

CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE  
of  
BALLARAT



# OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY

News around the Diocese

No. 75 March 2025



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### OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY (ODC)

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## A Jubilee of Hope



*As I write this reflection, Pope Francis has been in hospital for two weeks, suffering from pneumonia. The reports on his situation have varied, sometimes referring to his condition as "critical" and sometimes indicating some improvement. A few days after going to hospital, Pope Francis had a visit from the Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni. She said that she was pleased to find the Pope alert and cheerful. "I am very pleased to have found him alert and responsive. We joked as always. He has not lost his well-known sense of humour." Other positive messages have come from Pope Francis himself, thanking the doctors and nurses caring for him and thanking people from around the world for the support of their prayers. He said he was particularly encouraged by the cards from children hoping that he would get well soon.*

*This is certainly a trying time for Pope Francis, as he struggles with a serious illness. Yet he continues to approach each day in a spirit of trust in God. In a message from hospital to people gathered in St Peter's Square for the Sunday Angelus, he spoke of his time of sickness as a time for learning extra trust in God and a time for being close to all those suffering in various ways. "It is precisely in these moments that we learn even more to trust in the Lord; at the same time, I thank God for giving me the opportunity to share in body and spirit the condition of so many sick and suffering people."*

*As he spends these days in hospital, Pope Francis is putting into practice what he wrote about when he declared this year a Jubilee of Hope. In the decree announcing 2025 as a Jubilee Year, he prayed, "For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope." For some people life might be going along happily, with blessings of good health and peace. For others, life might be a struggle. They might be bearing the burden of illness or suffering in one of the many wars going on at present. Yet, Pope Francis prayed that 2025 might bring renewed hope for everyone.*

*The Pope recognised that it is not always easy to retain a hopeful outlook. "Uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness." Pope Francis acknowledges that the troubles we face can be discouraging. Yet, he sees a reason for hope even in difficult situations, because, for him, our ultimate hope is based on the love of God and this love can carry us through whatever may come.*

*Pope Francis recalls the message of St Paul that our hope is founded on the love of God that has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. "Since we are justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing in the glory of God... Hope does not disappoint, because*

*God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:1-2,5).*

*Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God's love, revealed most of all in Jesus. "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35.37-39). Christian hope can endure even in the midst of trials because it is founded on God's enduring love.*

*As well as finding hope in God's ongoing love, we can find reasons for hope in the generous love that many people show in communities around the globe. While there are certainly examples of selfishness and hurt in our world, there are also examples of selfless service and kindness. Such instances of generous service can increase our hope that our human family can address the problems we face and can work together to make life better. Pope Francis wrote, "We need to recognise the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence." Where evil and violence bring darkness, goodness and kindness can bring light.*

*One of the particular signs of hope that Pope Francis highlights is people's desire for peace. Even as the world labours under the burden of numerous wars, the longing for peace is a reason for hope. Pope Francis wrote, "Is it too much to dream that arms can fall silent and cease to rain down destruction and death? May the Jubilee remind us that those who are peacemakers will be called "children of God" (Matthew 5:9). The need for peace challenges us all, and demands that concrete steps be taken. May diplomacy be tireless in its commitment to seek, with courage and creativity, every opportunity to undertake negotiations aimed at a lasting peace."*

*Another sign of hope is the way parents share life with their children. They have an enthusiasm for life. They are ready to share this life by welcoming children into the world. In this they bear witness to hope for the future.*

*Pope Francis noted several groups of people who are especially in need of hope. He mentioned those who are sick and those who care for them. "Signs of hope should be shown to the sick, at home or in hospital. Their sufferings can be allayed by the closeness and affection of those who visit them. Works of mercy are also works of hope that give rise to immense gratitude. Gratitude should likewise be shown to all those healthcare workers who, often in precarious conditions, carry out their mission with constant care and concern for the sick and for those who are most vulnerable." His own time in hospital has increased the Pope's empathy with those who suffer in this way and his appreciation for those who look after them.*

*Pope Francis encourages us to show special concern for the young who are often worried by an uncertain future. Our support can build up their confidence that their dreams can indeed come true. He also urges care for migrants who leave their homelands in search of a better life for themselves and their families. A spirit of welcome from us can give them new hope and sustain them as they find a new home in a new culture. Likewise, Pope Francis encourages us to do all we can for the many people who struggle with poverty, lacking even the essentials of life. Whatever we can do to provide people with a hand up can help them find a way of life that is worthy of their human dignity.*

*May this Jubilee Year be a Jubilee of Hope for us all. May 2025 bring new hope to all the members of our diocese. May this year bring new hope to our whole human family spread throughout the world.*

*+ Paul Bird*

Bishop Paul Bird CSsR





# Laudato si'

*In his encyclical Laudato Si', Pope Francis reminds us that everything is connected. Our relationship with nature is not separate from our relationship with God and others. This concept of integral ecology encourages us to care for the Earth and each other. It calls us to action.*

*An offering from Caritas Australia's Catholic Earthcare program, the Australian Guide to Laudato Si' Action Planning outlines a four step cycle of self-assessment, reflection, planning and action that complements the global Laudato Si' Action Platform. It is designed to help you initiate practical, meaningful change within your parish, school, household or organisation as you plan and take action to live Laudato Si'. To learn more go to <https://www.caritas.org.au/catholic-earthcare/>*

*The Diocesan Social Justice Commission, in collaboration with Caritas (Diocese of Ballarat), Earthcare Ballarat and the Pastoral Ministry Office, continues to provide monthly Laudato Si banners for use on bulletins, newsletters and correspondence to all communities. The banners include a quote taken directly from the encyclical with the reference number provided for parishioners to look up and read more deeply about the encyclical. All are encouraged to promote the Pope's message by using these banners as they are designed to help reflect upon and respond to the encyclical and foster faith and action. Also provided is an idea of action/thought to encourage people to change the world!*

*2025 promises to be a notable year in the life of the Church. With a global Jubilee, the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si' and of the Laudato Si' Movement, the 800th anniversary of the Canticle of the Creatures and a momentous UN conference on climate change, this is a year for change.*

<https://laudatosimovement.org/>



## Beginning of the Year Mass

On Thursday, February 13, St Joseph's College Mildura came together for their first Mass of 2025. After welcoming the new Year 7 cohort, students and staff celebrated one hundred and nineteen years of educating the young people of Sunraysia in the Mercy tradition and also marked the beginning of the Year of Justice in the College. Xavier House did well assisting Fr Matt with prayers and readings. The choir and soloists sang beautifully. Following Communion, the Student Leaders all received their badges of office, as well as the the Class of 2025 (Year 12s) who received their special badges.



Celebrating our community during Masses and Liturgies forms an important part of college life, along with holding an important and meaningful role in Catholic education. Along with helping our community to maintain a connection to the Gospel, they also allow students to develop their own personal faith practices. This first Mass introduced new students to an aspect of our College culture that may not have been present at the previous schools they attended. During Communion, students who are not Catholic can receive a blessing or sit quietly and reflect on their own religious or spiritual practices. All faiths are respected at St Joseph's College.

*Tracy Aston - Communications and Events Manager*

Our Diocesan Community - March 2025

# *How does God want us to lead and govern for a missionary synodal church in the Diocese of Ballarat?*

Excitement, hope and anticipation were a few of the feelings experienced on November 15 and 16 with the gathering of people from around the Diocese of Ballarat for the first Diocesan Assembly in many years.

The Diocesan Assembly commenced in Ballarat with registrations on Friday evening in the Albert Coates Complex, Federation University, Mt Helen, followed by a light meal with the assembled gathering at their designated tables for the opening of the Assembly. Jenna Oldaker performed the Welcome to Country. Jenna is a Wadawurrung Traditional Owner and visual artist creating works under 'Murrup Art'. 'Murrup' is the Wadawurrung word for spirit, which is fitting as Jenna's art comes from the sacred tradition of storytelling told by her ancestors and their spirits.

The gathering was called to prayer following the Welcome to Country by the song "Gather Us, O God" along with a procession that included:

- Bishop Paul - with the Crozier that was Bishop Moore's from the 1880's
- Terry Harney – with the book "From the Murray to the Sea – Catholic Education in the Diocese of Ballarat" by Jill Blee
- Michael Myers - the Report of Royal Commission into the Sexual Abuse of Children by Clergy and Church Personnel
- Sr Veronica Lawson - the Documents of Vatican II
- Marie Shaddock - the Book of the Gospels
- Michelle Kearney - water from the sea at Portland
- Sr Telesia Ta'avao csn - water from Lake Wendouree
- Nancy Summerhayes - water from the Murray River at Mildura
- Maria Noonan - the symbol of the pomegranate
- Bernadette Lynch - 150th Anniversary Logo and history
- Megan Ioannou - Message Sticks

Bishop Paul commenced by calling by name the parishes, places and ministries of the diocese that had delegates in attendance: from its 29 parishes from the Murray to the Sea - Sunraysia, Ouyen, Northeast Mallee, East Wimmera, Wimmera-Mallee, Gariwerd, Maryborough, Creswick, Daylesford, Wendouree, Ballarat, Ballarat North, Beaufort, Ballarat East, Bungaree, Gordon, Redan, Linton, Sebastopol, Western Border, Hampden, Camperdown, Timboon, Cororooke, Colac, Apollo Bay, Southwest Coast, Portland; from services of Catholic education - Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited, Edmund Rice Education Victoria, Mercy Education, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and Australian Catholic University; in Social Services - CatholicCare, CatholicCare Housing and St Vincent de Paul; in Health and Aged Care - St John of God Healthcare, Mercy Place Aged Care and Nazareth House; from the Agencies and Offices - Caritas, Catholic Mission, Marriage Tribunal, Pastoral Ministry and Professional Standards; from its Boards, Councils, Commissions and Panels - Finance, Foundation, Liturgical, Pastoral Planning, Personnel Advisory, Professional Standards and Social Justice; throughout the Religious Congregations - the Brigidine Sisters, Good Samaritan Sisters, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Missionaries of St Thomas the Apostle, Oblates of St Joseph, Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of Nazareth; the Priests and Deacon, ordained for and incardinated into the Diocese of Ballarat; and finally the facilitators and planning team who will continue to serve the workings of this Assembly.

Once all were standing, participants sang "Together we Build our Place", one of the 150th Anniversary songs and lit the candles in front of them, they then placed these candles in the bowl in the centre of each table. Deacon Cay Trinh (now Fr) proclaimed the Gospel - Matthew 20:25-28. After the Gospel, Bishop Paul blessed the water brought forward from across the Diocese of Ballarat and facilitators come forward to receive bowls of water to sprinkle over the delegates at their table.

Those present then prayed the anniversary prayer, after which Bishop Paul introduced Sr Karon Donnellon rsm as the facilitator for the Assembly. In Bishop Paul's introduction of Sr Karon, he mentioned that because a diocesan assembly is a rare event, it is useful to have someone to guide us in how we conduct the meeting. Sr Karon has experience in facilitating meetings of various groups of people. She also knows our diocese, having grown up in the Donald district. Sr Karon joined the Ballarat East Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. She has served as a secondary teacher, diocesan youth director, juvenile justice chaplain and director of mission for Catholic Social Services Victoria. She is currently the Institute Leader for the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea.

The first session considered the focus of the Assembly – Leadership and Governance. The presenters were Fr Justin Driscoll, Maria Noonan (CEO St John of God Ballarat and Warrnambool) and Lucy Darcy (Moderator of the Parish of Cororooke and Diocesan Foundation member). The distinction between leadership and governance was emphasised. Making this distinction is a process which allows the transformational to be central to the experience and encourages and leads our communities to the next step. A sense of inspiring people for the future, whatever that may be. A key question was how can authority and responsibility be understood and exercised such that it serves the participation Our Diocesan Community - March 2025

of the whole People of God? What renewal of vision and forms of concrete exercise of authority, responsibility and governance, are needed in order to grow as a missionary synodal Church? Out of listening, three key lessons emerged. Trust has to be restored; we need to re-examine attitudes to power and authority in the Church; and the Catholic community feels it faces significant uncertainty.

Sr Karon's presentation in this session considered the Synod on Synodality which states that Synodality is a "constitutive dimension of the Church." Three points which Sr Karon offered included:

- Lay Participation: It calls for their increased presence in synodal assemblies and all phases of ecclesiastical decision-making. New procedures for selecting and evaluating bishops and expanded lay participation in diocesan leadership and canonical processes are proposed.
- Women's Leadership: The document explicitly states there is "no reason or impediment" to prevent women from assuming leadership roles in the Church. The text advocates for increased female participation in clergy formation and broader involvement in Church decision-making processes.
- The National Catholic Register also states: The end goal is to make the Church more effective at evangelisation by making it more participatory and inclusive.

Sr Karon then outlined the Synodal Process - a Conversation in the Spirit - as follows:

- To pause, centre and tune one's ear and heart to the other.
- This is a way of being together that opens us to perceiving the in-breaking of the Divine within a community. As Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered".
- Listen without thinking about what you will say, letting your next thoughts emerge from the silence.
- Allow what another has said to stimulate your thinking in order to build bridges of connection in the circle to create shared meaning.
- Keep a spacious hospitality to explore differences.

Over the course of the Assembly, the delegates, with the assistance of the table facilitator, were asked to consider different questions in the spirit of the synodal process during the different sessions.

There was a brief presentation with a word from a sponsor - Steve Bigarelli, Chair of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation, spoke about the works of the Foundation. The Foundation sponsored the Assembly and Steve promoted the understanding of the Foundation.

The next day began with prayer before going into the first session. Sr Karon reiterated the 'givens' and the purpose of the Assembly – embedding synodality in leadership and governance. Sr Karon read the feedback from the session on Friday evening which determined that there was an overwhelming support for synodal conversations as the process the diocese will use going forward. Sr Karon read a poem by Bernadette McCarrick describing the Holy Spirit as a wild goose rather than a dove, that at this point we need to be like her, exhilarated in your every part by such strong-winged, full-feathered, single-hearted flight. The Spiritual Conversation for this session concentrated on discerning what emerged. Delegates were asked to consider if they were Bishop Paul, what would they do about issues such as: Co-Responsibility, True Participation and Genuine Leadership? Table groups were invited to discern a vision and the practical implementation of that vision.



In the following session, Bishop Paul focused on our diocese as 'a Community of Communities'. He talked about Pope Francis' message on human fraternity in a document called "Fratelli tutti" - "Brothers and Sisters All". In that document, Pope Francis presented a vision of community in which people put aside the bitterness of divisions and violence and learn to live in kindness. He encouraged us all to look to such a vision, noting that visions and dreams can inspire action. A vision of peace in a war-torn country can inspire people to turn from violence and work to build the peace. A dream that people throughout the world could really live as one human family, as brothers and sisters could inspire people to work together to build up a truly caring human community. The same is true for our life as a diocese. A vision of living as a diocesan community can inspire us to do what we can to build up that community. A dream that we can live as a truly Christian family can inspire us to work together to build up a genuine community of care in our parishes and in our whole diocese. He talked about the diocesan vision statement. As it has developed, our vision is very much in tune with the vision of Pope Francis – a vision of a community of brothers and sisters. Our diocese is made up of local communities. All together, our diocese is a community of communities.

Bishop Paul also talked about how the Plenary Council encouraged us to develop leadership in a synodal style, in other words, leadership that involves the members of the community walking together in faith, addressing the issues in our

parishes and schools and all our services in a consultative way, a cooperative way, a way that includes contributions from the community. The Plenary Council referred to the leadership that is involved in governance. This includes decision-making and action to address the various areas in the life of the community. The Council emphasised that governance should be done in a consultative way and gave examples of participation in governance at the diocesan level and at the local level.

Sr Karon followed Bishop Paul, with the following considerations on forming a community of communities:

- Flourishing rather than growing.
- Diversity rather than commonality.
- Collaboration rather than competition.

The spiritual conversation at the table groups in this session focused on Our Community!

In the afternoon session, the gathering watched a video of a murmuration of starlings. Murmurations are huge groups of starlings that twist, turn, swoop and swirl across the sky in beautiful shape-shifting clouds. Small groups of starlings from the same area come together above a communal roosting site. The group grows ever larger, moving in unison in an aerial dance that casts gorgeous shapes against the waning daylight. A community of communities. The delegates were asked to discern what is their community's contribution to the whole during a period of spiritual conversation.

The final session of the Assembly concentrated on engagement. Fr Justin focused on Pope Francis who asked “are we prepared for the adventure of this journey? Or are we fearful of the unknown, preferring to take refuge in the usual excuses – it’s useless or we’ve always done it this way?” He portrayed the image of the Holy Spirit like the ancient Celtic people who saw the Holy Spirit not as a hovering white dove but as a “wild goose.” The meaning behind this peculiar choice is because they saw how the Holy Spirit has a tendency to disrupt and surprise. The Holy Spirit moves in our lives in an unexpected fashion, similar to the actions of a wild goose. Every member of a diocese has the power to say “No” to any call for change. For something positive to happen, a great many people have to say “Yes.” We do not always find it easy to imagine a different future. Ross Wheatland followed Fr Justin with a *‘Leading By Example’* presentation. He posed that we are all different shapes and sizes but we are one community – ‘a community of communities!’ We are all unique leaders and can lead by example within our community. The spiritual conversation for this session focused on the leading by example concept – delegates, as leaders, were asked to describe what their collective leadership commitment will be from their community which would encourage them to become increasingly missionary and synodal? They were also asked to comment on what supports does the diocese need to provide to your community to enable this. The Assembly concluded with a blessing from Bishop Paul and a sign of peace while Gerry sang the song, “Humble Service”.

The Diocesan Assembly was a dynamic opportunity to engage fully in our mission as the People of God of the Diocese of Ballarat. Active participation meant bringing our ideas, experiences and gifts to the table, contributing to the discernment of the focus of our Assembly - Leadership and Governance for a Missionary Synodal Church.

We thank all delegates for their participation in the Assembly. The delegates were asked to engage in listening, sharing and dreaming. To listen with open hearts and inquiring minds and dream of new possibilities for the Diocese we love. They brought their stories and also the stories, experiences and dreams of others. True conversations in the Spirit invited us to listen deeply to one another, fostering an environment where every voice is valued and heard.

We thank the facilitators for their kind acceptance in facilitating table groups at the Diocesan Assembly. Their time and commitment were very much appreciated. The facilitator’s role in the process was integral. Facilitators kept the discussion on track so that all participants were active in bringing ideas, experiences and gifts to the table, contributing to the discernment of the focus of our Assembly - Leadership and Governance for a Missionary Synodal Church.

The Pastoral Planning Panel will provide an account of the thoughts, testimonies and themes from the Assembly. The report is broken into three parts (1. Key Themes, 2. Delegates Commitments and 3. What Next) and is based on data collected from the synodal conversations at the Assembly with the Pastoral Planning Panel discerning the key themes that emerged from the data. An executive summary is provided on page 9.

**[A reflection by Rachel Allan \(Ballarat East Delegate\) can be read below:](#)**

I went to the Diocesan Assembly with the hope of finding a space for renewal - a chance to open outwards, to reimagine our faith for today. I carried with me a concern that we might fall into the temptation of looking back. There’s comfort in the familiar, in what we know and sometimes it’s easy to cling to what’s past rather than looking forward. I wondered if we’d turn inward, focused more on preserving what we’ve always done, rather than opening our hearts and minds to the possibilities ahead.

What I found, however, was something much more hopeful and spirit filled than I had anticipated. The assembly was a living, breathing moment of grace. It wasn’t about retreating to what was comfortable; it was about reimagining, discerning and flourishing. The energy in the room was palpable and the themes that emerged - hospitality, inclusivity and courage - spoke to the heart of what it means to be a Church in the world today. The desire to be open to

transformation was evident and it felt like a collective readiness to accept the challenge of change, much like the challenges Jesus presented to the people of His time.

One takeaway for me was the connectedness that ran through everything we shared. We are a community of communities and I was deeply grateful to be immersed in that reality. There was a sense of awe in being part of something much bigger than myself, something greater than any single parish or ministry. I was moved by how the Spirit was alive in the conversations and reflections shared, and there was a consistent invitation to “enlarge the space of your tent” (Isaiah 54:2). This call to expand our vision - to make room for others, for new ideas, for transformation was woven through every session, every discussion, every prayer.

There was a clear emphasis on speaking from the heart, listening deeply, and then listening again. Trust was a theme that kept coming up too; trusting each other, giving and building together, and of course, trusting in God. It was clear that we are being called to walk together, journeying as one, knowing that the Spirit is with us every step of the way. We’re not alone in this. The Church, at its heart, is “at the service of the unity of the people of God,” and we are all part of that service, committed to helping one another grow, connect and be transformed.

Another powerful theme that emerged was the call to allow the presence of the Spirit to enter our lives more fully. There was a notable awakening of the Spirit throughout the Assembly, a call to engage with one another and to actively seek ways to encounter people in our parishes and beyond. We spoke about embracing the diversity of the smaller communities we are connected to - whether through outreach, through prayer or through collaboration with the many Catholic entities in our region. It’s about recognising that we are stronger together, that our differences are gifts and that our unity is found through the opportunity for dialogue and the diversity of our experiences.

Something that resonated especially was a poem shared that gave the image of the Holy Spirit as a wild goose, rather than a dove. The Holy Spirit can certainly bring peace, but it is so often the disruption, the surprise and the unexpected that pushes us to listen more deeply for God in our lives - to spend time in discernment, to reevaluate, reconsider and reimagine. This new way of seeing the Spirit as wild and untamed, not as something we can control or confine, challenges us to stay open and flexible. The Holy Spirit doesn’t just offer comfort; it moves us beyond our familiar patterns, calling us to venture into the unknown with courage and trust. It’s as though the Spirit is whispering, as God did throughout scripture: “Do not be afraid.” We are invited to step out of the comfortable, to take risks, to embrace change. The wild goose reminds us that faith isn’t just about maintaining peace - it’s about trusting God to lead us into the unexpected, even when it’s unsettling.

Another significant and encouraging part of the Assembly was hearing about the growth of our Catholic schools. It was inspiring to hear how these schools are not only increasing in enrolment, but also becoming more central in the broader community. These schools are doing more than just offering education - they are creating spaces where faith is woven into the fabric of daily life. It is comforting to know that this is what families are seeking amongst the decline of weekend numbers. As someone who spends quite a bit of time in school settings, it is clear to me that these schools offer “Eucharistic moments” that extend beyond religious classes. Whether it’s through shared prayer, liturgical celebrations or simply offering spaces for reflection, these schools are providing opportunities for students and families to experience faith in action. The impact goes beyond the students themselves - it touches families and the wider community, helping to build a stronger sense of connection and unity.

These schools are forming the next generation of leaders, not just in academics but in values of service, compassion and faith. They have become community hubs where the bonds between families, parishes and schools are strengthened, and I sense that the growth of these schools is just the beginning of something even more transformative. It’s exciting to see how the schools are helping to cultivate a future where faith and service go hand-in-hand.

It was also truly uplifting to hear about the positive initiatives taking place across the diocese. From innovative outreach programs to collaborative efforts among parishes, there is a real sense of shared mission and purpose. I was particularly encouraged by the resilience of our communities, as they continue to come together to face challenges, celebrate joys and support one another in meaningful ways. Together, we are building a community of faith that is diverse, resilient and united in its mission to serve, grow and share the love of Christ. This is a community that is alive with possibility and I am filled with hope for the future we are creating together.

There was also a strong reminder of the words from scripture: “Do not be afraid” (Luke 12:32). As we move forward, it’s clear that God’s call to us is not one of fear but of trust. It was a call to step out, to trust in His guidance and to embrace the unknown with courage. It’s the same call we hear throughout the Gospels - do not be afraid, for the Spirit is with us. This invitation to courage was present throughout the Assembly, a reminder that we are not walking alone. It is evident that this Assembly was just the beginning of something much larger; it’s the next step forward. A step that must be synodal - walking together on ‘the way’ just as the early disciples did, stepping out of the known and embracing the unknown under the guidance of Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit. Just as the early Church emerged after His death and resurrection, we are now called to emerge in a new way, responding to the challenges of our time with the same courage, openness and faith that characterised the first followers of Jesus. We are walking on “the way,” and we are invited to journey together, trusting that the Spirit will guide us as we move forward. The journey is just beginning and I am filled with hope and excitement for what lies ahead.

# Executive Summary of the Diocesan Assembly

As previously reported on pages 5 - 8, in 2024 Bishop Paul Bird asked the Diocesan Pastoral Planning Panel to facilitate a Diocesan Assembly as part of its 150th year anniversary celebrations. 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 diocese's 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

The Pastoral Planning Panel will provide a comprehensive account of the thoughts, testimonies and themes from the Assembly. The report is broken into three parts (1. Key Themes, 2. Delegates Commitments and 3. What Next). The details contained in the report are based on data collected from the synodal conversations at the Assembly, with the Pastoral Planning Panel discerning the key themes from the captured data. Each theme also shows common "indicators" or one-line statements that emerged throughout the Assembly that support that specific theme.



# Celebrating the gifts of the communities in the diocese

## South West Coast Parish

### Managing a large Catholic Parish



A large parish is both challenging and rewarding. With six church communities, two hundred plus volunteers and a small administrative team – the balancing of faith, finances and operations is essential. A parish functions somewhat like a business, requiring organisation in liturgical services, outreach, staffing, maintenance of the many parish buildings, fundraising and financial planning. Efficiency is crucial - without losing the personal touch.



A parish is more than a place of worship; it's a vital community hub offering support, hope and belonging. Though demanding, the work is deeply fulfilling. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure the parish (i.e. community and buildings) is there for future generations.

### Mission Mass: A Beautiful Celebration of Unity

We recently introduced a monthly Mission Mass. This is a powerful reminder of the gifts found in our diverse faith community. Following Communion, a parishioner shares a short testimony, highlighting God's presence in their life. After Mass, the celebration continues with a shared meal. It has been a wonderful opportunity in recognising our diversity, cherishing our unity and growing together in fellowship, faith and love.

### Schools Unite re Sacramental Programs

With the establishment of the new parish, Frs John and Bill have recognised the importance of fostering a connection across our six primary schools. We have spent the past two years working towards a more integrated approach to planning and preparing our Sacramental Programs. This has been a great challenge and it has been met with enthusiasm.

This year all schools will collaborate in preparing students for Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Eucharist.

In partnership with Maria Forde, a well-known musician involved in faith formation, students and parents will participate in combined formation evenings, as well as a formation day for each Sacrament. The shared approach strengthens our community and enriches the faith journey of our students and families.

### Challenges ... leading to Rewards!

- We have faced 'dramatic' changes in Mass times and a reduction in the number of Masses celebrated – many parishioners have graciously changed their weekend routine with quite a number now going to a different community for Sunday Worship - as the new Mass time suits them.
- Parishioners have responded with a generosity of spirit to the challenge of leading Assemblies of the Word with Communion (mainly on weekdays) – when a celebrant is not available for Mass.
- Key people are needed for leadership in each community. We thank those who have already answered the call.
- There has been a significant change in the demographics – with many migrants gracing our parish. We welcome their enthusiasm for their faith and for our community.
- Down the track the question may be asked - how many communities can our parish maintain?

However, we journey into the future with hope in our hearts...

*The Star of the Sea shines bright in the south  
And points to the cross of her Son  
The Spirit is moving over water and country  
Holy Spirit, come enter our hearts.*

(Refrain from our new Parish Hymn – Don Stewart)



Fr John Fitzgerald - Parish Priest and Staff at South West Coast Parish

## Works of the St Vincent de Paul Society

Michael Ryan OAM, President of the Ballarat region of the St Vincent de Paul Society, spoke to parishioners during Masses at Ballan, Springbank, Gordon and Clarkes Hill recently. Michael raised awareness of the “Good Works” of Vinnies. Michael advised that Vinnies provides assistance to all people regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions and spoke of the “hands on” assistance they provide.



Michael’s presentation included the following points:

**Mission:** Vinnies is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society. About the only thing we don’t ask people about is their religion.

**What do we do:** Our main work is to provide families with assistance to meet basic everyday needs including food, household supplies, toiletries and baby products. We can and do assist with other things like electricity and gas bills, emergency travel costs and medicines. We offer support and advice about access to other assistance available through other agencies, eg. homelessness, family violence.

**Scale of need:** In the Ballarat Diocese from January – June 2024, \$380,000 was distributed assisting 8800 adults and children. In the Ballarat region from July - November 30, 2024, \$235,000 was distributed. The 2024-2025 annual budget is \$730,000. January – March 2025 is one of the busiest times, with post-Christmas and back to school expenses.

**Sources of income:** Vinnies shops - there are five Vinnies shops in our region, which rely almost totally on generous volunteers and goods donors. Those who seek assistance are not all Catholics – “Faith without good works is dead.”

**Appeals and fundraising.** The Back to School Appeal is ongoing as are other appeals – see <https://www.vinnies.org.au/vic/donate/current-appeals> for more information. You can place a donation on the collection plate at Mass also.

The cost of living crisis is real. People were also reminded to contact St Vincent de Paul if they know of anyone local who needs assistance.

## REST IN PEACE



**Sr Lesley Dickinson** died suddenly but peacefully at Mercy Place, Ballarat on Wednesday, January 29, 2025. Sr Lesley had been a secondary teacher since 1953 at Sacred Heart College, Ballarat East. Her other ministries included Bursar General and office duties at the Sisters of Mercy Congregation, secretary to the director at Aquinas College, Ballarat and Secretary to the Rector at Corpus Christi College, Melbourne.

*Sr Lesley is remembered as a woman of deep faith, a devoted Archivist for the former Ballarat East Congregation, as well as her work for St Mary’s Parish in Geelong.*

*May she rest in peace in the loving embrace of her God whom she served so faithfully.*

Sisters of Mercy, South B Community Leadership

It is with great sadness that we share the news of **Peter Kerwan's** unexpected death on February 2, 2025. Peter was a well-known and deeply valued member of the Catholic Education community in the Ballarat Diocese for many years. His contributions spanned across his time as a teacher at St Patrick’s and Loreto Colleges, his work at ACU and the University of Ballarat and his dedicated service at the Catholic Education Office as Executive Officer to the Director and later as HR Manager. Over his thirteen years with CEB, Peter provided support, guidance and a listening ear to many, both within the office and the wider school community - support that for some continued beyond his retirement in 2020.



To those who knew Peter well, he was the epitome of the fullness of life, always smiling, a devoted husband to Jacinta, a loving father to Stephanie and Rebecca and their partners and a cherished friend to many. Peter was generous with his time for others and is remembered for his warmth, encouragement and love for community, golf, and his beloved Magpies. May he rest in peace.

*First published in the Ballarat Diocesan Catholic Education Office Newsletter February 5, 2025*

# Bourke Family Commemorative Mass

The Bourke name is synonymous with and iconic in Koroit, via Mickey Bourke's Koroit Hotel where Ellen and her late husband Mickey were hosts with glee and flare. Mickey Bourke's Hotel was the 'must go' to place for punters attending the Warrnambool May Races.

Friends of the Bourke family from the local area and Melbourne took the initiative to arrange a commemorative Mass to celebrate, give thanks and remember the Bourke family on the eve of the Jerricho Cup, November 30, 2024 at Infant Jesus Church, Koroit.

Fifty people attended the Mass offered in honour of the following deceased persons:

Michael "Mickey" Bourke 16/4/1924 - 26/5/2009

Mary Therese Fiorini Lowell (nee Bourke) 19/9/1925 - 3/4/2020

Francis Xavier Fiorini Lowell 26/5/1935 - 14/4/2021

Elizabeth Jeanette Stephens (nee Bourke) 24/11/1931 - 3/3/2024

Sheila Giuliano (nee Bourke) 18/1/1927 - 8/5/2000

Concelebrants were Fr Lawrie O'Toole, well known in the Western District and Fr Joe Giacobbe from Melbourne, who has been give the sobriquet in racing circles as the "punting priest." Fr Joe has known Ellen and Mickey Bourke since 1972, as Founding Members of Doxa Youth Foundation, an organisation established to provide educational and recreational opportunities to disadvantaged children.



Mary and Frank Fiorini Lowell joined the Doxa band wagon twenty five years ago. The theme of the Mass was people are only dead when they are forgotten - to live in the hearts of the people we leave behind is not to die.

Accordingly, Ellen Bourke lit the Memory Candle. Symbols of Mickey's life were presented at the Offertory Procession, Racing Colours, Stock Saddle, Rosary Beads, Infant of Prague Statue and the standard punters trademark cash in a money clip.

The readings focused on living the message – the Old Testament Book of Ecclesiasticus "let us now praise our ancestors". They were wise in their words meaning living according to good values.

The classic Gospel of St Matthew - as long as you did it to one of the least of these brothers of mine you did it to me.

Fr Joe's homily summarised the readings in the words of Fr Anthony de Mello, "I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day of the week" - the people we are remembering lived the Christian message to respect and help our fellow human beings.

A perpetual plaque, funded by friends of the Bourke family, was unveiled at the Mass, which will be affixed in public view at Infant Jesus Church, Koroit to acknowledge the contribution of the Bourke family to Koroit and the wider community.

Ellen Bourke and Brian Castanelli delivered eulogies and acknowledged the assistance of Fr Bill Lowry, parishioner Aileen Culhane, Sacristan Betty Bishop and music co-ordinator Simon Hogan, for their contribution to celebrate the Mass.

In true Irish Catholic tradition, after Mass people gathered at Mickey Bourke's Hotel to raise a glass to remember the life and times of good Christian people.

*Fr Joe Giacobbe and Brian Castanelli*



# Celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week

In celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week (February 1-7), the Ballarat Interfaith Network hosted a Flag Raising Event on Monday, February 3, 2025 to celebrate religious and spiritual diversity across the city. Harmony Week, an initiative of the United Nations, was founded in 2011, following the recommendation of King Abdullah II of Jordan at the time. The aim is to bring together people of all religions, and those of no religious persuasion, to recognise that our common core belief in harmonious living as members of the worldwide family of humanity, far outweighs our differences. Building bridges of understanding and respect between people of different religions and spiritual persuasions is also a core mission of the Ballarat Interfaith Network.

Members of various faiths and religions, which included Bishop Paul Bird, convened at the front of St Peter's Anglican Church to raise the flag for harmony. The event began with the local acknowledgement of World Interfaith Harmony Week and saw the organisation's symbolic flag raised, featuring the colours white and blue representing spirituality and Ballarat respectively, a central dark blue circle representing the earth and orange stars for harmony.



A welcome was given by Ballarat Mayor Cr Tracey Hargreaves, with President Elham Jamali serving as Master of Ceremonies for the event. Mayor Hargreaves said it is about promoting harmony and understanding between people of different religions. "It's to help people understand that our similarities outweigh our differences," she said. "It's a reminder to everyone, especially with the unsettling problems happening around the world now, that we should be concentrating on our similarities and unity. We're all members of the one family, of humankind. It starts with community, that understanding."

Students from Damascus College Ballarat, Loreto College Ballarat, Phoenix P-12 Community Ballarat and St Patrick's College Ballarat shared their insights, commitments and hopes towards building a peaceful, unified and accepting society.

Keynote speaker Dean Berger from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints invited us to reflect on how we can each change our homes, schools and workplaces in a positive direction as well highlighting aspects of the youth presentations. Emmaus Catholic Primary School Mt Clear shared the Song of Peace for the celebration.

*Adapted from Ballarat Interfaith Network Facebook Page*

## WALKING TOGETHER

*The recent Diocesan Assembly encouraged us to think about what we are wanting and needing here at St Augustine's Parish in Creswick. We are so blessed to have the MacKillop Centre (the reimagined vacant presbytery) which allows us to have a cuppa after our monthly Liturgy of the Word and Communion. Our plans for the Centre are multifaceted including the development of a Spiritual Space for our parish.*

*The Assembly's theme of Synodality (walking together) has led us to purchasing an AED (automated external defibrillator), with the wellbeing of our 'ageing' parishioners in mind – there are very few 'spring chickens' in our congregation! We were fortunate to have Bernie Jordan, a local paramedic, run a training session for us recently.*

*There were nineteen attendees, including a representative from the neighbouring St John's Anglican Parish. Besides the AED training, participants learned the importance of listing any medications they may be taking on the Health App on their mobile phone – which is easily accessible to a medical professional as it is not password locked. In the spirit of synodality, we have started to act on the hopes and dreams that have been expressed by our St Augustine's family, as we continue to nurture the 'kin-dom' of God in our community.*



Roland Kaval

# Transformed Learning and Play Spaces

What was previously a dark and dated hallway at St Michael's Primary School in Daylesford has been transformed into an open, welcoming and flexible learning and play space. The specially designed space provides an opportunity for students to undertake imaginary play or independent learning, while the windows connecting the space and classrooms mean children are still supervised by their teachers.

It also provides an opportunity for students from different classes to learn and play together, creating greater opportunity for social connection across the various year levels. Importantly, for students with additional sensory requirements, the space is designed with soft lighting, natural colours and materials, quiet acoustics and various levels and spaces to explore.

St Michael's Principal, Tim Hogan, said the new spaces were being utilised by students and teachers. "We're already seeing the difference that these new spaces have made to our students' learning," he said. "The focus is on improving outcomes for students and providing additional opportunities for them to thrive at school."

The overall project also included the revitalisation of the school's library and a specialised STEM room. The project was made possible with \$2 million from the Federal Government's Capital Grants Program and an additional \$186,000 from the school. Bishop Paul Bird and Catherine King, Member for Ballarat, joined with the St Michael's school community to officially open and bless their refurbished learning spaces on February 7, 2025.

"This innovative project has transformed an under-utilised hallway into a fit-for-purpose area to support creative and flexible learning," said Catherine King. "We are so proud to support it with \$2 million from the Albanese Government's Capital Grants Program. St Michael's is a wonderful local school and this project is a great example of adapting and listening to the needs of students to support their learning."



This article is based on a media release from the office of Member for Ballarat. Catherine King, MP.  
First published in: <https://thewombatpost.com.au/transformed-learning-and-play-spaces-at-st-michaels-primary/>



## The pilgrim's journey of hope

The pilgrim's journey of hope on the path of peace may be long and tortuous. In the 'Pilgrim's Progress' (John Bunyan 1678-1684), Christian seeks the Celestial City. His journey takes him across the Valleys of Humiliation and the Shadow of Death and escapes prison. Christian, with Hope, eventually is admitted to the City. Central to the Christian tradition of the pilgrimage is the veneration of relics. The Catholic Diocese of Ballarat collection holds a significant number of first-class relics (a selection of which are exhibited in the gallery). These come in different forms. The reliquaries, monstrances or small sealed techas hold first-class relics. Other relics are preserved in altar stones. Relics bestow grace and are sometimes carried through one's journey. Relics

are treated with special care and vigilance to ensure preservation and veneration, invoking a sense of respect and reverence in the pilgrims.

The handling of relics is regulated by the Instruction, "Relics in the Church: Authenticity and Preservation" Rome 2017. Some third-class relics are carried on one's person as scapulars. This tradition is particularly connected with the Order of the Carmelites and Marian devotion. Some pilgrims carry Catholic medals or medallions, a tradition rooted in antiquity. Those carrying medals receive graces, a spiritual enrichment, and are usually worn for protection by pilgrims. The medal reminds the pilgrim of the journey and the purpose of the passage, connecting them to their faith and the grace bestowed by relics. (CBD 110: This converted tortoise-shell cigarette case contains multiple medals, scapulars and prayers. It dates from the early to mid-1900s and was carried for personal protection.)

Dr. Malcolm Borg - Diocesan Archivist  
Our Diocesan Community - March 2025

# More than a building

Emmanuel College Warrnambool welcomed dignitaries to officially open the new Edmund Rice Centre on Friday, March 7, 2025.

Housing the 9@RICE Program and the entire Year 9 cohort, the \$16million centre features modern learning spaces including all classrooms, labs, technology and a full sized basketball court and auditorium.

Principal Peter Morgan was thrilled to welcome guests and said "Today is about more than a building. Today is about recognising and celebrating what is possible when a community comes together with a goal and the drive to bring it to life."

The Edmund Rice Centre was officially opened by Senator for Victoria, Raff Ciccone and blessed by Bishop Paul Bird.

The official opening also included honouring local businessman and philanthropist Colin McKenna who had a space named in his memory, The Colin McKenna Auditorium.



The opening of the Edmund Rice Centre marks the beginning of a new chapter for Emmanuel College, with all year levels and learning now delivered to more than 1300 students on 'One Campus' which borders Botanic Road, Ardlie Street, Hopetoun Road and Crawley Street.

*Peter Morgan - Principal  
Glen Watson Photography*



## PASTORAL SUPPORT GROUP

*In the later part of each year, the Pastoral Support Group chooses a couple of days to meet in beautiful Halls Gap to pray and reflect and to encourage and support each other.*

*Ten people were able to participate in 2024. The time began with an enjoyable shared BBQ meal. Towards sunset, Margaret Hill led a very meaningful service of light in the context of acknowledging the country on which we gathered and its significance to the local Indigenous people.*

*Our guest speaker was one of our own group, Anna Schlooz. Anna skilfully led us through the five stages of Ignatian spirituality. This was an ambitious task but through activities using our creative skills and artistic abilities, she was able to lead us into meditation and prayer. So, in one day Anna gave us enough skills and methods for using this form of prayer to explore later in our lives. She did marvellous work with us and it was most appreciated.*

*We hope to continue these gatherings in 2025 and we welcome anyone who would like to join in. We would like to acknowledge with gratitude the continued support and encouragement given to this group by Bishop Paul.*



Sr Maree Holt csb



## WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

*World Day of Prayer is a worldwide ecumenical movement of many faith traditions, whose followers come together to observe a common day of prayer each year on the first Friday in March. Throughout the entire day, we collectively pray all over the world, beginning with the first sunrise and ending at the last sunset. Our prayers follow the sun's path around the globe. WDP's motto is "Informed prayer leads to prayerful action." Through World Day of Prayer, we affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence in the world. The program for the service is prepared well in advance from one focus country of the world. Each service has an advertised theme and involves Bible readings, prayers, songs and a reflection and is attended by women and men. The theme for 2025 was "I made you wonderful" prepared by the people of Cook Islands.*

*Amongst the celebrations throughout the diocese, a crowd of around twenty people gathered at St Mary's in Birchip for World Day of Prayer (pictured above right). Many thanks to Dianne Lehmann and Maureen Donnellon for the organising of the day and Marian McAuliffe for being the guest speaker. Marian presented an informative talk about a class of drama students that she accompanied to Alice Springs to entertain at schools around Alice and how the cultural experience went both ways for the Indigenous students as well as Marian's students. The service was followed by afternoon tea in the Belleville Room. Another gathering of fourteen people was held in St John's Anglican Church in Dunolly, which included members of the Catholic, Uniting and Anglican Churches (pictured above left) who joined in the World Day of Prayer program.*

<https://www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org/wdp/>

## P2P Fishing Excursion

*During February, the Year 10 Paddock to Plate class at Mercy Regional College Camperdown took a break from the classroom for a fishing trip to nearby Lake Bullen Merri. The excursion aimed to provide an opportunity for students to engage in local areas where food is grown or, in this case, caught.*

*The weather couldn't have been better, with warm and sunny conditions making for a peaceful afternoon of fishing. Students had the chance to cast their lines into the lake, waiting for a bite. While we got a few nibbles, unfortunately, no fish were caught - but the experience was still a huge success, with everyone enjoying the chance to be out in nature and for some, learning something new.*

*A big thank you goes to Shane and Troy for organising the buses to and from the lake and to Pete for coordinating the rods and equipment. We look forward to more outdoor learning opportunities in the future!*

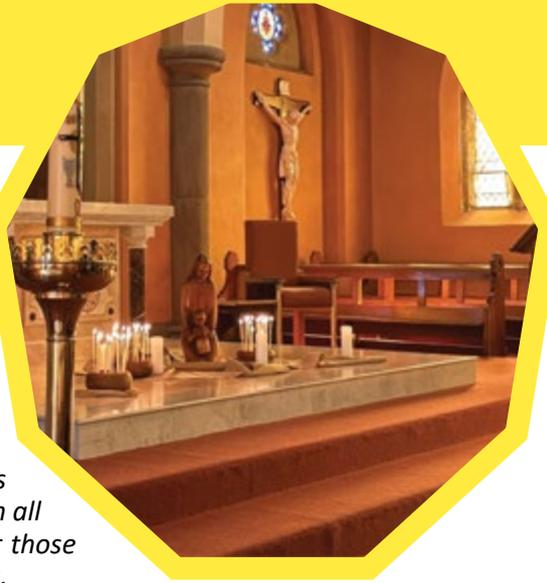
Sharon Gillett - Principal



# "Holding the Light"

*"Holding the Light" – Remembering Victims and Survivors of Family Violence*

*This ecumenical service offered an opportunity to remember and mourn those who have been killed as a result of domestic violence, to stand in solidarity with victim survivors and to reflect and commit ourselves to addressing the causes of violence in our communities. The service was held on Tuesday, December 10, 2024 at St Alipius Church, Ballarat East at 5.00pm. December 10 was the UN Human Rights Day, concluding the 16 days of Activism against gender-based violence campaign from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women). This ecumenical service named the dimensions and dynamics of the serious problem of violence in our society. We named the God present in and through all our efforts to create lives free from violence. We sought to hold the light for those who are in dark places and for those whose lives are emerging from darkness.*



*Fr Justin Driscoll, Parish Priest of the Ballarat East, Gordon and Bungaree Parishes, welcomed all to the service. Taking part in the liturgy were representatives from the Ballarat Central Uniting Church, St Paul's Church Bakery Hill, Ballarat Central Uniting Church, St Peter's Anglican Church and Buninyong Uniting Church.*

*Emily Clarke, Principal of St Alipius Parish School, introduced the subject of family and domestic violence and its enormous toll on all our communities. She stressed that each domestic violence case represents a real person. A person who had hopes and plans, talents and skills, memories and knowledge and, importantly, who loved and was loved by family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances. The Call to Worship was lead by Rev Lauleti Tu'inauvai, the Introduction by Sr Elisa Helen CSC and the Naming of those who have died by Mary Hollick and Geoff Le Marshal. A Reading from the Psalms was proclaimed by Rev Michael O'Brien with a Response to the Pain and Litany of Remembrance lead by Rev Marcia Eveland.*

*Jocelyn Bignold, CEO of McAuley Community Services for Women was the guest speaker. 'Holding the light' was guided by Fr Justin, where each member of the congregation was invited to come forward to light a candle, a symbol of hope. Rev Lauleti Tu'inauvai offered the closing prayers with Bishop Paul Bird giving the final blessing. All members of the community were invited to gather for this service.*

## Thank you for your time!

A big thank you to Jeanette Smith, volunteer at the Diocesan Archives. Jeanette retired at the end of last year and it is essential to recognise her invaluable contributions to our archives over the past two years. Collaborating closely with the previous Archivist, Dr Samantha Fabry, and myself, she has meticulously worked on preparing Tyvek vestment covers for our collection.

Her skill in implementing conservation methods and materials has significantly enhanced our storage processes. Thanks to Jeanette's efforts, we have successfully processed 70% of the collection, including a remarkable array of gold thread vestments from the 19th and early 20th centuries, primarily from the famous Roman-Italian makers such as Tanfani & Bertarelli and Gammarelli.

Moreover, the archive is currently undertaking a critical assessment that builds upon the invaluable insights from the 2016 Significance Assessment Report, Fr John Rogan's findings, and newly archived documentation. Jeanette's dedication has laid a strong foundation for the future of our collection. Thanks Jeanette!



*Dr Malcolm Borg - Diocesan Archivist*

## A Heartwarming Performance for Mercy Aged Care Residents



The Trinity College Colac 2025 music program has begun with a delightful and memorable visit to Mercy Place Aged Care Colac as students Indee, Mason and Charlie took to the stage to entertain residents with a lively and diverse performance. The group showcased an impressive mix of folk, classical, musical theatre and even a bit of Elvis magic, offering something for everyone to enjoy.

Residents joined in the fun throughout the performance, clapping, singing along and calling out song requests, creating an interactive and joyful atmosphere. It was clear that the afternoon brought smiles and a sense of connection to all in attendance, as the music brought back fond memories and sparked lively conversations.

For students, this visit was an invaluable opportunity to build confidence and hone their performance skills in a real-world setting. The experience of performing in front of such a welcoming audience is one that will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact on their growth as artists. For the residents, the afternoon offered a chance to unwind and enjoy some lively entertainment. The music provided a sense of joy and community, reminding everyone of the power of music to bring people together.

We look forward to more visits like this throughout the year, where residents can continue to enjoy wonderful performances and students can continue to grow in their craft.

*Everdina Pannekeet - Development & Communications Leader*



## A touch of reality

*Parishioners at St Alipius, Ballarat East were delighted at Christmas Eve Mass where they were treated to a touch of reality in the nativity story. The congregation stood in awe as the sound of Christmas hymns echoed through the church and the doors opened. In a humble procession, Mary, cloaked in a simple white robe sitting astride a donkey, was carried down the centre aisle.*

*Adults and children alike watched in silent wonder, as the living nativity scene unfolded before them, drawing them into the miracle of Christ's birth. Donkeys are mentioned a number of times in the Bible and had a key role in the life of Jesus, so for one to be part of the Christmas Eve Mass was fitting.*

*Fr Justin Driscoll, Parish Priest, celebrated Mass with the church filled to capacity.*

## BEGINNING OF YEAR MASS AND CELEBRATION

On Wednesday, February 12, St Mary's School, Clarke's Hill was blessed with a beautiful Beginning of Year Mass celebrated by Fr Matt Restall at the serene Kirks Reservoir. The Mass was followed by a delightful shared meal, where Fr Matt surprised us all by showcasing his culinary skills at the pizza oven! His delicious homemade pizzas were a hit, adding a fun and tasty twist to our gathering. It was truly a night to remember, filled with faith, fellowship, and fantastic food. What a wonderful way to kick off our school year together!

Clare Scanlon - Principal



## YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE



After years of dedicated service to the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat, Mark Bromley retired on November 7, 2024 marking the thirty-sixth anniversary of his starting date. Mark has had a number of roles within that time starting as Diocesan Accountant, with Jim Ryan as Diocesan Business Manager. In the mid 1990's Mark kept the role of Diocesan Accountant as well as taking up the role of Manager for the Catholic Development Fund. In August 2006, Mark was appointed as Diocesan Business Manager as well as Manager for the CDF. Following his retirement from the role of Business Manager, Mark took on a parish based role to assist priests and parish staff with the many facets of parish life.

Mark has been a long-time advocate for the clergy, assisting with the instigation of many benefits and schemes for the clergy. The clergy car scheme has been particularly successful. Mark is also very passionate to ensure that sick and retired clergy are well catered for. He has been a forerunner with options for priests regarding parish and diocesan business.

In his role as Diocesan Business Manager, Mark sat on several boards/commissions which included Bishop's Advisory Council, Diocesan Finance Council, Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation, Diocesan Building Commission and Diocesan Risk Management. Mark brought many skills and sound advice to these important functions of the diocese. Mark's efficient leadership and management in all areas of the diocese is to be commended.

Fr Kevin Maloney (pictured with Mark above) paid tribute to Mark at a celebration to acknowledge his retirement. Fr Kevin thanked Mark's family for allowing him to travel all over the diocese to support all parishes, from the Murray to the Sea. Fr Kevin also acknowledged Mark's role during the Victorian State Government Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse Cases by Religious and Non-government Organisations and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. He recognised Mark's support of the clergy and wished him a happy and well-deserved retirement.

Mark responded to Kevin by thanking him, acknowledging the good parts of his role and recognising, that at times, it has also been difficult. He hoped that some of the changes that have been set in motion may be implemented in the future for the benefit of the diocese.

Mark has shown great care for each person he encountered and has been committed to ensuring that each one is treated fairly. The diocese has farewelled a valued colleague and friend. We will miss his knowledge of people and places and the ability he had to connect with those working in our parishes.

All of us in the diocese extend our thanks to Mark for his service and tireless work and we wish him every blessing in his retirement.



## Project Compassion 2025 Launch

Social Justice Leaders and supporters from the Central Zone Secondary Colleges and Cathedral Parish Primary Schools attended the 5.00pm Mass on Sunday, March 2, at St Patrick's Cathedral to launch Project Compassion 2025 and be commissioned as Caritas Ambassadors.

Through partnering with Caritas Australia, the school communities are committed to being people of hope, bringing Jesus' message of compassion, dignity and concern for the poor into the world today.

Bishop Paul Bird celebrated Mass and blessed the communities represented who generously offered themselves to promote this year's PROJECT COMPASSION campaign to bring about a more just world for all future generations.

This year, the theme is 'Unite Against Poverty this Lent'. The theme invites you to put your compassion into action this Lent. As individuals we can help others, but when we come together through Project Compassion, our good becomes great. Our combined kindness grows. And when we unite with each other – and with people living in poverty – we can create BIG, lasting change.

Sally Murphy, Caritas Australia's Diocesan Director Coordinator and Resource Specialist, was the guest speaker. Read below an extract from her address:

*I feel proud to be working for an agency who values the importance of working alongside community members to amplify their voice and raise awareness through our aid and development programs. Last financial year alone, we were able to support over 1 million people directly, reaching nearly 1.8 million additional people across 36 countries.*

*I am here to invite you to participate in our Project Compassion campaign for 2025. This year, Project*

*Compassion encourages us to Unite Against Poverty this Lent to support the world's most vulnerable communities.*

*We have three inspiring stories, where because of your efforts, our partners have been able to connect with community members in Samoa, Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work towards a better future. Toefuata'iga and her school community have fresh, safe water to drink in Samoa, enabling them to focus on their education and dream of brighter futures. I invite you to take time this Lent to learn more about Toefuata'iga, Lam and Irene by visiting our website and engaging with our resources.*

*I invite you to think, how you can Unite Against Poverty this Lent? As a school, will you take part in The Big Walk for Water or perhaps as a parish you will participate in The Long Walk for Water? Or you will hold a fundraiser movie night? We have various fundraising initiatives in which EVERYONE can get involved. Along with our new fundraising initiatives we have also reduced the weekly envelopes to be one envelope for all of Lent. This decision was made in part in response to our commitment to caring for the earth.*

*On behalf of Caritas Australia, we would like to thank the Diocese of Ballarat for your continued support. It is due to your efforts that we have been able to improve the quality of life for so many people.*

*We hope that you are inspired to take action and deepen your connection to our mission of compassion, justice and dignity. Thank you for your support this Project Compassion. We look forward to seeing how your donations can change the life of someone from our global family.*

*Thank you for your time and for uniting against poverty with Caritas Australia.*

Jillian Hogbin - Caritas Australia, Diocesan Director, Ballarat



## ResearchED

On March 15, Emma Rutherford, Holly Southwell and Breeana Wade from DOBCEL presented at Australia's biggest ResearchED event held at Ballarat Clarendon College. As Education Officers for DOBCEL, they have worked with La Trobe's SOLAR Lab to transform literacy instruction – scaling a grassroots project into a 10-year, system-wide strategy.

Their session highlighted how expert training, strong data practices and targeted support are driving real change in some of Victoria's most disadvantaged schools. ResearchED is about connecting teachers with research and researchers.

DOBCEL Communications  
Our Diocesan Community - March 2025

# CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

On the weekend of March 8 and 9, 2025 the community of Timboon came together to connect with the past, enjoy the present and prepare for the future. A celebration of 150 years. The highlight on Sunday morning was Mass celebrated with all members of the community by Fr Eugene McKinnon. Fifty years ago on May 23, Fr Eugene was ordained in Timboon at the town hall. The Sunday gathering recalled the same spirit of celebration.

## Fr Eugene McKinnon reflects on fifty years as a priest:

In 1965, I left Timboon High to board at St Patrick's College Ballarat, with the intention of entering the priesthood. Ten years and a few months later I was ordained in Timboon. Is that where it begins? No. My beginning was in Terang and for the first stage of my journey, I enjoyed life with my parents, Frank and Etty, and siblings, Noel, Shane, Marian, Enid and Harvey, on their dairy farm at Port Campbell. While I was at St Patrick's, learning Latin was my main aim. In 1967, I went to Corpus Christi Seminary in Werribee. The impact of Vatican II was filtering through seminary life. Numbers entering were high, but so were departures. A multitude of characters added enjoyment to the atmosphere. Many monastic elements were part of the curriculum. Pastoral time was introduced as part of our formation and lectures were exciting with noted academics adding to our speakers. Questions could be raised and various talents were explored.



The Church into which I was ordained was strong in practice and numbers. Ballarat was a diocese envied by others because of our pastoral programs, missionary outreach and talented clergy. It was a time when the world at large became more liberal. Catholic practice was no longer directed by what the priest said. People made their own decisions. The 1950s had seen new parishes and schools being formed. Nevertheless, from this high, a change of direction saw vocations to religious life and priesthood decline. When the horror of rampant abuse started to be revealed, to continue as an active Catholic, priest or not, was a challenge in the light of so many victims and incidents.

As time passed by, because of a shortage of priests, with very few Australian born vocations, the Australian Church has been served by the arrival of overseas priests. As these new priests come to terms with a rural diocese in secular Australia, there are differing expectations and cultural matters which take time to work through. Thankfully, we have priests for the sacraments.

Accompanying the decline in vocations, numbers attending Mass have also been steadily decreasing. Parishioners in smaller numbers remain faithful. Those parishioners are to be commended as parishes change size and shape as the diocese tries to meet many needs.

Schools have flourished. The assistance of Federal grants has seen buildings, professionalism and numbers increase and stay strong as the Catholic ethos is shared. The need for a priest by various people and areas of our diocese is ever on demand. I spent four months in Beechworth Parish, to begin my retired status as a priest. It was a welcome change of pace and allowed me to plan where and when I would be involved in the future.



On my geographic return to Ballarat, I delightedly moved into a unit, which I now call home. It is good to be in a place that is adequate, comfortable and peaceful. Supplying in parishes is an ongoing need. Priests take holidays, move or encounter health problems, and so there is often a vacant spot to be filled. My preference to serve is in the further out places, as I spent much of my career looking at the other side of the coin and know their difficulties. I schedule a gap weekend every so often. In fifty years, I have worked in many of the parishes and it is great to revisit places and renew acquaintances. Generally, I try to help supply in parishes that are distant or struggling financially. I jokingly said to a previous bishop, with the payment for supply, perhaps we might be better off if we went on permanent supply.

Thank God I am not overwhelmed with calls to the hospital or funerals. Each day I have time to follow a regular routine. I enjoy being in Ballarat with the other senior clergy. However, my golfing partner, Barry Ryan is missing. In fact, golfing priests are a diminishing cohort. I am still able to make the other diocesan tournaments. Retirement, nearly a year on, is humbling as I reflect on the past. Life is good, and I enjoy "not doing" if that makes sense. My priesthood has been varied and rewarding, as I have found the Spirit of God in so many people and places. Deo Gratias. Thanks for so many blessings.

*Katrina Currell - St Joseph's Parish Timboon provided the photos - Top: Fr Eugene's Sign of Peace with his parents at his Ordination; Middle: Celebrating Mass at Timboon on March 9, 2025; Fr Eugene McKinnon shaking hands with Fr Matthew, Anglican Minister.*



## Rain on the Rock!

Jodi Toering, a teacher at Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School Wendouree, has just released her newest picture storybook, 'Rain on the Rock'!

This stunning book captures the magic of Itjanu, the rainy season at Uluru and Kata Tjuta - a time when waterholes fill, creatures stir and the desert bursts into life. With breathtaking illustrations by Valerie Brumby and deep collaboration with the Anangu community, this story beautifully weaves together language, culture, art and the power of nature.

Jodi's love for the Australian landscape shines through in every page, inspired by her deep connection to the land and her own childhood on a wheat farm in the Mallee. After six years of collaboration, the book was officially launched at the Cultural Centre overlooking Uluru, where it was embraced by the Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation and Walkatjara Art.

Congratulations, Jodi! Our Lady Help of Christian's Community are very proud of you.

'Rain on the Rock' is a must-read for anyone who loves Australia's rich landscapes, stories and cultures.

Copies can be purchased at <https://www.joditoeringauthor.com/>

OLHC Wendouree Facebook

## Missionaries of God's Love (MGL) Sisters visit Warrnambool

*The Star of the Sea Parish South West Coast was blessed with a Parish Mission led by seven MGL Sisters mid last year. The Sisters travelled down in a mini bus from their house in Canberra and spent ten days sharing their Joy, Hope & Love in the Lord with our community.*

*Their visit included sessions with students at our schools, daily prayer and exposition, participation in our Masses and bible study, visits to our aged care facilities, a multi-cultural celebration, a one day retreat, lots of socialising and even a day of being followed around by a Sydney Morning Herald Journalist. It was, to say the least, a whirl wind visit.*

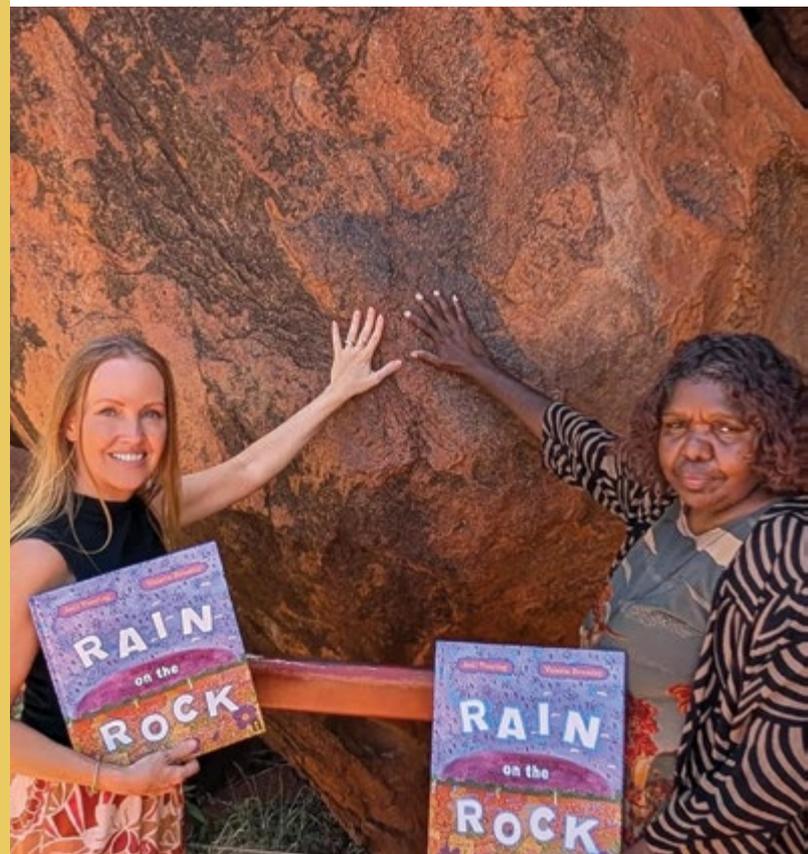
*The effects of the Parish Mission have persisted beyond the Sister's stay. A small group of parishioners gathered to unpack what happened over that ten days, what it was that the Sisters brought to us that was so special that we wanted to try and hold on to.*

*An outcome of those initial talks is a monthly 'Spirit of Mission Mass' where our aim is expressed in the motto 'Reclaiming Joy, Building Community, Sharing Hope'.*

*On the third Sunday of the month at the 6.00pm Mass at St Joseph's Church Warrnambool we add a few extra bits to the regular Mass. Hospitality in the form of a light supper is available after Mass. These simple additions have been warmly adopted by parishioners and are making good links between our multicultural communities.*

*We are forever grateful to the MGL Sisters for the Joy (and more) that they share. If you want to know more about the MGLs visit their website <https://www.mglsisters.org> and perhaps consider supporting them. If you would like to participate in some of their fruits – perhaps join us on a third Sunday at St Joseph's Church in Warrnambool.*

Katherine Stewart  
Star of the Sea Parish South West Coast



# Celebrating World Day of Consecrated Life



*Catholic Religious Australia marked the World Day of Consecrated Life (February 2) by celebrating the lives of consecrated women and men, giving thanks for their generosity in the day-to-day challenges of ecclesial living and missionary service to Church and society.*

*Instituted by Saint John Paul II in 1997, the World Day for Consecrated Life invites us to offer prayerful support for all those who have committed themselves to consecrated life.*

**Sr Jacinta Rice csb reflects on living life as a consecrated religious below:**

*My name is Sr Jacinta Rice. I am a Brigidine Sister living in Horsham. The following story is a brief survey of my life as a consecrated religious.*

*I became familiar with the Brigidine Sisters from the time they came to Murtoa to instruct children each month and later in the Horsham Convent Boarding School. Life in the boarding school prepared me to decide to enter religious life but particularly through the example of the Sisters themselves.*

*I entered the Brigidine Novitiate in Malvern with six other postulants on January 31, 1952 in preparation for St Brigid's Day on February 1. At the Novitiate I was prepared for my vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, studied the Brigidine Constitutions and spirituality, teaching methods in religious education and started my teacher training. Our charism is Strength and Gentleness in Love and the Eucharist is central to our lives, guidelines from Bishop Daniel Delany who refounded the Sisters of St Brigid in 1807 to assist the Irish poor, deprived of education through persecution. I also became familiar with St Brigid as a woman of the land, a peacemaker, friend of the poor, hearthwoman of hospitality, woman of compassion, a protector, a leader and a woman with a sense of humour who adapted to her time. Over many years I wrote poetry about her to share with friends and led a St Brigid's Well group. In the spirit of our Congregation, I also continued to live the inspiration of Bishop Daniel Delany to act for social justice especially for refugees, women and regional people.*

*After my religious profession in 1954, I returned to Horsham and graduated as a trained teacher. I taught at Ss Michael and John's Primary School, began studies at Melbourne University by correspondence and was loaned to Geelong to teach at Clonard College for its first year.*

*From 1961 - 1976, I taught in a kindergarten and several secondary Brigidine schools in the four Dioceses of Victoria and finished my Bachelor of Arts degree. One of the highlights of those years was being a Religious Assistant to the Young Christian Students in the Sandhurst Diocese and meeting with the other adult leaders every fortnight, reflecting on the gospel in relation to current issues and our lives, in better enabling our students to do the same.*

*After a year of Pastoral Studies in 1977, I began working with migrants and refugees in Adult Migrant Education (AMES). I spent four years teaching English as a Foreign Language to civil servants in Thailand as an Australian Volunteer Abroad, returned to Australia to continue teaching in AMES, followed by training as a spiritual director with Campion Ignatian Spirituality Centre, Kew in retreat work, as well as adult faith formation and retreat ministry in parishes, once again across Victoria. Finally, in 2009, I returned to the Wimmera, home of my childhood and have lived in Horsham for the past sixteen years. I returned to this parish as a parish associate for adult faith formation and although retired now, still volunteer.*

*My journey as a consecrated religious has been a challenging and faith-filled journey with many friends across cultures and races and from kinder to adults in education, hopefully empowering people to use their gifts in Church and society today.*

## Clean Up Australia Day

St Mary's Primary School Hamilton participated in *Clean Up Australia Day* on Friday, February 28, 2025. The official date is March 2 but schools usually take part on the Friday before.

Thank you to the Sustainability Leaders for organising the whole school to help our environment.

*Terrielynn Groves - Principal*

Our Diocesan Community - March 2025





## 'Who We Are' and 'How We Are' session for First-Year Early Career Teachers (ECTs)

As part of DOBCEL's commitment to supporting the professional growth of early career teachers, a session titled "Who We Are and How We Are" was held recently for first-year Early Career Teachers (ECTs).

Facilitators from the Catholic Identity and Mission, Learning and Teaching and Wellbeing Teams led informative sessions on student engagement, understanding learners, inclusive practices, teacher wellbeing and also a session titled "What Makes Our Schools Catholic?," which sparked meaningful discussions among participants.

Matthew Byrne, DOBCEL Deputy Director of Catholic Education, welcomed the new teachers and provided an insightful overview of the diocese's operations. Matt Woodley, from the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), introduced participants to the VIT Code of Conduct for teachers and workshopped some case studies.

This session not only provided valuable professional learning but also offered ECTs the opportunity to network with their colleagues - marking the start of their 3-year DOBCEL ECT program of learning together

*DOBCEL Communciations*



## Mini Vinnies have done a fantastic job

On Wednesday, November 27, 2024 the Grade 4 Mini Vinnies volunteers from St Patrick's School, Camperdown attended St Vincent de Paul and the Corangamite Regional Assistance Centre. The volunteers have done a fantastic job collecting donations for Vinnies.

They ran a Winter Appeal collecting winter clothing and blankets and a Food Drive collecting canned goods to donate. To conclude their volunteering for the year they organised Christmas cards to donate to Vinnies.



Part of their experience at the Corangamite Regional Assistance Centre was to participate in a mock board meeting where students saw what the volunteers discuss and the successes that they have had this year. They were also taken through the intake process which ascertains what assistance can be provided to people.

We thank Andrew O'Flynn and the team for providing this opportunity for our students to see how their volunteering and donations have assisted our community. We are extremely proud of our Mini Vinnies volunteers. They have demonstrated kindness and a willingness to help our wider community.

Tarryn Delaney - St Patrick's Primary School Camperdown

St Patrick's Day morning tea at Gordon after Mass



## “GIVE YOURSELF TO GOODNESS”



*On October 26 and 27, 2024, past students and staff were invited to join St Patrick's Primary School in Port Fairy to celebrate 175 years of Catholic education.*

*The weekend began on Saturday with school tours and viewing of memorabilia dating back to 1849. Maria Cameron conducted a cemetery-walk, focusing on the priests and staff who were buried in the local cemetery. An official reception was held on Saturday evening, attended by Tom Sexton, the Director of DOBCEL and Sr Berenice Kerr rsm, Deputy Director of DOBCEL. On Sunday, Mass was celebrated in the school hall, followed by a morning tea.*

*All events were well attended, especially the Mass and morning tea. Visitors were very impressed with the contemporary development of the school but were also delighted to see that one of the original weatherboard buildings was still on the school grounds.*

*On Monday, October 28, grandparents joined the students for olden day games and a sausage sizzle. The students also dressed up in olden day clothes. A time capsule containing material from 1999 and 2024 was placed in the old school house to be opened in 2049.*

*History: On July 27, 1849, a small single building school was opened for the first time in Belfast (Port Fairy) to provide a Catholic education for families settled in the area. Owen Flannery was the first teacher, followed fourteen months later by Stephen and Margaret Madden.*

*Lay teachers staffed the school until the arrival of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny in 1906. The order was recalled to France in 1912 and their governance role was handed over to the Good Samaritan Sisters, who were responsible for the school's growth and expansion until the late 1980's.*

*The original 1910 infant room, later to become a music room, still stands in the school grounds and houses the Hands-on-Learning program.*

*In 1855 a second building was added to cope with increasing numbers and in 1869 a stone structure was added. Since then, there have been several additions and refurbishment projects to create a vibrant, well-equipped learning environment.*

Olga Lyons – Principal

## The Reverse Advent Calendar

Once again in 2024, the Diocesan Office staff contributed to the Reverse Advent Calendar, which is a great opportunity to give to those in need. The Reverse Advent Calendar box starts empty, then for twenty days during December, items can be placed into the box every day (non-perishable food, toiletries, Christmas treat). The Ballarat Reverse Advent Calendar box official return day at the York Street Church of Christ was on Saturday, December 14. A team of over seventy volunteers assisted on this day to collect boxes, transport them between rooms, check each box has the right products included and provide coffee and food for those volunteering on the day.

The Ballarat Reverse Advent Calendar partners with St Vincent de Paul, Uniting Care, Anglicare and the Salvation Army to distribute these boxes to people in the community who are in need. Anyone wanting to receive a filled box was required to register with one of these agencies. Each of these agencies are allocated an equal number of boxes for distribution. Over 1207 boxes were delivered. A little way to bring some Christmas cheer.



Julie Boyd – Pastoral Ministry Office

# CatholicCare Victoria Housing developments

A lack of affordable housing often inhibits people in our Victorian communities from accessing the support they need to thrive. Without the safety and stability of a place to call home, it is difficult to address issues around mental and physical health, unemployment, family violence, addiction and entrenched disadvantage and poverty. Social housing is a foundational element of building thriving communities.

CatholicCare Victoria Housing are working with the Victorian State Government to deliver social housing projects in Victoria as part of the government's Big Housing Build. Chief Executive Officer, Fiona Williams, said, "There is always a demand for social housing and with this economic environment it's likely this will increase. CCVH has developed a strategy to grow the amount of social housing to assist with this demand."

Upcoming property developments in the Diocese of Ballarat are:

**Sebastopol:** This site has 24 dwellings, with 1 and 2 bedrooms for people from the Victorian Housing Register. The target cohort is singles and couples that are reliant on Age Pension, Disability Pension or Jobseeker payments.

**Warrnambool – Site 1:** This site provides 7 dwellings, with 1 and 2 bedrooms for people from the Victorian Housing Register. The target cohort is couples that are reliant on age pension, disability pension or Jobseeker payments and single parents with 1-3 children reliant on parenting payments, especially those escaping family violence.

**Warrnambool – Site 2:** This site provides 16 dwellings, with 1 and 2 bedrooms for people from the Victorian Housing Register. The target cohort is couples that are reliant on



age pension, disability pension or Jobseeker payments and single parents with 1-3 children reliant on parenting payments, especially those escaping family violence.

**Mitchell Park (Ballarat):** This site provides 30 dwellings, with 1 and 2 bedrooms for people from the Victorian Housing Register. Targeted cohorts are singles and couples over 55 years old; female headed single parent families with 1-2 children and couples with 1 child.

**Swan Hill:** This site provides 49 dwellings, with 1 and 2 bedrooms for people from the Victorian Housing Register. Targeted cohorts are single persons reliant on Jobseeker payments, age pension, disability pension and single supporting parents reliant on parenting payments.

**Mildura:** This site provides 46 dwellings, with 1 and 2 bedrooms for people from the Victorian Housing Register. Targeted cohorts are singles and couples who are over 55 years old.

[https://www.catholiccarevic.org.au/services/home-support/property\\_developments/](https://www.catholiccarevic.org.au/services/home-support/property_developments/)



## St Joseph's School Shines Bright

*On the Feast of St Joseph, the community of St Joseph's School in Hopetoun came together to celebrate a significant milestone - 70 years of Catholic education in the region. The day was filled with joy, reflection, and gratitude as past and present students, staff and families honoured the school's legacy and looked forward to its future.*

*A highlight of the celebrations was a special liturgy where students learned about a unique and meaningful gift to the school - a star named in its honour. Situated in the Carpenter's Plane constellation, the star serves as a tribute to St Joseph, the school's patron saint and a carpenter by trade. This celestial dedication symbolises the school's enduring commitment to guiding and nurturing young minds, much like the light of a star leading*

*the way. As part of the festivities, students engaged in a creative reflection activity, each decorating their own star and contemplating ways they can bring light into the world. This thoughtful exercise encouraged them to embody the values of kindness, compassion and faith that have been the foundation of St Joseph's School since its establishment.*

*The celebrations continued with a special morning tea, where the centrepiece was a selection of cupcakes adorned with the school's emblem. With 70 years of dedicated Catholic education behind them, the St Joseph's community remains steadfast in its mission to provide a nurturing and faith-filled learning environment for students in Hopetoun and the surrounding areas. As they move forward, they do so with the guiding light of St Joseph and the newly named star, reminding them that their legacy continues to shine brightly in the lives of many.*

Cynthia Maiden - Principal

Our Diocesan Community - March 2025

# Rite of Election 2025

The annual Rite of Election was celebrated on Saturday, March 1, 2025 at St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat by Bishop Paul Bird CSSR and assisted by Fr Marcello Colasante, Vicar General and Parish Priest of Wendouree, Creswick and Daylesford.

During the Rite of Election, an important step in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) journey, the candidates and catechumens are presented to the local bishop as a sign of their "election" into the Catholic community. It is at this gathering that those wishing to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation make public their intention to continue their discernment and preparation during the Season of Lent.

Five parishes were represented with catechumens (those yet to be baptised) and candidates (those who have already been baptised but have yet to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation) accompanied by their sponsors/godparents, family and fellow parishioners.



Catechumens were presented from the parishes of Ballarat Cathedral, Ballarat East, Maryborough, Redan and Wendouree with apologies from Northeast Mallee and Sunraysia.

Candidates were presented from the parishes of Ballarat East, Redan and Wendouree with apologies from Sunraysia.

Following the blessing and dismissal, all present joined Bishop Paul for lunch in the Mary Glowrey Hall.

Thank you to all those involved in the success of the Rite of Election: Maria Noonan as Presenter; Dr Chris Hadwen as Reader; Dr Susan Crowe as Cantor; Geoff Martin as Organist; and choir members from the St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat Parish; Parish Delegates; Sponsors of the catechumens and candidates; and Brett Hayward for catering.

Thanks must also go to all those involved in the preparation and co-ordination of the RCIA program in parishes.

The journey of discernment for these catechumens and candidates will culminate at the Easter Vigil where they receive the Sacraments of Initiation and are officially welcomed into the Catholic Church by the local parish community.

Photos courtesy of Bernadette Lynch.



## FARMERS' MARKET SUCCESS

On Thursday, March 13, 2025 at Damascus College Ballarat, the highly anticipated Farmers' Market, hosted by the College Horticulture Department, was held in the courtyard. This event, marked on many students and staff members calendars, showcased the hard work and dedication of the horticulture students.

After harvesting their fresh produce, students either turn it into delicious homemade goods or offered it as fresh produce for sale. Also featured were seedlings that the students had propagated and were available for others to purchase to plant in their own gardens. It was a lovely afternoon as students, staff and families browsed the market with handfuls of fresh produce to take home. It is an especially rewarding experience for the Horticulture students, who have grown and cared for the produce, to see it being enjoyed by others. Some of the produce was so popular that it sold out within moments of the market being opened. Well done to the students on hosting another great Farmers' Market!



Sarah Boswell - Leader of Marketing & Development

# Celebrating 150 Years



*The celebrations marking 150 Years of Loreto College Ballarat began on Friday, February 28, 2025 with a beautiful and moving Mass, held in the College*

*picturesque front gardens. The much-loved Chapel, affectionately known by Mother Gonzaga Barry as the Children's Chapel, provided a stunning and symbolic backdrop to this historic occasion.*

*The day began with a powerful and reverent procession, led by Dhurring students and First Nations alumni, whose presence highlighted the school's ongoing commitment to reconciliation and honouring First Nations culture. The haunting sounds of the didgeridoo, played by Tristan Harris, wove beautifully with the voices of the Loreto College Celebration Choir, creating a truly reflective and moving atmosphere and fitting introduction to a powerful Welcome to Country delivered by Macaylah Johnson (Class of 2019).*

*The 150 Years Celebration Mass, celebrated by Fr Justin Driscoll, was a true reflection of Loreto Ballarat's rich history, woven together through contributions from current students and staff, alumni and past staff. Readings and reflections were read by voices from across generations, celebrating the enduring impact of a Loreto education. Sr Denise Desmarchelier ibvm, Past Principal (1967-1976), proclaimed the First Reading from the Book of Proverbs, while current students and staff led the Prayers of the Faithful, each prayer honouring Loreto values and the vision of Mary Ward that continues to guide the College community today.*



*The Communion Reflection invited all gathered to pause and consider what it means to be faithful to the grace of Mother Gonzaga Barry, whose vision and pioneering spirit laid the foundation for Loreto Ballarat 150 years ago. A series of short reflections were shared, offering different perspectives on how the grace of Gonzaga continues to shape and inspire the life of the College. Among those who spoke was Sr Trish Franklin ibvm AO (Class of 1968), who offered personal insights from her time as both a student and a Loreto Sister, reflecting on how Gonzaga's spirit and legacy continues to echo through generations.*



*The Loreto Sisters, at the heart of the College story, were honoured guests, with front row seats for this milestone celebration. Joining them were members of the Loreto Province Council including Sr Helen Maguire ibvm, Sr Selvi Adaikalam ibvm, Sr Margaret Callaghan ibvm and Sr Diaan Stuart ibvm, who gathered alongside students, staff and families to mark this special occasion.*

*Following the Mass, guests gathered for a morning tea in the Mary's Mount Centre, a wonderful opportunity for past and present members of the community to reconnect and reflect on the occasion. The celebrations continued with the official launch of the Travelling Exhibition, a captivating showcase of 150 years of Loreto history, which will visit Loreto schools across Australia throughout the year.*

*Congratulations to all involved in creating such a memorable and meaningful celebration. The Loreto Sisters and the wider Loreto network look forward to continuing to celebrate this milestone, sharing the faith, courage and community spirit that has defined Loreto College Ballarat for the last 150 years.*

Author: Sr Sandra Perrett ibvm, Loreto Sister and Curator of the 150 Years Travelling Exhibition  
First published in the Special Eucalyptus Blossoms Edition – 150 Years of Loreto!

# Exciting year ahead

In early February, more than 18,600 students and almost 3,000 teachers and staff returned to 52 Catholic primary schools and 11 secondary colleges across the Diocese of Ballarat - from Mildura in the north, to Portland in the south and west to Edenhope and Nhill.

“On behalf of Catholic education in the Diocese I extend a warm welcome to all students, staff, and families, particularly those joining a Catholic school community for the first time,” Executive Director of Catholic Education, Tom Sexton said. “We look forward to an exciting and productive year ahead, where every student has opportunities to flourish fully in school communities that are caring, committed to excellence and live out the Catholic faith, in partnership with families.”



Eight Principals commenced in the role or changes schools in the diocese this year. Welcome and best wishes to new Principals Jaci Commons (Our Lady Help of Christians, Wendouree), Lisa McDonald (St Joseph's, Penshurst), Danny Franc (St Joseph's, Coleraine), Melissa Sutherland (St Paul's, Mildura), Julie Leonard (St Mary's, Warracknabeal), Catherine Howison (Marian College, Ararat), while Karl Dwyer (Sacred Heart, Colac) and Darren Lloyd (St Patrick's, Camperdown) moved to new schools.

In keeping with the DOBCEL culture of continuous improvement, work continues this year on a new 'high performance' strategy titled "Pursuing fullness of life for all". The focus in 2025 will be on co-designing how the strategy can best be actioned at both school and system levels. This work will include visits to the diocese by globally recognised education thinkers. A comprehensive suite of materials outlining the "Pursuing fullness of life for all" strategy is available on the DOBCEL website.

The Catholic education community will come together for its annual celebration of Catholic Education Week from May 26 – 30 this year with the theme "May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace." (Romans 15:13)

We also remind any families experiencing genuine financial hardship that school fee relief and other support mechanisms are available. "As a Catholic schooling system, we ensure relief mechanisms are available in times of need. Parents are encouraged to confidentially discuss their situation with school principals on enrolment, or as needs emerge, so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place," Tom Sexton said.

*Gerard Delaney (former DOBCEL Manager Communications and Marketing)*



## Victorian Clergy Carers' Reflection Day Gathering

Ballarat put on a warm and sunny welcome for the Victorian Clergy Carers' network gathering held on Wednesday, November 20, 2024. Nazareth House graciously allowed the use of their parlour and kitchen. The purpose of the day was to offer an opportunity to come together as colleagues to remember those deceased clergy whom we have cared for and to reflect upon the last twelve months both professionally and personally. The participants came from the Ballarat Diocese, the Sandhurst Diocese (Bendigo

and Shepparton) and the Melbourne Archdiocese. The day began with a welcome prayer led by Sandhurst. We then moved outside for a simple candle lighting remembrance ceremony for those clergy we have farewelled. Some guided reflection time and a fabulous lunch at The Boathouse Restaurant followed.

The afternoon became a time of discussion and planning for the next National Clergy Care Conference which was recently hosted by Melbourne Archdiocese in March.

All in all, the day seemed to flow well and the opportunity for us to reflect together and share experiences appeared to be appreciated. It certainly became quite apparent as the day progressed that we, as clergy carers, need time to stop and look back upon our work; to really take account of the sometimes profound effect caring for our clergy has on us both professionally and personally.

A big thank you to Nazareth House for being so hospitable and delightful to work with. Your kindness was very much appreciated.

Sonia Walker - Clergy Health & Wellbeing Coordinator  
Catholic Diocese of Ballarat



## Anniversaries at St Alipius' Ballarat

Throughout 2024 the Diocese of Ballarat acknowledged its 150th anniversary and recognised the strengths and weaknesses of our history. We celebrated the achievements and we asked pardon for our failure to live our Christian life to the full. We remembered those who had gone before us, who laid the foundations of our parishes and school communities, our social services and health care.

On the weekend of December 14/15, 2024 the Parish of St Alipius Ballarat East and Buninyong gathered at a time of significant anniversaries. It was 170 years since the Eureka rebellion that involved many of the pioneer Catholics including Fr Patrick Smyth; it was also the 150th anniversary of the blessing and opening of the current St Alipius Church by Bishop Michael O'Connor, in his very first public occasion as the Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Ballarat. Mass was first celebrated on the Ballarat Goldfields at Brown Hill in 1851 before relocating to the existing Victoria Street site in 1853, where the tent-church-school (as captured by artist Eugene Von Gerrard) was erected. 2024 was also the 10th anniversary of the blessing and opening of Ss Peter and Paul Church Buninyong.

Parishioners and visitors were invited to gather at St Alipius Church for 6.00pm Mass on Saturday, December 14, 2024. We welcomed Bishop Paul Bird, the eighth Bishop of Ballarat to our parish to lead us at the Vigil Mass. During his time as Bishop of Ballarat, the Buninyong Church remains the only Church that Bishop Paul has blessed and opened.



We welcomed all who gathered to acknowledge these significant anniversaries as well as those who were visiting us, former priests including Fr Adrian McInerney and many parishioners of the Parish of Ballarat East and Buninyong.



Thank you to those who gathered to prepare our parish for the events associated with these anniversaries that have included the 6.00pm Vigil Mass on October 19, 2024 at which the impact of child sexual abuse was formally acknowledged as we stood outside in Victoria Street looking into St Alipius. The Year 6 students from St Alipius Parish School Ballarat East, St Francis Xavier Primary School Ballarat East and Emmaus Primary School Mt Clear, together with some students from Damascus College Ballarat gathered for Mass on Wednesday, December 4, 2024 in acknowledgement of our parish heritage.

These anniversaries provided parishioners and visitors with opportunities to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of our history as well the opportunity to look to the future with hope and healing. Following the Mass parishioners gathered for a BYO picnic tea in the Church grounds. Photographic displays from across the years were collated as well as people of St Alipius recorded for a visual display. These anniversaries were a time to remember, revitalise and hope.

Fr Justin Driscoll – Parish Priest

## ST BRIGID'S FEAST DAY

Each year on February 1, St Brigid's College Horsham celebrate St Brigid, the 5th-century Irish Saint for whom our College is named. A visionary educator, peace-maker and 'soul-friend', St Brigid's legacy of compassion and service has shaped the Brigidine Tradition for over 1,500 years. Joyful 'St Brigid's Feast Day' wishes were extended to the College community. Deeply woven into Celtic myth and tradition, St Brigid is most remembered for her unwavering care for the marginalised and downtrodden. Following an Opening Assembly, the College community came together in a special way, forming a Brigidine cross on the oval for an aerial photo.

Gerard Raven - Principal



Our Diocesan Community - March 2025

# Ordination to the Priesthood



Mass to celebrate the Ordination to the Priesthood of Fr Cay Xuan Trinh was held on Saturday, November 23, 2024 at St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat at 10.30am.

Dr Peter Morris welcomed those who filled the Cathedral and presented the Acknowledgement of Country. All were then invited to stand to begin the celebration, with a great procession of clergy and with beautiful voices and music from the choir.

Following the entrance procession, Bishop Paul Bird, Principal Celebrant and Ordaining

Bishop, welcomed all present which included over forty diocesan and visiting priests and a large number of Seminarians from Corpus Christi College, Carlton.

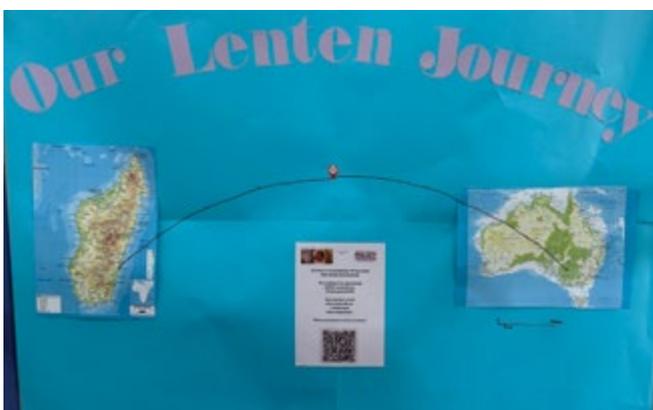
Concelebrating the Mass of Ordination with Bishop Paul were Bishop Peter Connors, Bishop Emeritus of Ballarat, Fr Marcello Colasante, Vicar General - Diocese of Ballarat, Fr Ed Moloney, Administrator - St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat and Fr Cameron Forbes, Rector - Corpus Christi College.

Mass then began with many family, friends and colleagues of the Ordinand involved in different ministries. We welcomed the Vietnamese choir and musicians who sang the psalm and a communion hymn in Vietnamese. All musicians and choir members performed beautifully following many hours of preparation and rehearsals prior to the event. Thank you to all those involved in the music ministry, which contributed significantly to this wonderful celebration.

Bishop Paul's homily invited us to give thanks for Cay's vocation and offered words of guidance to him as he begins his priestly ministry in our diocese.

Thank you to those who assisted with the Mass - your time and attendance before, during and after the Mass was very much appreciated by the Diocesan Liturgical Commission. Thank you also to all those who travelled to attend the Mass.

Newly ordained Fr Cay offered Words of Gratitude before the Final Blessing. Following Mass, Fr Cay offered First Blessings from the altar. All were then invited to the Hall for a light lunch. The Mass and celebration that followed were a great success for the Ordinand, Cay's parents who joined us from Vietnam, Cay's family and friends online, priest colleagues and all the faith-filled in attendance.



## The Big Water Walk

As part of St Paul's Primary School Mildura's Project Compassion Campaign, the school community is uniting and participating in 'The Big Water Walk'. There are many people in Africa, Asia and the Pacific who have to walk incredibly long distances to access and collect clean water every day. In some schools around the world, students have to be sent home early due to the depletion of clean water supplies.

Our students have the opportunity to participate in Walking Club, EVERYDAY, which is every morning between 8.00am - 8.30am, as well as walk two laps of the oval during their

brain break time. By participating in the 'The Big Water Walk', students are able to advocate for those most in need in the world and encourage their families to donate. This will create lasting change and help empower people to lift themselves out of poverty. We have calculated that during Lent we can cover approx 9,000km! This is like travelling from Mildura to Madagascar! The students are very engaged in this activity and we have a tracking map on display in the front foyer of the school.

Melissa Sutherland – Principal

On Friday, February 14, School Captains from Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill, Koby and Bella, along with Alison Wright, Director of Faith and Mission, travelled to Sydney for a JJAMM leadership conference. The conference started at St Mary MacKillop Place which included galleries, memorial pieces, her final resting place and tomb. Having the experience to witness and stand where Mary MacKillop once stood was breathtaking. It was a surreal moment that we will remember forever.



## JJAMM LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

At the conference, which was guided by Sr Jan, we had the opportunity to see many familiar faces and new students from other Josephite schools. We participated in many sessions to enhance our knowledge of the Josephites and their journey, helping to inspire us in our leadership journey.

On Saturday night we were able to encounter Sydney's true beauty as we went for a ferry ride across the harbour sightseeing the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Sydney Opera House and Luna Park under the lights.

It was a bright and early start on Sunday morning as we prepared ourselves for another big day of learning and growing as leaders. We had the privilege of listening to many inspiring guest speakers, amongst them were the Josephite Sisters, community helpers and two students who are active members in their school in Sydney. After a few more leadership sessions (and some sweet treats) the collective of JJAMM organised a Mass and we had the privilege of performing a liturgical movement.



Following Mass, we then headed to our new destination in Baulkham Hills where we settled in to prepare for the next day. In the evening we held a Mary MacKillop song remix. This activity required students to split into groups, pick an appropriate song and adapt the music to relate to Julian Tenison Woods, Joseph or Mary MacKillop.

Monday was another busy day putting the leadership skills we had learned and refined over the past few days into action by role playing our own 'soap box', speaking on an issue that we were interested in and felt needed reform. After this individual chance to protest we split into groups and chose an issue to protest as a group. We created signs, a chant and a speech to perform as a group, as we walked through the chapel to the stands. We also held a great race where students were mixed into groups and had to find eighteen different objects around the place. This tested our strengths and weaknesses as individuals and displayed how we implemented them in a team setting. We then had some fun showcasing our skills and talents with JJAMMer's Got Talent.

Our last day of the JJAMM Leadership Conference consisted of planning and collecting ideas from other schools that we would like to implement in 2025. We then packed our bags and headed to the airport to fly back to Melbourne, inspired to utilise the skills and ideas that we gained over our experience. We would like to say a huge thank you to Mrs Haeusler and Mrs Wright for making this trip possible.

Koby and Bella - School Captains



## Timboon Sacraments

Towards the end of 2024, Nikayla and Esther, from St Joseph's Parish Timboon, celebrated the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist. Over many weeks the girls and their parents worked through the "Let the Children Come" Sacramental Program in preparation for receiving their sacraments.

Nikayla and Esther and their families are pictured with Fr Neville Stanislaus, St Joseph's former Parish Priest.

Ruth Hoffmann - Sacrament Coordinator



## CELEBRATING JUBILEES OF ORDINATION

Mass to acknowledge the clergy who celebrated a Jubilee of Ordination in 2024 was held on Thursday, November 14, 2024 at St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat at 5.00pm. Bishop Paul Bird was the Main Celebrant and those celebrating Jubilees were invited to concelebrate Mass. Proceedings began with an Acknowledgement of Country and all were welcomed by Dr Peter Morris.

The choir members were from St Patrick's Cathedral Parish Choir, the cantor was Susan Crowe and Roger

Hillman was the organist for the Mass. Once again the music was fitting for the celebration and members of the congregation joined fully in the singing.

2024 Jubilarians were: Fr Eric Bryant - 50 years; Fr Patrick Mugavin – 50 years; Fr Michael O'Toole – 50 years; Fr Ed Moloney – 25 years. Unfortunately, Fr Paddy was unable to attend the celebrations due to illness.

Bishop Paul offered words of welcome to all in attendance, especially noting and congratulating the jubilarians.

Therese Winter proclaimed the First Reading and Peter Senserrick led the Prayers of the Faithful. Deacon Cay Xuan Trinh (now Fr) proclaimed the Gospel and Fr Michael O'Toole offered the Homily. Carmel Moloney and Clare Adriaans brought forward the gifts.

At the end of Mass, Bishop Paul prayed a Blessing for the Jubilarians and all in attendance joined in song to share the blessing, "May God Bless You and Keep You." Following Mass, clergy gathered to share a meal and continue the celebrations. We give thanks to those who celebrated a Jubilee and to all those who serve in our diocese.

Thank you to those who prepared the Cathedral for this Mass, the musicians, choir members and to those who travelled to attend.

## A St Patrick's Reflection

**Ben Shields, Principal of St Patrick's Primary School Ballarat, reflects on St Patrick's Day:**

*In celebrating St Patrick's Day, it is fitting to consider the remarkable legacy of St Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland and the deep connections his story holds to our school's identity.*

*St Patrick, born in Britain in the late 4th century, was taken to Ireland as a young man where he endured years of hardship before escaping. However, he later returned, driven by a calling to bring the Christian faith to the Irish people. His mission was one of courage, resilience and unwavering faith - values that continue to inspire our school community today.*

*In 2024, I had the privilege of joining principal colleagues from across the Ballarat Diocese on a Spiritual Heritage Pilgrimage to Ireland, visiting sacred sites connected to St Patrick's life and mission. The Rock of Cashel, home to St Patrick's Cross, stands as a powerful symbol of Ireland's Christian heritage. This ancient site is believed to be where Patrick baptised the King of Munster, securing Christianity's place in Ireland.*

*Our pilgrimage also led to Croagh Patrick, the mountain where St Patrick is said to have fasted for forty days in prayer. This place of pilgrimage represents the strength and commitment required to live out one's faith — a message that resonates with our school's mission. It was a challenging walk and I'm still amazed that pilgrims walk over the shaley rock in bare feet!*

*To honour our patron saint, we gathered as a school community on Monday, March 17, for a Feast Day Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, followed by a day of celebration at Kirk's Reservoir. At the conclusion of the Mass, we proudly presented the Clare Madden Award for School Spirit to the 2025 recipients, recognising students who embody the values of faith, kindness, and leadership within our school.*





## Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions

On Sunday, October 27, 2024 the centenary of the arrival of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions (OLOM) to St Joseph's Charlton was celebrated. Nine sisters of OLoM and four Sisters of Mercy were welcomed to Charlton by Fr Gerry Prunty. At the end of the 10.30am Mass, Sr Catherine Brabender, the Provincial, presented a slide show giving a brief history of their time in Charlton.

In 1924 the Sisters were invited by the Parish Priest, Fr Cornelius Kelly, to take charge of St Joseph's School. The pioneer Sisters were Mother Mary Obedience, Sisters De Sales, Madeleine and Jude. As a temporary residence they used the former presbytery. School was taught in St Joseph's Hall, partitioned into two classrooms. In 1930 a new convent, including boarding facilities, was blessed and opened. In 1959 a new school of four classrooms was built.

St Joseph's School was well known for its academic achievement, prowess on the sports field, its music program and other endeavours. Sr Catherine then read some memories and examples of past pupils who had brought honour to their old school.

In 1968, the Sisters withdrew from Charlton as they focused on reclaiming the international missionary character of their order. The Ballarat Diocesan Journal "Light" reported that the Sisters "going at the year's end was an extraordinary testimony of affection and gratitude as the parish gathered to bid them farewell. The Sisters had set high standards of strong faith and their cheerful self-sacrifice had done much towards moulding the spirit

of the place." Sisters at Charlton at the time of the farewell were Mother M Thomas who taught in Charlton for 24 years, Mother Paul (17 years), Sr Darerca (12 years), Sister Odo (11 years), Sr Camillus (3 years) and Sr Mary Jude (28 years as Directress of Music).

Today, the Sisters of OLoM are involved in ministries of education and social ministry responding to emerging needs in twenty-two countries. In Australia, the Sisters continue involvement in Parish Life, Advocacy Groups and Spiritual Accompaniment.

Charlton young ladies who joined the Sisters of OLoM congregation were: 1924 - Mary Murphy; Kathleen Murphy; Eileen and Mary Mulcahy; 1945 - Ina Lane; 1964 - Margaret Spain. Margaret spent thirty years in Missionary work in Senegal and now lives in Perth where she is involved in the ongoing formation of Sisters from Asia, especially with English language learning. Margaret currently has two young Sisters from Vietnam with her.

After Mass the visitors were joined by parishioners at a delicious luncheon in the school multi-purpose room. Thank you to all who helped make this a wonderful day – St Joseph's Catering team led by Naomi Fitzpatrick; Rae Heenan for the cake; people who arranged the flowers, prepared the grounds and many others behind the scenes.

The Sisters visited St Joseph's School on the Monday, sharing their history and the current work they do all around the world. A presentation of framed information and photographs was presented to the school. A delicious morning tea was enjoyed before the Sisters journeyed back to Melbourne.

Anne Kenny - Charlton

St Thomas Primary School Terang held a Big Breakfast on Shrove Tuesday, March 4. The breakfast has been running for over twenty years. This community event marks the day before Lent which is the time leading up to Easter. In Christian tradition Lent is a time where we may 'give up' some luxuries as a mark of remembrance of what Jesus went through leading up to his death.



Therefore, traditionally, Shrove Tuesday could be where you would have a feast prior to Lent beginning and one of the reasons why the school led by the Parents and Friends, hosts a Big Breakfast and invites the community to come into the school for breakfast. People pay an entry fee and then enjoy bacon and eggs, some pancakes along with a coffee or tea. The breakfast gets underway quite early in the morning for those who need to work. The event cannot happen without parental support in organising and preparing the breakfast so thank you to all who supported this event.



Matt Uzkuraitis - Principal (Photos by Fitzmedia Productions)  
Our Diocesan Community - March 2025

## Unveiling of a Peace Pole

October 24, 2024 marked a memorable day in the story of Emmaus Catholic Primary School Mt Clear, where they unveiled and blessed a Peace Pole that now stands proudly in the school grounds as a place to contemplate peace in our world. The Peace Pole movement began in Japan by the visionary Masahisa Goi. He was deeply distressed by the catastrophic devastation caused by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, instantly killing 200,000 people. In 1955, he began a mission to spread the simple message, "May peace prevail on earth."

The Peace Pole stands as a symbol of unity and respect. The inclusion of the message "May peace prevail on this earth" in the four chosen languages on each side of the pole, have been carefully selected as important elements of our school story. The message in Wadawurrung language acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which our school sits, honouring their enduring connection to this place. The Japanese language reflects our commitment to fostering cultural understanding, and our place and role in a global context, through our languages program. Braille signifies our dedication to inclusivity, ensuring all voices are heard and valued in our community. Together, these languages embody the principles of respect, learning and belonging that guide us to our world filled with peace. As a school of faith, hope and love, our prayer is to spread the message of peace and hope for both current and future generations.

Students, staff, parents, Fr Justin Driscoll, then Mayor Des Hudson, Rotarians and special guests participated in the ceremony, which included a song of peace led by the Emmaus Choir. DOBCEL Executive Director, Tom Sexton and Central Zone Education Consultant, Jo-Anne Bond attended the ceremony. In his address, Mr Sexton said, "I congratulate the Emmaus community for taking up the opportunity to help promote peace in your school, our community and in our world and the Rotary Club of Ballarat for your work in bringing the project to fruition".

"Peace is at the heart of all we strive to be as a Catholic education community".

*Ethan Corfee – Principal*



Our Diocesan Community - March 2025



## Congratulations

*Congratulations to Mercy Place Warrnambool for being recognised at the 7NEWS VIC Community Achievement Awards Gala Presentation Dinner on Friday, December 13, 2024.*

*We are thrilled to share that our team has been acknowledged for Excellence in Lifestyle Programs and named a Semi-finalist in the Regional Development Victoria Business Achievement Award.*

*This incredible recognition is a testament to the passion and dedication of our engaged and hardworking team. Every day, they empower our lovely residents by promoting restorative social, physical, behavioural and emotional activity programs that honour choice and dignity.*

*With creativity, innovation and a "think outside the box" mindset, our lifestyle team delivers engaging and fun programs tailored to meet each of our residents' needs. Thank you for all you do to make Mercy Place Warrnambool a truly special community!*

Mercy Place Warrnambool Facebook Page

# Diversity Homework Club

The Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council Inc. (BRMC) Diversity Homework Club (DHC) continued to serve as a vital resource for culturally and linguistically diverse students from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Ballarat throughout 2024. With the support of generous funding bodies such as the **Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation**, we have been able to provide a range of educational and extracurricular activities aimed at enhancing academic success, personal growth, wellbeing, and community engagement for students from diverse backgrounds.



In 2024 our activities and achievements included:

- The continuation of the program delivery to students aged 5 - 17 at Sebastopol Library, catering to various academic and social needs.
- The expansion of the program to include a second weekly session at Alfredton Primary School in September.
- The continuation of our Parent and Community engagement.

## Diversity Homework Club Activities:

- Over 70 students participating in the program, all benefiting from one-on-one and group tutoring in Mathematics, English and Science.
- Subject-specific help for assessments, assignments and projects.
- Engaging activities across subjects: Maths with hands-on tools, English (sight words, reading, writing), and Science (food, solar system, sustainability, pollution, animal habitats, plant life cycles).
- Volunteer tutors and Peer Tutors played an essential role in providing academic assistance, enhancing students' skills and fostering a collaborative learning environment.



Students' Peace Art Exhibition at the Peace Pole Launch at Barkly Square.

- Students participated in the Peace Pals International Art Exhibition and Awards in August.
- New Peer Tutors inducted with clear procedures to maintain and submit student records.
- Tutors were offered trainings from Learning Beyond the Bell on culturally responsive practices, literacy and math strategies for EAL learners and child safety in learning support programs.
- Cultural Show and Tell: Students shared their unique backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging and respect.

## Parent and Community Engagement:

- Parent workshops focused on supporting academic growth and fostering positive parent-child communication. Workshops at Ballarat libraries (facilitated by CatholicCare) covered topics like kids and technology, difficult conversations with kids, risk-taking behaviors, peer pressure and brain changes.
- Notable projects like Connect-Nurture-Grow engaged families in gardening and food-growing initiatives with local community members.
- Food-growing tips shared with families via videos and John Ditchburn's guide.
- Communication Skills workshop for students and parents.
- BRMC Audio Lab tour for Homework Club families.

The Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council Inc. (BRMC) extends heartfelt thanks to **Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation** for the funding received

in 2024. It clearly demonstrated the Foundation's support and commitment to promoting educational equity and social inclusion. Without the generous contribution, BRMC's essential education programs would not have been possible. The funding has had a direct and positive impact on the lives of our students and their families in the Ballarat community.

**Tim**, one of the tutors, has noted improved confidence in the students worked with over time. "Academic skills of individual students worked with often lands, allowing them to discover new knowledge on something they didn't know or had limited understanding of. Homework club, particularly useful for students from diverse backgrounds as tutors come ready to work with students where they are at, rather than expecting them to be able to solve particular challenges or communication issues."

**Sarah**, a student, says "Homework club has helped me with my homework or any problem I need help with in my learning. I am able to have a quiet place for my learning and if I need any help I can easily reach out."

**Namra**, a parent, stated "It gives them personalised help that can fill in any gaps in their education. By having the same tutor all the time, students can build a relationship with them, which is especially helpful for those who might feel lost or behind in a regular classroom. Since the tutor gets to know each student's learning style and what they are studying with, it makes it easier for everyone to feel included."



*Suzanne Ryan-Evers  
Chief Executive Officer*

## Flanagan Art Prize



The Flanagan Art Exhibition at St Patrick's College Ballarat was established in 2008 in honour of Noel Flanagan, an Old Collegian and former curator of the Australian War Memorial, celebrating established and emerging Australian artists. This prestigious event invited artists from across Australia to compete for a \$5,000 prize for the most outstanding artwork. Additional cash prizes were awarded for the Best Emerging Artist and the Best Affordable Artwork. As an acquisitive competition, the exhibition enabled the College to build an impressive collection of winning pieces, now permanently displayed in Kennedy House, the College administration building. The exhibition's primary goal was to enrich the cultural experience of our students, fostering a deeper appreciation for fine art and strengthening the College commitment to the visual arts.

In 2019 the College shifted its approach, offering a \$5,000 Artist in Residence program, with highly acclaimed Melbourne-based artist Robert Lee Davis named the inaugural winner. In 2025, the Flanagan Art Prize returned to its origins as a major exhibition at St Patrick's College. More than two hundred outstanding works from artists across Australia were received for the 2025 Flanagan Art Prize, with ninety-eight entries shortlisted for the exhibition. Winners were announced at the exhibition's gala opening at St Patrick's College on Friday, March 21. Tasmanian artist Paul Snell was awarded the \$10,000 Flanagan Art Prize for his ethereal chromogenic print, 'Bleed #202337' and St Patrick's College Old Collegian Wayne Elliott received the runners-up prize for his acylic painting, 'Yepereyne/Emily Gap'. In the youth categories, St Patrick's College Year 11 student Trevor TJ Wortley was awarded the Clontarf Academy Prize for 'Bundi'. Principal Steven O'Connor was delighted at the success of the event and the calibre of this year's entries.

Katie Spurgo - Publications Officer



## GALA DAY

St Mary's Primary School Sea Lake held their Gala Day on Sunday, March 16 - an exciting festival of events that promised fun and engagement for the whole community. The day featured a variety of attractions, including Laser Force Tag, a Magician Show, the Rotary Train and Jumping Castles and numerous food stalls serving treats like fairy floss and snow cones, along with engaging games. This festive day was designed to bring together families, friends and community members for an enjoyable and memorable experience.

The event was held on our school grounds, ensuring a safe and accessible venue for all attendees. It was also a day to strengthen the bonds within the Sea Lake community. The Gala Day had not taken place since pre COVID days. There was much work happening behind the scenes to make sure the event went smoothly and we thank all those involved in the organisation, promotion and support of the event and many thanks to those who came along to join in the fun. Special thanks to our students who made the flyers for the event and promoted it through the town.

Chris Prockter - Acting Principal



# Parish Administration Day



The Parish Administration Day 2024 was held on December 4. It is hoped that this type of day will be the beginning, or re-ignition of a regular event to assist and support parishes in their day-to-day operations. The day was organised by Ross Wheatland, the Diocesan Business Manager.

The agenda for the day was extensive. Bishop Paul welcomed the parish administration staff, clergy, diocesan staff and presenters to the day, beginning with words of welcome and talking about the different people involved in parish administration and how each bring their particular skills for the various areas of work to be attended to in parishes. He also talked about how the various roles involve a sense of a vocation, saying it is a particular vocation to support our parish communities through our work of administration. Bishop Paul offered a prayer of thanks for this vocation and prayed for the continued guidance for those in parish administration.

Michael Myers gave a presentation on Safety Officer Education and Safeguarding Audits. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) was highlighted by Ross and is available to all diocesan staff and parish employees. The service is provided via EAP Assist and is available at the following link - <https://eapassist.com.au/> The EAP is a support service that provides employees access to confidential phone counselling from anywhere in the country. Ross also outlined the ongoing 'Looking Forward' program in relation to ministry districts and Fr Justin Driscoll and Jane Collins gave an overview of the recent Diocesan Assembly which focussed on leadership and governance in the diocese. Sharyn Simpson gave a presentation on banking with the Catholic Development Fund and the processes required.

In addition to the diocesan team members presenting, the gathering was also fortunate to have contributions from the following people on the day - John Hockey (Business Manager – Western Border Parish) talking about banking and finance strategies within the parish.; Hakan Celik (Product Manager – PACEM) looking at PACEM which is an innovative parish management app that transforms administrative tasks for Catholic parishes; Damian Burley (Lockton Insurance) and Tony Meakin (Catholic Risk Insurance Services) focusing on insurance and what was happening in that area for the diocese and parishes now; and James Remington (Nevett Lawyers) concentrating on Employment Practices and Contract Review. The agenda also covered a question and answer panel session with attendees encouraged to ask any questions that hadn't been answered during the day.

The session ended with a performance from the Cantate Domino Choir from St Patrick's Cathedral Parish Ballarat. The Choir has a broad and exciting repertoire, including traditional styles of sacred music and contemporary church hymns, along with providing opportunities for musical, vocal and personal development in a safe, fun environment. They performed Christmas Carols for the gathering.

## TWO CELEBRATIONS



*St Joseph's Primary School Charlton acknowledged two important events on March 19. St Joseph's Feast Day, celebrated on this day, is a time to honour St Joseph as a caring, humble and hardworking figure who welcomed and protected his family. His life reminds us of the importance of kindness, acceptance and creating a safe, loving environment where*

*everyone feels they belong. Just as St Joseph supported and guided others, we are encouraged to reach out and care for those around us, making sure no one feels left out.*

*Similarly, Harmony Week, celebrated March 17-21 focused on inclusiveness, respect and celebrating the rich diversity of cultures in our community. It reminds us that everyone, no matter their background, deserves to feel valued and included. During Mass, specially commissioned crosses for the foyer and multi-purpose room were blessed by*



*Fr Gerry Prunty. The crosses are beautifully hand-crafted in timber, paying homage to our patron Saint, carpenter Joseph. The highlight of the day was the shared meal, lovingly prepared by our families associated with India, Croatia, Philippines, Vietnam, Timor-Leste, Egypt and Australia! We are so grateful to our families and staff who made the day so special.*

*Together, both St Joseph's Feast Day and Harmony Day highlight how important it is to build a sense of belonging by showing compassion, welcoming differences and supporting one another.*

Mary Hogan - Principal

## WELCOMED AND COMMISSIONED

New Principals in the Diocese of Ballarat and colleagues who have commenced new positions in 2025 were welcomed and commissioned by Monsignor Glynn Murphy and DOBCEL Executive Director, Tom Sexton at a Diocesan Leadership Gathering (DLG) Mass at Ss Michael and John's Church in Horsham.

Welcome to new Principals: Lisa McDonald (Interim - St Joseph's, Penshurst), Danny Franc (Interim - St Joseph's, Coleraine), Chris Prockter (Acting - St Mary's, Sea Lake), Jaci Commons (Our Lady Help of Christians, Wendouree), Catherine Howison (Marian College, Ararat), Melissa Sutherland (St Paul's, Mildura), Julie Leonard (St Mary's, Warracknabeal) and Greg Kluske (St Joseph's, Mildura).



DOBCEL Communications

## Reflection Day



In the lead up to Christmas, a group of around forty people met at St Mary of the Assumption Church in Swan Hill for a reflection day on Dr Sr Mary Glowrey, with a focus on her family connections in the region. Her sister, Lucy Connellan (nee Glowrey), resided in Swan Hill with her parents after moving from their home in Watchem, with her brother Gerard who also eventually settled in the region.

This day was the initiative of the former Ballarat Diocese CWL president Margaret Rowe (President CWL Stawell) and Anna Krohn OAM. It is the intention of the CWL to promote the story of Dr Sr Mary Glowrey creatively which prompted the idea to hold reflection days on Mary's upbringing, her work and her family which triggered this gathering in Swan Hill.

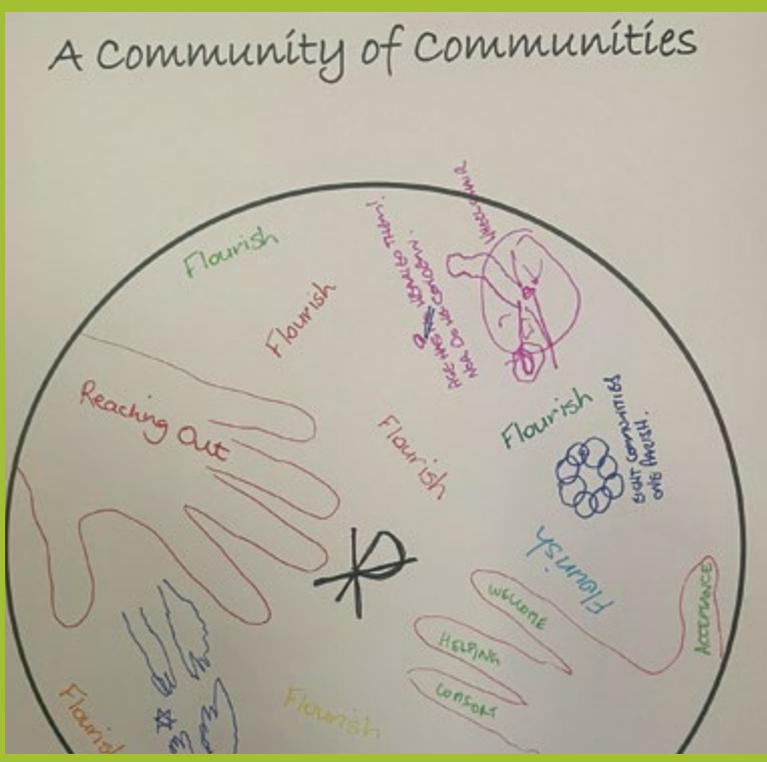
The reflection day began with Mass celebrated by the Parish Priest, Fr James Kerr, which was followed by morning tea and a brief history and PowerPoint presentation from Anna Krohn, referencing the journey of Dr Sr Mary Glowrey and her family. As Mary was a shy girl, her sister Lucy Connellan appointed herself as Mary's protector visiting her in Melbourne where she lived and studied as a teenager. Lucy also visited Mary in India in the early 1950's as did her brother Harold. We were all very pleased to meet with Dr Sr Mary's niece Joan Hoare (daughter of Gerard Glowrey), Joan's sister-in-law Pauline Glowrey and son Matt (grandson of Gerard), as well as Lucy Connellan's grandson Steve O'Halloran and his daughter-in-law Tracey, who all live in or around Swan Hill and were able to join us for the reflection day. Steve's wife Sue organised catering for the day and also prepared a display of photos and letters from Lucy's collection.



After lunch, we came together in a circle sharing stories about our parishes and our plans for Christmas and the New Year. Lots of ideas and questions ensued which created much discussion. One of the most beautiful stories that came from the day was that of Ruth Thompson and her unborn baby. Inspired by Fr James Kerr's prayer on their behalf, Ruth's sister Mary Kennedy invited everyone present to add their voice to a petition for Dr Sr Mary Glowrey's intercession in seeking God's help for Ruth's family. Mary shared with those present, the significant heart issues of their unborn child and the difficult prognosis of a series of surgeries post birth and if in fact babe was a candidate for surgery. Beautiful baby Jacinta Clare Teresa Thompson was born January 3 and, thanks be to God, did not require the initial surgery expected, returning home after just two weeks to get bigger and stronger for the anticipated surgery at around 3-6 months of age to fix the holes in her heart. The family are feeling very blessed and grateful, as are those who attended this day and were able to add

their prayers for the, then, unborn baby Jacinta. We shall continue to ask Dr Sr Mary Glowrey to intercede on baby Jacinta's behalf as she goes forward into the world with God's grace. A beautiful initiative from the Ballarat and Stawell CWL ladies and a great chance to continue to share stories between parishes.

*Written in collaboration with Fr James Kerr and Mary Kennedy, Holy Family Parish Swan Hill*



**Jubilee Year 2025 – Pilgrims of Hope**

*A Jubilee is a special year of grace and conversion involving prayer, pilgrimage and sacramental repentance, held every 25 years, or during other years as called for by the Pope. Through a series of concrete rituals, acts and commitments, the goal of a Jubilee year is to inspire and encourage holiness of life among the faithful and therefore to strengthen the Church’s witness to God’s loving mercy in and for the world.*

*Hope is also the central message of this Jubilee. Pope Francis encourages all to become pilgrims of hope, inviting those able to travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year and to all those who are unable to visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, to celebrate it in their local Churches. For everyone, he hopes the Jubilee may be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the “door” (cf. Jn 10:7.9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as “our hope” (1 Tim 1:1). Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God’s word helps us find reasons for that hope. Taking it as our guide, let us return to the message that the Apostle Paul wished to communicate to the Christians of Rome. (<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents>)*

We are the Catholic Church of the Ballarat Diocese. We gather in the name of Jesus from the Murray to the Sea in interwoven faith communities. Spirit-filled, we celebrate and share our journey; reaching out to nurture all God’s people.

Vision Statement for the Diocese