

St Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill is a member school of the Association of Josephite Affiliated Secondary Schools (AJASS). Each year, students and staff from these schools organize and participate in a pilgrimage, following in the footsteps of Saint Mary MacKillop and Father Julian Tenison Woods. This year, the pilgrimage was to the South Island of New Zealand. Emma Hoare and Xavier Murphy, the two students who attended, wrote the following:

For the AJASS Pilgrimage this year Xavier Murphy, Mrs Wright and I travelled to New Zealand. We joined with Mary MacKillop Catholic College Leongatha, Mount St Joseph's Girl's College Altona, MacKillop College Werribee and Penola Catholic College. We met at the airport on Wednesday, October 17 at 7am and we all introduced ourselves and started to become friends. We boarded the plane at 8:30am, bound for Christchurch Airport. The plane was equipped with a group chat messaging option so we made a group chat with the other sixteen students to try and learn more about everyone. We arrived in Christchurch at 2pm and hopped on a tour bus and looked around Christchurch. We saw a church that was made out of cylinders and visited a memorial of eighty-five white chairs which represented the eighty-five people that were killed in the earthquake that occurred in 2011. After our sightseeing tour of Christchurch, we went to visit Marion College.



Marion College had to be relocated and share the grounds of another school because their school was so badly damaged in the earthquake. We were given a tour of the current location of Marion College but today, seven years later, they still do not have a permanent location for their school. Sr Eleanor spoke to us about Mary MacKillop and where she had been when she went to New Zealand. We went out for dinner that night and we were able to meet even more students that were on the trip.



On day two, we left at 8:15am bound for Temuka. Once in Temuka, we were welcomed into the town by the students from St Joseph's School before going over to the church for a welcoming from the priest. Once everyone was seated the children stood up the front of the church and sang for us in their native Maori language. After they finished singing, some of the boys did the 'Haka'. It was so great to see them so passionate about something that is close to their hearts. The children of St Joseph's then gave us a tour of their school and the Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre. The Heritage Centre was built in honour of Mary. It was built next to the chapel that was already standing where Mary had prayed.

After that heartfelt welcome and tour of the school and Heritage Centre in Temuka, we left for Timaru. We were greeted by Fr Brian Fennessy, before going for a walk up on top of the Basilica. The Basilica was built and completed by 1911 and the views were exceptional! We stayed at Roncalli College in Timaru for the night.

On day three we left Timaru for Queenstown. It was a long bus trip but didn't feel very long as we were all singing songs and marvelled at the snow-capped mountains and the pristine blue freshwater lakes. The lakes are made up of the snow that melts off of the mountains so we were able to drink the water. A great memory we know we won't forget. Before arriving in Queenstown we stopped in Arrowtown and had a little look around. Arrowtown was a

significant stop for our pilgrimage as this was a destination for the Sisters of St Joseph. They lived and worked in Arrowtown and Mary visited the quaint little town and stayed there.

Just picture the main street as something like the Pioneer Settlement or the Port in Echuca. It was old and preserved but the shops were modern. After doing some shopping of lollies and souvenirs in Arrowtown we left for Queenstown where we went to our final accommodation for the trip, Pinewood Lodge.

On our final morning, we packed all our bags and we got to enjoy ourselves with all of the students from the trip before we would go our separate ways, once back in Melbourne. After breakfast, we went on the Queenstown Skyline Gondola. The Queenstown Skyline Gondola is an excellent way to get a bird's eye view of Queenstown, Lake Wakatipu and surrounding mountains. It only takes a few minutes by gondola to ride the four hundred and fifty vertical metres from the base station to the Skyline complex on Bob's Peak.

After coming back down on the Gondola ride, the teachers let us all go shopping in Queenstown. We had time to buy souvenirs for our families before meeting up so we could leave for the airport. We arrived at the airport, checked in our bags for the last time then went through customs before doing a quick little activity as a group. We were to write something we enjoyed about someone or something we found out about someone and write on a little piece of paper then give it to that person. It made you feel good that you could possibly make someone's day, or they could do the same for you if you were having a bad day. We arrived back in Melbourne, collected our luggage and once out of the international lounge we all were very happy to see our families. We said our goodbyes to the teachers and students but one day, we'll all meet up again.

We would like to thank Mrs Haeusler and Mrs Wright for the opportunity to go on this pilgrimage.

*Emma Hoare and Xavier Murphy - Year 10 Students*

