



CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT



OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY

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OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY (ODC)

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EDITORIAL BOARD

Sr Geraldine Mugavin, Mrs Julie Boyd, Ms Kate Lawry, Ms Fiona Tonkin, Dr Susan Crowe, Mrs Bernadette Lynch, Fr Adrian McInerney, Mrs Jane Collins.

The next ODC will be in October 2025.

All contributions to ODC may be forwarded to:

OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY,

PO Box 576, Ballarat 3353.

Phone: (03) 5337 7179

Email: odc@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Web: www.ballarat.catholic.org.au

JUBILEE 2025

Pressing the reset button for our Christian lives



From the start of this year, all kinds of people have been gathering in Rome for special Jubilee Year events. The gatherings began in January with a conference of people involved in the World of Communications. As the months have unfolded, there have been Jubilee celebrations for Artists, for Volunteers, for the Sick and for Healthcare Workers. There have been Jubilees for Families, Children, Teenagers, Grandparents and the Elderly. There have been Jubilees for Bands and Popular Entertainment and for People with Disabilities. Later in the year, there will be Jubilees for Migrants, for Choirs, and for the World of Education.

These different events reflect the many aspects of people's lives. The Jubilee gatherings are opportunities to celebrate the contributions people make in these various fields. They are also opportunities to pray for the gifts we need in all the areas of life.

A Jubilee Year is meant to be a year of liberation and renewal, a time to make a fresh start. It is also called a Holy Year. It is a year in which we are encouraged to pray for the gifts we need to live our lives in a holy and wholesome way.

Our celebration of the Jubilee Year draws on an ancient Jewish tradition that we read about in the Bible. According to the Book of Leviticus, every 50th year was to be a Year of Jubilee. The name came from the Hebrew word "yobel" meaning "trumpet" because the Jubilee was announced by the blowing of a trumpet. This is what we read in Leviticus 25:8-11.

"You shall count seven weeks of years – seven times seven years, that is to say, a period of seven weeks of years, forty-nine years. And on the tenth day of the seventh month you shall sound the trumpet throughout the land. You will declare this fiftieth year to be sacred, and proclaim the liberation of all the inhabitants of the land. You will keep this as a jubilee: each of you will return to his ancestral property, each to his own clan. This fiftieth year will be a jubilee year for you."

It was a year in which slaves were to be set free, debts were to be forgiven, and people were to return to their ancestral lands. The Jubilee was intended to restore the wellbeing of the community. It was like pushing the reset button, making a fresh start to community living. Our modern celebration of the Jubilee is similar.

In ancient times, the Jubilee was celebrated every 50 years. In modern times, the Church celebrates a Jubilee every 25 years. However, the basic aim is the same. It is a time to make a fresh start. It is a time to press the reset button for living as a Christian community. It is a time to pray for the gifts we need to live our Christian lives to the full.



During a Jubilee Year, many people make a pilgrimage to Rome, where the apostles Peter and Paul gave their lives as martyrs, witnesses for Christ. Pilgrims walk through the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica and pray at the tomb of Saint Peter. They walk through the Holy Door of St Paul's Basilica and pray at the tomb of Saint Paul. In these ways they can have a strong sense of their link with the early Christian community. A pilgrimage to Rome can be an inspiring experience as people pray to be renewed in the faith of the apostles. Yet, not everyone can travel to Rome. Happily, we don't need to go to Rome to pray for a renewal of our Christian lives. We can pray for this gift of renewal wherever we may be. We can celebrate the Jubilee Year wherever we are. We can mark this as a Holy Year in our own place by praying for the grace to live holy lives right here in our diocese of Ballarat.

Jubilee Indulgences

Some parishioners have asked me about the practice of indulgences linked to the Holy Year. In response to this question, I would like to offer a brief explanation, drawing on the apostolic constitution published by Pope Paul VI in 1967 and the document published by Pope Francis in 2024 announcing this Year of Jubilee.

Pope Paul's text was called "Indulgentiarum Doctrina", "The Doctrine of Indulgences". In that document, Pope Paul linked the doctrine of indulgences with the prayerful support the members of the Church give one another. "Following in the footsteps of Christ, the Christian faithful have always endeavoured to help one another on the path leading to the heavenly Father through prayer, the exchange of spiritual goods and penitential expiation. The more they have been immersed in the fervour of charity, the more they have imitated Christ in his sufferings, carrying their crosses in expiation for their own sins and those of others, certain that they could help their brothers and sisters to obtain salvation from God the Father of mercies. This is the very ancient doctrine of the Communion of Saints, whereby the life of each individual child of God in Christ and through Christ is joined by a wonderful link to the life of all their brothers and sisters in the supernatural unity of the Mystical Body of Christ till, as it were, a single mystical person is formed." (paragraph 5)

Pope Paul described an indulgence as "the remission before God of the temporal punishment due sins already forgiven as far as their guilt is concerned, which the follower of

Christ with the proper dispositions and under certain determined conditions acquires through the intervention of the Church which, as minister of the Redemption, authoritatively dispenses and applies the treasury of the satisfaction won by Christ and the saints." Pope Paul spelt out the conditions for an indulgence in this way. "To acquire a plenary indulgence it is necessary to perform the work to which the indulgence is attached and to fulfil three conditions: sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion and prayer for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff. It is further required that all attachment to sin, even to venial sin, be absent." In regard to the prayers, Pope Paul added: "The condition of praying for the Supreme Pontiff's intentions is fully satisfied by reciting one 'Our Father' and one 'Hail Mary'; nevertheless the individual members of the faithful are free to recite any other prayer according to their own piety and devotion toward the Supreme Pontiff."

Pope Francis announced the present Jubilee Year on May 9, 2024. In doing so, he recalled the Church's custom of linking indulgences with practices recommended in such years. He described indulgences as "a way of discovering the unlimited nature of God's mercy." He noted, "Not by chance, for the ancients, the terms 'mercy' and 'indulgence' were interchangeable, as expressions of the fullness of God's forgiveness, which knows no bounds." ("Spes non confundit", "Hope does not disappoint", paragraph 23)

Pope Francis referred to indulgences as complementing the sacrament of Penance. He wrote, "The sacrament of Penance assures us that God wipes away our sins" but then he added, "Still, as we know from personal experience, every sin 'leaves its mark'. Sin has consequences, not only outwardly in the effects of the wrong we do, but also inwardly, inasmuch as 'every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death, in the state called Purgatory'. In our humanity, weak and attracted by evil, certain residual effects of sin remain. These are removed by the indulgence, always by the grace of Christ, who, as Saint Paul VI wrote, is himself our 'indulgence'. The Apostolic Penitentiary will issue norms for obtaining and rendering spiritually fruitful the practice of the Jubilee indulgence." (paragraph 23)

The Apostolic Penitentiary issued these norms on May 13, 2024. "All the faithful, who are truly repentant and free from any affection for sin, who are moved by a spirit of charity and who, during the Holy Year, purified through the sacrament of Penance and refreshed by Holy Communion, pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, will be able to obtain from the treasury of the Church a plenary indulgence, with remission and forgiveness of all their sins, which can be applied in suffrage to the souls in Purgatory." The Apostolic Penitentiary listed various ways to obtain a Jubilee indulgence.

One way is through a pilgrimage to a designated church. "The faithful, pilgrims of hope, will be able to obtain the Jubilee indulgence granted by the Holy Father if they undertake a pious pilgrimage to any sacred Jubilee site." These sites include the main basilicas in Rome. They also include our Ballarat cathedral and the parish church in Portland, which I have nominated as a pilgrimage site.

Those unable to visit such sites can still obtain an indulgence by being united in spirit with those taking part in such pilgrimages. "The faithful who are truly repentant of sin but who cannot participate in the various solemn celebrations, pilgrimages and pious visits for serious reasons can obtain the Jubilee indulgence, under the same conditions if, united in spirit with the faithful taking part in person, they recite the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any approved form, and other prayers in conformity with the objectives of the Holy Year, in their homes or wherever they are confined, offering up their sufferings or the hardships of their lives."

We can also obtain a Jubilee indulgence by acts of charity, such as visiting the sick. "The faithful will be able to obtain the Jubilee indulgence if they visit, for an appropriate amount of time, their brothers and sisters who are in need or in difficulty (the sick, prisoners, lonely elderly people, disabled people), in a sense making a pilgrimage to Christ present in them (cf. Matthew 25:34-36) according to the

usual spiritual, sacramental and prayer conditions. The faithful can repeat these visits throughout the Holy Year, even daily, acquiring a plenary indulgence each time."

Dedication to Christ and to Our Brothers and Sisters

The teaching about indulgences can encourage us to take up good practices such as prayerful visits to churches or visits to the sick. However, whether or not we emphasise Jubilee indulgences, I hope we will take up such practices with extra commitment in this Jubilee Year.

May this Holy Year help us to renew our dedication to Christ and to our brothers and sisters. May this be a year in which we press the reset button for our Christian lives.

+ Paul Bird

Bishop Paul Bird CSsR



LEARNING WITH PLACE

St James' Parish School Sebastopol and The University of Melbourne have established a community-focused partnership to create *The Learning with Place© Lab School*. This Lab School is a result of a longstanding collaboration (that began in 2016) between St James' and Associate Professors Jeanne Marie Iorio and Catherine Hamm regarding *The Learning with Place©* research project. This project supports children, teachers, families and communities to build deep relationships with the environment to activate positive climate action.

As part of this project, children, teachers and researchers co-constructed curriculum and experiences that meet national and state educational outcomes and supported school and community-wide sustainability practices. Most recently, children and teachers created 'Our Common Home' - *Koling Wada Ngal (Let's walk together)*. This garden is a tangible outcome of *The Learning with Place©*, demonstrating the children's engagement with and understanding of their local environment.

The Learning with Place© Lab School is an innovative approach for community-centered education that prioritises environmental awareness, cultural responsiveness and collaborative learning.

Highlights include:

- Sustainability Focus: The emphasis on sustainability practices promotes environmental awareness and responsibility among students.
- Teacher Development: The professional development opportunities enhance teacher skills and knowledge.
- University-School Partnership: This partnership provides valuable research and practical experience opportunities for university students.
- Community Building: The project strengthens connections between the school, families and the wider community.
- Culturally responsive education: By the foregrounding local First Nations perspectives and local place, the school is taking steps to ensure that the education is culturally responsive.

Viv McLoughlin - Deputy Principal/Learning Diversity Leader

VIBRANT ARTWORK: If you visited the Ballarat Begonia Festival back in March, you may have seen Siena Catholic Primary School Lucas's vibrant artwork proudly on display! Our stunning painting of two rainbow lorikeets was created by our talented Year 6 Arts Leaders - Blake, Blair, Zahra and Jasmine - and was submitted as part of the Central Highlands Water Native Animal and their Connection to Water art competition. Congratulations to this creative team for their incredible effort and beautiful contribution! See the front cover.

Tonia Burrridge - Visual Arts Specialist

Our Diocesan Community - July 2025



Beaufort Parish Picnic

A Parish Picnic was held at the Beaufort Community Bendigo Bank Complex in mid-May for the Beaufort Parish. It was a great occasion for the community to gather. A delicious meal of soup, savouries and sandwiches was prepared by Angela with her band of helpers. Thank you to our families for providing dessert as well.



Around thirty people were in attendance and several apologies were received as well. It was lovely to welcome Sr Helen Murphy ibvm, former Parish Coordinator to our Lay Led Assembly prior to the Picnic. Sr Helen enjoyed being able to stay in the Parish House for a couple of days and was delighted to see our little church looking resplendent following the recent painting works. We appreciate Sr Helen leading us in 'Grace Before Meals'.

Children in attendance loved playing with some of the big games on loan to us for the day by Ange and Tim Chandler of Cave Hill Creek.

The tables were beautifully decorated with an Australiana theme and were strewn with wooden puzzles and cards for playing games.



Later in the afternoon, Tommy Franc was coaxed into playing his squeeze-box, and 'lo and behold', Fr Ed, just happened to have his accordion with him. This was swiftly followed up by Genevieve, picking up a couple of spoons and playing an accompaniment. This was thoroughly enjoyed by all in attendance.

Fr Ed said a few words focusing on community as was exemplified by our gathering today. Congratulations to Angela for her incentive and desire to get the Picnic up and running... it was well worth it.

Bernadette Franc - Beaufort Parish

Celebrating the Spirit of St Catherine of Siena

On Tuesday, April 29, 2025 Siena Catholic Primary School Community in Lucas (Ballarat) joyfully celebrated the Feast Day of our patron saint, St Catherine of Siena. Throughout the day, students explored her story, participating in engaging activities that taught them about St Catherine's strength, determination, bravery, kindness and wisdom; all qualities that continue to inspire us today. The day culminated in a beautiful liturgy, capably and reverently led by our Grade 6 students.

We celebrated St Catherine of Siena as a woman of courage, deep faith and love. She showed us that we can make a difference, no matter how young we are. Together, we reflected on her significant writings, most notably: "Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire."

After the liturgy, the excitement shifted to our much-loved Il Palio running race finals. Inspired by the famous horse race held annually in Siena, Italy, Il Palio is a thrilling and spirited event where students race with hobby horses while house chants echo throughout the school. This joyful tradition celebrates the passion and heritage of Siena, bringing our community together in a fun and lively way.

The celebrations continued throughout the week, as students connected with St Catherine's Italian heritage through cooking sessions led by our Italian language Our Diocesan Community - July 2025

assistant, Donato, who, lucky for us, is also an experienced Italian chef! Students made fresh pasta from scratch and prepared bruschetta using tomatoes grown in our school garden. Sharing this meal was a joyful act of table fellowship with community and culture, bringing us together through food, tradition and teamwork.

We concluded the week with a special Mass held in our beautiful school. Fr Ed Moloney led us as we reflected on St Catherine's legacy. He engaged wonderfully with the students and it was moving to witness the respect and sincerity with which they sang and prayed. Our Grade 5/6 readers showed great confidence, speaking with poise and pride. It was a week filled with faith, joy and connection; an uplifting celebration of community, culture and the enduring inspiration of St Catherine of Siena.

Lauren Davey and Monique McGrath
Catholic Faith, Identity and Mission Leaders



“The world you so loved has come to say goodbye – Thank you!”



With plans to travel to Rome already in place, I was saddened to hear of the death of Pope Francis. His leadership had inspired so many—through both his deep faith and his personal, humble style.

Walking across to the Vatican on Saturday morning, I was struck by how quiet the city was, how safe I felt and what a glorious day it was. I had expected, at best, to find a spot somewhere along Via della Conciliazione to watch on a screen and simply absorb the moment.

To my surprise, as I made my way up the avenue, I managed to get through the crowd and ended up near the obelisk in St Peter's Square, right at the front of the fence. I'm not usually a fan of big events, but the crowd

was patient and respectful. When the Rosary began, I was moved by the deep sense of prayerfulness that settled over everyone. My Italian is limited, but I joined in where I could and sent a few pictures home. Friends and family—Catholic and otherwise—were eager to hear what it was like and the question continues to come up.

Standing with hundreds of thousands of people from around the world at the foot of St Peter's was awe-inspiring. The grandeur of the buildings, the morning light on the fountains, the presence of the saints, and the hope, prayerfulness and generosity of the crowd—it's hard to capture it in words. Little children were let through to see better, people shared translations of what was being said, and booklets were held open so all could join in singing and prayer.

Though I was likely the only native English speaker in my section, I felt surrounded by friends. I prayed in English while others prayed in their own languages, all united in reverence.

A striking moment came when the crowd began clapping during the homily—an expression of deep respect for Pope Francis and acknowledgment of his leadership. There were also moments of profound stillness—so quiet you could hear the seagulls above and even the gentle hum of a drone.

As the celebration ended and Pope Francis was carried through the basilica, the crowd again rose to its feet in applause—some with tears, others with smiles and many filled with a sense of joy and hope. At that moment, a religious sister standing in front of me pulled a banner from her bag that read, in Italian: “Today the world you so loved has come to say goodbye – Thank you.” For me, that captured the day perfectly. The world had truly come together in peace and love to farewell a great man.

Laura Avery

“BRIDGING NOW TO NEXT”

Reconciliation Week 2025 (May 27 - June 3) had the theme of “Bridging Now to Next”, which encourages our nation to look ahead while drawing lessons from the past to continue building a more united and respectful nation. Australia has a history of making decisions for First Australian communities, rather than upholding their rights to decide for themselves. This history has deep and long-lasting effects on First Australians, as well as Australia as a whole. There are stark inequalities between the general population and those identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. When we look ahead, what we know is that support for First Australian-led approaches grounded in cultural and spiritual safety must be the priority. Caritas Australia thank First Australian Partners for allowing them to walk humbly beside them, for sharing their lived experiences and for their continued dedication to building a more united Australia.

St Alipius Parish School Ballarat East paused to remember the Stolen Generations and acknowledge the deep sorrow and ongoing impact of past injustices on First Nations peoples. The community were honoured and blessed to welcome Brenda Matthews, author of “The Last Daughter”, to the school for a special keynote address. Brenda’s powerful story of identity, family and reconciliation is one that will stay with us. Brenda told her incredible story to our students and students from St Michael’s Primary School Daylesford and we participated in a Q&A session following the keynote address. Brenda’s story is one of hope, forgiveness and love. We thank Brenda and Mark for being with us.



Caritas Media release (adapted) and Emily Clarke - Principal St Alipius Parish School Ballarat East

Our Diocesan Community - July 2025

A Season of Service, Celebration and Growth

This year to date, Sacred Heart Primary School Casterton, have embraced a spirit of reflection, community and renewal. The term began with meaningful moments – our ANZAC Day commemoration, where we remembered those who served and a day of reflection centred on Laudato Si', Pope Francis' call to care for our common home where staff used this time to set practical, values-led sustainability goals for the school.

Our students have continued to shine in many areas. Representatives recently competed at district and regional levels in athletics and cross country, showing determination and sportsmanship. Meanwhile, our Mini Vinnies group has had a strong start, raising over \$900 through Term 1 fundraising for the Good Friday Appeal and Caritas. A standout event was their student-run car wash – a fantastic display of teamwork and hospitality. Customers were invited inside for a cuppa and freshly baked muffins while they waited and thanks to the power of social media in a small town, word quickly spread. Even people driving past stopped in to support. In just a few hours, they raised over \$400. While the cars may not have been showroom clean, no one seemed to mind – the students' enthusiasm and care left a lasting impression.



We have also had major upgrades to our facilities following last year's hailstorm. The school is looking fresh and new, with new carpet throughout, modern library furniture and we have had two windows installed in the corridor so visitors can now see into our learning spaces. Our slide and climbing frame were finally repaired after more than six months of waiting, much to the excitement of our students, who wasted no time making the most of them!

Last term we farewelled Fr George and expressed our heartfelt thanks for his years of dedicated service to our parish and school community. This term, we warmly welcomed Fr Cay Trinh and look forward to building strong connections with him in the months ahead.

We were also proud to celebrate a staff achievement, with Gabby Sullivan competing in the prestigious Stawell Gift. Gabby placed second in her 400m heat and went on to make the final in the 800m event – a fantastic result and a great end to the running season.

Our Western Trinity collaboration with Edenhope and Coleraine continues to strengthen, and we are exploring the potential for St Joseph's Penshurst to join the network. This exciting possibility would help our small rural schools thrive by working smarter together.

As always, faith, wellbeing and learning remain at the heart of everything we do at Sacred Heart. We continue to be grateful for the support of our families, parish and broader Catholic community.

Suzie McManus - Principal

FR KEVIN, MAY YOUR HORSES RUN FAST



Fr Kevin Arundell celebrated his last monthly Sunday Mass at St Joseph's Church Pirron Yallock on April 6 with the parishioners from St Joseph's and St Brendan's Churches in Parish of Cororooke. The Mass was followed by morning tea, speeches and presentation of gifts, a BBQ lunch and

many wonderful conversations and laughter, sharing memories and events that Fr Kevin had shared with us. It was a chance to thank him for his continued commitment and support of St Joseph's and the broader community over many years, particularly providing thought provoking homilies, observations and wit.

The Parish of Cororooke were given a final chance to catch up when Fr Kevin celebrated the Easter ceremonies for Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil at St Brendan's Coragulac, ceremonies that he had celebrated for many years. A highlight was a prayer composed by Liz McGuane as a tribute to Fr Kevin as we know him, the first paragraph says: Lord, we pray for your humble servant, Fr Kevin. For his wisdom that shines like a like a lamp at our feet. May your love keep his path clear for future journeys. And help him always find his way home.

Lucy Darcy and Liz McGuane - Parish of Cororooke

Dedication, expertise and kindness



Over the past two decades, Jane Lee has been instrumental in managing the financial and administrative governance of St Colman's School Mortlake. Her dedication, expertise and kindness have made her a beloved figure in our community. Seeing Jane sitting behind the front desk is as familiar an image to us as the lump of olivine parked at the front door. She has been a constant and reassuring presence, embodying the welcoming and caring values that define our school community.

Jane has provided extraordinary emotional support to all four principals she has worked alongside. John O'Sullivan, Mick Saunders, Tim Bourke and Stacey Atkins would undoubtedly agree that Jane has been an emotional sounding board, wise mentor and steadfast champion for each of them. She has carried an incredible load to ease the burdens of leadership while remaining passionate about promoting Catholic education within our community.

Jane's passion for Catholic education has been invaluable during challenging times. She worked tirelessly alongside other principals during periods of low enrolments to promote and grow the school's profile. Her efforts were instrumental in increasing enrolments from the low 20s to the high 50s—a remarkable achievement. Our community also owes Jane immense gratitude for her dedication to fundraising efforts over many years. Without her hard work, our major fundraiser—the Annual Raffle—would not have achieved its consistent success.

Personally, as an inexperienced principal, I have relied on Jane as a safe

space where I could share challenges, brainstorm ideas and navigate the complexities of school leadership. Her wisdom and practicality have provided me with excellent advice—not only regarding school operations but also offering valuable local perspectives that I might not have considered otherwise. Whether shielding me from distractions, offering words of encouragement or being a calming presence during stressful times, Jane has been an incredible support. I will deeply miss her advice, stories and dry sense of humour.

Jane has played an indispensable role in fostering the warm and caring culture we all love at St Colman's. Her unwavering support has given us confidence to fight for our school's vision while allowing us to focus on what matters - most ensuring our students receive the best educational experience possible.

While it's hard to imagine St Colman's without Jane, we are excited for her and Lachie as they embark on new adventures together. We wish Jane all the very best for her retirement.

Janet Cain - Principal

150TH CELEBRATIONS

On May 4, 2025, a beautiful, Sunday morning, St Peter's Parish, Linton joyfully marked its 150th anniversary, celebrating a century and a half of faith, fellowship and service. The milestone was honoured with a special Mass that filled the church with a spirit of joy and thanksgiving. Parishioners of all ages gathered in the Church to commemorate this historic occasion. The congregation joined in the singing of hymns and prayerful participation in the Holy Mass led by Fr Eugene McKinnon, Parish Priest Fr Concord Bagaoisan OSJ and Fr Eric Bryant.

The Mass was an enthusiastic celebration of the parish's journey, that honoured the generations who have nurtured St Peter's over the years.

Fr Eric Bryant, one of many priests who has ministered to the parish during this time, delivered a heartfelt homily, reminding everyone of the parish's enduring mission and encouraging all to continue living out the faith with hope and love accompanied, as we are at every Mass, by the angels and saints.

Following Mass, a generous reception at the Linton Bowling Club brought the community together to share stories, memories and thanksgiving for all who have served the parish. Fr Eladio Lizada OSJ, who currently tends the parish with Fr Concord, attended the reception. This anniversary not only celebrated the past but also marked a significant change, as the parish will shortly merge with the parishes of Redan and Sebastopol. As St Peter's, Linton reflects on 150 years, the parish gives thanks for its rich history and prays for many more years filled with joy, prayer and faithful service to God and neighbour.



Tess Briody

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STAR OF THE SEA PARISH SOUTH WEST COAST 'RACING MASS'

The 'Racing Mass' is celebrated on the Sunday prior to the Warrnambool Racing Carnival in May at St Joseph's Church. Members of the Warrnambool Racing Committee attend and trophies of the more significant races are on display. Quite a few visitors also gather for this annual celebration, as well as parishioners.

Trainers and owners are also involved with the 'Racing Mass'. A number of their colours are displayed. They add colour and atmosphere as people enter the Gathering Space.

In 2013, a papier-mache horse was created by two Jesuits in Tertianship, Fr Hoa Dinh and Fr Thu Nguyen, who had led our Retreat in Daily Life that year. Fr Hoa is a talented artist and during the time with us he sculpted figures from papier mâché to be used as a prayer focus during the Retreat. The horse was their contribution to the Carnival even though they knew little about horses. Peter Griffin (pictured with the papier-mache horse) from Deloraine in Tasmania makes the annual trek to Warrnambool with his wife.

South West Coast Parish



Lend a Hand! Make a Difference!

Last year, I introduced the Lend a Hand! Make a Difference! initiative to our school community. This volunteer program was designed to give Year 9 and 10 students the opportunity to engage with the wider community through weekly visits to Logan Lodge (a Residential Aged Care Facility). I was overwhelmed by the response, with over seventy students expressing interest and as a result, the program now runs every Friday during Lesson 5.

This initiative aligns beautifully with the theme of the Jubilee Year: Pilgrims of Hope. It provides our students with a tangible way to live out the values of compassion, service and connection. Volunteering offers so many benefits; not only do students develop empathy, leadership and communication skills, but they also gain a deeper understanding of the importance of giving back.

What has been most heartening to witness is the joy that radiates from both students and residents during these visits. The feeling our students experience after volunteering is priceless. However, it's the smiles, laughter and sheer delight of the residents that leave the most lasting impression. These intergenerational connections bring genuine warmth and life to our community.

Laura Crow - Leader of Health and Physical Education – St Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill



DEMAND GROWING FOR FLEXIBLE LEARNING



Ballarat's first flexible learning school has expanded to meet soaring demand for an alternative to mainstream education for young people. Saints College opened its second campus in the region earlier this year at Bungaree, which is set on farmland and will cater for sixty students.

The ground-breaking education model offers flexible, supported learning for students from Years 7 to 12, with a broad range of elective and outdoor education opportunities that foster holistic development and engagement with the environment.

This campus is designed to complement the Ballarat campus, which opened last year and already has a full student cohort from Ballarat and surrounding areas.

Governed by Edmund Rice Education Australia Victorian Schools Limited (EREA VSL) and led by teachers working in partnership with wellbeing workers, the curriculum will focus on a flexible version of the Victorian Curriculum leading to the Victorian Certificate of Education Vocational Major (VCE VM), and the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC).

Director Chloe Hand says demand is growing for flexible education across the region. "Saints College Bungaree and Ballarat are designed to support young people who

have faced challenges in mainstream education and may be navigating other complexities in their lives," Ms Hand said. "Many young people enrolled at Ballarat live in dense housing, limiting their opportunities to engage with nature and open spaces."

"The Bungaree Campus is characterised by its expansive green spaces and farmland surroundings, providing a unique setting for experiential learning. In addition to literacy and numeracy, students will have the opportunity to engage in hands-on programs like cooking and horticulture. The campus will utilise an existing building for community spaces, communal meals and bathroom facilities, while demountable buildings will serve as learning spaces."

"Research tells us that once a young person is disengaged from education, the path to employment or further study becomes much harder. Saints College aims to reduce the barriers that can cause young people to slip through the cracks by helping them to reach their full potential through innovative approaches to teaching and learning."

Saints College does school differently. Campuses are unlike mainstream schools – class sizes are small and students are supported by both a teacher and wellbeing worker. There are no fees, booklists or uniforms and students are provided a free MYKI card and free meals, that are shared with staff and students to bolster learning and build community.

Troy Strybosch is the Campus Principal of Ballarat and his role has expanded to include Bungaree, supported by Renee Vallance as Deputy Principal. Saints College Bungaree is subject to Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority approval.

In addition to the Bungaree campus, Saints College has opened new campuses in Sunshine supporting vulnerable students and in Fitzroy North, dedicated to students with neurodiversity, anxiety, mental health concerns and school refusal (subject to VRQA approval). The College currently operates campuses in Ballarat, Geelong, North Melbourne, Colac, as well as an online campus, BlendED.

Media contact - HeadlinePR Lisa Gilbert

Year of Hope

The Australian Catholics 2025 Young Voices Awards are held in conjunction with Australian Catholic University. The YVA theme for 2025 is 'Voices of hope'.

Bailey Eder, a Year 12 student at St Brigid's College in Horham has entered a series of photos for the awards this year. "After such devastation and loss, from the ashes, new life finds a way. This collection of photos shows the destruction fire brought to our farm in Western Victoria in November 2024 and the hope nature brings us from its renewal and growth."

Malory Ryan - Marketing & Compliance Officer. Bailey's photos are pictured left and on also on page 11.

Our Diocesan Community - July 2025



LAUDATO SI'

The theme for Laudato Si' Week this year was **Raise Hope** – inspired by the Jubilee Year and its theme – Pilgrims of Hope. Laudato Si' Week was extra special this year as we celebrated the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si' in the Year of Jubilee. It was also a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge with gratitude the incredible inspiration of Pope Francis in caring for our common home. In line with the biblical tradition of Jubilee, the action focus this year is debt and the impact debt has on earth and each other. Through the global campaign, **Turn Debt into Hope**, we were all invited to stand together during Laudato Si' Week and beyond and look to building a more just world.



Bishop Paul encouraged every parish in our diocese to mark this milestone with prayer, education and community engagement. Bishop Paul suggested a few ways to commemorate the anniversary which included celebrating a special Mass or prayer service in thanksgiving for creation and to pray for ecological justice; hosting a reading group or reflection series on Laudato Si' or Pope Francis' recent follow-up, *Laudate Deum*; engaging youth and families with stewardship projects, such as tree planting, clean-up days or energy audits; and collaborate with local partners to support sustainable initiatives and advocate for policies that protect the environment and vulnerable communities.

“Let this 10th anniversary be a moment of grace and renewal in our journey toward integral ecology. May our actions, big and small, bear witness to the Gospel and our responsibility as stewards of God's creation.”

Parishes were also sent a Catholic Earthcare Caritas Australia Laudato Si' Card Set to acknowledge the anniversary. This resource aims to deepen our understanding of integral ecology by reflecting on the Laudato Si' Goals. Changing climate and recurring natural disasters have a significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable communities around the world. Caritas Australia works with local partners to develop programs to assist vulnerable communities to adapt and to tackle the challenges of a changing climate.



Sandra Dillon writes a reflection:

Ten years of Laudato Si has been celebrated during the week of May 16-24 in Australia. This encyclical is a letter to not only Catholics but to the whole world, speaking of the damage to our common home, the changing climate, pollution, deforestation, increasing water scarcity, biodiversity loss, economic inequity and the poor who suffer the most from the decline in every aspect of their quality of life forcing the increasing migration of millions with all the associated risks.

In Australia, we have been led by Earthcare Australia, auspiced by Caritas in the person of very committed Kerry Stone, who

facilitates individuals, parishes and dioceses across Australia in zoom discussions on the social justice actions we can undertake to care for our common home. In this Jubilee Year of Hope in Australia, Caritas is asking us to support a renewed call for justice, equity and economic reform through the 'Turn Debt into Hope' Campaign. This is a campaign to work towards forgiving foreign debt in recognition of the ecological debt existing between the North and the South of this world (Caritas). Everyone can sign the petition on the Caritas Australia website under “Petition to turn debt into hope.”

All are welcome to be part of these online Earthcare sessions to support each other who alone or in groups and parishes, are caring and working for all who are suffering now and for future generations, who will shoulder the burdens of our lack of action now. To enrol, simply go to the Caritas Australia website, Catholic Earthcare section <https://www.caritas.org.au/catholic-earthcare/>.

The Federation of Asian Bishops Conference Pastoral (FABC) Letter to the Local Churches of Asia on the Care of Creation also reflected on the 10th Anniversary of Laudato Si' and the urgency of responding to the ecological crisis of this time, describing the ongoing destruction of rainforests by illegal logging, agricultural expansion and mining and the displacement of communities due to sea-level rises threatening entire villages, with millions facing the threats of climate-induced migration. Water and food insecurity and economic hardship are also results of extreme weather events. Economic justice demands that financial institutions and lending nations rethink unfair structures that constrain climate action and sustainable development in the Global South.

'Free to Create'

Indie Folk Duo "The Red Violets" songwriters Jill O'Dowd and Claire Foley, have poured their hearts into their recently released debut album, "Free to Create", a powerful collection of original songs that reflect their values of inclusion, respect, and mental health awareness. Jill and Claire are passionate women who use their love of music to reach out to people of all backgrounds and abilities. Their work includes leading an all-abilities community choir and creating safe, welcoming spaces through the power of song where everyone feels valued and heard.

They are both respected members of our parish community, Jill a member of the St Brendan's Parish Leadership Team and Claire a member of St Mary's Parish Colac. Together they use music not only as an art form but as a tool for healing, belonging and social change. "Free to Create" embodies this mission. The album is a celebration of authenticity, vulnerability and the healing power of music. Songs like "Marching Free" and "Find Your Light" highlight the duo's dedication to creating meaningful music that resonates with all and uplifts the community.



Michelle Gorwell - St Brendan's Parish Cororooke

A Historic Farewell to St Michael's Church, Kaniva



After ninety-three years, the time has come to say goodbye to St Michael's Church, Kaniva. The final Mass was celebrated outdoors on Sunday, April 6. The building has become unsafe in its current state and although no Masses have been celebrated there for the past 18 months, there was an opportunity to take one last look inside on this occasion. As we gathered for this final Mass, we reflected on the history, faith and memories held within the walls of this church. Afterwards, all were welcome to catch up with friends and family at Little Guys Pizza and Cafe.

Some history: The foundation stone of St Michael's Church was laid December 29, 1929 by Bishop Daniel Foley, who had served the Kaniva district thirty four years earlier. The land was generously donated by Michael Roache, who had hoped to see a Catholic school built alongside it, though this dream was never realised.



The church was designed by Melbourne architect Lionel D. San Miguel and built by H. Harris of Nhill, opening on June 8, 1930, at a cost of £1,977. During the ceremony, he congratulated the community on their dedication and thanked Michael Roache for his generous donation of the land. As a lasting tribute, Bishop Foley placed several documents inside the foundation stone before laying and blessing it. Parishioners later contributed to the interior decorations, the total cost plus furnishings was £2,500. On October 12, 1931, Rev Dr Foley received the deeds of the church from Michael Roache

at a confirmation service held there. The Lawloit Times reported at the time: "It was fitting that on the Day of Pentecost the Church should be dedicated to St Michael, who sat at the right hand of God." The street the church is in was later renamed by the Council as Roache Street.

A Place of Faith, Family & Memories: For decades, St Michael's was at the heart of Kaniva's Catholic community, well attended by many families who hold fond family memories of baptisms, first Holy Communion, Christmas Eve Midnight Masses and weddings. The last wedding celebrated at St Michael's was that of Bernadette Powell and Paul Golder. Among its treasured features is the stunning stained-glass window, one of only two of its kind in Victoria. The Stations of the Cross, generously donated by the Roache family and imported from Italy, were translated into English and later restored by the nuns of Kew. Though they have weathered with age, they remain a testament to the dedication of past generations.

A New Future for St Michael's: Following the final Mass, the Church was placed on the market. Given its beautiful architecture and prime location across from the hospital and school, it has great potential for a new chapter—perhaps as a beautiful B&B or another creative use.

Ann - St Michael's Church, Kaniva
Our Diocesan Community - July 2025

**"MAY THE GOD OF HOPE
FILL YOU WITH JOY
AND PEACE"
(Romans 15:13)**

On Friday evening, May 30, 2025 we gathered as a diocesan community to celebrate the Spirit of Catholic Education Awards Dinner – a highlight in our calendar and a truly inspiring occasion. The evening recognised staff who have dedicated thirty years of service to Catholic education, as well as the exceptional nominees and recipients of the 2025 Spirit of Catholic Education Awards.



These individuals exemplify what it means to lead with heart, serve with purpose and contribute meaningfully to the lives of students, colleagues and communities. Their stories remind us of the deep commitment that continues to shape our schools and our shared mission.

These prestigious awards honour individuals and teams who exemplify the values and mission of Catholic education through their dedication, leadership and service. Chosen from a remarkable group of fifteen nominees across the diocese, this year's winners have demonstrated exceptional commitment to fostering faith, community and excellence.

Congratulations to the following 2025 Spirit of Catholic Education Award Winners –

Carmel Hanley, Lumen Christi Primary School Delacombe, Principal (Nominated for: SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY)

Chris Young, Catholic Education Ballarat, Team Leader: Payroll (Nominated for: COLLABORATIVE CULTURES)

Jacinta Skilbeck (Director Faith & Mission), Natasha Cummings (Social Justice & Community Service Coordinator) & Natalie Elliot-Jackson (Learning Diversity Assistant), Emmanuel College Warrnambool (Nominated for: SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY)

Ned Baldwin, St Alipius Parish School Ballarat East, Maintenance and Garden Worker (Nominated for: SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY)

Their contributions reflect the core principles of the DOBCEL Strategy 2035—Deeper Collaboration, Networked Local Innovation and Collective Autonomy and Agency—and serve as an inspiration to all within our Catholic education community. We commend all nominees for their outstanding work and thank them for the positive impact they continue to make in the lives of students, families and colleagues.

We proudly congratulate our 30 Years of Service to Catholic Education Award recipients for their unwavering dedication and faithful service to Catholic education - your commitment inspires us all.

Tom Sexton - Executive Director

Catholic Education Week Celebrations

"May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace" (Romans 15:13). This powerful scripture was the theme for Catholic Education Week 2025, celebrated across all DOBCEL schools in the week of May 25 - 30, 2025.

At St Alipius Parish School Ballarat East children shared what brings them joy.

Damascus College Ballarat students reflected on what gives them hope.

At St Patrick's Primary School Koroit, a scavenger hunt helped children explore how we live out our Catholic faith.

Many regions came together for combined Masses. Pictured here is the vibrant gathering from the Sunraysia region, including St Paul's Primary School, Mildura, Sacred Heart Primary School, Mildura, St Joseph's College,

Mildura, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Primary School, Merbein, St Mary's School, Robinvale and St Joseph's Primary School, Red Cliffs.

We thank and celebrate all DOBCEL schools who embraced the week with faith, creativity and community spirit.

CEB Ballarat Newsletter



Volunteering at St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat



National Volunteers Week: May 19-25, 2025 - 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. We take 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.

Deneise Walsh, Coordinator of St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat Liturgical Decorating Team, reflects on her volunteering role:

The definition of volunteering from Oxford languages is, "to freely offer to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task, usually for the benefit of others."

When I reflect on the large army of volunteers who work tirelessly with grace and dignity to enhance and enrich the liturgical life of the parish, I am in awe of the level of commitment of the many volunteers who make our parish the welcoming and prayerful community that it is.

For many years I have had the privilege of coordinating the Liturgical Decor of the Cathedral. As a member of the Liturgy Committee, I work with a small group of parishioners who play a vital role in enhancing the worship environment through thoughtful and seasonally appropriate decor.

Our role is to ensure that the Cathedral decor reflects the appropriate tone and symbolism of each season - Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time. This includes coordinating floral arrangements, symbols, fabric colours and textures and banners, and managing the placement of each one in a manner that facilitates a prayerful and spiritual experience for the parish community.

My main role is planning the decor and then working with my team to implement the vision that I have for each parish or diocesan liturgical event. This includes working with other parish groups to prepare the Cathedral for funerals, weddings, prayer services and the Sacramental program celebrations.

I am extremely grateful to the Cathedral Administrators and the Liturgy Team, who have supported and encouraged my team to create an environment that enhances not only the beauty of the Cathedral itself, but also hopefully encourages a deepened sense of reverence and sacredness for parishioners and visitors alike.

We are encouraged to be resourceful by recycling materials, minimising waste and carefully storing materials for future use. A limited budget, lack of accessible storage and the time restraints of working in a busy Cathedral can be problematic. These are minor distractions when I reflect on the many benefits I gain from this ministry. For me personally, this ministry is not only a form of prayer, but also an opportunity to develop social contacts within the parish and to use the creative skills that I have been blessed with to enrich my life and hopefully the worship environment of others.



'The Power of Communities'

IDAHOBIT Day acknowledges the date on which the World Health Organisation removed homosexuality from the classification of 'diseases' and related health problems. It is held each year on May 17. In 2025 the theme was 'The Power of Communities'. As the day fell on a Saturday this year, the Rainbow Alliance (LGBTQIA+ and allies student group) from St Joseph's College Mildura acknowledged the day on Monday, May 19. At lunchtime the students created a chalk mural that all were invited to contribute to, sold rainbow cupcakes and offered free glitter 'glow ups' to students and staff. The day was a resounding – and rainbow-coloured – success! It was heartwarming to see our students getting involved in social justice causes that speak to them.

*Amanda Morrison - Student Inclusion Leader
Our Diocesan Community - July 2025*

Emmanuel College:

Western District Food Share Visit

Recently, six members of the Social Justice Group at Emmanuel College Warrnambool participated in a volunteer session at the Warrnambool Food Share. During the session, the group assisted in packing 'emergency' boxes and bags, which are provided to individuals in immediate need of food while longer-term support is arranged. In 2023 alone, the Warrnambool Food Share distributed 187 tonnes of food to the local community.



In addition to their food relief efforts, Food Share's commitment to sustainability was notable. The organisation has implemented thoughtful recycling practices within the warehouse, repurposing materials such as cardboard boxes and even permanent markers. As a result, they produce only two red bins of waste each week.

The experience was both meaningful and rewarding, and students are strongly encouraged to take part in similar opportunities if they arise.

Caitlyn Belleville - Year 11 Student



CELEBRATING A GOLDEN JUBILEE

Bishop Paul Bird celebrated the golden jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood on May 17, 2025.

Thank you to the editors of Our Diocesan Community for the opportunity to share some reflections as I celebrate my golden jubilee of ordination.

Can you tell us about your childhood? I grew up in Newcastle, New South Wales. It was in the industrial suburb of Carrington, between the steelworks and the wharves. Dad was a forklift driver at the steelworks. Mum looked after our little grocer's shop. We lived next to the shop. I was the third of four children, with my elder sister Ann, elder brother Maurie and younger sister Josie. Our local parish church was only a few blocks away and was a regular part of our life. My brother and I were altar servers. The parish primary school was run by the Sisters of St Joseph. The school was next to the church and we walked to school each day. I played rugby league with our school team and we also played touch rugby in the local park after school. The touch rugby was very informal. Whoever happened to turn up, we would pick sides and play till late afternoon. For secondary school, I caught a bus to the nearby suburb of Hamilton and attended the Marist Brothers College there. I enjoyed the studies and also the sport, with cricket in summer and rugby league in winter.



Bishop Paul pictured holding the ball as Captain

When did you start thinking about being a priest? It was during secondary school that I started to think about being a priest. I felt particularly drawn to the way of life of the Redemptorist priests who used to come to our parish every few years for a parish mission program of preaching and prayer. My interest grew as I read some books by the founder of the Redemptorists, Saint Alphonsus Liguori. He wrote about how God has shown such love in sending Jesus as our Saviour and how we can find peace and joy in loving God in return. I felt that this was a message I would like to share with others and I applied to join the Redemptorists in my last year at secondary school.



Where did you study for the priesthood and where were you ordained? The first part of my training with the Redemptorists was in the novitiate in a country setting, in the monastery near the little town of Galong, about an hour's drive from Canberra. After making my profession as a Redemptorist, I came to Ballarat, to what was then the Redemptorist seminary in Wendouree. I was there from 1968 to 1971, when I moved with students and staff to Melbourne, where we joined with members of other religious congregations to begin Yarra Theological Union. I was ordained as a priest in Corpus Christi Parish Church in the Newcastle suburb of Waratah on the Vigil of Pentecost, May 17, 1975, and celebrated Mass on Pentecost Sunday in the Redemptorist Monastery Church in nearby Mayfield.

What have been some of the highlights of your years as a priest?

My first appointment after ordination was to the Redemptorist community in Perth. From there I travelled throughout Western Australia in teams with other Redemptorists conducting parish missions. One of our expeditions was a fourteen week journey through Western Australian mining towns and on to Darwin. A group of six Redemptorists travelled in a Volkswagen van, sometimes staying in presbyteries and sometimes camping along the way. In the following years I was based in Sydney and in Newcastle, conducting missions in parishes in New South Wales and Queensland. That was my main ministry till 1987 when I was appointed to the Majellan publishing community in Brighton in Melbourne.



In the middle of my years doing parish missions, I had the opportunity to do some further study in the field of liturgy at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC and at the Institut Catholique in Paris. That experience enriched my appreciation of liturgy and also my sense of international issues.

From 1988 I was part of the publishing team at Majellan House in Brighton. The Redemptorists there worked with lay staff to produce the Majellan magazine and Sunday Bulletins and distribute books and pamphlets. It was like the parish mission apostolate in that we were engaging with people all around Australia and beyond, but through the printed page rather than the spoken word.

In 2008 I was elected provincial of the Redemptorists in this part of the world, with the responsibility of promoting Redemptorist life and ministry in Australia and New Zealand and in Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. This role called for a lot of travel, visiting communities in each country. In the following few years the international travel expanded as I was involved in meetings with Redemptorists throughout Asia. I found it inspiring to see how people served their local communities in the different cultures.



How did you become Bishop of Ballarat? It was in July 2012, during my second term as Redemptorist provincial. I was at a conference in Galong when I received a phone call from the nuncio, the Pope's ambassador in Australia. He said he would like to meet with me. We arranged to meet at the cathedral presbytery in Sydney a few days later. There the nuncio said, "I have some news that will change your life. The Holy Father has appointed you to be Bishop of Ballarat." This came as quite a surprise. However, after some discussion, I indicated that I would accept the appointment and we arranged that the appointment would be announced on August 1, the feast of Saint Alphonsus, and my ordination as bishop would be on October 16, the feast of another Redemptorist, Saint Gerard Majella. Since then, my priestly ministry has been as Bishop of Ballarat.

How have you celebrated your golden jubilee? The first celebration was on Monday in Holy Week, when priests and people from all around the diocese gathered for the Chrism Mass. As we usually do, we included an acknowledgement of special priestly anniversaries. I was pleased to be celebrating a golden jubilee year in company with Fr Wally Tudor and Fr Eugene McKinnon. Then, in May, the team in our diocesan office arranged a lunch for my jubilee. A few days later, I was in the parish of Gordon, celebrating the parish's 150th anniversary, and the parishioners included my jubilee in the celebrations. Also present was Fr Wally Tudor, who had been ordained in Gordon, and Fr Wally and I cut the jubilee cake together. A few days after that, the Catholic Education team held a jubilee morning tea at the offices in

Gillies Street. I am very grateful to all these people for their kindness in arranging these celebrations. I am also grateful to those who have sent good wishes by post and by emails. These have included homemade cards from children at primary schools. The cards from the children have brought back happy memories of my visits to our schools through my years as bishop. I was also delighted to receive a letter from Pope Leo XIV, with good wishes for my golden jubilee and a blessing for all the people of our diocese.

Is there anything else you would like to add? The jubilee has provided an occasion to look back over the years. I am particularly grateful for all the encouragement I have received at each stage of my journey – from my family and the parishioners at Carrington, from the Sisters of Saint Joseph and the Marist Brothers, from my Redemptorist confreres and all the people I worked with in parish missions and in publishing. I am deeply grateful for the support I have received from people throughout our diocese in my ministry as bishop. All of this encouragement and support has helped me to have a positive approach to life, which I see reflected in the words I chose for my ordination as a priest and as a bishop. On my ordination card in 1975 I had the invitation we hear at Mass, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.” For my motto as bishop I chose the words of the risen Jesus, “Peace be with you.” As I give thanks for the kind wishes for my golden jubilee, I would like to continue this invitation and this prayer. To all the readers of Our Diocesan Community I say, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God” and “Peace be with you.”

Translation of the Golden Jubilee Letter from Pope Leo XIV - To our venerable brother, Paul Bernard Bird C.Ss.R., Bishop of Ballarat, on the occasion of the golden jubilee of his priestly ordination, received within the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. In the bond of fraternal charity, we congratulate him on his energetic pastoral mission, exercised devotedly among young people in schools and students for the priesthood, as well as his Redemptorist confreres and the Australian Bishops Conference. He has shown great care for what the divine liturgy teaches and through his wise and unstinting ministry has shown himself a servant and herald of the Gospel gift of peace. In offering every good wish, we gladly impart our Apostolic Blessing to him and his clergy, to the faithful of the Diocese and to his family, as a pledge of the Lord's generosity. From the Vatican, on the 20th day of May, in the Holy Year 2025. Pope Leo XIV



LETTERS TO THE POPE



The children were very excited to write, edit and publish their letters on their new chromebooks. Much care was taken to produce letters that were beautifully decorated. We look forward to hearing from Pope Leo XIV and we enjoyed the process of letter writing and learning how we can help save the earth for future generations.

Therese Winter - Religious Education Leader

At St Brigid's Primary School Ballan, the Year 2/3 classes studied the unit on "Love" in our Religious Education learning. As part of the unit we focused on *Laudato Si'* - *Caring for our common home*. We recorded ways in which we can look after our earth and preserve our natural resources.

During our writing classes we were learning how to draft and create letters. We decided that we could write to our new Pope Leo XIV to inform him of how we are trying to look after our earth and resources. This included making sure we always recycle paper, plastics and bottles, turn off lights when not needed and save water at school and home.



A SHORT HISTORY

CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE DIOCESE OF BALLARAT

Part 1. To 1900

by Berenice Kerr rsm

The parish priest of the country town where I was first appointed to teach was fond of repeating an axiom which may be a useful tool for interpreting the history of Catholic education in Australia, and indeed, our diocese. *He who pays the piper calls the tune, despite its lack of inclusivity*, is an apt idiom to keep in mind when navigating the issues which two centuries of catholic education presented to administrators, teachers and to those being educated.

On the basis of this principle we can, at this time of reassessing our heritage in education, ask ourselves several questions:

- What was the educational tune in our diocese in the early years?
- Who actually called it?

And what is more to the point:

- Who paid?
- Who was able to pay?
- What happened when there were no means of paying?

It seems that many were wanting to call the tune and all recognised the need for one. While there were definitely some successes, on the whole, lack of sufficient funds meant that many inferior pipers were engaged, and many discordant tunes were played. Nevertheless, the current system of Catholic education in Australia illustrates a unique resolution of the prevailing challenges, many of which were present at the outset.

As we call to mind the events of 150 years of our diocesan history, we note that significant educational milestones occurred in the years before the Ballarat Diocese was established, the opening of schools in Portland and Port Fairy in 1849 being but two examples. Ten years prior to that, the Franciscan priest Bonaventure Geohegan had employed Thomas Lynch and his wife Mary to conduct a school somewhere near St Francis Church in Melbourne, thus beginning Catholic education in what was later to become Victoria.¹ By that time Catholic education in Australia had been steadily progressing, the first school having been opened in 1822. Situated in Parramatta it was managed by a lay teacher named George Morley who was paid one penny per student for each of the thirty-one who turned up – seven of them Protestants!² Furthermore, prior to all these events and eclipsing them by millennia are the educational processes of the original inhabitants of this land.



Mindful of this, it is appropriate to acknowledge that with regard to the history of the Australian continent, the period we are concerned with is recent history. Preceding by more than 60,000 year the whalers, the pastoralists, the priests and bishops, who occupied the land which became our diocese, were the nation's First Peoples who lived on it, cared for it and preserved its history and heritage. They passed down their culture, customs, language and laws through successive generations, using, among other means, songlines – oral maps which spanned the continent, carrying the law and stories by which they encoded into memory the land and the sky and the water and their relationship to them.³ In one sense it can be stated that there have been metaphorical pipers and metaphorical tunes in this land long before white people ever heard them.⁴

1 Grogan, F., *A Short History of Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Melbourne 1839-1980*, Catholic Education Office, Melbourne, 2000, p.3.

2 See <https://www.catholicoutlook.org/200-years-of-catholic-education-in-australia>

3 <https://www.commonground.org.au/article/songlines>

4 I am not sure that the First Peoples' instruments could technically be called 'pipes' but they do utilise the same principles of physics.

For at least a quarter of a century before a decree signed in Rome by Pope Pius IX formally established the Diocese of Ballarat, Catholic education was being conducted around these parts. We know for certain that the practice which began in a 'commodious chapel'⁵ in Portland in 1849, ultimately developed into the present system of schools in this diocese.⁶

To guide our exploration of these 175 years I will present two case studies: Victoria's Western District and Ballarat.

1. WESTERN DISTRICT

When, in 1836, Major Thomas Mitchell surveyed what is now known as the Western District, he was surprised to find in Portland 'a thriving township and a flourishing agricultural industry.'⁷ In 1800 this piece of the Gunditjmara land had been named Portland Bay. European settlement was at first sporadic – mainly sealers and whalers on a seasonal basis, until the Henty Brothers arrived, with a view to establishing sheep stations further inland.⁸ The 'thriving township' Mitchell found in 1836 was the first European settlement in Victoria – the birthplace of the State.

Where there was settlement there were children, children who needed to be educated. Initially education would have been a hit or miss affair. If they could find suitable contenders, well-to-do squatters and settlers may have been able to afford private tutors for their children. At the other end of the spectrum since education was neither compulsory nor free, it is fair to say that, in the formal sense of the word, some children were not educated at all.

a. PORTLAND

When, in response to an invitation from Portland's mainly Irish Catholic population, Archbishop Polding and two companions visited the district, they found about 50 dwellings in Port Fairy and sufficient Catholics in Portland to warrant three Sunday Masses.⁹ The situation, he believed, warranted the appointment of a bishop to take care of the Melbourne mission. Arriving in 1847 James Alipius Goold set about visiting the people of his diocese - all of the present State of Victoria.

The 'Portland Guardian' of February 9, 1849, announced that 'the Right Rev. Dr. Goold ... arrived in Portland on Tuesday last.'¹⁰ He decided immediately that Portland needed a school and assigned to Fr Michael Stevens from Port Fairy the task of establishing it. Four months later Portland had a school.¹¹

This school was established with permission from and administered by the Denominational Schools Board. Under the system common to Victoria and NSW, schools were classified as either National or Denominational, each type administered by a Board of Trustees¹² which distributed to schools funds voted annually by Parliament. In the case of Denominational schools, the Board represented the various religious denominations and regulated such matters as inspection of standards, appointment and remuneration of teachers and the overall management of finances.¹³ Local communities were required to guarantee a minimum number of students and provide some funds towards a school building. In general, church bodies possessed the infrastructure to organise education and often had at their disposal buildings which could be used as schools. Thus, in the 1850s, most schools were religious.

From the report of Inspector Childers who visited Portland in February 1851, we have details of the steady progress of education there. Schooling took place, not in the church building, but in a small wooden house in Gawler Street, rented at £12 per annum. There were two rooms. Thirteen boys and twenty-three girls were in attendance. The teacher's name was Rosanna Quinn, who had previously been a governess in a private school. In October 1854 the school was divided into two sections, Miss McElligott taking charge of the girls and Martin J. Phelan, a well-educated and steady man, the boys. By July 1855, there were ninety pupils on the roll, though the average attendance was considerably less.¹⁴

5 The phrase was first used by Bishop Goold.

6 'The History of Education in Victoria, Catholic Schools and the Act of 1872', *Advocate* (Melbourne), June 8, 1939, p.11. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/172033123?searchTerm=Early%20History%20Church%20Victoria%20Early%20History>

7 <https://www.visitvictoria.com/see-and-do/art-and-culture/history-and-heritage/victorian-stories/the-henty-family>.

8 <https://www.visitportland.com.au/portland-a-short-history/>

9 Ebsworth, W., 'Early History of the Church in Victoria—No. 50 Beginning of Catholic History at Port Fairy. Archbishop Polding Visits District on Horseback in 1844', <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/172489550>

10 Ebsworth, W. 'Early History of the Church in Victoria - No. 19 Portland Oldest Town in Victoria Spiritual Destitution of Early Settlers' <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/172232956?searchTerm=Early%20History%20Church%20Victoria%20Early%20History>

11 Ebsworth, W., 'Early History of the Church in Victoria - No. 20 Priests and Teachers in Early Portland Opening of First Catholic School' <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/172233063?searchTerm=Early%20History%20Church%20Victoria%20Early%20History>

12 The two Boards had been established in 1848 with details of the Denominational Schools Board appearing in the Sydney Government Gazette No 17, 11/02/1848. See Kearney, J, 'Bishop Goold and the Denominational Schools Board', *Footprints*, Vol.1, No.7, July 1972, pp.11-17 and *ibid.*, Vol. 1, No.8, pp.8-10. Initial relations between Goold and the Board were somewhat frosty but by the end of 1849 and after some delicate negotiations, resolved favourably.

13 <https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/VA703>

14 Ebsworth, W., *Early History of the Church in Victoria* - No. 20, *op.cit.*

b. PORT FAIRY (BELFAST)

Built into Goold's pastoral visit to Portland, according to the Portland Gazette, was 'nearly a week in Belfast (Port Fairy) and its neighbourhood in the discharge of the important duties of his office'. At that stage the Belfast mission included Warrnambool, Koroit, Mortlake, Hamilton, Coleraine and Casterton. It might well take a week or more for Goold to discharge his pastoral duties! Fr Thomas Slattery was put in charge of the entire district and given the task of building a school. Goold had applied to the Denominational Schools Board in his own handwriting for the approval to establish this school, declaring: 'a school is much required at Belfast, where an average attendance of thirty to forty children could be expected.'¹⁵

Fr Slattery had a small wooden schoolroom built on the two-acre block which the church acquired. A sturdy building, it still stands in the grounds of St Patrick's school. Lessons began in July with a young Irishman as teacher. Inspector Childers reported: *Thirty-three boys and twenty-two girls attend. Some of the children are very neat— some the reverse. The teachers are Stephen and Margaret Madden, man and wife. He is aged 36. He received a good education at a seminary. He taught for about four years at Hobart. He is a kind and well-informed man.*¹⁶



c. TOWER HILL

At Tower Hill, a small private school had been opened in 1850 by a Catholic teacher, Edward Browne. It served the people of Tower Hill, Killarney and Crossley and was known as Tower Hill School No 634. This was ultimately taken over by Fr Slattery and received some aid through the Denominational Schools Board, but was also resourced by the local community.¹⁷

From these three examples it is clear that Goold and his clergy were diligent in establishing Catholic schools and it is equally clear that in this corner of Victoria, lay people were doing their best to organise some form of Catholic education. One wonders, however, at the quality of the delivered product and it is fair to assume that mostly a lot was left to be desired. There was no systematic organisation – in fact 'haphazard' is the word which springs most readily to mind. To revert to the musical metaphor, there was no consistent tune. Those who might call it – Bishop or clergy – were in short supply and, more often than not, absent from the local scene. As far as curriculum went, the prevailing Irish system was the guide.¹⁸ Catholics, most of them carrying a deep sense of grievance for the wrongs committed against their ancestors by the English Government, were anxious mainly that their children be educated in the faith. Basic literacy and numeracy was a bonus. It was not easy to find suitable teachers – often anyone at hand was given the task and, provided that minimum enrolments could be maintained, the piper was paid through the Schools Board. Obviously, this was not the most suitable of arrangements. It was, however, a beginning.

During the 1850s and 1860s the political climate in Victoria moved deliberately in the direction of liberalism, with increasing intolerance of what seemed to be favourable treatment of any religion. In this sectarian environment, education was seen as a means of dispelling ancient prejudices and ensuring economic advancement in a new enlightened society. Hand in hand with this went the promotion of a national system of education and a push towards withdrawing funds from denominational schools.

By 1862 the dual system of national and denominational schools had been abolished and replaced by a single Board of Education. Denominational schools were hence known as 'Common Schools' – a term never popular. Land and school buildings which had been administered by the Denominational Schools Board were given to Trustees to be administered in accordance with the Board's Constitution. During 1866 and 1867 the Victorian Government held a Royal Commission into education which recommended the setting-up of a system of secular, government-funded schools. A large group of politicians began agitating for the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission and in November of 1872, Parliament passed a bill establishing an Education Department, to provide compulsory, free, secular primary education.¹⁹ Under the new Act children between the ages of six and fifteen were obliged to attend

15 Ebsworth, W., Early History of the Church in Victoria - No. 50 'Beginning of Catholic History at Port Fairy: Archbishop Polding Visits District on Horseback in 1844'. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/172489550?searchTerm=Early%20History%20Church%20Victoria%20Early%20History>

16 *ibid.*

17 See Doyle, H., 'Irish Opposition to the 1872 Education Act: The Case of Crossley', *Victorian Journal of History*, 94, 2023, p.133. State Library of Victoria, downloaded 14/10/2024.

18 See Kearney, *op.cit.*, p. 11,

19 Catholic Schools and the Act of 1872, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/172033123?searchTerm=Early%20History%20Church%20Victoria%20Early%20History>

school, and if they attended a government school their education was free. All government funding to religious schools was stopped. Many of these, faced with extinction, chose to stop teaching religion and become part of the new government system. But some — mostly the Catholic schools — opted to run independently. Parents who chose to send their children to these schools had to pay.

So began a new era in educational provision in Victoria. Religious schools went from teaching most of the students to teaching less than a quarter.

While the aim of the various governments was undoubtedly to establish a modern school system, the interpretation of the aim caused conflict.²⁰ The official tune was now secular; the piper and the one who paid were secular also. Many Catholics saw the situation as unjust, exclusive and designed specifically to counter the influence of the Church. Not surprisingly, church authorities termed the whole thing 'godless'.²¹

CASE STUDY 2: BALLARAT

Catholic education in Ballarat followed a path similar to that followed in the Western District, except in Ballarat an increased population resulting from the gold rushes exacerbated the need for schools.

a. ST ALIPIUS



The story of the establishment of St Alipius School in 1853 is well known. Still, the basic details bear retelling – the tent church/classroom; the transition from Brown Hill to Melbourne Road; the list of lay teachers - women and men – Anastasia Hayes, Thomas McGrath, Honorah Ryan, Ellen Harrington, John Bouchier, Michael Campion Carey, John Manning - all of them worthy of their place in history. There are suggestions that the school was not conducted along the best of lines and attendance was well below par, but given the transient population and the lack of stability of life on the goldfields, the fact that in 1854 one hundred students were attending

the school is quite remarkable.²² *Even more remarkable is the description of classroom facilities at St Alipius: one very ungainly table of about twelve feet long serves as a writing desk for as many as can crowd around it – all who cannot must kneel on the wet floor along the seats and write thereon.*²³

b. BUNINYONG

In Buninyong, at that time a township of some 4000 inhabitants, several miles along the Geelong Road, a school had been started in 1854 in a little two-roomed house, but attendance dwindled to 15 as the school was in a state of disorder and neglect. Fr Madden closed it and immediately opened a school in the recently-opened church, securing as teacher one described by the inspector as 'an old man, a graduate of Oxford, an experienced master, amiable and sober, and honest and intelligent in his work'.²⁴

The new school quickly built up an attendance of over forty. But the previous mistress refused to close her school and won the consequent dispute. When the new master was transferred, she was re-appointed. The attendance fell again, and three years later aid was withdrawn.²⁵ Not a happy story but it illustrates the basic standards with which schools had to comply.

20 Wilkinson, P., 'First Plenary Council of Australasia, 14-29 November 1885 - Part 2' *The Swag*, Vol. 26, No. 3, Spring 2018.

21 Doyle, H., *op.cit.*, p.135. See also *Light*, May 1969, p.21.

22 Wickham, D., *From Humble Beginnings, St Alipius Ballarat's First Church*, epub. <https://ballaratheritage.com.au/bookshop/st-alipius/> Downloaded 17/07/2024. p.25.

23 Quoted in Wickham, D., *op.cit.*, p.30.

24 Ebsworth, W., 'Early History of the Church in Victoria—No. 38 The Beginnings of St. Patrick's Cathedral' <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/172487375?searchTerm=Early%20History%20Church%20Victoria%20Early%20History>

25 *ibid.*

c. PALMER'S GULLY (ST FRANCIS XAVIER)

The story of school at Palmer's Gully – the ancestor of St Francis Xavier - demonstrates powerfully the trajectory of Catholic education in Ballarat.

Very early in the gold rush days this school existed under the authority of the Denominational Schools Board. Records attest that '[a]t Palmer's Gully, nearly two miles east of Bakery Hill, another school was opened under the name St Xavier's.'²⁶ By the end of 1857 additions were needed to accommodate the increasing number of students. Having given its name to the surrounding locality of Mount Xavier, the school was described by Fr Fennelly as 'one of the most respectable schools on the goldfields, having been built of the best pine, and shingled.' A Board inspector whose spectacles may not have had the same rose tint, reported that it consisted of two rooms, into which he found crowded 35 boys and 51 girls.²⁷

Academic achievement at the school was consistently high with 84% of the pupils passing government inspection, a score much higher than that achieved by most of its neighbours.²⁸ Reports declared that *parents could scarcely desire to have their children at a better school. It is quite a little model ... compared with the musty, ill-ventilated houses and halls rented by the State for school purposes. As for the teacher, Mr Whyte, and his assistants, it is not too much to say that they are eminently fitted for their vocation.*²⁹ When Mr Whyte retired he was presented with a set of studs, a gold locket and an address which expressed the esteem of his pupils.³⁰ His departure notwithstanding, the school continued to flourish 'with the largest general attendance that has ever been'³¹ which in fact may have been the catalyst for its becoming embroiled in a battle over funding.

Following the passing of the Act of 1872, some denominational schools had continued to be subsidised by government funds if there were no government schools in the same locality. Designated one of these 'capitation schools' – funding being on a per capita student basis – Palmer's Gully was threatened with extinction when, in 1877, moves were made to establish a government school in nearby Queen Street.³² Despite vigorous protests, by August that year the treat had materialised and it was announced that the 'capitation allowance hitherto given to the Palmer's Gully school will cease on 31st October'.³³

The following year the school opened with Fr (later to be Bishop) James Moore named as the proprietor, Mr Collins, imported from St Alipius', as head teacher and no funding at all. When he distributed the prizes at the end of that year, Fr Cleary, the Parish Priest, commented on the 'careful and painstaking manner in which the school was conducted.'³⁴ The stability and sustainability of the school were now, however, in question, no matter how careful and painstaking its conduct may have been.

This marks a watershed in the history of Catholic education in the diocese. Following the passing of the Education Act in 1872, no money was available for Catholic schools. Clergy and parishioners united to resist the attempts of the State to lure Catholic children to the 'godless' State schools, which were being built in communities almost entirely Catholic and where Catholic schools were already in operation?³⁵ Under these circumstances, the fact that Catholic schools survived, and indeed flourished, can be attributed to the unstinting work and far-sighted leadership of the first Bishop of Ballarat.

BISHOP MICHAEL O'CONNOR: 1874-1883

When Michael O'Connor was installed as Ballarat's first Bishop in 1874, education was already his priority: his overriding ambition was to see a parish school in each parish community. His approach is illustrated in the following account of his visit to Smythesdale quite soon after his arrival:

*Early in January the Bishop visited Smythesdale where the parishioners requested a priest of their own. He complied, promising the newly-ordained Michael Meade, on the condition that when he came, he would set up a Catholic school and they would all - without exception - send their children to it.*³⁶

26 It is probably co-incidental that the parish priest at the time was Francis Xavier Fennelly.

27 Ebsworth, W., *op cit.* No 38.

28 *Advocate* (Melbourne) Saturday 5 June 1875 p.13.

29 *Light*, May 1969, p.23 quoting the Melbourne *Advocate*.

30 *ibid.*, Saturday 23 December 1876, p.14.

31 *ibid.*, Saturday 27 January 1877, p.6.

32 *The Ballarat Star*, Friday 16 February, 1877, p.2; *Advocate* (Melbourne) Saturday 5 June 1875 p.13.

33 *Advocate* (Melbourne) Saturday 4 August 1877, p.13. *ibid.*, Saturday 8 September 1877, p.6. See also *Light*, May 1969, p.21.

34 *ibid.*, Saturday 28 December 1878, p.6.

35 A case in point is Crossley, examined in detail in Doyle H., *op.cit.* See also *Light*, Feb 1969 p.22.

36 *Light*, Feb 1969, p.22.

This bargain and admonition would be repeated again and again in the communities visited by O'Connor over the next eight years.³⁷ He insisted in season and out of season on the Catholic right to build schools and on the strict duty of Catholic parents to send their children to them.³⁸ Consequently we find records of Catholic schools (often of the bark-hut variety), initiated by O'Connor in communities that have now forgotten that they ever possessed them: Dead Horse (Invermay) Fellmongers (in the region of the Gong reservoir) Clunes, Dunolly.³⁹

In 1876 a new Catholic school was opened at Colac. A wooden structure, it was about midway between the town's main street and the priest's residence. It accommodated 100 children. The estimated cost, including furniture, was £500.⁴⁰ And let us not forget there was no government aid for its construction or furnishings.

The same year in Port Fairy, Fr John O'Dowd in a few hours collected from his parishioners, sufficient funds to enable him to guarantee a salary of £200 per annum for a male teacher and half of that amount for a female teacher. Clearly this was long before any 'equal pay for equal work' provisions.

A further observation stated: 'the school is so crowded at present that considerable additions will be required',⁴¹ Unquestionably, despite lack of funding, Catholic parents were supporting their schools and priests were using every bit of their creativity to raise money to pay for them.

In 1876, two lay teachers for the Ballarat Diocese arrived in Melbourne on board *The Northumberland*.⁴² It seems that the bishop too was exercising every measure possible to secure staff for the schools opened under his direction. What became of the teachers we do not know but the story illustrates the creative measures undertaken by the entire Catholic community to support the fledgling educational enterprise.

Prior to 1874 education had depended on priest-laity cooperation.⁴³ Now the diocese was led by a bishop who was determined to remove the ad hoc nature of the business and impose some law and order. In other words he was anxious to establish some sort of system which he could control. Furthermore, he had arrived in the diocese with a winning card in his luggage - within six months of his installation he welcomed to Ballarat a community of Loreto nuns from Rathfarnham, the suburb of Dublin where previously he had been parish priest. At the same time he began negotiations for a community of Christian Brothers to come to Ballarat. O'Connor was acutely aware of the transformation effected in his native Ireland by the Loreto nuns, the Christian Brothers and other religious orders. His plan was to replicate that in Ballarat.

Already among his resources was the Warrnambool community of Mercy Sisters who had arrived in Australia at the request of Goold in 1872 - just in time for the passing of the Education Act. An offshoot of this community arrived in Ballarat in January 1881 and were welcomed by the Bishop who was only too pleased to pass to them some of the responsibilities of teaching the ever-increasing school-age population. They almost immediately took over St Alipius' School and though we do not have an exact date, at some point they also assumed control of the little school at Palmer's Gully.

The 'new' sisters were especially welcome as they had pledged to ask nothing of the bishop but his blessing: they would fend for themselves and make their own way as best they could. Make their way they did by means of a 'superior' (fee-paying) school - Sacred Heart College - and by giving music lessons to paying students. Once a year, on Good Friday, a collection was taken up in the Ballarat churches to provide funds for their upkeep.⁴⁴

It was a case of religious to the rescue. Religious teachers actually saved the day for Catholic education in Australia. Generally they were well-versed in teaching methods, education having been at the forefront of their ministry overseas. Additionally, they worked for a pittance! There was no need to pay any pipers. These women and men freely danced away their lives, often to the point of exhaustion.

37 *ibid.*

38 *Light*, March 1969, p.17.

39 *Light*, Feb 1969, p.22.

40 *Light*, July 1969 P.22.

41 *Light*, June 1969, p.19.

42 *Light*, July 1969 P.21.

43 *Light*, March 1969, p.17.

44 [https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/169705846?searchTerm=Sisters%20Mercy%20Ballarat%20sermon](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/169705846?searchTerm=Sisters%20Mercy%20Ballarat%20sermon;); <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/169705768?searchTerm=Sisters%20Mercy%20Ballarat%20sermon>; The Advocate Melbourne, Saturday 5 April 1890 p.15 states: His Lordship announced that on Good Friday, both morning and evening, an appeal would be made on behalf of the Sisters of Mercy, Ballarat East. He paid a high tribute to the efficiency of their schools, and the unqualified satisfaction they were giving to both parents and children. He hoped the Catholics of Ballarat would respond generously to their appeal, as the good Sisters were doing a great work in Ballarat, not only in their excellent schools, but also in the Hospital, Benevolent Asylum and the other Charitable institutions of the city. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/168051123?searchTerm=Sisters%20Mercy%20Ballarat%20sermon>

The Ballarat diocese was a microcosm of the rest of Australia. The other Australian Bishops – Irishmen, most of them, did exactly as the Bishop of Ballarat had done. They went on recruiting drives to obtain teachers who would work in their schools without demanding the wages to which lay teachers had a claim. They enlisted religious women and men full of missionary zeal who were willing to freely devote their lives to saving the souls of Australian children – and teach them the 3Rs at the same time. In the Ballarat diocese, financed by vigorous fundraising campaigns, frequently inaugurated by the bishop and sustained by the parishioners, parish schools which had, until 1872, been staffed by lay teachers, were by 1900, mainly conducted by members of religious orders. As well as from Ireland, they came from England, France, New Zealand. An interesting story is that of the Ballarat Mercies hosting a community of Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny from New Caledonia who later took over the school at Port Fairy.⁴⁵ In 1888, returning from his visit to Rome, Bishop Moore brought with him forty nuns, brothers and priests – quite a cargo!⁴⁶ It is a great and glorious chapter in Catholic Education, though one not without its dark side.⁴⁷ In general, however, the prevailing tune was buoyant and even a little defiant when it came to Government authorities.

So it was that the issues of funding and staffing, which were besetting Bishop Moore, were placed at the forefront of the agenda for their Plenary Council Meeting of Australian Bishops in 1885.

In Council, the Bishops determined that, for the whole of Australia:

- there would be a Catholic school in every parish;
- the school would be supported by parish revenue ;
- where necessary the school would be built before the church and used as a chapel until such time as a church could be established.

Support for the schools was mandatory and to put pressure on parents, the Council ruled that those who did not send their children to the Catholic school were to be excommunicated.⁴⁸ When the Victorian Government demanded registration of all teachers, the Bishops were ready. Those teachers already teaching received automatic registration; new recruits who needed to demonstrate their qualifications in an approved training course were provided with courses. The Loreto Sisters had a college in Melbourne designed to train teachers to the highest of standards; the Mercy Sisters set up their own ... the antecedent of Aquinas.⁴⁹

By 1900, Federation notwithstanding, there was no uniformity with regard to Catholic education. Each diocese was doing more or less its own thing with the Bishop calling the tune and taking responsibility. Collectively, however, Catholic schools were visible ... and a force to be reckoned with. They were holding their own in the education dance.

And so it remained for the first half of the twentieth century.



Photo 1 - "From the Murray to the Sea: The History of Catholic Education in the Ballarat Diocese ", Jill Blee (2004)

Photos 3 & 4 - Out of copyright - Eugene von Guerard

Photo 5 - Out of copyright - Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT EDITION

45 See *Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny: In memory of the Parleys*, Compiled by Sr Mary Gaylor SJC, 1999. Private document held in archives of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea.

46 Pell, G., adapted from Cardinal Pell's comments made at the launch of *From the Murray to the Sea: The History of Catholic Education in the Ballarat Diocese* by Dr Jill Blee at St Patrick's Cathedral Hall, 18 May 2004. https://ad2000.com.au/articles/2004/aug2004p10_1703.html

47 There were cases, for example, where religious needed to withdraw from ministry as they were unable to provide themselves with the necessities for living.

48 Wilkinson, P., 'First Plenary Council of Australasia, 14-29 November 1885 - Part 2' *The Swag*, Vol. 26, No. 3, Spring 2018. (Decrees 239-240). In 1879 a Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Education had effectively branded the national schools as 'seedplots of future immorality, infidelity and lawlessness' thus sparking intense sectarian conflict and dissuading Catholic parents from supporting them.

49 By 1907, 22 religious and 1 lay teacher from the Sisters of Mercy had been registered.

YOUNG MINDS SHINE IN DA VINCI DECATHLON



St Patrick's College Ballarat has proudly hosted regional Victoria's only Da Vinci Decathlon, welcoming more than one hundred and sixty students from public and independent schools across the state.

Held in the College's Performing Arts Centre on Tuesday, April 1, 2025 the event showcased exceptional academic talent in a day of spirited competition and collaboration.

The Da Vinci Decathlon is a prestigious academic tournament that challenges teams of students across ten disciplines including engineering, mathematics, code breaking, art and poetry, science, English, ideation, creative producers, cartography and legacy.

Inspired by the genius of Leonardo da Vinci, the competition pushes students to think creatively, work collaboratively and problem-solve under pressure. St Patrick's College fielded teams in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, all of whom represented the College with distinction.

St Patrick's College Principal Steven O'Connor praised the spirit and determination of all participants. "It was inspiring to witness so many talented young students embrace the challenges set before them. The Decathlon is not just about winning—it's about fostering a love of learning, teamwork and innovation," he said. "We are incredibly proud to have brought this opportunity to regional Victoria and to have hosted such an exciting and engaging competition."

St Patrick's College Head of Academic Enrichment and Extension, and event organiser Kathryn Fraser, said the energy was electric as students threw themselves into each challenge with vigour, collaboration and a genuine love of learning.

"Our students approached every challenge with curiosity, creativity and resilience. There were moments of intense focus—with crinkled brows deep in thought—and others of pure joy when breakthroughs were made," she said. "It was a privilege to watch them grow and shine throughout the day."

Congratulations to all students and schools involved in making the 2025 Da Vinci Decathlon such a resounding success.

www.davincidecathlon.com

Katie Spurgo - Marketing and Communications Manager

Mercy Regional College 2025 Feast Day

The Mercy Regional College Camperdown Feast Day on Friday, May 23, 2025 was filled with celebration and Mercy spirit! During Mass our community recognised the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians and we thank Fr George, Mrs Bouchier and the many staff and students who participated. The Mass was hosted by students and staff from Markey House, recognising the work of Fr Bob Markey in the creation of our College. Student achievements and upcoming events were then highlighted at an assembly hosted by the student leaders.

A BBQ lunch and festivities followed, with cupcakes also on offer as everyone settled in to watch the annual Staff vs Year 12 soccer match on the oval. We congratulate the Year 12s on making sure the players were well looked after! Year 7 students took to the field at half time alongside a special performance by student band "Re-Spin". A great match was played and with the score at 2-2, a penalty shootout resulted in the students ultimately taking the win.

Our Feast Day is a great annual opportunity to celebrate our unique College community and we look forward to sharing many more memories in the coming year.

Toby McKenzie

Marketing, Communications & Community Engagement





the impact every day, and we know that with the right support, people can and do rebuild their lives.”

“By participating in the Sleepout, we weren’t just braving the cold for one night - we’re shining a light on an urgent issue and reaffirming our commitment to being part of the solution,” James said.

Peplow House: A Lifeline for Men in Crisis

One of the ways CatholicCare Victoria is addressing homelessness is through Peplow House, a crisis accommodation facility in Ballarat.

In partnership with local organisations, Peplow House provides more than just a bed - it offers a holistic support model for men experiencing homelessness due to addiction, trauma or mental health challenges.

With only eight beds, Peplow House is a small but vital sanctuary for those ready to rebuild their lives. It offers: safe, short-term accommodation; mental health and addiction support; pathways to long-term housing; and independence

“Peplow House is about more than shelter—it’s about dignity, healing, and hope,” says James. “Every man who walks through our doors is met with compassion and a path forward.”

Your support can help us continue this life-changing work. Whether you donate to Peplow House, or simply share this message, your support makes a difference. Together, we can restore dignity, hope and stability to those who need it most.

“Ending homelessness requires all of us - government, community and individuals - working together,” adds James. “Events like the Sleepout remind us that change is possible when we stand united. Thank you for standing with us in the fight to end homelessness.”

<https://www.catholiccarevic.org.au/resources/end-homelessness-2025>

FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: CatholicCare Victoria's Mission to End Homelessness

CatholicCare Victoria supported the Ballarat Corporate & Community Sleepout held on June 13 and 14 - an impactful initiative focused on raising awareness and funds to address homelessness in the Central Highlands region.

At CatholicCare Victoria, we believe that everyone deserves a safe place to call home. That’s why we’re proud to stand alongside the Central Highlands Homelessness Alliance and the Lions Club of Haddon in this year’s Ballarat Corporate & Community Sleepout - a powerful event raising awareness and vital funds to combat homelessness in our region.

Every night, more than 5,000 people in the Central Highlands - including children, families and the elderly - face the harsh reality of homelessness or insecure housing. These individuals are not strangers. They are our neighbours, our colleagues and our classmates.

“Homelessness is not just a housing issue—it’s a human issue,” says James Treloar, Senior Manager, Homelessness and Housing Support at CatholicCare Victoria. “We see

Meeting Pope Francis

Naomi Gerrard is a member of the St John the Baptist Catholic Church community in Beaufort. She is currently studying Primary Teaching at ACU in Ballarat. Recently, Naomi was selected as the Australian Catholic University Ballarat representative to contribute to and attend the “Building Bridges Across the Asia Pacific: A Synodal Encounter between Pope Francis and University Students.” This interactive meeting took place over Zoom. Naomi was included in a small group of students from across the Asia Pacific to share with Pope Francis issues that are facing young people today, in the hope of building bridges to create solutions for them. Naomi participated in three workshops before the Zoom, to meet with other members of the ACU team and share what challenges they are facing, collaborate, decide and discuss the direction the presentation would go. These sessions allowed for the final topic to be chosen, ideas confirmed and the speaker selected.

The presentation addressed the idea of meeting young people where they are at, recognising their dignity and supporting them in their faith journey. Pope Francis responded by sharing that it is very important that we foster a sense of belonging within the Catholic Church. He advised that we all look back and reflect on ourselves and our weaknesses and allow people to help us. He emphasised that we need the support of other to become stronger in order to face vulnerability. The Holy Father deeply expressed the importance of showing love and kindness to one another which will support us all in solving current challenges and help to build bridges. This was an amazing opportunity and a true honour to be in the presence of the Late Pope Francis and receive a blessing from him.



Bernadette Franc - Beaufort Parish

Our Diocesan Community - July 2025

Cultivating Compassion:

Loreto College Students partner with St Patrick's Cathedral

The spirit of service and sustainability is thriving through a new partnership between Loreto College Ballarat Year 12 VCE-VM students and St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat. As part of the Community Connections program, twenty-two students are engaging in hands-on activities that blend environmental stewardship with compassionate community outreach.

Held fortnightly on Tuesdays, this initiative transforms learning into action. Students are developing practical skills in gardening, construction, cooking and teamwork while making a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

At the heart of the program are two major projects:

1. Creating a Parish Produce Garden - Working alongside Cathedral maintenance staff, Platinum Institute and landscape designer Helen Todd, students are establishing six raised garden beds on the Cathedral grounds. These beds will be planted with seasonal vegetables, with a longer-term vision of incorporating native species to enhance biodiversity and reduce the site's carbon footprint — a true expression of *Laudato Si'* in action.
2. Preparing Meals for the Community - Students will prepare and freeze wholesome meals, many of which will feature produce grown in the garden. These meals will then be distributed to local families and individuals in need, offering not just nourishment, but care and dignity.

Through this partnership, students are not only gaining valuable life skills — they are also deepening their understanding of community service, sustainability and faith in action. We are grateful for the generosity, guidance and shared vision of all involved, and we look forward to seeing the fruits — both literal and spiritual — of this beautiful collaboration flourish.

Jill Wheatland - Coordinator: Vocational Major and Pathways



Little Feet, Big Footprints: Growing Young Leaders in Faith

St Brigid's Primary School Ballan recently hosted the 'Little Feet, Big Footprints' initiative, bringing together Year 6 students from St Patrick's Gordon, St Augustine's Creswick, St Mary's Clarke's Hill, St Michael's Daylesford and Our Lady Help of Christians Wendouree.

The day focused on leadership, connection and faith in action. Students heard from senior leaders from Ballarat secondary schools (Loreto College, Damascus College and



*St Patrick's College), and took part in a powerful session on *Laudato Si'* and environmental care, led by DOBCEL Social Justice Education Officer, Sarah Page.*

This initiative is a wonderful example of Catholic schools working together to form young leaders grounded in faith and community. The collaboration between primary and secondary schools highlighted the strength of our Catholic education network - fostering mentorship, unity and shared values.

CEB Newsletter - May 21, 2025



First Year Early Career Teachers

Recently first-year Early Career Teachers gathered for a dedicated day of professional learning focused on the theme of Communication, Connection and Relationships.

The day offered a rich program covering key topics to support our new teachers in their ongoing development. Sessions included Communication-Friendly Classrooms, Positive Behaviour Supports, Reportable Conduct, Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Requirements, and How to Approach Challenging Conversations. Each session was designed to provide practical strategies and guidance to help build strong, respectful and effective relationships with students, colleagues and families.

It was a valuable opportunity for early career teachers to learn, reflect and connect with one another, reinforcing the importance of clear communication and positive relationships in every aspect of teaching. We are proud of all they have accomplished so far in their first year and look forward to supporting their continued growth.

These gatherings are an opportunity for all early career teachers in their first, second and third years to:

- Come together to build connections with each other, with creation and the possibility of being open to God's presence.
- Provide an opportunity for our early career teachers to have valuable time to nurture their own spirits.
- Gain strategies to enhance their own wellbeing.
- Explore and experience rich spiritual practices from the Catholic story and vision and how these may be able to be experienced in their own lives.

The gathering is a highlight and is very valued by Early Career Teachers. It is intentionally designed for first, second and third year teachers to participate together and is invitational in nature.

CEB Newsletter - May 21, 2025



Save for a Greater Reward

Help fund projects across Catholic organisations, including parishes, hospital wings and classrooms, with a CDF savings account.

With competitive interest rates, it's a greater return than money alone.

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Tribute to Fr Kevin Murphy

As the people who have made a significant impact on my life die around me every year, I am left with a profound sadness, accompanied by an immense gratitude to have had them in my life. One of those people was Fr Kevin Murphy. I am grateful for this opportunity to pay tribute to him here and share my memories of the contribution he made to the lives of so many in the Ballarat Diocese and further afield, as a priest, pastoral mentor, chaplain, religious educator, colleague and friend. He has had a profound impact on my life. He married Maurie and me and christened our three children. He was an inspiring presence.

It was when I was studying at Sacred Heart Teacher's College at Patrician House in the late 1960s that I got to know Kevin well. He was chaplain to the college and helped us establish the Catholic Teacher's Movement there, grounded in the Cardijn See, Judge and Act process of the Young Christian Workers Movement (YCW). Kevin's chaplaincy and leadership were experienced as quite revolutionary and were, for many of us, formative in shaping our social conscience and the way we approached the religious education of the children we taught. Kevin

Continued next page

Our Diocesan Community - July 2025



supported us to be a “powerhouse” in the church, leading reflection on the potential of our role as Catholic educators and connecting us with other lay organisations and individuals in the diocese who were actively engaged in creating a church responsive to the modern world.

At this same time he was also chaplain to the Diocesan Young Christian Students Movement (YCS) and was instrumental in establishing YCS groups throughout the diocese, so that young people could participate more actively in the life of the church and share their vision for its future. All of this was happening in the wake of Vatican II, a time of new ideas, liberation, hope and excitement. It became apparent that he, and a number of other like-minded priests in the diocese, were ahead of their time, now given a license to speak the message that Vatican II had voiced. They were backed by a vibrant laity, also well ahead of its time, many of whom were members of the Adult Lay Apostolate Movement (ALA), the Catholic Student’s Movement, the YCW and the YCS whose lives were being transformed by Cardijn’s See, Judge and Act process.

Kevin approached all aspects of his life as a priest with the same commitment to inclusiveness and openness. As Inspector of Catholic Schools in the diocese, he made a profound contribution to the way religious education was taught in the diocese and in fact throughout Australia. This became the religious education program called “Move Out”, developed in association with Gary Eastman. It too was revolutionary. It was a new way of teaching religious education and a new way of designing and publishing it. Teachers had been crying out for an approach and an accompanying resource that allowed them to reflect in their religious education classes the breath of fresh air that Vatican II brought with it.

Kevin was essentially an educator and a teacher, fascinated by learning and always a learner himself. After finishing as Diocesan Inspector of Schools and completing his projects of designing religious education programs for schools and his chaplaincy with Catholic lay teachers, he moved into adult education and was on the planning committee of the first Catholic adult education conference in Australia in 1993. Following that event we published a newsletter on adult education for a number of years.

Kevin facilitated many discussion groups over the years, his way of providing thoughtful reflection on theology and the church. The most controversial was a discussion of Humane Vitae together with Dr Gerald Caine back in the early 1960s, which provided an opportunity for Catholic couples to ask questions about a “doctrine” of the church that would profoundly impact their relationships regarding birth control.

In this way, Kevin created numerous opportunities for people to discuss issues of religion, theology and church. He drew to him people who wanted to search, who were on a journey of discovery. Those who wanted to question and reflect. He gave people permission to do that, to ask questions and he enhanced their discernment and motivated their reflection. It was always done in a spirit of searching for truth and meaning.

But while Kevin was valued by so many, there were others in the diocese who saw him as too controversial, even doctrinally unsound. While this response must have caused him deep hurt he never showed it, nor made an issue of it. This was an extraordinary measure of the person he was. He was very loyal to the church even while saddened by what has happened in recent times. While his priestly colleagues were leaving the priesthood, there was never any sense that he also would go.

Kevin’s life was inspired by the Gospel. It was guided by “What would Jesus have done?”, rather than “What does the church and its doctrines tell me to do here?” Nevertheless, Kevin never assumed he knew what Jesus would have done. He just asked the question and helped us turn to the gospel and reflect in deciding what we ourselves would do. In the formation of people, as educator, visionary, learner, listener, explorer and sharer of wisdom, Kevin was way ahead of the times.

Kevin is no longer with us. What he has left behind lies in the hearts and minds of the people whose lives were transformed by their engagement with him. The disability he experienced in his later years has left him. He is now in a place with so many others who shared his way of being and knowing. I have no doubt that he has found affirmation and peace in a heaven and with a God who has embraced him.

Maree Harris

Full version of article can be read at <https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/fr-kevin-murphys-funeral-mass/>

Finding Freedom: Diversity in Community

For Refugee Week 2025, the Refugee Council of Australia continued their three-year theme of Finding Freedom, with a focus on diversity in community to emphasise the vital role community plays in all our lives, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, language, disability, sexuality and age.

The journey towards freedom represents the challenging path that many refugees take, escaping oppression and uncertainty for safety in a new place. In these new spaces, community is more than just a physical place or a group of people; community is a lifeline. It offers refugees safety, belonging and the strength to rebuild. Diverse communities bring people together, showing that our differences make us stronger, more united and capable of facing challenges.

Community is where people find the strength to solve problems together, where voices are amplified, and where aspirations find direction and support. It's a space where everyone can feel safe, valued, and empowered to pursue their dreams without fear or judgment.

Refugee Week 2025 (June 15 - June 21) celebrated the inclusive communities across Australia that open their arms to those seeking refuge, providing platforms for connection and a sense of belonging.

CatholicCare Victoria (CCV) has supported refugees and asylum seekers for more than 50 years. Today, CCV continues this legacy by helping individuals and families across Victoria build safe, stable and hopeful futures.

Supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Mildura and Swan Hill - In the Mildura and Swan Hill regions, CatholicCare Victoria provides specialist Refugee and Asylum Seeker Counselling, Advocacy, and Community Capacity Building services.

These programs are designed to meet a range of needs, from emotional and psychological wellbeing to social connection and access to essential services.

Support includes:

- One-on-one counselling;
- Referrals to visa services, local community groups, and specialist support;
- Advocacy to help individuals and families navigate complex systems;
- Capacity building to strengthen community connections and empower self-advocacy;



Counselling Services - The Counselling Program offers a safe, private, and culturally sensitive space to talk about difficult feelings and experiences. Counsellors support individuals in managing day-to-day challenges and can also assist with linking into other appropriate services if needed.

Counselling may be helpful if you are:

- Having trouble sleeping;
- Feeling isolated or disconnected;
- Experiencing low energy or motivation;
- Struggling with memory or concentration;
- Troubled by difficult memories or emotions;

Community Capacity Building - The Community Capacity Building initiative focuses on working directly with communities to:

- Build relationships and strengthen external partnerships;
- Identify and develop community skills and resources;
- Understand community needs and co-design support options;

This program fosters belonging, trust, and resilience - supporting individuals to not only access help but become advocates and leaders within their own communities.

Who Can Access These Services?

These free services are available to:

- Refugees, asylum seekers, and individuals from similar backgrounds;
- People who have experienced torture and/or trauma prior to arriving in Australia;
- Immediate family members of someone experiencing psychological distress related to past trauma;

To learn more about services and support programs, visit: <https://www.catholiccarevic.org.au/types/multicultural-services/>

<https://www.refugeeweek.org.au/resource-kits-2/>

Photos: (L-R) Farkhunda, Parisa, Zahira and Ziba, former refugees from Afghanistan



WALK FOR TRUTH: On Wednesday, May 28, 2025, Year 4 students at St Patrick's Primary School Port Fairy participated in the Walk for Truth with Commissioner Travis Lovett. Travis was walking from Portland to Parliament House in Melbourne sharing his knowledge of First Nation's History and building connections in our Australian community. The students walked with Travis from the All Saints Church Portland to Railway Place. It was a great experience.

St Patrick's Primary School Port Fairy Facebook

Our Diocesan Community - July 2025

OPENED AND BLESSED



Damascus College Ballarat proudly opened and blessed the Xavier Flood Senior Learning Centre, a major new educational facility designed to support and inspire senior students as they prepare for life beyond secondary education.

The ceremony took place on Thursday, May 22, 2025 at Damascus College, and was led by Bishop Paul Bird. The event included a formal blessing, a guided tour of the new centre and a morning tea for invited guests. This significant new building is named in honour of Mother Xavier Flood, a pioneering Sister of Mercy and renowned educational leader in Ballarat's Catholic tradition. Born in Ireland and arriving in Australia in 1872, Mother Xavier made a profound contribution to Catholic education, particularly as the first Principal of Sacred Heart College. Known for her wide learning, warmth and stately presence, Mother Xavier was instrumental in the establishment of Aquinas Training College in 1910— an institution that would eventually evolve into what is now known as Australian Catholic University (ACU) - Ballarat Campus.

College Principal Mr Steven Mifsud said the new Senior Learning Centre both honours this legacy and looks to the future. "The Xavier Flood Senior Learning Centre is an investment in the learning, growth and wellbeing of our senior students. It creates a bridge between secondary school and the adult world, offering flexible and engaging spaces that support both independence and connection," Mr Mifsud said. "In the spirit of Mother Xavier's enduring commitment to courageous and holistic education, this building offers the space and support for young people to flourish academically, spiritually and personally."

Designed by Law Architects and constructed by local builders AW Nicholson, the three-storey centre includes twenty-three modern classrooms, flexible independent learning areas, student services, gathering spaces and contemporary amenities. The building's open staircase, operable glass walls and natural amphitheatre enhance its connectivity and light-filled ambience, while its eco-conscious design—including solar expansion and sustainable materials—reflects the College's commitment to responsible environmental stewardship. Positioned to embrace the campus' natural bush setting and connected to the wider College via a raised walkway, the Centre is a contemporary interpretation of learning within the Mercy tradition. "This facility brings together the key functions of senior learning support—VCE and VCE-VM coordination, careers education and student services—into a unified precinct," said Mr Mifsud. "It is a place where learning and discernment intersect, equipping students with the knowledge, confidence and care they need to pursue their chosen pathways." The Xavier Flood Senior Learning Centre stands as a testament to the Damascus College vision of providing future-focussed, values-based education in a setting that nurtures the whole person.

Sarah Boswell - Leader of Marketing & Development

Celebrating St Joseph's Primary School's Inspiring Eisteddfod Journey



On June 4, the students and staff of St Joseph's Primary School Red Cliffs, especially the talented Marimba band and their dedicated leader, Mrs Winders, took to the stage to compete in the band section at the Mildura Eisteddfod.

After weeks of hard work, creativity, and commitment, the students performed with enthusiasm and skill. We are incredibly proud of each and every one of them for sharing their gifts and representing their school with such passion.

This wonderful experience is a true reflection of the values of Catholic education - encouraging students to strive for excellence, support one another and use their talents to bring joy and inspiration to the community.

Congratulations to the entire Marimba band and Mrs Winders!

CEB Newsletter - June 4, 2025

Sr Elizabeth Donnan ibvm RIP

It is with great sadness that we share the death of Sr Elizabeth Donnan ibvm on Wednesday, May 7. Sr Elizabeth was a member of the South African province, who returned recently to the Victorian community.

Sr Elizabeth held a special place in the Loreto College Ballarat family, remembered fondly for her time with us in the early '90s as an inspiring educator and leader.

"Elizabeth's unwavering commitment to the community, her gentle spirit, and her devotion to service and prayer have left a lasting mark on all who had the privilege to know her. Sr Elizabeth's life was a testament to humility, compassion and steadfast faith. Her presence in the parish was a beacon of hope and kindness, touching hearts across generations."

We hold her in our thoughts and prayers. May she rest in peace.



Loreto College Ballarat Facebook



Sr Marie Vagg rsm RIP

Sr Marie Vagg rsm died peacefully at St John of God Hospital Ballarat on May 7, 2025. Sr Marie was surrounded by Sisters in her local community, who had been lovingly caring for her in recent months.

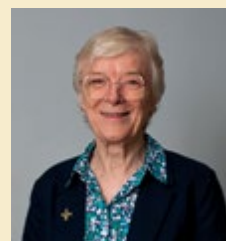
Sr Marie is remembered as a woman of deep faith. Her ministry contribution to the diocese was over many years as a dedicated teacher and Principal in Ballarat East, Edenhope, Mortlake, Manangatang, Warracknabeal and St Arnaud. Sr Marie is also acknowledged for her work with St Vincent de Paul as well as her parish work.

The Funeral Mass for Sr Marie was held on Thursday, May 15, 2025 at St Alipius Church, Ballarat East at 10.30am. May she rest in peace in the loving embrace of her God whom she served so faithfully.

ISMAPNG Community - South B

Sr Mary Wright ibvm RIP

Sr Mary was a former Principal at Loreto College Ballarat from 1977 - 1980 and former Province and Institute Leader. Sr Mary



was a remarkable woman, known both nationally and internationally as an educator, canon lawyer, writer, facilitator and board director. She was a true Mary Ward woman

Mary was a "renaissance woman" knowledgeable, cultured and proficient in a wide range of fields. A lover of history, science, nature, the arts and humanities. Mary was both grounded and imaginative, often drawing on music and art to illustrate an argument. Alongside her incisive intellect, Mary had a deep faith reflected in her motto "Come Lord Jesus," an abiding freedom "to refer all to God," practical compassion and a great capacity to enjoy life. She gave herself wholeheartedly to the task at hand whether it be work or recreation.

Sr Mary died peacefully at St Vincent's Caritas Christi, Kew and her Funeral Mass was held on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 at the Immaculate Conception Church, Hawthorn.

<https://www.ibvm.org/in-loving-memory-of-sister-mary-wright-ibvm/>



parishioners. Fr John Fitzgerald was the main celebrant and Fr Lawrie O'Toole concelebrated. Otha Akoch and Charity Nyinyal from South Sudan presented the Gifts, wearing white garments that are their traditional Peace garments.

South West Coast Parish

Memorial Mass for Pope Francis

In spite of other gatherings in the Star of the Sea Parish South West Coast, including Race Week and the Koroit Irish Festival, many came to pray in thanksgiving on Monday, April 28 in St Joseph's Church for the papacy of Pope Francis and for the cardinals as they prepared for the Papal Conclave.

It was a very ecumenical gathering - with Bishop Scott Lowrey, the local Anglican pastor, proclaiming the Gospel. The Rev Malcolm Frazer from the Uniting Church was also present, as well as parishioners from several denominations, together with a large number of Star of the Sea



ACU GRADUATION

More than 200 graduates from Australian Catholic University - Ballarat Campus celebrated the completion of their studies at a ceremony held in early May. Graduates from the Faculties of Education and Arts, Health Sciences and Theology and Philosophy gathered with family and friends at Ballarat's Mercure Hotel & Convention Centre to mark the momentous milestone.

Morgan Barby and Alicia Myers delivered the vote of thanks, reflecting on their academic journey at ACU and acknowledging their lecturers, family and friends for helping them cross the finish line. Morgan, who has just completed at Bachelor of Nursing / Bachelor of Paramedicine, said graduation was an emotional time. "I feel a mix of emotions - pride, joy, a little nostalgia, and deep gratitude to all of our mentors at ACU," she said. "We made it. All the late nights, the deadlines, the doubts - we've arrived at this moment stronger, wiser and ready to take on the world."

Alicia said she was excited to embark on a new chapter, pursuing her chosen field of nursing. "It's not about money or likes or having the perfect house. Most people want to feel safe. To be understood. To know that someone will be there when it matters most. That's what we chose to do with our lives. Every single one of us said yes to a career that centres around people, that is about healing and hope."

Ballarat Campus Dean Professor Bridget Aitchison said that graduation day was always a special time at ACU. "Graduating from ACU's Ballarat Campus is about more than just earning a degree - it's a reflection of the fact that great things can start in small places," Professor Aitchison said. "It is always a very special opportunity to acknowledge our graduates as they embark on the next chapter of their lives. ACU graduates are known for their commitment to the community - these graduates are the future teachers, nurses and paramedics that are the lifeblood of regional Australia."

Media Contact: Louise Crossen

Strengthening Health Services in Tonga



The dedicated team from St John of God Ballarat Hospital recently returned from a collaborative mission in Tonga, working alongside Ministry of Health Tonga as part of the Tonga Twinning Program. This initiative, supported by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), focused on enhancing key areas of healthcare delivery.

The multidisciplinary team, including experts in Wound Care, Clinical Governance, Medical Records, Radiology (with special thanks to support from Lake Imaging) and maternity services, brought their knowledge and expertise to Vaiola Hospital and hospitals on the outer islands.

We extend our gratitude to the Ministry of Health Tonga for their warm hospitality and collaboration. Special thanks to Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for their continued support in advancing healthcare initiatives in the Pacific region.

Jamie Lovett - Communications & Marketing Officer



The Pilgrimage of Hope

Pope Benedict XVI stated at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, "To go on a pilgrimage is not simply to visit a place to admire its treasures of nature, art or history. To go on pilgrimage means to step out of ourselves to encounter God where He has revealed Himself, where His grace has shone with particular splendor and produced rich fruits of conversion and holiness among those who believe."

Following Pope Leo's inauguration, the United States Catholic Church launched the 2025 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage from Indianapolis. This five-week, 3,300-mile journey to Los Angeles passed through 10 states and 20 dioceses, concluding on June 22 in fire-ravaged Los Angeles with a Mass and celebration on the solemnity of Corpus Christi.

The Ballarat Diocesan Archive holds records of past pilgrimages organised by the diocese. Bishop Emeritus Peter Connors coordinated the Pilgrimage of Grace, which travelled through Ararat and included the veneration of the hand of St Francis Xavier, a first-class relic now kept at La Chiesa del Gesù in Rome. In 2011, as part of World Youth Day, Ballarat Diocesan pilgrims organised a pilgrimage to Madrid. The Diocesan pack for World Youth Day 2011 included a Preparation Booklet, a Pastoral Formation Booklet and a Pilgrimage Reflection Booklet. This pack aided pilgrims in preparing spiritually for their journey.



1. Pilgrimage: a very brief history. (n.d.). Melbourne Catholic. <https://melbournecatholic.org/news/pilgrimage-a-very-brief-history>.
2. Wiering, M. (2025, May 15). Pilgrimage launch coincides with papal inauguration, marks young Catholic's "radical yes." OSV News -; OSV News. <https://www.osvnews.com/pilgrimage-launch-coincides-with-papal-inauguration-marks-young-catholics-radical-yes/>

Dr Malcolm Borg - Diocesan Archivist

Photos: Fr Brendan Davey with Bishop Peter J. Connors in Ararat and copy of the Reflection Book WYD 2011

BRINGING JOY THROUGH MUSIC



Recently, the Concert Band, Junior/Intermediate Band and String Ensemble at Trinity College Colac entertained students at local Primary Schools as part of Catholic Education Week.

Monday included visits to Alvie Primary School and St Brendan's Primary School Coragulac, with these being the first performances for our Junior Students. While there were nerves, the students performed well and their confidence grew over the week.

On Wednesday, we visited St Mary's Primary School Colac and performed for Grade 3/4 students. This was the String Ensemble's first performance this year. Friday afternoon

saw us all walk across to Sacred Heart Primary School Colac, where we celebrated with staff and students by performing our favourite pieces for the week, including Star Wars, YMCA and Thriller for the Senior Group and six short pieces for the Junior Group. The String Ensemble also performed with their two pieces again.



These performances have built confidence, camaraderie and musical ability as well as showcased to the community the amazing talent we have in the Trinity College Music Program. Students displayed all Trinity values while away and should be proud of their achievements and involvement this week.

Kelly Kerr

Music Programs Coordinator & Concert Band Coordinator

Our Diocesan Community - July 2025

110 YEARS OF CARE

On May 6, 2025 St John of God Ballarat Hospital proudly marked a remarkable milestone - 110 years of serving the Ballarat region and surrounding communities with compassion, excellence and unwavering commitment to care.

Since opening its doors on May 9, 1915 in Bailey's Mansion, St John of God Ballarat Hospital has grown from a modest private hospital into one of regional Victoria's most respected healthcare providers. Over the past century, generations of caregivers, clinicians and volunteers have continued the mission begun by the Sisters of St John of God, who travelled from Western Australia, to establish the first St John of God hospital in Victoria.

With little more than "head, hands and heart", the Sisters laid the foundation for a legacy of care that has remained steadfast for 110 years. Their courage, vision and compassion are deeply woven into the fabric of the hospital's identity — qualities that continue to shape our work every day.

"We honour the contribution of the Sisters of St John of God, and all those who have come after them, for the enduring legacy they built in this community. Today, we celebrate the journey and reaffirm our commitment to meeting the healthcare needs of Ballarat for generations to come," said Chief Executive Officer Maria Noonan.

Throughout its history, St John of God Ballarat Hospital has continually invested in improving services to meet the needs of a growing and evolving community. From the opening of Marian House in the 1960s as a nursing education facility, to the hospital's many facility upgrades and service expansions, every era has been marked by a clear focus on quality care.

This tradition continues with our most recent redevelopment — the new **Wexford Wing**, part of an \$80+ million investment that adds:

- A new Intensive Care and Coronary Care Unit;
- Two new operating theatres and recovery areas;
- A 30-bed inpatient ward;
- Improved access to state-of-the-art technology and care environments.

These enhancements ensure that Ballarat residents can access world-class care, close to home, in a setting that reflects the values of **hospitality, compassion, respect, justice and excellence**. "We are not just celebrating our past — we are actively building for the future," said Ms Noonan. "Every investment we make is about ensuring the people of Ballarat and surrounding areas continue to receive the highest quality care for the next 110 years and beyond." As part of our centenary decade, we continue to celebrate not just bricks and mortar, but the people who have made this place special — from pioneering Sisters and nurses, to present-day caregivers and specialists, to our volunteers and patients who are at the heart of everything we do.

Jamie Lovett - Communications & Marketing Officer

Congratulations: Sacrament of First Eucharist

Congratulations to Dolly, Penelope, Sonny, Hamish, Celeste and Sadie from the All Saints Parish Portland who recently celebrated the Sacrament of First Eucharist recently.

This now completes their initiation as full members of the Catholic Church. We wish them and their families all the best as they continue along their faith journey.

Jamie Walsh - Principal All Saints Primary School' Portland



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL

DEEPEN YOUR
RELATIONSHIP
WITH JESUS

EXPERIENCE
THE BREADTH
OF THE CHURCH

CONNECT
WITH OTHER
YOUNG PEOPLE

BE EMPOWERED
TO LIVE
YOUR FAITH



MELBOURNE, VICTORIA 30 NOVEMBER – 2 DECEMBER 2025

ACYF.ORG.AU
@/ACYF25



The Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF) will be held in Melbourne from Sunday, November 30 to Tuesday, December 2, 2025. ACYF is a national gathering of Catholic young people, established by the Australian Bishops more than a decade ago. This three-day event offers young people from across Australia the opportunity to connect, deepen their relationship with Jesus and be empowered to live their faith in the world. It also provides a unique chance to experience the diversity of the Church in Australia.

Key Details:

- Participants: Young people aged Year 9 – 25 years
- Activities: The Festival will include prayer, Mass, workshops, talks, live concerts, games, justice issues, and an interactive expo. It will also offer opportunities for engagement with peers, school and youth groups, Bishops, musicians and speakers.
- Pricing:
 - * Festival access (all areas and experiences): \$345 per pilgrim
 - * Additional costs: Travel, meals, and accommodation are not included
 - * Sponsorship may be available from the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation to help offset costs.

The first round of Keynote speakers have been released. The ACYF committee are pleased to be welcoming back Katie Prejean McGrady – a fan favourite from ACYF 2019, along with well-known popular performer and speaker Fr Rob Galea, and Australian born Sr Mary Grace SV who now lives in the USA as a Sister of Life. Other speakers are also listed on the website and will be added to in the coming months. The Festival program details have also been released. For those who have attended previous Festivals, many of the program elements are included, with some unique aspects added – such as a pilgrimage walk from Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral through the heart of the city to the Festival venue – the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre on the first day of the Festival. Of course, no ACYF would be complete without plenaries, workshops, opportunities for prayer and the Sacraments and the Expo.



Bishop Paul plans on attending the festival and offers the following message:

I'm looking forward to attending the Australian Catholic Youth Festival to be held in Melbourne from November 30 to December 2. The first such festival was held in Melbourne in 2013. Since then, there have been festivals in Adelaide, Sydney and Perth. This year the festival will be returning to Melbourne. I have attended all these festivals and I have found them inspiring. They draw together thousands of young people from all around the nation. There is uplifting music and much singing together and sharing of meals and hearing encouraging messages of faith in Jesus and spending time in prayer.

I have been pleased that our own diocese of Ballarat has been well represented at each of the festivals, with groups of young people from various parts of our diocese taking part. The Australian Catholic Youth Festivals have been wonderful combinations of fun and faith.

I encourage the young people of our diocese to attend and I look forward to sharing these days with you and those from all around Australia.

We are currently inviting expressions of interest from the young people of the diocese who may wish to attend. If you or you know anyone who may be interested in attending please contact your parish or send an email to youth@ballarat.catholic.org.au

The Ballarat Diocese is collaborating with DOBCEL, and in consultation with other education governing bodies, for the coordination of expressions of interest. All submissions will go through parishes. For more details, you can visit the official ACYF website: <https://acyf.org.au/>

Lay thriving with ministry training



Jess Salazar believes completing the Lay Pastoral Ministry program offered by the Diocese of Ballarat has helped him to clearly discern how he can best contribute to his parish community.

A parishioner of St Patrick's Cathedral in Ballarat, Jess recently finished the diocesan program, studying subjects such as faith and human development, leadership in ministry and evangelisation and discipleship. "I enrolled in the Lay Pastoral Ministry program to help me with my discernment about what type of ministry I should be doing within or outside of our parish," he said.

"I found it very helpful, especially in discerning to understand the type of ministry that I can do to assist our community. It also gave me an opportunity to really understand my core values and the main reason why I wanted to do and to be part of a ministry program."

The Diocese of Ballarat first offered its Lay Pastoral Ministry program in 2016, as one of the recommendations of its 'Looking Forward' pastoral planning process. Since then, there have been more than 100 participants in the

program. The program is offered in partnership with Dayton University in the USA, through its Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF). About 75 dioceses around the world are making use of the VLCFF, including the Australian dioceses of Ballarat and Lismore.

By partnering with the University, subject costs for Catholics in the diocese are discounted to \$US50 per subject. Each year, there are six or seven teaching cycles, with up to 30 different courses available during those times. Subjects covered include 'Ministry Leadership in the Church Today', 'Spirituality of the Missionary Disciple', and 'Vocation, Spirituality and Discipleship of Catechists'.

Program coordinator for the Diocese of Ballarat Djurdja Klaric said the program is open to anybody in the diocese, with online courses running for 3-5 weeks. "It's offered to anybody that's interested in increasing their knowledge, developing their skills for formation or if they're interested in a lay pastoral ministry role in their parishes," she said.

"It's a really good program, particularly for people who would like to do some study without having to pay an awful lot of money... and you don't have to have any higher education qualifications to be able to do it."

A number of Catholic education staff in Ballarat have participated in the program, Djurdja said, as well as Catholics seeking to be more involved in their parish. "We get a number of parishioners who are just interested in the subjects that are offered," she said. "A lot of them will do it just for their own personal growth, for their own personal understanding. There are quite a few who then go on to be far more involved and far more active in their parish. They seem to really enjoy it."

Matthew Biddle

<https://nce.catholic.org.au/events/the-bridge/593-lay-thriving-with-ministry-training>



OLHC Murtoa new building

The new building at Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School in Murtoa is now fully operational with staff and students moving in for Term 2. The beautiful spaces are wonderful to learn in and include two new classrooms, offices, a meeting room and sick bay.

Our Lady Help of Christians School enjoys a reputation for being a small school with a big heart. Classrooms are

deliberately low-tech and teachers use explicit direct instruction and evidenced-based programs to ensure that each child gets the best beginning with their learning. The grounds are beautiful, with native gardens, views of the Grampians and lots of spaces for children to play. The new building is the latest addition to all the wonderful things the school has to offer.



Chris McCumstie - Principal

Courage to Care

On Wednesday, May 14, 2025 volunteers from Courage to Care delivered their impactful Upstander Program to Year 9 students in small workshops at St Joseph's College Mildura. This program aims to transform bystander behaviour by empowering participants to stand up against bullying and discrimination, including racism and anti-semitism.

The workshops included a brief documentary film that gave an historical background to the Holocaust as an extreme example of racism and discrimination and a Holocaust survivor's personal testimony of how rescuers had the courage to act and helped them to survive. This part of the workshop is often delivered via audio or video testimony, as not many Holocaust survivors remain. However, the College was fortunate to have Mark Kestin travel to Mildura with the team and share his family stories. Mark's mother Lola was born in Kalisz, Poland near the German border. She was 14 years of age when she had to flee from the Nazis, travelling with false papers and surviving only because of the kindness of three strangers who had the courage to help her. Mark held the students spellbound with the story of her amazing escape and eventual move to Australia after the war ended.

Eva Gross spoke about her mother Erna, who was born in Nyirbator, a small town in Hungary. She, too, survived the



Holocaust due to the kindness and courage of strangers when millions of others didn't.

The workshops also provided enquiry led activities to spark thought and discussion about personal attitudes and behaviours, encouraging students to develop an understanding of the consequences of their choices. The final part of the workshop involved giving students tools to help them respond when they witness injustice.

We are very grateful to the 'Courage to Care' volunteers who gave their time to come to Mildura and deliver these powerful workshops to our students.

More information about the program can be found at: <https://couragetocare.org.au/upstander-programs/syp/>

Tracy Aston - St Joseph's College Mildura



Mission: One Heart Many Voices

The Mission: One Heart Many Voices (MOHMOV) conference opened in Sydney on May 19, 2025 drawing over 300 participants from across Australia for three days of dialogue, reflection, and spiritual engagement. With the 2025 theme **Choosing Hope: Trust yourself to its leading**, the conference aligned with the Jubilee Year focus on Pilgrims of Hope. Fran Peterkin, Bernadette Lynch and Jane Collins from the Ballarat Diocese attended.

The event began with a deeply spiritual Welcome to Country by Isaac Bamblett, followed by an opening keynote from theologian Estela Padilla, who explored hope as both a spiritual force and a communal responsibility. Describing hope as "light through cracks of darkness," Estela encouraged attendees to see themselves as pilgrims navigating the uncertainties of life with trust and courage.

Anna Cody, Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, gave a powerful address on the theme of "Choosing," emphasising the need to create safe, inclusive spaces - especially for marginalised communities. Workshops that followed focused on synodal principles, First Nations truth-telling and applying spiritual frameworks like Theory U.

Day two featured a theological keynote from Fr Richard Lennan, who reflected on forming hope in a synodal Church, followed by a youth-focused session led by Madeline Forde and special guests exploring spiritual quests and inclusion. These sessions deepened participant engagement through quiet reflection, dialogue and shared experience.

On the final day, Lana Turvey-Collins launched **formation.org.au**, a professional network for those working in mission formation. Reflections from the Interfaith Encounters Program highlighted the ongoing impact of interreligious dialogue in nurturing confidence and hope in young people. The conference concluded with workshops and heartfelt sharing. As attendees departed, inspired and renewed, the conference left a lasting legacy—a rekindled fire of hope to carry forward into their communities.

Adapted from media releases by Astrid Delayre - Catholic Mission Communications Officer



UNITED TO MARK NATIONAL SORRY DAY

On Monday, May 26, 2025 Damascus College Ballarat proudly hosted the National Sorry Day Ceremony, an occasion where the three Catholic Colleges of Ballarat united to remember and acknowledge the Stolen Generations of First Nations peoples. Damascus College welcomed students from St Patrick's College, Loreto College, along with all First Nation students and their families, Elders, members of the First Nations community and other invited guests.

The National Sorry Day ceremony is held annually as a collaboration between the three Colleges and Damascus College Principal, Mr Steven Mifsud, says it is an important occasion to unite and come together, "Sorry Day is a powerful opportunity for our three Colleges to come together in solidarity and to deepen our collective commitment to reconciliation. It is a privilege to share this

occasion with First Nations students, their families and community members and to create a space where truth, learning and respect are at the centre."

The event commenced with guests gathering outside for a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony led by Macaylah Johnson, followed by a didgeridoo performance by Tristan Harris. Formal proceedings continued in the John Shannon Centre, including the revealing of the new message stick, designed by First Nations students from St Patrick's College, Loreto College and Damascus College, which represents the coming together of these schools, each contributing their unique perspective and spirit.

Renowned keynote speaker Brenda Matthews addressed the audience, a proud Wiradjuri woman, author, filmmaker and advocate. Brenda's powerful personal story continues to inspire national conversations around truth-telling, healing and unity. Also sharing her voice at the ceremony was Kyeema Brown, one of the Damascus College proud First Nations student leaders. Kyeema reflected on the meaning of National Sorry Day, "Today is about strength. It is about recognising the resilience of our Elders and ancestors, who fought to keep our culture alive. Because of them, we are still here, connected to our families, our stories and our country." The event was a powerful and meaningful gathering and likely one of the largest Sorry Day events happening in Ballarat.

Sarah Boswell – Leader of Marketing & Development

Liturgical Music Symposium

The Diocesan Liturgical Commission hosted a day on liturgical music, presented by international composer, Tony Alonso, on Tuesday, May 27, 2025 at St Patrick's Cathedral Hall, Ballarat. Tony is a Catholic composer of sacred music and a scholar whose work responds to the diverse realities of contemporary culture. His many compositions, which appear in compilations and hymnals throughout the world, embrace multicultural musical expressions and reflect a commitment to strong ritual song. Tony holds a Bachelor of Music in Choral Conducting, a Master of Arts in Theology and a PhD in Religion from Emory University Atlanta. He is currently Aquinas Assistant Professor of Theology and Culture at Candler School of Theology at Emory University where he also serves as the inaugural Director of Catholic Studies.

A Reflection – Liturgical Music Symposium with Tony Alonso



I went to hear Dr Tony Alonso speak about liturgical music. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I'm so glad I went. Tony shared his gift of music throughout the day, interwoven through prayer, lecture and song. People across the diocese, from parishes, schools and Catholic Education Ballarat, seized the opportunity to hear a modern international artist speak. I was interested in his background as an American university lecturer and a theologian and his insights were thought provoking and grounded in scripture.

Tony discussed the invitation from God for all to sing, which is repeated throughout the Old and New Testaments, as well as the giving of one's full self to God through the reason of Baptism. He spoke of music healing wounds and drawing people closer to God. The power of music takes the listener and singer to a place where words cannot. Tony mentioned the way that singing seems to be counter cultural, left to the 'experts' or those with the microphone. He argued that music is not just an optional extra for liturgy, but an essential part of it – the more music is connected to the liturgy, the holier it is!

Some thought provoking questions he left me with were around the choice of music for the different moments of liturgy and the importance of giving children the types of liturgical songs that will sustain them as they grow. He also said everyone can sing – 'If God made it, God wants to hear it'

Bernadette Luckman – Catholic Identity and Mission Primary Education Officer, CEB.



DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

In early 2024 Bishop Paul Bird asked the Diocesan Pastoral Planning Panel to facilitate a Diocesan Assembly as part of the 150th year anniversary celebrations of the diocese. Delegates from all communities including our twenty-nine Parishes, Diocesan Agencies, Councils and Commissions, Catholic Education, Catholic Health and Aged Care, Catholic Social Services, Clergy and Religious Congregations within the diocese were invited to attend over two days at the gathering held in November. The focus of discussion at the assembly was leadership and governance and how each can be promoted within our diocesan communities.

In preparation for the Assembly, there were many smaller gatherings throughout the diocese to reflect on existing leadership within our communities and to share thoughts in a prayerful atmosphere, which followed a method of 'Conversations in the Spirit'. This process of 'Synodal Conversations' was then also the methodology adopted at the Assembly.

During the Assembly, delegates were assigned to a table group of up to eight people with a facilitator appointed to each table. Each delegate was asked to respond to a series of questions with interludes of silence to allow participants to really listen to what other delegates had to say. There are two necessary attitudes that are fundamental to this process: active listening and speaking from the heart. Each table facilitator was also provided additional support in the synodal process to assist delegates work through each question.

The Assembly confirmed that there is strong support for adopting 'Synodal Conversations' as the process moving forward. This collaborative and reflective approach resonates with the diocesan shared commitment to listening, discerning and walking together as a community, a commitment to synodality - walking together, sharing joys of faith and hope. "Orientated towards mission, synodality involves gathering at all levels of the Church for mutual listening, dialogue, and community discernment. It also involves reaching consensus as an expression of Christ rendering Himself present, He who is alive in the Spirit. Furthermore, it consists in reaching decisions according to differentiated co-responsibilities. Along these lines, we can understand better what it means to say that synodality is a constitutive dimension of the Church." (Synod report 1/28)

The data provided from the Assembly offered valuable feedback on how the diocese can better serve and engage with all the different communities of the diocese (*A community of communities*). There were several themes that recurred in many of the table groups.

The Key Themes from the assembly are:

- Mission & Identity
- Relationships
- Transformation & Conversion
- Formation
- Structural Change
- Trust

Following the Assembly, the Pastoral Planning Team hosted a gathering with facilitators for a further briefing. The Pastoral Planning Panel shared an account of the thoughts, testimony and themes from the Assembly. The facilitators were asked to gather their table group for reflection on this preliminary account.

In March, the Pastoral Planning Panel completed a formal report on the Assembly that was presented to Bishop Paul. A meeting with the facilitators was then held to discuss outcomes and actions. The Pastoral Planning Panel invited facilitators to reconnect with delegates on the report during the Easter Season.

Building on this progress, the Pastoral Planning Panel has discerned that the most suitable next step is for the parishes themselves to lead the process, continuing the journey with a spirit of collaboration and faith. To support this ongoing discernment and action, parishes have been provided with information and resources intended to assist them in guiding conversations within their communities. In the initial phase, clergy, delegates and facilitators across the diocese are encouraged to actively engage within their own parishes and communities by participating in the discussions as they are organised.



Following this, the sharing and distribution of the report will be widespread. If you are interested in taking part in any discussions, please contact your parish priest for further details.

Also, an action from the Diocesan Assembly is the proposal to establish a working party that will lay the foundation for a new ongoing body to support leadership and governance in the diocese. This working party will:

- Discern the purpose;
- Define the structure;
- Develop its terms of reference;
- Propose a suitable name.

Representatives of clergy, facilitators and delegates were invited to join this working party. More information on this will be provided in due course.

Another outcome of the Assembly is members of the Pastoral Planning Panel and diocesan staff have attended zone meetings to discuss parish leadership and future planning and offer support in any of these areas, along with others. This will be an ongoing arrangement when possible.

Another action is direct consultations with clergy and the Pastoral Planning Panel to learn about parish leadership teams, strategic planning in the parishes and communities and any other concerns or issues that needed addressing. Through the discussions, it is clear different models of leadership operate in communities/parishes and not one style would work in all. Consultation with the different communities is important. The meetings have been invaluable, making further connections and listening to the views of the clergy. The meetings are a step in future planning and are assisting with the evolution of a new diocesan strategic plan.

The Diocesan Assembly report highlighted the need for transformational change, both within the church and the diocese. In response, the Pastoral Planning Panel wishes to continue to introduce the idea of reimagining how the diocese can flourish and make the most of our gifts, in future conversations — perhaps with a greater focus on mission. Future generations may not connect with the traditional forms of Church but may instead be drawn to new and different expressions of mission and community, which can and could be led from community leadership.



Overseas Mission

Richard and Ushi Murphy are saying ‘farewell’ to Hamilton and calling Timor-Leste ‘home’ for the next year. Richard and Ushi’s journey to the Pacific began when they applied to be overseas volunteers in 2023 with Palms International Volunteering, an Australian NGO which has been working in countries across the Pacific and Asia to provide mentoring opportunities for over 60 years.

“With no children at home and no grandchildren, I felt we were gifted a window of opportunity to volunteer with Palms overseas,” said Ushi. “It wasn’t until Richard saw a niche project management mentor position advertised in a Palms newsletter, that he decided I might be onto something.”

“Not only is managing sustainable agriculture projects something I do in my current job”, says Richard, “Ushi could apply her management and communication skills to empower farming women to participate in the project,” he says. “We felt we could work together to make a really meaningful contribution whilst being challenged to grow personally and in our Christian traditions.”

Richard and Ushi will be mentoring at Fundasaun Haburas Moris (FHM), an organisation working with farmers to establish forestry systems that increase nutrition, livelihood and food security. In an area that is heavily dependent on agriculture, finding ways to increase forestry and decrease food scarcity is vital.

“We were thrilled to receive Richard and Ushi’s application,” said Soraya Kassim, Executive Director of Palms International Volunteering. “They are just the sort of people who make great international volunteers. They both have plenty of skills to share, but their attitude is one of openness and curiosity. That’s what gives us the most confidence in the success of their placement.”

As Richard and Ushi embark on this new adventure in Timor-Leste, many joined with them on Sunday, June 15, 2025 at the St Mary MacKillop Parish Centre in Hamilton to wish them a safe journey as they engage in their overseas mission.

Soraya Kassim, Executive Director, Palms International Volunteering

St Patrick's Primary School Port Fairy is proud to be a leader in sustainability education, reflected in our prestigious 5-star ResourceSmart Schools (RSS) status. This recognition highlights our dedication to embedding sustainable practices into every aspect of school life. From termly whole-school sustainability days to our expertise in upcycling, we model a commitment to the environment that inspires our students and the wider community. Our curriculum integrates real-world environmental challenges, encouraging students to become active problem solvers who champion sustainability both in school and beyond.

Central to our approach is fostering a circular economy mindset, an ethos that views waste as a resource and embraces reuse, repair and regeneration. By equipping our students with the tools to think critically about resource use, we empower them to shape a sustainable future. This commitment was celebrated in 2024 when we received the "Community Leadership Award" at the ResourceSmart Schools Awards at the MCG, recognising our impactful initiatives and the passion of our school community. We are proud to lead the way, demonstrating how education can inspire transformative environmental change. Our school's partnership with Boomerang Bags has been an inspiring initiative, combining sustainability with global community support. Using recycled materials provided by Boomerang Bags, our students designed and assembled pencil cases, which were then sewn together by my mother-in-law. This collaborative effort not only showcased the creative talents of our students, it also emphasised the importance of reusing materials to reduce waste. The finished pencil cases were filled with stationery generously donated by Officeworks Warrnambool, ensuring they were ready to be sent to children at The Bandari Project in Mto wa Mbu, Tanzania.

A unique aspect of this initiative is that students personalise each pencil case. They carefully select the recycled materials, design the cases and write their names and the recipient's name on them, creating a meaningful connection across continents. This personal touch makes the gesture even more special, as it allows the students to feel directly involved in supporting their peers in Tanzania. Inspired by the success of the first batch, we are already working on a second run, aiming to provide every child at The Bandari Project with a personalised pencil case.

The Bandari Project, a non-profit organisation dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty through education, provides a safe and engaging learning environment for children who otherwise wouldn't have access to schooling. By sending these handmade pencil cases, our school community contributed to their mission, fostering educational opportunities for underprivileged children and women. The initiative has been a meaningful experience for everyone involved, blending environmental consciousness with acts of kindness. It demonstrated the power of global connections and highlighted how small, sustainable actions can have a far-reaching impact on communities in need.

Benson Steere, Deputy Principal and Year 3 teacher

First published in the Eingana - journal of Environment Education Victoria

Full story can be read at <https://www.eev.vic.edu.au/eingana>



INSPIRING INITIATIVE



BUNGAREE PARISH ROAD TRIP

During Catholic Education Week, the students and staff from St Mary's Primary School Clarkes Hill attended Mass at St Patrick's Gordon to celebrate together with the theme, 'May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace.' We joined with students and staff from St Brigid's Ballan and St Patrick's Gordon.

After the Mass we jumped back on the bus and began a road trip to find out about the Catholic churches and Catholic schools close to the Clarkes Hill area and compare their similarities and differences and what makes them unique. After St Patrick's Gordon we visited St Michael's Springbank, St Peter's Clarkes Hill, St Brendan's Dunnstown and St Michael's Bungaree. It was also an opportunity to find out why Catholic Education is so important to the people of these communities. We are so grateful to Sue Prendergast, our Religious Education Leader for organising this and to Fr Justin for joining us at each of the churches we visited.

Clare Scanlon - Principal
Our Diocesan Community - July 2025



EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE

Congratulations to Maureen Davey, who has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division for her extraordinary service to the St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria and the community.

Maureen has dedicated her life to advocacy, quiet leadership and community service. She was born deaf and with legal blindness and these aspects of her identity have never defined her.

Maureen has volunteered at the Vinnies Shop in Alfredton for over thirty years and she can usually be found each week carefully ironing donated clothing to help prepare items for sale. Her dedication earned her a St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria's Service Award in both 2013 and 2018.

In 1967, she helped found Ballarat and District Better Hearing Australia and later served as President from 2005 - 2007. She was also a founding member of the Ballarat Deaf Social Club in 1974. Maureen holds life memberships with both organisations, recognising her decades of contribution. That same year, she helped establish the Ballarat Branch of the Association for the Blind (now Vision Australia), serving for many years as both a committee member and chairperson.

Maureen's life has been one of service — grounded in compassion, community and courage. We are deeply proud to have her as part of the Vinnies family. Congratulations Maureen!

Susanne Newton - Senior Communications Advisor (Vinnies Victoria)

Photo credit: Lachlan Bence/Ballarat Courier (2022)

Damascus launches innovative program at Dunnstown

On Wednesday April 30, 2025 Damascus College Ballarat officially launched the Year 8 St Brendan's Program in Dunnstown. The official opening commenced with a smoking ceremony and didgeridoo performance by the talented Tristian Harris, a proud Noongah man, setting a meaningful tone for the event. Following this, Mass was celebrated by Fr Justin Driscoll, who highlighted the theme of growth and the significance of this new chapter at the St Brendan's site.

In a symbolic nod to the site's rich educational heritage, the opening also included a very special ringing of the St Brendan's bell, by none other than a former pupil of St Brendan's Primary and the gentleman who built the bell itself, Mr Leo Murphy. It was a moving moment to witness Mr Murphy ring the bell once more, marking the official opening of the St Brendan's program.

The St Brendan's Program places students in a dynamic, project-based learning environment where the focus extends beyond traditional academics. With an emphasis on leadership, social responsibility and personal growth, the St Brendan's program encourages students to connect with their community, work collaboratively and develop skills that will serve them beyond the classroom.

Based in the former St Brendan's Primary School, this new Damascus initiative has been named 'The St Brendan's Program' in honour of the site's 161-year history of education and its connection to the Dunnstown community. Principal Mr Steven Mifsud said that Damascus College is excited and proud that Catholic education will continue to thrive at this beautiful learning site. "This innovative program has been designed with the Dunnstown community in mind, we have intentionally involved community members during the development phase and are delighted that the program will continue to engage local residents, helping to sustain education within the Dunnstown community" he said.

It was wonderful to see the Dunnstown community, Sisters of Mercy, members from the Diocese, former St Brendan's Primary School students, the first cohort of Year 8 students, Damascus College staff and many others come together to celebrate this new era of education at the St Brendan's site.





All through this year, there are special events in Rome for various groups of people, celebrating 2025 as a Jubilee Year. The special gatherings began in January with a conference of people involved in the World of Communications. There was a Jubilee celebration for Artists, a Jubilee for Volunteers, a Jubilee for the Sick and HealthCare Workers. There have been Jubilees for Families, Children, Teenagers, Grandparents, the Elderly, a Jubilee for Bands and Popular Entertainment, a Jubilee for People with Disabilities. Later in the year, there will be Jubilees for Migrants, a Jubilee for Choirs, a Jubilee for the World of Education. These different events reflect the many aspects of people's lives. The Jubilee gatherings are opportunities to celebrate the contributions people make in these various fields. They are also opportunities to pray for the gifts we need in all the areas of life.

A Jubilee Year is a year with a focus on renewal, a focus on making a fresh start. It's also called a Holy Year. It's a year to pray in a special way for the gifts we need to live our lives in a holy and wholesome way. During a Jubilee Year, many people make a pilgrimage to Rome and pray at the tomb of Saint Peter and the tomb of Saint Paul. A pilgrimage to Rome can be an inspiring experience. Yet, not everyone can travel to Rome. Happily, we don't need to go to Rome to pray for a renewal of our Christian lives. We can pray for this gift of renewal wherever we are.

Bishop Paul's Homily - Pentecost Sunday Year C - Ballarat Cathedral, June 8, 2025

We are a community of communities from the Murray to the sea. Inspired by the Gospel and nourished by the Eucharist, we follow the example of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reaching out in joyful and humble service, caring for all of God's creation, growing in love day by day and looking forward to life with God forever.

Vision Statement for the Diocese

Photos: Front cover: Siena Catholic Primary School Lucas; Back cover: 1. Mercy Regional College Camperdown Feast Day. 2. A famous photo of what the 1890s race crowd looked like in Warrnambool! 3. St James Parish Primary School Sebastopol. 4. Damascus College Opening at St Brendan's School Dunnstown Campus