



REFLECTIVE GARDEN OPENING



St Malachy's School Edenhope had a very successful opening of the Reflective Garden with about fifty people attending. There was great debate with the weather and the forecasting of storms for the evening – do we go indoors or outdoors - with indoors finally winning.

There were a number of invited guests in attendance, including Bishop Paul Bird who has contributed financially to the building of the Reflective Garden. He has been very supportive of this project from the moment of its inception.

Fr Patrick Mugavin, Canonical Administrator of St Malachy's School, along with Fr John Corrigan, was also in attendance as was our former Parish Priest, Andrew Hayes and former Parish Leader Sr Pam Barlow rsm. We thank them very much for their commitment to attend the evening.

Jess Sambell, School Advisory Council President, began the Liturgy with an Acknowledgement of Country. Principal Angela Kealy welcomed guests and provided some background information as to how and why people felt there was a need for a garden. The evening was about acknowledging past failings of the Church, reflecting on the healing of the present and looking to a future of hope where all children can feel safe, protected and loved wherever they are, whoever they are with and whatever they are doing.

Rosie Rokebrand read a letter from Rosemary Nolan about her thoughts on the bravery of the victims in coming forward to ensure this never happens to children again. Her thoughts were, "May we never forget the heinous crimes committed against children here, throughout the Ballarat Diocese, Australia and the world. May we remember the victims and their families and acknowledge their bravery in coming forward to reveal the truth. May they understand why I have supported a reflective garden in their honour even though they are unable to go back to places that bear horrendous memories. Now and in the future, may we remember that our children are much safer because of the bravery of the victims. I hope St Malachy's Reflective Garden is a reminder that children are the most precious gift and we will protect the children of this parish and support those who endeavor to prevent child abuse on all levels. As Nelson Mandela said 'There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.'"

Fr John read Mark 8:22-25 about the blind man being healed by Jesus. Bishop Paul reflected on this reading in his homily saying that healing can take a long time, as it did for the blind man and our victims and survivors of abuse. His final reminder was that we need to care for all children, keeping them safe. Everyone was then invited to light a candle in memory of a loved one who had passed away.





Community members read the Prayers of the Faithful and Fr Patrick Mugavin led a Litany of Healing Prayers for children. The weather turned fine so we were able to wander from the Music Room to the garden and around it as Bishop Paul blessed us and our garden.

Fr Andrew sang a reflection song about the many ways in which children have not been treated well over time - taken from unmarried or single mothers, Indigenous families, sent from England to Australia and abused. The Liturgy concluded with an African Blessing, 'Walk tall, walk well, walk safe, walk free and may harm never come to thee'.

I would like to thank Bishop Paul for being part of our community healing journey and for financially supporting the Reflective Garden. Thank you also to Chris Carter and Tim & Rosie Rokebrand for their huge contributions to the building of the garden, Cam Colley for the metal logo and Mark Cross for his assistance in plant selection.

Many thanks to Fr Andrew for his continued support of acknowledgement of past failings and Fr John, Fr Paddy and Sr Pam for their support of the Reflective Garden. Thank you to staff, school families and the Parish Council for being involved in the journey. Also thanks to Evan Wrobel (Sacred Heart Primary School Casterton Principal) for joining us to offer his support. All the support was greatly appreciated and we hope that these small steps forward will in time help others.

Angela Kealy – Principal

