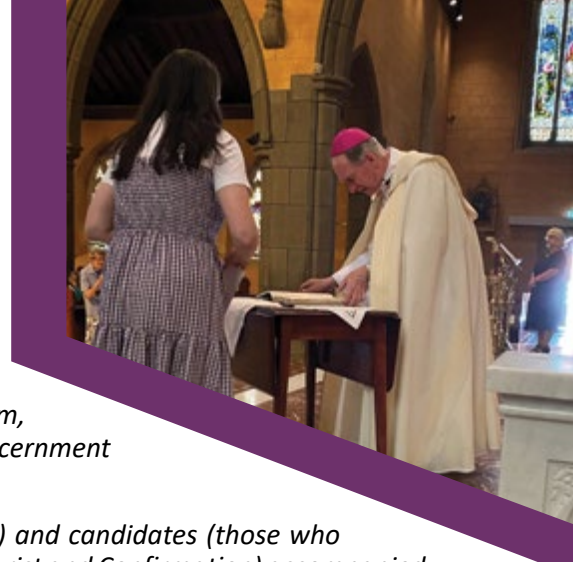
Following the blessing and dismissal, all present joined Bishop Paul for lunch in St Patrick's Cathedral Hall.

Thank you to all those involved in the success of the Rite of Election: Maria Noonan as Presenter, Anthea Stanton as Reader, Dr Susan Crowe as Cantor, Maria Russell as Organist and choir members from the St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat Parish, Parish Delegates, Sponsors of the catechumens and candidates and Brett Hayward for catering.

Thanks must also go to all those involved in the preparation and co-ordination of the RCIA program in parishes.

The journey of discernment for these catechumens and candidates will culminate at the Easter Vigil where they receive the Sacraments of Initiation and are officially welcomed into the Catholic Church by the local parish community.

Photos supplied by Fr Justin Driscoll, Bernadette Lynch and Susan Crowe



MEET OUR MINI VINNIES

Sacred Heart Primary School Casterton held a commissioning ceremony for their 2024 Mini Vinnies Team.

The team will be led again by Dana Murphy, who did an exceptional job last year raising funds and awareness in the school community.

Congratulations to all the students who put their hands up to volunteer for Mini Vinnies. We can't wait to see what you achieve this year!

Suzie McManus – Principal



Ministry of Caring



The ministry of caring that is the Christmas Day lunch began in 1991 at Our Lady Help of Christians Parish, Wendouree. It continued this year in the usual joyful and celebratory way, built on a long history of service and care for each other in the parish. Volunteers provided their time and energy to offer guests a carefully prepared meal and a festive welcome and we all shared a time of togetherness and family.

The OLHC caring group has provided care to parishioners including visitation and funeral hospitality since the early 1990's. The group also initiated a welcoming ministry when people enter the church for Mass. From this welcoming culture the annual Christmas Day lunch evolved.

The first few years saw the lunch held in a school class room, all preparations performed in the tuck shop and staffroom stove. As the numbers of guests grew, the lunch was moved to the parish meeting room and then again to the gym area as demand increased. It is now

held in the school hall facility adjoining the gym, using the parish kitchen. The parish kitchen has been a wonderfully helpful part of the parish facilities for parish gatherings. Initially all the dishes from the Christmas lunches were washed by hand, a very committed effort on Christmas day for the volunteers until the kitchen was upgraded to commercial standard.

For many years Exodus members collected up the more mobile guests without transport from their homes in the mini-bus and drove them home again after lunch. Other volunteers with cars brought the frailer guests. The lunch was funded by a combination of small grants and generous donations and this generosity continues to the present day. Guests come from all over town. One year, one person to our amazement drove a gopher from Sebastopol, charged it at the hall and drove home after.

The volunteer group is a diverse cluster of happy and energetic workers – some offering their time each year while others contribute alternative years as families do in the in-laws/outlaws juggle that many of us undertake! There are tasks for everyone – planning, preparation and setting up for the lunch, meal delivery, the serving of food and the inevitable clean up at the end of a long day. We have been very fortunate in recent years as protocols for functions have been more defined, to have the talents of a wonderful chef whose gifts have made this occasion possible.

We are very grateful for the generous annual donation of meat from a meat company within the parish that has been cooked for our Christmas Day lunch since the very beginning. This extraordinary generosity is much appreciated and reminds us yearly of the story of the loaves and fishes – even in the absence of actual fish!! Others with their families fill festive bags with sweet treats for guests and send them to the parish centre to be distributed on the day. We remember and value the work of the pioneers of this lovely and responsive event – generosity and kindness that has endured and has continued to blossom because it meets a very obvious need.

The goodwill for the yearly event is evident in the contribution of artwork by OLHC, St Columba's, Loreto College and Damascus College students – hand made cards and greetings and decorated bags arrive in time to be handed to guests on the day.

We see volunteers of all ages from the parish, other parishes and people not connected to a parish or church of any sort – everyone chooses to be involved in providing a family-like, safe and joyous Christmas Day meal for those requiring this for whatever reason. Some guests are bereaved, some live alone, or living apart from family and would like to spend part of Christmas Day with others in a welcoming space.

In recent years a significant development has been the establishment of an enthusiastic coordinating team who take responsibility for ensuring the whole event runs smoothly. This has ensured the sustainability of the Christmas Day lunch for many years to come

Christmas lunch 2023 saw a number of guests form an impromptu choir to lead the carol singing before lunch – a fantastic response given that it was such an immediate action in a call out for leaders. There were some very enthusiastic vocalists in that little group – we hope we see them – and hear them - again next year.

Thank you to all the very wonderful volunteers for their work in making the Christmas Day lunch so special over the last thirty two years. We welcome all those who would like to be with us as a guest or a volunteer on a day that we see as a Christmas gathering of family.

Karen Davies

Our Diocesan Community - March 2024

‘21ST CENTURY STORYTELLING’

Director of Learning and Teaching at Monivae College Hamilton, Benjamin White, has contributed to a peer-reviewed article, specifically about Monivae’s inclusion of digital games in their English curriculum.

The unit is called ‘21st Century Storytelling’ and demonstrates a commitment to include as many digital technology offerings as possible. The paper, titled “Designing Game - Centered Curricula: A Critical Inquiry”, reveals that designing and implementing digital game-centred curricula is complex. Read the open source resource at: <https://llpjournal.org/2024/02/01/a-bacalja-digital-game-literacies-02.html>

Kylie Schurmann - Marketing Co-ordinator



SJOG welcomes 2024 nurses



St John of God Ballarat Hospital is proud to announce the commencement of its 2024 graduate nursing program, marking a significant milestone with the largest cohort of graduate nurses to date. Thirty-two dedicated graduate nurses have embarked on their professional journey, reflecting the hospital’s commitment to enhancing health care services in the Ballarat community.

This year’s program is divided into two specialised areas: the Pathways to Practice graduate nurse program and the Pathways to Practice graduate perioperative nurse program. These programs are designed to blend learning with practical bedside experience, enabling our graduate nurses to deliver exceptional patient care.

Pathways to Practice graduate nurse program - The program is structured to provide exposure to various medical settings. Participants will undergo two 6-month rotations across different wards, including surgical, oncology, medical, and potentially our Emergency Department or Intensive Care Unit. This year, fifteen registered nurses and nine enrolled nurses will be involved in this program.

Pathways to Practice graduate perioperative nurse program - Tailored for those with an interest in perioperative nursing, this program offers rotations through critical roles such as scrub scout, anaesthetics and recovery. Eight registered nurses have started this program.

Josh Stott, Quality & Development Manager, expressed his enthusiasm for the new cohort. “Welcoming this year’s graduates, our largest group yet, is not just about numbers. It’s about the fresh perspectives, energy and commitment they bring to our hospital,” he said. “Their journey is a vital part of our mission to provide outstanding care, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact they will have on our patients and the Ballarat community.”

Are you ready to kick start your nursing or midwifery career in an environment that champions your growth and success? The graduate nurse program offers 12 months of comprehensive experience featuring:

- Permanent contracts
- Competitive salary
- Diverse clinical rotations
- Supportive team environment
- Emphasis on education and training
- Small group coaching sessions
- Opportunities for career development and advancement

To learn more about the graduate nurse and midwife programs, please visit sjog.org.au/working-with-us/graduate-nursing-jobs

Jamie Lovett - Communications & Marketing Officer, St John of God Ballarat Hospital



HAPPY 1st BIRTHDAY COCO

Early in 2023, the exciting news was shared that Sacred Heart Primary School Mildura had acquired funding from the Mildura City Council for a wellbeing dog and the training that goes with having a dog on school grounds via the Dogs Connect Program. Marcus and Julie Brown of PETstock Mildura also very generously committed to sponsoring our wellbeing dog for which the school is very appreciative. Anything that is needed for the care and health of our dog is supplied by PETstock.

The puppy was born in March 2023, chocolate in colour with curly hair. She was sent out around the end of April and went through very specialised training to be part of the school community and introduced slowly into the classrooms.

After collecting suggested names for her, she was called Coco which is a name well suited to her. Coco is an Australian Cobber Dog (purebred Labrador/Poodle cross) so she is hypoallergenic and does not shed fur. She has wool-like fur, so will not pick up as many outdoor allergens.

Each family was sent a letter to gauge an indication of their children’s experiences with dogs so that an individualised transition/introduction could take place prior to Coco being introduced to the students when she was ready. Coco is, and will continue to be, in training to remain passive and calm while at school. She is not the school’s pet dog, but a wellbeing dog.

Dogs Connect was first set up in school communities throughout Victoria. They have introduced wellbeing dogs in over 250 schools all around Australia and all of them have spoken of improved attendance and an openness to learn since their dog joined the community. Students and staff are happier and they have noticed less anxiety among their community. The benefits have been remarkable, not just with mental health but with improved student learning outcomes. We love working with educators who are passionate about supporting young people to become valuable and independent people. A school dog can become entrenched in the pedagogy and bring powerful impacts to students, staff and families.

On Friday, March 1, 2024 the school celebrated Coco’s 1st birthday with all students receiving an icy pole. Coco has become an important feature of our school community and is very loved!

Mark Gibson - Principal
<https://dogsconnect.net.au/schools/>



THE REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

In 2023 for Christmas, the Diocesan Office staff thought that the Reverse Advent Calendar was a great opportunity to give to those in need. The Ballarat Reverse Advent Calendar had a number of collection points with the official box return day at the York Street Church of Christ on December 16.

The Ballarat Reverse Advent Calendar partnered with St Vincent de Paul, Uniting Care, Anglicare and the Salvation Army to distribute the boxes to people in the community who are doing it tough. Anyone who wanted to receive a filled box was required to register with one of these agencies. Each of these agencies came together at the York St Church of Christ where the boxes were distributed by them as part of a Big Blessing Day. A range of other fun and free activities for the recipients of boxes to enjoy were also provided on this day. As of Sunday night, December 17, 1393 boxes had been delivered for those in need.

Reverse Advent Calendar begins as an empty box. For twenty days during December, one item is placed into the box (non-perishable food, toiletries, Christmas treats). A very helpful list is provided by the coordinators of the Reverse Advent Calendar. Some boxes were filled all at one time!! A little way to bring some Christmas cheer.

For more information, please see: <https://www.facebook.com/reverseadventcalendarballarat/>



Earth Care Corner



Mullawallah Wetlands in order to give us an idea about its biodiversity. We would like to compare the wetlands data with our own school dam's data and investigate what we might be able to do to increase biodiversity in our own aquatic environment.

We are hopeful to be allocated a place in the River Detectives program to help with some information and resources to assist in doing this. Notification of successful schools will take place in late March, so fingers crossed.

What an exciting few weeks it's been in Earth Care at Siena Primary School Lucas. Students have been studying the aquatic invertebrates of our local

River Detectives is an exciting education initiative of Catchment Management Authorities inspiring teachers and students to understand,

appreciate and care for their local waterway through engaging, cross-curricular, citizen-science activities.

Students have also been taking a close look at our waste, where it goes and how it is treated in order to have minimal impact on the environment. Parent and Ballarat City Council Project Manager, Bec Love, delivered a presentation about the local landfill site helping the kids to understand how important it is to reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill. Lots to learn in the care of our earth!

Shelley Ryan - Principal

<https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/>
Picture: Two different species of Dragonfly Nymph (mudbugs) found in the sample of water from Mullawallah Wetlands

Making a Scene at Christmas

On Thursday, November 30, St Brendan's Primary School Coragulac visited Colac to view the 'Making a Scene at Christmas' (MASAC) display of Nativity scenes from around the world. It was quite fascinating to see how different countries depict the Nativity scene, and to hear how interpretations of the Gospel story have developed.

For instance, the Gospels do not give a number for how many kings or wise men that visited Jesus. It is thought that the number 'three' came from the fact that there were three gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Children were able to see and smell frankincense and myrrh and hold a coin minted in the time of Jesus. As we headed into the Christmas season, it was wonderful to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.

MASAC was in Colac from November 27 - December 3 at the invitation of the United Church community. Other schools to view the display included Sacred Heart Primary School Colac and St Mary's Primary School Colac. Counting the students, over nine hundred people visited the show and all were impressed with the display of over 250 nativities.

Leanne Eastman – Principal





Teacher and author brings love of writing to students every day

It's not often that children have the opportunity to develop their reading and writing skills with guidance from a published children's author. But at Our Lady Help of Christians (OLHC) Primary School in Wendouree, this is a daily treat.

OLHC Wendouree teacher, Jodi Toering, has recently published her second children's book 'Night Watch', the story of a pair of tawny frogmouths as they soar through the skies and through the night keeping watch over the Australian countryside and fauna. "Growing up I had two dreams – to be a teacher and to write picture books for children," Jodi says. "I love bringing stories to life for the children, not only to improve their skills, but hopefully to inspire a lifelong love of writing and reading."

Jodi says she wants the students to see themselves as authors. "Even with the younger students, we unpack the text and discuss what makes the story work or not work and I challenge them to write their own. I never tell a child what to write. Writers want to write about things they know and love," she said.

Jodi's first book was titled 'Mallee Sky' and on Friday, March 1, 2024 she was celebrated by the OLHC community for her second successful publication, 'Night Watch'.

OLHC Principal, Leigh Bradshaw, says Jodi's personal passion for writing and language comes through in her teaching, and is greatly appreciated by the students. "Jodi is not only a talented children's writer, but also an amazing and energetic teacher. She encourages and inspires the students to think about their own writing. There are very few reluctant writers in Jodi's classes! Our school community celebrated the launch of 'Night Watch' with great excitement and pride today," she said.

Jodi was born in the Mallee at Hopetoun and grew up on a wheat farm outside a small town called Beulah. She is currently collaborating on a guide for other teachers called 'Inside Story – Creative Writing for Students', due to be published in April.

Gerard Delaney (DOBCEL Manager Communications and Marketing)

"To progress in its discernment, the Church absolutely needs to listen to everyone, starting with the poorest. This requires a path of conversion on its part, which is also a path of praise: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children" (Luke 10:21)! It means listening to those who have been denied the right to speak in society or who feel excluded, even by the Church".

Employee Assistance Program



The Catholic Diocese of Ballarat has recently signed up to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for all diocesan staff and parish employees. The service is provided via EAP Assist, information found at <http://eapassist.com.au>

An EAP is a support service that provides employees access to confidential phone counselling from anywhere in the country. It also provides online tools for self-help and wellness hints and tips.

It is not compulsory and does not come with a cost to those who use the service. It is designed to assist workers on those days where they just need an independent voice to chat to or a space to find some wellness hints and tips.

There are many staff across the diocese who spend considerable time on their own and may be faced with tricky issues from time to time. This service does not replace the conversations with immediate supervisors, nor does it take the place of any service or protocol that may be in place currently, either at the diocese or within the parish. It is an additional resource for diocesan and parish employees should they choose to use it. The service is confidential and there are no records kept at the diocese of who calls or how many times. It is hoped that people find this service useful.

Ross Wheatland - Diocesan Business Manager

Visit to the Art Gallery

On Tuesday, February 27, 2024, Sociology students from Loreto College Ballarat visited the Art Gallery of Ballarat. During their visit they were fortunate to have talented local artist, Pauline O'Shannessy-Dowling, as their guide. Pauline is familiar to many in the Loreto community because she has generously shared her time and talents with students at Spirituality Days.

Pauline guided the students through a series of artworks which would explore the Sociological concepts of cultural relativism and ethnocentrism.

Many of the artworks were created by local Indigenous artists such as Marlene Gilson and Deanne Gilson. One of the highlights was being able to see a special exhibition from local First Nations artist, Georgia MacGuire titled *Onemda*, which explored her deep love of Country.

A heart made from echidna quills, a stunning headdress of eagle feathers, COVID facemasks shaped from paperbark and a series of possum skin furry hearts made for an entrancing and tactile display. The excursion was fascinating and stimulated rich discussion which no doubt will be continued back in the classroom.

Jayne Carrigg (Faculty Coordinator: Humanities)





Clontarf Program

With a staggered start to the year, St Patrick's College Ballarat Clontarf Program now have all boys back on deck. It is also exciting to see the numbers increase in the program from 32 in 2023 to 45 boys in 2024.

The Clontarf Foundation exists to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and by doing so equip them to fully realise their potential. The program exposes participants to as many experiences, activities, environments, people and opportunities as possible. Whether it's academic achievement, exciting employment visits, personal milestones or challenges overcome – the boys have amazing stories to tell.

It was great to meet our new cohort of ten Year 7 boys. They are a great bunch and I am looking forward to the energy that they will bring to our program.

Our eleven new Boarders include students from Darwin, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs making the big move to St Patrick's College. They are an impressive group of young men and they will add a lot to our young academy.

We have a busy term planned for our boys with the Year 7 Induction camp, Year 8/9 camp to Anglesea and the Clontarf Employment forum in Melbourne for our Year 10-12 boys. Along with our morning trainings and afternoon activities, we have a jam-packed term to keep our boys engaged.

Mr David Friebe, Clontarf Academy Director
<https://clontarf.org.au/>

We welcome Fr Francis Kureckal MST, Fr Concord G Bagoisan OSJ and Fr Alex Valliyamthadathil CM.

Fr Francis is from the state of Kerala in India, belonging to the Missionary Society of St Thomas the Apostle (MST). Fr Francis was ordained in 1996. After working for about twenty five years in the mission area, he was interested in pastoral work in a parish setup. Fr Francis is the fourth member of the Missionary Society of St Thomas (MST) to minister in our Diocese. Fr Francis will minister at the Cathedral Parish in Ballarat.

NEW CLERGY IN THE DIOCESE

Fr Con is from the Religious Congregation of the Oblates of St Joseph Philippine Province. He joined the OSJ congregation in 1985 and was ordained priest on February 10, 1996. Most recently, before coming to the Ballarat Diocese, Fr Con worked in the Diocese of Bunbury, Western Australia. He is Administrator of the St Alipius Parish Ballarat East presently and will soon become Parish Priest of the Redan/Sebastopol/Linton parishes.

Fr Alex is also a priest from Kerala in India. He belongs to the Vincentian Congregation, St Josephs' Province Kottayam. Fr Alex was ordained as a priest in December, 2006 and came to Australia to serve the Syro Malabar Eparchy of St Thomas The Apostle, Melbourne. Fr Alex has been appointed in Ballarat as the Chaplain of Syro Malabar Community for a period of time.

We wish them all the best in their appointments in the Diocese of Ballarat.



Spirit of the Season

As the 2023 year came to an end, the St Michael's Wycheproof Community (part of the East Wimmera Parish) extended best wishes of the Christmas season to all communities across the Buloke Shire and beyond. Taking a moment to celebrate the year that was full of milestone birthday celebrations, special visits, sacrament celebrations, World Day of Prayer, historic prayer-book displays and so much more.

The Nativity Scene was prominently on show in Webster Street over the 2022 festive season and returned for 2023. Complimenting the 'Christmas Lights' on Broadway and around the community, St Michael's were thrilled to feature this traditional display at the front of the church with accompanying lighting in the lead-up to Christmas. The display was kindly loaned through Barry and Deborah Crockett. It was a sight to see. The Church featured another Nativity Scene inside. The unique wooden figurine display was made by creative former students at St Michael's School in the late 1950's and is a special piece of history relative to the former school and parish community.

First printed in the Buloke Times – Jackie Noonan (adapted)
Our Diocesan Community - March 2024

NEW WELLBEING INITIATIVE

All 58 Catholic Education Ballarat (CEB) primary and secondary schools now have access to a leading online mental health and wellbeing platform designed to proactively support families and students and strengthen parent-school partnerships.

SchoolTV is a highly regarded, evidence-based suite of resources, endorsed and informed by eminent child and adolescent psychologist, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg.

CEB Leader of Wellbeing, Tony Perkins, says effective responses to student wellbeing require a proactive and whole-of-community approach where schools and families are on the same page. "SchoolTV provides regular communication and support materials for parents with the common goal of achieving better wellbeing outcomes for all students," he said. "This is a high-quality suite of resources that we believe will provide welcome support for parents to help navigate the complexities of modern-day parenting, with the aim of raising happy, self-assured, and resilient young people."

"The platform addresses the full range of contemporary issues impacting young people's mental health and wellbeing, while providing schools with the flexibility to select, publish and promote resources tailored to local needs and context."

The Executive Director of Catholic Education Ballarat, Tom Sexton, said more broadly the program would further strengthen partnerships between Catholic schools and families, which research shows leads to better learning outcomes.

Please find attached summaries of the topics and themes included in the program and/or visit the SchoolTV website - <https://schooltv.me/>

Gerard Delaney (DOBCEL Manager Communications and Marketing)



Image © <https://www.123rf.com/free-images/>
Our Diocesan Community - March 2024



Be Connected

Congratulations to students and staff at St Mary MacKillop College, Swan Hill on the 'Be Connected Young Mentors Program'.

In partnership with the Swan Hill Regional Library, this program supports older Australians to improve their digital skills by bringing them together with young people in a mentoring capacity, to share digital skills and knowledge.

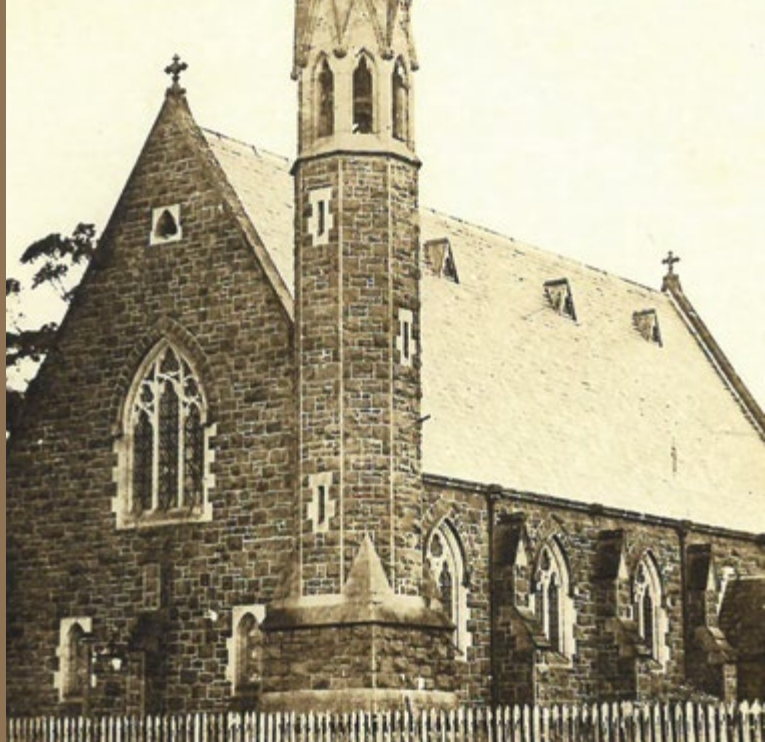
What a fantastic concept, achieving practical, educational, personal development and engagement outcomes, on so many levels.

The program not only facilitates digital learning for older Australians and builds their confidence in using technology, but it also gives young people the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills.

Michelle Haeusler - Principal

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/seniors/be-connected-young-mentors>





Our Diocese of Ballarat turns 150 this year. It was on March 30, 1874, that Pope Pius the Ninth issued a decree that marked the beginning of the Ballarat Diocese.

Marking an anniversary provides us with an occasion to reflect on the past, affirm people in the present and look hopefully to the future. All of these elements will be a part of our acknowledgement of the 150th anniversary of the diocese in the course of this year.

In this first part of the year, during the season of Lent, there has been a focus on the years gone by. It has provided an opportunity to reflect on our history. In a spirit of gratitude, we give thanks for all the blessings of these years. In a Lenten spirit of repentance, we ask forgiveness for the failings. We acknowledge both strengths and weaknesses. We celebrate the achievements and recognise the failures to live our Christian faith to the full.

We pray that this season of Lent be a time of repentance for each one of us, and as a diocesan community. We pray that God grant a new heart and a new spirit to each one of us, and to our whole diocese. We pray that we live more and more as a truly Christian community, a community of communities, from the Murray to the sea. We continue to pray.

(Adapted from Bishop Paul Bird's Ash Wednesday homily)

We are the Catholic Church of the Ballarat Diocese. We gather in the name of Jesus from the Murray to the Sea in interwoven faith communities. Spirit-filled, we celebrate and share our journey; reaching out to nurture all God's people.

Vision Statement for the Diocese

Photos: Front cover: Cathedral Interior early years. Back cover: 1. St Augustine's Church Creswick c 1910. 2. St Alipius Parish Church Ballarat East 3. Beaufort Streatham Church 1912. 4. St Augustine's Church Maryborough