

Horizons

FREE Publication of the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba

YEAR OF MERCY BEGINS



Catholic
Schools new
Executive
Director



Parish
and School
double
celebration



SPRED
gives
thanks

HORIZONS is a quarterly magazine produced by the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba. Grateful acknowledgement to the Catholic Education Office for their contribution to production costs, as well as to our advertisers for their support. Opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily held by the editor.

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Front Cover: Bishop McGuckin opening the Door of Mercy at St Patrick's Cathedral. (Photo taken by Ingrid McTaggart)

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DEADLINES

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FROM THE EDITOR

By Michael Hart


Sometimes I sit back and think that we live in very interesting times. There is so much going on that I can't imagine how people could be bored. A quick flick through this edition of Horizons will leave you with no doubt that there is life and vitality in our parish and school communities. There is so much activity in the areas of education, social justice, youth ministry and the liturgical life of our communities that the mind boggles. I am extremely grateful to all the contributors across our vast diocese who take the time to record what is happening in their community and share it with all of us. The generosity of these people who write stories and take photos can not be overstated. Thank you so much for spreading

the "Good News" and for getting that message out to the whole community.

The Year of Mercy is clearly a theme running throughout this edition. It is a pastoral priority in the diocese and that is reflected in many of the events that will be happening in 2016. I have been doing some reading and reflecting on Pope Francis' papal bull of indiction, *Misericordiae Vultus*, and it strikes me that the Holy Father is calling for the Church to keep alive the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. He has some tremendously inspiring things to say about mercy and how it can be "the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite

our sinfulness." This year should definately be an interesting year!

As we move towards Easter it is important to slow down and take stock. Lent is a time of penance and preparation and that involves a degree of self-reflection and contemplation. In this Year of Mercy perhaps I should reflect on the question "How do I show mercy to those around me?" Maybe this will help me open my heart to what God is asking of me.

I wish you every blessing as we enter this important time in the Church's year. May we all be touched profoundly as we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Our Risen Lord. 



Lenten Message 2016



From Bishop Robert McGuckin

Ash Wednesday ushered in the season of Lent, a special time when we are called to grow in our response to the Lord's call to love one another. It is a time of prayer, of fasting and of alms giving.

His Holiness Pope Francis has declared this year a special extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. He has asked that the season of Lent in this jubilee year be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God's mercy. He calls us to have an attentive listening to God's word and encouraged the initiative "24 Hours for the Lord" on 4-5 March.

In addition to the special 24 Hours for the Lord, I ask parishes, where possible, to each week have an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, a special time of prayer. May we pray for our needs and the needs of our world. Please also pray for vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life.

As Pope Francis says, "God shows himself ever rich in mercy, ever ready to treat his people with deep tenderness and compassion. God's mercy transforms human hearts, it enables ours, through the experience of faithful love, to become merciful in return".

In Lent then by stepping aside for time in prayer we will grow in the love of God in our friendship with Jesus and be more finely attuned to the



Sereymom from the Mondulkiri Community Health Program, established by Caritas Cambodia and supported by Caritas Australia. Read about Sereymom's story in Week 5 of Project Compassion at www.caritas.org.au.

Spirit of the Lord, opening ourselves to the power of Grace. May we then be alerted to opportunities of need and be so prompted to act in a spirit of mercy and compassion.

Project Compassion gives us an immediate means to assist our sisters and brothers who need vital commodities that each day we simply take for granted. The call for us to fast can be a very positive thing for ourselves but then by our contributions to Project Compassion we assist others.

I am indeed heartened by the young people in our schools who are ambassadors for Project Compassion.

I commend the Lenten programs that are being offered in our parishes. By participating in such programs there is the realisation that Lent is not a journey we undertake alone.

The call on Ash Wednesday was that we turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel. If Pope Francis can call himself a sinner then we too should see our need for forgiveness and be ready to receive the mercy that God continually offers us. The Diocesan Liturgy Office has sent to Parishes the ritual for the Sacrament of Penance during Lent. Parishes will offer this Sacrament during Lent and we should all take that opportunity to be reconciled to God and to one another.

Pope Francis has expressed his hope that "the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; that this will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty, and to enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy".

May Lent be for all of us a favourable time by listening to God's word and by practising the works of mercy.

Bishop Robert McGuckin
Bishop of Toowoomba
February 2016



"BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY." (MT 5:7)



Bishop Robert McGuckin with Paul and Wendy Ladewig, Julie See and Diocesan Priests on the balcony at the newly constructed Kelly House.

James Byrne Centre Expansion

By Ingrid McTaggart

The James Byrne Centre has been an invaluable resource to the Toowoomba Diocese. The Retreat and Education Centre is approximately 20 minutes north of Toowoomba, just outside of Highfields. Set on 130 acres with spectacular range views of the Lockyer Valley and surrounded by bushland, the Centre is the legacy of Bishop Edward Kelly and generous local families and individuals through their bequests of land and money. The centre is named after Toowoomba's first Bishop, James Byrne. Opened in 1980, the Centre consisted of Sanctuary House, the Chapel, the Old Hall and another transportable building. The Marian Hall was added in 1981, the main accommodation block in 1982 and the dining hall was the last building added in 1986.

After much planning, Kelly House is the first new building on the James Byrne Centre site in 30 years. It is only fitting that it is named after Toowoomba's fourth Bishop and James Byrne Centre instigator, Edward Kelly. Rob Fiedler was the architect for the project, his wife Majella provided interior décor design and Taddio Building Group oversaw the construction. The new building sits on the spot once occupied by the Old Hall, which was sold and removed. The brand new accommodation block was conceived to meet the growing demand for the centre in general as well as expanding on the total capacity to accommodate large

school groups. Kelly House adds an additional 30 beds accommodation, has a well equipped conference area to comfortably fit 50 occupants as well as a kitchen.

Kelly House was officially opened and blessed by Bishop Robert McGuckin on Thursday 7th January. Bishop Robert was joined by Centre Managers, Paul and Wendy Ladewig and Diocesan Priests for the special occasion. The blessing wrapped up the annual Diocesan Priests' Retreat which was being held at the James Byrne Centre. Paul and Wendy documented the project from the Old Hall removal through to the Kelly House completion. They have put together the photos in a video presentation which can be viewed at www.jamesbyrnecentre.org.au.



Family and Child Connect team at Mercy Community Services SWQ (L to R back row) Perry Miller, Melina Bick, Laurie Stewart, (L to R front row) Lyn Harland, Bridget Visser

new family support service which helps families with the challenges they face by connecting them to appropriate services before these challenges become acute problems.

Mercy Community Services South West Queensland, in partnership with Lifeline Darling Downs and South West Queensland, is delivering Family and Child Connect to communities in Toowoomba and Roma.

Family and Child Connect helps families develop parenting skills and manage child behaviour, build better relationships between family members and deal with violence in the home. The service also supports families in budgeting and money management, with alcohol, drug or gambling problems and with access to housing, health care or other community or government services.

Frances Klaassen OAM, Senior Manager of Mercy Community Services SWQ, described how Family and Child Connect works through connecting closely with

Connecting families to the right services at the right time

By Dr Wendy Richards

One family's story...

We really started struggling when my partner lost his job truck driving in the mines. I work casual so that I can look after the little ones. The bills piled up and we missed a couple of rent payments. My partner started drinking and sometimes I think he might get violent with me or the kids. I don't know where to go to get help and I'm afraid that Child Safety might get involved.

Does this sound like your story? Or maybe it's the story of someone you know.

Family and Child Connect is a

communities: 'Our strong links with communities means that we can offer families different options that will help them care for and protect their children at home'.

Anyone can contact Family and Child Connect for help – parents, family members, young people and members of the community.

Call 13FAMILY (13 32 64) or visit the Family and Child Connect teams at 104 South Street Toowoomba and 35 Queen Street Roma.

Keeping the Vulnerable Safe

By Majella Albion

Participants from Roma, Cunnamulla, Charleville, and St George gathered at All Saints' Parish Hall, Roma on Monday 1st February for a workshop relating to the diocesan policy on Safeguarding Children and the Vulnerable. George Keryk and Majella Albion from the Diocesan Professional Standards and Safeguards Committee outlined details of the Diocesan response to issues

raised in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Child Abuse. The Diocese of Toowoomba respects and upholds the dignity of children and the vulnerable, and an integral part of the policy is to acknowledge and ensure that everyone has a right to feel safe in all Church environments. One strategy to achieve this is the establishment of a network of Safeguarding Representatives, and the Roma meeting was the second of a series of workshops conducted throughout the diocese to describe this role, and to recruit and train possible volunteers.

Other speakers included Michelle Leadbetter, Principal Child Protection Practitioner from the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services; Yolunda Lambourne, Lifeline Family Response Facilitator South West Region; and Helen Druce, a counsellor from Chinchilla who conducted a session on listening skills.

There was useful and productive discussion raised around various

case study scenarios presented to the group, highlighting some of the unique difficulties faced by people trying to provide services to families in crisis in remote regions.

The Diocesan policy and resource documents are available on the Diocesan website www.twb.catholic.org.au

Send off at The Shrine

By Ingrid McTaggart



L to R: Tom Jolley, Robyn-Anne Lovell, Kirsty Elliot, Kathy Bizzell, Kathy Herden and Ingrid McTaggart.

On 15 January, The Shrine staff came together for an informal farewell for Kirsty Elliot. For the past two years Kirsty has been the smiling face of the DDF reception and was administrative support for the many ministries located at The Shrine. Kirsty's support and hard work has been appreciated. And while a few tears were shed, everyone wishes her well in her future endeavours. The DDF welcomes Wendy Auld to staff as reception and administrative support. <#>



L to R: Margie Cruz, Grace Allen, Mark O'Brien, Helen Druce, Stella Baxter, Sr Maureen Andrews, George Keryk, Fr Jamie Collins and Anne Maloney.



Kevin and Jacaline McGrath (now retired)



Judith McGrath-Colquhoun

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Bishop Michael McCarthy.
(on the funeral of his Mother)



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HORIZONS: CONNECTING THE DIOCESE FOR 10 YEARS

By Sr Eileen March SSPC and Ingrid McTaggart



The debut masthead for Horizons in 2006

In 2005, then Bishop of Toowoomba, Bill Morris, approached Sr Eileen March with the suggestion of starting a diocesan magazine. Sr Eileen had experience with her congregation's mission publication *Echo from Africa* and other continents and had also worked in one of her congregation's printing presses. With so many services, like banks, shops, even medical facilities, disappearing out west, the people were feeling abandoned and isolated. Bishop Bill wanted them to know that they were valued as members of our diocesan family and they were not alone, that the whole diocese shared their concerns, their joys and sorrows. So in January 2006, Issue 1 of *Horizons of Toowoomba Diocese* was published.

A previous incarnation of printed communication in the Diocese was a newspaper, *Catholic Future*. This was conceived primarily a reporting tool of the Diocesan Development Fund, but the magazine Bishop Morris envisioned was to have a much wider scope: a reporting tool for the whole diocese in which every event could be shared, whether it was a personal milestone such as a special birthday or anniversary; a parish celebration such as First

Communions, Confirmations, Lenten/Easter/Christmas liturgies etc., or a large diocesan event such as the Diocesan Gatherings.

The name *Horizons of Toowoomba Diocese* was chosen because it encompasses the vastness of the diocese while avoiding the difficulty of trying to name its geographical area. To travel in our vast diocese, is to travel towards a horizon – which in turn suggests looking beyond the present towards the future and reaching goals.


Originally the publication was sent to parishes and agencies within the Toowoomba Diocese. *Horizons* was very well received and grew in popularity, so much so that the page count has increased over the years as well as the printed quantity. The schools in the diocese quickly became regular contributors and at the request of then Director of Catholic Education, John Borserio, copies were circulated within the schools.

We asked Sr Eileen about her time as editor of *Horizons* and what she enjoyed the most, "Apart from enjoying the actual 'work' of putting together the magazine, I enjoyed working with the members of the Media Committee. Also, several ladies generously took on the role of honorary 'Media

Liaison Officer' for their parishes and worked hard to write up and send news articles from their parish for publication. I enjoyed, most of all, getting to know the diocese better – and some of its wonderful people."

So, does Sr Eileen have a favourite edition? "One favourite? There are too many to mention! The 2007 'Journey of the World Youth Day and Icon' was truly awesome. . . There was the Farewell Mass for Bishop Morris in 2011, and the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop McGuckin in 2012. These were both milestones for the diocese, as were the Diocesan Gatherings, so they stand out in my memory."

"I feel very privileged to be a part of this diocesan family and to have had the opportunity, as editor of *Horizons*, to gain a deeper insight into the lives of its wonderful members."

Today the original vision for *Horizons* carries on. Under the patronage of Bishop Robert McGuckin *Horizons* continues to be supported and recognised as playing a vital communications function. It is still a conduit for news and information within the Toowoomba Diocese, drawing all parishes, schools and ministries together as a diocesan family. 

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

By Donna Burke

Mitchell Parish and School communities offered congratulations to Ruby and Brian Waldron who celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary at the end of October. At the St Patrick's School Mass celebrated on Tuesday, February 2nd, 2016. Fr Jamie Collins had the pleasure of bestowing a Papal Blessing on Ruby and Brian for their 50th wedding anniversary. Fr Jamie invited Ben Waldron, the grandson of Ruby and Brian to come forward to present the beautiful certificate as a gift from the Holy Father, Pope Francis. Ruby and Brian felt extremely privileged and thrilled to receive the Papal Blessing.

Everyone wished them much health and happiness for the future



Brian and Ruby Waldron with Fr Jamie Collins.

and thanked them for their many years of service to Mitchell at both St Patrick's School and St Columba's Parish. Ruby thanked the Parish for the beautiful roses and card. At the recent

Australia Day Awards Brian was also awarded the Citizen of the Year for 2016 for his community service to the Mitchell area. Congratulations Brian on this wonderful achievement. [H](#)

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CELEBRATING THE YEAR OF MERCY CELEBRATING LITURGY IN YOUR PARISH

By John Briffa

In announcing the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis invited us to contemplate just how merciful God has been to us and, in turn, to understand better how we are called to be merciful to others:

How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst! Misericordiae Vultus (5)

During this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, and most particularly during Lent, parishes can place a special focus on their reconciliation liturgies as a way of celebrating God's mercy not only for those within the church, but to also try to reconnect with the wider community.

Time to rethink reconciliation

Discern a team who are not afraid to try something new. Invite faith-filled people who reflect the diversity of your parish (age, gender, ethnicity & spirituality) to meet with the liturgy team. Spend time in prayer and study the sacrament of reconciliation. Reflect on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Think of realistic ways to increase the number of parishioners who celebrate the sacrament of God's mercy by making it easier and more meaningful for them to do so.

Begin with the Sunday liturgy

Examine the Sunday readings, especially the Gospels, and create one or two locally sensitive reflection questions to put in the parish (&

school) bulletin each week. Identify particular images in hymns that speak of mercy, and integrate those images into the seasonal church environment. For example, if a hymn speaks of washing away sin, create or find an image of rain on lush greenery. If a song speaks of a rich harvest, create an image or a montage of the produce of your area. Keep in mind how a smile and kind word creates an atmosphere in which all feel comfortable. Young families and adults of all ages can be greeters. If parishioners speak differing languages, spend time training greeters to say hello in those languages.

Consider existing activities


Review existing parish activities and identify ones into which the theme of forgiveness can be integrated. For example, a parents' group might invite a speaker to give tips for teaching children to forgive. Homebound parishioners might be invited to pray by name for families going through difficulties or to write notes of encouragement. Those in the Visitation ministry might take paper, pens and stamps and encourage and assist those they visit to write to a family member to whom they have not spoken in a long while.

Make reconciliation more accessible and meaningful

Many parishes offer weekly confession, only adding special reconciliation services during Advent and Lent. Consider offering alternate confession times, for example, Saturday morning on first weekend of



month, Wednesday evening in third week, and Friday night in the last week. Promote more frequent use of the second rite of penance, include a ritual action and invite all elements of your community to participate. Give different people a role. Visitors will feel more comfortable when they see people like themselves being involved. Consider using the corporal and spiritual works of mercy as penance, making a connection with deeds that bring reconciliation to the world. In your bulletin or visual aids, list concrete ways the various works of mercy can be lived in your community.

Don't be afraid to promote what you are doing. Nobody will come if they don't know what is happening. People only recognize God's mercy once they have experience it, but every new experience calls us to share that mercy with others. 



Outreach to the Future

A Bequest to the Diocese of Toowoomba, it's ministries and parishes, ensures that the wider family of Church is provided for. It is a gift that reaches into the future to continue the work of the Church in the local community.

A gift, no matter how big or small in value is always received with appreciation. The Diocese, its Ministries and Parishes are grateful to be remembered in your will.

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YEAR OF MERCY DIOCESAN LAUNCH

By Michael Hart



Parishioners enter through the Door of Mercy at St Patrick's Cathedral.

On Sunday 13 December Bishop Robert McGuckin opened the Door of Mercy at St Patrick's Cathedral in solidarity with Bishops across Australia and around the world. The opening of the Door of Mercy, just days after Pope Francis officially opened the Holy Year of Mercy at the Vatican, signifies the beginning of the Holy Year which will conclude on Sunday 20 November 2016. The ceremony was incorporated into the 9.00am Celebration of the Eucharist and parishioners processed through the Door after it was opened.

Throughout the Holy Year of Mercy there will be a range of local opportunities for people to more fully engage with the celebration of this important initiative. As new programs or events are identified they will be promoted through the Diocesan Year of Mercy Committee and local parish contacts.

The next Diocesan In-service is scheduled for 8-9 March and it will have the theme "Earth's Distress and the Mercy of God: A Biblical Exploration". The Diocese is delighted

that Sr Veronica Lawson rsm, a well-known author and presenter on this topic will facilitate the In-service. It will be an opportunity to explore new ways of living the mercy of God in our times, particular attention will



be given to the bible as a "wellspring of mercy" and to Pope Francis' appeal for mercy and for care of our common home. Lent will also provide an opportunity to reflect on the Year of Mercy's central themes of love and forgiveness. Bishop McGuckin has encouraged parishes


to choose a Lenten program focused on the Year of Mercy as a way of renewing and deepening our understanding and actions of mercy.

Sr Elaine Morzone and Fr Hal Ranger are offering parishes a "Mini-Mission of Mercy" which will be custom designed to suit local needs at a mutually convenient time between Easter and the conclusion of the year of Mercy. Sr Elaine, the Spirituality and Mission Development Officer for the Diocese, said that the Mini-Missions were "a forum for parishioners to share



Bishop Robert opening the Mercy Door at St Patrick's Cathedral.

their experience of God's mercy and the experiences which are a block to their experience of a merciful God". She explained that their aim was to "facilitate a deepening encounter with the God of Mercy revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and to search together for ways of promoting a culture of mercy which embraces all."

Bishop Robert has asked parishes to make the Holy Year of Mercy a pastoral priority for the year. With so many opportunities being made available throughout the Diocese there will be a chance for all to take up Pope Francis' challenge, "Let us set aside all fear and dread, for these do not befit men and women who are loved. Instead, let us experience the joy of encountering that grace which transforms all things." 

DIGNITY PROJECT

SUPPORTS DESPERATE FAMILY

By Mark Copland working with the Dignity Project

Many of us have been in the fortunate situation where we have been able to take advantage of educational opportunities to increase our knowledge, and hopefully add to our employability. Whilst it is not something we take for granted, nevertheless we recognise that we live in a country that enables this process. For Mr and Mrs G, the opportunity to study at the University of Southern Queensland was greeted with much enthusiasm, and so they packed up their three school aged children and moved from Iraq to Toowoomba to study.

During this time, the conditions in Iraq deteriorated greatly, and as one of the Christian minority, they were facing a life threatening situation if they returned and so they applied for Australia's protection as refugees, becoming instant asylum seekers. However this did not immediately give them peace of mind for they had no form of support as Mrs G's scholarship from the

Iraqi government instantly ceased.

Now they found themselves living in the city of Toowoomba with little access to any financial, medical or educational supports. Into this complexity, the Dignity Project caseworker from Centacare came and with a fortnightly round table we were able to support the family with basic food and clothing needs. The next issue to be tackled was the Queensland State government Education Department - charging the family close to \$700 per week to send their children to the local state school. After a number of unsuccessful meetings, the caseworker was finally able to lodge an appeal, with a myriad of translated documents and letters of support.

As the school year started this year, the family received the very welcome news that the appeal was successful and the \$10 000 debt had been cancelled. Furthermore, the family has now been granted protection and has gained permanent residency.



Whilst this "win" was due to a number of contributors, it simply would not have happened without the actions of the caseworker for the Dignity Project, funded by Mercy Works. [\[1\]](#)

CHANGE IN

CENTACARE'S LEADERSHIP

By Kate Venables

Mr Geoff Argus announced his resignation from his role as Director of Centacare Toowoomba at the beginning of the year. He has taken up a new position with the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service as the Director of Allied Health – Mental Health, where he will oversee the ongoing development of effective partnerships between local communities and the government's Mental Health services. Geoff will be sorely missed at Centacare, as he effectively guided the organisation as it developed effective organisational and governance systems, providing staff and volunteers with strong leadership and support.

The solid foundation he helped develop has ensured that Centacare is in a strong position to move forward, seeking to live out its Mission to enable individuals and families to reach the potential that God has envisioned for each of them.

Mrs Kate Venables has been appointed as Acting Director for a number of months until a final decision is made regarding a permanent Director. Kate comes with more than 12 years' experience working in the community sector as Centacare's Business Manager for the last 12 months and more than 10 years with Centacare Rockhampton as Mission Director and Regional



Mr Geoff Argus

Program Manager, and is looking forward to leading the teams across the Darling Downs and South West over the next few months. [\[1\]](#)

SHEILA FREEGARD

By Donna Burke

At the end of October Mrs Sheila Freegard passed away. She was aged 90 years 11 months and had been married to John for 69 years 9 months. Sheila was a member of St Columba's Parish for a very long time. At a memorial service held for Sheila, Mrs Ruby Waldron delivered a few words about Sheila and acknowledged the wonderful person she was.

She said it was a privilege to share in the Mass in memory of Sheila Silvester Freegard. Sheila was a devoted Catholic and her religion meant a lot to her. Sheila was always a big supporter of St Patrick's School and St Columba's Church even when she and John lived on their property Ekari Park. Sheila and John moved into town in 1994. She never liked to put anyone out and often said if Fr Jamie had the time she would like to receive Communion but only if he was not doing something else.

Sheila was fortunate to have a wonderful husband in John who was an Anglican and he helped out with anything over the years at St Patrick's and St Columba's. Sheila was a tireless worker for Mitchell Red Cross and was a wonderful Treasurer and also supported the Returned




Fr Jamie Collins with Sheila Freegard.

Soldiers League. She also assisted the Parish Treasurer Jill Irwin.

John and Sheila met while working at the Royal Navy at Rocklea. John who was a member of the British Royal Navy and a qualified carpenter was posted from England to Australia to help out in Australia after the end of World War II. John and Sheila were married at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Rosalie on Australia Day, 1946. In the early years of their marriage John and Sheila were hoteliers.

In 1962 John and Sheila came to Mitchell. Bonus Downs was a large grazing property and was being split up into five blocks. John and Sheila drew a block in the land ballot and named their property Ekari Park. They lived on the property for over thirty years and raised their son Peter.

St Columba's Parish, Mitchell offers deepest sympathy to John, Peter, Rosie and their family. It was a pleasure to be part of Sheila's life and may she rest in peace. 

Celebrating 30 years of SPRED in the Toowoomba Catholic Diocese

MASQUERADE WINTER BALL SUNDAY

19th June 2016

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GIVING THANKS WITH THE ST THOMAS MORE'S COMMUNITY

By Loretta Coman

On the First Sunday of Advent, November 29th, the SPRED Community celebrated its annual Mass of Thanksgiving with the parishioners of St Thomas More's. Always a much anticipated event for our SPRED community, approximately 120 Volunteers, Friends, and their families and carers attended the mass, after which they joined parishioners in the outdoor courtyard to enjoy the glorious weather and a shared morning tea.

Participating in the liturgical life of the parish, especially the Mass, provides a dynamic context which helps our Friends to connect with others and discover them as believers. SPRED Masses which occur twice throughout the year at the various parishes around Toowoomba give

our Friends a sense of being part of a parish family and a feeling of joy in belonging, it also provides a touchstone for further growth in faith when we gather at our SPRED sessions in our small faith communities. Through the ritual actions in Liturgy which are also so prevalent in SPRED catechesis we are all drawn to a deeper awareness of God.

"Our shared desire as church is that liturgy give life and nourishment to our spirits as well as glory to God... People with developmental and learning disabilities have the right to be baptised and welcomed into the liturgical life of God's people."

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Chicago

The next SPRED mass will be at St Theresa's Parish Centre on March



Kellie-Anne Hinds and Laurie Laherty enjoy morning tea after Mass.

13th at 9.30am when the community will gather with the parishioners of St Theresa's to celebrate 30 years of SPRED in the Toowoomba Diocese. SPRED commenced on that very site 30 years ago in what was then the former Good Samaritan Convent. <#>

SPRED PROFILE: MY FRIEND PATRICK

By Denis McCarthy

At the beginning of each season, a lot of the football codes present to the world one of their highly gifted players as "the face of the game". Over the past few years I have come to think of Patrick O'Shea as "the face of SPRED".

Patrick has been a member of SPRED for some 28 years, a veteran! Yet over all these years, on every occasion when Patrick has entered the door to a SPRED session or to some SPRED event, he has lit up the place with his sense of excitement and joy. His enthusiasm at meeting everyone and his delight at the prospect of another social event are reflected in his bright eyes and his broad smile. His face conveys a message about himself and about SPRED.

Agape, a special meal shared by everyone, is an important component of our SPRED sessions and is an element highly valued by all the participants. Patrick's enthusiasm for the home cooking of our talented

volunteers is legendary and this no doubt brings rewards in the knowledge that their efforts are so appreciated.

Like all of our SPRED Friends, Patrick endures many difficulties. There is an obvious lively side to him and at times the very emotional Patrick can emerge. All of us in the St Thomas More's group are very proud of Patrick and it is a wonderful experience to witness the warmth and support shown to Patrick by all other members of the wider SPRED community when we are together on public occasions. We really do belong to a caring and understanding community.

Patrick strongly values friendships which he clearly sees as a two-way street. Our SPRED community gatherings become a great opportunity to seek out old friends and to sustain some very long term relationships. Through the lens of these relationships we have observed the development of support, respect and mutual learning



which underlies the depth of so many long term SPRED friendships.

Every day Patrick continues to inspire us with his sense of joy and excitement at everything around him. In his own way, he teaches all of us about the joys of living and he demonstrates, by contrast, a quiet spirituality and reverence during the prayerful moments of our celebration.

Patrick may not have the gifts of a star footballer, but he has taken just as many knocks and endured just as many personal challenges. Resilience, determination, acceptance and love make Patrick our star player. He is the irrepressible face of SPRED. <#>

PASTORAL COUNCILS PROMOTING GOD'S MERCIFUL MISSION

By Sr Elaine Morzone



Reference Group with Sr Elaine Morzone and Facilitators Srs Margaret Endicott and Carmel Dwan.

On Saturday 13 February, approximately sixty members of pastoral councils representing twenty parishes of the diocese came together at the James Byrne Centre, Highfields, in a reflective and relaxed atmosphere. They reflected more deeply on their role of leadership in contributing to God's merciful mission, particularly during this special Jubilee Year of Mercy. While it was wonderful to experience the enthusiasm and energy of those gathered, there was a concerned awareness that a number of parishes were not represented. There would be a variety of reasons for this but it seems that they might include time and distance factors as well as the reality of personnel diminishment.

In the aftermath of the 13 June 2015 Development Day, some participants expressed the desire to strengthen the networking process that had begun that day and to search for ways of offering greater support across parish boundaries, particularly to parishes with limited resources. A reference

group was formed to begin the process – Doug Birrell and Lyn Cash (St. Patrick's Cathedral Parish), Marie Cleary (St. Thomas More's Parish), David Rogan (St. Theresa's Parish) and Stephen Connolly (Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.) They joined with me in the process of planning which gave direction to the theme and process for this year's development day, "How Parish Pastoral Councils Contribute to God's Merciful Mission."

Through a process of input, personal reflection, facilitation and group sharing, Sisters Margaret Endicott and Carmel Dwan (both Sisters of Mercy) skillfully led the group to reflect on the purpose of the Year of Mercy allowing themselves to experience the touch and challenge of God's mercy personally, to interpret the invitation and challenge of the traditional corporal and spiritual works of mercy through the lens of "Laudato Si" and our current world situation, and to consider concrete actions that particular parishes might take in response to



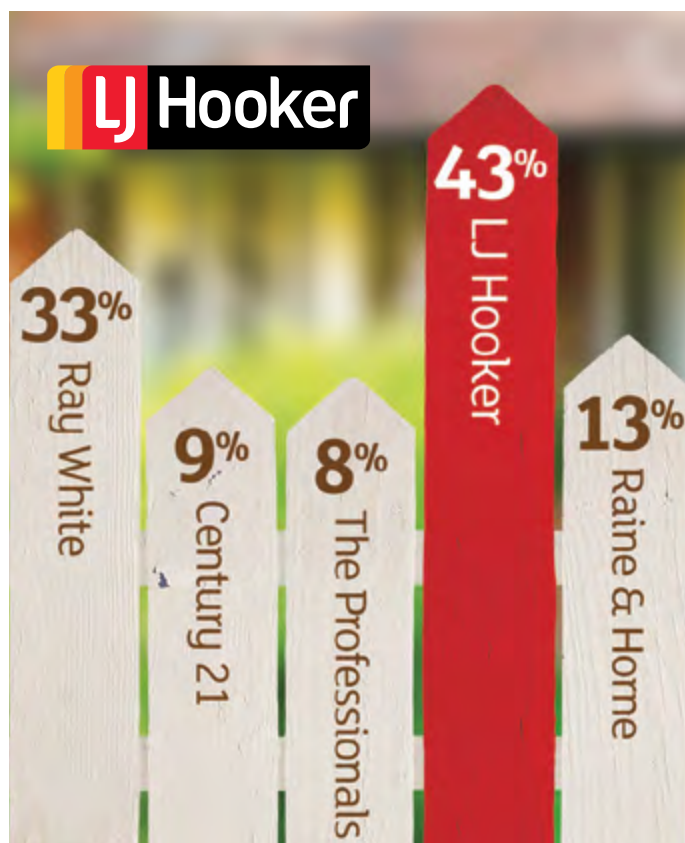
Sr Carmel Dwan

the call of Pope Francis for this Year of Mercy. The day concluded with a ritual during which each parish group or representative made a statement of belief and commitment, received a copy of Pope Francis' "Misericordiae Vultus" ("The Face of Mercy") for their ongoing spiritual

enrichment, and passed through the “Door of Mercy” on mission to open the doors of mercy to others in their parishes and beyond.

Participants responded very positively to the experience of the day, grateful for the enriching and well-presented input as well as the opportunity to interact with people from other parishes. It was described as “a wonderful day of fellowship and education.” Representing the reference group which would like to encourage networking throughout the diocese and support for parishes with more limited resources, Doug Birrell invited parishes to become part of an ongoing process.

Would your parish pastoral council like assistance from and connection with other parishes in the diocese or deanery in promoting God’s merciful mission? Please do not hesitate to share your needs or suggestions with Doug Birrell at djbirrell@bigpond.com 



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MOVING CEREMONY FOR THE 24TH WORLD DAY OF SICK

By Sonia Wood



Darlene Dreise acknowledges Traditional Owners at World Day of Sick celebrations.

Over 70 pastoral carers from across the Darling Downs and South West Queensland attended a very moving and inspirational ceremony for the 24th World Day of Sick celebrations at Lourdes Home for the Aged on 11th February in Toowoomba.

The theme which was chosen by Pope Francis for 2016 was: *Entrusting oneself to the Merciful Jesus like Mary: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5)*

In his message to the world, His Holiness Pope Francis stated that this particular day gave him an opportunity to draw particularly close to his people - his dear friends who are ill, and to those who care for them.

It is also on this special day that pastoral carers choose to hold the commissioning of all ecumenically trained pastoral carers who minister in hospitals, aged care and mental health facilities, both in Toowoomba and the region. There were representatives from Goondiwindi, Stanthorpe, Warwick, Oakey, Chinchilla, Miles and St George. Joining them were Toowoomba pastoral carers, who minister at St Vincent's Private Hospital Toowoomba,



L to R: Bishop Robert McGuckin, Mr John Agnew (Uniting Church), Pastor Michael Braunberger (Lutheran) and Rev Johnathan Inkpin (Anglican).

Toowoomba Hospital, Aged Care facilities, Toowoomba Hospice and Baillie Henderson Hospital.

As part of the ceremony prayers were said for the very ill and vulnerable as well as for those who care for them and in a wonderful tribute to ecumenical care, the faith leaders from the Catholic, Uniting, Lutheran and Presbyterian Churches were represented.

A special presentation was held for Sharon Kirk, who is retiring as Chair of the Uniting Church Presbytery of the Downs. Sharon will continue her role as Chair of the Pastoral Care Oversight

committee. Sharon was pleased to cut the special celebration cake at the afternoon tea following the World Day of Sick ceremony.

St Vincent's Private Hospital Toowoomba Mission Director Darlene Dreise was pleased to deliver a welcome story and an acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land where the ceremony was held. Attendees were pleased to meet the St Vincent's Toowoomba Acting General Manager Janine Loader, who also holds a position on the Catholic Health Australia Board with Bishop Robert McGuckin. <#>

ANNUAL 'DARLING DOWNS HOSPITAL HEALTH SERVICES AWARDS'

2016 (A PASTORAL CARE EXPERIENCE)

By Patricia Langan

A recent surprise personal invitation for our Pastoral Care Leadership Team was received to attend an Employee Awards Celebration dinner at Inbound Restaurant. On the evening of the 27th January, Pastoral Care team members were advised that in the 'Caring' category, pastoral care were one of three finalist from thirty proposed. At the dinner, tension arose as we waited to hear which of these had won the award. Not us! However, we enjoyed celebrating with the Western Cluster Operations Manager at her success.


Attending, there were perhaps 150 DDHHS personnel gathered for the award finalist presentations nominated through seven categories of Health Service Values, that of: 'Caring'; 'Doing the Right Thing'; 'Openness to learning and change'; 'Being safe, effective and efficient'; 'Being open and transparent'; 'DDHHS Purpose' and 'DDHHS Vision'. As each category winner was announced by the Chairperson, Dr Peter Gillies, Acting Chief Executive Officer, it was greeted with a room in happy affirmation at their success.

Interwoven through these formalities, all guests were being served a delicious two course meal, with wines of choice and brilliant



Pastoral Carers and Hospital Staff Celebrate at the DDHHS Awards.

service. Personally this was a great experience being in the midst of our hospital celebration. A feeling of warmth pervaded along with a degree of health work-place intimacy in the sense that many present were known to one another by name, coming from past or present working experience, a feeling of 'family', almost. Overall, there was a sense of pride, fulfilment and ownership about our work lives.

Celebrating this occasion and participating in presenting the Awards along with Dr Gillies, were Mr Michael Walsh, Director General of Health, QLD and Mr Mike Horan, OAM, Board Chair. Our thanks go to members of the Toowoomba Hospital Foundation, Peter Rookas and Ray Taylor who have been instrumental in ongoing support for the Toowoomba Hospital Pastoral Care Services. 



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END OF YEAR PARISH CELEBRATIONS

By David Rogan and Regan Kama



The Walking Meditation as part of the Ecumenical Evening.

Our annual Ecumenical Evening which was organised by Kathy Sternes for all parishes and religions was held at St Theresa's Parish on the 5th November. The topic was "Interfaith Dialogue and Engagement". Our guest speakers were Mr Muhammed Haniff, The Venerable Wu Ping and The Venerable Wu Chin from The Pure Land Learning College, and parishioner Mrs Trish Sheely.

Trish discussed "Debunking myths, celebrating common ground and valuing differences in other religions", The Venerable Wu Ping spoke about her love for Buddhism and "The benefits of meditation". After this we enjoyed a very inspiring "Walking Meditation" organized by the Venerable Wu Chin. The Sri Sathya Sai Organization provided wonderful interfaith music during the evening for all to enjoy.

Mater Dei students joined the parish during weekly Masses. Parishioners enjoyed listening to the children's Prayers of the Faithful and watching them participate throughout the Masses. Thank you to the Mater Dei teachers and students for sharing their thoughts and prayers.

Releasing of the Memories Liturgy and light lunch occurred on November the 10th. The families of those who have died in the last twelve months were given a special opportunity to remember their loved



Parishioners attend the Anointing Mass.

ones. Additionally, on November 28th and 29th the names of the loved ones of many parishioners were remembered in a special way.


The First Reconciliation Ceremony for children was held on November 12th at 6pm. A large number of children and parents were in attendance.

The Anointing Mass on November 19th was a time of blessing for our parish, Fr Brian Noonan said the Mass and focused upon healing for us all. Also the Care and Concern Thanksgiving Liturgy and light lunch was provided for those involved in Care and Concern. The group provides great support to the parish in times such as funerals and in visiting those in nursing homes or who are unable to attend parish functions.

The 2nd Rite of Reconciliation on the

17th December assisted in parishioners moving into Advent in a reflective way. The Liturgy committee, especially Carole Rogan and Michael Gatt, put in a lot of effort in the preparation for this Reconciliation ceremony. The Advent Masses focused upon the coming of Christ into our midst with four themes: Hope, Peace, Joy, Love. The Christmas Ceremonies were reflective of these themes. Special thanks to Mary Otto, Jan Mayo, Anita Mc Veigh, Elizabeth Stewart, the choir, our wonderful musicians, readers and everyone who helped with the ceremonies.

Regan Kama, our Pastoral Associate has moved to the Gold Coast and she and her family will be very much missed.

St Theresa's wishes everybody a peaceful, happy and contented 2016. 

COMMUNIONS, CONFIRMATIONS, CLOSURES & CHRISTMAS

By Sr Maureen Andrews mfc

The Catholic community of Cunnamulla/Thargomindah were happy to welcome Bishop Robert McGuckin for the recent Communion and Confirmation ceremonies. These are special times in the life of children growing up and growing into the church and are popular occasions for relatives and friends. We had a good gathering in both places.

In Cunnamulla four girls received communion and confirmation and after the liturgy the congregation gathered in the quadrangle of the school to have supper. Naturally the service was not complete without a cake which was cut by all four. Although there was only one girl in Thargomindah the celebrations began the day before in a surprising way. Ide Rush, the Catholic leader and ambassador of Thargo was the sponsor to Anna O'Shea. She and Anna decided that the steps of the church needed painting for the Bishop's visit. Both started painting and along came a visitor, a painter by trade, to offer advice and instructions. He even went and bought the correct paint. It looked great!

Anna remarked earlier that she was saddened that the Collins family were on holidays and could not attend. The Collins family add seven people to the monthly Mass celebrated by Fr Peter so they were missed. An unexpected guest was the local policewoman who came out for a week to oversee the station. Anna had two cakes to cut, a sponge and a fruit cake, and she was assisted by Caleb and Jonah who, with their mother and father, are regular attenders of the monthly Eucharist. Both congregations were grateful that Bishop Robert would make time to travel to the south west corner to lead the celebrations.

We farewelled the Grade Six students in an inspiring ceremony which culminated in them running the gauntlet through the arch of hands created by the rest of the Sacred Heart School. The P&F President, Paul Webster, in his address reminded us how "fundamentally



Graduation night in Cunnamulla.



Lilly Hatchman, Lily Barrington, Bishop Robert, Amy Hatchman and Mia Woods.

important families are as part of our children's education alongside school staff." It was also a good reminder of what a special place Sacred Heart School is. We hope that 2016 will be successful in continuing to create a positive and safe environment for our children.

The Christmas celebration was a surprising boost to the parish. The church was full as we welcomed 65 people including recent residents to Cunnamulla, Fhonnice and Johannes Sidata, a married couple from Indonesia. Supper was provided

after the liturgy and we all enjoyed ourselves. We are a small group of dedicated parishioners who at times achieve the impossible because we believe that small is beautiful and we value our faith, our Christian community and one another.

People are increasingly taking initiatives to ensure our future. One recent example of this was an initiative by Jan Gorrie and assisted by Di O'Brien to raise funds through a Christmas raffle, that was surprisingly successful and a big boost to our limited finances. [H](#)

FAREWELLING FR MICHAEL COONEY

By Narelle McIntyre



Don McPherson thanks Fr Michael.
Photo by Amanda Seigmeier, A.S. Is Photography.



Cook and Treasure families singing a special tribute song.
Photo by Amanda Seigmeier, A.S. Is Photography.

Dalby

On the evening of 20th December 2015, a large number of parishioners of St Joseph's, Dalby and visitors gathered in the Parish Centre. As well as celebrating Parish life in 2015, this was an occasion to formally thank and farewell Fr Michael Cooney as Parish Priest.

Fr Michael came to Dalby from Goondiwindi in June 2005 and has spent the past 10 ½ years providing pastoral care and leadership at St Joseph's and Immaculate Conception Parish, Jandowae. During that time he has made many friends and close connections in the local and surrounding communities.

Early in the evening, tributes were paid to Fr Michael by several speakers

for his commitment to the country church communities of Bell, Irvingdale and Bowenville. He was also thanked for his pastoral care of Our Lady of the Southern Cross College and his involvement with and commitment to the Ministers' Fraternal in Dalby.

It was fitting that the Parish Centre was used for Fr Michael's farewell as he had identified the need for such a facility and was actively involved in the group that planned and oversaw the refurbishments opened in 2012.

Interspersed during the evening's activities, compered by Brian Bryant and Richard O'Shea, were a number of musical items provided by the young and not so young – Mowing Minstrels, Filipino Singers,

Ella O'Shea and the Cook and Treasure families. These included two songs in which the lyrics were especially composed as a tribute to Fr Michael. They brought a tear or two to Fr Michael's eye and he spoke of being very touched by the friendship, support and generosity shown to him during his time in Dalby and it would be hard to move on.

An album of photographic memories, farewell card and testimonial gifts and a computer (so he could keep in touch) were presented to Fr Michael by parishioners. Everyone wished him good health and happiness in his move to Toowoomba after Christmas and his pastoral pathways in 2016. [H](#)

CHURCH CHALLENGE ENTERTAINS

By Fr Michael O'Brien

Goondiwindi

Each year in Goondiwindi the Anglican and Catholic churches get together for what we call the "Church Challenge". In the spirit of ecumenism everyone comes together to "compete" against each other in cards, Mahjong and indoor bowls. It is a wonderful social evening to enjoy each other's company and the event is in its 7th year. In 2015 the Anglicans got across the line by winning the cards and indoor bowls. The trophy we play for is a beautifully framed montage of photos from each parish along with the names of the winner each year. [H](#)



Fun and games for Goondiwindi Anglican and Catholic parishioners.

A FAREWELL IN CHINCHILLA

By Zita Stark

The end of 2015 was a challenging time for the parishioners of Chinchilla. After long years together, our Priests, Fr Jim Cronin and Fr Darrell Irvine are moving to other townships as of 1 January 2016.

Fr Jim arrived in Chinchilla almost 8 years ago and has been our Parish Priest since then. Besides his numerous duties, he worked hard by also ministering in the towns of Miles, Wandoan, Taroom, Dulacca and Condamine. To share his busy schedule, Fr Darrell arrived in August 2014. He has been a great addition to our community, bringing happy moments to many. Fr Jim has been appointed as Parish Priest in Dalby and Fr Darrell as Hospital Chaplain in Toowoomba. They are hoping to come back to Chinchilla now and again to help out Fr Gonzalo Garcia Duran, who will take over their duties from next year.

As a heartfelt celebration and an appreciation for their

marvellous work, the parishioners of Chinchilla organised a farewell party for Fr Jim and Fr Darrell on the presbytery grounds straight after the Sunday evening mass of 20 December. Everyone brought delicious meals to share, and the crowd of about 50 people enjoyed a pleasant night together.

Parish Councillor Paul Gearon addressed Fr Jim and Fr Darrell separately, admiring their many contributions to the community and saying thanks on behalf of the whole parish. Similarly, Parish Council Chairwoman Deonne Crowe handed over farewell presents to the Fathers to express the gratitude and the love of the parishioners. A beautiful cake was presented as well, and this was cut after the address.

Dear Fr Jim and Fr Darrell, thank you so much for everything you have done for our parish! We will miss you and wish you all the best for the next station of your faith journey! 🙏



L to R: Parish Council Chairwoman Deonne Crowe, Fr Jim Cronin, Sr Sue Smith and Fr Darrell Irvine.

CHANGES AFOOT AT CROWS NEST

By Margaret Fowler

Early in December Fr Ted Hanlon decided, in consultation with Bishop Robert McGuckin, that due to ongoing health problems, he would resign as our supply priest. We thank Fr Ted for his service to our Parish during his time with us. In the interim we thank Frs Edgar Boglosa and Roque Maguinsay from Sacred Heart Parish for celebrating our Masses and Bishop Robert who celebrated our Masses on the weekend of 17 January. At Mass Bishop Robert announced that as of 24 January, our new supply priest would be Fr Dave O'Connor. Fr Dave has recently been celebrating the Masses at the Aged Care Complex on the first Friday of each month. On Christmas Eve Fr Dave celebrated a well attended Vigil Mass at Haden, the first vigil in our Parish for several years. We



Stewart Hintz, Stefany Hanley, Shelene McNee, Adam Hintz, Fr. Kerry and Isabelle.

welcome Fr Dave as our supply priest. At both Christmas Masses toffees were on offer for all in attendance.

On 19 December, Fr Kerry Costigan officiated at the Baptism of Isabelle Summer Hintz. Parents,

Adam Hintz and Shelene McNee, welcomed family and friends from Brisbane, Sydney and Toowoomba to St Matthew's Church, Crows Nest, for the occasion. The Godparents were Stewart Hintz and Stefany Hanley. 🙏

YOUTH GROUP SPREAD CHRISTMAS CHEER

As their Christmas project, the St. Anthony's Parish Youth Group chose to run a collection for Rosies Friends on the Street with the intention of donating gift bags to members of the community. The youth asked for products such as toothpaste and a toothbrush, soap, shampoo and conditioner, underwear and socks - items they recognised as everyday things they themselves took for granted. "We want to be able to make someone's Christmas a little brighter" was the comment made by the group members.

The week before Christmas, a small group gathered to assemble the donations into special Christmas packages to be distributed by the Rosies team over the Christmas weekend. The amount of items was

just overwhelming. Over a period of 2 to 3 weeks the parish community had donated a huge collection of goods to the cause, far beyond what anyone anticipated. More than 50 bags were created, and still there were left-over products. Each bag was decorated with a personalised Christmas message, topped off with a candy cane for those with a sweet tooth. The car was loaded up, smelling of soap and a hint of minty freshness as the bags, along with the left-over items, were delivered to the Rosies team.

It brought so much joy to the members of the Youth Group to give their time to the Christmas collection and we only hope that joy was spread throughout the Toowoomba community through a small paper bag. [H](#)



Sophie Rangiira & Caitlin Seng with the gift bags ready to go.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN CHARLEVILLE

By Sr Elizabeth O'Keeffe

At the end of last year at our Ecumenical Service we farewelled two of our long serving parishioners, Helen and John Gurney. In their more than forty years in Charleville John and Helen were always ready to put their hands up when and where needed from baking and serving on fete stalls, finance committee members, Pastoral Council, and President and Secretary of the local St Vincent de Paul conference, just to name a few. The wider Charleville community will also miss their involvement. Helen and John have moved to Toowoomba to be closer to their family in their retirement.

With the Christmas holidays over we turned our attention to celebrating the Lunar New Year with our Vietnamese parishioners after Mass on Saturday, 6th February. This has become an annual event for us as a means of saying thank you for all that they contribute to



Fr Peter Doohan farewelling Helen & John Gurney.

our community not only by their presence but by their willingness to be involved. Wherever they see a need they are always ready to assist.

We would like to say a big thank you to all those who have shown their concern for our community because of the drought. Whether it came from a church group, a community group, a workplace or an individual, your assistance to the

Charleville community has made a huge difference to morale. To know someone is thinking of them at this trying time is a real morale booster. Since Christmas we have also received some good rain which has not only put some water in dams but has put a smile on many faces and a spring in their steps. Although it hasn't broken the drought yet, to see green grass instead of dirt gives us hope. [H](#)

SCHOOL AND PARISH CELEBRATE MILESTONES



Presentation Sisters, (back L to R) Srs Marion, Patsy, Maria, Marilyn, Zoe, Anne Maree (front L to R) Cyprrian, Kieran.

"Today, for me, is like coming home," reminisced Vivienne Ruffini, as she spoke at the combined celebration for the 60th anniversary of St Anthony's School and 50th anniversary of St Anthony's Church in Harristown, Toowoomba, on Sunday 15 November 2015.

Vivienne went on to explain that her family helped build the church, she was married there, her children were baptised and received the sacraments in it, as did some of her grandchildren and one of her daughters was a teacher at St Anthony's School. Add to that the fact that Vivienne's husband, Raul, helped fashion – and later restore – the pews for the church and it's very easy to see why the jubilee celebration was "like coming home".

Vivienne painted a picture of a new parish in the 1950's which, "under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the redoubtable Fr Paddy McMorro, was a precursor to Vatican II in that,

at its heart, was the unshakeable belief that 'You are the Church'."

Vivienne's memories were echoed and expanded on by many who attended the celebrations. "Remember when...", "Whatever happened to...", "This is where..." were the order of the day. Many past and present parishioners, school staff and students came together to give thanks and to celebrate the wonderful milestones.

The day began with a Jubilee Mass concelebrated by Fr Hal Ranger, Fr Jack Peard and Fr Rod MacGinley (past priests at St Anthony's), Fr Salvador Fernandes and the current Priest Director, Fr Hermi Rafada.


The Presentation Sisters who started the school in 1955 were well-represented, with Sr Zoe Fitzpatrick, a founding member of the school staff, carrying in procession the lantern, the symbol of Nano Nagle's order of nuns.

Three generations of the Waters family – grandparents, children (past

pupils) and grandchildren (present pupils) took part in the Offertory Procession and the students from the school performed a liturgical dance to honour the Presentation Sisters' founder, Nano Nagle.

After Mass it was off to enjoy activities in the school grounds with a barbeque lunch, musical items, games, raffles and stalls. The rich history of church and school were traced in photographic displays, various memorabilia, original documents and a powerpoint presentation.

Speakers included Principal Paul Ryan; the State Member for Toowoomba South, John McVeigh; as well as Mrs Ruffini.

In the shadows of late afternoon, guests, reluctant to close another chapter, were still seated in little clusters, and murmuring voices were still heard asking "Do you remember when...?" 

CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

DELIGHT OUR CONGREGATION

By Patti McNaught

In our Community we have had a mixture of infants and older children participating in the Sacrament of Baptism. We also have had adults who go through a programme co-ordinated by Carolyn Hartung, with the RCIA (Right of Christian Initiation in Adults). Our Parish has a Baptism Team as well, capably led by its co-ordinator, Helen Casey. This consists of around 10 people from our Parish who do formation with Parents who wish to have private Baptisms with only family and close friends rather than during Mass in front of the congregation. We have had infants and children that have received Baptism privately and have used our Baptism Team who works closely with our Parish Priest, Fr Brian Noonan, who Baptises them on their selected day.

There have been many, many infants and children Baptised in our Church, mostly during the Mass (to the delight of the Congregation). There have been 96 children baptized privately, already 4 this year, since the inception of our Baptism Team in mid-2010 and many Adults going through the RCIA Programme. The most recent being three adults from



L to R: Leander Kennedy, Chrissy Atkinson and Meaghan O'Reilly with their sponsors during their Baptism.

our Mary MacKillop Catholic College (Meaghan O'Reilly, Chrissy Atkinson and Leander Kennedy). This was truly a moving ceremony for these girls who are well known in our Parish, and it was celebrated accordingly with a special morning tea after Mass. It is wonderful to see lots of children being Baptised into our faith and it becomes significant when we see the growing number of children at Mass who attend our Children's Liturgy each week.

When you look around at those

present at Baptisms at Mass or otherwise you only see smiling faces and a captivated crowd as Fr Brian explains what he is doing as he progresses with the Baptism. Thanks to Fr Brian and to Helen and her efficient team and Carolyn Hartung from the RCIA Programme, much progress has been made in our Parish over the years and we are extremely lucky to be a part of a vibrant, most welcoming community that seeks to be open and faithful to the Spirit of Christ. [H](#)

ALTAR SERVER'S PICNIC

ENJOYED BY ALL

By Patti McNaught

Mary of the Southern Cross Altar Servers were very fortunate to have had a great day, weather wise, for the annual altar server picnic at Cooby Dam in late November 2015 following some very hot days earlier in the week.

Ten of our fifteen servers attended, along with parents, and had a great day on the dam and in the park area. Special thanks once again goes to

John Ryan for bringing along his catamaran offering the opportunity for all to have a special time and for some a new experience on the dam. Altar servers recruiting and training officer, Mark Rowland, said that our new altar servers seemed to really enjoy themselves. Council has erected some new great play equipment for the young ones to

occupy themselves whilst waiting their turn on the cat. Plenty of goodies consumed supplemented with ice cream provided by Peter & Trish Hundt following a family group get together the previous night at their place. A very special time for our young people and a great way to thank them for their commitment to this ministry at Highfields. [H](#)

FR RICHARD LEONARD LEADS COMMUNITY IN RENEWAL

Why me? or alternatively, *Why did God do this to me?* These age old questions about the existence of evil and human suffering - and a loving God's role in it all - were at the heart of a parish renewal conducted by Fr Richard Leonard SJ at St Anthony's Church on the weekend of 23-24 January this year.

More than 200 people from across the diocese, many from Toowoomba parishes but others from centres farther afield, gathered for afternoon tea on Saturday afternoon, to be led afterwards by Fr Richard in reflecting on the theme *Reclaiming Mercy: Holding to Faith through the Tough Times*. Following the presentation, Fr Richard gave the homily and concelebrated Mass with Fr Hermi Rafada, Priest Director of St Anthony's.


On Sunday morning Fr Richard again preached and concelebrated with Fr Hermi. After morning tea, the topic of Fr Richard's presentation was *Being Set Free: Making the Best choices in My Life in the Light of Faith*.

Guided by his reflections on his

family's experience of suffering, the Jesus of the Gospels and by the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, Fr Richard spoke of a compassionate God, who respects the integrity of the natural law and all that is created, including human beings and choices they make. As Christians we were challenged to pray for conversion of heart asking the God of Mercy to change us so that we can change the world. Through reflection on our own life's story in the light of the gospels we were encouraged to see a God who walks with us in the pain and suffering of life, a God who is boundlessly loving, totally with us during every moment of our life and there to embrace us at our life's end.

Fr Richard's reputation as a thoughtful, dynamic and engaging presenter was certainly fulfilled over the weekend in both his homily and his two major presentations. Krzysztof Batorowicz, Chair of St Anthony's Parish Pastoral Council which facilitated Fr Richard's visit,

proposed the vote of thanks at the end of the event. According to Krzysztof, he had seen many students sound asleep during lectures, but having observed Richard's audience, he could certify that there wasn't a single nodding head among all those present in the church!

During the weekend many participants expressed their gratitude, in high praise of both Fr Richard's input and the hospitality provided by the parishioners of St Anthony's. Many said that they had found answers to some of the questions that had followed them throughout their lives. Others were grateful for positive guidelines to live their lives with thanks and grace and joy knowing that the Spirit of Jesus was active in their lives. The success of this initiative is perhaps a timely reminder that the whole diocesan family is enriched when parishes are able to share whatever blessings, resources and opportunities may come their way. May we enjoy many more such life-giving gatherings. 

WARWICK GATHERS TO GIVE THANKS

By Kathleen Cuskelly

Parishioners gathered together after the 6pm Mass on Saturday 28th November 2015 to celebrate Christmas 2015 at St Mary's Parish Hall with a Barbecue and cup of tea followed by games and karaoke led by Fr Gonzalo Garcia Duran and the Filipino Community. Approximately 120 parishioners attended and enjoyed the entertainment.


Fr Gonzalo was farewelled at a Parish Morning Tea on Sunday 20th December 2015 after spending 6 months in Warwick as Assistant Priest. He embraced our community with his friendly and easy to get along with attitude. Fr Gonzalo has been appointed



Saying farewell to Fr Gonzalo.

as Parish Administrator at Our Lady Help of Christians Parish, Chinchilla and took up his duties there as of 1st January 2016.

Christmas Down Under is

an ecumenical presentation of the real meaning of Christmas in which Warwick Churches of many denominations are involved and participate. 

A NEW LIFE FOR OLD STATIONS OF THE CROSS

By Fr Brian Connolly

In February 2010, a final Mass was celebrated at St Patrick's Church, Amiens and the Church "decommissioned" prior to its sale. The Church had first served the district of Sugarloaf for fifty years, and after its relocation to Amiens it served the liturgical needs of that district and community for the next fifty years. The pews from the Church were given a new life in the Parish Hospitality Centre in the former

Convent adjacent to the Church, but the Stations of The Cross were put into storage – at least until recently.

Following a request to Sr Carmel Martin RSM from Fr John Ryan SDV at the Divine Word University in Madang, for a set of Stations of The Cross, the original Stations from the Sugarloaf/Amiens Church were donated, restored in Brisbane and transported to Papua New Guinea where they now adorn the walls of The Divine

Word University Chapel in Madang.

On Ash Wednesday evening, 10th February 2016, the fourteen Stations, which are mounted on attractive wood panels were blessed by Fr John Ryan SVD, the University Chaplain. It is nice to know that a little piece of the history of an historic, old wooden, rural Church on the Granite Belt will now enrich the faith of those who worship and pray in the University Chapel in Madang. [\[7\]](#)

NEWS FROM MITCHELL

By Donna Burke



Celebrating after Sacrament of Reconciliation received.

On 17 October St Columba's Parish was delighted to witness eight children receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation officiated by Fr Jamie Collins. Ben Waldron, Joshua Cross, Jarad Cross, Aaron Cross, Lainie Baldo, Millie Filan, Faith Bond and Eliza-Rose Avery Inman were prepared by Jane Filan, Sacramental Co-ordinator, with the help of the

children's parents. A lovely meal followed to celebrate this special occasion. We would like to thank the parents and, in particular Jane, for preparing the children for the Sacrament and congratulate all the children and their families. These children will receive their First Holy Communion later in 2016.

Former parishioner Margaret

Schneider caught up with our former Pastoral Leader, Sr Amy Caldwell in Sydney in early November.

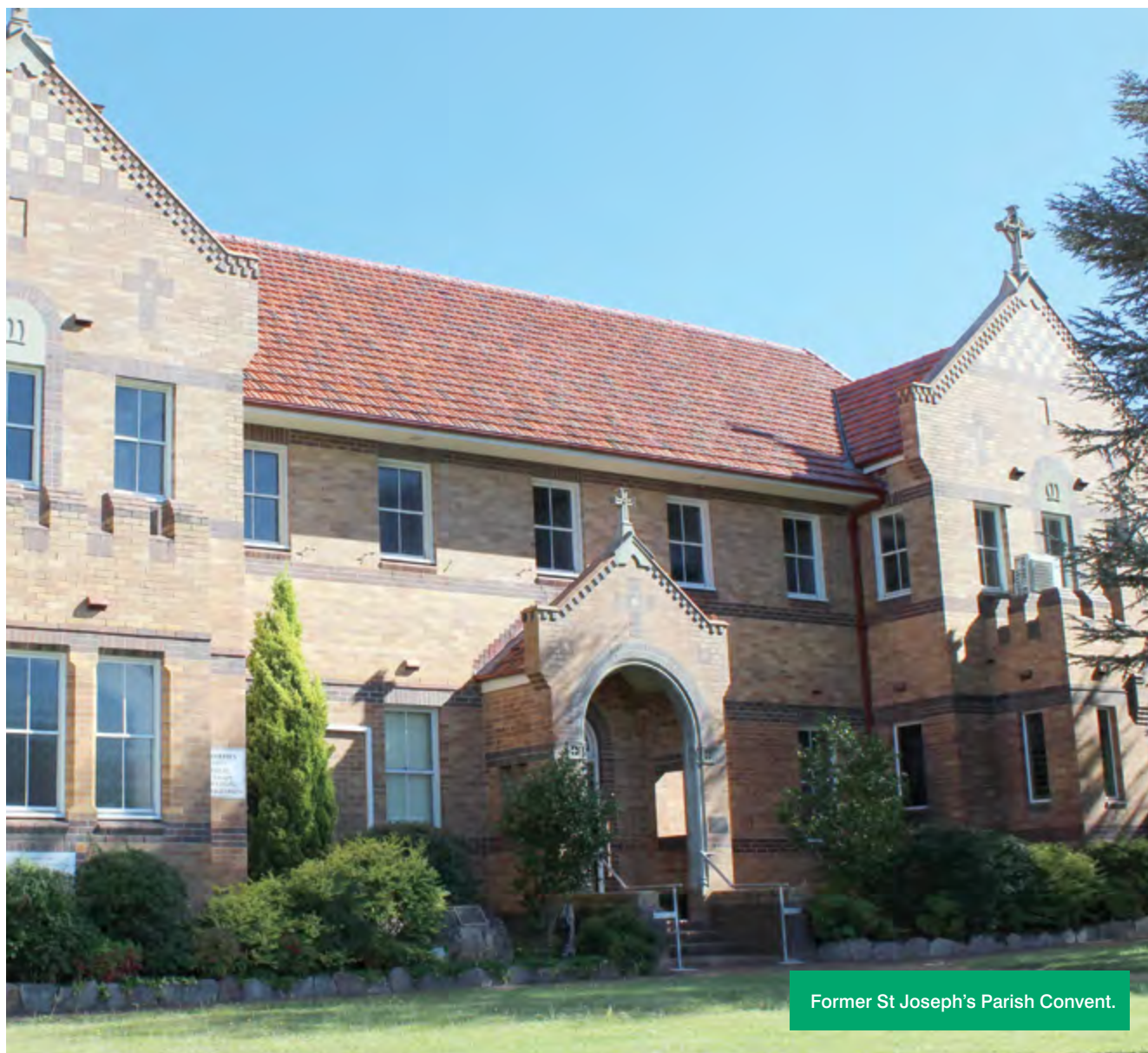
Sr Amy was in great spirits and showed Margaret and her sister Ann Wigan around her home and the garden at St Mary's Villa, Concord. Sr Amy loves to get visitors from her old Parish and catch up on news of all her dear friends. [\[7\]](#)

THE END OF AN ERA 1875-2016

By Fr Brian Connolly

PARISH

Stanthorpe



Former St Joseph's Parish Convent.

At the invitation of the first Parish Priest of Stanthorpe, Fr Jerome Davadi who arrived on the Granite Belt in 1874, three Sisters of Mercy arrived from All Hallows, Brisbane in 1875 to establish a Parish School and offer a Catholic education to the children of Stanthorpe and the Granite Belt. The School grew as the years progressed, the two storey Convent for the Sisters was built in 1932, and many Sisters of Mercy taught at St. Joseph's and lived and ministered in St. Joseph's Parish.

By 1989 the School was totally staffed by lay teachers. Since the withdrawal of the Sisters from the School, there was initially a small community of Sisters living in the

Parish and involved in the pastoral activities of the Parish. Sr Esther Dowling, the last remaining Sister is soon to relocate to Brisbane, and this will bring to an end an unbroken link between the Parish and the Sisters of Mercy.

As an expression of appreciation to the Sisters of Mercy for their 141 years in St Joseph's Parish, Stanthorpe, the 8:30am Mass on Sunday 17th April will be offered in thanksgiving, to be followed by a Parish Morning Tea in the Hospitality Centre which appropriately is on the lower floor of the former Convent.

It is hoped that a number of Sisters of Mercy will be able to attend, especially Sisters who taught at St

Joseph's and lived in the Parish in years gone by. Past students and past parishioners and former teachers are also warmly welcome to join the Parish Community to express thanks to the Sisters of Mercy for their many years of dedicated service.

If any former students of St Joseph's School Stanthorpe in particular those taught by the Sisters of Mercy, have photos which could be of interest to the Alumni Association and are willing to allow them to be copied, please contact Santina Leonardi on 4681 5900 or email santina.leonardi@twb.catholic.edu.au. If names could be provided with the photos it would be very much appreciated. #

NEW INNOVATIVE LEADER FOR SCHOOLS IN THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF TOOWOOMBA

From the beginning of 2016, school education in the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba is being steered by a new Executive Director of Catholic Schools, Dr Patrick Coughlan.

Bishop McGuckin announced the appointment of Dr Coughlan in November 2015 and said, "I am looking forward with anticipation to working with Dr Coughlan. He is an innovative and experienced educational leader with a broad range of skills and expertise."

On discussing his recent appointment, Dr Coughlan said, "I am excited to be taking up the position of Executive Director of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Toowoomba. I will focus on ensuring that we continue the rich tradition of delivering quality education in a community of care to students within our schools."

Dr Coughlan believes that Catholic Schools has an opportunity to re-engage their local communities

within the Diocese of Toowoomba. Beginning with an open dialogue on what is important to families. He will focus on a listening tour during the first semester of this year.

Dr Coughlan wishes to re-ignite discussion on the important role Catholic Schools play within regional and remote communities.

"Our schools provide choices for families. Families and communities should not be disadvantaged, simply because of where they live. We at Catholic Schools will be listening to see how we can partner with local communities to deliver the best educational outcomes."

"A key focus of a Catholic education is educating the whole child – intellectually, spiritually, physically, morally and emotionally. We want students to leave our schools prepared and empowered to take the next steps in their life's pathway."



Dr Patrick Coughlan, Executive Director.

For further information please contact Kirsty Hogarth, Communications and Marketing Officer via email at kirsty.hogarth@twb.catholic.edu.au or phone 4637 1408. [H](#)

CATHOLIC EDUCATION FAREWELLS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Friday 20 November Bishop Robert McGuckin hosted a rousing farewell dinner for Catholic Schools Office departing Executive Director, John Borserio at Toowoomba's City Golf Club. Over 70 guests attended the evening. The diverse crowd was a great representation of John and Anne's friends, industry peers and work colleagues.

Bishop Robert spoke his thanks for the work that both John and Anne had contributed to the Diocese, John through his work in education and Anne with her work in Diocesan ministry.

Bishop Bill Morris also gave thanks to John and Anne along with Dr Joan Conway – Chair of the Catholic Schools Board and Margaret Hendriks on behalf of Catholic Schools employees.

A moving part of the evening was

the family blessing by both Bishop's.

As John was a great advocate for music in schools the evening was peppered with musical talent. Performances were sung by Bernard Borserio and Geena Ryder, Brett Pollard and Vanessa Horton from Catholic Schools and the final act by Josh Arnold who sang a special version of 'Jackson' that had been penned by another Catholic Schools employee, Brett Rangiira. Josh was even able to coax 'JB' to sing along.

To John, Anne, Jack, Bernard and Max the Catholic Schools Office wish to thank you for your contribution to your parish, education and diocesan community life. Thank you and best wishes for wherever your travels may take you. [H](#)



John Borserio with Bishop Robert McGuckin.

ST JOSEPH'S MINI VINNIES


By Deonne Crowe

During the last week of Term Four, 2015, St Joseph's Chinchilla Mini Vinnies group invited representatives from the local St Vincent de Paul Society to attend our school assembly. The students presented Mrs Pam Walsh and Mrs Vonnie Hughes with a cheque for \$525.00, proceeds from fundraising efforts throughout the year. Mini Vinnies fundraising also goes towards sponsoring a World Vision child in Indonesia. We are very proud of the students, Miss Bianka Rookas and Miss Rebekah Bowdler, our Mini Vinnies coordinators for the enthusiasm they display throughout the year with the many fun events and good works they organise and participate in. Thanks must also go



Miss Bianka Rookas, Miss Rebekah Bowdler with St Joseph's Mini Vinnies members and Mrs Pam Walsh and Mrs Vonnie Hughes from Chinchilla St Vincent de Paul Society.

to our local St Vincent de Paul group, who are keen to support the children

and are always interested in their progress and achievements. 

SCHOOL LEADERS COMMISSIONED


By Deonne Crowe



Fr Gonzalo, Principal Mr Aaron Wells and Year 6 School Captains and Leaders.

It was a special event on Friday 5th February, when Fr Gonzalo Garcia Duran conducted his first school Mass within our Parish, welcoming students, staff and families to the new

school year. During the mass senior badges were blessed and our Year 6 School Captains, Vice Captains and Sports Captains were commissioned, as were the entire Year Six class,

as student leaders in our school. Congratulations to all of our seniors and many blessings for a successful and enjoyable year as leaders and role models at St Joseph's. 

CELEBRATING MARIA BOOTH

By Sally Yin

At Sacred Heart Primary School the 10th February was a day for celebration! Maria Booth (APRE) reached a momentous milestone – 30 years at Sacred Heart School. We had a wonderful morning tea to celebrate Maria's 30th Anniversary. Some special guests came along and lots of stories from the past were shared. Maria is clearly dedicated to Sacred Heart and her passion and commitment is inspiring.

30 years of first days at school, parent interviews, reports, concerts and graduations. More than a generation of watching little people arrive, grow, learn and move on to new places. Season after season of societal changes and their impact on education. The explosion of technology in the classroom.

A dedicated and exceptional teacher, with an enviable array of creative talents, Maria has nurtured scores of children in their early years of school, guiding each one of them to develop a love of learning in bright, colourful classrooms in which there was always something

exciting to experience. Her calm approach and ability to bring out the best in children stems from just how well she knows each one of them.

Always an ideas person, Maria has spent tireless hours painting classroom windows to support the current theme, hand sewing puppets and educational resources, often leading the organisation of events and sewing costumes/creating props for dress up days, concerts, Wakakirri competitions and graduations. Her attention to detail and natural flair have resulted in many special events in the life of the school. Through it all, Maria has held fast to the Catholic Faith in which she was raised and to which she is committed, journeying each day with Jesus in her heart.

Since 1996, Maria has embraced her position as APRE, ensuring that the Catholic ethos is evident in all aspects of the school's practices and diligently teaching Christian values to guide the development of a caring school community. Maria is well known for her Easter Pageants



Maria with School Captains, Keeleigh and Jackson at School Assembly.

– which she starts preparing in the first week of the Christmas holidays! Graduating students have all enjoyed meaningful ceremonies as their primary school years draw to a close.

Staff, students and families past and present express heartfelt thanks to Maria, for sharing so much of herself, from the depths of her heart, with all of us. For her selfless dedication, her time, her energy, we applaud and congratulate her on 30 years of service to the Sacred Heart Primary School community. [\[4\]](#)

MEMORIES SHARED FOR 75TH ANNIVERSARY

By Angela Gilbert and Janice Moore

On the weekend of the 31st October last year, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the school opening. Prior to this weekend, many photographs were collected and published on the Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School 75th Anniversary Facebook Page. Many past students and staff enjoyed a walk down memory lane and reconnected with childhood friends.

In the lead up to the event, each class produced artwork to be displayed outside the hall. Each decade, from the 40s to present day, was represented – with tie-died shirts, pop art, surfboards and mosaic tiles among the display.

On the 31st October, a dinner dance was held in the school hall. Many past students, staff and current families attended, with many dressing up in 40's style fashions. All who attended had a fantastic night of memories, food and dancing. We were blessed to have a group of first day students in attendance who willingly shared their fun reminiscences of the early days of Our Lady of Lourdes. Entertainment on the night was provided by the St Ursula's College Jazz Fusion Ensemble, the Downlands College Stage Band and Brisbane band The Whetherbeys.

The following morning, a morning tea and tours of the school by



First day student Betty Burke, with current students Hope McKellar and Holly Mills.

current students and staff were held after 9:30am Mass. Many past students enjoyed the chance to see how the school has grown and changed. One of the past students in attendance was Betty Burke, a first day student, who proudly wore her original hat and tie. [\[4\]](#)

STUDENTS BECOME 'PATCHWORK OF COMMUNITY'

By Christine Conneely

Towards the end of 2015, a class of Year 1 students at Sacred Heart Primary School were keen to present a beautifully created quilt to the elderly residents of nearby Salem Nursing Home. Each child designed and painted a square as part of their Religion Unit 'Patchwork of Community'. Using the book *Wilfred Gordon Partridge* by Mem Fox as a guide, students talked about responsibilities which respect and dignify the natural rights of all people. The students decided to make a quilt to give to the residents of Salem Nursing Home that would help them remember happy moments throughout their lives.

Year 1 classroom teacher, Mrs Christine Conneely commented, "Giving to the community is a wonderful experience for the



Year 1 students proudly display their quilt.

children. They were fully engaged with the activity and found self-satisfaction in their charitable act." Mrs Conneely's sister-in-law, Mrs Vivienne Rasmussen generously sewed the squares together so it

was ready for presentation. Year 1 student Jada Guok said, "We were very proud of the quilt and it made us happy to give it away." Jayden Reynolds added, "Everyone feels proud of themselves." ■

ST STEPHEN'S/ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL CENTENARY

By Lloyd Cronin

It's less than six months until St Stephen's school celebrates its' centenary.

On Saturday 6th August 2016 there are plans for some fete celebrations in the school grounds followed by an Art Show in the evening. On Sunday 7th August there will be a mass followed by some more family fun activities.

One of the main projects for the Centenary is a mosaic featuring Saint Mary of the Cross Mackillop, which will be placed on the front of St Stephen's School. The mosaic will consist of small tiles from Venice and has been designed by Alain Colfs, a Belgium National residing near Warwick. Alain also designed the St Francis De Sales Mosaic on the Catholic Church in Millmerran.

St Stephen's Centenary Committee are currently taking contributions for the special projects, they are hopeful



Alain Colfs with the mosaic in progress.

that many past pupils will get involved in the project. Donations of \$100 or more by past students, families or community members will be listed on a plaque underneath the mosaic. If you would like to help towards the

costs of this historical piece of art, please contact St Stephen's School Office on 07 931627 or alternatively call Leah Moore on 0428931586.

Closing date for inclusions on the plaque are 31st May, 2016 ■

A SUCCESSFUL START FOR NEW HIGH SCHOOL

By Elizabeth Findley



Executive Director Dr Patrick Coughlan enjoys visiting students and Principal Peter Murphy in the new senior school.

There was much excitement in Highfields on the first day back to school as over 40 Year Seven and Year Eight students began their secondary schooling at Mary MacKillop Catholic College. "The campus was abuzz with anticipation," said Principal, Peter Murphy. "We have successfully opened, welcoming students for the new academic year and all the opportunities that lay ahead."

The new state of the art facilities offer students: Science, Art, Home Economics, Design and Technology alongside 8 general learning areas, a library, tuckshop and administration. The College has also introduced an instrumental Music and Band program, school Dance, after school Drama and Art, and a Mathematics and Science club with more programs to come.

"I hope to see students having enormous pride in the school, to see students well engaged, faith filled and achieving excellence as we continue to grow," said Peter Murphy.

New staff member, Assistant Principal Mark Gregson said he was impressed by the welcoming, supportive and positive environment of Mary MacKillop, a reputation the




A 'vibrant learning environment', stage one of the expansion complete.

College is known for in the region. "Being part of a new school can be challenging, but the close relationships you develop with everyone give a sense of not being alone and that we are all working together towards a unified goal. Having only Year Seven and Eight students presently is a unique opportunity for teachers to really get to know the students on a personal level and maximise their learning potential."

Year Eight student Rory Dixon

is also new to the College this year, "Everyone is really friendly and kind, I am loving learning and discovering new things especially in English and Art".

The secondary expansion will continue to roll out over the coming years offering a new grade each year with the first Year 12 class in 2020. The College anticipates catering for over 1400 students once the expansion is complete offering Prep to Year 12 with standout, modern education. 

ST MARY'S LAIDLEY

STUDENTS HEAD OUT WEST!

By Sr Ann Maree Jensen and Matthew Hogan



St Mary's Laidley and St Mary's Charleville students.

The students from St Mary's Laidley are familiar with rural life, but in November last year they investigated the impact of the drought on their fellow primary producers in Western Queensland. The Laidley community were so grateful that many communities helped them through the 2011 and 2013 floods that they wanted to give back. In 2014 the students at St Mary's created a program called Rural Connect, which raised \$50,000 for drought affected farmers. The 2015 Year 6 students decided to continue that project by raising funds and collecting house-hold items, to deliver to drought affected graziers in Roma, Charleville and Quilpie. The children were given support from many Brisbane Catholic Education schools to undertake this project.

Year 6 teacher Matthew Hogan said one of the important things was spending money in the drought affected towns. The children spoke at the local Lockyer Rotary Club meeting who were so impressed with what the children were undertaking that they come on board to support the project. Along the journey the Lockyer Valley, Roma, Charleville and Chinchilla Rotary Clubs prepared meals for the children and their teachers.

On Monday morning 16th November, thirty-nine Year 6 children, two teachers, a school officer and Pastoral Worker boarded the bus with Nathan Haley, the Principal following



St Mary's Laidley and St Finbarr's Quilpie students.

behind in his Ute. After two hourly stops and noting big kangaroos along the way, one of which hit the bus, the excited and tired passengers arrived for their first night at St Finbarr's Quilpie. We were met by the Principal, Genevieve McNair who showed them to their classrooms where we prepared for our two night stay. They saw first-hand the effects of drought on a rural property. On the second night St Mary's put on a BBQ for the school community and donated items towards a raffle for the local parish.

In Charleville, the children attended a class at the School of Distance Education and handed over \$1000 worth of food and fuel vouchers to give to families in need. Also in Charleville money was given to the

neighbourhood centre as well as the parish priest Fr Peter Doohan to assist his needy families. Our children were greeted by the Year 6 children of St Mary's Charleville and our accommodation was in their school hall. At the Flying Doctor base toiletries were dropped off for the families that they visit. In Roma the children stayed in the St John's Sports hall and during the afternoon St John's students organized rotation games mixing the two schools together.

The Laidley children arrived back to their welcoming were hopefully this experience has shown the children the value of giving to those in need on the land. The project's motto was "Every time you open the fridge, thank a farmer". ☒

YEAR 3 SAYS THANKS AND GIVES BACK

By Majella Morris

On Friday 28th November Year 3 from St Patrick's School in St George walked to the Post Office to post their Santa letters to the North Pole. On their way back to school the group called into the park on the Balonne River to have morning tea with the 3 ladies who have volunteered as Reading Grandmothers to say thank-you. Veronica White, Patti Twidale and Zenda Kellock have been reading with the Year 3 students all year on a weekly basis. The children have shown a marked improvement due to their dedication as well as the ladies commitment. We thank them and hope they will return in 2016.

As part of our Religion unit in Term 4 2015, Mrs Veronica White spoke to the Year 3 students about the work of St Vincent de Paul in St George. As a follow up, the students visited the local St Vinnies shop. They thoroughly enjoyed spending their \$5. It was very touching to see so many of them buying something for their parents or siblings and it was a very successful venture. 📷



The Year 3 Students with the Reading Grandmothers.



Supporting the local St Vinnies Shop.

ST MARY'S BACK ON DECK

By Sr Elizabeth O'Keefe

St Mary's School had an unexpected visitor to their End of Year Gala Concert. Thanks to the assistance of our Adopt-a Cop, Juliet Schmidt, Santa Claus was able to park his sleigh and reindeers and make a grand entrance in a police car with sirens blaring. There was no mistaking his popularity. On arrival he needed no introduction but he did need his police escort to get through the crowd of children all wanting to get close to him. Even Fr Peter was seen lining up to get his order in for Christmas.

With the start of the school year we have welcomed Mrs Therese Lecompe to our school staff. Therese has come to us from Maroochydore

but is no stranger to Charleville having attended St Mary's as a child herself back in the 1970s. We also welcomed back Mrs Ricki Itzstein and Mrs Vanessa Alexander after their maternity leave. In welcoming everyone back for the beginning of a new year Mrs Louise Pfgst, our Principal, expressed her hope that "throughout the year our school will be a place where staff, students and families have opportunities to learn, experience positive relationships and demonstrate genuine care and concern for others. That we would all model God's love for each other by being a renewing community where all members are valued, affirmed and empowered." 📷



Our Year 6's cutting the cake after their induction as School Leaders for 2016.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS RECOGNISED

By Sarah Lilburne



School Dux Dan Stephen accepts the Bursary from the Dalby and District Friendly Pharmacy (L to R) Board Member Barry Kirtly, CEO James Bannerman and Board Member Helen Stagg.

This year marks 140 years of Catholic Education in Dalby. 2016 has begun with enthusiasm which was evident at the Commencement Mass, a ceremonial tradition that starts the school year for the entire College Community.

Fr Jim Kirtly led the Mass, his first occasion as the College Chaplain after his recent move from Chinchilla to Dalby. In his Homily, Fr Jim addressed the students encouraging them to share and offer themselves to their fellow students in order to help others but also to nourish themselves in continuing in their journey in faith and knowledge, the College motto.


Badges and name bars were blessed by Fr Jim as seniors, College Captains, Prefects and new staff were all invited on stage to receive their badges, a symbol of their importance as leaders. Western Downs Regional Council Mayor

Ray Brown, Principal John Hegarty, Deputy Principal Damien Morgan and Senior Education Officer Dr Robyn Sharpe from the Catholic Schools Office made the presentations offering congratulations to those people taking on these important roles. The recipients were encouraged to carry out their duties with good faith and to wear their new badges with pride.

Student representatives and sports leaders were also acknowledged on stage. Their roles involve leading, listening to and encouraging their peers to strive to do their best in school and in the sporting arenas.

At the conclusion of the mass, Principal John Hegarty led the Academic Assembly where he was pleased to officially welcome and thank everyone for attending. Mr Hegarty took this opportunity to highlight the excellent results achieved by the seniors of 2015 both with OP

scores and tertiary places as well as Traineeships and Apprenticeships.

Seniors from 2015 who scored in the top 1 to 5 OP bracket were invited as special guests to attend the Assembly where they received trophies recognising their high academic achievements. Dan Stephens, who scored an OP 1, was awarded the College Dux and proudly stepped forward to accept his trophy and Bursary from the Dalby Friendly Society Pharmacy. Ellen Bailey was the first proud recipient of the Mrs Jenny Thornton Bursary for a student with high achievements in Sciences in particular Chemistry. Mrs Thornton was a teacher at the College who sadly passed away in 2015. Ellen scored and OP 5 and is soon heading off to Townsville's James Cook University to study a Bachelor in Physiotherapy. 

FINDING YOUR TRUE NORTH AT ST MARY'S

By Jannita Oldham



St Mary's teachers gather as one

Warwick

St Mary's School Warwick has begun the year highlighting the Year of Mercy as a leading path for both our students and teachers. The staff retreat, hosted at the Stanthorpe College of Wine and Tourism by Susan Seaton, was both an enlightening and truly spiritual experience. Our theme this year was "Finding our True North", leading us to reflect on what our path is, not only educators is but also as individuals walking along a journey which doesn't always have a clear destination. With Jesus as our compass, we can find our "true north" by relinquishing ourselves to the mercy and grace of God.

These are a few of the quotes from readings and songs that some of our staff connected with most. Perhaps these are messages that not only resonated with the staff but

also can be seen as a guidance as a way to 'finding their true north'.

"God's love is freely given, we don't earn it"

"Our love for one another is all-embracing and compassionate."

Nourished by hope, transformed by love, be a transforming energy in the world.

Be still. Listen. I am with you always.


'Right now in this place and at this time; I am exactly where I am meant to be.'

"To live a loving life".

"God is waiting to be explored in everyone and everything".

You too may find some inner guidance from these thoughts to seek a mission of mercy on your own path using Jesus as your compass.

Our Year 6 Leadership Mass embodied the theme of "Opening the Doors to Mercy". It is through faith, justice and respect that the students of St Mary's are guided to live by. We wish all students a successful year and especially pray for the Year 6 students to lead and seek the truth.

It is in joining together as school where we can truly reflect on the importance of our role as educators. As the wonder and awe of God surround us in the faces of hundreds of 'little people' who are just beginning their journey with Jesus, one starts to reflect on how unique a part we each have in the lives of each other and how we are given this gift of life from God, standing side-by-side, holding Jesus' hand leading us to a life of Mercy. 



Students gather for Leadership Mass

NEW SEMINARIAN FAREWELLED BY PARISH

By Nancy Webb

A TOOWOOMBA teenager has announced he will begin studying for the priesthood this year, to the joy of his home parish. Nathan Webb, 18, told parishioners of Sacred Heart parish he would be entering Brisbane's Holy Spirit Seminary on February 14 as a propaedeutic-year seminarian for the Toowoomba diocese.

"I've always wanted to be a priest, but in the past few years I have been doing some more serious discernment and have decided to take the next step and enter seminary," Mr Webb said. "It's kind of appropriate that I'm entering on Valentine's Day because I've found my true love," he said.

On February 7 Mr Webb announced his departure and thanked Sacred Heart parish for supporting his vocation.

"My decision to follow this calling has been based primarily on the great examples of those I have seen around me," Mr Webb said. "From volunteers around the parish to our great parish priests Fr Byrne and Fr Roque, as well as Fr Hermie, Fr Edgar and many other priests from around the diocese and beyond," he said.

Parish priest Fr Roque Maguinsay presented Mr Webb with a breviary as a farewell gift from the parish.



Nathan receives a blessing from Fr Roque Maguinsay

"Nathan is highly involved in our music ministry, playing and singing," Fr Maguinsay said. He said Mr Webb also trained the altar servers, was on the parish pastoral council and the liturgy committee, and served at up to three masses every weekend.

"He gives himself totally for the service of the Lord," he said. "Nathan's vocation will be a gift not just for the parish but for the whole mother church." Fr Maguinsay said good examples and Eucharistic Adoration were key to promoting sorely-needed

vocations in local parishes. "Also, we will encourage the family because the family is the seed of vocation" he said.

Parishioner Nessie Ryan expressed the mixed feelings of the parish on hearing the news of Mr Webb's departure. "He's a lovely lad and we're sorry to see him go, although we're pleased he's going to be a priest," Mrs Ryan said.

On completion of the seven-year formation process Mr Webb would be the first priest to come from Sacred Heart parish. **#**

Thinking Priesthood?

Contact: Fr Michael Cooney:
Email michaelcooney11@gmail.com
Phone 0427 138 547

or: Fr Jamie Collins:
Phone 07 4622 1075
All Saints Parish
PO Box 119, Roma, Qld 4455



LEARNING MORE, CREATING CHANGE

By Robyn-Anne Lovell



Bishop Robert McGuckin and Fr Peter Dorfield with school leaders after Mass.

Project Compassion 2016 was launched on Sunday 7th February at St Patrick's Cathedral in beautiful downtown Toowoomba. Bishop Robert McGuckin celebrated Mass, welcomed Caritas' guest speaker and commissioned student leaders of 11 primary and secondary schools from across the diocese. Fifty students attended the celebration and launch along with principals, APREs and teachers. This year's theme is "Learning more, creating change" and reminds us how education can empower the most vulnerable communities to realise their hopes for peace, equality, dignity and justice. As Pope Francis says: "Education is an act of hope."

For this launch we were privileged to welcome Marie Mondue from Caritas Australia in Port Moresby, Papua-New Guinea. Marie is the Program Quality and Support Coordinator, and working with our local partners in PNG, provides support throughout the design, implementation and evaluation stages of our long-term community development programs. Marie has worked with Caritas Australia since 2008 and is particularly interested in ensuring that our projects embrace the most vulnerable women, children and men to build strong, inclusive, thriving communities throughout PNG. Marie has also worked with Caritas Australia in the PNG Highlands. She co-researched a report into

the socio-cultural drivers of HIV and sexually-transmitted diseases whilst also supporting three Catholic Health services to implement health and wellbeing programs.

Marie's perspectives and experience in the work of Caritas Australia, and most especially the PNG program with Dominic, proved to be a valuable lesson for the congregation at the Cathedral launch, but also for Year 7 & 8 students at Mary McKillop College Highfields, where we visited on the Monday morning after the launch. I wish to offer a huge thank you to Marie and Joe Foley (Caritas Brisbane), and also to Steve Moyle (Mary McKillop College) for graciously inviting us to talk to the students. [\[4\]](#)



Bishop Robert McGuckin with Marie Mondue.



Bishop Robert McGuckin hands out Caritas candles to school leaders.

CARITAS

AROUND THE TRAPS



Members of the Student Council executive at St Mary's School, Goondiwindi during Robyn-Anne Lovell's visit in 2015. L to R: Ben Hyson, Gracie O'Shea, Milly Buck, Mia Billing.

Robyn-Anne Lovell has been traveling around the Toowoomba Diocese visiting schools and parishes talking about the results of Project Compassion in 2015. She has also been demonstrating the WASH kits Caritas distributes and how they have been used in recent emergency situations, like the earthquake in Nepal. [\[2\]](#)



Dalby Combined Churches Dinner.



St Thomas More's Parish, Toowoomba.



St Mary's Parish, Warwick.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL 2015- ADELAIDE

By Sarah de Byl

What an amazing, inspiring and uplifting three days we had in Adelaide at the Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF)! The Young Catholics group of 10 participants along with myself and Bishop Robert McGuckin made the journey to Adelaide to join over 3000 young people and 17 Bishops.

The festival gave young people an opportunity to connect with like-minded youth in an environment that fostered an understanding of their faith through worship, workshops and song. Centred around the theme "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," (Mt 5: 8) the festival

included five spectacular plenary sessions with music, testimonies, drama, inspirational speakers, and Fr Morgan Batt abseiling from the ceiling. In between plenaries, participants partook in workshops, concerts, expo spaces, games, prayer experiences and more.

The festival finished with a Vigil Mass celebrated by Archbishop Anthony Fisher, after which two major announcements were made. Sydney will host the next Youth Festival in 2017 and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference have decided to declare a Year of Youth in the Australian Church to commemorate 10 years since



The Toowoomba Group at ACYF.

World Youth Day in Sydney. Young Catholics has a lot of work to get organised for such an important year in our church! [H](#)

A LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE

By Alice Galea

Had I been asked to describe a Catholic Youth Festival before December last year, I would have struggled to provide a suitable answer. Since having the privilege of attending the ACYF in Adelaide last year, I can describe my entire experience in just two words...life changing!

One of the highlights of my ACYF experience was coming to the realisation that from all around the country, from so many different backgrounds, the one thing that each and every one of us at the festival had in common, was our Catholic faith. It was an amazing feeling to be able to join together in the plenary sessions and realise the impact that we can make because of how our wide, yet connected community stretches. It was comforting to realise no matter how far or wide I may travel not only

within this country, but also around the world that it is likely that there will be someone from this community wherever I may go in my life.

Throughout our time together in Adelaide, we had the privilege of listening, sharing, singing, dancing and praying together in our Catholic community with presenters from our worldwide Catholic Community. Each of these presenters had been influenced in one way or another by their strong faith in God, and as a collective group covered many topics relevant to young people in our changing world.

Some of the most popular of these presenters included Fr Morgan Batt from Vocations Brisbane, Sr Hilda Scott from the Benedictine Abbey in Jamberoo, Jason Evert and Steve Angrisano from America, our very own Bishop Robert and many more.

Some of the topics that these wonderful people explored included finding 'God moments' in our everyday lives, speaking to God, understanding and practicing chastity, as well as how to develop good relationships with God and others. Simply being in the presence of these presenters was a privilege and hearing them speak was inspirational.

The ACYF experience has encouraged me to become more in touch with my faith and the faith community of which I am proud to be a part. I believe that all of us who attended the festival had our expectations and aims exceeded and left changed people in one way or another. I don't believe that many events could have such an impact on young people in today's world, but the ACYF did. [H](#)

ACYF BUILDS ON FAITH JOURNEY

By Max Borserio

Three years ago the ACYF first occurred in Melbourne. This event was the catalyst for my faith journey as an adult in the Toowoomba Diocese. Remembering how enjoyable the experience was, I was more than excited when I found that a Toowoomba group would be attending the ACYF in Adelaide.

The ACYF in Adelaide was an absolutely incredible experience, a multiple day bonanza of enlightening speakers, great music and amazingly prayerful experiences. Some of the best of these speakers included; Fr Chris Ryan, who spoke on how to be authentic in the complex age we live in, a panel where a number of sports people with strong religious beliefs spoke about how they balanced their professional lives and religion. The two speakers who truly registered with me personally were Jason Evert and Patrick Langrell. Jason Evert is a promoter of modern chastity, and used humour to break down and simply explain the right way to behave in the often incomprehensible arena of modern dating. Patrick Langrell presented a sensitive, sensible way to talk about the position of those who oppose gay marriage without getting into name-calling and hatefulness.

The other dimension of the festival which was truly incredible were the plenary sessions. Like last time, these plenaries were events where everybody gathered to celebrate faith and to celebrate being the young heart of the church. The greatest of




Alice Galea, Bishop Robert and Wade Anderson on their way to dinner.



The Toowoomba Group enjoy one of the musical acts at ACYF.

these experiences was one specific plenary where Adoration was conducted. Adoration was impossible to describe so I will not try. The only thing I will say is the presence of the Holy Spirit in that room that I could actually physically feel it.

To sum up, I do not have the words to adequately describe the experience of the ACYF. I would like to thank everybody who was in the Toowoomba group with me, and everybody who was involved in making this amazing experience possible. 

Curious to see what the Australian Catholic Youth Festival is all about?

You can view ACYF 2015 highlights at www.youthfestival.catholic.org.au or www.xt3.com.

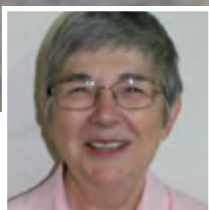
Or visit www.twb.catholic.org.au/gallery/201512acyf/index.html for photos of our own young people at ACYF 2015.



What does the Year of Mercy mean to you?



Doug Birrell
 St Patrick's Cathedral Parish
 For me, the Year of Mercy means a chance to reach out to all those who have been alienated from the Catholic Church over the years, for what ever reason and to invite them back. There is no one who is excluded from our Father's love and forgiveness and it is important that this message gets out, not just to those who come to mass regularly but to those who have felt abandoned and who have lost contact with their faith communities.



Sr Elaine Morzone
 Spirituality and Mission Development Officer
 At a time when we as a church are reeling from the fallout of sexual abuse scandals and the world is torn apart by terror and violence, Pope Francis' promulgation of a Year of Mercy offers hope and challenges me both to be open to and to share with others the limitless mercy of God which is the good news which Jesus proclaimed.



Fr Salvador Fernandes
 All Saints Parish Roma
 It is a time to approach God with a new outlook, as revealed by Jesus who said 'I am the door to the Father'. He is infinitely unconditional in mercy, love, acceptance and pardon for me. He invites me to have a compassionate heart for the poor and those in need of forgiveness.

On the road to Charleville. Photo taken by John Briffa If you have an image of the Diocese you would like to share please email it to horizons@twb.catholic.org.au with the subject "Views of the Diocese".

Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba

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