



St Francis Xavier Primary School

Newsletter

Monday 2nd December 2024
Term 4 Week 9

P.O. Box 2027
Ballarat East VIC 3354
Phone: 5331 6311

Email: principal@sfxballarat.catholic.edu.au

Term 4 (11 weeks)

Mon 7th Oct – Fri 20th Dec

Friday 6th December

9.30am in Gym
End of Year School Mass

Thursday 12th December

Yr 1 Excursion
Creative Play & Arts Centre
& Ballarat Ninja
6pm Year 6 Graduation

Monday 16th December

Year 3 Camp

Tuesday 17th December

5pm Community Christmas
Carols at school

Wednesday 18th December

Last 2024 day for students

In the Land of the Wadawurrung People

Dear families,

The Catholic Church officially began the season of Advent on Sunday. Advent is the time when we begin to prepare for the celebration of the birth of Christ.

All classes will be talking about Advent over the coming weeks, and many will have an Advent Wreath set up in their classroom. If you would like to set up an Advent Wreath at home, I am sure that your creative children would be able to assemble one in no time at all. If you are planning on having an Advent calendar at home, remember to think about what we are really celebrating as we open up a new window each day. It is also a great idea to try to do something special which can show the true spirit of Christmas - the love of Jesus - to the world e.g. children could set the table without being asked, do a special kind deed for someone who needs it, leave a note for someone telling them how much they are appreciated, etc. There are many ways to prepare both physically and spiritually for Christmas!

As you enter into this special season of Advent, may you enjoy your time of preparation. May your family grow closer in their understandings of the meaning of Christmas, and when it does finally arrive, may your Christmas time be blessed. Have a wonderful time celebrating this magical season!

God bless,

Mark Hogbin



An Advent Prayer

God of Love,

Your son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us.

He is a sign of your love.

Help us walk in that love during the weeks of Advent,

As we wait and prepare for his coming.

We pray in the name of Jesus, our Saviour.

Amen.



End of Year Mass

We will come together in the gym at school on Friday 6 December at 9.30am to celebrate and give thanks to God for another great year at Saint Francis Xavier primary school. This is a very special Mass for us and one which we always look forward to attending. Please feel welcome to come along and join us if you can. All are welcome!

St. Francis Xavier Primary School is a Child Safe School called to action through Gospel values and Mercy tradition. Through the mission of Jesus within the Mercy tradition, we are called to action in pursuing fullness of life for all.



Feast Day of St. Francis Xavier

The feast day of our Patron, St. Francis Xavier is held on Tuesday 3 December. This remarkable man was born in Spain in 1506 and died in 1552. He was the first Christian and the first Jesuit missionary to visit Japan, which in the sixteenth century was a closed country about which almost nothing was known.

St Francis Xavier not only travelled as far as Japan but also journeyed to Borneo, India, the Moluccas, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Mozambique and other areas that had not yet been visited by Christian missionaries, as well as visiting and working in China with a small pioneering band of Jesuit missionaries. The bravery of Saint Francis Xavier is an example to us today to be strong in faith, courageous and determined to spread the word of God.

Christmas Carols



A reminder that we will gather for our traditional Christmas Carols event on the school oval on Tuesday 17th December. Children may come in casual clothes to this event and Carols will commence at 6.00pm. Families are most welcome to gather earlier on the oval to enjoy each other's company.

Year 5 Camp

Our Year 5 students returned from their camp on Friday afternoon. Many memories were made, and everyone felt a sense of achievement by mastering individual challenges and group tasks. Well done students! Of course, well done and thank you to our staff and helpers who worked so hard to ensure that everyone had a successful time.

Religious Education News

THIS WEEK'S GOSPEL- Sunday December 1st, 2024 First Sunday of Advent (Year C)

Gospel: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

“There will be strange things happening to the sun, the moon, and the stars. On earth whole countries will be in despair, afraid of the roar of the sea and the raging tides. People will faint from fear as they wait for what is coming over the whole earth, for the powers in space will be driven from their courses. Then the Son of Man will appear, coming in a cloud with great power and glory. When these things begin to happen, stand up and raise your heads, because your salvation is near.”

“Be on your guard. Don't let yourselves become occupied with too much feasting and drinking and with the worries of this life, or that Day may suddenly catch you like a trap. For it will come upon all people everywhere on earth. Be on the alert and pray always that you will have the strength to go safely through all those things that will happen and to stand before the Son of Man.” *(Gospel passage taken from Good News Translation)*

Gospel reflection: This week begins the Church Season of Advent- a time of waiting and preparing. What's the most exciting thing you've ever had to wait for?

Maybe you've waited for the visit of a friend or family member, or a special treat or the birth of a new baby. Waiting is not easy, is it? Especially if we don't know when the thing or the person we are waiting for will arrive.

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us to pray and to watch how we behave while we are waiting. He asks us to love one another and to treat other people as we want to be treated, whether they're in our own family or on the other side of the world.

The other thing that is special about waiting for Jesus during Advent is hope.

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Hope is not just a wish for good things to come in the future- it also changes the way that we feel and think and act. When things are hard, if we have hope that they will get better, that helps us to keep trying and working to change things.

We can share hope with others, by being with them in difficult times, by giving them a smile or a hug, or by helping them with something that is hard.

Our Challenge: What is your hope this Advent? How do you think you could share hope with others around the world?



Invitation to Term Four End of Year Mass

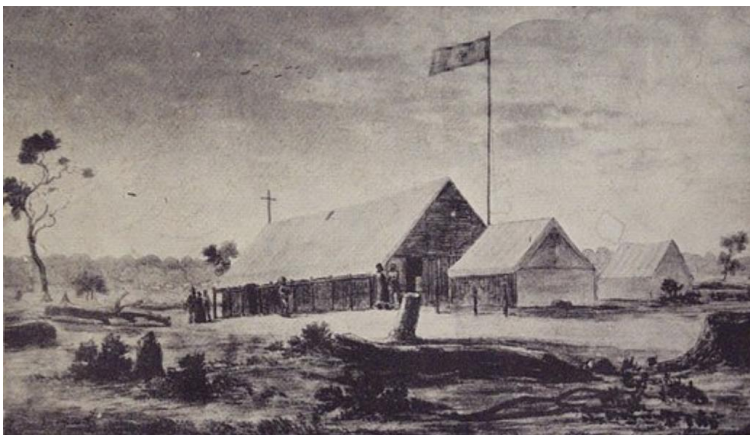
A warm invitation is extended to all our families, friends and parish members who would like to join us in celebrating our End of Year Whole School Mass. Fr Justin Driscoll will be our celebrant.

Our End of Year Mass includes a special tradition at St Francis Xavier- in Term One, the Year Six students led the blessing of our newest children in Foundation. At our End of Year Mass the Year Six students are accompanied into the gym by their buddies and are blessed and farewelled led by our Foundation students.

9.30am Friday December 6th in the school Gymnasium

150th Year Celebrations

2024 is a significant year for St Alipius' Church in Ballarat East- as a Parish we are remembering the 170th anniversary of the Eureka rebellion including the involvement of Fr Patrick Smyth and the Catholics of the Ballarat Goldfields. 2024 is also the 150th anniversary of the opening of the existing St Alipius' Church in Victoria Street. Mass was first celebrated on the Ballarat Goldfields at Brown Hill in 1851 before relocating to the existing Victoria Street site in 1853, where the tent-church-school (as captured by artist Eugene Von Gerrard) was erected. These anniversaries are providing parishioners with opportunities to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of our history, as well as the opportunity to look to the future with hope and healing.



As part of the St Alipius Parish 150 Year Celebrations, the Year 6 students from our Parish schools (St Francis Xavier, St Alipius, Emmaus) and representatives from Damascus are joining to celebrate Eucharist together at St Alipius Church at 9.30 am on Wednesday December 4th. Following Mass, the children and staff will share morning tea and spend time reflecting upon how we are a part of something bigger than just our schools. All parents, parish members and friends are welcome to join us.



Wow! Superstar Efforts Everyone!

We are so proud to donate \$1121 to our local Ballarat East chapter of St Vincent de Paul for their Christmas Appeal.

Our Cool Drinks and Crunchy Treats raised \$762 and our Free Dress Day raised \$359! Many thanks to everyone for their support of these initiatives, especially our stellar Mercy and Wellbeing Leaders who help lead us in making our world a better place.

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OUR SCHOOL HAS BEEN ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE **SPREADS**. Please bring your **honey, jam, nutella, vegemite, peanut butter** to place in the box in the office **by Friday 6th December**.

Thank you for your generosity! By working together we will make this Christmas Season a little brighter for those in need!



Christine Meneely, **Religious Education Leader**

Wellbeing News

Child Safety Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

When things are perceived to be hard, the lure to quit can be very big.

Challenge your negative thoughts

Socratic questioning is the process of challenging and changing irrational thoughts. Studies show that this method can reduce depression symptoms. The goal is to get you from a negative mindset (“I’m a failure”) to a more positive one (“I’ve had a lot of success in my career. This is just one setback that doesn’t reflect on me. I can learn from it and be better.”). Here are some examples of questions you can ask yourself or your child to challenge negative thinking.

Firstly, write down your negative thoughts, such as “I’m having problems at work and am questioning my abilities.”

- Then ask yourself: “What is the evidence for this thought?”
- “Am I basing this on facts? Or feelings?”
- “Could I be misinterpreting the situation?”
- “How might other people view the situation differently?”
- “How might I view this situation if it happened to someone else?”

So when your child comes home after a tough day at school, a bad play or a large loss, remind them: It’s alright to quit. Quitting will forever be a choice, but not on an awful day. In my own family growing up we always had a rule that once you commit to a group, club or a period of activity, you need to maintain your end of the deal and complete what you began.

Please find attached a link to the [SFX SchoolTV Website](#) where you will find an article titled ‘How to be Happy’. There is a lot of information from behavioural scientists in this article who have spent time studying what makes us happy (and what doesn’t).



Gemma Johnson, **Wellbeing Leader**

Sending cheers your way,

Assessment & Reporting – Term Four



Parent Access Module Login

Please login with your credentials, as supplied by your school.

Keep me logged in

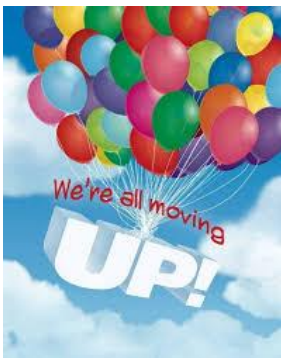
[Forgot Password?](#)

Sign In

We are pleased to inform you that your child’s End of Year School Report will be available for download from the Parent Access Module (PAM) site on **Monday, 16th December**. These reports provide a comprehensive overview of your child’s achievements throughout Semester Two.

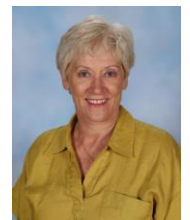
Each report is carefully prepared by your child’s class teacher, reviewed by a year-level team member, and further checked by the Leadership Team to ensure accuracy and clarity. I would like to commend our teachers for their dedication, professionalism, and the personalised comments they have included.

We encourage you to take the time to read the report thoroughly and discuss the feedback with your child. Most importantly, take this opportunity to celebrate your child’s efforts and successes throughout the 2024 school year.



Looking forward to a great day tomorrow with our **Moving up day**. We welcome our new staff, children and 2025 cohort of Foundation students. We also wish our Year 6 children all the best as most head to their respective secondary schools on this day also. Class placements will be shared on PAM on **Monday, 2nd December**, in preparation for our whole school Transition Day on **Tuesday, 3rd December**, from **9:30 am to 12:30 pm**. We look forward to a positive and exciting start to 2025!

Enjoy your week,



Jane Clark, **Deputy Principal/Learning Enhancement**



SFX
Christmas raffle

DONATIONS

SFX Parents & Friends association are seeking your support for donations for our Christmas raffle

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO OWNS A BUSINESS THAT COULD OFFER A SERVICE OR WOULD DONATE AN ITEM FOR OUR SFX CHRISTMAS RAFFLE?
DO YOU WANT TO MAKE A DONATION BUT ARE UNSURE HOW YOU CAN HELP?
PURCHASE A GIFT VOUCHER, DONATE A HAMPER, PURCHASE AN ITEM TO DONATE
ALL BUSINESSES & FAMILIES WHO MAKE DONATIONS WILL BE PROMOTED IN ORDER FOR OUR SFX COMMUNITY TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING THEM THE SAME MANNER THAT THEY HAVE SUPPORTED OUR SCHOOL

Please drop any donations into the front office, or if you have any questions contact Steph Nunn on 0466 096 488

Attachments

ASSEMBLY AWARDS 29th November Hosted by 6ZA Theme: Hospitality

We welcome and include others. Hospitality means welcoming other people to a home, business or school.

We show hospitality because Jesus teaches us to include everyone and show them they are welcome.

FLH	Georgia Little and Jed Phelan	4GH	Sophie McNeill and Bridie Millington
FGJ	Harper Gilbertson and Kit Blomeley	4ML	Milla Richardson and Minti Toohey
FTW	Alina Osciak & Olive Miceli	4BO	Anna Marson and Emily Crough
FMM	Max Banwell & Tommy Just	5CC	NO AWARDS - Yr 5 CAMP
1JS	Rupert Veal & Piper Swayn	5MA	
1EM	Polly Meade and Lillian Armstrong	5JW	
1MV	River Harney & Daisy Whittlam	6PB	Molly Danaher and Milla Alford
2RR	Finn Burbidge, Ollie Geaghan and Fletcher Hipke	6ZA	<i>All of 6ZA for hosting a wonderful final Assembly!</i>
2CK	Oscar Kersley and Violet Toohey	6MM	Elliana Tocchet and Sophie Keating
2JS	Sahesi Kariyawasam and Eliza Vallance	EE	Nick Taylor (2CK) & Sahesi Kariyawasam (2JS)
3JE	Mitchell Cycles and Pippa Gleeson	PA	Flynn Williams and Zephyr Swanson 1EM
3JV	Connor White and Molly Lewis	VA	Olive Anderson (1MV), Jessica Youl (6ZA), Matilda West (6MM) Emily Hanrahan (6PB)
3DW	Harry Logan and Ted Nunn	PE	Milla Rowland & Charlie Johnson
		Tch	Charlie Irving & Eliza Vallance



Newsletter article: Bushfire At-Risk Register - Schools

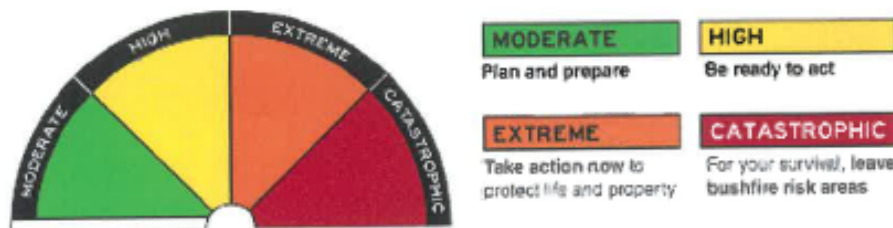
CATASTROPHIC FDR DAY CLOSURE

Here is an article for you to publish in your newsletter or on your website. It will help you communicate to parents that your school is listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) and prepared should an Extreme FDR day be forecast or a Catastrophic Fire Day be determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner.

When using the article, you are advised to:

- review the text for relevance to the specific circumstance - noting that red text indicates statements that are optional or that must be reviewed for each use
- copy the required text onto your school's website or into the newsletter

Fire danger ratings and warnings are used in Victoria to provide clear direction on the safest options for preserving life.



School procedures for forecast Extreme fire danger rating days

Following consultation with the Parish Priest, Catholic Education Office and the broader school community, it has been decided that in exceptional circumstances, our school St Francis Xavier Primary School will close on forecast Extreme Fire Danger Rating (FDR) days.

In these circumstances, when the Bureau of Meteorology forecasts an Extreme FDR day for the following day, the school will contact you directly via SMS message and PAM before the end of the school day.

This information will also be posted on the Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA) and the Department of Education and Training website which I strongly recommend that you monitor for updates – see:

<http://www.vcea.catholic.edu.au/Emergency-Management/School-Closures> and,
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/closures.aspx>

I acknowledge that the potential closure of our school on a forecast Catastrophic FDR day may result in some inconvenience to you and your family, but the safety of our students and staff remains our top priority.

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Current Document: 29.11.2024

Next Review: 28.11.2025
As partners in
Catholic education
and open to God's presence,
we pursue fullness of life for all.



School procedures for determined Catastrophic fire days

Schools listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) will be closed when a Catastrophic fire danger rating day is determined in their Bureau of Meteorology district. Our school has been identified as being one of those at high bushfire risk and is listed on the BARR.

Where possible, we will provide parents with up to four days' notice of a potential Catastrophic fire day closure by letter, SMS message and PAM. A Catastrophic fire day will be determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner no later than 1.00 pm the day before the potential closure. Once we are advised of the confirmation of the Catastrophic fire day we will provide you with advice before the end of the school day.

Once confirmed, the decision to close will not change, regardless of improvements in the weather forecast. This is to avoid confusion and help your family plan alternative care arrangements for your child. It is also important to note that:

- No staff will be on site on days where the school is closed due to a forecast Catastrophic fire day.
- School camps will be cancelled if a Catastrophic fire - fire danger rating day is determined for the Bureau of Meteorology district in which the camp is located.

On these Catastrophic fire days families are encouraged to enact their Bushfire Survival Plan – **on such days children should never be left at home or in the care of older children.**

For those of us living in a bushfire prone area, the CFA advise that when Catastrophic fire days are forecast, the safest option is to leave the night before or early on the morning of the Catastrophic fire day.

As part of preparing our school for potential hazards such as fire, we have updated and completed our Emergency Management Plan, reprioritised any maintenance works that may assist in preparing for the threat of fire and cleared our facility's grounds and gutters.

What can parents do?

- Make sure your family's bushfire survival plan is up-to-date and includes alternative care arrangements in the event that our school is closed.
- Ensure we have your current contact details, including your mobile phone numbers. Keep in touch with us by reading our newsletters, by checking our website at <https://www.smclarkeshill.catholic.edu.au/> and by talking to your child's teacher or any other member of the teaching staff about our emergency management plan.
- Most importantly at this time of year, if you're planning a holiday or short stay in the bush or in a coastal area, you should check warnings in advance of travel and remain vigilant during your stay.
- If your child is old enough, talk to them about bushfires and your family's bushfire survival plan.
- You can access more information about children's services closures on the Department of Education and Training website – see <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/closures.aspx>

For up-to-date information on this year's fire season, visit the CFA website at www.cfa.vic.gov.au or call the 24-hour Victorian Bushfires Information Line on 1800 240 667.

1st December 2024
1st Sunday of Advent

'When Christ comes may he strengthen your hearts in holiness.'



▶ **SS PETER & PAULS**
701 FISKEN ST
BUNINYONG 3357



▶ **ST ALIPIUS**
82 VICTORIA ST
BALLARAT EAST 3350



▶ **PARISH OFFICE**
84 VICTORIA ST
BALLARAT EAST 3350
PH 5332 6611
OPEN TUE – FRI
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

St Alipius parish

ballarateast@ballarat.catholic.org.au

www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/parish/ballar-at-east/

MASS TIMES

St Alipius

Tues 5.30 pm

Wed 9.30 am – Parish Schools Cluster
Mass

Wed 11:00 am Mercy Place
(All welcome)

Thurs - Sat 9:30 am

Sat 6:00 PM Vigil

Sun 9:00 AM (1st, 3rd & 5th weeks)
10:30 AM (2nd & 4th)

Ss Peter and Paul's

Sunday 9:00 AM (2nd & 4th)
10:30 AM (1st, 3rd & 5th)

Rosary – Thursday 11:00 AM

Our Parish is committed to the safety, well-being and dignity of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

We acknowledge this land's traditional owners and custodians and pay our respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging.

WE PRAY FOR

Faithfully departed: John McCarthy (Mossman, QLD)

Anniversaries:

Unwell: Pam Hill, Kathy Towns, Socorro De Chavez, Peter McLachlan, Sarah McLachlan, Carole Simmons

PARISH TEAM

Parish Priest
Fr Justin Driscoll

Assistant Priest
Fr Matthew Restall

Parish Coordinator
Cathy Prunty

Administrative Assistant
Natalie Gleeson

Finance Officer
Jackie Wrigglesworth

Child Safety Officer
Emily Clarke
Principal – St. Alipius School
Phone: 5331 1816

PARISH VISION

The combined communities of St Alipius Parish reach out in the spirit of faith, hope, love, and acceptance, as God calls us to in the gospels.

PARISH MISSION

Our mission in the Parish of St Alipius is to actively engage and serve our combined communities, embodying the teachings of the Gospel. Strengthened in the spirit of faith, hope, love acceptance and Mercy, we strive to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment. Guided by God's call to service, we aim to build strong connections, provide spiritual nourishment, promote social justice, and offer support to individuals and families in their journey of faith. Through our dedicated interactions, we seek to deepen our relationships with God, inspire transformation, and make a positive impact in the lives of those we encounter, spreading God's love and compassion to all.



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PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM

Thank you to all parishioners who contribute to our planned giving program. Your generosity is appreciated.

Supporting our parish priests	\$1356
Maintenance of parish buildings, office and administration expenses, grounds maintenance etc.	\$358.20

Counting Team this week: No. 1

UPCOMING DATES

Anniversary Mass & Picnic
December 14th @ 6pm – Church and Grounds

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES ACROSS THE MINISTRY DISTRICT

Following consultation with the Bungaree and Gordon Parish Leadership Teams and the Ballarat East Parish Liturgy Team, the schedule for 2024 will be:

Christmas Eve (Tuesday December 24th)
4.00pm Mercy Place Ballarat East
5.30pm Ballan
6.00pm Ballarat East
6.30pm Clarkes Hill
7.00pm Gordon
7.30pm Buninyong
9.00pm Ballarat East
Christmas Day (Wednesday December 25th)
9.00am Ballarat East
9.00am Dunnstown

The above schedule is reliant on the generosity of Frs Kevin Maloney and Wally Tudor assisting Frs Justin and Matt.

MAKING A SCENE AT CHRISTMAS

Making a Scene at Christmas will be held in the Bridge Mall from Wednesday December 4th until Friday December 20th, 2024. Entry by gold coin donation.

CARING GROUP

The Caring Group will be meeting next Friday, December 6th at 2pm in the Parish Hall. Everyone is welcome to come along for a cuppa and a chat. Please bring a small plate to share.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL

♦Christmas Appeal♦

The Ballarat East Conference of SVdP invites you to support our Christmas Appeal.

Please do so by donating

1. Via envelopes found on pews, please place completed envelopes on collection plate
2. Online vinnies.org.au
3. By phone 13 18 12

Donations greater than \$2 are Tax deductible

♦Christmas Raffle♦

A Christmas raffle will be held with tickets being sold for \$2 each or 3 tickets for \$5. Winners will be announced at the Anniversary Picnic on December 14th.

PRIZES - first drawn parishioner chooses from three prizes:

BIKE for 6 - 8 year old

HAMPER - including fruit cake, meat voucher and other goodies

DOLLS - porcelain dolls

♦Piety stall - cards and calendars♦

The stall will be open after Masses commencing 23rd November for sale of:-

SVdP Christmas Cards \$5 for pack of 5
St Columban's Calendar \$10

BAPTISMS

Finn Henry Tongs
Child of Ronan and Gabrielle

Frédéric Wayne Claude David Detragiache
Child of Dorian and Gemma

'You are precious in my sight and I love you'
Isaiah 43:4

PARISH ANNIVERSARIES

Saturday December 14th is not far away. Please remember to RSVP by December 7th, by calling the parish office on 5332 6611 or emailing the office at ballarateast@ballarat.catholic.org.au.

SETTING UP THE NATIVITY SCENE

Next Saturday, December 7th, following the 6pm Mass we are asking people to stay and help us set up the nativity in the church yard. 'Many hands make light work', so the more people who can give us half an hour, the quicker we will be. Thank you in anticipation!

PARISH SCHOOL CLUSTER MASS

As part of the significant anniversaries occurring throughout December, the year 6 students and staff from Emmaus Primary, St Alipius School and St Francis Xavier Primary together with a group of students from Damascus College will all gather for Mass at St Alipius Church with Fr Justin on Wednesday December 4th at 9.30am. Parishioners and friends are all welcome to celebrate this anniversary with students from our Catholic Schools.

ECUMENICAL SERVICE

Remembering Victims and Survivors of Family Violence

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

Parishioners and all members of the community are invited to gather for this service.

END OF YEAR SCHOOL MASSES

St Francis Xavier School Ballarat East will celebrate their end of school year Mass on Friday, December 6th at 9.30am at the school, with the Year 6 Graduation to be held on Thursday December 12th at 6.00pm.

St Alipius School Ballarat East will celebrate their end of school year Mass on Tuesday December 17th at 1.30pm in St Alipius Church.

Emmaus, Mt Clear will celebrate their end of school year Mass on Thursday December 16th at 11.30am in St Alipius Church as well as staff Mass celebrated on Friday December 17th at Ss Peter and Paul Church Buninyong at 2.00pm.

FROM THE DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

A formal report on the Assembly held at Federation University Mt Helen last weekend on Leadership and Governance for a Missionary Synodal Church will be released in the coming weeks. In the meantime, our newsletters for the coming weeks will include reflections from parishioners in attendance as either delegates or facilitators.

Dianne Reynolds (Dunnstown, Bungaree Parish) Delegate

From the Murray to the Sea; we came together at Federation University, on the weekend of 15th – 16th Nov., as a community from the Diocese to listen and discern – How does God want us to Lead and Govern for a Missionary Synodal Church. The structure of the Assembly was divided into several sections- each started with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to intercede, silence, listening and then giving time to hear what those at our table had to say. The sessions started with big ideas- What do we hope for? What are the challenges? Then moved onto Mission and Identity – Relationships, inclusivity and hospitality were most important. And lastly, we were asked to some artwork or words that described our Parish. I had to say we were aging, but also a welcoming and inclusive Parish community. What resonated with me came from the younger people at the Assembly. They were very passionate, trusting in the Holy Spirit, they were confident that although the church has been through turbulent times, it may be restructured but will continue. It is people not buildings that are important!

Have you ever thought of the Holy Spirit as a Wild Goose? Fr Justin presented us with this image. The Wild Goose of Iona, to the Celts is the name for the Holy Spirit, known for its passion, noisiness and courage. This symbol reminds us that God's spirit cannot be tamed or contained. Let us remember this as we move forward. It will take passion, courage and noisiness! On behalf of the Parish community, I would like to thank Bishop Paul for instigating this assembly and Father Justin, who has put in an enormous amount of work travelling from one end of the diocese to the other, to plan and bring together a meaningful and thought- provoking insight into possibilities for Governance and Leadership of our Church. Thanks to Sr Karon Donnellon RSM for facilitating, her attention to detail and humour was appreciated. Not least, the work of Jane Collins and Pastoral team was exemplary and of course table facilitators who managed to bring all our thoughts together.

An On-Going Cosmic Event

Reflection on the Gospel- 1st Sunday of Advent

(Luke 21:25-28, 34-36)

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Today's gospel passage, with its vivid description of the end-time signs, may seem a strange choice of reading for Advent and the beginning of the Church year. Its depiction of global devastation has a particular resonance in our changing world order. Some may be tempted to interpret "apocalyptic" events of today as the judgement of an interventionist God. This is far from the truth. Our mindless exploitation of planetary resources has brought its own judgement and we must struggle together to save our planet from further destruction.

Advent and Christmas are about the coming "in power and great glory" of the One who brings the liberation of God. The earliest Christians believed that Jesus would soon return and bring everything to completion. Some decades after Jesus' death, Luke's community had come to realize that the "final" coming of Christ was not just around the corner as they had expected. They needed to be reminded that a delayed return was no excuse for lack of vigilance. Luke warns against activities and attitudes that desensitize the heart or the human spirit.

For Luke, the proper stance for the Christian believer is an attentive heart and constant prayer for the strength to withstand whatever comes. An attentive heart will be attuned to the cry of the earth and the cry of those rendered poor by those who exploit the goods of the earth. The image of Christ coming on the clouds belongs within an ancient understanding of the structure of the world in which God and God's heavenly court are located in the heavens above, rather than permeating all of creation. It might function in our times as a reminder that the

Incarnation, "God's becoming material" (Karl Rahner), is an ongoing cosmic event, not just a once-off event limited to one place and one time.

We might do well to read this gospel passage against the backdrop of today's first reading from Jeremiah that looks to the fulfillment of God's promise of the "virtuous branch for David". The organic metaphor of the branch reminds us of the interconnectedness of God's people and of all being across the ages. The virtue of the expected descendant of David finds expression in honesty and integrity, literally "justice and righteousness/right relationship". Justice in the Hebrew tradition is about redress in the law courts for the most vulnerable. Righteousness is about right relationships as well as the equitable sharing and proper use of Earth's resources. Justice and righteousness are two sides of the one coin. Where they are absent, there is no liberation. Our prayer and practical action this Advent might embrace the plight of the earth itself and the concerns of those who yearn for liberation from various forms of oppression. We might remember especially those who seek the justice of a dwelling place secure and a nourishing meal each day. Our Advent could make a difference to their Christmas.



THIS WEEK'S READINGS 1st Sunday of Advent (Year C)

Jeremiah 33:14-16
1 Thessalonians 3:12 – 4:2
Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS 2nd Sunday of Advent (Year C)

Baruch 5:1-9
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11
Lk 3:1-6

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