CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT

# OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY

**News around the Diocese**

**No. 80 November 2026**



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OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY (ODC)

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# *Discipleship and Encountering*

Dear friends,

Each year in September a formation course is held in Rome for all the newly ordained bishops from around the world. I was part of this year's gathering from September 2 - 10. I joined with 146 other bishops from every part of the globe, including two other Australians, Bishop Nelson Po, Auxiliary Bishop of Perth and Bishop Stuart Hall, Bishop of Australia's Military Diocese.

Our days together included many lectures from the various departments in the Vatican. There was time for questions and answers, small group discussions, as well as many rich conversations over meals. We prayed together and celebrated the Eucharist together each day. On Sunday, September 6 we made a pilgrimage to Assisi where we prayed at the tomb of St Francis and then concelebrated Mass in the upper Basilica. It was something very special, especially during this special Jubilee Year marking the 800 years since the death of Francis of Assisi.

For me the highlight of our days together was our encounter with Pope Leo XIV. We spent a few hours together culminating in a brief one on one meeting with all 147 newly ordained bishops. The Pope's words to us were words of encouragement and support. He reminded us that everyone must find a place in the bishop's heart, for everyone already has a place in the heart of Christ. In simple words Pope Leo challenged us, first of all, to remain with Jesus. He went on to say that among the many things you will be called to do as bishops this is the most important. We are bishops, but we are first and foremost disciples. The Pope encouraged us with these words: always cherish your time with the Lord: The Eucharist, the Word of God, prayer and those moments when you can be in his presence with the simple heart of a disciple who allows himself to be loved by his Lord.

These thoughts were very much in my mind and heart as I celebrated Mass in the Cathedral on Sunday, September 27 when

our seminarians, Channa Tilakarathna and Simon Zakari were admitted as candidates for ordination to Diaconate and Priesthood. This simple ceremony affirms the formation of our seminarians and expresses the local Church's acceptance of their readiness to move forward to ordained ministry. In my homily, I called on Channa and Simon to deepen their commitment as disciples of the Lord and to allow the call to priesthood to arise out of the personal relationship with the Lord that discipleship demands. This was at the heart of what Pope Leo was saying to us newly ordained bishops at our gathering in Rome.

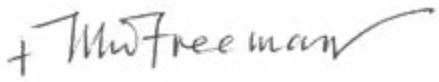
The most recent Social Justice Statement from the Australian Bishops calls every one of us to renew our commitment as disciples. Entitled *Living the Gospel in Times of Social Division*, this statement calls all people of good will to take the lead in reaching across the divides present in our society and to be instruments of peace and reconciliation.

In his preface to the Statement, the President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe of Perth, points out that living the Gospel in these times is not a private devotion. It is a public witness that human dignity is not negotiable, that truth matters and that peace is more than the absence of conflict – it is the fruit of justice, reconciliation and communion. We could ask the question, how are we to live the Gospel in our times and in our circumstances here in the diocese of Ballarat? A similar question could be put before us; how can we faithfully live our discipleship in Christ amid the tensions and challenges of our social climate?

The Social Justice Statement proposes four ways of living the Gospel, of being disciples in this time of social division. Firstly, by remaining close to Christ in prayer and the Sacraments, allowing the Lord to convert our hearts before we seek to change the world. Secondly, by practising a "culture of encounter": listening before reacting, seeking to understand the fears and hopes of others and choosing relationship over caricature. Thirdly, by exercising restraint in what we say – especially online. And fourthly, by concrete acts of compassion and justice.

We are coming towards the end of another year, and even more quickly to the end of our Liturgical year. The season of Advent invites us to be attentive to the Lord in the many ways in which he comes among us. This time of hope and expectation calls us to renew our relationship with God and with each other. Just as Pope Leo called us newly ordained bishops to be missionaries with hearts open to all, so too each and every one of us within our diocesan community is called to be a missionary who listens to and respects each and every person, reaches out to all people and strives to know how to recognise the good in the heart of everyone.

Every Sunday the bishop offers a Mass for the intentions of the diocesan community. As the bishop I pray for you all every day. Please pray for me that, together, we will remain close to Christ and be true disciples proclaiming the Gospel in every circumstance.



*+ Mark Freeman*
*Bishop of Ballarat*





## 120 YEARS OF MERCY IN MILDURA

*Five Sisters of Mercy travelled to Mildura in 1905, carrying the Mercy ethos in their hearts and bringing with them Catherine McAuley's vision of improving the lives of women and children through education.*

*Those inspiring Sisters of Mercy opened a school in 1906. That humble school grew to become St Joseph's College. Over decades, countless staff members and families have dedicated themselves to providing generations of young people countless opportunities to learn, expand their horizons and achieve their dreams.*

*St Joseph's College commemorated 120 years of Mercy Education in Mildura on Thursday, August 20, 2026. The celebrations began with a special Mass in the Mercy Stadium led by Most Rev Mark Freeman, the Bishop of Ballarat. The College was also privileged to host several clergy from the diocese, Sisters of Mercy, a few former College Principals and Deputy Principals, guests from Mercy Education, and many more members of our extended community.*

*Later that evening, guests attended a special dinner at Powerhouse Place. It was a wonderful celebration of the College's long history and legacy, reflecting on the past and looking ahead to the future - a future in which we will continue to focus on educating the young people of Sunraysia while living by our Mercy core values, and expressing gratitude for our home here in Mildura. More can be read and viewed on this special event at this link - https://www.sjcmda.vic.edu.au/celebrating-120-years/*

Tracy Aston - Communications and Events Manager

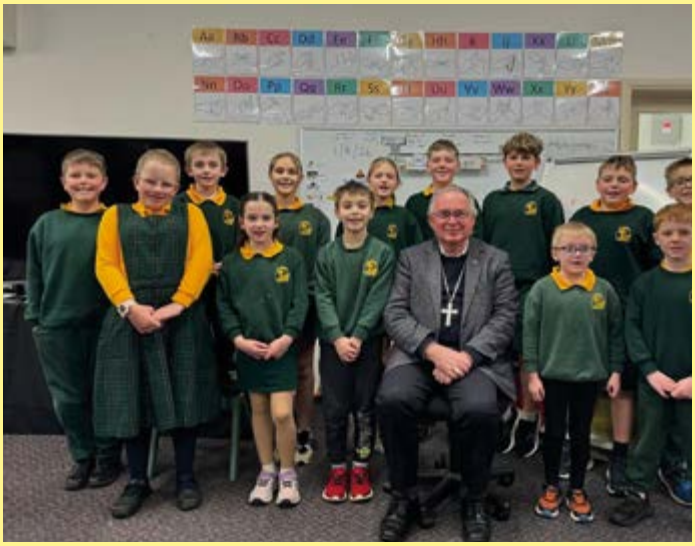
# BISHOP MARK VISITS ST MARY'S

*St Mary's Primary School, Clarkes Hill, were delighted to welcome Bishop Mark Freeman on August 13, 2026.*

*Bishop Mark enjoyed meeting our staff and students and seeing our school community in action. A big thank you to our Leadership Team of Will, Vanessa, Izzy and Pat for doing an excellent job showing Bishop Mark around the school.*

*Afterwards, they enjoyed a cup of tea and a lovely chat together. Will and Pat were especially happy to discover that Bishop Mark's middle name is William and his Confirmation name is Patrick!*

*It was a wonderful visit and we are grateful to Bishop Mark for spending time with us at St Mary's.*



Clare Scanlon - Principal

# Welcome to Fr Vuong



***Fr John Corrigan PP welcomes Fr Vuong to the Western Border Parish:***

We welcome Fr Vuong Nguyen CSsR, who begins a year-long pastoral placement in the Western Border Parish. His official appointment begins and ends on the feast of St Mary MacKillop, our parish patron.

Fr Vuong was ordained to the priesthood by our Bishop Emeritus, Most Rev Paul Bird CSsR, on Saturday, May 23, 2026 and celebrated his first Mass of Thanksgiving the following day, on Pentecost Sunday. We are privileged that the first year of his priestly ministry will be spent here among us.

Fr Cay and I are both delighted that Fr Vuong will be joining us in the parish. Fr Vuong brings an enthusiasm, generosity and love for the Gospel that will be a rich blessing to our parish communities. As a longtime friend of Fr Cay, he is warmly welcomed and we look forward to supporting him as he begins this new season in life.

There is a special joy in welcoming a newly ordained priest. Both Fr Cay and I spent our first year as a priest in this parish and we remain deeply grateful for the kindness, encouragement and hospitality we received. A priest never forgets his first parish and I have no doubt Fr Vuong will receive the same gracious welcome that made our own first years of ministry such a happy and formative experience. On behalf of all parishioners: Fr Vuong, welcome to the Western Border parish. May God abundantly bless your ministry among us.

***From Fr Vuong:***

My name is Van Vuong Nguyen. I prefer to be called "Vuong." I was born in 1992, in Ha Tinh Province, located in the northern part of central Vietnam. I belong to the Loc Thuy Parish, Ha Tinh Diocese. It has a population of around 3,000 people, and around 99.9% of them are Catholic. My childhood and adolescence were closely tied to this rich religious tradition. The people in my parish were deeply devoted, and we practised our faith with great seriousness and discipline.

I come from a family of five – my parents, my younger sister, my younger brother and myself. My parents are fishermen. They own a fishing boat and go fishing every day. Above all, they are people of faith. They instilled in us the importance of prayer, encouraging us to pray the Rosary and other prayers together as a family, both in the morning and evening before bedtime. Attending morning Mass was a non-negotiable part of our childhood. My younger sister is five years younger than me. She is married and a mother of a boy and a girl (making me an uncle.) My younger brother is ten years younger than me and is in his final year at university, pursuing a degree in Automotive Engineering Technology.

In 2010, I started studying a Marine Engineering course at the University of Transport in Ho Chi Minh City and graduated in 2014. During those years, I felt a growing call to religious life. Firstly, it began when I attended my uncle's first religious profession as a Cistercian monk in Vietnam in 2011. I was profoundly moved as I witnessed him vow himself to God. That moment touched my heart and marked the beginning of my "search" for a deeper relationship with God. Secondly,



later that year, despite doing well in university, I often felt empty and meaningless. I longed for something to fill the emptiness in my heart. Fortunately, during a gathering with a group of uni students, a friend introduced me to the Redemptorists by chance. She told me, "Redemptorist priests are friendly, active, they always have good homilies and are loved by many people." I was deeply attracted and impressed by her words, feeling as though God was speaking to me through her. After prayerful discernment, I decided to get to know the Redemptorists in Saigon. As I continued my formation in the Redemptorist formation house:

- On May 4, 2018, I took my first profession as a Redemptorist.
- On February 22, 2025, I took my final profession.
- On August 16, 2025, I was ordained a deacon.
- On May 23, 2026, I was ordained to the Priesthood.

I am deeply grateful to all who have supported and accompanied me on this journey of faith, especially my family, parish community and the Redemptorists who nurtured my vocation. Their prayers, love and guidance have been the steady light that led me to where I am today. As I have been assigned to the Western Border Parish for my first year of priesthood, I look forward to this new chapter with excitement and hope. I desire to live out my priestly ministry with humility, compassion and availability, especially through the celebration of the sacraments, which will provide opportunities to share God's love and grace with those I serve. I hope to grow not only in my pastoral skills but also in my relationship with Christ the Redeemer under the guidance of Fr John Corrigan, Parish Priest, Fr Cay Trinh, Assistant Priest, and the parishioners. During this time, I hope to learn how to truly walk with God's people by listening attentively to their stories and accompanying them through both their joys and their struggles. I trust that their witness of faith and life will enrich and deepen my own priesthood.

*First published in the Western Border Parish Bulletin 9/8/2026*

# Celebrating a redevelopment

*The St Columba's School community in Ballarat North recently celebrated the completion of a significant $2.9 million redevelopment, delivering more accessible, inclusive and contemporary learning environments for students.*

*The milestone was marked alongside Member for Ballarat Catherine King, with the project supported by $2 million in funding through the Australian Government's Capital Grants Program.*



*The extensive upgrade has transformed key learning areas across the school, including the creation of four fully accessible classrooms and a central collaborative learning space designed for Year 5 and 6 students. Significant accessibility improvements have also been implemented throughout the campus, enabling students to move more easily and independently between learning spaces.*

*A key feature of the redevelopment is the revitalisation of the historic Columba Wing, originally built in 1911. The refurbishment has introduced additional natural light, improved accessibility and enhanced soundproofing, creating calmer and more inclusive learning environments while preserving the character of this important heritage space.*

*DOBCEL congratulates Co-Principals Shaun Mohr and Bambi Afford, along with staff, students and the wider St Columba's community, on this significant achievement.*

*Following 12 months of construction, the project stands as a testament to the patience, resilience and adaptability shown by students and staff throughout the redevelopment process. The new facilities reflect the heart of Catholic education: creating learning environments where every student feels welcomed, included and empowered to thrive.*

*The completed upgrade will support generations of students, ensuring St Columba's continues to provide high-quality learning opportunities in spaces designed to meet the needs of all learners.*

Catholic Education Ballarat Communications



# Shining During Winter

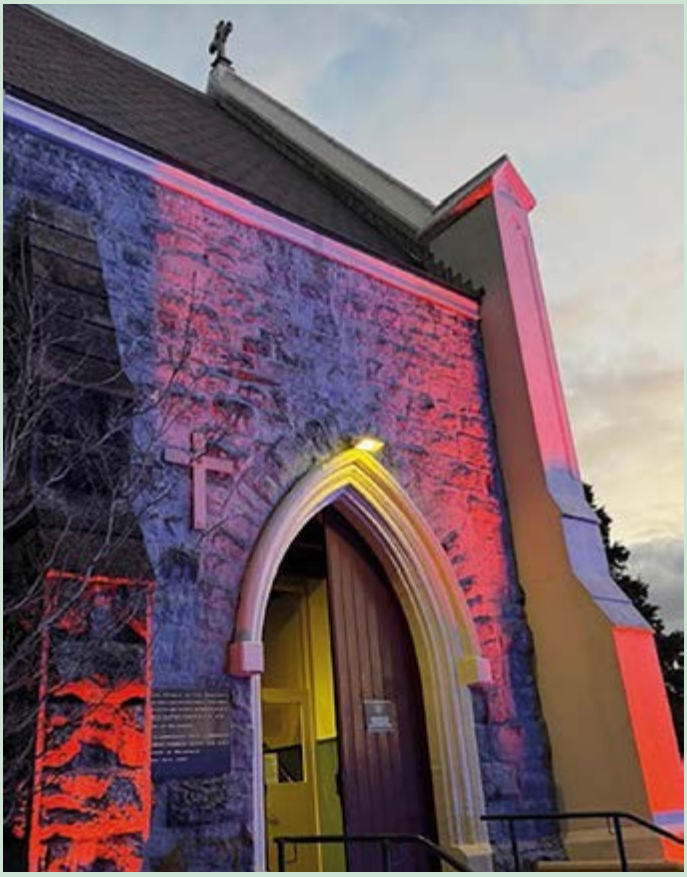


*In August, St Peter's Church Daylesford played a central role in the Winter Sounds 2026 Festival, offering the community and visitors an unforgettable encounter with music, architecture, history and atmosphere. Within St Peter's extraordinary walls, three intimate concerts over three nights, brought together sound, place and spirit in a setting that proved as memorable as the performances themselves.*

*As night fell, the illuminated church became a striking feature of the Winter Sounds experience. Festival Director Dave Frazer captured the response perfectly, "All three artists were absolutely blown away with how spectacular the Church looked and sounded, and seeing the look on our patrons' faces when they enter that space for the first time is always one of the highlights of the festival for me!"*

*For locals and tourists alike, the concerts offered more than an evening of music. They opened the doors to one of Daylesford's treasured buildings, allowing audiences to appreciate St Peter's not only as a place of worship, but as a vibrant cultural space at the heart of the Daylesford.*

Leonie Keynes





# TRINITY DAY

Trinity Day is a meaningful celebration of generosity, compassion and service. As the major fundraising event for the term at Trinity College in Colac, Trinity Day reflects the heart of our Catholic charism and the legacy of founders, Edmund Rice and Catherine McAuley, who dedicated their lives to serving others with compassion, justice and dignity.

The day gives the College community an opportunity to live out our Touchstone values by supporting those most in need. All funds raised throughout the day, including gold coin donations and stall proceeds, will go to St Vincent de Paul and the Colac Salvation Army, organisations that work tirelessly to support people experiencing homelessness and hardship in our local community.

Trinity Day is a whole-school event, and all students enjoy the special day. Festivities began with an assembly, followed by a full afternoon of activities, food vans, games, competitions, and student-run stalls. Highlights included staff versus Year 12 sporting matches, the ever-popular House Dance Competition and an Ice Bucket Challenge. We are blessed to be able to come together as a community to celebrate, have fun and make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. A huge thank you to all who helped make the day so memorable. What a way to finish the term!

*Natalie Holt - Director of Wellbeing*



# 100 Years of Vinnies Shops







In October this year, Vinnies Victoria celebrated 100 years of Vinnies shops in Victoria. It started with a single shop at 214 King St, Melbourne, opening on October 1, 1926. Back then it was called the Waste Products Bureau, and by January 1927 it had already found a new home at 155 Maribyrnong Road, Ascot Vale, where it lives today.

A hundred years on, Vinnies has believed in pre-loved for longer than most of us have been alive - and, long before it was trendy. What started as one shop grew into stores across Victoria, then went digital in 2010 on eBay, and our very own Vinnies Online in 2025. Vinnies VIP launched in 2019, rewarding the people who had already been choosing pre-loved for decades.

The look has changed more than once. What hasn't changed is why we do it. Every donated item helps fund support for people facing hardship, just as it did in 1926.

None of this happens without our community. To every volunteer who has given their time, every team member who has kept the doors open, every shopper who has walked in and every donor who has trusted us with their pre-loved items: thank you. A hundred years in, we genuinely couldn't still be doing this without you.

In the Diocese of Ballarat there are fifteen Vinnies stores located across the diocese: Vinnies Alfredton - 1824 Sturt Street, Alfredton; Vinnies Ballarat Central - 75 Bridge Mall, Ballarat Central; Vinnies Camperdown - 156 Manifold Street, Camperdown; Vinnies Casterton - 35 McPherson Street, Casterton; Vinnies Daylesford - 28 Howe Street, Daylesford; Vinnies Hamilton - 69 Cox Street, Hamilton; Vinnies Horsham - 7-9 David Street, Horsham; Vinnies Maryborough - 148 High Street, Maryborough; Vinnies Mildura - 79 Lime Avenue, Mildura; Vinnies Portland - Tenancy 1, 175 Percy Street, Portland; Vinnies Sebastopol - 112-114 Albert Street, Sebastopol; Vinnies St Arnaud - 35 Napier Street, St Arnaud; Vinnies Swan Hill - 140 Curlewis Street, Swan Hill; Vinnies Warrnambool - 180 Fairy Street, Warrnambool; Vinnies Wendouree - 1255 Howitt Street, Wendouree.

Pop in, say hello and celebrate 100 years with your local Vinnies community.

*www.vinnies.org.au*

# Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize



*On Thursday, August 13, Loreto College Ballarat student Bilyana Holloway represented herself and the College with great distinction at Parliament House, where she was presented as a winner of the Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize by Minister for Veterans Natalie Suleyman. Premier Ben Carroll addressed the award winners, congratulating them on their achievements and endorsing and signing their Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize certificates.*

*The Spirit of Anzac Prize is an annual competition open to Victorian students in Years 9-12. Winners receive the opportunity to participate in a fully funded overseas study tour. This year, the nine-day tour travelled to Vietnam at the end of September, visiting Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and the villages of Hoa Long and Nui Dat.*

*The tour has been developed to give students a unique opportunity to deepen their understanding of Australia's history during the Vietnam War and the service and sacrifice of Australian troops.*

*Bilyana's family has a strong history of military service, including a relative who was a Prisoner of War during the First World War. While in captivity, her relative kept a diary documenting the people he met and his experiences. Many years later, the diary was displayed at the Ballarat Gold Museum. For Bilyana, the opportunity to travel to Vietnam has deep personal significance. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I am so grateful for. I recognise my ancestors and relatives who went through the hardships of war and sacrificed their lives and families to protect future generations. Being able to learn about the history and conflict of war while being present in the country where they were fighting is incredibly significant and valuable to me as a young Australian Aboriginal woman."*

**Loreto College Ballarat**

# A New Chapter for the Diocese: Establishing a Diocesan Pastoral Council



Over recent years, our Church has been on a significant journey of renewal and reflection through the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, the Synod on Synodality, and our own Diocesan Assembly. These experiences have invited us to listen more deeply to one another, remain open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and grow in our understanding of what it means to be the People of God journeying together in faith and mission.

As this journey continues, the establishment of a Diocesan Pastoral Council marks an important milestone in the life of our Diocese. It reflects a shared commitment to prayerful discernment, collaboration and participation in the mission entrusted to us by Christ. More than a new structure, the Council will serve as a forum for listening, dialogue and reflection, helping ensure that the voices, experiences and gifts of the faithful contribute to the ongoing discernment of our local Church.

The Council will bring together people from across the Diocese to consider where the Holy Spirit is leading us and how we can respond faithfully to the opportunities and challenges of our time. It is an opportunity to strengthen the synodal way of being Church, where we walk together, listen carefully and seek God's will for the future. A helpful image for this work is that of the Holy Spirit as a "wild goose" moving through our lives in unexpected ways, sometimes disrupting and surprising us. This reminds us that discernment requires openness, courage and trust. By listening to one another and remaining attentive to the Spirit, we create space for new possibilities to emerge.

The vision of the Diocesan Pastoral Council is grounded in the belief that the Church flourishes when all the baptised are encouraged to share their wisdom, talents and experiences. The diversity of gifts among our communities is a source of strength, and every person has a role to play in advancing the Gospel and building up the Body of Christ. The success of the Council will depend on the faith, wisdom and commitment of those willing to serve. The diocese is seeking people from a variety of backgrounds, experiences and communities who are passionate about the life and mission of the Church. Whether through parish involvement, ministry, professional expertise or a deep love for the Church, every perspective can make a valuable contribution. As we begin this new chapter, we invite members of our Diocese to prayerfully discern whether God may be calling them to serve. May the work of the Diocesan Pastoral Council strengthen our unity, deepen our faith and help us become an ever more vibrant and missionary Church, walking together in hope and guided by the Holy Spirit.

After a process of invitation, consultation, discernment and selection, it is planned that the first meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Council will be held early in 2027.

# Opportunity to explore

*The Year 6 students at St Alipius Parish School Ballarat East had a wonderful day at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne recently!*

*The day gave students the opportunity to explore the experiences of people who have migrated to Australia, develop empathy and understanding and appreciate the diverse cultures, stories and backgrounds that make up our community. It was a powerful way for students to connect their learning with the real world and reflect on what it means to belong.*

*It was also such a beautiful day for a stroll along the Yarra!*

Emily Clarke - Principal





# FLARE LITERACY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DAY



*More than 200 educators from eight Catholic primary schools gathered at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Alfredton, for a day of professional learning, collaboration and shared commitment to improving literacy outcomes for students across the Diocese.*

*The Flare Primary Literacy Professional Learning Day brought together teachers, school leaders, principals and learning support staff to explore evidence-informed literacy practices, share expertise and strengthen the teaching of reading and writing in their classrooms.*

*The event provided a valuable opportunity for educators to learn alongside one another, exchange ideas and build on the collective work already taking place across DOBCEL schools. Throughout the day, participants engaged with current research and practical strategies designed to support every student to become a confident and capable reader, writer and learner.*

*There was a strong sense of energy and optimism as educators worked together towards a shared vision: ensuring every DOBCEL primary school graduate is confidently literate and equipped with the skills needed to thrive in learning and life. The gathering highlighted the power of collaboration across Catholic education, demonstrating how schools can work together to achieve the best outcomes for students and create consistent, high-quality literacy teaching practices.*

*Participating schools included: St Mary's Primary School, Clarkes Hill; Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School, Wendouree; St Thomas More Primary School, Alfredton; Lumen Christi Primary School, Delacombe; St Patrick's Primary School, Ballarat; St Aloysius Primary School, Redan; St Alipius Parish School, Ballarat East; St Patrick's Primary School, Gordon.*

Catholic Education Ballarat Communications

## *Achieving Flare Lighthouse School Accreditation*



The DOBCEL Flare team is incredibly proud to announce that Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Primary School Merbein has officially become a Flare Lighthouse School. This accreditation represents a significant milestone in the school's literacy improvement journey.

To achieve Lighthouse status, schools complete all three phases of the Flare Literacy Professional Learning Syllabus and undertake a rigorous self-accreditation process, demonstrating excellence in literacy teaching, leadership, intervention practices and whole-school consistency from Foundation to Year 6.

As a Flare Lighthouse School, OLSH Merbein joins a growing network of schools committed to continuous improvement, collaboration and achieving outstanding literacy outcomes for every student. Congratulations on this remarkable achievement. Your dedication, hard work, and commitment to Literacy excellence have made this recognition possible.

*Catholic Education Ballarat Communications*



## Parish Administration Day: Celebrating the Heart of Parish Life

The Parish Administration Day brought together parish staff from across the Diocese for a day of reflection, learning and shared conversation. A central theme of the gathering was the recognition that parish administration extends far beyond office functions. Parish offices are often places of welcome, support and pastoral accompaniment, where staff regularly respond to people facing hardship and personal challenges.

Participants reflected on both the rewards and demands of this work, highlighting the need for ongoing formation and support in areas such as pastoral listening, difficult conversations, de-escalation techniques and personal wellbeing. There was strong affirmation of the vital role parish administration staff play in the mission and ministry of the Church.

Workplace safety was also identified as a priority, particularly for those working alone. Discussion focussed on practical measures to promote safe and supportive working environments, including improved office security and welfare check-ins.

The role of hospitality in parish life featured prominently throughout the day, with many sharing examples of parish offices serving as welcoming spaces where people can connect with faith communities and access support. Participants also reflected on the strong partnership between parish staff and clergy, recognising the important contribution staff make in supporting pastoral ministry, communications and parish operations.

Updates from diocesan ministries and agencies highlighted a range of initiatives and priorities. Jillian Hogbin, Diocesan Director of Cartias thanked parishes for their support of Project Compassion, reporting encouraging growth in fundraising across the Diocese. Participants also received updates on sacramental ministry, safeguarding, synodal practices and the renewal of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

Presentations from Maxine Vallance from the Catholic Development Fund and Cathy Prunty from St Alipius Parish Ballarat East outlined resources available to assist parishes with financial stewardship, record keeping, reporting and administration systems from both the CDF and PACEM.

The day concluded with strong support for continued networking, formation and professional development opportunities. The closing reflection captured the spirit of the gathering: parish administration is a ministry of welcome, service and accompaniment that helps build safe, vibrant and faith-filled communities across the Diocese.



## *ENHANCING UNDERSTANDING*

*On Monday, September 7, 2026 St Brigid's Primary School Ballan Year 2 and Year 6 students went to the CERES Environment Park in Brunswick. Students learnt all about the different ways that water is collected in the park, the habitats that have been created for local fauna and about our ecological obligations to the world. They will now use what they learnt to further enhance their understanding of Laudato Si' and the call from Pope Francis to protect our Common Home.*

*It was also a chance for us to think about our conversations about our local flora and fauna, particularly the Werribee River that flows through Ballan, and what they can do to protect it, through the Little Feet, Big Footprints projects.*

Jayne Bosworth - Principal







# OUR LADY OF MERCY MASS

*The Mercy Regional College Camperdown community gathered for the Our Lady of Mercy Mass on Tuesday, September 15, 2026 hosted by Frayne House.*

*The Feast of Our Lady of Mercy, celebrated each year on September 24, is a significant celebration for the Mercy tradition. Mary is honoured as a model of compassion, protection and care for others - values that continue to shape the mission of Mercy Regional College.*

*The Mass led by Frayne House, named in honour of Sr Ursula Frayne, an early Australian Sister of Mercy whose commitment to education, social justice and service helped establish the Mercy tradition in Australia. Her life reminds us of the courage it takes to respond to the needs of others and to turn compassion into action.*

*We gathered together as a College community to celebrate our Mercy identity and the example of Mary, Catherine McAuley and the many women and men who have carried the Mercy mission forward.*

*It was a wonderful way to celebrate our heritage and the valuable work of the Sisters of Mercy. We thank Fr George for celebrating Mass with us and the many staff and students involved in the celebration.*

Melanie Bourchier - Director of Catholic Identity & Culture

# Mothers Who Pray for their Children

On Saturday, September 19, 2026 the Mothers who Pray for their Children movement in the Star of the Sea, South West Coast Parish celebrated Mass for their Patroness 'Our Lady of La Salette'. Mass was celebrated by Fr Matt Restall at the St Pius Church, West Warrnambool.

Mothers who Pray for their Children began in 2011 in Brazil, Vitória city in Espirito Santo state, at São Camilo de Léllis Parish. It is a non-profit organisation seeking to encourage families by the power of prayer. It was acknowledged by the Archdiocese of Vitória (ES) as "Mothers who Pray for their Children's Movement", with Angela Abdo as Foundress and the Patroness is Our Lady of La Salette as Patroness with St Monica as Co-Patroness. An annual conference is held each year.

Marita Flanagan is the coordinator for the South West of Victoria. The Movement meet each Friday at the Infant Jesus Church, Koroit. These beautiful prayer groups are all over the world and the Holy Spirit is guiding them to form across Australia. There are now two Conferences here in Australia.

Marita said she recommends joining a group as it brings such peace and fellowship to mothers and if anyone would like to begin a group, please contact Marita Flanagan on 0402431053.







# ST MARY MACKILLOP COLLEGE SWAN HILL PENOLA CAMPUS

Under the governance of the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL), St Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill purchased 6.7 hectares of land on Gray Street, Swan Hill in 2022. Through consultation with staff and students, the campus is now known as the Penola Campus and will serve as the future site of the college, with an anticipated opening in 2028. The new site is more than three times the size of the current grounds and will enable the development of purpose-built classrooms tailored for 21st-century learning.

In August we were pleased to hear that a planning permit has been issued from the Department of Transport and Planning for the proposed development. Following this, approval was then granted for our architects to progress Stage One of the Penola Campus Master Plan to tender. This is an exciting and significant milestone in the development of the campus, with the hope that the tender process will lead to the appointment of a contractor and the handover of the site before the end of the year.

It is anticipated that this will be a five stage project. The timeline for each stage is dependent on the College's borrowing capability, cash reserves and capital grant funding. Stage 1 has been approved with a $6 million grant from the Victorian State Government under the Building Fund for Non-Government Schools.

The Maintenance Team has been working hard to prepare the site for the next stage of development in the tender process. An important milestone in this journey took place on Tuesday, September 8, 2026 when members of the Indigenous community joined the College community for a special ceremony to honour the history of the land and the generations of people who have cared for it. We were privileged to participate in this meaningful event, led by proud Wamba Wemba and Mutti Mutti Elder, Aunty Vicki Clarke.

The ceremony provided an opportunity to cleanse and bless the site before construction begins, acknowledging the land, its spirit, and the many stories it holds. It was a powerful way to recognise the deep cultural significance of the area while looking forward to the future of learning and community that our new campus will provide.

Students were actively involved throughout the ceremony. They reflected on their own connections to the land by drawing symbols of their roots and relationships in the earth and were individually anointed with a special oil as part of the experience. It was wonderful to gather together on the site of our future campus and share in this significant moment. The occasion marked the beginning of an exciting new chapter for our school, and we look forward to sharing further updates as the project progresses.

*Nella Sharp - Head of Campus*

# Congratulations

*A special congratulations to Ivy and Lottie who recently celebrated the Sacrament of Baptism at St Patrick's Church in the Cathedral Parish.*

*We are delighted to celebrate this important step in their faith journey and pray that they continue to grow in their relationship with God, surrounded by the love and support of their families and our Siena Primary School community, Lucas.*



Lauren Davey - Siena Catholic Identity, Faith and Mission Leader

# ENGAGING SESSIONS FOR CLERGY



*Clergy from across the Diocese gathered for the **Priests in Parishes Forum** on September 8, 2026 in the Wimmera Mallee Parish (Horsham Centre).*

*The first session led by Fr Justin Driscoll reflected on the theme "Synodality is Already Happening." Discussions focused on the changing face of the Diocese, shaped by parish consolidations, demographic shifts and growing cultural diversity. Clergy explored how unity can be strengthened while ensuring that the voices, experiences and gifts of different communities are recognised and represented in parish and diocesan life.*

*A part of the conversation centred on the proposed Diocesan Pastoral Council, with clergy emphasising the importance of a clear mission, genuine discernment and broad representation. The forum also highlighted the value of parish assemblies, grassroots faith groups and local leadership teams in fostering belonging and engagement.*

*Throughout the session, there was strong recognition that listening, hospitality and opportunities for communities to gather remain essential for building trust, maintaining local identity and supporting the Church's mission across an increasingly diverse Diocese.*

*In the second session facilitated by Fr Paddy Mugavin, clergy reflected on the realities of parish consolidation, sharing lessons from recent experiences across the Diocese. Clergy emphasised that while careful planning around parish identity, governance and finances is essential, equal attention must be given to the emotional impact of change.*

*Many communities experience consolidation as a sense of loss, grieving familiar traditions, local identities and long-standing relationships. The forum highlighted the importance of listening, transparent communication and strong administrative support in helping parishioners navigate transition and build confidence in a shared future.*

*Discussion also focused on building trust and unity across larger parish communities. Clergy noted that successful transitions depend on strong relationships, stable leadership and a willingness to embrace new ways of being Church. Technology, including livestreamed liturgies, has helped maintain connections across geographically dispersed communities, while shared parish initiatives have created opportunities for collaboration and renewal. The forum also acknowledged the growing pressures on clergy as parish boundaries expand and priest numbers decline, while reaffirming the importance of shared responsibility, family faith formation and maintaining vibrant faith communities as the Church continues to adapt to changing circumstances. Overall, an engaging gathering to support the clergy in the Diocese.*

## GreenPrint Projects

St Thomas' Primary School Terang have recently connected with GreenPrint Projects. GreenPrint Projects is a not-for-profit turning school gardens across South-West Victoria into Living Classrooms. They help schools reimagine spaces as transformative green environments that nurture learning, biodiversity and the health and wellbeing of young people.



Anthea and Chon from GreenPrint Projects delivered nature workshops, exploring students' ideas for their school green space and the important role native gardens play in creating habitat for local wildlife.



Grade 6 students helped prepare the site near the sandpit, turning their ideas into the beginnings of a vibrant new green space for their school community.

It was wonderful to see students sharing ideas, getting hands-on, and helping shape a healthier, greener future for their school.

*Matt Uzkuraitis – Principal & GreenPrint Projects FaceBook*

# 3 Months in Rome: A Sabbatical Experience

***Fr James Kerr, Parish Priest of Northeast Mallee, writes a summary about his sabbatical experience where he was blessed with the opportunity to spend three months in Rome.***

*What is a Sabbatical? A Sabbatical is an opportunity for those in ministry to step aside from their responsibilities and duties for a little while so they can be renewed and refreshed. Think of Jesus telling his disciples to 'come away and rest awhile.'*



*Feeling the Call: I had felt that call to 'come away' gently building over the last couple of years. Don't get me wrong, I absolutely love where I am and love what I do. I wouldn't trade any of it for the world! But even if we are happily secure in our vocation, we are still only human, with all the limitations that entails. We need to receive before we can give of ourselves, and I was feeling God calling me to step aside for a little while in order that he could make me anew. It really was a strong sense of God calling me to this time, that he had something to show me, something he wanted me to experience.*

*The Sabbatical Program Itself: The final nudge came when a trusted friend recommended the Spring Program to me. He could see the need in me. He had also completed the program itself, so he knew it would be a good fit. He was right! The program was run by the Institute for Continuing Theological Education, based out of the Pontifical North American College in Rome. There were 15 of us priests in the program, based mostly in the United States, but from very varied backgrounds. I was blessed to be with the men I was with. We had our own house and chapel, praying together more or less every day. Most days we also had a class or presentation delivered by various speakers and lecturers, along with the occasional excursions and outings. We visited many sacred and historical sites, as well as seeking out some significant examples of religious art. It was a very well-balanced program; plenty of great input but still plenty of time and space left to get out and explore Rome and its surrounds on our own.*

*The Highlights: Some highlights of the program were the optional pilgrimage to Turkey, where we visited the sites of all the Seven Churches of Revelations, as well as many other sites connected to the life of St Paul and the early Church. Our retreat in Assisi was also a great blessing and luckily coincided with the Jubilee year and the very rare opportunity to venerate St Francis' relics. We were also so blessed to finish our time with the opportunity to concelebrate Palm Sunday Mass with the Pope and thousands of the faithful.*



*As far as my own explorations went, I embraced the opportunity to explore many of Rome's lesser-known churches. So often I was surprised to find beautiful frescoes and mosaics or important sacred relics in the most unassuming of churches. Three more very special memories are my visit to the Focolare Centre in Loppiano (near Florence), as well as making it to the Holy House in Loreto and finding and viewing the ancient and beautiful icon of our Lady 'Advocata Nostra', tucked away and almost hidden and forgotten in the quiet cloistered convent of Our Lady of the Rosary. Locked away, it was a bit of a challenge getting inside, but a kind man I came across pleaded with Sister on my behalf, "he has come all the way from Australia". All of these experiences together left me feeling so much closer to the Saints and our tradition. Everything just feels that bit more real!*

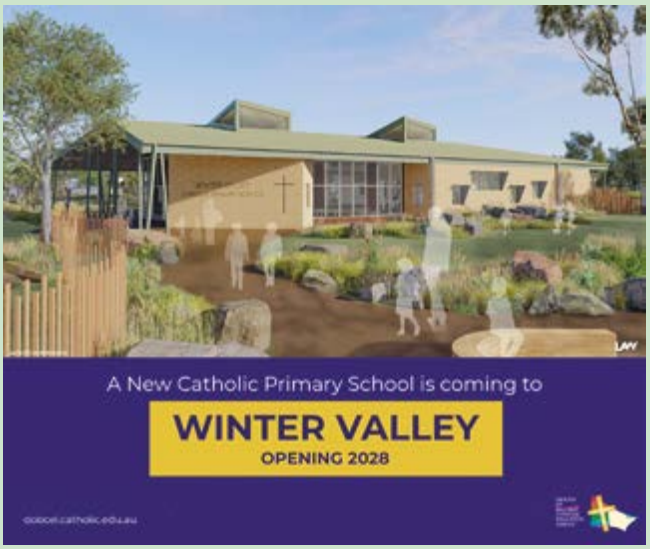
*Challenges and Growth: The experience was not without it challenges, but these too became opportunities for growth. I was surprised by how deeply I was affected by homesickness; that sense of being out of your depth in a new environment and cut off from your usual supports and the people you love. As hard as it was, I recognised it as an opportunity to taste, ever so slightly, just something of what so many of my parishioners who are migrants must themselves feel day to day. I also came to see it as a good confirmation of just how much I love where I am!*

*The even bigger challenge was being hit with a sense of being rather useless and forgotten. This really knocked me flat. As a priest in a parish I am often called upon – people seek me out and turn to me, I am needed, I have my place*

*and my identity. But in Rome, I was cut off from all that; no-one needed me, no one called on me. Challenged by these feelings of being a bit useless, I was pushed to remember that before I am a servant, a priest, and a father, I am firstly a beloved child of God; a son, a brother. That is my foundational identity, and indeed that is true for all of us. It is good for us to find meaning in our various identities as carers, as spouses, as mothers or fathers (and the list goes on), and to give generously of ourselves within that vocation, but before all of that, and breathing life into it all, is our foundational identity as a beloved child of God. We can only give because we have first received, and we never cease needing to receive. I think that will be a lesson I will continue to turn back to and draw upon time and again.*

*In Thanksgiving: I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to undertake this Sabbatical. My thanks to Bishop Emeritus Paul for his blessing, to the Diocese for its support and sponsorship, to my brother priests who encouraged me and who helped cover my absence, and to our Parish staff and volunteers who held the fort and were so generous in supporting me. My heartfelt thanks and gratitude.*

# New Catholic Primary School Planned for Winter Valley




The Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) is progressing plans to establish a new Catholic primary school at Winter Valley, responding to the significant population growth occurring across Ballarat's western growth corridor.

The school is planned to open at the beginning of the 2028 school year, creating a new Catholic education option for families in one of Ballarat's fastest-growing residential areas. It will become part of DOBCEL's network of 56 Catholic schools across Western Victoria.

DOBCEL Executive Director, Tom Sexton, said planning for the Winter Valley school represents an important investment in both the immediate and long-term needs of the growing Ballarat community. "Winter Valley and Ballarat's western corridor are experiencing significant growth, with new neighbourhoods and communities continuing to take shape," Mr Sexton said. "Our responsibility is to look ahead and ensure families have access to high-quality Catholic education close to where they live. A new school gives us a particularly exciting opportunity. We are not simply constructing buildings; we have the opportunity to build a school community from the ground up, one shaped by faith, belonging, contemporary learning and strong connections with its families and the wider community."

The new school will be located off Greenhalghs Road, Winter Valley with construction expected to commence later this year.

An important milestone in the project's development is the commencement of recruitment for the Foundation Principal. The successful candidate will begin in January 2027 and will play a key role in establishing the school's identity, culture and educational vision ahead of its planned opening in 2028. "The Foundation Principal will have an extraordinary opportunity to help create the identity, culture and educational vision of a completely new Catholic school," Mr Sexton said. "With Catholic education continuing to experience strong enrolment growth in the Ballarat region, this new school community will provide families with access to quality Catholic education in contemporary, purpose-built facilities."

As planning progresses, further information about the new Winter Valley Catholic primary school, including opportunities for families and the wider community to engage with its development, will be shared. Families interested in enrolling their children can register their interest via https://www.dobcel.catholic.edu.au/

*Catholic Education Ballarat Communications*

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.*

*('Peace Prayer' attributed to St Francis of Assisi)*

# R U OK?




*Thursday, September 10, 2026 was R U OK? Day. R U OK? is a national suicide prevention charity and registered public health promotion that encourages people to stay connected and have conversations that can help others through difficult times. Their work focuses on building the motivation, confidence and skills of the help-giver – the person who can have a meaningful conversation with someone who is struggling with life. R U OK? contributes to suicide prevention efforts by encouraging people to invest more time in their personal relationships and building the capacity of informal support networks – friends, family and colleagues - to be alert to those around them, have a conversation if they identify signs of distress or difficulty and connect someone to appropriate support, long before they are in crisis.*

*Asking R U OK? any day, not just on the designated day, could change a life.*

*St John of God Ballarat caregivers came together to support R U OK? Day, raising awareness of the importance of meaningful conversations and looking out for one another. Caregivers enjoyed connecting with colleagues throughout the hospital, which was brightly decorated with yellow flowers, streamers and balloons. The sea of yellow was a vibrant show of support for the message that a simple conversation can make a real difference.*

*At St John of God Health Care, we know that staying connected and checking in with one another helps create a culture where everyone feels supported, valued and heard.*

*Remember, you don't need to be an expert to reach out. Sometimes asking "Are you OK?" and taking the time to listen, can have a lasting impact.*

Jamie Lovett - Marketing & Communications Coordinator
https://www.ruok.org.au/

# RACE STEM – Careers in Agriculture

At St Brigid's College Horsham, the RACE STEM Agriculture Program, led by CQUniversity's Agri-tech Education and Extension researchers and facilitated by the Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network, aims to provide engaging experiences that increase students' understanding, confidence, interest and motivation for pursuing a pathway to one of the many different careers in the agricultural industry. The program has been successful in connecting students with the local agricultural industry through hands-on STEM activities and has seen a significant increase in secondary students interested in pursuing a career in agriculture. Recently, Year 8 students engaged in innovative digital technologies including thermal cameras, and explored the use of drone technology in agriculture. Thank you to Mrs Lannen and the Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN for making the opportunity available to our students.

*Fiona Combe - Acting Principal*





# New VACPSP Vice President



Congratulations to Ben van de Camp on his new role as VACPSP Vice President. Ben is an experienced and highly respected Catholic primary school leader who currently serves as Principal of St John's Primary School, Dennington. Known for his steady leadership, relational approach and deep commitment to Ballarat Diocese Catholic education, Ben has made a significant contribution to strengthening principal voice and professional collaboration across Victoria.

In 2026, Ben was appointed Deputy President of the Victorian Association of Catholic Primary School Principals (VACPSP). His appointment reflects both his strong reputation among colleagues and the Association's commitment to ensuring balanced representation from metropolitan and regional communities. Ben brings to the role a thoughtful, solutions focused mindset and a genuine dedication to supporting principal wellbeing, advocacy and system improvement. Throughout his career, Ben has demonstrated a consistent focus on building thriving school cultures, nurturing staff leadership, and ensuring high quality learning environments for students. His work in Dennington is widely recognised for its community engagement, stability and clarity of purpose. Ben's leadership is characterised by integrity, calm professionalism and a deep respect for the vocation of Catholic school leadership. His contribution to VACPSP strengthens the Association's capacity to serve principals across the state with wisdom, unity and a strong collective voice.

Watch a short video from VACPSP at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezqlWT2Tqcc&t=5s

*Catholic Education Ballarat Communications*

# WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Each year, the World Day of Migrants and Refugees invites us to reflect on the realities faced by people who are forced to leave their homes in search of safety, security and a better future. This year's theme, "Even just one of these children," draws particular attention to children and young people affected by migration and displacement. It challenges us to recognise their dignity, hear their stories and respond with compassion to their vulnerability. As Jesus reminds us, "whoever receives one such child in my name receives me" (Mk 9:37).

Children are among the most vulnerable of all migrants and refugees. Across the world, millions have been displaced by war, poverty, violence and environmental disasters. Many have experienced trauma, loss and separation from their families, while others continue to face uncertainty and hardship as they seek safety and belonging. Their experiences call us to a deeper awareness of our shared responsibility to protect, welcome and accompany them with care and hope.

We invite you to read the following reflection of a refugee family who have called Ballarat home for more than eight years. After arriving in Australia over thirteen years ago, they faced the heartbreaking reality of leaving behind two young children, aged five years and six months, in the care of their grandmother. While building a new life in Australia, they welcomed two more children, now aged twelve and ten, with their eldest Australian-born child entering the world while the family was in detention in Melbourne. After years of separation, joy finally arrived when, this time last year, they were reunited with their two older children, now nineteen and fourteen. Their story is a powerful reminder of both the profound challenges faced by many refugee families and the hope that can emerge through perseverance, faith and reunion.



*Fourteen years of being apart, uncertainty, and legal battles. Fourteen years of ticking every box and meeting every requirement put forward by Immigration. Finally, our two kids have been allowed to come to Australia and live with us as a family. The happiness and joy they have brought into our lives is something we simply cannot describe in words. For all these years without our two kids, life never felt complete. We never truly celebrated festivals, birthdays, or special occasions with our hearts full. There was always an emptiness, a missing piece that words cannot explain. After fourteen long years, that emptiness is finally being filled. Having our children with us, under the same roof, is a blessing beyond words. We know this journey may still bring challenges and difficult times, but this time we will face everything together - as a family. We have waited, struggled, hoped, and fought for this moment for fourteen years. Finally, our family is together. And that is all that matters.*



# The Australian Pedal Car Grand Prix

The Australian Pedal Car Grand Prix is one of Coleraine's most exciting community events, bringing together fun, teamwork and friendly competition in a vibrant atmosphere. This unique and environmentally friendly event sees competitors race pedal-powered vehicles around a dedicated street circuit, creating an action-packed spectacle for participants and spectators alike.

This year's event on October 3 was centred around the Coleraine Railway Station Tourist Centre, overlooking the picturesque Lagoon. The racing circuit took in McConachie, Pilleau and Robertson Streets, with the start and finish line located in McConachie Street alongside the Lagoon.

Located approximately 330 kilometres west of Melbourne and 34 kilometres west of Hamilton, Coleraine is a welcoming rural township nestled in a valley at the southern end of the Grampians. Its scenic setting provides the perfect backdrop for this much-loved annual event.




Teams are invited to build and race their own pedal cars in a two-hour endurance race, with hire cars also available for those wishing to participate without constructing their own vehicle. Competitors can enter one of three categories: **Junior** - for participants aged 13 years and under, with teams consisting of 4 to 8 riders and 2 pit crew members; **Open** - for participants aged 13 years and over, including adults, with teams of 4 riders and 2 pit crew members; **Elite** - for competitors aged 14 years and over, with teams of 4 riders and 2 pit crew members.

Whether competing, volunteering or cheering from the sidelines, the Australian Pedal Car Grand Prix is a fantastic celebration of community spirit, fitness and innovation. **St Joseph's Primary School Coleraine** once again competed in the Grand Prix and this year were fortunate to have their very own car donated by Geoff Vickery, which was presented to the school by David Vickery. Students were excited to see the cart, so before the cart took to the road for the first time, a blessing was held to mark the occasion and pray for the safety of all involved. A great day was had by all and the fundraising was amazing.

*Danny Franc – Principal*
*Information from https://pedalcargp.au/*

# A Surprise Visitor

*There was a delightful surprise at St Andrew's Catholic Church, Simpson, on Thursday, September 17, 2026 when Anton Morris arrived for the weekday Mass — on horseback! Anton, a local retired school teacher, made quite an entrance as he rode his horse to the church in true country style. His arrival brought a special touch of joy and character to the gathering and was certainly something the parishioners will remember.*




*Around a dozen parishioners gathered for the weekday celebration of Mass. As is the usual custom at St Andrew's, the community remained together after Mass for Benediction and the Rosary, followed by a friendly cup of coffee and conversation.*

*The sight of a horse standing patiently outside the church while the community prayed inside was a beautiful reminder of the close connection between faith, community and country life.*

*St Andrew's is a cherished community of Heartland Parish, where ordinary moments often become memorable occasions. Anton's horseback arrival was certainly one of them — a wonderful example of the warmth, simplicity and welcoming spirit of the Simpson Catholic community. Faith, fellowship and country life — all gathered together at St Andrew's!*

Kevin Robertson. Photo: Anton and parishioners outside St Andrew's Catholic Church, Simpson

# *ACU Ballarat Open Day*

*Deciding what to study is a pretty momentous decision. This is the main reason why Australian Catholic University (ACU) runs their Open Day — it's everything students need, in one place, to help make their choice. ACU's Ballarat campus threw open its doors to future students on a sunny Sunday, August 23, 2026.*

*ACU Ballarat Campus Dean Professor Bridget Aitchison, said that Open Day gave future students and their families the opportunity to gain a better understanding of ACU. "We had academics, course experts, support staff and admission gurus on-hand and ready to help," she said. "Students could ask about courses, applications, pathways, scholarships, studying overseas, accommodation, financial support and more. It was also an opportunity to participate in a campus tour, meet current students and course lecturers."*

*ACU offers a friendly, supportive environment for students preparing for careers in schools, hospitals, businesses and a range of other workplaces. People were encouraged to come along and learn more about:*

- *ACU's courses in education, theology, philosophy and health sciences such as nursing, paramedicine and physiotherapy;*
- *ACU's connections with industry;*
- *University life;*
- *Scholarships and financial support;*
- *Different ways of securing a place in courses of choice.*

*Open Day at ACU's Ballarat Campus was also a fun day out with live entertainment, lots of giveaway goodies and great food.*

*For more information on ACU Ballarat, see http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/campuses/ballarat*



# *FORMATION IN LEADERSHIP FOR SYNODALITY RETURNS IN 2027*



Following the success of the pilot Formation in Leadership for Synodality program, *Together on the Way*, which brought together twenty participants from across the Diocese of Ballarat, a second formation opportunity will be offered in 2027 in partnership with Catholic Theological College. Supported through a bursary funded by the Therese D'Orsa Mission Fund, the program continues the Diocese's commitment to forming leaders for a more synodal Church.

The initiative emerged from the Diocesan Assembly in 2024, where formation for synodality was identified as a key priority. The 2027 program will focus on *Identity and Mission in the Synodal Church*, helping participants explore the theological, ecclesiological and cultural foundations that shape mission and leadership within Catholic communities today.

The formation journey will consist of three interconnected sessions. An Introduction Session in December 2026 will establish the shared purpose of the cohort and begin project discernment. Two further sessions in Semester One 2027 will focus on *Synodal Dispositions* and *Reading the Signs of the Times*, equipping participants with the skills to listen, discern and respond to the needs of their communities through a theological lens.

Participants will be supported in developing a synodal praxis project within their parish, school, ministry or diocesan context, putting the principles of synodality into practice. More than a series of workshops, the program is an invitation to embrace a synodal way of being Church through attentive listening, collaboration, shared discernment and missionary engagement.

To make participation accessible across the Diocese, key presentations from the Saturday gatherings will be livestreamed, while participants will also be welcome to attend in person.

Attendance at the program will form an important part of the preparation of prospective members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council and will also be offered to members of diocesan commissions and committees. Bishop Mark Freeman encourages people to take part in this valuable formation opportunity and hopes to participate himself whenever commitments allow. For more information, please contact Jane Collins - Pastoral Planning Panel - jane.collins@ballarat.catholic.org.au

# *Introducing The Border Quarterly*




*In September, St Mary MacKillop Western Border Parish launched its new parish magazine. The Border Quarterly, subtitled Our Parish Community, was inspired by **Our Diocesan Community** and brings the same idea to a much smaller scale: sharing news, stories and photographs across the ten communities that make up the parish, scattered over 10,000 square kilometres.*

*The idea grew from seeing how well **Our Diocesan Community** connects Catholics across the diocese. The parish team wanted a local counterpart, something that would celebrate the people and places that make up the Western Border parish.*

*The magazine is designed and produced in-house using Affinity, Canva's professional layout software, which is free for everyone. The parish already uses Canva for its weekly bulletin, so the two publications are now made with tools from the same Australian-founded family. The inaugural Spring issue featured the parish's annual financial report alongside local news and photographs. Future issues will have a seasonal focus. Summer will include a photographic tribute to parishioners who have died over the past year, and Autumn will celebrate everyone baptised in the previous year.*

*These recurring features will keep TBQ relatively simple to produce, while helping it become a warm local companion to ODC — telling the stories of our parish and the people who belong to it.*

Fr John Corrigan - Parish Priest

# *BREAKING THE CYCLE, ONE PEDAL AT A TIME*

For 24 hours, the wheels kept turning at St Patrick's College Ballarat as students and staff united to *Break the Cycle* of gender-based violence. Now in its third year, the initiative once again brought the College community together to raise awareness of gendered violence, challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours, and support organisations working to create safer communities. This year's event raised an impressive $7,730.19 for Raven Collective Ballarat and WRISC Family Violence Support.

Six bikes were ridden continuously throughout the 24-hour challenge, with more than 100 students and staff taking turns in the saddle. The event was further supported through donations, sponsorships and an online auction. We thank the students, the staff and the many businesses for their support of Break the Cycle 2026.

Speaking at the launch, John Richards, Deputy Principal - Community, said the significance of the event extended far beyond fundraising. "As a boys' school, we have a responsibility to help form young men who build positive, respectful relationships and contribute to safer communities," he said. Mr Richards also acknowledged the efforts of the boarding community, led by Boarding Captains Lachie Lloyd and Rory Bell, together with event coordinator Ebony Corden, whose work helped make the event a success.

Representing WRISC Family Violence Support, Elisha Smith thanked the College for its commitment to addressing gender-based violence. "Your courage is challenging outdated gender-based norms and empowering yourselves to recognise the positive impact you can have on others and the world around you," she said. "Together, we are helping create a safer, more respectful and inclusive community."

Ms Corden praised the dedication of the Student Council, particularly Lachie Lloyd, Rory Bell and George Charles, whose leadership played a significant role in the event's success. "Whether you rode, donated, volunteered, attended the opening or closing ceremonies, purchased an auction item or helped spread the word, every contribution made a difference," she said. "This incredible result reflects the generosity and spirit of our College community. Together, we have raised vital funds, increased awareness and taken another step towards breaking the cycle of gender-based violence."

*Katie Spurgo - St Patrick's College Ballarat*



# "Emmanuel Goes to the Movies"



On Friday, September 18, 2026 Emmanuel College Warrnambool celebrated Emmanuel Day with this year's theme, "Emmanuel Goes to the Movies."

Students and staff embraced the theme enthusiastically, with some fantastic costumes inspired by all things movies! Throughout the day, students enjoyed a wide range of activities, with the celebrations culminating in "Emmanuel's Got Talent". Beautiful weather added to what was a wonderful day of fun, connection and celebration for our College community.

A sincere thank you to our school community for purchasing wristbands and supporting our fundraising efforts. We are delighted to announce that $7,762 was raised, with all proceeds to be shared between our two major charity partners, Mercy Works and the Ruben Centre in Africa. We would also like to acknowledge the generous support of Harvey Norman Warrnambool, who donated a fantastic 40-inch television as the prize for our Passport Competition. Congratulations to Jewel from Year 7, who was the very happy winner!

Finally, thank you to Norfolk Butcher and Brumby's Northpoint for supporting the College BBQ by supplying meat and bread at discounted prices. Their generosity contributed to make the day a great success. Thank you to everyone who contributed to making Emmanuel Day such a memorable celebration of our College community.

*Claire Wrigley - Assistant Principal Students*

# Spiritual Day Retreat: A Pierced Heart






*The glory of God shone brightly upon Daylesford on September 12, 2026 when 115 people gathered at St Peter's Church for a spiritual day retreat run by Fr John Corrigan and Fiona Bradley.*

*Retreats provide us an opportunity to leave behind our everyday routines and spend some time in prayer to focus on our relationship with God and replenish our spiritual lives. The facilitators of the Daylesford retreat, A Pierced Heart: Following the Path of Our Lady of Sorrows, invited participants to enter into Mary's seven swords, and to find encouragement in her model of faith, trust, and compassion amidst adversity. The day included three sessions, prayer, and Adoration before concluding with a beautiful celebration of the Mass. As the source and summit of our faith, the Eucharist calls us to stand with Mary at the foot of the Cross, offering our own sufferings in union with Christ's perfect act of love.*

*Whilst potentially confronting on paper, the theme of redemptive suffering helped dismantle the fear of sitting with pain, ultimately encouraging attendees to surrender to God's divine plan. The facilitators encouraged participants to seek solace in Our Lady who compassionately accompanies us in our sufferings. The sword that pierced her heart offers her a profound understanding of human grief, which has allowed her to step tenderly into our personal trials and walk faithfully alongside us in our darkest moments.*

*The resounding message of the day was that our faith is relational, not only with God but with each other. We are made to share it and to walk alongside others in it, and that was evident in how people interacted throughout the day. During breaks, participants were animated as they caught up with old friends and made new connections.*

*People arrived at St Peter's spiritually weary but left beaming with contentment after having rested with the Lord in prayer, reflection, and community. Spending time away from the daily grind had brought about a clear sense of joy and a renewed certainty that our faith is built on hope and charity. May we all continue to find encouragement in knowing that our faith is deeply relational. We are at our best when we allow others to share our burdens and when we support our neighbours in theirs. Plans are underway for more retreats in 2027. Look out for advertising in your parish bulletins.*

Fiona Bradley

# Fred Hyde Day

*In 2012 the Marian College Ararat Year 12 cohort took the initiative to find a charity or foundation that the College could support. From their research they came upon the CO-ID charity for children created by Fred Hyde that builds and operates kindergartens and schools on the Island of Bhola, Bangladesh. This foundation is 100% not for profit with 100% of donations going to the operations of the schools and kindergartens.*

*Since then, the annual day has become an important part of College life. On Friday, September 11 this year, students and staff once again gathered to continue this wonderful tradition and make a difference in the lives of others.*

*Our wonderful Year 12 students planned and organised great activities, food and entertainment. The College was also happy to welcome the Year 5 and 6 students from St Mary's Primary School Ararat and the Year 6 students from St Patrick's Primary School Stawell to join them on the day and help make it a true community celebration. The College thanks staff, students and members of the local community who supported the day with attendance and donations.*

*Overall fundraising for the day totalled over $5,000 but irrespective of the amount raised, the day is an important reminder that we have an obligation to care for those who may be experiencing difficult times and for whom a hand up may just be the catalyst for a better life.*

*We began the day with a liturgy and heard stories of those who have been assisted by Vinnies and also the incredible difference early childhood education can make in Bangladesh. As a Catholic community, we have a responsibility through our Catholic Social Teaching to honour the inherent dignity of all and to live out the words of Jesus when he reminded us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked and visit the sick and those in prison. Fred Hyde Day helps us to live out that commitment in a meaningful way.*



*I will finish with a quote from Pope Leo XIV's recent encyclical 'Magnifica Humanitas' (Magnificent Humanity), "For a Christian, going beyond the narrow confines of one's own interests and committing oneself, within the limits of one's ability, to the common good is a non-negotiable value, as is the promotion of life." (59). The Marian College community certainly lived this value in the past few months including the Vinnies Winter Appeal and Sleepout and Fred Hyde Day.*

Marlo Drake-Bemelmans - Religious Education Curriculum & Faith Leader






# 'DON'T GIVE UP'

I'm 81 and have always lived an active life. Lorraine and I have been married for 56 years, and we've spent our retirement caravanning around Australia, volunteering in the community, getting involved in local clubs and spending time with our three children and seven grandchildren.

A few years ago, I started noticing small changes. I was becoming more forgetful, sometimes not recognising people and repeating myself. I just had this feeling that something wasn't quite right. After seeing my GP and having specialist assessments, I was diagnosed with Mild Cognitive Impairment in 2023. Two years later, that diagnosis progressed to Alzheimer's disease.

The diagnosis has been difficult for both Lorraine and me, especially as everyday things have become harder. I stopped driving in September 2025, which had a big impact on my independence. But we've tried to focus on the things we can control. I exercise regularly, eat well, do puzzles, volunteer and stay socially connected. Lorraine supports me more with day-to-day life now, while making sure I can still do the things I enjoy. I've also taken part in research and clinical trials because I want to do what I can to help improve our understanding of Alzheimer's disease and support the development of new treatments for people diagnosed in the future.

I'm open about my diagnosis because I don't think it's something people should feel they need to hide. If you notice changes in yourself, don't just put them down to getting older. Talk to your doctor and seek support early. "Don't give up. Talk to people and use the help that's available. There's still life to be lived." Lorraine and I are sharing our story in the hope it helps others recognise the signs, seek medical advice and know that if they do receive a diagnosis, they're not alone.

*Frank Stuart*



# SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Fr Marcello Colasante recently celebrated his 25th Anniversary of Ordination to the Priesthood. Fr Marcello was ordained on August 31, 2001 at St Alipius Church, Ballarat East and is currently the Vicar General of the Diocese and Parish Priest of Creswick, Daylesford and Wendouree Parishes.

The community of St Michael's Primary School Daylesford celebrated this milestone with Fr Marcello:

Our St Michael's school community recently celebrated a very special milestone for Fr Marcello – 25 years since his ordination to the priesthood. For 25 years, Fr Marcello has generously answered God's call to serve His people, sharing his faith, compassion and pastoral care with the many communities he has been privileged to journey alongside.

We are particularly grateful for the important role Fr Marcello plays in the life of our St Michael's community. Through our liturgies, Sacraments, school celebrations and everyday interactions, he continues to support our students, staff and families and reminds us of the importance of living our faith through kindness, service and love.

Twenty-five years of priesthood represents an incredible commitment to God and to the people he serves. We give thanks for Fr Marcello's vocation and for the many lives he has touched throughout his ministry.

*Tim Hogan - Principal*

# CONTEXTUALISING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN CATHOLIC CLASSROOMS

*On September 8, 2026, the Catholic Identity and Mission and Student Wellbeing teams recently facilitated a professional learning workshop,* ***Contextualising RRRR in Catholic Classrooms****, in partnership with the Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA). The workshop brought together 31 participants, comprising school educators and DOBCEL staff, to explore the effective implementation of the Rights, Resilience and Respectful Relationships (RRRR) initiative within Catholic school contexts.*

*The workshop was designed to support Catholic school leaders in implementing RRRR with confidence, authenticity, and fidelity to Catholic teachings and values. Participants engaged in rich discussions and practical learning experiences that examined how respectful relationships education can be meaningfully integrated within the mission and identity of Catholic schools.*

*VCEA's Consent and Respectful Relationships Education Lead, Alyssa O'Sullivan, officially opened the workshop and welcomed participants before introducing facilitator Caitlin Humphrys from Brisbane Catholic Education. Drawing on her extensive expertise, Caitlin guided attendees through a range of collaborative activities, reflection opportunities, and practical strategies.*





*Throughout the day, educators from different schools shared experiences, engaged in meaningful table discussions, and explored approaches to strengthening respectful relationships education in their communities. Key takeaways from the workshop included:*

- *Implementing RRRR faithfully and confidently within Catholic school settings.*
- *Grounding practice in Catholic identity, mission, and values.*
- *Navigating complex and sensitive topics with clarity and pastoral care.*
- *Applying trauma-informed and inclusive pedagogical approaches.*
- *Strengthening educator confidence in facilitating respectful relationships learning.*

*The workshop provided a valuable opportunity for collaboration, professional growth, and shared learning, equipping participants with practical tools to support the wellbeing and formation of students. We thank the schools from across the Diocese from Foundation to Year 12 for their participation and commitment to this important work.*

Catholic Education Ballarat Communications



# Volunteering

*The theme for National Volunteer Week 2026 is "Your Year to Volunteer". This theme honours the contributions of volunteers and invites people across Australia to make 2026 a year of meaningful involvement, in ways that work for them. This year is also a moment to thank those who already give their time and to invite others to discover how volunteering can create connection, purpose and lasting positive change.*

**Small acts with lasting impact – recognising the volunteers behind St Michael's Catholic Church Wycheproof.** *The saying 'many hands make light work' rings especially true in small rural communities, where the efforts of a dedicated few often become the foundation upon which vibrant and resilient organisations are built. At St Michael's Catholic Church, Wycheproof, volunteers play an integral role in parish life, contributing countless hours to ensure the church remains not only a place of worship and reflection, but also a valued contributor to broader rural, farming community life.*

*From sharing Holy Communion with the sick and elderly, maintaining the church grounds and facilities, cleaning and preparing the church for services, coordinating Mass, events and holy days, and offering a welcoming presence to parishioners and visitors alike, volunteers are at the heart of everything that St Michael's does.*

*In recognition of National Volunteer Week 2026 (May 18-24), which carried the theme 'Your Year to Volunteer', St Michael's incorporated a special focus on volunteering into its monthly Mass via utilising visual images, a welcome sign, and acknowledging the contribution of volunteers both within the parish and across the wider Wycheproof community in the Prayers of the Faithful. All highlighting the important role volunteers play in strengthening community connections and supporting those around them.*

*The Mass also provided an opportunity to formally recognise the contributions of parishioner Jacinta Miller, whose commitment to St Michael's and the broader East Wimmera Parish community has spanned many years and countless acts of service – from audio-visual planning, finance and banking, Mass preparations, funeral co-ordination, fellowship, communications and more.*

*Fr Gerry Prunty, Parish Priest, together with one of St Michael's most longest serving volunteers, and most respected parishioners, Mrs Sheila Powell, presented Jacinta with a certificate of appreciation and a token gift (appropriately shaped chocolate confectionary depicting the word 'Thanks'), in recognition of her dedication and service. Sheila (left) and Fr Gerry (right), congratulated Jacinta (centre) during Mass, with a special National Volunteer Week presentation recognising Jacinta's longstanding contribution to the parish and community life.*

*The presentation was warmly received by those in attendance, with parishioners acknowledging not only Jacinta's contribution, but also the collective efforts of the many volunteers who quietly give their time and talents throughout the year. While individual recognition is important, the occasion served as a timely reminder that the ongoing vitality of St Michael's is made possible through the generosity, goodwill and commitment of volunteers. Their contribution ensures the Church remains a welcoming place of prayer, fellowship and support for parishioners and the wider community alike.*

*As communities across Australia celebrated National Volunteer Week, St Michael's proudly joined in recognising the volunteers whose efforts, often undertaken behind the scenes, continue to make a meaningful difference every-single-day.*

Jackie Noonan

***Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God. The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good. Anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighbourhood square; going back to these places is a chance to recover something of their true selves.***

*(Pope Francis, Laudato Si', 84)*

# JJAMM Week

Recently, the St Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill community joyfully celebrated JJAMM Week – a special time to honour the lives and legacy of Jesus Christ, St Joseph, Fr Julian Tenison Woods and St Mary MacKillop. Throughout the week we gathered as a community through prayer, liturgy, classroom activities, service and celebration, taking time to reflect on the rich Josephite heritage that continues to shape who we are today.

At the heart of this year's celebration was our newly developed JJAMM Week Identity. More than simply a logo, this image tells the story of our faith and our mission.




At its centre is the open Gospel, reminding us that Christ is the source of everything we do. Rising from those pages are the letters JJAMM, symbolising that our Josephite story begins with Jesus and is grounded in the Good News. Standing alongside are St Joseph, Fr Julian Tenison Woods and St Mary MacKillop, whose lives were inspired by the Gospel and who courageously responded to God's call in their own time.

Yet the image does not end with them. It reminds us that the story is still being written. Their mission is now entrusted to us. Every act of kindness, every moment of compassion, every opportunity to stand up for justice, and every choice to love and serve another person becomes a new chapter in the Josephite story.

Throughout the week, our students and staff embraced this spirit in many different ways. We enjoyed our much-loved pJJAMMa Day, where students came dressed



in their pyjamas and began the day sharing pancakes together - a simple but joyful reminder that community is built through spending time with one another. The delicious JJAMM doughnuts proved another highlight, bringing plenty of smiles while celebrating the week in true Josephite style.

The annual Walkathon provides a fitting conclusion to JJAMM Week. As we walk together, we are reminded that faith is a journey we undertake as a community. Each step symbolises our commitment to following in the footsteps of Jesus, St Joseph, Fr Julian Tenison Woods and St Mary MacKillop, continuing their mission through the way we live each day.

This message has connected beautifully with our school theme for 2026, 'Conscious Compassion', and with St Mary MacKillop's words: "Love each other, help and comfort each other." These words are more than an inspiring quote - they are an invitation to live differently each day. Throughout JJAMM Week we celebrated not only the remarkable lives of Joseph, Julian and Mary, but also the countless ways our own students and staff continue their mission through generosity, respect, dignity, forgiveness, reverence and compassion.

As our celebrations concluded, JJAMM Week does not simply become another event on the school calendar. Instead, it serves as a reminder of our identity as a Catholic community. The story continues every day - in our classrooms, on the playground, through our learning, our relationships and our service to others.

*Alison Wright - Director of Faith and Mission*





# A FANTASTIC DAY OUT

*Grade 3/4 students at Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School, Wendouree recently had a fantastic day out and about. They explored the Ballarat Tramway Museum, enjoyed a tram ride with the wonderful conductors, and finished the day with plenty of fun at the adventure playground. A huge thank you to the lovely team at the Museum and the conductors for making the day so special!*

Jaci Commons - Principal

# ACU Ballarat celebrates Mission Week

Each year at Australian Catholic University, Mission Week provides an opportunity for the whole community to come together and celebrate who we are and what we stand for. This year's Mission Week held from August 10 -14 brought students and staff together through shared experiences, meaningful conversations and opportunities to deepen connections and strengthen a genuine sense of belonging.

Grounded in ACU's Catholic identity and inspired by patron saint St Mary MacKillop, Mission Week encouraged the community to reflect on lives of purpose, faith and generosity. Celebrated in conjunction with the Feast of St Mary MacKillop, this year's theme, "Made for More", invited students and staff to recognise that life is about more than simply achieving academic success or professional goals. It served as a reminder that each person has unique gifts and is called to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of others and the wider community.




Throughout the week, ACU Ballarat hosted a range of events designed to help participants explore the theme in practical and engaging ways. The week commenced with a Reflective Walk around Lake Wendouree, where participants reflected on the meaning of mission, service and community while enjoying conversation and fellowship. Across the campus, Mission Awareness Stations highlighted the many ways ACU's mission is lived out in everyday campus life.



On Tuesday, staff and students gathered for the Staff Prayer Breakfast and Connect Group, taking time for prayer, reflection and fellowship while considering the example of St Mary MacKillop and others who saw a need and responded with courage and compassion.

A highlight of the week was Wednesday's Mission Week Mass, which brought the campus community together in prayer for ACU and its mission in the world. Following the Mass, students and staff enjoyed the vibrant Mission Week Festival Day, featuring music, activities, giveaways, inspiring speakers and free food. Later that afternoon, students participated in a Sunset Session, exploring themes of mission, relationships and personal vocation through reflection, discussion and shared hospitality.

Thursday saw the campus embrace *Random Acts of Kindness Day,* encouraging students and staff to foster a culture of generosity, inclusion and care. The day concluded with a Campus Ministry and Student Residence Dinner, where participants shared stories of people who embodied Mary MacKillop's commitment to "seeing a need and doing something about it", before enjoying a fun-filled music bingo celebration.

Mission Week concluded on Friday with the Community Engagement Showcase, hosted by Dr Matthew Pink, which explored how community engagement enriches both personal and professional lives while contributing to ACU's mission. Students also gathered for a screening of The Blind Side, reflecting on themes of compassion, belonging and supporting those in need. More than a series of events, Mission Week was an invitation to look beyond the surface, choose purpose over comfort and discover what it means to be "made for more". Through prayer, service, community and reflection, students and staff were encouraged to take the next step in becoming the people they are called to be and to embrace lives marked by courage, intention and love.

*ACU Media Unit (www.acu.edu.au)*

# A joyful step towards Diaconate and Priesthood



On Sunday, September 27, 2026 Simon Zakari and I were admitted to candidacy for Holy Orders during the 5.00pm Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat, celebrated by Bishop Mark Freeman. It was a joyful and deeply meaningful occasion in our journey towards the diaconate and priesthood. For us, becoming candidates means offering a renewed and public "YES" to God's call. Through this rite, the Church recognises our commitment and welcomes us to continue preparing for ordained ministry. This brings both encouragement and responsibility: To deepen our prayer, grow through formation and allow Christ to shape our hearts for service.

In his homily, Bishop Mark reminded us that who we are as disciples in communion with Jesus, matters more than any ministry we may one day hold. He encouraged us to live our vocation through faith, hope and love, reminding us that discipleship is something we must continue to grow in throughout our lives. His words, "Know yourselves as loved by Christ and love Christ with all your hearts. And love us, the People of God in this place," expressed beautifully the heart of our calling.

We sincerely thank Bishop Mark for admitting us to candidacy and for his guidance and encouragement. We also offer our heartfelt thanks to Bishop Emeritus Paul Bird, who welcomed us into the Diocese of Ballarat. His presence at this celebration meant a great deal to us, reminding us of the kindness and support with which our journey in the diocese began. A special word of thanks goes to Fr Ed Moloney, who has accompanied us from the beginning of our priestly vocation journey. His care, friendship and encouragement have been a blessing and we will always remain grateful for the part he continues to play in our lives and formation.

We are grateful to our Corpus Christi Seminary Rector Dr Cameron Forbes and Vice-Rector Fr Brian Nichols, and to all the priests from the Diocese of Ballarat and the Archdiocese of Melbourne who joined us for this occasion. We also thank our fellow seminarians, nuns, friends and parish communities throughout the diocese. Your presence, prayers and support made the celebration especially memorable. To those who joined us from afar, thank you for sharing our joy. As we continue our priestly formation, we carry this encouragement with grateful hearts. Please keep us in your prayers, that our "YES" to God may deepen each day and that we may grow into faithful and loving servants of his people.

*Channa Thilakarathna*



# CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK

*Children's Book Week 2026 was celebrated from August 22 - August 28, 2026 featuring the theme "Symphony of Stories" by the Children's Book Council of Australia. This important celebration highlights the joy, imagination and connection that literature in all its forms brings to all ages.*

*Emmaus Catholic Primary School Mt Clear enjoyed week-long celebrations embracing the 2026 theme of "Symphony of Stories". Staff and students began the week by dressing up as a character from a picture story book and participated in sessions focussing on a variety of wonderful stories to evoke joy and to spark imagination. These sessions occurred in multiage settings where students had chosen two picture story book experiences of their own choice to engage in.*

*Book Week costumes were celebrated at the Book Week Parade, a feature of the celebrations. Many of the treasured adults from within the community also joined in. Thank you to everyone who supported and encouraged the children to embrace the joy of Book Week to celebrate their favourite stories and to share in the magic of reading. More information can be be found at this link: https://cbca.org.au/childrens-book-week/*

Ethan Corfee - Principal



# Vinnies Support

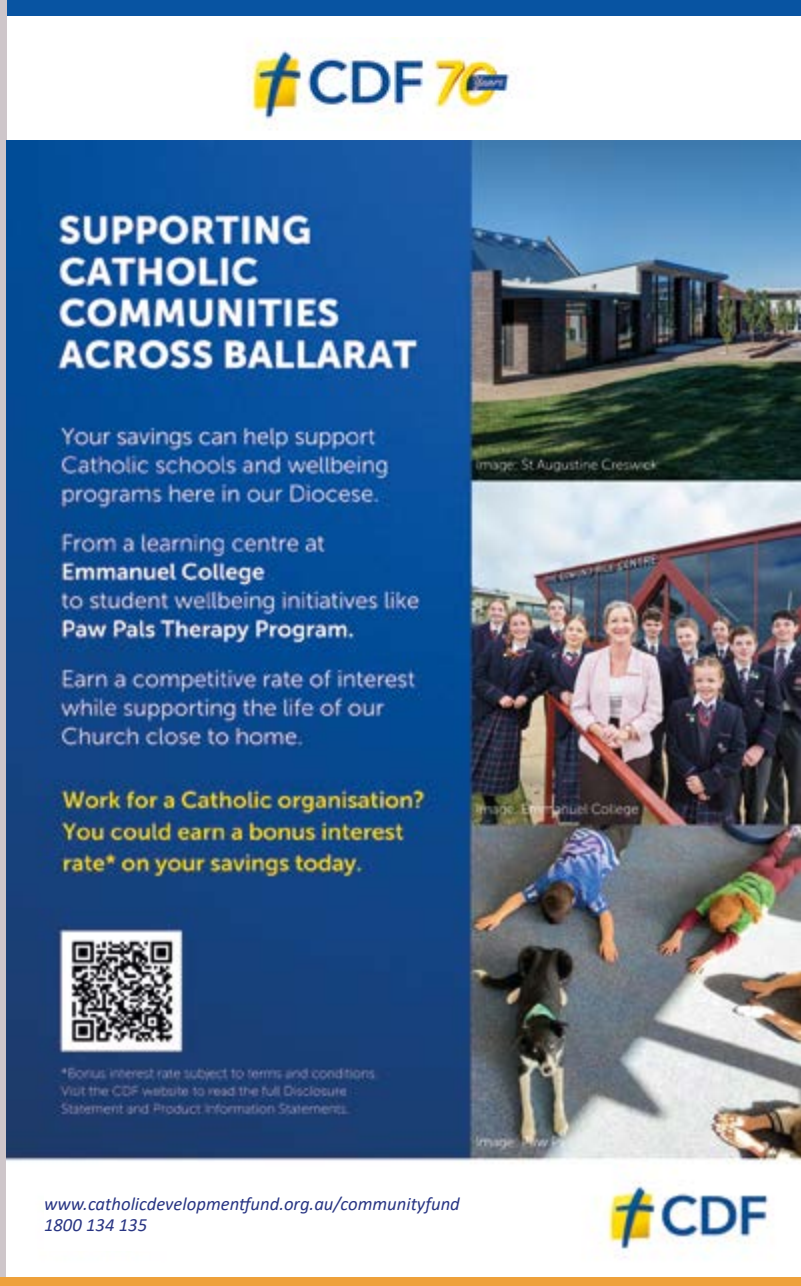
Over the winter months, the Damascus College Ballarat community once again came together for their annual toiletry drive in support of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

The Teacher Advisor (TA) groups generously donated toiletries to help provide families experiencing financial difficulties with these essential, yet often expensive, household items.

In late August, members of the Year 11 VCE-VM Religious Education class had the opportunity to present Helen and Geraldine from Vinnies Australia with the toiletry gift bags they had assembled from all of the donations.

Supporting organisations such as Vinnies Australia speaks to the heart of our Catholic Identity, providing practical opportunities for our students to live out Christ's call to show mercy, compassion and care for those in direction and practices.

*Damascus College FaceBook*





# *Celebrating Foundation Day*

*On Wednesday, October 7, 2026 St John of God Hospital Ballarat caregivers came together to celebrate Foundation Day and honour the Sisters of St John of God, whose care, compassion and commitment to others continue to shape who we are today. This year's theme, 'Nurturing dignity. Every person, every moment', reflects a principle the Sisters have lived by for more than 150 years.*

*St John of God Ballarat marked the day with a special celebration and the presentation of Length of Service Awards for long-serving caregivers and volunteers. Thank you to all the caregivers and volunteers for continuing the Sisters' legacy and bringing the Mission to life in the care you provide to others.*

Jamie Lovett - Marketing & Communications Coordinator

# Celebrating 150 years







On Sunday, August 30, 2026 the Banyena community celebrated the 150th anniversary of St Joseph's Church with Mass and morning tea. Locals, members of the wider East Wimmera Parish and visitors whose families had strong ties to St Joseph's, filled the church.

Originally the Banyena community was part of the Carisbrook Parish and Masses were celebrated at the home of Judith and Martin Shanahan, the original selectors of 'Marnoo'. By the time the Church was built it became part of the new St Arnaud Parish, which also commenced in 1876. Banyena parishioners remained part of the St Arnaud Parish until the East Wimmera Parish was formed in 2018.

St Joseph's Church is still the original building and one of the oldest buildings in the East Wimmera Parish. The building was constructed using local timber from the Bolagum Hills which were carted by horse and wagon. Since early construction, the building has been lined and in 2000 the outdoor boards were replaced. The Church has had flood waters from the Richardson River surround it every few years. Only the 2011 summer flood waters entered the church. The building required cleaning, painting and new carpet but the building dried up and the floorboards did not need to be replaced.

The Mass for the 150th anniversary was celebrated by Fr Gerry Prunty and concluded with a slide show displaying many celebrations and familiar faces participating in special events at the Church. Mr Peter Byrne shared some of his memories about attending St Joseph's. Special events included weekly Mass, celebrating First Communion and breakfast at the Hall across the road and Confirmation when the Bishop visited.

With the Church surrounded by a stunning backdrop of flowering canola, lush green pastures, thriving crops and the gently flowing Richardson River, guests enjoyed a delicious morning tea together. The cake was cut by two parishioners, Peter and John Byrne.

The first recorded Baptism at St Joseph's recorded was John Robert O'Shannessy on August 15, 1876 celebrated by Fr Michael Dwyer. Other baptisms held that year included Hugh McConville, John McDonald, Maria Boyle and Joseph Patrick McGonigal. The first marriage celebrated at St Joseph's was on July 19, 1897 between Dugald McDonald and Lorene Dow. Marriages have continued to be celebrated over the decades with the last wedding celebrated between Lisa Drum and Jake McConville in October 2022.

Over the 150 years Mass has continued to be celebrated by dedicated priests travelling out from St Arnaud, with Fr Gerry Prunty continuing this today on the fifth Sunday of the month. Until the 1960's, Mass was held fortnightly and on the alternate Sunday locals attended Mass in Rupanyup, Minyip, St Arnaud or Donald. During the 1960's and 1970's the Church was full, Mass held weekly and each family had their own seat.

St Joseph's was the building used for the filming of the movie 'The Dry', when then Parish Priest Fr Eugene McKinnon and several parishioners had roles in the film.

Marnoo parishioners were also part of the Banyena community, as they only had Mass every fortnight or monthly. By the 1970's, Mass at Marnoo was only held a couple of times a year and the Church was closed and demolished. Some of the red pine wood from the building was turned to make the Easter Candle stand used at St Joseph's.

St Joseph's parishioners love their church, Irish ancestry and strong family ties to this area. They are known for their long chats after Mass to catch-up on the local news, discuss the seasons and solve local issues. In recent years we have started to share morning tea and welcome other East Wimmera parishioners who share Mass on the fifth Sunday.

Throughout the 150 year history, the Church has played a central role in the life of the local parishioners. It has been the place to celebrate both joyous occasions and join to support each other during times of loss or difficulty. With thanks we acknowledge the former Banyena parishioners and thank them for their support and care of the Church. Special thanks to Fr Gerry Prunty for his care and interest in each parishioner and celebrating Mass with us. Parishioners appreciated Fr Eugene McKinnon sharing our celebration and remember fondly his time as our Parish Priest. In the coming years may St Joseph's Church continue to be a gathering place to pray and share our lives with each other.

*Anne Anderson*

# 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



*Sixty years of marriage is a profound achievement and a testament to their love, commitment, and resilience. Together, Maria and Ralph Dorigo have built an amazing life. From running their concreting business - with Dad on the tools and Mum managing the administration - they navigated joy, challenges, and laughter. Through everything, they have stood side by side with unconditional love.*

*Their relationship is an inspiration to us all. Their patience, understanding, and unwavering support of each other have kept this marriage strong across six decades.*

*Ralph and Maria met in Swan Hill around 1965. After Ralph spent time traveling back and forth from Sea Lake, Fr Frank Monaghan married them on June 18, 1966 at the Swan Hill Catholic Church. Their wedding reception was held at the Swan Hill Memorial Hall and attended by more than 400 guests. The hall was so packed that more people arrived than expected, and the meals had to be cut in half to ensure everyone was fed.*



*Following the wedding, they travelled to Italy for five months to visit family before returning to Sea Lake to start their life together. They went on to raise three children: Angelo, born March 31, 1970; Joseph, born December 6, 1972; and Sandrina, born October 5, 1979.*

*They lived in Sea Lake until their retirement to Swan Hill. Both Ralph and Maria have made significant contributions to the community, leaving an indelible mark on the town and the people.*

*We would like to honour this incredible couple and their beautiful legacy.*

*Sam Brady offers a few words on Maria and Ralph:*

*Maria and Ralph's time at St Mary's Parish, Sea Lake, formed an important part of their life of service and commitment to the community. Maria served as President of the School Council, led the local CWA for many years, and faithfully cared for the church, ensuring it was always prepared for Sunday Mass and special occasions including weddings, funerals and baptisms. Ralph was equally generous with his time, assisting with church and garden maintenance and contributing to the local bowling club, where he was a highly respected and accomplished bowler. Together, Maria and Ralph were deeply involved in community life and have been greatly missed since their move to Swan Hill. As the saying goes, it is Sea Lake's loss and Swan Hill's gain. We extend our sincere thanks for their many years of service and friendship and wish them both continued health, happiness and every blessing in the years ahead.*

Joe Dorigo

# PRAYER AND CONNECTION



Recently, St Joseph's Primary School Charlton students had the opportunity to attend Mass at the local nursing home, sharing a special time of prayer and connection with residents and parishioners. As part of the celebration, the students led the congregation in song, performing 'These Hands' by Andrew Chinn at the beginning of Mass and 'Count on Me' by Bruno Mars at its conclusion.



The visit was a wonderful way for students to engage with the older members of our parish community, bringing joy and energy to the celebration. The residents thoroughly enjoyed the students' participation, with many singing along.

These moments of connection are a beautiful reminder of the importance of building relationships across generations and sharing faith together. The smiles, laughter and enthusiastic participation from everyone present made the visit a memorable experience for both the students and residents alike.

*Mary Hogan - Principal*






## *A New Chapter for Star of the Sea Parish*

On Monday, August 17, 2026 at 6.00pm, Fr Matthew Thomas was officially installed as the new Parish Priest of Star of the Sea Parish, Southwest Coast, during a Mass celebrated at St Joseph's Catholic Church, Warrnambool.

The installation was presided over by Bishop Mark Freeman, who concelebrated Mass with Fr Matthew and the retiring Parish Priest, Fr John Fitzgerald, alongside approximately twenty other priests from the Diocese of Ballarat. A large congregation of parishioners, family members and friends gathered to welcome Fr Matthew to his new ministry and to share in this special occasion.

Following Mass, those attending enjoyed a light supper in the Gathering Space, providing an opportunity to catch up and extend a warm welcome to their new Parish Priest.

Fr Matthew was delighted to accept Bishop Mark's invitation to lead Star of the Sea Parish and looks forward to beginning this new chapter of ministry among the Catholic community of the Southwest Coast. Bishop Mark assured Fr Matthew of his prayers, friendship and ongoing support as he takes up his new appointment.

The occasion also provided an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the remarkable contribution of Fr John Fitzgerald, who has dedicated 48 years of service to the Catholic Church. Bishop Mark expressed his gratitude for Fr John's faithful ministry, particularly his 23 years of service to the people of Warrnambool since his appointment as Parish Priest of St Joseph's in 2004. As Star of the Sea Parish farewells Fr John from his role as Parish Priest and welcomes Fr Matthew, the community looks forward with gratitude for the past and hope for the future, continuing its faith journey together under new pastoral leadership.

*Tim Keane - Southwest Coast Parish*

# Living the Gospel
## in Times of Social Division




*The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's 2026 Social Justice Statement,* ***Living the Gospel in Times of Social Division****, invites us to reflect on how we can be witnesses of peace, compassion and hope in an increasingly divided world. The statement acknowledges growing social tensions, including racism, antisemitism, online hostility and the tendency to view those with different opinions as opponents rather than neighbours. It challenges people of faith to respond not with fear or division, but with the love and mercy of Christ.*

*At the heart of the statement is the belief that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and possesses an inherent dignity that must always be respected. The bishops call on us to reject prejudice and discrimination, stand in solidarity with those who experience exclusion, and work towards communities built on understanding and mutual respect.*

*A key theme is the promotion of a "culture of encounter", encouraging people to listen deeply to others, especially those whose experiences differ from their own. Rather than allowing disagreement to foster hostility, the statement promotes respectful dialogue, genuine relationships and a commitment to the common good. It also highlights the importance of responsible communication, particularly online, where words can either deepen divisions or help build bridges.*

*In living out the Gospel in practical ways, through prayer, acts of compassion, hospitality towards migrants and refugees, and a commitment to justice and reconciliation, we can play an important role in strengthening social cohesion and fostering peace. In a divided world, the Social Justice Statement reminds us that living the Gospel begins with recognising Christ in one another and choosing encounter, understanding and hope.*

*The Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission warmly invites members of the diocesan community to join a reflection evening on the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's Social Justice Statement, Living the Gospel in Times of Social Division, on Thursday, November 12, 2026, from 6.30pm to 8.00pm. To learn more about the statement or register for the reflection evening, please visit the diocesan website – https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/service-and-agencies/welfare/social-justice/social-justice-statement-current/*



# Celebrating 150 Years of Faith in St Arnaud

In 1875, St Patrick's Church, St Arnaud, was built. The Parish of St Patrick's was established in 1876 and was initially part of the Carisbrook Parish. In July 1906, Bishop Joseph Higgins laid the foundation stone for our present church, which was dedicated on February 3, 1907 under the title of the Immaculate Conception Church. Our magnificent marble altar was later installed as a gift from Count Thomas O'Loughlin. It was designed and sculpted by Fratelli Agrone of Genoa under the guidance of Parish Priest, Fr Gerald Doyle.

Recently, parishioners and visitors gathered to celebrate 150 years of the continual celebration of the Eucharist and a faith that has sustained generations, providing strength, hope, and the love of our Father. The Mass was celebrated by Fr Gerry Prunty and commenced with the hymn *Hail Queen of Heav'n*. Fr Gerry, reader John, and cross-bearer Philomena processed into the Church, setting a reverent tone for the celebration. The Chipperfield family presented the gifts, and the Mass concluded with the hymn *Faith of Our Fathers*. A heartfelt thank you is extended to all those who contributed behind the scenes. Thanks go to Barb Hogan for providing the music and PowerPoint presentation, and to John and Marlene Arandt and Chris Dyson for their assistance in livestreaming Mass each week.

To mark the occasion, historic vestments and an altar server's surplice were displayed throughout the church. These items are among the few remaining from the parish's history. Many other artefacts have been entrusted to the Diocesan Archive for preservation, including the umbrella used during visits from the Bishop, after it became apparent that some items were deteriorating.



Following Mass, everyone gathered in the Parish Centre for refreshments. There was plenty for all, and many remained for lunch, sharing stories, renewing friendships and catching up with people they had not seen for some time. The room was filled with conversation, laughter and memories. Sincere thanks to the dedicated ladies who worked tirelessly to provide the catering: Marlene, Brenda, Pauline, and Barb, as well as the parishioners who generously contributed a plate to share.

*Barb Hogan*



# OFFICIAL OPENING

*DOBCEL Deputy Director for Catholic Education, Matt Byrne, and DOBCEL Board Deputy Chair, Anne Pekin, joined the school community of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School in Maryborough to celebrate the official opening of the school's newly refurbished facilities. The event was officiated by Senator Jana Stewart, with a blessing led by local parishioner Terry, in the absence of Fr John Monaghan. Under the leadership of Principal Sonia Turner, the celebration showcased the strong spirit of the St Augustine's community, with students and staff enthusiastically participating throughout the occasion.*

*The project has transformed key learning and administrative spaces across the school, providing contemporary, flexible environments that will support student learning and wellbeing for years to come. Funded through a significant investment from the Australian Government, the project received a grant allocation of $1.6 million, complemented by a $500,000 co-contribution, bringing the total project investment to $2.1 million. Works included the refurbishment and alteration of existing buildings to create new general learning areas and upgrade existing classrooms, administration facilities, the library, and associated spaces. The project also delivered extensions to staff and library areas, along with landscaping works to create an arts terrace and improve site accessibility through a new accessible entry. The refurbished facilities reflect St Augustine's commitment to providing high-quality learning environments that inspire student growth, collaboration, and creativity while strengthening the school's capacity to serve its community well into the future. The school is very grateful for the federal Government support and for the efforts of everyone locally to bring this to fruition.*

Catholic Education Ballarat Communications

# Season of Creation 2026



*On Friday, August 21, 2026 the Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission's Season of Creation Mass was celebrated at St Joseph the Worker Church in Red Cliffs. St Joseph's Primary School Red Cliffs community joined with St Joseph the Worker Church community and Sunraysia Parish to celebrate this occasion. Mass was celebrated by Bishop Mark Freeman and Fr Bill Lowry with the beautiful liturgy focussing on the gift of life-giving, nourishing and living water.*



*The global Season of Creation runs from September 1, which marks the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, through to October 4, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, uniting Christians in prayer and action to protect our common home. This Diocesan Mass offered an inspiring launch for local celebrations.*

*In his homily, Bishop Mark reminded us that water is a sacred gift from God, providing nourishment, habitat, enjoyment, and life across our diocese - stretching "from the Murray to the sea!" He encouraged everyone to honour this divine blessing by using water wisely and mindfully in daily life, recognising that our well-being is permanently interwoven with the health of the earth.*

*The gathering also marked a major milestone as the school community celebrated the retirement of beloved leader Janice Divola. Janice concluded an incredible 40-year tenure at St Joseph's, serving with great distinction as both Religious Education Leader, Learning Diversity Leader and Wellbeing Leader. The deep community affection was evident in heartfelt speeches from the youngest students to past staff. While she will be missed immensely, we wish Janice every happiness in her well-deserved retirement.*

*The Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission extends its heartfelt thanks to the Red Cliffs and Sunraysia communities for their exceptionally warm hospitality. In particular, we thank Naomi Kennedy, Principal of St Joseph's Primary School, and her wonderful team of staff and students who brought this momentous celebration to life. You can watch the Mass online at www.ballarat.catholic.org.au*

Sarah Page - Social Justice Education Officer: Catholic Identity and Mission Team

## *PAUSE, REFLECT AND GIVE THANKS*



During the Season of Creation, the St Mary's Primary School Swan Hill community was invited to pause, reflect and give thanks for the wonderful gift of creation and consider how they can play their part in caring for our common home.

The theme for the 2026 Season of Creation is "Living Water," with the focus "Immersion in Living Water." This theme invites us to recognise water as a precious gift that gives life to people, animals, plants and entire ecosystems. Within our Catholic tradition, water also holds deep meaning as a symbol of life, renewal, hope and our connection with God.

Here in Swan Hill, this theme has particular meaning for our community. The Murray River is an important part of our local environment, community and story. It provides a wonderful opportunity for students to reflect on the importance of water, our connection to country and our shared responsibility to protect and care for the waterways and environments around us.

Throughout the Season of Creation, students were encouraged to notice the beauty of the natural world, ask questions, reflect on their own relationship with creation and consider the small actions they can take to make a difference.

As a school community, the theme of "Living Water" inspired us to be grateful for the gift of water, to recognise how deeply connected we are to creation and to work together to care for our common home – now and for generations to come.

*Belinda Davies – Religious Education Leader*

# Peplow House Celebrates




*For 50 years, Peplow House has been more than a place to stay. It has been a place of safety, stability and hope for thousands of men in Ballarat experiencing homelessness, helping them move from crisis towards independence and long-term housing.*

*On August 7, 2026 Peplow House celebrated its 50th anniversary with a special event held during Homelessness Week. The timing of the celebration added particular significance, providing an opportunity to pause, listen and reflect on the realities of homelessness. It also served as a reminder that homelessness is not an identity, but an experience that can change when people are met with the right support, at the right time, within a community that refuses to give up on them. The celebration brought together people from across CatholicCare Victoria, including case workers, health practitioners, program staff, managers, members of the executive team and the CEO, alongside current and former residents, supporters, partners and community members. It was an opportunity to reflect on five decades of impact, celebrate the dedication of all people involved and thank the Founder Gerry Baldock, whose vision, determination and commitment helped establish the service 50 years ago.*



*CCV extends its thanks to everyone who joined the celebration, including The Hon. Juliana Addison MP, Member for Wendouree, and Boyana Shawi, representing The Hon. Michaela Settle MP, Member for Eureka. Their attendance reflected the strong government support for services that assist people experiencing homelessness in the community.*

*A highlight of the event was a presentation and discussion panel exploring Peplow House's history and enduring role within the Ballarat community. Speakers reflected on why the service was established, what homelessness looked like 50 years ago and the challenges men face today. Through these conversations, attendees gained a deeper understanding of how Peplow House continues to support men experiencing homelessness through 24-hour crisis accommodation, support for their immediate needs and guidance tailored to each person's circumstances. While the panel explored the history of Peplow House, an exhibition of artwork created by current and former residents, photography and personal stories offered a glimpse into life at Peplow House. For many residents, art has provided a creative outlet to reflect on their experiences and Peplow House was the place where they were welcomed during some of the most difficult periods of their lives. CCV thanks the residents for their openness and willingness to share their stories; their contributions helped put a human face to an issue that is often discussed through statistics alone.*

*One former resident captured the impact of the program when he shared: Peplow House gave me more than a roof over my head. It gave me time to breathe, people who believed in me, and the confidence to start rebuilding my life.*

*While the anniversary was an opportunity to celebrate, it was also a reminder that the work is far from finished. Today, Peplow House remains Ballarat's only crisis accommodation service for men, providing more than 2,500 nights of accommodation each year and supporting around 120 men annually through crisis, recovery and the search for long-term housing.*

*Homelessness continues to affect too many people across Ballarat and regional Victoria. Housing stress, family violence, mental health challenges, poverty and rising living costs continue to place increasing pressure on individuals, families and communities.*

*For many of those who attended the celebration and listened to the stories shared throughout the evening, the event reinforced a sense of collective responsibility and the importance of continuing this work. As Peplow House enters its next chapter, its mission remains unchanged: to provide compassionate, person-centred support that helps men move beyond crisis and towards a future where they can find not only shelter, but a place to call home.*

https://www.catholiccarevic.org.au/resources/peplow-house-celebrates-50-years/

# Activities of the Cantate Domino choir

On Wednesday, September 23, 2026 following an invitation to Bishop Mark from Bishop Michael Morrissey, the *Cantate Domino Choir* of St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat set off for Western Australia for a week of liturgical singing and sightseeing of Catholic architecture and sites of historical significance in the Geraldton Diocese.

Fr Ed Moloney celebrated 7.00am Mass, the choir enjoyed a cooked breakfast and then boarded a shuttlebus bound for Tullamarine. We stayed in Perth on Wednesday night, headed to Geraldton for lunch on Thursday and then onto a convent in Northampton on Thursday night.

On Friday morning, we were hosted for morning tea by Bishop Morrissey where our choir captains – Francesca Skyrme and Bodhi Hoiles – presented the Bishop with a gift courtesy of the Ballarat Diocesan Historical Commission: a copy of the papal bull which installed Bishop O'Collins as Bishop in Geraldton.

The choir then visited St Francis Xavier Primary School and performed for the students, singing *Adiemus* by Welsh composer Karl Jenkins and *If Ye Love Me* by Thomas Tallis. The choir then involved the whole school in a rendition of *Si Le Le*, arranged by composer Paul Smith.

Over the next day and a half, *Cantate Domino* was led by Jacinta Jakovcevic, Director of Music for the Geraldton Diocese, in music workshops to finetune repertoire for Vespers in the Cathedral on Saturday night and Sunday morning Mass. Highlights included *Exultate Justi* by Viadana and Mass parts from the *Missa Secunda* by Hassler - samples of this repertoire can be viewed on the Cantate Domino choir Facebook page.

With our significant musical responsibilities out of the way, the next few days were spent sightseeing and learning about the architectural work of Monsignor John Hawes and history of the Geraldton diocese.



Highlights included: the Church of Our Lady of Mt Carmel and Priest House Museum in Mullewa; Pioneer cemetery (where many early settlers were buried) and Mass Rock, an outdoor Mass setting built by Monsignor John Hawes to accommodate the needs of local Aboriginal people (who were less comfortable in formal Mass settings i.e. churches); Skywalk at Kalbarri (two cantilevered viewing platforms that hang in mid-air 100 metres above the Kalbarri gorge); Pink Lake (Hutt Lagoon has a pink hue created by the presence of *Dunaliella salina* algae).

These visits were accompanied by informative and entertaining commentary by the Chancellor and Director of Heritage, Fr Robert Cross.

On Tuesday, September 29, we travelled back to Perth and the following day took a flight back to Melbourne.

We arrived back in Ballarat at midnight Wednesday, September 30, physically and emotionally exhausted, but invigorated and inspired to strengthen our music ministry at St Patrick's Cathedral.

We would like to express our gratitude to Jacinta, Fr Robert Cross and Bishop Michael Morrissey for hosting us in Geraldton!

*Vincent Sully*

## SUPPORTING THE ST MARY'S CLARKES HILL COMMUNITY



*In early August, families and staff of St Mary's Primary School, Clarkes Hill were advised of DOBCEL's difficult decision to close the school at the end of the 2026 school year. This decision has been made with great sadness following careful consideration of the school's future enrolments, regulatory requirements and long-term viability.*

*We recognise this will be a deeply difficult time for Principal Clare Scanlon, the St Mary's staff, students and families. Clare and her team have continued to lead their community with care, compassion and a strong focus on student and family wellbeing. Catholic Education Ballarat will work closely with affected families as they consider schooling options for 2027, and staff will be supported to understand their options and future opportunities. A full statement from Executive Director Tom Sexton, providing further context, can be found at this link - https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/supporting-the-st-marys-clarkes-hill-community/.*

*On November 22, there is a celebration for 80 years of education, faith and the community at St Mary's. Please RSVP at office@smclarkeshill.catholic.edu.au Please keep Clare, the St Mary's team and the broader Clarkes Hill community in your thoughts as they navigate the months ahead.*

Catholic Education Ballarat Communications










*From January 10, 2026 to January, 10 2027, the Year of St Francis is being celebrated, marking the 800th anniversary of his death. During this year, Catholics are encouraged to follow in the footsteps of St Francis, becoming models of holiness of life and constant witnesses of peace. After leaving everything to follow Christ, Francis began to see the world and its people in a new light. He was committed to the Gospel message of peace and all his teaching began with the words: "May the Lord give you peace." (cf. John 20:21; Legend, Ch VIII, 26). St Francis' life, writes Pope Leo, "points to the authentic source of peace" - the peace Jesus brought to the world was announced by angels at his birth: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those whom he loves" (Luke 2:14); the Risen Lord spoke peace to his frightened disciples on the evening of Easter: "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). "The Franciscan vision of peace is not limited to the relations between human beings, but also embraces the whole of creation. Francis, who calls the sun 'brother' and the moon 'sister', who recognises in every creature a reflection of divine beauty, reminds us that peace must be extended to the entire family of Creation … Peace with God, peace among human beings and with creation are inseparable dimensions of a single call to universal reconciliation." (Pope Leo, Letter to The Franciscan Family, 2026). St Francis "sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters" (Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 2). He united people who disagreed with one another. Francis' peace-making extended to the Muslim world. He visited the Holy Land, Syria and the Sultan in Egypt. He hoped to win everyone to Christ, but remained courteous and respectful when this hope was not realised. "Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that 'God is love and those who abide in love abide in God' (1 Jn 4:16) … Francis was able to welcome true peace into his heart and free himself of the desire to wield power over others. He became one of the poor and sought to live in harmony with all." (Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 4)*

*Taken from the Diocese of Sandhurst " St Francis of Assisi Reflection & Prayer Resource." at https://sandhurst.catholic.org.au/item/3145-st-francis-of-assisi-jubilee-prayer-book*

**We are a community of communities from the Murray to the sea. Inspired by the Gospel and nourished by the Eucharist, we follow the example of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reaching out in joyful and humble service, caring for all of God's creation, growing in love day by day and looking forward to life with God forever.**

Vision Statement for the Diocese

Photos: Front cover: St Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill Penola Campus; Back cover: 1. Bishop Mark presents at CEB Formation Day; 2. Mass celebrated for the Season of Creation in St Joseph the Worker Church Red Cliffs; 3. Bishop Mark with Simon and Channa (Seminarians); 4. Bishop Mark with students at St Mary's Primary School, Clarkes Hill.