



# Diocesan e-News

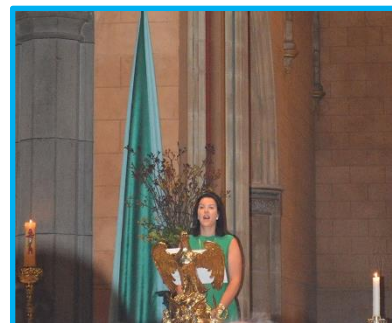
## CATHOLIC EDUCATION OPENING SCHOOL YEAR MASS 2017



As over six hundred principals and staff from the Primary and Secondary Catholic schools and Education Office in Ballarat gathered, the noise in St Patrick's Cathedral grew from a whisper to a gentle roar. The sound of these school communities gathering after their summer break, to celebrate the beginning of the 2017 school year with a Eucharist, presided over by Bishop Paul, was exciting and heart-warming to hear.

The theme of the Mass this year was 'Light' and as Bishop Paul, Fr Justin Driscoll (VG) and Fr Anthony Nagothu entered the Cathedral, the members of the Assembly raised their voices in a joy-filled rendition of the well-known hymn "Christ be our Light".

The Gospel of Matthew reminded all present that we, as staff in Catholic Education have the responsibility to be light for the world. Bishop Paul's homily encouraged all to take this task seriously. He reminded all present that, just as the words of the Psalm, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet" (Amy Grant) sung by Majella Muller, informed us that the *Word of the Lord* is the light that guides who we are and what we do in our every-day lives, so too we must share this light with our students and school families.



Each school and college from the Central Zone was presented with a candle, as Mitch Leviston (St Patrick's College) invited us to 'carry these candles' out to our schools and the wider community through his singing of a very appropriate hymn "Go light your world" by Chris Rice.

Our thanks go to the Central Zone Principal Network and Educational Consultants who prepared the celebration and to all who ministered to the Assembly on Monday morning through music, song, proclamation and distribution of candles.



*Dr Susan Crowe - Education Officer: Sustainability, Liturgy and Special Projects*

**Bishop Paul Bird's homily can be read below:**

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**Opening of 2017 School Year - Ballarat Cathedral, 8.45 am, January 30, 2017**

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Last Thursday evening, there was an Australia Day Fireworks Display at Lake Wendouree. I went along to watch the show, together with thousands of other people who took up vantage points all around the lake. By the time I arrived, the sun had set but there were still traces of colour in the western sky. The last of the

daylight began to fade. The people waited patiently. Gradually it became darker. Then the fireworks began. There were bursts of colour in the sky as the fireworks exploded – reds and blues and greens and sparkling silver. To add to the scene, the evening was very calm and the water of the lake was still, so the fireworks in the sky were reflected on the surface of the lake.

Of course, the light from fireworks is nowhere near the light of the sun. Fireworks are not like daylight. They don't scatter all the darkness. But they do provide a bright light in the midst of the darkness.

In this sense, the light from fireworks is something like the light of a lamp – a welcome light in the midst of the darkness. If we are out walking and it grows dark, it's a great help to have a lamp of some kind or a torch so that we can see where we're going.

Pope Francis says that faith is like this. Faith is like a lamp or a torch. It doesn't light up everything but it lights up the path ahead so that we can continue our journey. This is what Pope Francis said: "Faith is not a light that scatters all our darkness, but a lamp that guides our steps in the night and suffices for the journey."

This thought of Pope Francis is close to the thought that John Henry Newman expressed in one of his poems. The opening words were "Lead, Kindly Light". The poem was really a prayer that the kindly light of God would show him the way. He did not ask to see far ahead. He prayed simply for enough light to take the next step along the road.

"Lead, Kindly Light, amidst th'encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on!  
The night is dark, and I am far from home,  
Lead Thou me on!  
Keep Thou my feet;  
I do not ask to see the distant scene;  
one step enough for me."

In the refrain of the psalm that we sang together, we referred to God's word as a lamp, a light. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The word of God shows us the way. The teaching in the Scriptures is a light that illuminates the path ahead.

God provides us with light to guide our way. This is a key part of our Christian faith. Another part of our faith is that God asks us to share that light with others to help them on their way.

In the gospel that we heard a few moments ago, Jesus said to his followers, "You are the light of the world. Your light must shine in the sight of those around you, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven." Sharing the light with others – this is surely a basic element of our role as teachers. And the light that we are called to share is the light of love. God offers us the light of love and God asks us to share the light of love with others.

Pope Francis spoke about the love of Christ lighting up our hearts with joy and the light of that joy spreading to those we meet. "If we are truly in love with Christ, and if we sense how much he loves us, our hearts will light up with a joy that spreads to everyone around us!"

As we begin a new school year, may the word of God truly be a lamp to our feet and light to our path. May the love of Christ light up our hearts with joy and may that joy spread to our students and to each person we meet, day by day.

*Bishop Paul Bird CSSR*

**Go Light Your World**      Chris Rice

There is a candle in every soul  
Some brightly burning, some dark and cold  
There is a Spirit who brings a fire  
Ignites a candle and makes His home

*So carry your candle, run to the darkness  
Seek out the helpless, confused and torn  
Hold out your candle for all to see it  
Take your candle, and go light your world  
Take your candle, and go light your world*

Frustrated brother, see how he's tried to  
Light his own candle some other way  
See now your sister, she's been robbed and lied to  
Still holds a candle without a flame

*So carry your candle, run to the darkness  
Seek out the lonely, the tired and worn  
Hold out your candle for all to see it  
Take your candle, and go light your world  
Take your candle, and go light your world*

Cause We are a family whose hearts are blazing  
So let's raise our candles and light up the sky  
Praying to our Father, in the name of Jesus  
Make us a beacon in darkest times

*So carry your candle, run to the darkness  
Seek out the helpless, deceived and poor  
Hold out your candle for all to see it  
Take your candle, and go light your world*

*Carry your candle, run to the darkness  
Seek out the helpless, confused and torn  
Hold out your candle for all to see it  
Take your candle, and go light your world  
Take your candle, and go light your world  
Take your candle, and go light your world*

Songwriter: RICE, CHRISTOPHER M.

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