

A tradition for many years now was once again held on February 9, the day before the beginning of Lent, where the student leaders of the local Catholic Secondary Colleges gathered at St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat with Bishop Paul Bird to acknowledge their role in their colleges.

Bishop Paul celebrated Mass, the recalling of baptismal commitments in a Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling, the proclamation of God's Word and finally around the altar for Eucharist. The dismissal included a blessing of the Ashes that would be used by the colleges in Ash Wednesday ceremonies the following day. The student leaders were also presented with a 50th Project Compassion candle and a project compassion box representing the light of the Easter Candle and almsgiving during Lent. The Bishop joined the students in the garden of the Cathedral for the traditional Shrove Tuesday pancakes.



With the presentation of the candle and Project Compassion box, Caritas Australia's Annual Project Compassion Appeal in the Ballarat Diocese was launched at this Mass. Each year Project Compassion brings hundreds of thousands of Australians together in solidarity with the world's poor. "Lent is the time of year when we put our faith into action through prayer, fasting and almsgiving," said Caritas Australia CEO, Paul O'Callaghan. "Project Compassion has transformed millions of lives and every year since 1965 we have demonstrated our faith, our compassion and our generosity towards the most vulnerable members of our global family."

The theme for this year's Project Compassion is **Learning More Creating Change**. The Diocesan Director for Caritas is Sue Searls. Sue can be contacted on 0409401329 or sue.searls@ballarat.catholic.org.au