



Catholic Diocese of Ballarat

Community
Remember *Revitalise*
Hope

150 years



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

Romans 12.12

CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT



OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY

News around the Diocese

No. 74 November 2024

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OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY (ODC)

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Leadership in Our Communities



On November 15-16 this year, people from all around our diocese of Ballarat will gather for a diocesan assembly. The focus will be on leadership in our communities. How can we promote the kind of leadership that fosters the gifts of all parishioners?

The assembly will include delegates from each of our parishes, representatives from religious congregations, diocesan committees, health services, aged care, school communities and the Catholic Education Office, CatholicCare social services, organisations

such as the St Vincent de Paul Society, Catholic Women's League and Australian Catholic University, as well as the priests of our diocese. The venue will be Federation University, Mount Helen, which has suitable meeting spaces and also accommodation for those attending from out of town.

In preparation for the assembly, there have been gatherings throughout the diocese – in Mildura, Robinvale, Horsham, Colac, Buninyong, Wendouree and Warrnambool. These gatherings have provided opportunities to reflect on leadership in our communities and to share thoughts in a prayerful atmosphere. They have followed a method of "Conversations in the Spirit", in which we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us as we listen to each person sharing from their heart. This method was used in the sessions of the Australian Plenary Council in 2021 and 2022 and at the first session of the worldwide Synod in Rome in 2023.

Reflecting on the experience of the Synod in Rome, Cardinal Blaise Cupich explained the process as a way of listening to the Spirit by listening to one another. "As a practical consequence of giving priority to listening to the Spirit in our conversations, each of us would take our place at a round table with six to eight other delegates. We would be asked to participate in a series of conversations with interludes of silence to allow us to really listen to what was said by the others. In sum, instead of giving speeches, we were to talk to and listen to one another . . . There are two necessary attitudes that are fundamental to this process: active listening and speaking from the heart."

Those who have taken part in the gatherings around our diocese over the past months have followed this process of listening and speaking from the heart in addressing questions of leadership in our communities. They have considered the kind of leadership that will help us fulfil our calling to be communities that live as Christ has taught us and share the message of Christ with our world. Some of the qualities that they mentioned were leadership that serves, leadership that listens, leadership that communicates well, leadership that is accountable, leadership that builds bridges between people, leadership that is faith-filled.

The diocesan assembly in November will be a further step along a journey that has involved a sharing of faith over the past few years.

In a speech in 2015, Pope Francis emphasised that we all have something to learn through listening to others. He spoke about the Church as “synodal” and he said, “A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realises that listening is more than simply hearing. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the ‘Spirit of truth’ (John 14:17), in order to know what the Spirit ‘is saying to the Churches’ (Revelation 2:7).”

In 2018 and 2019, there were local gatherings in Australia in preparation for our national Plenary Council. All together, over 220,000 people took part in these gatherings. We considered the very broad question, “What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?” From our diocese of Ballarat, 93 groups and 227 individuals sent in responses. The responses from all around Australia were gathered by a team from the National Centre for Pastoral Research led by Dr Trudy Dantis and presented in a 298-page report entitled “Listen to what the Spirit is saying”.

The local gatherings were followed by the first session of the Plenary Council held online and the second session held in person. Throughout this process, we were invited to speak from the heart and listen carefully to one another. We were encouraged to walk together in faith.

In 2020, Pope Francis highlighted the theme of walking together for the whole Church when he called a world-wide synod that would include lay people as well as bishops. The word “synod” comes from two Greek words meaning “together” and “path”. We are invited to walk together on the path the Spirit marks out for us. We are called to walk together on the road of our lives in company with Christ, as the two disciples walked with the Risen Lord on the road to Emmaus. Our diocesan assembly will be a time of walking together as a diocesan community.

The focus on the theme of leadership is in response to one of the decrees of the Australian Plenary Council, encouraging us to develop leadership in a synodal style. Decree 7 of the Plenary Council is about leadership and governance in the Church. It includes the following paragraph.

“This Plenary Council affirms that governance in the Catholic Church should be exercised in a synodal manner,

with the appropriate participation of all the baptised. For a diocese, this would mainly involve the participation of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Council of Priests, the College of Consultors, the Diocesan Finance Council, the Diocesan Curia, various boards and governance bodies, and, at times, a Diocesan Synod. For a parish, this would mainly involve the participation of the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Committee.”

Participation in governance in the Church is based on baptism. All those who share in the life of the Church through baptism have a role to play in discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church so that decision-making is in accord with the Spirit. The Australian Plenary Council listed various bodies at the diocesan level and at the parish level through which the faithful participate in this discernment. In our diocesan assembly, delegates will be able to share reflections on how bodies such as parish pastoral councils and a diocesan pastoral council can be developed, for the benefit of our parish communities and for the benefit of our diocesan community.

I look forward to sharing in our diocesan assembly, praying with the delegates and listening to their reflections, as well as sharing my own thoughts. I see this as a great opportunity to learn from one another. To paraphrase the words of Pope Francis from 2015, the diocesan assembly for Ballarat is an assembly called to listen, to realise that listening is more than simply hearing. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the priests and the bishop: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, in order to know what the Spirit is saying to the Church of Ballarat.

I hope November 15 and 16 will be blessed days for all the delegates and that the assembly will bear fruit that will bring blessings to everyone in our diocese. Please pray for our diocesan assembly and for our whole diocesan community. May we learn more and more to walk together, guided by the Spirit of Christ.



Bishop Paul Bird CSsR

Photo credit: Giovanni Portelli and Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

ASSEMBLY FORMATION

In preparation for the Diocesan Assembly in November this year, formation sessions were held around the diocese with a focus on leadership and governance.

The formation opportunity was for clergy, Parish Leadership Teams (including Pastoral Councils, Finance Councils and other parish leadership groups), along with representatives from religious orders, diocesan commissions and committees, health services, aged care, DOBCEL and the education sector and Catholic organisations.

Fr Justin Driscoll facilitated the formation sessions. In his introduction, Fr Justin asked the question, why are we here with you? Many



people were unsure. Fr Justin went on to clarify the reason for the sessions and talked about the Diocesan Assembly in November, with the focus on Leadership and Governance in a Synodal Church and the hope of providing guidelines to develop and support leadership and governance at the parish and diocesan levels.

Fr Justin presented data and facts about the diocese - who we are, where we are, what our mission is and to where our outreach extends. He included the points below on the Assembly in his introduction.



Why an assembly? Considering the Plenary Council Decree 7: At the service of Communion, Participation, and Mission

- Governance, Bishop Paul Bird called a Diocesan Assembly on leadership and governance for a synodal church, to coincide with the 150th Anniversary of the Diocese of Ballarat.

Why an Assembly and not a Synod? The Diocese of Ballarat has decided on an assembly as Bishop Paul turned 75 in July and has submitted his resignation letter to the Pope. The assembly can inform the process for a Synod, following the appointment of a new Bishop for the diocese.

Who will be at the Assembly? Clergy who serve their community, delegates from each parish, religious orders representatives/delegates from diocesan commissions and committees, health services, aged care, DOBCEL and the education sector, Catholic organisations such as St Vincent de Paul, Knights of the Southern Cross and CWL.

What is the agenda of the Assembly? The agenda for Assembly is not set at this point. The focus of the Assembly is Leadership and Governance in a synodal Church.

Who is the organising group for the Assembly? The Pastoral Planning Panel will oversee the running of the Assembly.

Where is the Assembly being held? The Assembly will be held at Federation University, Mount Helen in the Albert Coates Complex. Accommodation is available onsite for those attending from out of Ballarat and surrounding areas.

How will the Assembly be conducted? Similar to the Plenary Council and the Synod on Synodality, the Assembly will follow "Conversations in the spirit". These emphasise pausing prayerfully; listening to each other; not being adversarial; being open to all perspectives; active listening and speaking from the heart. The Holy Spirit is the protagonist in these conversations, silences, talking and listening, forming friendships to share doubts, seeking the truth together, agreeing or disagreeing respectfully. There will be table groups of eight with one facilitator at each table including a mix of clergy, laity, agency representatives, religious orders and education.

Formation sessions have been held in Mildura, Robinvale, Horsham, Colac, Buninyong, Wendouree and Warrnambool. In Mildura, Fr Matt Thomas and Fr John Corrigan hosted the evening with representatives from the Parish Council, Finance Council, St Joseph's College, Sacred Heart Primary School, Red Cliffs community, Irymple community, Merbein community, St Vincent de Paul and the Knights of the Southern Cross in attendance. In Robinvale, Fr Shaiju Mathew MST, along with Mary Knight, assisted with the session. Participants included representatives from Robinvale, Ouyen and Managatang.

In Horsham, Mons. Glynn Murphy hosted the Sunday session with representatives from the communities of Horsham, Warracknabeal, Murtoa, Hopetoun, Beulah, Natimuk, Nhill, St Brigid's College Horsham, East Wimmera - Birchip, Wycheproof, Gariwerd - Ararat. The Buninyong session was hosted by Fr Justin and the Ballarat East Parish with the Buninyong community. Representatives in attendance were from Ballarat East Parish Finance and Liturgy Teams, Buninyong Liturgy Team, DOBCEL, Diocesan Finance Committee, Sisters of Mercy, Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation, St Patrick's College Ballarat, Ballarat Cathedral Liturgy Team, Marriage Tribunal, Creswick Parish, Australian Catholic University Ballarat Campus, Bungaree Parish, Caritas and Diocesan Social Justice Commission, ODC Editorial Committee, Catholic Care Housing.

Fr Marcello Colasante and the Wendouree community hosted the session held at OLHC Wendouree. Representatives at the session were from BCAF/BCSF, Personnel Advisory Board, College of Consultors, Ballarat Cathedral, Ballarat East, Ballarat North, Beaufort, Bungaree, Creswick, Daylesford, East Wimmera, Gariwerd, Gordon, Linton, Redan, Sebastopol and Wendouree parishes, Diocesan Clergy Health & Wellbeing coordinator, St Columba's Primary School Ballarat North,

SJOG Ballarat and Warrnambool, Cathedral Liturgy Team, CatholicCare, Diocesan Business Manager, Diocesan Finance Office, Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation, Diocesan Finance Council, Pastoral Planning Panel, Bishops Advisory Council, DOBCEL, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Brothers, Oblates of St Joseph, Missionary Society of St Thomas the Apostle, Diocesan Liturgical Commission, CWL, Professional Standards Resource Panel, St Vincent de Paul and the Vocations Committee.

The final session was held in Warrnambool with Fr John Fitzgerald hosting. Parishes represented included Star of the Sea Parish with people participating from Warrnambool, East Warrnambool, West Warrnambool, Koroit and Port Fairy communities and the parishes of Timboon, Cororooke, Portland, Camperdown, Ballarat East and Western Border. The Emmanuel College Warrnambool community was also represented along with St Vincent de Paul.

Fr Justin talked about leadership and synodality - what is synodality? Journeying together with deep listening and faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit. He spoke about 150 years of the diocese and the words, "remember, acknowledge community, revitalise and hope". Fr Justin considered the 'Synod on Synodality', being a synodal Church and walking together and that one of the key points was around listening, listening to each other and listening to what is within our own hearts and in the hearts of others.



He spoke about a new relationship of trust and confidence that needs to be created within the Church and the wider community. It is important to restore trust and listen at every level of the Church's life. He spoke of being a pilgrim on a journey. To be a pilgrim is to invite change. 'Spirit, people and land', the diocese is all of these. The call of God dislocates us. The Church is always in need of reform.

Fr Justin presented different ideas of leadership; **servant leadership** – leader as foot washer, authentic power is service; **prophetic leadership** – exercising leadership

by giving voice to what can be, in ways that challenge the status quo; **Leadership as Bridge-building Across Boundaries of Difference** - exploring the ways that Jesus models for leaders how to build bridges across boundaries of difference and how this provides help for leaders today in intercultural settings; **Leadership as Co-Creating with God: Birthing New Life** – the Gospel of John and its theme of birthing new life as an image for how leaders pour themselves out in love as self-gift and are filled with the Spirit for co-creating new life with God for a future full of hope; **Leadership as Vulnerability** - this means being exposed, open or responsive to the other; in this sense, vulnerability is the human condition that allows us to hear, encounter, receive or recognise the other, even if it could lead to being wounded or injured.

"Everybody leads", a book by Chris Lowney was explored. In the book, Chris talks about the EASTeR strategy. The strategy follows that the church can be strengthened if we: are **Entrepreneurial** – we cannot be business as usual or we will stay with what we have, we must be creative and innovative; are **Accountable** – employing good stewardship and transparency; **Serve the poor and marginalised** - service is the heart of who we are; **Transform the hearts and souls of our members** - seek the spiritual enrichment of ourselves and those with whom we come into contact; and **Reach out to the world beyond our Church doors**.

The message of Cardinal Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago was another topic considered. Cardinal Cupich mentions ways the 'conversations in the Spirit' can revolutionise the church. He says the Holy Father is calling us to envision a renewal of the whole church as a conversation in the Spirit. It is a new "model of the church," which he believes has the promise of bringing about a renewal for how we make decisions in the church and how we relate to one another at the universal, continental, national and local levels.

The Plenary Council degrees on leadership and governance were included in the discussion. These included the important matters of Indigenous participation; Safeguarding; Healing; Co-responsibility – consultative and collaborative; Equality of women; Adult Faith formation for all; Formation of clergy which avoids the toxicity of clericalism; and the needs of regional and rural communities.

The sessions were open and participants were encouraged to ask questions along the way. When discussing a specific question, time was given for conversation and each small group gave a thought or comment back to the larger group when convened. The below discussion points are combined thoughts from all the sessions.

General:

- Key part of a synodal church is listening. Conversations in the spirit.
- We are walking together in faith. Journeying as pilgrim people, guided by the Holy Spirit.

- What is leadership?
- People fall into roles of parish leadership due to experience, age, commitment. Role as member of a parish council seen as a conduit from the people to the parish priest and from the parish priest to the people.
- Leadership can change as parish leadership/priest changes.
- Women in ministry.
- Leadership is struggling. Turn pyramid upside down. Are people being listened to?
- How do you see your leadership role in your parish?
- Not seen as a leader - represent community under instruction of parish priest.
- Strong sense of community.
- Engagement of people.
- Lead by example.

What sort of leadership is needed for a synodal church?

- Consistent leadership.
- Collaborative leadership.
- Transparent leadership.
- Leadership of service.
- Leadership that listens.
- Communication/Relationships.
- Open minded.
- Accountable.
- Relationship with parish – not with diocese.
- Governance – who is governing us? God is!
- Non-dictatorial.
- Faith-filled.
- Flexible.
- Representative of all different groups in the community - inclusive.
- Leadership that suits the parish community.
- Servant leadership.
- Prophetic leadership.
- Bridge-building across boundaries of leadership.



What do you want in leaders?

Empathy, clear language, respect for others, ability to listen, transparency, authenticity, relationship, consistency with diocesan/parish levels, leadership to revitalise - which then becomes infectious, strong, consultative, engaging personalities, credible leadership that can be trusted.

What do we need to talk about at the Diocesan Assembly, specifically relating to Leadership and Governance in a Synodal Church?

- Formation of Parish Pastoral Councils/Leadership Team
- Include scripture in decision making
- Formation of a Diocesan Pastoral Council

Further observations:

- ◊ Good governance will lead to strong leadership, establishing structures with transparency and accountability to lead us in to the future.
- ◊ 'Love one another' is the overarching vision.
- ◊ Connection between parish and school – strengthen and grow; collaborative; in partnership
- ◊ How do people become a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council – appointed / elected? How do people get there in a synodal way? eg. Appointed / elected to DPC or mandatory councils?
- ◊ Transformational thoughts – a Catholic isn't just someone who turns up for Mass, data suggests otherwise. Ability to go to Mass with no priest – more often a possibility in future. What is Catholicism beyond this? Are we Catholic through our actions too? ie. volunteering at the Soup Bus. How do we include people who are not engaged? Maybe, for many, being engaged as a Catholic is for these other things rather than going to Mass?
- ◊ Inclusivity in our Church. A diverse range of people feeling excluded for one reason or another creating a wider circle of people feeling left out. We need to be conscious that exclusivity creates holes in the church community, people can fall through these holes.

The Diocesan Assembly beginning on the evening of November 15 and continuing for the day on November 16 will bring together clergy, representatives of leadership teams in parishes, schools and Catholic organisations to consider how we might develop leadership and governance in our communities in the future.

Star of the Sea Parish welcomes refugees



Star of the Sea Parish, South West Coast commenced involvement in the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP) late in 2022. CRISP is a government program where recognised refugee households are brought to Australia and provided with twelve months of support by groups of people like us in the community.

The initial parish Community Supporter Group had ten members and, after we had completed training and background checks and completed some fundraising, we were matched with a family of five originally from Iraq. We met the family at the airport just over twelve months ago and they are now part of the life of our Catholic community, a parish primary school

and Emmanuel College. The welcome they received from our agencies, individuals and the broader community is a testament to what is possible when we say yes to opportunities such as being involved in CRISP.

This program has obviously been of great benefit to the refugee family – who now have a country to call home after being displaced from their native Iraq about ten years ago.

However it has also been a huge experience for those on the team. This is a really practical way of living out our faith – doing what we are called to do in welcoming the stranger. It has also been a great experience of working with and getting to know others within the parish. One of the lessons we have learnt along the way is that we all have something to offer – it is our combined skills, talents, connections and experience that make for an effective team.

At Star of the Sea Parish we have started the process again - to welcome a second refugee household to Warrnambool. The current step is fundraising. If this has aroused your interest please consider the below.

Donate to our fundraising at <https://shoutforgood.com/fundraisers/StaroftheSeaParish2>

Consider forming a CRISP team through your church <https://refugeesponsorship.org.au/> YOU WON'T REGRET IT!

For further information contact Katherine Stewart, Star of the Sea Parish CRISP Coordinator - katherinestewart99@gmail.com

A NEW INITIATIVE BASED AT ACU BALLARAT

In June 2024, Australian Catholic University announced the launch of a new initiative based at its Ballarat Campus - the Centre for Regional Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (RHASS). Led by ACU's Associate Professor of History Benjamin Mountford, the Centre will provide a hub for research, teaching and alumni and community engagement. "The opportunity to study and research in fields such as history, literature, drama, and visual arts is essential for regional communities", Mountford explains. "In Ballarat and the wider region, our history and culture forms an essential part of who we are - but they are also really important to our local economy".

During the second half of 2024 the RHASS is hosting a series of programs - bringing Australian and international researchers, PhD students and Arts industry leaders to Ballarat. The Centre also reflects ACU's ongoing commitment to expanding opportunities for students in the region. Professor Bridget Aitchison, ACU's Campus Dean and Professor of Theatre Studies, said, "We are delighted to have this new Centre dedicated to supporting and promoting the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in our region. It is another expression of our commitment to providing opportunities for regional and rural students".



Professor Bridget Aitchison - Campus Dean (Ballarat)

Historic Carn Brea House, Home of ACU's new Centre for Regional Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

Liturgy Formation

Recently, around thirty people gathered at St Mary's Primary School in Donald for a Liturgy Formation Day presented by Bishop Paul Bird and Dr Susan Crowe from the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

Parishioners from across the region came together for Mass, followed by lunch and the formation sessions. Bishop Paul opened the assembly with an introduction based on the letters of Pope Francis on the liturgical formation of the people of God, (*Desiderio Desideravi*). "There are many ways in which the assembly, as one body, participates in the celebration (of the mass)." DD51. Gathering, walking standing, kneeling, looking, singing and being together in silence all contribute to the whole experience, making our involvement more profound than any one individual could make alone.



Susan Crowe took us through the guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. What is liturgy? Liturgy is the community gathering together. It's not just going to Mass. Liturgy and life are interconnected. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not extraordinary people, they are "extra" to the priest. Eucharistic Ministers are commissioned for a period of three years and are then required to be recommissioned.

Bishop Paul then led us in a session for lectors (readers). Tips for reading the scriptures include reading the passage beforehand to understand the key points; practice the reading in a way that conveys the key points; practice developing our breathing (there are some very long sentences in some passages); speak with a full voice; let your pace suit the text you are reading; concentrate on the meaning to help you emphasise the more important words; and practice will give you confidence.

A very interesting and informative day, with a big thank you to Bishop Paul and Susan Crowe

Noeline Hogan - East Wimmera Parish



ART SHOW

We are thrilled to share that the Art Show at Siena Catholic Primary School in Lucas was a resounding success! It was truly heartwarming to see such a vibrant turnout from the Siena community, all coming together to admire and celebrate the remarkable creativity of our talented student artists. The diverse array of artwork on display—from stunning paintings to intricate sculptures—showcased the extraordinary talent and hard work of our students. The afternoon was filled with enthusiastic conversations and admiration for the creative expressions of our young artists. This event not only highlighted the artistic spirit thriving within our school, but also reinforced the importance of supporting and nurturing creative endeavors. We couldn't be prouder of the incredible work displayed. Thank you to everyone who attended and supported this wonderful event, making it a memorable success for all involved!

Tonia Burridge - Siena Catholic Primary School
Our Diocesan Community - November 2024

COMMISSIONING MASS

Greg Kluske, new Principal of St Joseph's College Mildura writes the following on his appointment:

Although I assumed the role of College Principal at the end of March earlier this year, the Diocese of Ballarat and Mercy Education Limited officially commissioned me to lead St Joseph's College at a special Mass on July 19.

I felt honoured to be formally recognised in my role by Bishop of Ballarat Paul Bird, Mercy Education Board Chair Georgina Smith and Mercy Education Ltd Chief Executive Officer Louisa Rennie, among others. The entire college community, staff and students alike, were present to welcome our guests and participate in the Mass. I am proud to say that our College, especially our student leaders, impressed all our visitors with the respect and hospitality they displayed before, during and after the Mass.

My family also attended this career-defining milestone. After more than forty years teaching at St Joseph's College, it meant so much to have my wife, three daughters, mother and father present to share in this special moment. I am proud to lead this college and grateful to be involved in helping Sunraysia's young people grow into the next generation of leaders for our community.

My career in education spans more than forty years. I have devoted all that time to improving the learning outcomes of the students at St Joseph's College. I originally joined the College in 1983 as a Geography, History and English teacher and worked my way up to the role of Deputy Principal - Learning and Teaching before successfully applying to become College Principal.

Mildura is my home. I began my family here and have lived in this fantastic region for more than four decades. My family connection with St Joseph's College stretches back over half a century.

I feel proud and humbled to have been entrusted with the legacy of learning and the tradition of excellence left to the College by the Sisters of Mercy. My close connection to Sunraysia and length of service at the College give me a unique insight into the needs of our learning community and equip me to lead the College into the future. I look forward to working with College staff, families and students to ensure that St Joseph's College continues to grow while staying true to our Mercy heritage.

Tracy Aston - Communications and Events Manager



Recognising parish history



Our response to recognise the history of St Joseph's Parish Timboon, within the 150th Anniversary of the Diocese of Ballarat, was to assemble a chronological, pictorial display from 1896 to the present. In doing so we acknowledge and give almighty thanks for the co-operative efforts of countless individuals who contributed time and finance



over the decades to provide services and our buildings with ongoing upkeep. A special mention of our priests and religious orders who shared their talents and caring concern with parishioners and the wider community. We are still very happy to welcome back Fr Adrian McInerney at Christmas and Easter.

We recall also the almost thirty groups, large and small with rolling memberships, who were formed or disbanded according to need and populace. These ministered to spiritual, temporal and social needs within and outside our parish and organised many gatherings to meditate, pray as a community, mourn, celebrate, learn, brainstorm, react and hold an event or just catch-up.

The 128 year history of St Joseph's reveals a cycle over time. In 1896 it was the Parish Priest from Camperdown who rode a horse south to the emerging community in the Heytesbury forest. In 1958 we became a parish with Nirranda until 2008. Simpson merged in 1994. Now we co-share Fr Neville Stanislaus with the Camperdown parish. We pray our future will be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Catherine Marr & Ruth Hoffmann - Timboon Parishioners

The Chasuble – Symbols of purity, joy and hope

The chasuble, the most significant Catholic church vestment, plays a central role in liturgical celebrations for both the parish and for priests. The one currently on display at the Diocesan Archive is a precious artefact predating Vatican Council II. It was once housed in the St Patrick's Cathedral Sacristy and later preserved with the vestments collection for conservation. The colour of the chasubles, including this one, is determined by the liturgical calendar, enhancing the solemnity of each celebration.

This is a Roman (fiddle-back) chasuble with the characteristic Latin cross on the back. White is used for Masses of Our Lord (except regarding His Passion), the Persons of the Holy Trinity, Our Lady and Saints who were not martyred. White represents sanctity, joy and purity.

Reading the symbolism in the chasuble is essential to understand the liturgical celebration. This particular one is worn on first-class feast days and probably comes with a matching set of maniple, cuffs and often, a burse, corporal and chalice veil. The vestment is rich in design and material. The main parts are in a pure silk damask with floral motifs. It is hand-sewn and enriched with gold trim, delineating the Latin cross. The colourful embroidery depicting the Lamb of God and tendrils with red lilies are also Christian symbols. The Agnus Dei is a symbol of gentleness, innocence, purity and hope. The red lilies or roses symbolise the passion and blood of Christ—the sacrifice for the salvation of humanity.



Dr Malcolm Borg - Diocesan Archivist

Photo: White pure silk damask Chasuble (Recto/front) showing decorative tendrils replicated on the (Verso/back) along the Latin Cross. (Photo: M Borg for Diocesan Archives Ballarat)



'HEART' IS A CENTRAL FOUNDATION

Each student in Year 7 this year at Monivae College Hamilton, plus staff, who attended a Reflection Day, wrote their name on a fabric heart. Each heart was then applied onto a banner to form a piece of art the shape of a large heart. 'Heart' is a central foundation of the MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart) charism.

The artwork will be part of this year's annual Reflection or Retreat Days, up to and including Year 12, with the names of the new students who have joined added each year. The artwork will then be featured at the Year 12 Graduation ceremony, as a symbol of all those who have shared their Monivae College journey. In the following years, the Monivae Old Collegians Association (MOCA) will take custody of the artwork which will then feature at reunions.

Kylie Schurmann - Marketing Co-ordinator

(L-R) Year 7, 2024 students Tyler, Lucas, Ned, Indi and Mr Danny Franc (Director Faith and Mission) with their Heart artwork



CHARITY CONCERTS RAISE CLOSE TO \$20K

Two choral concerts in Victoria that honoured the lives of people who have died on the streets have raised nearly \$20,000 for members of the homeless community.

The inaugural ACU BIG SING for a BIG CAUSE attracted more than 650 people at concerts in Melbourne and Ballarat and 600 livestream views from a global audience, raising funds for ACU students experiencing financial hardships and a Ballarat-based crisis accommodation for homeless men. Free tickets were offered to organisations that support Victoria’s homeless community and to people who are experiencing homelessness.

The concerts were performed by a massed, international choir of more than 150 singers, including Indigenous singer-songwriter Jess Hitchcock, accompanied by a community orchestra and marking the 10th anniversary of the acclaimed oratorio *Street Requiem*. Inspired by the traditional Catholic Mass of the Dead, *Street Requiem* is a contemporary musical tribute to people who have died on the streets.

Conductor and Australian Catholic University senior lecturer, Dr Kathleen McGuire dedicated the concerts to those people who have lost their lives in the decade since she, Andy Payne and Jonathan Welch composed *Street Requiem*.

“We would like to dedicate this performance to people whom we have lost in the past decade since we wrote the work, people who were on the street whom we don’t

know, people who are in our lives that we do know and people who performed this work that we’ve since lost,” Dr McGuire said during the Melbourne concert. “It’s tragic that (*Street Requiem*) is still relevant today.”

During the concerts, the massed choir also premiered a new work composed by Dr McGuire and Payne titled *Libera Me*, which incorporates rap and Gregorian chant.

“It is a piece of contrasts. We encourage the audience to consider the innermost thoughts of somebody homeless, outside a Cathedral, juxtaposed with a chant in the distance, coming from inside the Cathedral,” Dr McGuire said.

Dr McGuire said the ACU BIG SING for a BIG CAUSE was a reminder that communities who work together to combat homelessness can make a difference.

“One of the things we’ve found about this work is it’s a way for people to feel like they can actually make a difference, whether they are in the audience or performing,” Dr McGuire said.

“On a much smaller scale, I encourage you to look to people who are on the street and say hello. Being seen and being visible is one of the most important things. We all deserve dignity in life and in death.”

ACU Media Contact: Emilie Ng,
Photo: ‘Charles Wale Photography’



Andrew Chinn visits

On Monday, June 24 St Brendan’s Primary School Coragulac were blessed to have a concert with Andrew Chinn. Andrew worked as a classroom teacher for nearly twenty years before going into the music industry. He has released twelve albums, five DVD’s and six picture story books. Andrew has travelled extensively throughout Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada performing 5000 concerts!

It was a delight to watch the genuine engagement and pure joy the children radiated during the session. Andrew was incredible and his ability to remember the children’s names was particularly impressive. He was so funny and shared his own experiences in the classroom. We thoroughly enjoyed his time with us. Several students were heard to say, “We love Andrew!” That is a real testament to his impact. Thank you to Kara for the stellar photos.

HeapsART Everyday

St Patrick's Primary School Koroit is currently offering students an art for wellbeing program called HeapsART Everyday. The program studios are based on the understanding that Art making allows for a unique, personal expression and encouraging young people to communicate their inner world in ways beyond words. The HeapsART Everyday program encourages young people to practise art regularly.



This term's program invited the participating students to co-organise a pop-up shop within the school. This involved the students creating artwork with everyday life items to raise funds for an organisation of their choosing, therefore transferring an awareness of their own needs to an awareness of the needs and desires of others. The issue of homelessness was raised - particularly of families - and Vinnies was the organisation that was known to the students.

A sausage sizzle lunch created an opportunity for families to reflect on food, as a basic survival need, whilst supporting a pop-up shop for fundraising for people experiencing homelessness.

Anna Schlooz - HeapsART Everyday Facilitator



WARM WELCOME

On Wednesday, September 4, St Mary's Primary School in Clarkes Hill warmly welcomed Bishop Paul Bird CSsR. The students were excited to show him around their school, sharing their stories and eagerly asking him a variety of insightful questions.

During his visit, Bishop Paul shared fascinating details about his life, revealing that he grew up in Newcastle, between the steelworks and the wharf. He explained that he was appointed as a Bishop by Pope Benedict and

candidly discussed how being a Bishop can sometimes be challenging, while at other times, quite rewarding. Bishop Paul also spoke about the significance of his motto, "Peace Be With You", and explained how the dove in his crest not only symbolises peace but also relates to his family name, Bird.

His visit was part of a broader effort to visit as many schools as possible in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the diocese. It was truly a blessing for the St Mary's community to have Bishop Paul join them on this special day.

Clare Scanlon - Principal

Our Diocesan Community - November 2024

Red Earth Immersion 2024



A group of senior students from Emmanuel College Warrnambool recently embarked on an incredible journey to Central Australia. They spent the first night under the desert stars at Yulara. Day two brought them up close to Uluru, guided by a local Anungu elder who shared

creation stories. The group then travelled to Sandy Bore (Tali Walpa). Traditional owner Syd welcomed them with a smoking ceremony and they enjoyed sitting around the campfire listening to him share stories of his homeland and his life. Highlights included digging for maku (witchetty grubs) and making traditional clapsticks. They also visited Wattarka (Kings Canyon) to complete the hike to the top of the scenic rim. They then made the long, bumpy drive south into the APY lands. A stop at the Ernabella Arts Centre, chatting to some amazing indigenous artists, was enlightening. One final bus trip had them arriving at their second homeland at Yunyurinyi (Kenmore Park). The students helped construct windbreaks, participated in bush dancing, painting and jewellery workshops and even tried kangaroo tail! The trip concluded with a magical sunset and sunrise at Yulara before heading home.

Melissa Crothers - Development & Marketing Office

NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS WEEK

Each year, National Volunteers Week provides an opportunity to highlight the important role of volunteers in our community and invites people not currently volunteering to give it a go. From May 20-26, 2024 we have the opportunity to celebrate and recognise the vital work of volunteers and to say thank you and this includes people in our parishes and agencies. The theme for National Volunteer Week 2024 was "Something for Everyone". It is an invitation to explore the myriad of opportunities available, emphasising that there's a place for everyone in the world of volunteering. Whether you're drawn to environmental causes, community outreach, education or beyond, there's a place where your unique skills and interests can flourish.

Ruth Hoffmann from the Timboon Parish reflects on being a volunteer:

In this diocesan anniversary year, some of us recall a time when the parish priest did almost everything. Or that's the way it seemed. Maybe he had a housekeeper, but no paid parish secretary. When our Timboon Parish no longer had a Parish Priest, we became a "Community Led Parish" with a volunteer Parish Leadership Team and one of our own as Moderator. Parishioners stepped up so the parish could continue. We still gather for Lay Led Assembly of Word and Communion on two Sundays of the month and Holy days.

In a small community we must wear multi hats. Some duties are rostered, others have no retirement date. The list includes Communion to the housebound, hospital visitation, home visits and food to the sick, weekly altar preparation, linen care, weekly bulletin, roses pruned, church cleaned, main and side altars decorated for special feasts, bins out and in, music and responses chosen and downloaded to a laptop, money collected, counted and banked, attention to grounds and buildings, assembly leaders, sacramental and funeral preparation, finance committee, Christmas crib and Advent wreath, organising morning tea after Mass or social gathering, Plenary Council and Lenten discussion leaders, Ecumenical gatherings and Anointing Masses organised AND, this year, finding a way to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the diocese.

At this juncture I pay tribute to members who supported groups when we were a larger congregation – CatholicCare Victoria, Catholic Women's League, Knights of the Southern Cross, St Vincent de Paul, Religious Education catechists.

As one of the volunteers I hope I speak for all, when I say I never feel alone. There is always a generous response when back up or extra assistance is needed. Shared talents and expertise mean everyone benefits.

I'm certain all give their best effort in any position. We would aim to have all services and occasions run smoothly. If this means being pushed beyond our comfort zone, then we grow in confidence for next time. I must add that no-one seems to be judged. People often express thanks and gratitude.

It takes a united approach to present as a well oiled, welcoming group, which is keeping our church doors open. May we continue to gather, support and celebrate as a unique community of believers. May the Holy Spirit guide us.



Bishop Paul and Fr Dan Arundell in the Timboon Church



Diane Kierce and Anne McIntyre from All Saints Parish Portland offer the following reflection:

All Saints Outreach Shop in Portland is a vital part of our parish. We have about thirty volunteers who support us enthusiastically and bring their different skills and interests to our shop – some may love ironing or rag cutting, others bring artistic skills to dressing our mannequins or setting up displays of jewellery and then there are our book lovers and furniture specialists.

We have a great and dedicated group of men who drive the Ute and do pick-ups and deliveries of furniture and other items.

Our volunteers can work as many or as few shifts as they like. There are not many jobs where you can select your own hours and take leave whenever you choose!

There are benefits to volunteering at our Op Shop. We feel good knowing that we are contributing to our community and to our world. Funds raised by our efforts are distributed locally as well as to overseas charities.

A benefit of great importance is the social interaction. We get to chat to customers who come into the shop. We get to know our fellow workers better than we would normally, and of course we always have a few laughs, often at our own expense. Some of us love being on-hand to buy the bargains when they first come into the shop.

Volunteering in the shop also teaches us patience as all volunteers have their own ideas about how things should be done. And be warned, you can turn your spare bedroom into a mini-Op Shop when you take home things to wash, repair and sort.

The Executive Management Committee is made up of our parish priest and six parishioners, who also volunteer in our shop. We can always use more volunteers as age and ill-health take their toll, but it is one of the most enjoyable and rewarding jobs you could take on as a volunteer.

L: Margaret, Jeanette and Mandy at the front counter R: Colleen sorting donations at the back.

The Volunteering Australia website has National Volunteer Week resources, certificates of appreciation, volunteer thank you gifts and merchandise available - <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/get-involved/nvw/nvw-resources/>

It was a lovely celebration of the Assumption of Mary Feast Day on Thursday, August 15 at St Mary's Primary School in Swan Hill. The community gathered for the whole school Mass celebrating the life of Mother Mary and what a special person she was.

A big thanks to Fr James Kerr and the Year 6 students for leading a beautiful Mass. A special mention also to Gen Bryant and her band who played some wonderful music for us.



FEAST DAY CELEBRATION

After recess, we were entertained with Gen's whole school concert. The students were absolutely amazing and thoroughly enjoyed singing and dancing to a range of different songs. After lunch, Gen and the team then worked with our choir for a music workshop. Overall, it was a fantastic day!

Belinda Davis – Religious Education Leader

Social Justice Projects

Years 5 and 6 students at St James' Parish Primary School Sebastopol have been learning about the four areas of the United Nations Declarations: Inclusion, Gender Equality, Health & Wellbeing and Zero Hunger. They invited community groups into the school to hear how they are helping people in the local community. Students then aligned with the community group whose work they felt passionate about and ten sub-committees were formed.



These groups designed a logo and mission statement and connected with their community contact to form a plan as to how they could be of service to the community. In response to the issues they were hearing about, students voted and organised a Homeless Experience. In this two-day event, they actioned deeds of service and



raised awareness for their social justice project and local community link.

Some of the projects grew vegetables and collected seeds to donate to the Sebastopol Library Food is Free garden. Others collected donations of clothing, food and blankets for various community groups. The Seen and Unseen group wrote braille menus for local businesses for the vision impaired. Compassionate Kids designed a colouring book for sick children in local hospitals, with drawings from school students. The Homeless Experience group networked with each of these groups to organise the Sleep Out, raising awareness and providing resources for the homeless. This project gave the students a real-life experience of the challenges that people in our community face. They were saddened by the experience but also proud to be helping.

Jacqui Jarvis - Deputy Principal & Religious Education Leader

Bishop Paul visits the parishes of Bungaree & Gordon

On the weekend of August 31/September 1, 2024, the parishes of Bungaree and Gordon hosted Bishop Paul Bird CSsR as he makes his way to every parish in the diocese as part of the 150th Anniversary Year of the Diocese of Ballarat.

Bishop Paul celebrated Mass at St Brendan's Dunnstown on Saturday evening with Fr Matt Restall, then St Patrick's Gordon and St Brigid's Ballan on Sunday morning with Fr Justin Driscoll.

Bishop Paul's homily included reflections on the 150 years of the diocese and a little history on the parishes. The Anniversary Prayer was included in each of the Masses.

A combined parishes lunch was held on Sunday afternoon at the Wallace Hotel, with people from the six faith communities of the two parishes - Ballan, Bungaree, Clarkes Hill, Dunnstown, Gordon and Springbank coming together on Father's Day and in the midst of the Central Highlands football/netball finals, to share a meal and a chat with Bishop Paul, Fr Justin and Fr Matt, and to enjoy each other's company.

The parishes are grateful to Bishop Paul, Fr Justin and Fr Matt for their care of the people in our ministry district and the diocese.

Julie Boyd - Bungaree Parish





Visiting the Western District of the Western Border Parish

The 150th anniversary of the Diocese of Ballarat marks a significant milestone in the history of this Catholic community in Victoria, Australia. Established in 1874, the diocese has been a spiritual and cultural cornerstone for the region. The celebrations in 2024 included special Masses, pastoral visits by Bishop Paul and community events across various parishes, reflecting on the diocese's rich heritage and commitment to faith. These events brought together clergy, parishioners and the wider community to acknowledge the past, recognise the present and look forward to the future.

On June 8, 2024, the western district of the Western Border Parish in Victoria was graced with a special visit from Bishop Paul. His visit was a significant event for the local Catholic communities, particularly as it coincided with the 150th anniversary of the Diocese of Ballarat, an occasion of deep historical and spiritual significance.

The visit began in Casterton, where Bishop Paul was warmly welcomed by Fr George Kuruvila. Fr George had prepared a modest yet heartfelt lunch for his Bishop. The meal was more than just a culinary experience; it was an opportunity for the Bishop and Fr George to engage in meaningful conversation, reflecting on the challenges and joys of pastoral ministry in the rural and remote areas of the diocese. The atmosphere was one of camaraderie and shared purpose, as they discussed their dedication to serve their parishioners and the broader Catholic community.

Following lunch, Bishop Paul took the opportunity to visit one of the parishioners. The visit was a testament to the Bishop's deep commitment to his flock, as he made time to connect with individuals of the local community. The local parishioner was honoured by the bishop's presence and their conversation was undoubtedly rich with shared memories and insights.

The next stop on Bishop Paul's itinerary was the small yet spiritually significant town of Tarrayoukyan. Here, he celebrated Mass at St Joseph's Church, a humble but cherished place of worship that has served as a beacon of faith for the local community. The Mass was concelebrated by Fr George and Fr Damian Heath, with around twenty four people in attendance. Although the congregation was small, the significance of the occasion was profound. The celebration of Mass was a moment of reflection on the enduring presence of the Catholic Church in the region, its history and the faith that has sustained generations of worshippers.

The day concluded with a warm and festive shared dinner at the home of Paddy Neeson and Anne Pekin, two cherished members of the parish community. The dinner was a fitting end to a day filled with spiritual nourishment and communal bonding. The gathering provided an opportunity for parishioners to connect with Bishop Paul in a more informal setting, sharing stories, laughter and perhaps even a few memories of past celebrations and events in the parish. The hospitality of Paddy and Anne was a testament to the strength of community ties in the parish, and the evening was marked by a spirit of joy and gratitude.



On June 9, 2024, Bishop Paul continued his journey through the Western Border Parish with visits to two important church communities: St Malachy's Church in Edenhope and St Michael's Church in Harrow. The day began with Bishop Paul's arrival at St Malachy's Church in Edenhope. The Mass celebrated by Bishop Paul and Fr George was a reflective occasion, where Bishop Paul shared messages of hope, faith and the importance of community in his homily. Following

the Mass, the parish community gathered for a shared morning tea, a tradition that has always played a vital role in fostering fellowship among parishioners. This particular morning tea was made even more special by the inclusion of delicacies from the Philippines, reflecting the diverse cultural heritage within the parish. The array of Filipino treats was not only a delight to the senses but also a symbol of the rich multicultural fabric that characterises the Edenhope community.



At midday, Bishop Paul travelled to St Michael's Church in Harrow together with Fr George, where they were greeted by a small crowd that had gathered in anticipation of the special Mass. Following Mass, the community gathered for a shared lunch, a sign that exemplifies the collegiality and strong sense of community within the parish. The lunch provided an opportunity for parishioners to also connect with one another and with Bishop Paul in a relaxed and welcoming environment. The meal was a celebration of both the spiritual and communal life of the parish, showcasing the unity and fellowship that have long been the hallmarks of the Harrow community.

On June 16, 2024, Bishop Paul continued his visit to the Western Border Parish with the celebration of Mass at Sacred Heart Church Casterton. The Mass was concelebrated by Fr George, whose dedication to his parish has been a source of inspiration and guidance for the local community. The liturgy was marked by a deep sense of reverence and joy, as parishioners reflected on the rich history of their diocese and their own personal journeys of faith. Bishop Paul's homily resonated with the congregation, as he spoke of the enduring strength of the Catholic community in the Diocese of Ballarat and the importance of remaining steadfast in faith and service.

Following the Mass, the celebrations continued in the Sacred Heart Parish Hall, where a shared dinner was held. This gathering was a true reflection of the parish's strong sense of community, as people from all walks of life came together to share a meal, stories and fellowship. The dinner was not just a social event, but a continuation of the spiritual celebration that had begun in the church. It provided an opportunity for parishioners to connect with one another and with Bishop Paul in a more informal setting, reinforcing the bonds of faith and friendship that are so vital to the life of the parish.

On Monday, June 17, 2024, Bishop Paul carried on his visit with a series of engagements that brought him closer to the young minds and educators of the region. This visit provided an opportunity for the Bishop to connect with the students and staff of three Catholic schools, reaffirming the Church's commitment to education and the spiritual growth of its younger members. The day began with a visit to Sacred Heart Primary School in Casterton. Bishop Paul, accompanied by Fr George, was warmly welcomed by the students and teachers. The visit provided a unique opportunity for the children to interact with their Bishop in a relaxed and informal setting. Bishop Paul took the time to converse with the students, engaging with them on various topics and showing a genuine interest in their lives and education. His gentle and approachable demeanour made a lasting impression on the young students, who were delighted to meet such an important figure in their Church.

Following the visit to Sacred Heart Primary School, Bishop Paul and Fr George made their way to St Malachy's Primary School in Edenhope. Upon arrival, they were greeted by the school staff and enjoyed a morning tea together, which allowed the Bishop to connect with the educators who play such a vital role in the spiritual and academic formation of the children. After morning tea, they ventured out to the playground where the children eagerly gathered around the Bishop. Bishop Paul answered their questions with patience and warmth, making the encounter both memorable and meaningful for the students. The visit then moved indoors, where the children and teachers gathered in the school hall. Here, Bishop Paul was asked a series of questions by the students, which he answered clearly and thoughtfully. His responses were not only informative but also deeply respectful of the children's curiosity and enthusiasm. The exchange highlighted Bishop Paul's commitment to nurturing the faith and understanding of the younger members of the Catholic community.

Later in the day, they visited St Joseph's Primary School in Coleraine. Bishop Paul met with the staff and students, offering them the chance to meet their Bishop in person and engage in conversation. This visit was particularly special for the pupils, as it provided a rare opportunity to interact with a senior Church leader and ask questions about their faith and the Church's role in their lives. Bishop Paul reiterated the importance of this visit in the context of the 150th anniversary of the Diocese of Ballarat, emphasising the historical and spiritual significance of the occasion. Throughout the day, Bishop Paul's interactions with the school communities were marked by his warmth, accessibility and genuine care for the well-being and spiritual growth of the children. His visit was a powerful reminder of the Church's enduring commitment to education and the formation of young Catholics, and it left a lasting impact on everyone who had the privilege of meeting him.

Fr George Kuruvila - Co-Pastor



"CELEBRATING LITURGY"

The Religious Education Leaders Conference, "Celebrating Liturgy", was held on August 22-23, 2024 in Halls Gap, Gariwerd Parish. The conference was led by Bishop Paul and drew together both secondary and primary Religious Education Leaders (RELs) and Faith Directors across our diocese and the Catholic Identity and Mission team who work closely with them. During and after each of the four of Bishop Paul's presentations, he invited dialogue with the group and answered some heartfelt and burning questions raised regarding celebrating liturgy in school contexts. Joe Ewing and members of the Catholic Identity and Mission (CI&M) team facilitated presentations in response to Bishop Paul's lead and Dr Susan Crowe brought home the event with a summary of the key points that had been made throughout the two-day conference.

Workshop themes included the spirituality of young people; music as an integral part of liturgy and its appropriate use thereof; the art of celebrating non-Eucharistic liturgies; co-creating prayer and how this might be utilised into liturgy; and supportive resources for preparing school school-based liturgies. The workshops were practical and enabled the RELs to feel they had new points of access to engage students appropriately in liturgy. Feedback from RELs was overwhelming, immediate and positive including how blessed the gathering was to have Bishop Paul speak to his passion and expertise and engage the group in a way that made them feel very comfortable to dialogue.

The conference also highlighted the importance of their leadership role and the challenges the role holds in the changing face of being Church. For many of our RELs the role can be a rewarding or a lonely experience and again for many, the annual REL Conference is the only time the group meet with those who share in this vital role. The CI&M team are most grateful for the sincere commitment and fortitude our RELs have to the role and what they do to sustain and enhance Catholic Identity for fullness of life in their unique school and parish communities.

Kate Lawry - Catholic Education Ballarat

As part of the broader network of Edmund Rice Education Australia, Victorian Schools Ltd., St Joseph's is committed to providing inclusive education for all. St Joseph's aims to remove barriers to education, charging no fees and providing all necessary resources, including books and MYKI cards for public transport. Young people enjoy shared meals with teaching and support staff each day, prepared by experienced cooks, with take-home packs available for those in need.

The College fosters an inclusive environment, focusing on young people facing challenges such as neurodiversity and mental health issues. Grounded in a trauma-informed practice framework, St Joseph's offers personalised educational programs aligned with the Victorian Curriculum, the Victorian Certificate of Education Vocational Major (VCE VM), the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Through its practices, St Joseph's promotes critical awareness of justice and empowers young people to express their voices in decisions affecting their education. This commitment is supported by a framework called 'Operation by Principles,' which uses the principles of Respect, Honesty, Participation, and Safe and Legal to guide all interactions within the school community.

The official blessing of the Ballarat campus took place on September 6, led by Bishop Paul Bird. This event highlighted the collaboration between the Ballarat Youth Service Network, Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited and the Department of Education. Since opening in early



2024, the Ballarat campus has reached an enrolment of one hundred and twenty students, featuring music rooms, art facilities and a woodwork space.

Looking ahead, St Joseph's will open a new campus in Bungaree in early 2025. This facility will engage young people with nature and open spaces, allowing the College to support up to sixty more young people and broaden its range of elective and outdoor education opportunities.

As St Joseph's moves forward, it remains committed to fostering a culture of inclusivity and support, ensuring the voices of young people and their families are heard and valued. In a notable development for the local community, St Joseph's has announced it will officially change its name to Saints College, pending VRQA approval.

Credit: <https://stjosephs.vic.edu.au/>

Our Diocesan Community - November 2024

SPARK ENGINEERING CAMP

Recently, St Brigid's College Horsham students Charlie Kuhn (Year 11) and Isaac Arnold (Year 12) attended the Spark Engineering Camp in Melbourne. Hosted by Youth Without Borders, the week-long, fully funded camp provides students with a unique experience by showing them what tertiary education and technology-related fields are like while they are still in secondary school. By participating in this camp, students are encouraged to pursue careers in STEAM and see that these pathways are both accessible and achievable.

"One of the best things I got out of this camp was that it got me interested in fields that I thought I would have no interest in. It was a new experience for me and I enjoyed every minute of it. I made new friends and made unforgettable memories from this camp. This will be an experience that I will constantly look back on and I heavily encourage others to give experiences like this a go, to learn new skills and interests." - Isaac



"Day five was the best day ever. We went to Monash University for a tour and made bouncy balls and created a water rocket. We ended the night with a talent show where I did food facts. Afterwards we had a dance party and spent most of the time dancing, jumping and taking selfies. I would like to thank the teachers at St Brigid's College and the Spark Camp staff for making this camp an amazing opportunity and I would recommend this to any student." - Charlie

Malory Ryan - Marketing & Compliance Officer

COMPASSION IN ACTION

On August 15, 2024 at St Patrick's College Ballarat Faith in Action Assembly, Caritas Diocesan Director Jillian Hogbin was presented with a significant donation from student leaders for Caritas Australia's Project Compassion 2024. This generous contribution is a testament to the students' dedication and the school community's support.

The students, the teachers and the school community worked together to raise funds through various activities including a Pancake Day and a Walk-a-Thon. The student leaders' role in encouraging personal donations through the Project Compassion box in classrooms each morning throughout the Lenten period was instrumental.

Congratulations to St Patrick's College Ballarat, lead Secondary School fundraiser for Caritas 2024 in the Ballarat Diocese.

St Thomas More Primary School Alfredton used Caritas K's awareness-raising activity, with the whole school to understand what it means to cart water daily to supply basic needs. This understanding led to a substantial donation to Caritas through Crazy Sock Day and sending home Project Compassion Donation boxes to their families. Their empathy for the cause is commendable. They are the lead Primary School for Caritas 2024 for fundraising in the Ballarat Diocese.

Well done and thank you, St Patrick's College and St Thomas More Primary School, for your unwavering commitment to championing for vulnerable people around the world. Your efforts are not just about raising funds but about building a future of hope for all future generations. You should be proud of the impact you have made and inspired to continue your compassionate work.

Jillian Hogbin - Caritas Australia Diocesan Director





VISIT TO HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

The Trinity College Colac Year 11 Vocational Major Literacy class was privileged to visit the Melbourne Holocaust Museum and hear from Mr Peter Gaspar, who is a survivor of Terezin Camp.

"There is no room for hatred in this world and choices we make impact upon so many people," Peter shared with the students. "Anger kills the hater much quicker than it kills the hated. There is no room for hatred in this world," he reiterated.

In 1942 Peter was just five years old and living in Bratislava when his family went underground, living in secret cellars, attics, garden sheds and orchards to escape the Nazis. They were moved from one place of hiding to the next in the dead of night, staying ahead of the Nazi death squads and staying hidden until the end of 1944 when they were forced to turn themselves in after Peter fell gravely ill.

Peter and his mother were sent to Terezin, separated from his father who was sent to a labour camp in Germany. "Terezin was a holding operation, a halfway house to extermination," he said.

"From Terezin, every week transport vans left for extermination camps, mainly Auschwitz. You never knew how long before you were put on the van. Terezin had been built to hold 7,000 people – from 1942 to 1945 it contained 30,000 Jewish prisoners. I was one of 120 children who survived out of 15,000 children that were held in the camp."

Terezin was not an extermination camp, but tens of thousands of people died within its walls from starvation and malnutrition riddled with lice and disease.

In May of 1945, Peter and his mother were liberated from the camp. Only two other family members survived the Holocaust – Peter's father and his uncle. In 1949 they arrived in Australia to start a new life, as far away as possible from Europe. Peter has since returned to Bratislava to thank the people who helped save his life. Yan, the son of a family who hid Peter, told him they were grateful that they had helped and given the opportunity to prove to themselves that they were the people they thought they were.

The goodness of humanity is found in the darkest of moments. "They saw our common humanity, rather than the fact that they were Christian and we were Jewish." Peter said of the people who risked their lives to hide them.

Anne McCrickard - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coordinator

"MISSIONARY MESSAGE FOR THE MODERN WORLD"

The Australian Catholic Communications Congress is held every three years and is hosted by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Media Council. The Congress this year was held in Sydney from August 28-30 with the theme "Missionary message for the modern world". It brought together media professionals, educators, communication specialists and clergy from Australian and New Zealand catholic dioceses and agencies, for three days of discussions and workshops on the role of communication in the Catholic Church. Archbishop Patrick O'Regan, Archbishop of Adelaide and the ACBC delegate for the Australian Catholic Media Council, welcomed all in attendance and led us in prayer. This was then followed by a Welcome to Country. Keynote presentations and workshops were held over the three days of the Congress. The keynote speakers left us all with ideas of how to evangelise and promote the good works of the Church through digital media. The workshop presenters provided practical ways of using the digital tools we have available to us to provide the missionary message for the modern world.

Delegates attended Mass at St Mary's Cathedral Sydney, celebrated by Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP. Following Mass, we walked to NSW Parliament House for dinner. Guest speaker for the dinner was Peter Greste, an academic, author and journalist. Peter was detained in Egypt for 13 months on terrorism charges before being deported to Australia. Peter's story was inspirational and also tragic, as he shared details of how his life changed so quickly whilst on assignment. Peter is now a strong advocate of media freedom.

During the Congress there was ample opportunity to connect with other delegates, to meet new people, make new connections or re-connect with those from previous events. These connections help us work together to provide the missionary message for the modern world. The Congress was very well organised and provided valuable and thought provoking content. Thanks to the Media Council for organising the event and to Bishop Paul for encouraging our attendance. More information on the Congress is available from the website <https://mediacongress.catholic.au/>



Jane Collins & Julie Boyd - Pastoral Ministry Office

Our Diocesan Community - November 2024

FR BARRY RYAN RIP

There was standing room only on Monday, July 1 at St Patrick's Cathedral in Ballarat for the funeral of Fr Barry Ryan. Metastatic prostate cancer, with which he was first diagnosed in the week of his 70th birthday, had accelerated in his final months. The funeral Mass was celebrated by Fr Kevin Arundell and concelebrated by many priests (including three bishops). Two eulogies were offered, one by Barry's niece, Clare Szollosi, and the other by Sr Veronica Lawson rsm, a long-time colleague of Barry's in the field of faith education.

Barry was born in Warrnambool, the only son of Tom and Eva Ryan. Three sisters were to follow - Rosemary, Kathleen and Angela. His early years on a farm just outside Warrnambool shaped life-long interests which included a passionate interest in the environment. Barry's secondary education was at Christian Brothers College, Warrnambool. After studies at Corpus Christi College, Werribee and Glen Waverley, he was ordained a priest at Warrnambool on July 21, 1965.



In his homily Fr Kevin Arundell spoke warmly of Barry's skills in ministry, his counselling in healing hurts, his commitment to Ballarat priests and his ability to make friendships for life. Barry worked in eight different parishes of the diocese over his years; he was on many diocesan committees; he was Vicar General from 2004 to 2013, and Director of Religious Education for decades, including a long stint as Head of Religious Education at Aquinas Campus, one of the predecessor campuses of Australian Catholic University.

Sr Veronica declared, "the tender mercy of our God gave us, in the person of Barry Ryan, a truly faithful and faith-filled priest, a faithful and devoted family member, a faithful and faith-filled proclaimer of the gospel, a mentor, counsellor, storyteller, consciousness-raiser, and above all a faithful friend who showed us what it means to be human."

Barry was a life-long learner. After his first appointment to Ballarat East parish, he attended to his own on-going education, working full time in the parish while enrolling in an Arts degree at Melbourne University where he completed studies in Psychology, Philosophy, Comparative Religions and Biblical Studies. His talent as a faith educator was affirmed by his appointment in 1971 as the Diocesan Director of Religious Education. Veronica made mention of his commitment to the environment and the care of the planet after reading Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" during his seminary years. Barry convinced many teachers and catechists throughout the diocese of the need to care for our common home long before Pope Francis and Laudato Si.

Post-graduate studies at Fordham University in New York were to follow. To cover boarding costs with the Marist Brothers, he taught in their High School in the Bronx where he was assigned a group of students for whom learning was anything but a high priority. After a very short time, Barry had those tough young adults eating out of his hand and learning as no-one had ever thought possible.

Barry's influence extended far beyond Ballarat. His contribution to parish life paralleled his academic ministry. He proclaimed the gospel powerfully, not least through the witness of his life. Veronica concluded her words by giving thanks for fifty-eight years of gospel partnership with one of the planet's wisest and most inspirational lovers of life. Barry died at Nazareth House in Ballarat, a few short weeks after his admission.

Obituary written by Sr Veronica Lawson rsm for the Spring edition of "The Swag"



Cultural Immersion Session

On Monday, August 19, St Thomas Primary School Terang welcomed Dr Wang Zheng-Ting into school for a Cultural Immersion session with all the students. Ting graduated from Shanghai Music Conservatory, completed an MA at Monash University and a PhD in Ethnomusicology at the University of Melbourne on the history of Chinese Performing Arts in Australia. He currently coordinates the Chinese Instrumental Program at the University of Melbourne. He has been invited as a

visiting scholar to the City University of New York, as guest professor at Xiamen University China and as research fellow at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music in China. It was great to have Ting in the school educating the students along with showing his musical talents. Thanks also to Xan from 'A is for Atlas' who helped co-ordinate the visit.

Matt Uzkuraitis – Principal



BotaniKids

BotaniKids is a program assisted by Year 11 Loreto Ballarat VCE-VM students. The BotaniKids program is aimed at preschool aged children to get them involved in nature, the community and be participants in tactile activities designed to develop their fine motor skills and confidence. Each fortnight Loreto students host the BotaniKids program, running different activities and supplying a morning tea focused around a common theme. This program allows the children to familiarise themselves with new people and allows the Loreto students to engage in the community in a positive way. Parents, grandparents and carers are offered complimentary barista coffee and are encouraged to socialise with other parents or volunteers while their children engage with the Loreto students.

Our students have the opportunity to be actively involved in the program, volunteering their time, contributing and running activities as well as preparing food for both children and adults. Each fortnight has a different theme based on seasons and the outdoors. Term 3 has included themes such as 'Winter - keeping warm', 'gardening and planting' and 'Spring' which our students make activities and foods to match.

The recent theme of 'Spring' inspired activities such as making butterflies out of paper plates, creating blossom trees, colouring in paper flower crowns, painting flower jars and making daffodils. Some girls were also in charge of decorating the main table, arranging bunches of beautiful fragrant flowers and making coffees for parents. Food platters were served for morning tea to the parents and children containing treats such as scones, sausage rolls and veggie boats.

The BotaniKids program is a valuable part of the Year 11 VCE-VM program. All the girls look forward to hosting and engaging with the BotaniKids children, parents and volunteers.

Mr Andrew Blackwood (Faculty Coordinator: VCE-VM)
Lacie, Matilda and Annabel – Year 11 VCE-VM students

Sr Louise Ritchard IBVM RIP

Sr Louise Ritchard ibvm was Principal of the former St Joseph's Primary School Ballarat from 1978 – 1987. During the late 1970's a decision was made to merge St Joseph's Primary School with the nearby St Patrick's Primary School onto the Drummond Street site in Ballarat. In 1982 Sr Louise was the first Principal of the merged St Patrick's Primary School, Ballarat.

In 1997 the Ballarat Cathedral Parish Council purchased five acres of land in Alfredton as the potential site for the construction of a second parish school. Sr Louise was instrumental in the establishment of this school, St Thomas More Primary School Alfredton.

Sr Louise continued her ministry in education, working with Parish Education boards in setting up new schools and amalgamating others. She was known as a dynamic teacher and educator, vitally interested in the children and their families.

Upon her retirement, Sr Louise moved to Loreto Normanhurst. Sr Louise died on June 16, 2024. Her funeral was held in the chapel of Loreto Normanhurst on June 27, 2024.

DOBCEL newsletter #13 – February 14, 2024



2024 DOBCEL Ireland Spiritual Heritage Pilgrimage



appreciation for our forebears who laid the foundation for Catholic Education in Australia. This incredible journey, made possible by DOBCEL, allowed me to forge deep connections to saints who have inspired Catholic Education over the past 150 years.” Shelley Ryan, Principal of Siena Catholic School, Lucas

In a reverse ‘C’, the group circumnavigated Ireland traveling on bus from Dublin around to Belfast, maximising time and opportunities to include diverse religious, spiritual, historical, cultural and ecological locations. The wide scope of the itinerary included staying at the famous Trinity College where the Book of Kells, an illuminated manuscript of the Gospels from the medieval period, is housed in the Old Library; visiting Glendalough, once a monastic city founded by St Kevin in the 5th century; enjoying the breathtaking scenery of the Cliffs of Moher; walking the Giant’s Causeway, a UNESCO World Heritage site; and climbing the tough ascent of Croagh Patrick.

We visited several communities linked to the diocese including Loreto House, in Rathfarnham, Dublin where Teresa Ball (1794-1861) brought Mary Ward’s Institute to Ireland. In 1822 she opened the first house in Rathfarnham and called it “Loreto House”. Under Mother Teresa Ball’s leadership, the Loreto Order expanded throughout Ireland and eventually overseas including to Australia.

We visited Catherine McAuley’s House, the first house of Mercy built by Catherine in response to the needs of the poor of Dublin. It is home to the Mercy family from all over the world. Catherine’s House is a centre of hospitality, heritage, pilgrimage and renewal. It is a wellspring of inspiration for those who come to continue Catherine’s mission in their place. St Brigid’s Solas Bhride Centre in County Kildare was another moving experience. The centre, built in the shape of St Brigid’s Cross, was enchanting and included a mediative garden with pathfinders that offered moments for pause and reflection.

A trip through Kilkenny enabled us to meet Bishop Niall Coll, at St Mary’s Cathedral, Diocese of Ossary. Bishop Coll had a strong background in teaching and was keen to know of our experiences. Our diocese has links to Martin O’Loughlin (see KILLARNEY: LOUGHLIN’S HOME - Ballarat Heritage Service) who made his fortune through the ‘Band of Hope’ mine and was a significant benefactor and patron to many including the Diocese of Ballarat.

We visited and celebrated Mass at the Edmund Rice International Heritage Centre and the final resting place of Blessed Edmund, founder of the Christian and Presentation Brothers. Later, in Cork City, we explored the reflective sensory gardens of Nano Nagle Place, a place that celebrates Nano Nagle’s vision of empowerment through education, community inclusion and spiritual engagement for a contemporary world.

Glenstal Abbey was a highlight. A community of Benedictine monks lead a boarding school for boys who

Thirteen principals and three leaders from across the DOBCEL community embarked on a 14-day Spiritual Heritage of Ireland Pilgrimage on June 23. The pilgrimage was led by Fr Justin Driscoll who was a dedicated and insightful leader. The experience provided an opportunity for the participants to appreciate and understand, more deeply, the legacy of Irish Catholics from previous generations and how that has been distilled into our diocese through the establishment of many of our Catholic schools. This was celebrated through visiting specific sites and cities linked to founders of Irish Religious Orders that supported the development of our diocese and Catholic schools, and in some cases, locations associated with Irish saints whose memories have also been nuanced across the diocese. The concepts of ‘community - remember, revitalise and hope’ were integral to the experience of journeying together with participants mining these rich concepts to see how they reflected Catholic identity over time and place and what resonates now. Together, through and across stunning environments, meeting unforgettable people and visiting holy places, in a myriad of larger and smaller moments, pilgrims enjoyed an enriching spiritual and educational experience.

“My trip invigorated my spirituality, catholicity and gratitude for our community. In Ireland, I felt a profound connection to history, nature and ecology, particularly influenced by the strong presence of the Loreto, Mercy and Brigidine Sisters. The experience brought me immense joy and laughter; I pushed myself to walk Croagh Patrick, indulged in the local cuisine and shed silent tears of



moments of revelation open to amazement at the newness and surprises Jesus brings (*paraphrased from the Easter fire in St Peter's Basilica on April 3, 2021. / Vatican Media/CAN*).

A second pilgrimage for another group of principals and leaders has just been completed with Fr Justin again leading the pilgrimage. What a wonderful experience for these leaders in education for the diocese.

Kate Lawry - Catholic Education Ballarat

A LIVING LAUDATO SI' COMMUNITY

St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat Parish is a living Laudato Si' Community.

The members of the St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat Parish Earthcare Group - Fr Ed Moloney, Joanne Rix, Carolyn Bourke, Sheila Wilton, Susan Crowe, Jillian Hogbin and the late Therese O'Loughlin - have worked tirelessly over the past 18 months to complete a Catholic Earthcare Audit and Action plan for the parish. Their efforts have been acknowledged with a three-star Earthcare Parish certificate from Caritas Australia. The parish is now recognised as a vital part of the global movement towards integral ecology, with the need for ongoing reflection and renewal. The Parish Action plan has been uploaded to the International Laudato Si' Action Platform.

The Laudato Si Action Platform is a shared space where the Church develops a bold and active response to the ecological crisis, so urgently illustrated in Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si'. The Laudato Si' Action Platform equips you to take action now when it is "urgent and necessary" (LS 57). Our collective responsibility in this crisis cannot be overstated and our active participation is crucial.

Jillian Hogbin - St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat Parish Earthcare Group

work, pray and farm amidst 500 acres of farmland, forest, lakes and streams. The community is dedicated to St Joseph and St Columba and we celebrated Midday Mass with the community and for many, they heard the Gregorian Chant sung during Mass for the first time.

For one hundred and forty years, visitors and pilgrims have been welcomed into the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Knock where in 1879, a miraculous vision was experienced. Our Lady, St Joseph and St John the Evangelist, an altar, cross and a lamb appeared to fifteen people in this small village. While many of us found this belief challenging, Knock was a reminder of the faith that has been passed down through generations and how it is appropriated now. The church was certainly magnificent.

In Derry we had a walking tour of the 400-year-old Derry Walls and learnt about the 6th century history up to the modern-day Troubles, the Apprentice Boys, the Famous Bogside Murals and the 1972 Bloody Sunday massacre. Also where "The Derry Girls" was filmed. This incredible city, rich in cultural heritage, is one of few cities in Europe that never saw its fortifications breached.

In Belfast we participated in a late afternoon journey into the Shankill. The Shankill Road (from Irish Seanchill, meaning 'old church') is one of the main roads leading through West Belfast, in Northern Ireland. It incorporates the Road Murals area where we learnt stories behind many of the murals, the people, the neighbourhood and history of this key place during the great conflict of The Troubles.

The Spiritual Heritage of the Ireland Pilgrimage illuminated aspects of Christianity's existence, highlighting the subtle differences from our own encounters of the Irish origins to the rediscovery of the actual heritage. Pope Francis' reminds pilgrims that faith is not an album of memories, nor Jesus outdated but alive here and now and in the days of journeying, that new doors open when least expected. I am sure our group of pilgrims had



Our Diocesan Community - November 2024

JJAMM Week Celebration



What a fantastic week of celebrations for JJAMM Week at St Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill recently. This week has become one of the highlights on the school calendar each year. JJAMM is an acronym for Joseph, Julian (Tenison Woods) and (St) Mary of the Cross MacKillop. It was a great opportunity to reflect and honour the Josephite charism which the College follows. St Joseph was the earthly father of Jesus and spouse of Mary. He demonstrated courage, patience and tenacity in caring for his family. Julian Tenison-



Woods was a priest who supported Mary MacKillop's dream of making Catholic education accessible. He was a passionate botanist and avid promoter of ecology. St Mary of the Cross MacKillop was the founder of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart (Josephites) who were a religious order focused on service to others in Australia, especially the poor and those living in rural and remote areas.

The week began with a Staff versus Student Basketball game in the Jubilee Centre, in what was a great contest! The staff came out on top, with Mrs Clark being nominated Best on Court!

Tuesday was the day everyone was looking forward to - it was pJJAMMa day with Hot Jam Donuts at recess. Wow, what a huge line for the donuts! Around 500 donuts were sold to very hungry students!

On Wednesday, many students went into the Learning Resource Centre to make JJAMM Week badges. Everyone involved had a great time and many different badges were worn by students afterwards.

We celebrated the Feast Day Mass during Lesson 1 on Thursday. It was a lovely celebration of our founder, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. Students were very reverent and respectful during the Mass. To finish off the week we had casual dress on Friday with our annual Walkathon after lunch. We were blessed with a beautiful sunny afternoon, making walking (and running) conditions perfect.

Sincere thanks to everyone who helped in preparing for and participating in JJAMM Week. It takes a huge effort from many people for this week to come together. Thanks to the Religious Education staff for colouring and decorating the Mary and Julian silhouettes in their classes. These looked wonderful as they were displayed around Penola Square.

Alison Wright - Director of Faith & Mission

DOBCEL leaders learn from Canadian counterparts



Learning did not stop for DOBCEL leaders over the recent school holidays! A delegation including Tom Sexton (Executive Director), Matthew Byrne (Deputy Director – Catholic Education), Michelle Haeusler (Principal, St Mary MacKillop College, Swan Hill), Terry Harney (DOBCEL Board Chair), Kathleen Donnellon (Board Director) and Dave Runge (Future Schools) visited Canada. The group met with both Catholic and government education leaders in the Toronto, Ontario, Edmonton and Ottawa regions across an intensive ten-day period.

“The aim of the visit was to learn from both the successes and challenges of the Canadian authorities in driving system improvement, with a view to establishing partnerships that will deliver ongoing benefits as the new DOBCEL 2035 strategy is activated,” Executive Director Tom Sexton said.

DOBCEL Communications

DAMASCUS DAY

September 17 marked Damascus Day at Damascus College Ballarat, a special event designed to foster community spirit among students and staff. The day began with a traditional smoking ceremony, symbolising purification and the welcoming of positive energy, followed by a Mass in the John Shannon Centre. The talented College Choir and Band provided uplifting music, enhancing the atmosphere of unity and celebration.

Fr Matthew Restall led the Mass, focusing on the theme of “Living Mercy” and encouraging reflection on the role of mercy in our lives. The Mass honoured the founding schools of the College - Sacred Heart College, St Paul’s Technical College and St Martin’s in the Pines. A highlight was a student performance depicting Saul’s transformative journey, emphasising personal growth and the importance of change.

Principal Steven Mifsud concluded the morning with a school assembly, recognising the new 2025 College Captains and House Captains, celebrating student leadership and community collaboration. The celebration reminded us of the strength found in unity, as we honour our shared values and history, creating a nurturing environment where students can thrive and embody the spirit of mercy.



In the afternoon, the College buzzed with excitement as the Student Representative Council (SRC), supported by Hannah Keating, Acting Assistant Principal - Student Wellbeing, organised a memorable Damascus Day celebration. The festivities began with a shared BBQ lunch, where students and staff enjoyed delicious food and camaraderie.

Participants embraced a lively Y2K theme and showcased their creativity through vibrant costumes, bringing pop culture references to life. The afternoon was filled with engaging activities, including the Bungee Run, Soccer Shootout, Longest Kick and Bubble Soccer. Laughter echoed as teams competed in games of celebrity heads, trivia and charades, fostering a spirit of friendly competition.

A standout feature was the Op Shop, run by the Justice Action Group (JAG). Proceeds benefited Vinnies, highlighting the commitment of the College to social justice. The Dunk Tank, organised by VCE-VM students, was a crowd favourite. Funds raised went to FightMND. The sight of teachers and students taking a plunge into the water brought cheers and laughter, creating lasting memories. Well done to all of the students and staff involved in making this day such a resounding success, celebrating creativity, community and compassion, leaving everyone excitedly waiting for next year’s festivities.

Sarah Boswell - Leader of Marketing & Development



In August the student leadership team invited the staff and students of St Mary’s Primary School, Clarkes Hill to truly embody the spirit of generosity and compassion by coming to school in their pyjamas. By bringing coats, jumpers and tins of food, they made a powerful statement of solidarity with those in need. Their actions were a beautiful reflection of the Catholic Social Teaching of the Preferential Option for the Poor, where we are called to prioritise the wellbeing of the most vulnerable in our society. The students showed kindness, demonstrating that even small acts of giving can make a big difference. They are living examples of faith in action, and we are so proud of the way the student leaders have chosen to care for others.

Clare Scanlon - Principal

FAITH IN ACTION



Our Diocesan Community - November 2024

A glimpse into the past

Sacred Heart Parish Primary School Casterton Year 5 and 6 students, Miss Finnigan and Ms Mac had an incredible time at their recent Sovereign Hill camp in Ballarat, stepping back into the 1850s for a few days of fun and learning! From trying on old-fashioned clothes to panning for gold, the students were able to experience life during the Gold Rush era. What a great experience to have during the Diocese's 150th Anniversary.

Highlights included Brendon and Nicola enjoying the 1850s costumes, Nate getting a kick out of his knickerbockers and Immi trying gold panning for the first time. The sound and light show was a hit with Jayden, who loved the 3D effects and Brody, who held a real bar of gold worth \$370,000! Flynn and Brody even struck gold, finding a nugget during their panning adventure. The camp was an exciting mix of history, fun and hands-on activities. The students have come back with memories they'll never forget.



The students also learned about schooling in the 1850s Goldfields. In the 1850s, education on the Victorian goldfields was a privilege, not a right. Free education did not arrive until the 1870s, meaning many children, especially those from poorer families, were sent to work instead of school. As a result, literacy rates were low and many children missed out on education altogether. Boys typically worked in labour-intensive jobs like mining or helping shopkeepers, while girls were trained in domestic roles such as maids or seamstresses. Girls were often kept at home to learn household skills, as their education was seen as less important or not important at all. This reflected the gender norms of the time, with boy's work considered vital for income and girl's roles focused on future homemaking.

1850s School Rules:

1. Respect your schoolmaster. Obey him or her and accept his or her punishments.
2. Do not call your classmates names or fight with them. Love and help each other.
3. Never make noises or disturb your neighbours as they work.
4. Be silent during classes. Do not talk unless it is absolutely necessary.
5. Do not leave your seat without permission.
6. No more than one student at a time may go to the washroom.
7. At the end of class, wash your hands and face. Wash your feet if they are bare.
8. Bring firewood into the classroom for the stove whenever the teacher tells you to do this chore.
9. Go quietly in and out of the classroom.
10. If the master calls your name after class, straighten the benches and tables. Sweep the room, dust and leave everything tidy.
11. Boys and girls shall file into classroom in separate lines and be seated quietly on opposite sides of the room.
12. Boys shall remove their caps when entering.
13. Children must sit up straight at all times.
14. Children must not squirm, fidget or whine.
15. Children must be clean and tidy in clothing.
16. There will be a daily inspection of neck, ears and fingernails prior to class to ensure cleanliness of person.
17. Young ladies must never show a bare ankle; girl's and boy's clothing should cover arms and legs completely.
18. Nothing shall be dipped into ink wells except pens.

Suzie McManus - Principal



OLHC School Soup Bus food drive



Our Lady Help of Christians (OLHC) Primary School students in Wendouree had a special visit from the Soup Bus on August 28 to learn more about its work and hand over food cans generously donated by the children and their families.

The project was organised by OLHC teacher Angelique Greene, who volunteers with the Soup Bus and is herself a fantastic role model within the school community. "Social justice, compassion and dignity are really important to us at OLHC and we love being able to teach the children through initiatives like this. We had a casual clothes day but instead of inviting the children to bring a gold coin donation, we asked them to bring a can of food for the soup bus pantry instead," Angelique said.

The food cans are directly supporting local families who are struggling financially, especially in the cost-of-living crisis. "While many of the students aren't fully cognisant of the cost-of-living crisis, they are aware and compassionate," Angelique said. Craig Schepis from the Soup Bus delivered a short educational presentation to the children about the Soup Bus, its history and the importance of connection within our community. The children loved getting on board the bus for a look inside at the set-up!

After the short tour, the students removed the cans from the trolleys and put the cans into cardboard boxes for Craig to take away to the Soup Bus pantry. The food donations will be used for families in need in the local Wendouree community. Our Catholic schools across the diocese do wonderful work to support those less fortunate in their communities and OLHC is certainly no exception. Congrats to all involved!

Image: OLHC teacher and Soup Bus volunteer, Angelique Greene, with OLHC students
DOBCEL Communications

VALE JEAN MCMEEL

Jean was born in 1933 and grew up in Melbourne. With a Teaching Diploma from Melbourne Teacher's College, nineteen year old Jean moved to her first teaching post at Timboon. Here, she met Mick McMeel. After three years she married Mick in St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne in 1956. They built their two bedroom home on the McMeel family farm at Scotts Creek and started their family of Peter, Tony, Terry, Pam, Greg, John (stillborn), Geraldine and Carl. During these years Jean taught piano. Jean resumed teaching when Carl was four years old. At the same time she returned to study for an Early Childhood degree. This led to a full-time position at Camperdown Kindergarten. After sixteen years she retired to spend her time singing, playing music and acting in plays with Timboon Theatre Group.

One of the most enduring memories of Jean would be the years she spent as music coordinator and organist at St Joseph's Timboon. This included playing for Fr Eugene McKinnon's Ordination and Mass of Thanksgiving, both in the Timboon & District Hall. She was also involved in the Ecumenical Choir which performed in all the churches. There were invitations to play for funerals in these churches too. She undertook postgraduate studies in theology and contributed to the Ballarat Diocese. For six years she was Moderator in St Joseph's Parish Leadership team.

On a side note, Jean was a good delegator and always "had a job or two" for anyone who dropped in to see her. She had 2 speeds: turbo and exhausted collapse. But always charitable, she would collect hitchhikers, bring them home and feed them. Jean considered herself lucky. She considered she had a responsibility in life to make things better. Faith was important to her and she believed most people would benefit from faith. Another long lasting memory is that she once said, "Faith needs to be fed in order for it to grow". Jean's community involvement with Timboon Probus, the Wannabees, Theatre Group, the Book Club (which she initiated sixty years ago and which still meets), her music ministry and the faith leadership are all reflections of her willingness to make a difference. Jean, a Timboon parishioner for 67 years, died on March 3, 2024 and will be greatly missed.

Jean's story was printed on her Requiem program. Her daughter, Pam gave permission for publication.

Ruth Hoffmann - Timboon Parish

Our Diocesan Community - November 2024

MAKING A SCENE AT CHRISTMAS

The Nativity is the central scene at Christmas. Many families have a Nativity that comes out every year and with it come the memories of family Christmases past that are shared and celebrated.

Earlier this year I was given a hand-crafted Nativity made in Exeter, England in the 1970's (pictured). It has travelled all over the world with the lady who bought it originally. It was given to me because she knew that I would appreciate it on many levels unlike her children who, she felt, would either donate it to the local op shop or throw it in a bin.

It now is celebrated with over six hundred nativities that will be displayed in the Bridge Mall Ballarat in December and the two hundred we will travel with to Camperdown and Swan Hill Catholic Schools in mid-late November.

Kay Paton and I have been displaying the collection for twelve years now and have moved to all major centres around the diocese. We have a special schools program but are most delighted when grown-ups bring their children to share it with them.

We have hand-crafted nativities from over sixty countries and some ancient artifacts. The more unusual nativities



include one made from bullet shells, one made by a refugee in Palestine, some crafted in Bethlehem, one from Mongolia and a recent acquisition from the Republic of Georgia. One set of nativities highlight the Biblical stories including a pregnant Mary and a frightening Herod from a carousel in New York State. And yes, we have coins and a lamp that date back to the time of Jesus' birth or just before.

Please accept our invitation and visit us.

Fiona Tonkin

Ministry Formation at St Patrick's Cathedral Parish



On the afternoon of Sunday, August 4, the St Patrick's Cathedral Parish Liturgy Committee presented a Ministry Formation Session in the MacKillop Room of the Cathedral Precinct to twenty five members of the Ballarat area. These formation sessions are held on a two-to-three-year cycle and cover all liturgical ministries. The topic of this gathering was the Ministry of Sacristan. In attendance were current Sacristans from St Columba's (Ballarat North), St John the Baptist (Beaufort) and St Patrick's Cathedral (Ballarat), as well as anyone aspiring to take on this ministry.

The presenter for the afternoon was Dr Susan Crowe who began by exploring aspects of Liturgical Ministry in general. Susan stressed that all ministry is service to God, the Liturgy and the Assembly, and all Ministers must display

full conscious and active participation throughout the liturgy. It was also noted that ministers should display qualities of service, respect, care, and inclusion, be invitational, hospitable and welcoming. All these qualities are paramount to the Ministry of Sacristan. Subsequent discussion and questions were followed by a social break and afternoon tea.

The second session explored the specific duties of the Sacristan and their relevance to a prayerful celebration of the liturgy. Each Mass requires the contribution of many people to proceed smoothly. The Sacristan is responsible for the setting up of all requirements for the celebration, as well as ensuring all the ministry roles are filled. After Mass the Sacristan has to take care of the cleaning and replacing of sacred vessels, books and altar linens in their assigned storage spaces. All soiled linens need to be set aside for laundering.

It is the role of the Sacristan to ensure the security of the Sacristy, including the Sunday collections and the security of the Eucharist. After questions and discussion, a very worthwhile formation session concluded. As this was the first combined formation session of the ministers from Ballarat North, Beaufort and St Patrick's, a genuine feeling of friendship and support was evident to all. We now look forward to sharing our expertise and resources into the future with enthusiasm.

Kay Curran - Cathedral Parish

SHEC Update

The Environmental Committee at Sacred Heart Parish Primary School in Mildura has been busy undertaking a number of projects this term. They created special gifts for Father's Day and have been busy making improvements around the school such as repaving around the garden beds and planting some flowers.

The students were lucky enough to attend an excursion to the Mildura Sporting Precinct for their annual Sunray Warriors showcase. Students participated in a range of activities focusing on our environment such as learning about habitats, fish and water quality.

Mark Gibson - Principal



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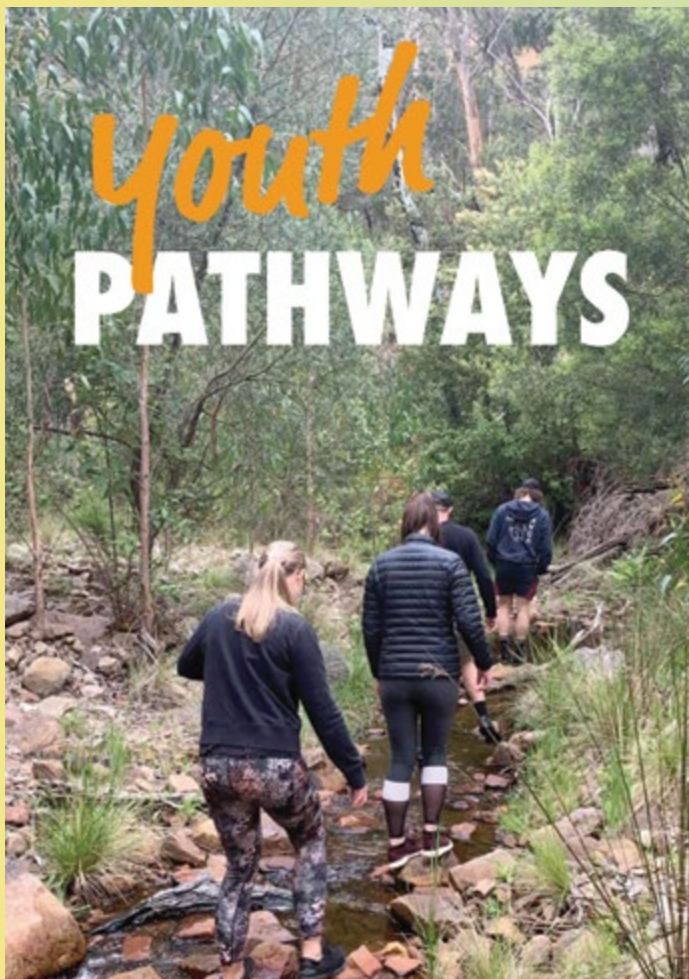


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*rate subject to change. Interest paid on maturity



2024 'Youth Pathways'

We are excited to share that the 'Youth Pathways' booklet is in the process of being delivered to all Year 12 students in Catholic Secondary Colleges in the diocese. The booklet produced by the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat outlines opportunities to assist these young people on their faith journey.

The booklet contains information about a variety of youth ministry and young adult activities, as well as details on faith formation, social justice and outreach initiatives that you may like to consider. A range of social media networks and online forums offer choices for young people to connect with the wider Catholic community. In addition, there are links to resources to support them in prayer and spirituality and to help explore their calling in life.

The booklet includes information about reflection days, festivals, immersions and pilgrimage experiences for young adults to consider, to take part in to grow in their faith and qualifications available in theology, ministry formation, training and much more.

If you would like a copy, please contact the Pastoral Ministry Office via email: pastoralministry@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Ultra-modern hospital services open



already supporting a wide range of cardiac diagnostic and interventional procedures and enhancing patient safety.

An opening event was attended by close to one hundred caregivers, community members and special guests, including City of Ballarat Mayor Des Hudson, Bishop of Ballarat Paul Bird, St John of God Health Care Trustees Chair Neville Owen AO and St John of God Health Care Group CEO Bryan Pyne. Mr Pyne said the redevelopment and new wing meant better access to advanced private health care for our regional communities. “It will ensure that our patients and their loved ones can have access to the very best care in a warm and welcoming environment, right here in their local community,” he said.



The newly opened Wexford Wing at St John of God Ballarat Hospital underpins St John of God Health Care’s ongoing support for top-tier medical and surgical care to the Ballarat region. A result of a significant investment, the new facilities include a 10-bed Intensive Care Unit / Coronary Care Unit, four new operating theatres and an expanded recovery room and a 30-bed in-patient ward.

St John of God Ballarat Hospital CEO Maria Noonan, who began as a student nurse at the hospital more than 40 years ago, said the redevelopment demonstrated St John of God Health Care’s continued support and commitment to the provision of regional and rural private health care in Victoria. “This redevelopment is a true testament to our relentless pursuit of excellence in private healthcare and our ongoing mission to offer a place of healing and care for our community,” she said. “With these impressive new facilities, we can now meet the growing private health care needs of both the Ballarat community and the wider region.” The new facilities complement the recently opened catheter lab and central sterile services, which are

“The Ballarat Hospital redevelopment is part of our ongoing organisational capital program along with St John of God Richmond, Subiaco, Geelong, Midland Private and Murdoch hospitals, which are all critical to delivering contemporary care close to home for our communities.”

Expansion projects at several other St John of God Health Care hospitals have been ushering in improvements to patient care and experience across our locations in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia.

Jamie Lovett - Communications & Marketing Officer

Reconciliation Action Plan



At a recent staff meeting of St Brigid’s College Horsham, staff member Colby McDonald presented the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The RAP is a formal commitment to reconciliation and will document the commitment of the College to implementing genuine actions that advance reconciliation and create meaningful opportunities for the First Nations peoples, both within the College and broader communities. We look forward to sharing more as the document evolves and is finalised.

St Brigid’s College, Horsham

TO BE A PILGRIM

FROM FIONA BRADLEY

On September 19 at St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat, a young Melbourne priest, who belongs to a congregation in Chartres in France, presented a talk on pilgrimage. Fr Shawn Murphy, an experienced pilgrim of the famous Paris - Chartres pilgrimage, shared his experiences and reflections on pilgrimage as an enriching journey not only for the body but for the mind and soul. The presentation was part of the 'Wisdom in the Cathedral' series organised by the Ballarat Cathedral Parish.

Each year at Pentecost, Fr Murphy is one of the chaplains to some ten thousand pilgrims as they make their way on foot from Notre Dame de Paris to Notre Dame de Chartres. The cathedral of Chartres is one of the greatest examples of Gothic architecture in the world and is particularly celebrated for its extensive collection of original stained-glass windows and wonderfully preserved exterior reliefs. It has been a place of pilgrimage for over a thousand years, predominantly because of the treasured relic of the Veil of the Virgin, said to have been worn by Mary during the birth of Jesus.

The pilgrim's experience today is a far cry from pilgrimages in much earlier centuries which were very long, costly and perilous. The spiritual journey, however, is the same. Pilgrimages allow us to step out of ourselves to encounter God where he has revealed himself. The fruit of this grace is conversion and holiness.

I have had the good fortune to visit a number of important pilgrimage sites around the world, it has, however, almost always been as a visitor and not as a pilgrim. The difference between the two comes down to intention and the spiritual journey, or lack thereof.

My two pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela were undertaken after months of preparation and consisted of weeks of walking and a lot of tears shed along the way. They have left me with a constant yearning to undertake more pilgrimages. Of course, every pilgrim has a unique experience and no two pilgrimages are the same. Reading the stories of previous wayfarers who had also walked to Santiago de Compostela proved to be a negative distraction. I felt pressured to have the same experiences as they did and I felt disappointment and a sense of failure when they did not eventuate.

By my second pilgrimage I had dispelled those distractions and was able to focus on being completely open to whatever, and whomever, came across my path on each day's walking. Eventually I had the empowering realisation that the pilgrimage I was undertaking mirrored every Christian's earthly pilgrimage to heaven. In this condensed version of pilgrimage, the trials experienced were significant but short lived and the encounters with others were profound even if fleeting. Importantly though, the moments of complete abandonment to the Will of God were life changing. I learnt that no matter how much I thought I knew about the road ahead, that the path (God) had other things in store for me, for better and for worse. And where I felt let down, I learnt that I needed only to have faith, that such hardships exist so that I might experience an even greater joy.

St Augustine recognised this when he wrote that "our pilgrimage on earth cannot be exempt from trial. We progress by means of trial. No-one knows himself except through trial, or receives a crown, except after victory, or strives, except against an enemy or temptations." The outward journey of pilgrimage and the arrival at a sacred destination may be what spurs us pilgrims on, but it is the journey mirrored within us spiritually where the true reward is found.

Image - Alexander J.E. Bradley



EMMANUEL COLLEGE VINNIE'S WINTER APPEAL

The Year 7 Leaders at Emmanuel College Warrnambool have been working hard throughout Terms 2 and 3 to plan an activity for the Junior School. They decided on the great idea of a fundraiser selling BBQ snags, lolly bags and soft drinks, with all proceeds going towards the Vinnie's Winter Appeal. The fundraiser was a huge success, with \$892.00 being raised. Well done to all the Year 7 Leaders for their awesome effort!

Melissa Crothers - Development & Marketing Office

Our Diocesan Community - November 2024

Jubilee Year of Hope 2025



Pope Francis has declared a Jubilee Year of Hope in 2025, centred on the theme, “Pilgrims of Hope.” A Jubilee is a special year of grace and conversion, involving prayer, pilgrimage and sacramental repentance, held every 25 years, or during other years as called for by the Pope. Through a series of concrete rituals, acts and commitments, the goal of a Jubilee year is to inspire and encourage holiness of life among the faithful and therefore to strengthen the Church’s witness to God’s loving mercy in and for the world.

Pope Francis will open the Holy Door of the Basilica of St Peter in the Vatican on December 24, 2024 to begin the year. On the following Sunday, December 29, 2024, the Holy Door of the Pope’s Cathedral, St John Lateran, will be opened. Then on January 1, 2025, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of St Mary Major will be opened. Finally, Sunday, January 5, 2025 will mark the opening of the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls. Pope Francis has decreed that on Sunday, December 29, 2024, in every cathedral and co-cathedral, diocesan bishops are to celebrate Holy Mass as the solemn opening of the Jubilee Year, using the ritual indications that will be provided for that occasion.

The Holy Year will conclude in the particular Churches on Sunday, December 28, 2025. The doors of St John Lateran, the Basilica of St Mary Major and the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls will also close on this date.

More information can be found at the diocesan website www.ballarat.catholic.org.au or the Jubilee Year website <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html>

Catholic Identity and Culture at MRC

OUR LADY OF MERCY MASS

As always, Mass on Friday, September 13 was a beautiful celebration of the heritage of Mercy Regional College Camperdown. The Our Lady of Mercy Mass commemorates the day in 1827 when Catherine McAuley and her companions opened the House of Mercy on Baggot Street in Ireland. Since then, the Sisters of Mercy have worked tirelessly to offer mercy and support to people worldwide. Our Lady of Mercy also serves as a patron for those in prison, especially the unjustly sentenced, as well as for those suffering from loneliness and isolation. It was fitting that the Mass was hosted by students and staff from Frayne House. Frayne is named after Sr Ursula Frayne, the first Sister of Mercy to come to Australia, who played a pivotal role in establishing Mercy education here. We were blessed to have Fr Neville Stanislaus preside over the Eucharist and many staff and students contributed to the ministries during the Mass. The way our community comes together to celebrate is a true testament to the strength of our school culture.



SEEDS OF JUSTICE

Eight students from MRC were able to attend the annual Seeds of Justice event sponsored by Mercy Education and the Sisters of Mercy ISMAPNG recently. The theme of the 2024 gathering was: Mercy is: kindness, compassion, respect and hospitality with thirty-nine students from seven schools across the state participating in the two day event. Keynote speakers were Hayley Marriott from McAuley Community Services for Women and Sophie Rowan, alumni of Mercy Regional College. Hayley spoke of the vital work of McAuley Community Services for Women and in particular the housing and both short and long term benefits that McAuley brings to many women, children and indeed families across Melbourne and in other cities as well. Sophie spoke of the opportunities for study and experience as a global citizen based on Social Justice. She shared her journey from Mercy Regional

College to ACU Melbourne and then on to the Federated States of Micronesia and eventually a position with the UN. The students and staff present were inspired by the encouragement to seek out and act for Social Justice in all aspects of life, including employment and study opportunities, here and abroad. Friendship, connection and a shared Mercy ethos were fostered and celebrated. We thank Mrs Saunders for her wonderful work over the years in helping organise this event.

Melanie Bouchier - Director of Catholic Identity & Culture

Robinvale Vinnies

Vinnies, as the St Vincent de Paul Society is affectionately known, is recognised as the largest volunteer organisation in Australia. Although a worldwide organisation founded by Catholics, Vinnies is strictly nondenominational in assisting the people it serves.

The Robinvale Conference of St Vincent de Paul began its annual Winter Appeal at St Mary's Catholic Church Robinvale Mass, on July 28 and 29. Trevor Jury, President of the local Vinnies chapter, shared insights about the history and impact of the Winter Appeal. "I have been involved for over thirty years and the first appeals were mainly through the St. Mary's Catholic Community," he explained. "In the last fifteen years, we have had a strong association with Network House and because of this, people have had better access resulting in greater demand. Consequently, we have gone out to the wider community to cater for this demand."

The theme of this year's appeal, 'Assisting with the Cost of Living,' aims to support vulnerable individuals struggling with the rising cost of living. "We know that people who live on fixed incomes have repeatedly reported that they struggle to keep up with these costs," said Trevor. "Once again, we ask our community to give generously to help us with the work we do in this community."

Over the past year, Vinnies has assisted over six hundred adults and children locally, providing around \$20,000 in aid. This assistance includes IGA food vouchers, Ampol fuel vouchers, bus/train tickets, accommodation/rental assistance, prescription medicines, medical assistance, donated food, utility bill payments, educational expenses and furniture and bedding.



The Winter Appeal focuses on the need for seasonal warmth, such as blankets and bedding, while the Christmas Appeal addresses broader needs. "Sometimes the need for assistance in Robinvale is more pronounced during the winter season due to seasonal work," Trevor noted. Donations of non-perishable food items and personal care products are particularly needed. "We accept all canned foods, pasta and sauces, rice, noodles, breakfast cereals, long-life milk, tea, coffee and personal items like shampoo, soaps, toothpaste and deodorants," Trevor specified.

However, due to limited facilities and manpower, they cannot accept fresh foods, fruits, vegetables or meats. Donations can be dropped off at Network House between 9 am and 3 pm, where they will be stored temporarily before distribution. Cash donations are also welcome and can be placed in envelopes with the donor's name and address for receipt issuance. "Cash donations can be accepted for the purchase of food vouchers and help with other assistance," said Trevor. People in need can visit Network House, where they will be interviewed by staff to evaluate their needs. "Go to Network House where they will be interviewed by Jack and Carolyn to evaluate what assistance is needed," Trevor explains. The community has always responded generously.

Article courtesy of the Robinvale Sentinel

'TRUTH AND PEACE - A GOSPEL WORD IN A VIOLENT WORLD'



The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference releases a Social Justice Statement in September every year. In the 2024 – 2025 Social Justice Statement, "**Truth and Peace: A Gospel Word in a Violent World**", Australia's Bishops scrutinise the signs of our own troubled times, observe the violence around us and ask why it is so. They also ask what is needed if there is to be peace. In a world full of pessimism, they put their faith and hope in the possibility of peace.

The statement addresses the urgent need for peace from a Gospel perspective. This document highlights the alarming levels of global and local violence, noting that the 20th century was the most violent in history and the early 21st century continues to see numerous conflicts. In 2022, there were 55 state-based conflicts and 82 non-state conflicts affecting two billion people worldwide. Specific conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Myanmar's military coup, the persecution of Rohingya people, the crackdown on pro-democracy movements in Hong Kong and ongoing violence in West Papua and Papua New Guinea, underscore the pervasive nature of violence and its devastating impacts.

Bishop Paul considers the statement: **In a tradition reaching back to 1940, each year the Australian Catholic Bishops publish a social justice statement. Through this statement, the bishops offer reflections on some current issue of social justice.**

This year the statement is called “Truth and Peace”. The message is that truth provides a foundation for peace. When people are truthful with one another, this builds up trust and when there is trust, this promotes peace between them. By contrast, when people are not truthful, this breaks down trust, and when there is no trust, there is likely to be conflict.

Sadly, in our world today, there is much conflict. There are conflicts between individuals and between groups of people. There are conflicts in the home and many cases of domestic violence. There is daily news of wars, in Ukraine and in Gaza and in many places around the world. Such conflicts are often fuelled by lies. One person tells lies about another and they no longer trust each other and this quickly leads to clashes. One government tells lies about another and they no longer trust each other and this can easily lead to war.

To break such a vicious cycle, we need to turn from lies to the truth. We need to speak the truth to one another. This will gradually build up trust between us and this will be a basis for peace.

St Augustine describes peace as “the tranquillity of order”. Real peace requires that people recognise the proper order of justice. It requires that people show respect for one another. It requires that people speak honestly to one another. To speak the truth is already the beginning of peace-making.

Pope Francis highlights the role of dialogue. We can see this in personal relationships and in relations between countries. When two people or two groups of people are willing to have an honest dialogue, they have the chance to understand one another better. This builds trust and trust builds peace.

In April this year, Pope Francis met with 6000 children from the Italian Network of Schools of Peace. The Pope encouraged them to be “artisans of peace”, not war-mongers but peace-builders. The Network educates the young people of Italy about human rights, justice and peace. I have been pleased to see such lessons being taught in our schools in Australia as well. I hope we all learn such lessons – adults as well as children.

The Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission hosted a Reflection Day, in acknowledgment of the launch of the statement on Saturday, September 7, 2024 from 10.00am – 2.30pm at Ss Michael and John’s Horsham Parish Centre.

Facilitator for the day was Michael McGirr. Michael is the mission facilitator and manager of community engagement at *Caritas Australia*. Bishop Paul welcomed Michael.

Michael’s presentation for the reflection of the statement encouraged personal contemplation. One thought provoking comment was about Pope Francis, who said in effect that due to so many conflicts in the world today, World War III is being fought in pieces. The impact of these conflicts on everyone is devastating, men and women losing their lives, children orphaned, resources diminished and stretched and the environment damaged. War is costly.

Michael focused on war memorials, local and national. The stories, made personal by each of us in attendance, were insightful. He talked about the healing nature of memory. The importance of memory is significant. He asked participants to write a letter to a leader of a country at war. What would we say to them?

Michael prompted us to reflect on the powerful words of Isaiah 2.4: ‘They shall beat their swords into ploughshares’ and the profound message of Pope Francis’s encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. These texts remind us that peace is not a distant dream, but a collective endeavour. We are all called to be peacemakers, as we are one human family, sharing a common home. Moments from the encyclical included :A new culture; Recovering Kindness; The Art and Architecture of Peace

The day was a unique opportunity to contemplate the Social Justice Statement from the Bishops. It emphasised how important it is to focus on truth and peace in our own lives and to understand the connection between truth and honesty and peace and goodwill. Many thanks to Michael McGirr, Bishop Paul and the Diocesan Social Justice Commission for this chance of reflection.





The Second Assembly of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops brought together 368 bishops, priests, religious and lay people from around the world. There was also 90 non-voting members. Pope Francis also invited 16 representatives of non-Catholic Christian faiths. Catholics around Australia have been asked to pray that the continuing journey of the faithful together in the synod be a time of grace and that active listening, dialogue and discernment strengthen the dynamic relationships between the People of God and the Risen Lord.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President and Archbishop of Perth, Timothy Costelloe SDB, said there was a fundamental question behind the synod. "How can I, in the concrete reality of my own life and circumstances, play my part in keeping alive and effective the presence of Jesus Christ in that part of the world and Church in which I find myself?" he said. He said the whole Church was being called to walk the synodal path in a way that "sustains, supports and encourages each other".

All people in the Diocese of Ballarat are asked to pray that the diocesan assembly on leadership and governance being held in November is also a time of active listening and discernment, more than simply hearing, listening to each other and to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, in order to know what the Spirit is saying to the Church of Ballarat.

(Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Media Release September 27, 2024 and Bishop Paul's ODC November article)

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: St Patrick's Church, Nhill (1899). Back cover: 1. First St Michael and St John Church, Horsham 2. Sacred Heart Church, Mildura (Rose Series) 3. Original St Joseph's Church, Charlton (Rose Series). 4. Early St Mary's Church, Swan Hill (Rose Series)