

JOURNEY

NEWS FROM THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

JUBILEE YEAR OF

Mercy

SUMMER 2015 | NO. 60





ISSN 1835-7024

EDITION NO. 60
SUMMER 2015

Publisher

Catholic Diocese
of Wollongong

Editors

Jude Hennessy
Daniel Hopper

Administration

Helen Bennett

Graphic Design

Jeremy Yuen

Proofing

Lorraine Tobin

SUBMISSIONS & ADVERTISING

Phone: 02 4222 2400
Email: journey@dow.org.au

Journey welcomes submissions
of articles, photographs and
advertisements.

Regretfully, we cannot
guarantee publication or replies
to unsuccessful submissions.

There will be an Autumn and
Spring of *Journey* in 2016.

**Submission deadline for
the Autumn 2016 edition
is 17 February 2016**



PO Box 1239
Wollongong NSW 2500

Phone: 02 4222 2400
Email: journey@dow.org.au

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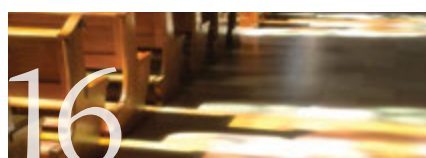
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A chance to know God's love deeply

BY JUDE HENNESSY



Back in the nineties, there was a very popular song performed by Joan Osborne called, *What if God was one of us?* It's a song that in its greyish tones, cries

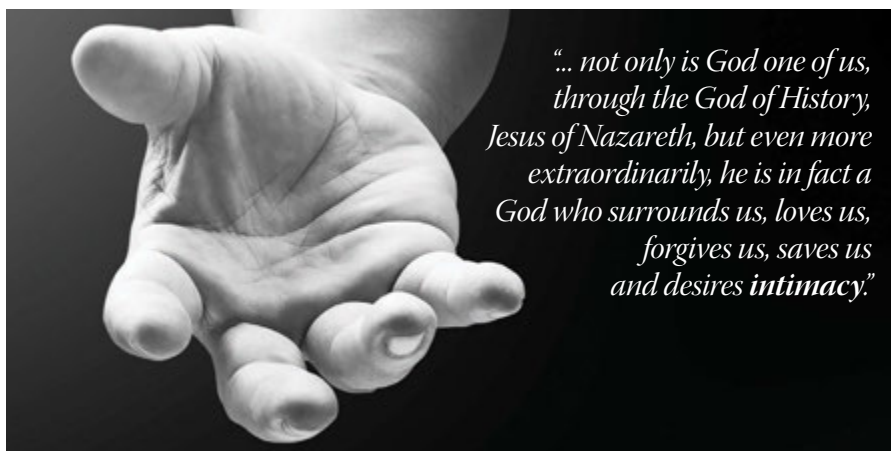
out for a God that knows what it is like to be human, with all of the ups and downs of life. The song laments her perception of a distant, uncaring, disinterested God.

I remember on one occasion when hearing the song, speaking out loud to Ms Osborne, letting her know that she was wrong, that God is one of us, and that was precisely what the Incarnation, Jesus and Christmas was all about. Given that this was in pre-mobile-phone days, talking out loud in an otherwise empty car was not really acceptable and people in surrounding cars no doubt thought I was quite mad.

Pope Francis wants all people to know that not only is God one of us, through the God of History, Jesus of Nazareth, but even more extraordinarily, he is in fact a God who surrounds us, loves us, forgives us, saves us and desires intimacy. That is the main reason Pope Francis has announced the *Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy*.

Pope Francis has articulated that he very much wants each of us to encounter God's love in a powerful way. He is calling all of the baptised to "a living experience of the closeness of the Father, whose tenderness is almost tangible so that the faith of every believer may be strengthened and thus testimony to it be ever more effective." (*Pope Francis Letter on the Year of Mercy, 1 September 2015*)

Pope Francis is inviting us in this Year of Mercy to powerful encounters with God's mercy, encounters that cause us to fall deeply in love with God. Why? Because that is what we need; that is what we are made for; and it will strengthen our faith and prepare us for mission as authentic witnesses.



Pope Francis recognises that for the Church to be truly able to embrace its mission of making Disciples, then the Church needs to be full of witnesses who themselves know and love God deeply. In many ways, the Year of Mercy is like pre-season training where Pope Francis is asking us to allow God to embrace us with mercy and feel God's love. Only then will we have God's love to share with others. Only then can we really get our hands dirty in the mission of making Jesus known and loved as individuals who can witness to faith in a Jesus who we *know*, not simply who we *know about*. It is for this reason that Pope Francis has made the Year of Mercy the responsibility of the *Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation*. To do this we will be encouraged in various ways in this Year of Mercy to encounter the love of God, especially through the powerful grace and encounters with God's love in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

I pray that as our Advent and Christmas seasons come and go, that the Mother of Mercy, Our Lady, will draw many in our Diocese into deep encounters with our loving Father through the Holy Spirit in this Year of Mercy. ■

Jude Hennessy is the co-editor of Journey, Director of CCD and Evangelisation and Acting Director of Parish Services.



Thankyou and farewell Richard McMahon

In October, Mr Richard McMahon concluded his time as Director of Parish Services in the Diocese of Wollongong to take on a new role with the Diocese of Parramatta. I join Bishop Ingham and many others in the Diocese who have gratefully acknowledged Richard's hard work and commitment. We appreciate the wonderful support he provided to the Diocese of Wollongong over the past ten years in various leadership roles, particularly the work he did with Pastoral Planning and in this Publication which is recognised around Australia as being exemplary in its nature.

We wish Richard every success and blessing as he undertakes a role in the Parramatta Diocese that will see his excellent skills in Pastoral Planning put to good use. ■



Bishop's Pastoral Letter for the *Jubilee Year of Mercy*

BY BISHOP
PETER INGHAM

As your Bishop, I want to alert you to the good news that our beloved Pope Francis has proclaimed an *Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy*, from the celebration of Mary's Immaculate Conception on 8 December 2015 until the celebration of Christ the King on 20 November 2016.

Pope Francis wants us to focus on Jesus' words, "Be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful," (Lk 6:36) and from the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the Merciful for they shall obtain mercy." (Mt 5:7) In the Bible, "mercy" is a key word to describe how God deals with you and me. Pope Francis is asking of us a key question: "Have we long since forgotten how to show the way of mercy and how to live the way of mercy?"

Pardoning those who offend us is the clearest expression of merciful love, says the Pope, because pardon is the instrument put into our fragile hands to gain peace of heart. To let go of bitterness, resentment, anger, violence and revenge, are necessary conditions if we are to have peace and joy in our lives and bring joy to others.

It is 'spot on' for the Pope to remind us that the practice of mercy is diminishing in our wider culture. Look at the merciless actions and senseless violence on our streets, which can make it risky to be out alone at night. Yet, the Pope tells us that without our witnessing to God's mercy in the way we think and the way we behave, life loses its sparkle and it can become like living in a barren desert.

Francis our Pope reminds us that Jesus is the face of the Heavenly Father's Mercy – God's merciful attitude is living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth.



Connectedness

Pope Francis wants us to focus on what matters most – our relationships – because life is about relationships: our personal relationship with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit; our relationships with each other – those nearest and dearest in our families; people in our parishes; in our workplaces; in our schools; in our social, leisure and sporting activities; our relationship with people who are poor and in need as well as our relationship with our common home, the natural world around us. "Everything is connected" says the Pope. "Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and to an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society." (*Laudato Si*, 91) "When we can see God reflected in all that exists," says Pope Francis, "our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship God in union with them." (*Laudato Si*, 87)

Jubilee Tradition

You may well remember Pope St John Paul II proclaimed the Great Jubilee of our Saviour's Birth in the Year 2000. The Jubilee tradition of God's chosen people (Leviticus 25-27) marked each 50th year as a rare and important time

to stop and reflect on God's love and care, so as to respond by forgiving debts, releasing prisoners and letting the land lie fallow to regenerate. *Jubilee* meant a time of reconciliation, hope, justice and peace. The Church has embraced the Jubilee tradition since the 13th Century. In addition to this, Popes have also called Extraordinary Jubilees – Pope Paul VI in 1967 to mark the 19th Centenary of the Martyrdom of Sts Peter & Paul and Pope St John Paul II in 1983 called a Jubilee of Redemption.

This *Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*, about to commence on 8 December, has been called because our Pope wants us, the Church, in all our witness, our preaching and teaching and our pastoral work, to be taking our lead from the merciful heart of God. If we are to be credible to people who don't believe or to those who have given up on religion, especially due to the scandals and merciless acts of those who were called to be ministers of mercy, we, at all levels of the Church, have to show mercy and compassion. If all we do is condemn the evident evils in our society, we can seem to be out of touch with people who are really struggling because they are broken by suffering the tragedies life can bring. Rather, the Pope wants us to focus on how merciful the Gospels show Jesus

was with sinners, with the sick, with people with disabilities, with those in need who were often on the margins of society. "Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the Mercy of the Father must be evident – in our parishes, communities, associations and movements. In a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an *oasis of mercy*." (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 12) How can we make this a reality in our parishes, schools and communities?

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

In the focus on mercy, you and I realise we need to be open to God's mercy ourselves. St Paul reminds us that, "It is by Grace, you have been saved, not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God." (Eph 2:4-8). It can be a shock for us, as modern, sophisticated, self-reliant people, to comprehend the stark reality that, no matter how good we may think we are, we are always in need of God's mercy and forgiveness because of our human weakness and our often poor self-interested moral compass. Even though we find it hard to admit, we are all truly needy and broken human beings depending on God's mercy to be saved, redeemed, forgiven and made holy. Such lack of awareness possibly explains why so few people these days approach the Sacrament of forgiveness. "Everyone, sooner or later," says the Pope, "will be subject to God's judgement, from which no-one can escape."

During this Year of Mercy, the Pope wants us to "place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the centre once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands. For every penitent, it will be a source of true interior peace." The Pope went on to say, "I will never tire of insisting that clergy in the confessional, themselves be authentic signs of the Father's mercy!" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 17) In the spirit of the Pope's invitation for dioceses to appoint specific priests to

be *Missionaries of Mercy*, I am inviting *all* the priests of our Diocese to be missionaries of mercy and to make themselves more available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Lent 2016

The Pope wants Lent 2016 to be a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God's mercy. On the Friday and Saturday (4-5 March 2016), before the 4th Sunday of Lent, he wants "24 Hours for the Lord" to be celebrated as intense prayer throughout the Church with Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, personal devotion and opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Pilgrims Through the Holy Door

The practice of pilgrimage has a special place in this Holy Year because our life is a pilgrimage as we make our way to our final destination – to be with God forever. So to reach the Holy Door in Rome, or at our own St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Wollongong, or at designated places of pilgrimage in our Diocese (eg, Immaculate Conception Church Unanderra, Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy Penrose Park, The Benedictine Abbey Jamberoo, The Carmel of Mary and Joseph Convent Varroville and Bethlehem Monastery Campbelltown), we cross the threshold of the Holy Door as a sign we are seeking the grace to embrace God's Mercy and to dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as our Heavenly Father has been with us.

A special Holy Year Indulgence will be available to free us from every residue left by the conflicting consequences of our sins on how we think and act, so that we may be strengthened as disciples of the Lord.

I commend this Holy Year to your prayer and consideration and acceptance, because as Pope Francis says, "God's mercy is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people approach it." (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 25)

I pray that, as the year unfolds, it will touch our hearts so that we can re-evaluate how we practise the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy (see below), as practical evidence that we are open to receive mercy so that we will *become* merciful like our heavenly Father. Where will the "oases of mercy" be in our personal lives, our parishes, schools and communities?

After announcing the Jubilee Year in March this year, the Pope said, "I am convinced that the whole Church will find in this Jubilee, the joy needed to rediscover and make fruitful the mercy of God with which all of us are called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time. From this moment we entrust this Holy Year to the Mother of Mercy so that she might turn her gaze upon us and watch over our journey." (*Homily*, 13 March 2015). ■

Yours in Christ




Most Rev Peter W Ingham DD
Bishop of Wollongong

CORPORAL Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry
Give drink to the thirsty
Clothe the naked
Shelter the homeless
Visit those in prison
Comfort the sick
Bury the dead

SPIRITUAL Works of Mercy

Instruct the ignorant
Counsel the doubtful
Forgive offences
Bear wrongs patiently
Admonish sinners
Comfort the sorrowful
Pray for the living and the dead



Oases of Mercy

BY PAUL MASON

In announcing the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis has urged us to reflect deeply on the gracious mercy of God and to hear again Jesus' call to us to "be merciful just as your Father is merciful" (cf. Luke 6:36). "It is indeed my wish that the Jubilee be a living experience of the closeness of the Father, whose tenderness is almost tangible, so that the faith of every believer may be strengthened and thus testimony to it be ever more effective" (Pope Francis, Letter to the President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation, 1 September 2015).

Pope Francis asks us in this Jubilee Year to especially rediscover the richness encompassed by the spiritual and corporal works of mercy:

"The experience of mercy, indeed, becomes visible in the witness of concrete signs as Jesus himself taught us ...

"Wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. Wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an *oasis of mercy*."

There are innumerable stories of corporal and spiritual works of mercy in the Church today. I invite you to reflect on the following few examples, and to further consider your own experiences and opportunities to continually provide oases of mercy in our world today. ■

Paul Mason is the Diocesan Liturgy Coordinator, Diocese of Wollongong.



Bringing hope to the homeless: Homestead of Hope NSW Inc.

Rebecca Miller (Office of the Bishop)

For Dianne O'Dwyer, a lay Carmelite from Ss Peter and Paul Parish Kiama, difficult times as a child have left her with a strong empathy for those who are fleeing domestic violence or facing homelessness. Dianne finally feels free to share her own childhood experiences, "Poor Mum, my step-father was a difficult man. He would lock us outside all night. I can still feel how frightening it was having nowhere to go." Three years ago, Dianne established a group of volunteers who shared her passion for social justice. Fast forward four years and this group of dedicated volunteers has a registered charity called *Homestead of Hope NSW Inc.* Current Homestead Projects favour the underprivileged, marginalised, homeless, refugees, people with a disability and victims of natural disasters. Although deeply rooted in her Catholic faith, Dianne felt strongly that an ecumenical approach was needed so that all local people could work together.

Dianne explains, "Sometimes a child can be sick and suddenly the family is behind in rent. Because we are independent, we are free to offer help when asked, without all the red tape." They have recently opened the *Good Shepherd Welcome Centre* on Tuesdays (11.30am-1.30pm) at the Kiama Scouts Hall where they offer a free light meal and friendship with love and a smile.

Dianne hopes others will share her vision. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if every parish 'adopted' a family and helped them get back on their feet?" If you would like to help please contact Dianne dkodw@bigpond.com or Secretary Mary Rice on 4237 6542. ■



Providing shelter at Wollongong's House of Mercy

Fr Ron Peters (Wollongong)

In cooperation with CatholicCare, Jesuit Refugee Services and Navitas (Humanitarian Settlement Services), the Lumen Christi Catholic Parishes of Wollongong are launching a House of Mercy in December 2015. The House will be used for emergency housing to welcome people seeking refuge in our nation.

The initiative resulted from a recent meeting of our parishioners to study the Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement: *For Those Who've Come Across The Seas*. At the conclusion of the meeting the parishioners resolved to proceed with this significant pastoral initiative which will help meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in the world.

Some of our parishioners have already indicated their willingness to "roll up their sleeves" and help in the setup of the house. Others have offered their services as "companions" to our new guests, seeking to help them to negotiate a new culture and new ways of doing business, teach them English, provide recreational outings, help with shopping, help with transport, and generally support them with settling in a new country.

A fund has been established for all people wanting to contribute to the refurbishment and the ongoing costs of running this house. Donations can be made at the Lumen Christi Pastoral Region Office, 36 Harbour Street Wollongong. Envelopes should be marked "House of Mercy". ■



Channels of peace through the Illawarra

Fr Ron Peters (Wollongong)

The Illawarra People for Peace (IP4P) is a movement in the Wollongong area across various ethnic and faith groups. It formed last year and began by hosting a welcome barbecue in the grounds of St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Wollongong. The inaugural event drew more than 800 people. They came together to share a meal and expressed their desire to work together for peace.

Fr Aloysius Mowe SJ was the guest speaker and a number parishioners, schools and groups were involved, including the Amity Muslim School Shellharbour, St Brigid's Gwynneville, Good Samaritan Fairy Meadow, Edmund Rice College and St Mary Star of the Sea College. A second barbecue was held on 19 November in the grounds of St Francis Xavier's Cathedral with great success. ■



Compassion to those devastated by the Nepal Earthquake

Timothy Hart (Helensburgh)

On 21 May 2015, Holy Cross Catholic Parish Primary School Helensburgh became an oasis of mercy as the community demonstrated a show of compassion for Nepal following the

recent earthquakes that devastated this densely populated country. During the day, Holy Cross students offered up prayers by creating a *Graffiti Wall For Nepal*, using chalk to write messages of hope and compassion. Their prayers were matched with a financial contribution to the Nepal Earthquake appeal. ■



Feeding the hungry The Vinnies Food Van

Sr Sue Barker SGS (Nowra)

Four years ago, the Wollongong Catholic Education Office and the Wollongong Diocesan Central Council of St Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP) collaborated to establish a *Vinnies Van* food service in the Illawarra. The van initially operated three evenings a week in the Wollongong CBD and Warrawong areas.

Food is prepared at the SVdP distribution centre at Coniston. Catholic school and Catholic Education Office staff members are trained as volunteers to support and operate the food service under the guidance of the SVdP.

More recently, the service has been extended to provide visits to Bomaderry and the Nowra CBD each Tuesday evening. Staffed by teams of volunteers from local Nowra Catholic school communities, the van food service prepares and serves sandwiches, hot meals and hot drinks from 5.30pm to 7.30pm.

For more information about the many oases of mercy offered by the SVdP, please visit www.vinnies.org.au



Feeding the hungry The Nowra Soup Kitchen

Rebecca Miller (Office of the Bishop)

Earlier this year, a local group of Lay Missionaries of Charity established a *Soup Kitchen* in Nowra. This oasis of mercy is the collaborative work of the parishioners from St Michael's Parish Nowra, including Shannon Chittick and Sue Hill, who had the initial vision and dream. They draw their inspiration from Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who founded the Missionaries of Charity. Having volunteered for many years with the Missionaries of Charity in Surry Hills, Shannon and Sue decided it was time to respond to the needs of their local community in Nowra.

Shannon explains, "There is high unemployment and a lot of homeless people in this area and we could see a real need for this type of service. We present a nice warm lunch somewhere out of the weather."

Retired chef, Herbert Manauschek, also feels for those who are doing it tough, and is on hand to guide preparation of a delicious three-course lunch every Friday at the Nowra Showgrounds.

Drawing the community together, 35 volunteers and a range of local businesses and service providers have stepped up to ensure the success of the Soup Kitchen. Shannon and Sue also appreciate the support of the parish and value how this connection strengthens their ministry. "We gather with our volunteers at St Michael's in the morning and start each Friday with the Rosary and prayer. This feeds us spiritually – we then go out and feed others."

If you would like to help, please contact St Michael's Parish, ph. 02 4423 1712. ■



Resources & diary dates

Resources for the Journey

BY PAUL MASON

In this Year of Mercy, Pope Francis is calling us to renew and deepen our understanding and works of mercy. We began the journey with the recent Diocesan Assembly held at Varroville on 5 September 2015. More than 120 people gathered to hear Bishop Peter Ingham outline the scope of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. Paul Mason then provided an overview of key events, opportunities and practical considerations for parishes. After morning tea, a number of workshops then opened up discussions for parish and diocesan agency preparations.

Bishop Peter Ingham will open the Holy Door of St Francis Xavier Cathedral at 10:30am on Sunday 13 December. A number of Jubilee events will be held throughout the year, including the opportunity for pilgrimage to shrines and holy places within the Diocese. It is hoped these events and pilgrimage opportunities will enable everyone in the Diocese to experience the mercy of God in very tangible ways during this Jubilee Year. The Advent and Lenten Programs this year have been especially shaped to incorporate the special focus on Mercy.

To help parishes and individuals make the most of this year, the Office of the Bishop is producing a range of resources to support the various initiatives available at dow.sh/yomres. They include Pope Francis' *Year of Mercy Prayer*, the *Year of Mercy Songs*, suggested liturgies during Lent for *Twenty-four Hours for the Lord*, suggested pilgrimages to shrines and holy places within our Diocese, and a list of Jubilees and other celebrations during the year. New resources will be promoted as they become available. Please adapt and use these resources to suit your parish, agency and group as appropriate to your particular circumstances. ■

Paul Mason is the Diocesan Liturgy Coordinator, Diocese of Wollongong.

8 December <i>Feast of the Immaculate Conception</i>	Opening of Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica Rome (50th Anniversary of the Closing of Vatican II)
13 December <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i>	Opening of Holy Doors of St John Lateran Basilica Rome, St Francis Xavier Cathedral Wollongong, and all Cathedrals throughout the world
20 December <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i>	Opening of Holy Door of Immaculate Conception Parish Unanderra (Diocesan Shrine to the Blessed Virgin Mary)
20 December <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i>	Opening of Holy Door of Our Lady of Mercy, Penrose Park
1 January <i>Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God</i>	Opening of Holy Door of St Mary Major Rome
19-21 January	Jubilee for those engaged in pilgrimage work
25 January	Opening of Holy Door of St Paul's Basilica Rome
2 February <i>Feast of the Presentation of the Lord</i>	Jubilee for Consecrated Life and the Closing of the Year of Consecrated Life
10 February <i>Ash Wednesday</i>	Sending of Missionaries of Mercy. Lenten Program begins
22 February	Jubilee for the Roman Curia
4-5 March <i>3rd Week of Lent</i>	24 Hours for the Lord.
3 April <i>2nd Sunday of Easter</i>	Jubilee for those who are devoted to the spirituality of Divine Mercy
24 April <i>5th Sunday of Easter</i>	Jubilee for young boys and girls (aged 13 – 16)
5 May <i>6th Week of Easter</i>	Vigil to Dry Tears
27-29 May <i>Corpus Christi</i>	Jubilee for deacons
3 June <i>Sacred Heart of Jesus</i>	Jubilee for priests
12 June <i>11th Sunday in Ordinary time</i>	Jubilee for those who are ill Jubilee for persons with disabilities
26-31 July <i>18th Sunday in Ordinary time</i>	Jubilee for young people. World Youth Day (Krakow, Poland)
4 September <i>23rd Sunday in Ordinary time</i>	Jubilee for workers and volunteers for mercy
25 September <i>26th Sunday in Ordinary time</i>	Jubilee for catechists
8-9 October <i>28th Sunday in Ordinary time</i>	Marian Jubilee
6 November <i>32nd Sunday in Ordinary time</i>	Jubilee for prisoners
13 November <i>33rd Sunday in Ordinary time</i>	Closing of the Holy Doors throughout the world
20 November <i>Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe</i>	Closing of the Holy door of St Peter's Basilica Rome

Euthanasia a dangerous, radical shift in society's foundational values

BY DEBRA VERMEER

Euthanasia is not an incremental change to current end-of-life practices, but a radical and massive shift in our society's and civilisation's foundational values, says internationally renowned Australian ethicist, Margaret Somerville.

Dr Somerville, who is a Professor of Law, Professor in the Faculty of Medicine, and Founding Director of the Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, was speaking at the University of Notre Dame (Sydney), as part of a series of public lectures on ethical issues surrounding euthanasia and assisted suicide during her recent visit to Australia.

Her presentation focused on lessons to be learnt from the debate in Canada, where the Supreme Court earlier this year struck down a ban on doctor-assisted suicide for mentally competent Canadian patients with terminal illnesses.

She said one of the key arguments of pro-euthanasia advocates was that euthanasia is no different to medical treatments, such as palliative sedation, that are already widely practised.

"When used correctly as part of palliative care, palliative sedation is not euthanasia," she said. "In palliative sedation, as part of standard palliative care, physicians often allow the patient to become conscious from time to time and use the lightest possible sedation consistent with relieving suffering. As well, it's only used as a last resort, and not often."

Dr Somerville said acting with an intention to kill is "different-in-kind" from allowing a natural death and that doctors are one of the groups most opposed to euthanasia.

She said in The Netherlands, where euthanasia is legal, there is so much resistance by physicians to carrying it out that the government has had to set up "mobile euthanasia units" to



visit homes and attend to euthanasia requests.

"Euthanasia is not just an incremental expansion of current ethically and legally accepted end-of-life decisions, such as refusals of life-support treatment, as pro-euthanasia advocates argue," she said.

"It seems that most politicians and many Canadians do not recognise the momentousness of a decision to legalise euthanasia. It's not incremental change, but rather a radical and massive shift in our society's and civilisation's foundational values."

Dr Somerville said another pro-euthanasia strategy to be resisted is the euphemising of euthanasia by calling it "medical treatment" and "medically assisted death".

"Euthanasia is not medical treatment. Defining it as such presents serious dangers to patients, the trust-based physician-patient relationship, and medicine," she said.

The medicalisation of assisted suicide establishes suicide as a legitimate response to suffering, thus endorsing suicide, Dr Somerville said. Studies have shown that more honest language such as "state-sanctioned suicide" or "physicians killing their patients" reduces public support for deliberately inflicted death.

"Words matter," she said. "Language affects emotions and intuitions, including moral intuitions, which are important to ethical decision-making."

Drawing on the Canadian experience, Dr Somerville said the appeal to individual autonomy, to empathy and compassion, and the promotion of the idea that death is actually a benefit to someone whose life is affected by illness, were all pro-euthanasia arguments to be vigorously resisted.

She said the dangers of legalised killing to society as a whole must outweigh individual circumstances.

"Euthanasia is special (among ethical debates) because there's nothing new about it. We've always got old, suffered, become terminally ill, been dying and somebody could have killed us, and we said 'No, that is wrong. We don't do that.'"

"So that's why euthanasia is so important. Because if we change that, we're changing the very roots of our society. I think we're changing the essence of what it means to be human if we start killing each other." ■

Debra Vermeer is a freelance journalist and media relations business manager. She was the Communications Officer for the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (2002-2010). Prior to this she was a political journalist for AAP in the Parliamentary Press Gallery, Canberra.

Dr Somerville's presentation at The University of Notre Dame was a joint initiative of the Faculties of Medicine and Law and the University's Institute for Ethics and Society.

Families are the heartbeat of the Church:

An interview with Bishop Eugene Hurley

BY FIONA BASILE

In October 2015, Bishop Eugene Hurley of Darwin was in Rome attending the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, discussing the theme: *The vocation and the mission of the family in the Church and the contemporary world*. Bishop Hurley took some time out to catch up with fellow Australian and photojournalist Fiona Basile, who presented the following questions to the Bishop.

Tell me about your experience of the Synod.

I think my overwhelming sense is one of great privilege. Firstly, to represent the Australian Church as a representative of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, and secondly, it's an enormous responsibility to listen carefully to the real lives of families, particularly Catholic families, many of whom find themselves trying to manage the Church's teaching. They're great people of great faith and I think we need to listen really carefully to the struggles they're having.

I think the whole theme of the Synod has been that reverential listening, which is a lovely term. It's not just listening; it's really reverent. There's a real reverence for the goodness, fidelity, faithfulness and prayerfulness of families. We constantly talk about the mission of the Church to the family, but from my point of view, I am very convinced of the mission of the family to the wider Church. We talk about the family being the domestic church and if that's true, and it is, then it has a profound mission to the wider church.

Given this is a Synod about listening to people's experience of family, tell me about your family.

My own family had an incredible influence on me. I learned about God very early in my life. A silly story, but



Bishop Eugene Hurley

PHOTO: FIONA BASILE

we lived in a small country town called Carrieton in the Flinders Ranges, in the north of South Australia and we used to go to country dances. As a little kid you'd be put under the supper table to go to sleep and often, very late, about 2 or 3 in the morning, you'd be pulled out, put in the car and taken home. And when I got home my dad carried me to bed—I was only a little kid—and we had the habit of saying a few prayers by the side of the bed. So I kept getting out of bed, which must have been frustrating to my dad and eventually he said, "What's the matter with you? Stay in bed!" And I said, "I haven't said my prayers." And I remember my dad saying, "Look, you've been a very good boy and God wouldn't want you to get out in the cold. He'd want you to snuggle up and say your prayers in bed tonight." And I remember thinking, "What a beautiful God!"

Most of my faith I learned in my family. Not in the seminary, not in the Catholic boarding college, not doing post-graduate studies – I mean, I learnt more about it at those places, but I didn't learn my faith there. I heard my parents saying the Rosary every night and then I was part of it. And that's what I want to emphasise to the people: Don't be waiting for Catholic schools to imbue your children with faith. They'll teach about the faith, but they will learn it essentially from in the family. Now what do we need to do to help you do that? What do you want me to do? What has to be set up? What sort of groups? Prayer groups? What sort of education? What do you need in order for you to do what you have to do? That's my job.

What is the experience of families in your diocese?

In my diocese it's a bit different in that the average age is 30, which is lovely because they're all young families with children and the cathedral is full of children and noise; I love it. Also a third of my diocese is Aboriginal people who have a deep and wonderful culture. And I think we need

to listen really carefully, attentively and with humility to that culture.

The other thing in my diocese that is a real heartache for me is that many families are in detention – the trauma and dysfunction that that causes. It's just so terribly sad. I visit the detention centres now and have done so since Woomera and Baxter. But the destruction of that reality of families is something that weighs heavily on my own heart. We need to understand that children and families do not belong in mandatory detention, particularly when they are fleeing such awful circumstances.

How has the Synod reconciled or brought together all the different experiences and viewpoints when it comes to the vocation of families?

When we talk of families, we talk of all families. There are broken families, there are wonderful families, young families, people who are single or widowed. They're all part of family life. And I think this Synod has tried really hard – and I have been really impressed with how people have struggled – to not leave anybody out, because our Lord himself didn't leave anybody out. He sat with the Samaritan woman – he scandalised a few people doing that! But

his first commandment was “to love one another”.

The lovely thing about the Synod is that the Holy Father has asked people to be frank and open. And Synods are about listening to one another and there are different points of view. In the end, this is a pastoral Synod, it's about how do we do things? So when people talk about this doctrine and that doctrine, that's all certainly in place, but what we're looking at now is, how do we accompany people? How do we reach out to people? How do we engage people? How do we show mercy? The focus of the Synod is, how do we bring the healing love of Jesus Christ to the people, particularly in the Catholic Church, but wider than that. How do we bring life and energy and a sense of grandeur to families, particularly those who are struggling? This is what the Holy Spirit is calling the Church to.

Were there any surprises?

I think one of the lovely things that has come out of the Synod and which was discussed at the previous Synod of the Family, is the profound place of sexuality in marriage; recognising the real sacredness, beauty and life-giving nature of sexuality within marriage. I know a number of us were anxious that this not be lost. Not only was it not lost it was

taken up as a theme and I think that's lovely because it presents to the world this whole idea that conjugal sexuality is healing, life-giving and reconciling. It's a wonderful, beautiful part of human nature and I think it exalts the whole idea of priestly celibacy as well. It sounds strange but I would say to people, the reason I am celibate is the same reason that my best friends are married. They want to love each other exclusively, totally and with their whole heart and their whole self and they have made a covenant of love to each other.

And I believe that my covenant of love is with the people; that I couldn't have lived my life the way I have and also have been a husband and a father. I've tried to be available to people night and day, weekends, week in, week out, year in, year out, and that's my covenant of love with them. And I think the more beautiful the covenant of love is between married couples, the more beautiful my celibacy is. Rather than something you don't do, or have given up, I have said yes, with all the ups and downs, frustrations, beauty and profundity of it, just as a married couple says yes. ■

Fiona Basile is a photojournalist for Kairos Catholic Journal, who reported on the Synod process for the ACBC from the Vatican, Rome.

Fantastic First Year for Certificate Course in Pastoral Liturgy

BY PAUL MASON

At the *Lift Up Your Hearts Conference*, held in Wollongong in 2014, Bishop Peter Ingham announced the Diocese would commence offering a Certificate Course in Pastoral Liturgy. Aimed at pastoral leaders in liturgy, music and the sacraments of initiation, the course features teaching from recognised experts in the field of



liturgy, including Dr Carmel Pilcher ^{RSJ} and Rev Dr David Orr ^{OSB}.

The first year, recently completed, has been enthusiastically received by all course participants. The initial intake in 2015 was 12 students, who have attended the first two units of the course comprising 144 teacher hours.

The course comprises four units studied over two years and provides a sound foundation in liturgical principles and practice for parish and school Liturgy Coordinators, Pastoral Associates, Music Coordinators, Choir Directors, Sacramental Program Coordinators and RCIA Coordinators. ■

Enrolments for 2016 are now open. Contact Paul Mason for further details: liturgy@dow.org.au or 02 4222 2462 liturgydow.org.au/certificate-course.html

Youth Ministry on the move, *literally*



PHOTO: DANIEL HOPPER



Youth Mission Team

Since 1986, Youth Mission Team Australia (YMT) has been one of the leading Catholic youth ministries in the country, pioneering a new style of peer-to-peer youth outreach. Team members share a house together, begin and end each day with communal prayer, attend daily Mass, and spend time in daily worship and personal prayer.

Our Wollongong team has spent over forty days in schools this year facilitating youth retreats and reflections as well as the weekly iStand youth group and Fun Days.

The iStand Camp in September had over 40 attendees learning about Church teaching and the virtues in everyday life. The October Fun Day involved a "colour war" to capture a prized flag at Fairy Meadow Beach.

Some recent student feedback received:

"It made me stop and think about if I have been pushing God away and it made me reflect on our relationship."

"It made me stronger in my faith and made me feel so much better about life." ■

To find out more about our iStand youth group or other fun events, please email wollongong@ymt.com.au or call 0433 636 359.

BY SETH HARSH

It has been a big year for youth ministry in the Wollongong Diocese. While there might not have been a lot of action on the surface, there has been much planning and networking to establish some solid foundations for the exciting initiatives ahead in 2016.

This year saw the establishment of a formation programme for high school students that prepared them for a deep engagement with the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Adelaide (December 2015) and planted seeds that will hopefully come to fruition next year as they share all they've learnt with their peers and the wider community. Around sixty students, representing almost every Catholic high school in the Diocese, attended the formation program and energy is high as the Festival approaches.

The formation consisted of a powerful combination of encounter, knowledge, ownership and mission elements that were enthusiastically entered into by all. Feedback from both staff and students regarding the program was overwhelmingly positive and included comments such as:

"I enjoyed every second. It deepened my faith and relationship with God."

"The whole day was just amazing. It inspired me as a young Christian."

"It was a great day full of lots of fun activities and deep and meaningful

discussions/talks. I learnt to be more aware of God in my everyday life."

Planning is also well underway for a series of vibrant high school encounter events next year. The main 'driving vehicle' for these will be a brand new state-of-the-art mobile youth ministry stage decked out with powerful sound and lighting equipment and accompanied by a dynamic team of the Diocese's most gifted youth ministers, including the Wollongong Youth Mission Team and Youth Ministry Music Team. This exciting initiative will deliver the timelessly relevant Gospel message in a way that is youthful, vibrant, relevant and engaging.

Existing initiatives in the Diocese will continue into 2016 and they will be bigger and better than ever. Some of these include Pub Theology and iStand youth group. In addition to these, there will be more opportunities for prayer and faith discovery.

For all the latest updates on youth ministry, look us up on Facebook at Catholic Youth Ministry Wollongong, and don't forget to 'like' us. You can also contact me directly on 4222 2460 if you want any information or you'd like to get involved. ■

Seth Harsh is the Youth Ministry Coordinator, Diocese of Wollongong.



Ruah Young Adults

Ruah Young Adults has had the pleasure of witnessing the abundant blessings of our gracious God throughout 2015. The vision and mission of Ruah, to bear Christ's love, peace and joy, was realised and has borne special fruit for us all.

The most significant sign of Christ's redeeming power was during our annual weekend retreat, themed *Infinite* in July. With help from the Catholic Development Fund, Fr Richard Healey, Fr Duane Fernandez and Fr Stephen Varney, over 60 young people were able to personally encounter Almighty God and hear from reputable speakers such as Peter Holmes and Sr Mary Rachel OP.

Testimonials from the Ruah Weekend:

"I am grateful to have had the opportunity to attend such a weekend. I learnt and grew in my relationship with God, understanding of our Catholic faith, within myself, and through sharing experiences with my fellow youth. I left the weekend knowing and feeling I had grown closer to God. Everything I encountered has continued to be a part of my life since."
– Dee (Age 30)

"The retreat has definitely been the highlight of my year so far. My experiences with the amazing people and by engaging in the sacraments and various activities, not forgetting personal time spent reflecting on my faith and laying in awe of God, has

shaped this experience as one of the most memorable of my adult life." – Ben (Age 19)

Another great blessing is Pub Theology that began in March. This monthly event saw an average of 50 young adults engaging with speakers such as Sam Clear (Walk4One) on topics including *marriage equality and politics and the Church*.

Moreover, the fortnightly meetings, whether it was beautiful Adoration evenings or wrestling with difficult questions of the Faith through *Mystery Box* nights, further gained spiritual nourishment and a deepened relationship with Christ.

Ruah will be working more closely with Seth Harsh (Youth Ministry Coordinator) to expand these ministries in order to ignite the hearts of many more young adults with the mysteries of Christ's love. Please continue to keep us in your prayers. ■

Dates for Ruah events next year:

- Ruah weekly Wednesday evening meetings begin 3 Feb
- Pub Theology at Dicey Riley's Irish Hotel – 30 March with guest speaker Bishop Peter Ingham (www.pubtheo.com.au)
- Ruah Weekend 2016 at The Tops Conference Centre, Stanwell Tops – 29-31 July www.ruahyoungadults.com

Thank you from Caritas

Dear Bishop Peter Ingham

Thank you for your support and that of your parishioners who walked in solidarity with the world's poor during Project Compassion 2015 ... It was humbling to see this incredible generosity ... In the 2014-2015 financial year, the Diocese of Wollongong raised \$282,849 for Project Compassion, and \$438,397 in general and emergency donations

... We immensely value your faithful support and commitment ... I would also like to thank Tom van Kints whose continued commitment to Caritas Australia means that the community is able to connect with Caritas Australia through Project Compassion each year. ■

Kind Regards
Paul O'Callaghan
CEO Caritas Australia

Fathers Day Appeal 2015 thank you

Each year on Fathers Day, Bishop Peter Ingham invites us all to remember and support the retired priests and seminarians of our Diocese by contributing to the annual *Fathers Day Appeal*.

This year \$39,050 was raised. These funds will be used to help support the six retired priests and two seminarians in our Diocese.

Bishop Peter said, "Most of our priests work long into their seventies, caring for the spiritual life and welfare of the people in their parish. When they retire, it becomes the responsibility of the Diocese to provide the appropriate accommodation, health care and other support they need. We must also ensure that a sound seminary formation program is in place for those who will follow.

"At a time when the number of retiring, retired and sick clergy begins to grow in our Diocese, and we are reminded of the immense responsibility we have to our seminarians, this practical support is very much appreciated and something for which I am very grateful." ■

Family, Healing and Outreach:

A review of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan in 2015

Sharing the love and life offered by Jesus Christ is at the heart of all we seek to be and do in our Catholic Church. How do we do this most effectively? This year saw the launch of the renewed *Diocesan Pastoral Plan 2015-2017: Family. Healing. Outreach.* Shaped by community consultation and key advice from our diocesan leadership, our Pastoral Plan offers a wonderful vision and resource to support us in our efforts to be proclaimers of the Good News.

This year, in particular, Pope Francis invited us to reflect on family as he convened an Extraordinary Synod on the Family. Next year, our Universal Church will embark on a Year of Mercy, with the focus of our Pastoral Plan being on healing.

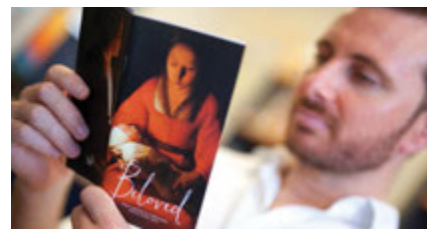
In 2015, approximately 1,000 people undertook some form of faith and ministry formation across the Diocese with over 90% of participants finding the offerings an excellent source of ideas, inspiration and growth. The following is a brief summary of how we embraced the plan in 2015 based on the objectives given in each goal for 2015: Focus on Family.



Uplifting our Prayer and Worship

- In 2015, more than 400 people attended 16 *Diocesan Liturgical Ministry Training* courses (over 72 teaching hours) run by the Liturgy Office, including:
 - Acolytes and Altar Servers;
 - Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion;
 - Cantors & Musicians;
 - Children's Liturgy of the Word;
 - Ministers to the Sick & Dying;
 - Bereavement Support Teams; and
 - Music Coordinators.

- Continued to develop Diocesan Liturgical Ministry support initiatives and resources, including:
 - A new database facilitating course and event enrolments, resourcing and the production of new ministry engagement forms and certificates;
 - A new diocesan ministry authorisation process incorporating Working With Children Checks and Police Checks, as well as training and approval requirements;
 - Regular Liturgy Notes updates, and a greatly expanded Liturgy Handbook website (www.liturgydow.org.au) resulting in a strong growth in website visits (now 1,000+ per week);
 - New resource and support pages on the Liturgy Handbook website for kid's liturgy, confirmation liturgies, welcoming, prayer of the faithful, weekly music suggestions, youth music and a scholarships program for cantors and accompanists;
 - Launch and in-service with Prof Clare Johnson (ACU) on new Children's Eucharistic Prayers and Guidelines for clergy, principals and RECs;
 - Support for new Oran Park Parish liturgy and music ministry establishment; and
 - Development of liturgy resources for 2016 Lenten Program.
- Guidelines for liturgical architecture for the creation and ongoing development of liturgical spaces including an in-service for clergy with Rev Dr Stephen Hackett msc (Chair of the National Liturgical Art & Architecture Board) on the new national guidelines: *And When Churches Are To Be Built*.
- We celebrated the Second National Conference of the Australian Pastoral Musicians Network (APMN) with keynote presenter and well-known liturgical composer, Marty Haugen. There were 200 attendees led by Paul Mason (APMN Chair) and other diocesan APMN members.



Enriching Faith and Spirituality

- We have seen continued growth in popularity of our *Lenten and Advent programs* with record sales (approximately 37,000 Advent and Lenten program books distributed in 2015) as well as the introduction of the Advent program App for smartphones.
- Expanded our Advent and Lenten program suite with the production of *Cry Out*, a professionally recorded music CD containing Sunday psalms.
- Assisted the Moss Vale and Corrimall parishes with the development of *Adult faith formation groups* and drafted a position description for Parish Adult Faith Formation Contact/Coordinators for use in all parishes.
- *Faith in Everyday Life* workshops with Dr Anthony Gooley (Broken Bay Institute) were held throughout the year focusing on: Interreligious Dialogue, Science and Religion and Faith and Justice. Breaking down the barriers, stereotypes, misunderstanding and prejudice that often colour debates in these areas was a key focal point in each presentation.
- Conducted workshops throughout the Diocese in connection with the *Year of Consecrated Life*.
- Explored further opportunities to enrich Catholic faith and spirituality with a special focus on family faith life, including:
 - *Messy Church* – currently running in Albion Park with

plans for Kiama and several Macarthur parishes;

- *Conversations about Catholics* – currently running in Corrimal with plans for Kiama and several Macarthur parishes; and
- *Frankly Magazine* and a *Faith in the Family* newsletter were investigated and piloted with the Catholic Education Office (CEO).
- Continued to develop ways to support and nourish a culture of vocations including reflections placed each week in the *Weekly Communications* bulletin and various reflection days held throughout the year.



Strengthening Community Life & Outreach

- We saw the exponential growth of the *Journey Catholic Radio* show as a unique evangelising initiative now aired weekly on 14 Christian Radio Stations in 11 Dioceses across Australia to an estimated weekly audience of around 100,000 people. The *Podcast eNewsletter* version of the show is emailed out to thousands of subscribers each week. The *Journey Catholic Radio* is the only Catholic radio program in Australia aired on general Christian radio.
- Bishop Peter Ingham launched *The Catholic Guy Impact Ministry* in Macarthur Region to reach out to those disconnected from parishes with the commencement of Sunday services at Campbelltown Catholic Club.
- One of the major highlights of the year was our second Family Ministry Conference, this year called: *Embracing Family: Parish School & Beyond*. Approximately 90 people experienced a wealth of input from keynote presenters Fr Elio Capra SDB and Jill Gallio (Archdiocese of Adelaide) along

with numerous workshops dealing with the many and varied ways in which we can reach out and connect with families across our Diocese.

- Carmen Karauda (Diocesan Aged Care Advocate – CatholicCare) offered a *Certificate in Pastoral Care* course in the Illawarra and Macarthur. Under the banner of *Supporting Life's Journey*, approximately 150 people attended workshops concerned with the care and support of those who are ageing, those with dementia, those experiencing loss and grief and those in palliative care.
- Sr Ruth Davis (Diocesan Advocate for those with Disabilities and their Families – CatholicCare) conducted a series of workshops encouraging parishes to consider how they were creating places of inclusion for everyone, especially those with disabilities.
- Varroville, Macquarie Fields, Picton and Corrimal Parishes undertook *formation and development in outreach, welcome and inclusion*, recognising the specific needs of different groups.
- Continued the development of promotional resources distributed to all Catholic State School parents whose children go to or who are considering *Special Religious Education* delivered by Catechists.



Empowering Leadership for Mission

- Bishop Peter Ingham appointed a *new parish priest for the Northern Illawarra Parishes* (Bulli, Thirroul and Corrimal Parishes), Fr Patrick Vaughan, with a movement towards greater cooperation across the parishes.
- Assisted in the establishment of our *newest diocesan parish, St Mary MacKillop Parish Oran Park*, especially in the areas of communications and welcome and support for families.

- In order to strengthen the *protection of children*, we created a database and completed an audit recording details of all involved in parish ministry who interact with children. We also commenced developing updated child protection policies and procedures including new Working With Children Check processes.
- Engagement of Catholic Mission to provide *in-services to clergy and CEO staff* on leadership.
- Commencement of a *Parish Self Review and Improvement Process* for the Diocese including an Implementation Strategy and Formation Program.
- Bishop Peter Ingham launched the *Certificate in Pastoral Liturgy Course* for leaders in liturgy, music and RCIA. The initial intake in 2015 was 12 students, who have attended the first two units of the course. 144 teacher hours, including Dr Carmel Pilcher RSJ and Rev Dr David Orr OSB (see page 9 for more details including enrolment information for 2016).
- Approximately 40 people undertook our *Serving God's People* course at Dapto, Macquarie Fields, Ruse and Camden providing an overview of Christian ministry, equipping those involved with essential practical skills and knowledge for actively contributing to the life of the parish.
- Our new Diocesan Youth Ministry Coordinator, Seth Harsh, developed a *Youth Engagement Plan* in liaison with key stakeholders (eg, CEO and the Youth Mission Team) and commenced the training of peer-to-peer ministry groups in secondary schools in preparation for the 2015 Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Adelaide.
- Continued our full implementation of online training opportunities for *Catechists* to promote easier involvement in the ministry of CCD as well as contributing to the government review of *Special Religious Education* in State schools. ■

The story of Christmas by student artists



Top: Director of Schools' Christmas Story Prize: Zoya Huang (St John the Evangelist Catholic Parish Primary School, Campbelltown)

Bottom left: The Bishop's Choice Award: Jadyn Berhardt (St Clare's Catholic Parish Primary School, Narellan Vale)

Bottom right: CatholicCare Star of Hope Award: Ben Waights (St Clare's Catholic Parish Primary School, Narellan Vale)

BY JOANNE KENNY

In September 2015, Catholic Primary Schools in the Diocese of Wollongong celebrated the official opening of the annual *Christmas Story Art Competition and Exhibition*. The evening was an outstanding success with the event and competition providing an opportunity for our students to reflect upon and demonstrate, through the artistic process, their understanding and interpretation of the Scripture of Advent and Christmas from the Religious Education curriculum. It was standing room only at the Wollongong City Art Gallery as student artists were acknowledged in the prize-giving ceremony.

Each year, the exhibition grows in stature as a wonderful celebration of the spirituality and creativity of students in Years 5 and 6, highlighting the role of the arts in Religious Education. In 2015, there was a record number of 154 entries from 27 of our 29 diocesan Parish Primary Schools.

Six finalists from each year group were selected by an expert panel of seven judges, including Mr John Monteleone from the Wollongong Art Gallery and Mr John Charadia from the Catholic Education Office in Wollongong.

The Bishop's Choice Award was presented to **Jadyn Berhardt** from St Clare's Catholic Parish Primary School, Narellan Vale.

The Director of Schools' Christmas Story Prize was awarded to **Zoya Huang** from St John the Evangelist Catholic Parish Primary School, Campbelltown and, **Ben Waights**, also of St Clare's, was presented with the *CatholicCare Star of Hope Award*.

The exhibition continued to be the centre of attention at the Gallery for two weeks after the award ceremony and many students, families and visitors attended to view the works during this time.

The artworks were then shipped up to Sydney to be included in the Sydney Archdiocesan Christmas Story Competition and Exhibition that opened on the first Sunday of Advent at St Mary's Cathedral Crypt, Sydney.

Congratulations to the student artists, their families and teachers who supported them and all involved in the organisation of the exhibition. It was again a most outstanding success. ■

Joanne Kenny is the Education Officer – Primary Religious Education for Catholic Education, Diocese of Wollongong.

The power of love

BY JOSIE COOKS

Every now and then, if you're lucky, you come across people who leave a lasting impression on you – ordinary people doing extraordinary things as they go about their daily business. For me, those people are Max and Michelle Green, a couple who radiate love and an enthusiasm for life. A selfless couple who have raised their eight biological children and are grandparents to four grandchildren, Max and Michelle have found room in their already full lives to adopt a little girl with special needs, to be long term foster parents to a young boy and be short-term foster parents to several other children.

While many of us would find the responsibility of caring for a large family and a child with a disability somewhat overwhelming, Max and Michelle embraced the challenge and overcame every obstacle they faced with large doses of humour and a wonderful outlook on life that allows them to enjoy their children whom they consider a true gift.

Ethan was the sixth child to be born into the Green family and had Down syndrome. When he was a few days old he was in need of emergency heart surgery. At the hospital, Michelle met a woman caring for a child with Down syndrome and automatically thought that this was something she and Max could do; provide a safe, loving home for a child in need. Years later, while reading the local paper, they came across an ad seeking a loving home for a baby girl with Down syndrome. Having already been through the experience with Ethan, they decided to apply for adoption and twelve months later were the proud parents of a fifteen month old baby girl, Emily.

When Emily came to live with her new family, her parents were informed that she would probably never walk or talk. Shaken into action but undeterred by this prognosis, Michelle and Max showered her with love and treated her with the same love and devotion as each of their



To facilitate young people's growth in wisdom and age is to watch the unfolding of God in our midst.

Daniel O'Leary
(*Engaging Religious Education*, 168)

other children. Needing heart surgery, Emily's new parents convinced their pediatrician to delay the surgery to give her time to bond with her new family and come to know who it was that was going to be fighting hard for her. Emily thrived in her new home and now is a fiercely independent young girl who plays netball, dances, participates in the band program and is in the cast of school musicals at Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School, Fairy Meadow.

Ethan was also encouraged to follow his passions, including basketball and dancing. Both Emily and Ethan know they have Down syndrome, but Michelle and Max have not let this define who they are, or limit what they can do. If this couple weren't busy enough already, they also welcomed a little boy into the fold. Unable to adopt due to their age, Michelle and Max have been assigned as his long-term carers.

One of the most difficult things the couple have had to overcome is the negative attitude and lack of awareness of other people. Believing that each child should be allowed to come into their own, Michelle finds it upsetting

that people assume because a child has a disability, they are incapable of achieving the same things in life as other people. Wanting all their children to be treated with dignity and respect, Michelle and Max enrolled them in the Catholic Education system. Having sent their older children to Holy Spirit College Bellambi, the couple believe that the Catholic school system is the best choice for their children with special needs. Michelle feels that Holy Spirit, St Francis Xavier and Good Samaritan schools all have a culture of acceptance and understanding towards students with special needs and that the children are embraced by the whole school community and treated with fairness as equals by the students and the staff.

You only need to observe the look of loving joy on the faces of Michelle and Max as they collect their children at the after-school pick-up to understand the depth of their love. Amongst all the busy-ness and chaos that comes with raising a large family, these children have flourished in this vibrant, loving and caring environment. Max and Michelle Green are unsung heroes of our community; they have much to teach us all about the true meaning of love. Their actions project the joy of the Gospel each and every day. ■

Josie Cooks is the Community Development Officer – Catholic Education, Diocese of Wollongong.

The Royal Commission and the unique challenges for the Catholic Church

BY FRANCIS SULLIVAN

Below is a condensed version of a speech given by Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth, Justice and Healing Council, as part of the Blackfriar's Lecture Series at the Australian Catholic University on 20 October 2015. The speech in full can be downloaded at dow.sh/tjhcspeech

Over the past two and a half years the child sex abuse Royal Commission has had a very close look at the way in which institutions, both public and private, have responded to claims of child sexual abuse. The public and private examinations have been far reaching. From the Royal Commission's data it is clear that around one in every three institutions identified in private hearing sessions is Catholic.

The Royal Commission has handled 26,000 calls, received 14,000 letters and emails and referred 767 people to police and other authorities. Its work has been thorough and comprehensive. So what have we learnt during the past two and half years about our own institutions and about other organisations?

In almost every one of the public hearings looking at Catholic Church institutions we have seen how rigid, closed, defensive and combative the institutional Church can be when it is threatened. It has been ready to use all its might, resources and social position to prevail over abuse survivors looking for justice. The first instinct of most Church officials was to protect the reputation of the Church, regardless of the cost to the survivor and their family – and as it has ultimately turned out, at a far greater cost to the Church in so many different ways.

Survivors have often said that they struggled to get close to Church leaders. Church processes kept bishops and congregational leaders at a distance from the real discussions and certainly from meeting face to face with the



victims. While some survivors have been treated with great consideration and kindness, many have reported that they were not believed by Church officials and even worse, when they engaged in the Church's redress processes, they felt re-traumatised.

Culture and clericalism

Among the many criticisms of the Church during the Royal Commission's hearings has been the way in which the Church's culture, in particular clericalism, has played a role in the original crimes and then been a factor in their cover-up.

As an organisation, the Church is a closed system with its own code of conduct and promotion. It has a clearly defined elite caste – the clergy – with exclusive rights to participation. Despite the official teaching position of the Church there is an entrenched power imbalance between the clergy and the laity which leads to the abuse of power characteristic of a culture of clericalism.

Peter Steinfels, one of America's leading Catholic commentators, says that denial and secrecy happened because priests and superiors operated in this closed, self-protective culture, a culture not open to scrutiny, inquiry, interview or evaluation, with little or no accountability and even less transparency from Church leaders back

to the Church community. Ironically, in dealing with the child sexual abuse crisis behind locked doors to avoid scandalising the faithful and protect the Church, the opposite has been the result.

The way in which this 'cultural blind spot' is manifest varies and has changed from denying the abuse actually took place to creating a narrative that seeks to qualify the history. These qualifications typically involve attempts to put the abuse scandal into some sort of justifying context like: there was more abuse in the Catholic Church because we ran more schools, homes and orphanages than anyone else, or; the Catholic Church dealt with more vulnerable children than any other institution, or; the abuse was a factor of immature candidates, seminarians and clerics, even homosexuals within the priesthood and religious life, or; the number of abusers in the Church was relatively small. But ultimately these rationales were offered to excuse the institution rather than offer an honest and critical analysis to determine the full extent and reasons for the abuse, for the devastation caused by the abuse, and for the serious problem facing the Church.

Other institutions

While much has been revealed about how the Catholic Church has responded

to claims of child sexual abuse, so too have other institutions been similarly stripped bare. Thanks to the work of the Royal Commission, we know that mismanagement and cover up of child sexual abuse is not unique to the Catholic Church. Often the Commission has heard there were no policies to guide personnel in institutions to identify and act on suspicious and inappropriate behaviour. There was no training to help respond appropriately to children and adults disclosing abuse. And, heart-breakingly, where there were policies in place, the Commission has found that when it came to the crunch they were either inadequate, or simply ignored.

This is despite at the start of the Royal Commission many people being of the view child sexual abuse was a Catholic issue and largely confined to Catholic Church institutions. What has become clear is that this is not the case. Having just said that, let there be no mistake: institutional abuse in other organisations should never be used to moderate the horror and scandal for abuse of children in the Catholic Church. But we do now have a much clearer picture and we now understand child sexual abuse is a broad based community problem that needs a broad community based response.

Redress

At the forefront of the Royal Commission's work, at its very heart, is the development of a national scheme of redress, or compensation, for child sexual abuse survivors. I must say here that it's come to light during the public hearings, that the Catholic Church is one of the few organisations that has its own protocols, limited as they are, for supporting victims of abuse.

Regardless of this, what is clear now is that it is no longer tenable for the Catholic Church, or for that matter any other institution, to run their own redress schemes. I have said it before and I will say it again: "the days of the Church investigating itself must be over."

Legal

Church leaders have now taken very clear and decisive steps to remove some legal hurdles for survivors wanting to take an abuse claim against a church entity to court. One such hurdle is the unincorporated structure of many faith-based institutions, including the Catholic Church. Unincorporated associations are not legal entities, with the result that they cannot be sued.

The agreed position of Church leaders now is that in the case of child sexual abuse, they will assist in the identification of the proper person or body against whom proceedings may be brought. If this approach is adopted by all dioceses and religious congregations, the old expression 'you can't sue the Catholic Church' should become a thing of the past.

Changes have also been agreed that will extend the time limits survivors have to bring a claim in the courts. With implementation of these reforms survivors, in theory, should be able to seek justice through the courts, if they want to, without one hand tied behind their back. For many survivors, however, court processes will continue to be an unsatisfactory way of pursuing redress for damage arising from child sexual abuse.

Independent Church entity

We are in the process of establishing a new independent Church entity that will set, monitor and report on best practice child protection standards across dioceses and congregations. The plan involves a new body working in tandem with existing statutory requirements to strengthen child protection measures in those parts of the Church that are not currently regulated.

Conclusion

The child sex abuse scandal has challenged the collective conscience of our Church. It has forced us to question our awareness of the working assumptions and the values of our Church's institutional structure, its processes, culture and *modus operandi*.

It has tested our understandings of what is right behaviour, truth telling, honesty, responsibility to others, duty and human respect. This experience is now the basis for judgment. In Australia the Catholic Church has a unique opportunity. The Royal Commission is driving change and demanding answers. Not just from the Church but across the community. We should embrace this opportunity to re-establish the Church as a credible organisation, willing to acknowledge failings, accept criticism, and put in place reforms and move forward. Our history demands nothing less from us. ■

Francis Sullivan is the Chief Executive Officer of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council.



Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The Catholic Diocese of Wollongong is cooperating fully with the Royal Commission and seeks to be truly open to the wisdom that it will offer to ensure greater protection for children, now and into the future.

If someone has been sexually abused as a child by a priest, religious or employee of the Catholic Church, it is important that they are given an opportunity for their experience to be heard.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse:

1800 099 340
childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au
GPO Box 5283, Sydney NSW 2001

Police Assistance Line: 131 444

Wasting time and learning to love



BY BISHOP MICHAEL KENNEDY

“Waste time with families” was the fatherly advice Pope Francis gave to bishops, and by extension to all priests, on the final day of the World Meeting of Families held recently in Philadelphia.

For many years “wasting time with God” has been my own approach to God and time with him in prayer so I was delighted to hear the Holy Father say we must approach families and the time we spend with them in the same way.

When in the presence of those we love we are happy just to be with them; we don’t have to be doing anything in particular, we simply ‘hang out’ and spend time with each other. From this “quantity time” as opposed to “quality time” there emerges a deepening of relationships, mutual understanding and appreciation, and growth in love. It also provides the opportunity to accompany and support each other through difficulties. We know from experience that simply “being there” for somebody is often all that’s needed. “Wasting time with families” is not just good advice for bishops and priests; it’s good advice for everybody.

For me one of the highlights of the Australian pilgrimage to the World Meeting of Families was being with and wasting time with the nine couples and families who made up the Australian delegation. It was wonderful to see how the parents and children quickly became friends and supported each other in faith and love. I certainly benefited greatly from being with them and hopefully they benefited from my presence too.

As well as hearing Pope Francis’ inspirational messages the World Meeting of Families provided the participants the opportunity to hear many world-renowned speakers: cardinals, bishops, married couples and single people.

A theme which emerged in a number of the talks was “love”, no surprise given that the theme of the week was “Love is our Mission”. We were encouraged to grow in the knowledge that we are loved unconditionally by God the Father, no matter what our circumstances. Only when we are open to the Father’s love for us can we sufficiently love those around us beginning with our own family members. As one speaker put it: “If God’s going to teach you to love he’s going to put you with some unlovely people”! It’s in our families that we receive love and learn to love.

One comment made early in the week that resonated with me throughout the whole conference and remains with me still now was that “every family is broken”. Sure, some may be more broken than others but every family has its trials, divisions, sufferings, and need for mutual forgiveness. Being broken and wounded does not stop my family from being a family and does not stop my family from fulfilling its God-given mission in the Church and in the world which is to love: “Love is our mission”.

So the message I bring home with me from the World Meeting of Families is that wasting time with our own families and wasting time with those families who may be more wounded or broken than our own is the only way we will learn to love and fulfil our mission as families. ■

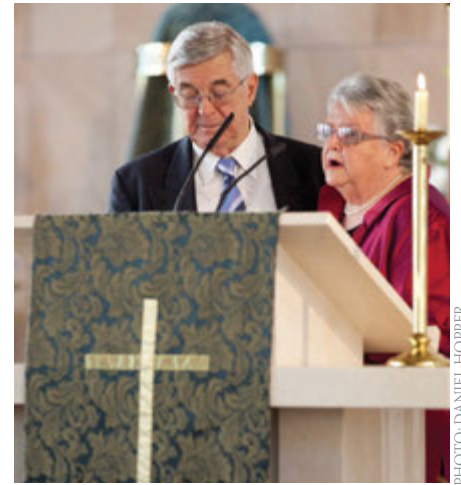
Bishop Michael Kennedy is the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Delegate for Marriage. He led the Australian pilgrimage to the World Meeting of Families with Ron and Mavis Priola, Co-Chairs of the Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council. Bishop Kennedy is on Twitter @BishopMKennedy

See more at: <http://mediablog.catholic.org.au/wasting-time-and-learning-to-love/#more-4719>

Unlocking the secret to good marriages



Damien and Michelle Duncan celebrating 25 years



Bill and Ardell Sharpe celebrating 50 years

PHOTO: DANIEL HOPPER

BY DANIEL HOPPER

On Sunday 20 September, Bishop Peter Ingham celebrated his annual *Marriage Anniversaries Mass* along with 71 couples in the Diocese who have clocked up an extraordinary 3,406 years of combined married life, including one couple celebrating the staggering milestone of 74 years of marriage.

During the Mass, Bishop Ingham invited each couple to renew their marriage vows and they received a commemorative candle. Bishop Ingham said of the annual event, "If you want to know the secret to an enduring marriage, just ask any one of these couples. They are an inspirational and powerful witness to love and faithfulness, enduring even through the tough times."

One couple celebrating 50 years of marriage this year is Bill and Ardell Sharpe, who met after Ardell's father invited Bill and his mates to Ardell's end of school party. Bill said, "I was best mates with Ardell's cousin. Ardell was a student at St Mary Star of the Sea College so the opportunity to meet boys at that age was limited. So Ardell's Dad took on the role of asking some boys to the party and I came with Ardell's cousin. That was December 1961 and so our love story began."

Fifty years on, the couple attribute part of the credit for their strong marriage to the *Worldwide Marriage Encounter* program. After the first 12 years of marriage Bill said, "We were growing apart, hurting each other. I was working three jobs and Ardell was caring for the children and our home. We were basically living a 'singles' lifestyle." Then some friends invited them to a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend and they found their way back to each other. Ardell said, "From that weekend we learned what God's plan was for us and for our marriage and the grace that was available to us through our marriage." The couple have now been involved in Worldwide Marriage Encounter for the past 38 years and

have helped hundreds of couples revitalise their marriages, including Damien and Michelle Duncan who are celebrating their 25th anniversary this year.

Damien and Michelle were almost a missed connection. Both involved in Antioch youth groups in different suburbs, they met when the two groups got together. Michelle recalls, "There was an instant attraction for both of us. Over the next few months we lost touch, but I sent him an anonymous Valentine's card. He found out that I had sent it to him and he asked me out."

Damien and Michelle have also used the Worldwide Marriage Encounter retreats as a tool to take time out and reconnect with each other. When asked about the secret to staying together, Bill and Ardell said, "Relaying thoughts and feelings to each other and listening with your heart and not just your head has helped us immensely." Damien and Michelle said, "From the early days of having children, we made sure that we spent time alone together, whether it be for a coffee, a date night, bush walking or a weekend or night away together."

The Diocese's social service arm, *CatholicCare*, runs marriage and relationship education programs including *Prepare* and *Partnership* courses for couples getting married. Both programs cover such topics as expectations of marriage, family of origin, communication, managing conflict, spirituality, sexuality and intimacy.

Visit www.catholiccare.dow.org.au for more information. ■

Daniel Hopper is the Director of Communications, Diocese of Wollongong. Worldwide Marriage Encounter run weekend retreats for couples with sound marriages who want to take their relationship a step further and enrich and/or revitalise their marriage. Visit www.wmme.org.au for more information.

Varroville celebrates St Teresa of Avila

BY FR SHANE
KELLEHER OCD PP

Carmelites throughout the world have been celebrating 2015 as the fifth centenary of the birth of St Teresa of Jesus, perhaps more widely known as *St Teresa of Avila*. A number of events have taken place in the Diocese, centred in and around the parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Varroville. The year began on Teresa's feast day, 15 October 2014. A Mass to launch the centenary celebrations was celebrated in the parish on 25 October. In December, Teresa's walking stick arrived in our parish and we were able to spend some prayerful time with this relic – a tangible reminder of the great energy the saint exerted as she walked the dusty roads of Spain in order to see her mission fulfilled.

St Teresa's birthday on Saturday 28 March was the next big event. We were delighted that Bishop Peter Ingham was able to celebrate Mass with us on that significant day and that he could stay on for the fantastic concert that followed. Throughout the year we had been busily fundraising to send some of our young people to a mini-Carmelite World Youth Day gathering on 5-9 August in Avila (see article on the right.)

The *L'Osservatore Romano* wrote of the Youth Festival Mass: *"It's Saturday evening about 11 pm. A rather strong wind blows along the city walls of Avila ... the displays of hundreds of mobile phones light up the city. Bishop Xavier Novell, who presided at the vigil ... approached this new generation ... by translating the parable of the vine and the branches ... 'You are like the cellular and I'm like your source of energy and coverage. Without me, you can't do a thing' ... Bishop Novell thus paraphrased Jesus' words, preparing the youth for the exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament which lay ahead: 'In just a few minutes, I will make myself present for all of you. I will shine my love upon you all; I will cover you with millions of megabytes of love. Connect to me. Stay in my network and you will never seek others again. My love fears no competition.'"* ■

Fr Shane Kelleher is the Parish Priest at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Varroville.



World Youth Festival for St Teresa of Avila

BY KARINA CORTES

On 4 August 2015, a group of thirteen students from Mount Carmel Catholic College Varroville, four members of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish Youth Group, Fr Shane Kelleher OCD PP, Fr Greg Burke OCD, Damon our New Zealander friend, Mr Wayne Marshall (Principal), and teachers Mrs Christine Meharg and I, travelled to Avila, Spain, to participate in the European World Youth Festival for St Teresa of Avila.

After a 26 hour flight we arrived in Madrid to be greeted by a 35 degree summer day and our Spanish escort Jesús. We boarded our coach and made our one and a half hour journey to Avila where we stayed in a school gymnasium (boys at a separate school to girls). Over the next few days we walked, and walked, and walked some more, participating in festival activities that included tours of key Teresian sites, liturgies, Masses, evening youth concerts, catechesis and group activities.

Over the four days, we drank lots of chocolate milk and pineapple juice for breakfast, queued up for hours for our lunches and dinners, slept on the floor in a hall with 200 other European pilgrims, showered in the dark at midnight in outdoor showers with cold water, tried hard to use the Spanish taught to us back in Year 8, met some amazing people, ate delicious Spanish cuisine, visited every

souvenir, sport and handbag shop in Avila, and danced the evenings away with 5,000 other pilgrims. We wouldn't have had it any other way!

St Teresa's presence was felt everywhere in Avila. The final Mass (where two of our students were chosen to read), televised live to millions in Spanish-speaking countries, bought together almost 10,000 Teresian people.

At the conclusion of the festival we remained in Avila for another four days going out on day trips to Segovia, Salamanca, Madrid, Fontiveros – the birth place of St John of the Cross, Duruelo, and Alba de Tormes – where St Teresa passed away.

Trips like these open hearts and minds and educate far more than any classroom can. The students representing the College and parish, led by Christine and me, were sensational the whole time.

Santa Teresa de Jesus (St Teresa of Jesus) and San Juan de la Cruz (St John of the Cross) came to life as we walked in their footsteps and visited the significant places in their lives. Their work and mission has impacted around the world and made a huge difference to our community here in Varroville. ■

Karina Cortes is a teacher (C&PA, LOTE, RE) at Mount Carmel Catholic College Varroville.

Please remember the most vulnerable children this Christmas



Sister Corazon with Henny

BY DAVID HARRISON

With the festive season nearly upon us again, Catholic Mission is urging its supporters to remember the most vulnerable children around the world this Christmas.

Catholic Mission has launched its 2015 Children's Appeal, which specifically highlights the work of dedicated Catholic missionaries in the Philippines, who are caring for children in desperate need.

The Christmas direct mail appeal raises funds for children's projects all around the world, including those in the Philippines, so that even the most vulnerable children can live a happy and healthy life with access to greater opportunities.

This year the campaign highlights the work of Baptistine Sister Corazon Riconalla, the Superior at the Our Lady of Providence Home in Cebu. The Sisters of St John the Baptist, who run the orphanage, care for young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom are afflicted with conditions such as malnutrition.

The campaign carries the theme 'Whoever welcomes this child in my name, welcomes me'—from Luke 9:48— and also tells the heartbreaking story of Helen, a recently widowed young mother living in the poverty-stricken outskirts of Cebu, who is no longer able to provide the nutritious food her children need to survive.

Distressingly, after Helen nearly lost her daughter Henny to malnutrition when she was just one year old, she was forced to make the toughest decision of her life, leaving Henny and

her sister to the loving care of the Sisters at the Our Lady of Providence Home.

Catholic Mission Deputy National Director Peter Gates says Sister Corazon often fears for the future of the children. "With more than a quarter of the people in the Philippines living below the poverty line, Sister Corazon is constantly worried about the future of all of these children.

"One of her primary concerns is the health of the children, given the spate of recent typhoons and an unpredictable climate that has caused an increase in diseases at the orphanage."

Mr Gates is urging supporters to consider sharing a Christmas gift with these special children. "If we can contribute just a little, then Sister Corazon and the home can care for more children," he said. "What a wonderful Christmas blessing that would be for the little ones in need."

"There is great need at home and abroad, but I especially invite you—if you can—to help support these beautiful children so that they may have the opportunity for a brighter future and to experience the love of Jesus this Christmas." ■

David Harrison is the Director of Catholic Mission for the Diocese of Wollongong. For more information about Catholic Mission's 2015 Children's Appeal, or to donate, please visit www.catholicmission.org.au/christmas2015, or call toll free on 1800 257 296.

Special Religious Education in NSW is world best practice

BY JUDE HENNESSY

In recent months, much has been made in the NSW media of the removal of Special Religious Education (SRE) from Victorian Government schools, and calls from a myriad of run-of-the-mill secular atheist groups, to predictably call for the similar removal of SRE from NSW Schools. Unfortunately, the ABC, Sydney Morning Herald and various other mainstream media organisations have again rushed to quote the sound bites provided by these groups, ignoring the facts about SRE in NSW Schools.

The Catholic Conference for Religious Educators in State Schools (CCRESS), in its recent media release, highlighted that SRE in NSW is not even similar to Special Religious Instruction (SRI) in Victoria. The reality is that SRI in Victorian Government schools can't be compared with the quality or capacity of SRE delivery in NSW. To put it plainly, we would not be so much comparing apples with oranges, but apples with sultanas.

SRE in NSW is world best practice, with the NSW government giving all faith groups, as well as Primary Ethics, the opportunity to offer classes to children in government schools and form children in the faith of their families.

In Victoria, you had one group, ACCESS ministries, providing SRI for a small number of Christian children, with no real concern for denominational differences. The program did not have strong backing across denominations and other faith traditions were not catered for.

As a result, around 30,000 students went to SRI in Victoria. Therefore, SRI was an easy target, as it really was not something that was providing the sort of formation in faith that parents in NSW Government schools enjoy.

By comparison, over 300,000 young people attend SRE in Government



The reality is that SRI in Victorian Government schools can't be compared with the quality or capacity of SRE delivery in NSW.

primary schools in NSW, equating to roughly 70% of the primary State school population. Around 260,000 attend Christian SRE, with 95,000 students (approximately 37%) of the total SRE enrolment in NSW going to Catholic SRE. A small but growing number of students (around 20,000) attend the classes delivered by Primary Ethics.

Another feature of delivery in NSW is that our trained teachers use authorised curriculums with age-appropriate lessons that are publicly available. Moreover, the NSW Government is looking to further enhance SRE in NSW, and the current review being conducted by the Department of Education is providing the feedback to enable this to happen.

Rural, remote and minority faith groups are choosing public education because their children have the opportunity to be educated in the faith of their family. This can only be good for our multi-cultural and multi-faith nation. The 40,000 students who attend SRE in faith traditions, such as Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and Bahai faiths, are steadily growing.

In response to recent suggestions that SRE be removed, the President of the NSW Board of Jewish Education, David Selig, said that this would deny a proper Jewish education to thousands of students. He said, "[the suggestion that SRE be removed is] flawed, and by definition, a prejudiced approach that devalues the intrinsic importance and beauty of our faith." David continued, "All aspects of religious education must be encouraged and nurtured, a view that has consistently been enshrined in state legislation for over 100 years, and for good and obvious reason. Similar views continue to be espoused by SRE providers of the major religions and across Christian denominations."

It is disappointing that SRI in Victoria has reached this point of removal and a pity that the Victorian Government didn't have the vision to explore the development of a system of delivery as robust and diverse as ours in NSW.

It is undeniable that religion, God, and faith is good for kids. Countless studies show the benefits of formation in faith as evidenced in measures of happiness, fulfilment, resilience, meaning, purpose and the fact that it is a good 'vaccine' for young people against depression, substance abuse and self-harm. People of faith know this intrinsically, and parents in general know it too, and thus continue to choose SRE in Government schools in such large numbers.

*It is undeniable that religion,
God, and faith is good for kids.
Countless studies show the
benefits of formation in faith
as evidenced in measures
of happiness, fulfilment,
resilience, meaning, purpose ...*

Thank a catechist in your parish

SRE in NSW is strong and valued because of the great work and dedication of SRE teachers. I want to say thank you to our Catholic catechists in our Diocese and across NSW for the contribution they make to this great feature of public education. Thank you for the service of your faith. The fact that all religions come together in unity

to provide this educationally-sound choice for parents is remarkable. Nevertheless, it is obvious that there are powers at play that, despite all of the evidence of its value, want SRE to be removed as it offends their atheist world view. We need to respond with prayerfulness.

A call to prayer

I am asking catechists and everyone in our parishes throughout the Diocese to pray for our ministry. Pray for those CCD Directors representing you at the inquiry into SRE. Pray for balance in reporting, and pray that parents and politicians continue to appreciate its profound value for young people in NSW. ■

Jude Hennessy is Director of CCD and Evangelisation and Acting Director of Parish Services.



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NEWS FROM ST BRIGID'S GWYNNEVILLE



Dawn Fraser: An inspirational leader

In July, some of our students accompanied Mrs Nadia Huska and Mr Chris Price to the Illawarra Women in Business lunch at City Beach Function Centre, Wollongong. The guest speaker was Ms Dawn Fraser AO MBE. Dawn is one of Australia's greatest Olympians. In November 1999, Dawn was awarded World Athlete of the Century at the World Sport Awards in Vienna. In the same year she was also awarded Athlete of the Century by the Australian Sports Hall of Fame. She was voted the person who best symbolises Australia and in 1998 was included as one of Australia's National Living Treasures. She is one of only three swimmers to have won the same Olympic event three times – in her case, the 100m freestyle.

Dawn was an inspirational speaker and our students shone with regard to their manners, behaviour and intelligent questions. Dawn commended them on all three and being wonderful ambassadors for their schools and families. ■

Kindergarten visit to Symbio

Kindergarten from St Brigid's Parish Primary School, Gwynneville went on an excursion to Symbio Wild Life Park at Helensburgh. The children hand-fed the kangaroos and wallabies, saw the meerkats, red panda and sumatran tiger, touched a snake and so much more. It was an exciting and fun-filled day for all. A big thank you to the parents who helped on the day. ■



Sleepout for Anna

Our Whole School Justice goal for this year is to raise \$15,000 for the Good Samaritan Outreach Program for Rural and Indigenous Communities in Three Springs Western Australia, a program run by our beloved Sr Anna Warlow SGS.

Thank you to all our courageous parents and students for braving the cool night and sharing in our Sleepout for Anna. We watched a movie, had supper and 'retired' to our various sleeping arrangements for the evening. Sleep was had by a lucky few – but all survived the night fairly well.

The camaraderie on the night was lovely to witness and the excitement on the faces of the children was beautiful. Thank you also to those generous families who couldn't participate but sent in donations. Thank you to all the staff who were able to come and support this most worthy cause. ■



Northern Illawarra kids shine

The Northern Illawarra Catholic Schools Showcase of talent on Friday 21 August was an exceptional night. A passion for the performing arts was demonstrated by all schools involved, with the theme of *Australiana* evident as we commemorate the Centenary of the ANZACS. The combined band and choir were highlights of the night.

Thank you to the P & F and all the teachers and staff involved. Without your support this opportunity to perform in front of a large audience would not be possible. ■



News from St Therese West Wollongong

In August, St Therese Catholic Parish Primary School held an *Indigenous Day* to celebrate Aboriginal culture and to bless our new mural, to which every student in the school contributed. The day began with a liturgy, during which the mural artist, Uncle Kevin, assisted Parish Priest, Fr David O'Brien with the blessing ceremony. After the liturgy, students rotated through a number of activities including dreaming stories, painting, story-telling, cooking johnnycakes and looking at Aboriginal artifacts. It was a great, fun day where the students learnt about and experienced a different culture. ■



Simple Cycles making dreams come true

"Nothing quite compares to the feeling of riding a bike."
(John F Kennedy)

Riding a bike is a wonderful experience and for many people, childhood recollections often include a memory of their first bike. Unfortunately, not every child gets to have this experience, as the constant rise in the cost of living can make it difficult for some families to purchase such items. *Simple Cycles* Wollongong believes that every child should experience the joy of owning and riding a bike, and therefore has kindly donated a number of children's bikes to the Catholic Education Office for distribution to disadvantaged children within our schools.

Simple Cycles is a family owned business, run by father and son duo, David and Peter McGuinn. David is a strong community advocate and has spent fifteen years as a foster carer. According to Peter, his parents also spent many years working for various

not-for-profit organisations, which taught him the importance of helping those in need. "Our business isn't just about making money," Peter said. "It's also about helping kids and finding ways to give back to the community."

Director of Schools, Peter Turner, is delighted with the generosity shown by Simple Cycles, "I am incredibly grateful to the owners and staff for their generosity. It is refreshing that a significant local business is prepared to put people before profit in order to contribute to the wellbeing of their local community." ■

Simple Cycles can be found at 80 Market Street, Wollongong and 9/5 Burra Place, Shellharbour City Centre. For more information, visit their website www.simplecycles.com.au



CDF Public Speaking Grand Final 2015

The CDF Public Speaking Grand Final was held recently at St Clare's Catholic Parish Primary School, Narellan Vale. The speeches presented were of a very high standard from both the Year 5 and Year 6 students. ■



Wakakirri story-sharing festival

Three of our Catholic primary schools, Nazareth Shellharbour City, Our Lady Help of Christians (OLHC) Rosemeadow and St Justin's Oran Park, performed at the WIN Entertainment Centre recently in *Wakakirri*: a national story-sharing arts festival for primary and secondary schools.

Nazareth, under the guidance of dance/drama teacher Mrs Kim Day, won one of the top awards, *Best Adapted Story*, for their adaptation of John Boyne's, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Mrs Day said that the confronting and tragic story about a friendship between two young boys during World War II, challenged both children and parents. OLHC also won a top award, *Best Social Story*, for a wonderful adaptation of Anh Do's, *The Littlest Refugee*, and St Justin's Oran Park won a choreography award for their story which told of the journey of how St Justin's came to be. ■

St John's Campbelltown Athletics Carnival winners

A squad of 42 students represented St John the Evangelist Catholic Parish Primary School at the *Sydney-West Region Athletics Carnival*, held on 18 August at Campbelltown Athletics Centre.

St John's placed first in the overall point score, with the boys also taking out the male points championship. It certainly was a day of outstanding performances and it was pleasing to hear the many comments from the carnival about how St



John's excelled, both on the track and in terms of sportsmanship.

Team members included: Zachary Anderson, Jack Axougas, Joshua D'Mello, Sonny Edwards, Christopher Fergie, Tyrone Fergie, Phillip Fifita, Riley Hunter, Atonio Kaufusi, Viliami Kaufusi, Harrison Kedde, Zacariah

Morheb, Jack O'Toole, Mateia Pasifiki-Tonga, Samuel Turner, Tyler Volcov, Braydon Wickey, Jessica Anderson, Diana Bader, Jasmine Belbin, Leyla Boustani, Alexis Brunt, Stephanie Cesarin, Isabella Comparini, Hope Evans, Macarious Faleono-Tie, Elise Farrant, Clare Feiloakitohi, Joela Ignacio, Mikalya Jackson, Savannah Jackson, Doris Kristo, Briar Lynch, Nikita Maika-Teal, Charmaine Marquinez, Audree Moroney, Adrianna Naine, Aidanna Naine, Monique Ray, Sophia Sharpe, Maddison Sutherland and Emily Weskin. ■



Ability on show

In the lead up to the annual *Illawarra Disability Options* (IDO) Expo in August, budding artists from primary and high schools were invited to join other local artists in the *IDO Art Competition* on exhibition at the Art Arena Gallery in Wollongong.

Sasha Salvio from Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School Fairy Meadow was awarded first prize in the primary schools section for her colourful collage of a beach scene. ■



Feast day of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop

The parish primary school community of Our Lady Help of Christians Rosemeadow celebrated the Feast Day of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop with a liturgy, reflection walk and walkathon.

The celebration was based on the virtues of Mary MacKillop – Woman of God, Woman of Action, Woman of Courage and Woman of Compassion, and students' creative responses to these were displayed throughout the grounds and windows of the school. ■



Carrington Aged Care Program

The Carrington Aged Care Program, *Through Our Eyes*, was initiated in August 2011 at Carrington Care Aged Care Facility (Camden). The initial project involved ten Year 11 students from Magdalene Catholic High School Narellan and five residents from Carrington Care. The project was so successful that it was decided to maintain the program as a regular annual event. 2015 has been our biggest year to date, with twenty Year 11 students from Magdalene and seven residents from Carrington participating. ■

Year 12 Holy Spirit College exhibition of works

Holy Spirit College Bellambi recently held an exhibition showcasing HSC works from Year 12 Students in Visual Arts, Design and Technology, Industrial Technology and Furniture. Works from Years 10 and 11 Students in Visual Arts and Photography were also on show.

Students, staff, families and invited guests, including Director of Schools, Mr Peter Turner, were most impressed by the standard of excellence and range of works on display. ■



St John's Nowra dairy judging day



A group of keen agriculture students from Years 9 and 10 attended a junior dairy cattle judging day at the Nowra Showground in August. This is the first time St John the Evangelist Catholic High School Nowra has competed in this annual event, organised by the Group 5 Show Societies. Students had to judge three breeds of dairy cows, placing them in the correct order from first to fourth. Five of our students made it to the final in the intermediate age group: Siebren Dooper, Caitlin Hancock, Keira Holstegge, Nathan Kenny and Rhiannon Wray. They had to give a verbal explanation to the crowd (of around 200 people) as to why they chose their final order of cows. Second place went to Keira Holstegge and third place to Siebren Dooper. ■

From little things big things grow

BY DANIEL HOPPER

The conversation began four years ago – we were discussing how we are all generally exhausted by the end of the year, and with the ever-increasing commercialisation of Christmas, it is difficult to find quiet time with the Lord and to focus on the “reason for the season,” despite needing that quiet time more than ever.

So, we thought of the idea of approaching clergy, religious and lay people in the Diocese and asking if they would be willing to write reflections based on the daily Scripture readings that can be read in less than two minutes. We got a great response and so we began publishing the reflections in a small book that could fit in a handbag/pocket and be read at home or on the way to work on the train or bus.

Four years later – this little idea has grown into a major publication. This year, our little *Beloved: Advent and Christmas Reflections 2015* book was distributed to over 23,000 people across Australia and New Zealand including hundreds of inmates in our prisons. To accompany the book we also produced an album, “Cry Out”, containing the psalms for Advent 2015 and Lent 2016 put to contemporary music. The response to the album has been phenomenal. To top it off, this



You can purchase the Advent program and accompanying Cry Out CD at www.shop.dow.org.au and smartphone app at www.app.dow.org.au

year we have released the book as an interactive app for iOS and Android devices. The app includes all the images and text from the book as well as audio narrations of the reflections by the

authors and the four advent psalms from the Cry Out album. ■

Daniel Hopper is the Director of Communications, Diocese of Wollongong.

Mercy – Lenten Program 2016

Our annual diocesan Lenten program continues to grow each year and the 2016 edition promises to be the biggest yet! As Lent begins so early in 2016 (10 February), our 2016 Lenten program, *Mercy*, will go on sale in mid-December 2015. We have been blessed to have secured the wisdom of *Fr Ken Barker MGL* (head of the Missionaries of God's Love) and *Sr Hilda Scott OSB* (Jamberoo Abbey) for our Gospel reflections and spiritual direction. The “mercy” theme of the program is in response to Pope Francis’ *Jubilee Year of Mercy* and the program and accompanying CD will include additional liturgical resources for the Year of Mercy. For more information, check out www.lent.dow.org.au



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For further information, please contact the Diocesan representative on **4222 2446** or visit www.dow.org.au

Celebrating a decade of friendships



BY CARMEN KARAUDA

The Wollongong Lunch Club celebrated its 10th Anniversary in August this year. The event began with a conversation between Fr Graham Schmitzer and Kathleen McCormack, the founding Director of CatholicCare, with a view to providing regular monthly gatherings at the Xavier Conference Centre. The luncheon had two simple aims – to provide an opportunity for older parishioners to connect with others and to promote health and wellbeing.

Parishioners enjoy catching-up with friends at the luncheon after celebrating the 12:10pm Mass at the Cathedral. Through the generosity of a faithful team of volunteers, an atmosphere of hospitality and friendship has been forged throughout the past decade, providing delicious sandwiches, cakes and various other culinary delights with endless cups of tea and coffee, raffle prizes and lots of talking and laughter.

At the Anniversary luncheon, Carmen Karauda, CatholicCare's Aged Care Advocate for the Diocese, thanked the committed volunteers who make the Lunch Club possible. She also thanked Bishop Peter Ingham,

Fr Ron Peters, Judith Crowe and the staff at the Bishop's Office for their support. "CatholicCare is humbled by the attendance of all the parishioners who have joined the lunches over the years, and we especially pray for those who are no longer with us," Carmen said.

The role of the CatholicCare Aged Care Advocate, an initiative of Bishop Peter Ingham, is to work towards establishing connection groups.

These help to ensure that people who are ageing, as well as their families and/or carers, have the opportunity to participate in all Church activities and have access to information and services to meet their needs as they age. ■



If you would like to attend a gathering at a parish near you, if you are interested in becoming a volunteer, or if you would like some support, please contact Carmen Karauda, CatholicCare Aged Care Advocate on 4640 8515.

Luncheons and morning tea gatherings

Through the work of CatholicCare and the Pastoral Care Volunteer teams in various parishes, this event has been the catalyst for other luncheons and morning tea gatherings throughout the Diocese. Please see below locations for a regular event near you.

WOLLONGONG

First Wednesday of each month

St Francis Xavier Cathedral

12:10pm Mass followed by
Lunch at Xavier Centre

.....

CAMPBELLTOWN

*Every second month –
First Saturday of the month*

St John's Campbelltown

10am Mass of Anointing
followed by Morning Tea

.....

VARROVILLE

First Tuesday of the month

Our Lady of
Mount Carmel Varroville
Friendship group 9am Mass
following by Morning Tea



Do you need help?

Need help in your home or want to connect to other Aged Care Services CatholicCare has to offer? Call us on **4254 9342** to find out more about what we can offer you.

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If you possess professional skills and interest in any of these areas and are prepared to give freely of your time, please send your contact details with a brief résumé of your areas of expertise to:

The Chancellor, Diocese of Wollongong
PO Box 1239 Wollongong NSW 2500

Marjorie Condon 100th Birthday

BY JOHN ODWYER OAM

The oldest parishioner of All Saints Catholic Parish Shellharbour, Mrs Marjorie Condon, celebrated her 100th birthday on Tuesday 17 November 2015.

Marj has been part of the Shellharbour Parish for 88 years. She was born in Jamberoo and attended school at Jamberoo and Jerrara and then for three years at Saint Patrick's Church Berry, followed by Shellharbour after moving to *Watsonia* at Dunmore in 1928 with her parents and ten brothers and sisters. The *Watsonia* farm was located between the present recycling depot and the Killalea camping area. The beach now known as "Mystics" was previously called *Watsonia*.



In 1934 Marj married neighbouring dairy farmer Frank Condon at Saint Pauls Albion Park with Fr Thomas O'Farrell officiating, and they farmed the "Fairview" property now the highest point in Shell Cove overlooking *The Links Golf Course*. After leaving the farm in the mid 1950's Marj lived in Shellharbour until she moved to the

Elanora Aged Care Centre three years ago. Frank passed away in 1995.

Marj always supported parish activities and was "Matron of Honour" for the first *Debutante Ball* held in the parish in 1954.

The family dynasty has grown to 79 direct descendants: six children – Brian, Sheila Reid, Frank, Raymond, Patrick and Joan Hamilton (deceased earlier this year); 20 grand, 50 great-grand and 3 great-great-grandchildren.

Friends and family gathered at *Elanora* for two separate birthday celebrations and greetings were received from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, Governor General, Members of Parliament and many others including Bishop Peter Ingham.

Congratulations Marj on 100 wonderful years! ■

Catholic Women's League, Diocese of Wollongong

BY SUE FREESTONE

Our Diocesan Branches had forty-six members attend the 47th Biennial Conference of CWLA Inc at Parramatta in September. Together with the CWLA NSW Inc dioceses, Wollongong acted as hostesses to the National Executive Council and visiting members from the six member organisations within Australia. It was a very successful conference, officially opened by the Governor of NSW, His Excellency The Honourable David Hurley, with speakers including The Hon Pru Goward, Sr Hilda Scott OSB, Pat McDermott, Jennifer Burn, Ken Smith and Chris Field. The Theme for the conference was *Listen with the Heart*.

In November a combined Branch social function was held at Goulburn gathering members from all areas of the Diocese and also Canberra Branches. It was a very joyous occasion with plenty of laughter and fellowship.

On 25 October The Oaks Catholic Women's League assisted in the



celebrations for the 150th Anniversary of St Aloysius Church, The Oaks. A great display of memorabilia was created by the members, including vestments, photographs, old records of the Convent, School and Branch. A highlight was the attendance of Sr Michelle, one of the last Sisters of St Joseph at the Convent (which is now the Presbytery building). Sr Michelle met with Mrs Elva McDonald who worked for the sisters and priests in the early days of the parish. It was a very enjoyable day with a special Mass celebrated by Fr Rick McCann.

Our Annual General Meeting was held at the Xavier Conference Centre on 24 November where the Nonagenarians of the CWL in the Diocese were honoured.

Our Chaplain, Fr Patrick Vaughan, has moved from Port Kembla Parish



to the Northern Illawarra parishes of Corrimall, Bulli and Thirroul. We thank Fr Patrick for the tender care he provided to the members of Port Kembla; and we welcome Fr Peter Tien to Port Kembla as Parish Priest, and assure him of the support of the Members of CWL in the Parish. This is the end of the term of office of the current Diocesan Executive and we welcome and congratulate Anne Kelly to the position of President. Anne is a Member of Dapto Branch.

May this wondrous new life give you joy, courage and hope at this special Christmas time and for the dawning New Year. ■

Sue Freestone is the President of Catholic Women's League, Diocese of Wollongong.



Legionaries at Evelyn Malcolm's send off on her departure for Alice Springs 1964.

Legion of Mary at Corrimal

According to records, Mons Edmond Downey and Mrs Valerie Henderson are credited with making the initial inroads into the formation of the Legion of Mary in the Corrimal Parish. The Corrimal praesidium of "Our Lady Help of Christians" was established on 12 July 1961. Mena Barrett was installed as the first President, and long serving parish priest of Corrimal, Mons Downey, as Spiritual Director.

Bess Jordan, Mena Barrett, Mel Byrnes, Beryl Gray, Sheila Looney, Mary White and Mrs Paolo were amongst the first members. Other long-serving members later included: Rene Tosi, Sadie Cropper, Clare Parks, Norma Long and Nance Cullen.

In the 1960s, the members made their visits each week using public transport, or by walking. They visited the sick, the lonely, the bereaved, as well as hospital patients.

None of the legionaries had a motor vehicle, and telephones were not common place, so it wasn't as easy as it is today. On one occasion they conducted the parish census on foot, visiting every home in the parish, and recording Catholics in residence. In July 1964, one legionary member,

Now in 2015, our Legion at Corrimal is still active. Together with a devotion to our Blessed Mother, we endeavor to bring knowledge of Mary and a true love of her to those we visit. ■



Aida Marcolin Long serving Legion of Mary member 1973 to 2015

Aida Marcolin and her husband Amando (Andy), migrated to Australia in 1953 from a farming community in Vincenzo in the north of Italy, to make a new life in Australia, firstly in Balgownie and then Corrimal

Unable to speak English, Aida was befriended by Mrs Jordan, the wife of the local chemist, who invited Aida to join her each day. Aida made coffee and in return she was taught one new English word each day. Mrs Jordan was the president of the Corrimal Legion of Mary and introduced Aida as a new member in 1973.

For the past 42 years, Aida has made thousands of visitations to members of the St Columbkille's parish community. It was with deep regret that we accepted her resignation from active membership. She will of course remain as a valued auxiliary member and the Legion takes this opportunity to recognise the amazing contribution and thank her for her generosity of spirit.

Maybe you could take Aida's example and join the Legion of Mary. At meetings we recite the Rosary, discuss spiritual readings, and report on the work we have done during the previous week and plan our visitations for the coming week. ■

St Brigid's Bundanoon celebrates

St Brigid's, one of the five churches which make up the Parish of Moss Vale in the Southern Highlands, recently celebrated 120 years in the Sesquicentenary year of the town of Bundanoon.

A Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated by Bishop Peter Ingham, and co-celebrated by Parish Priest, Fr Damian Mosakowski OSPPE, Fr Terry Herbert MSC (Chaplain at Chevalier College), with Deacon Michael Dyer in attendance. A plaque was blessed by Bishop Peter which commemorates the generosity of the early townsfolk of Bundanoon who raised the funds for the building. Mr William Augustus Nicholas, an early member of the Trinity Anglican congregation, donated the land on which St Brigid's stands,



and was a benefactor to the newly built church for some time after its construction. The offertory gifts were carried in procession by ancestors of early Catholic Bundanoon families. Two young children, representing the future, presented Bishop Peter with a bouquet of flowers and a hand-made St Brigid's Cross. Over 100 people attended the celebrations including the Rev Jeremy Tonks, Rector of Holy Trinity Anglican Church Bundanoon, and Mrs Danielle Tonks, and Elders from the Uniting Church. ■

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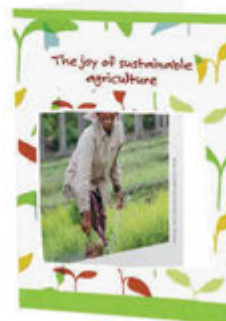
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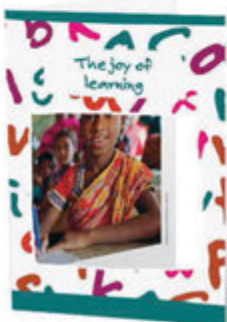
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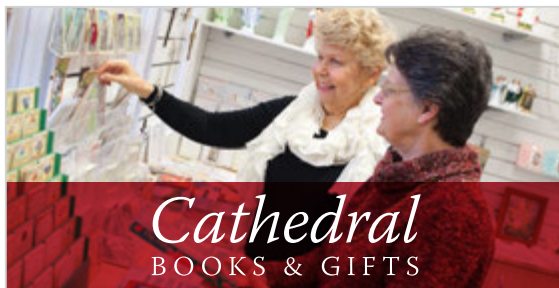


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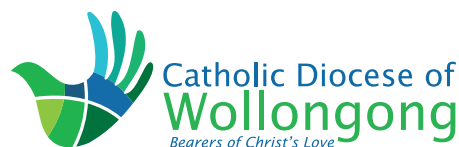


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