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DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE



*Adore for
Eternity*

A Land of Droughts and Flooding Rains



The Bishop Speaks



When I arrived in Armidale in February 2012 large parts of the Diocese were affected by floods. Now in 2019, as I travel around the parishes every elderly farmer I talk to tells me this is the worst drought in their living memory. Indeed, our region and much of Australia is currently impacted by one of the worst droughts in recorded history.

We are all experiencing the effects of this drought with many of our cities and towns now under severe water restrictions. But this pales almost into insignificance when we think of the farmers who have no crops to harvest, no feed or water for their stock, and that stock which remains has to be sold or shot because of this. And let's not forget all the rural businesses and communities who are also going

under because the farmers have no money to spend. This all has a huge toll on both physical and mental well-being. I think we all realize that this drought is seriously impacting the lives of individuals and families.

What about a spiritual impact? Is this drought affecting us spiritually? I think it is. For one thing, it has people praying more or at least praying more fervently. My prayer every day is for bountiful rain, for an end to the drought, and that the farmers and all others affected will be sustained in faith and hope until the drought breaks.

Country people are incredibly resilient. However, I believe we are now at the stage where mere human resilience is not enough. We need Divine resilience,

Front Cover: Sts Mary & Joseph's Cathedral Parish Sanctuary, celebrating 100 years since the dedication of the new altar - Photo taken by Kerry Myers

Divine Assistance, Divine Grace. We need from God the gifts or the virtues of faith, of hope, of perseverance, of fortitude.

You might think “What has fortitude got to do with it?” The virtue of fortitude, St. Thomas Aquinas tells us, “denotes a certain firmness of mind...and this firmness of mind is required both in doing good and in enduring evil, especially with regard to goods or evils that are difficult.” And this drought is definitely an evil which is difficult.

Another type of spiritual effect of the drought may be for some people to question God. The presence of any kind of evil often has this effect on us. In such times we need to remind ourselves of a couple of the basic facts of our faith: first, evil does not come from God – only good comes from his hands; and second, God in his providence can and does draw good things out of evil situations.

What might these good things be in our current situation? I can think of a couple: We become more aware of our human vulnerability and our dependence upon God and the goods of the Earth that he has created. And we become more aware of each other as our eyes are opened to see the plight of those who are harder hit than ourselves. All around me I am seeing evidence of mutual support, practical assistance, helping hands, and listening ears as we grow in our love and care for one another and in our bonding together as communities.

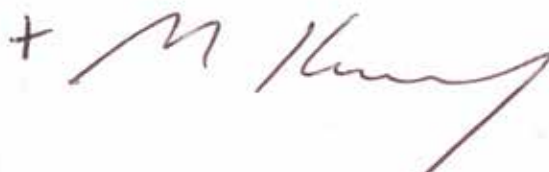
There is still one more spiritual effect of drought that people seemed more attuned to in times past than we do in our present day. In the Biblical times of the Old Testament we find numerous occasions when

drought, famine, or disaster were interpreted by the people as an opportunity to be shaken back to their senses, and to turn from sin and back to God. They even saw them as being permitted by God precisely for this purpose. In such times the people of Israel would recall all the good that God had done for them in the past, how ungrateful they had been, and how far they had strayed from His paths.

I suggest that this is actually a very good and religious way for us today to approach our situation of severe drought: To remember and see how wonderfully generous God has been to us throughout our life; to thank him for his goodness and generosity; to be contrite for any lack of gratitude on our part or any straying from his paths or distancing ourselves from him; and to strive to grow each day in our love for God and neighbour.

When we approach any calamity or hardship in this way our faith in God’s goodness is restored and our endurance, fortitude, and hope are strengthened. God who has been so good to us in the past will again be good to us in the future and is in fact still good to us now if we but open our eyes to see.

Let us all continue to help each other, to pray, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.

+ 
Most Reverend Michael Kennedy
Bishop of Armidale





Part of your parish
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Reaching for the sky

As we approach the completion of another school year, the Armidale Diocesan Investment Group (ADIG) are once again pleased to support the considerable achievements of children from across our diocese through the ADIG Shields.

While the award recipients and criteria vary between the schools, the one thing that does not change is the recognition and reward for individuals gained through their focus in academic, sporting or community life.

ADIG delivers a platform to Catholic Education that is fundamental in safeguarding that children and their parents in regional NSW are given a choice with regard to education centred on the Catholic Ethos.

ADIG CEO, Mr Grant Devine identified that “the group currently delivers the investment and transactional needs of forty two catholic primary and secondary schools, geographically spread over more than 500,000 square kilometres or approximately two-thirds of NSW.”

ADIG is extremely proud to be a part of ensuring that every child is able to do their personal best.

The considerable effort, energy and planning that is required for school presentation nights is now well underway. As we approach the final performance, we again congratulate the entire school community for their strong achievements gained in 2019.

ADIG empowers regional women

The challenging drought conditions felt across the North West did reduce attendance numbers slightly at the Annual General Meeting of the Armidale Diocese Catholic Women's League (CWL) held over the weekend of the 19th & 20th October at Quirindi. Participants however saw the gathering as an important part of their catholic lives and critical to ensuring regional Catholic women remain connected and empowered.

Local branch delegates saw the greatest challenge facing the CWL as the recruitment of new members given the busy lives that people now lead, further compounded by the vast distances between branches and towns across the diocese's 91,500 square kilometre reach.

Despite these factors, delegates believed that the reward and satisfaction experienced through being a part of the CWL far exceeded the sacrifice of their time. The social interaction and friendships built overtime are a lasting and rewarding bonus.

Business Development and Marketing Manager, Bernie Munro said “ADIG was extremely happy to support events such as this because of the positive benefits it brings to our communities. The actions of groups such as this quite often do not get the recognition they deserve. Even the fact that they choose to hold their meeting in a small local community such as Quirindi, shows the thought that they give to helping locals and the towns in which they live”.



(L-R) Molly Burke, Madeleine Hayes and Marlene Keys



(L-R) Vishanti Porter and Deirdre Andren



(L-R) Helen Passfield, Catriena Broekman and Anne Jones

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Be Proud of your Faith

Every Christian has every reason to be proud of Christ. And every Catholic has reason to be especially proud, though so many take the Church for granted.

There are, of course, ten thousand reasons to start being proud of our Church. Our Church has remained a guiding light for 2,000 years. She has been the inspiration for so much of the greatest art and architecture, and many of the most profound thoughts, that the world has ever known.

She has guarded the Gospel from countless heresies, and shall continue to do so until the end of time. She is led by the office handed to St. Peter by Christ Himself. Her teachings reveal to us countless saints to emulate, and who pray for us daily. She hallows our lives through the Sacraments.

I have, in the years since I took my first RCIA class, had the privilege of meeting many proud Catholics: missionaries, each in their own way. Some are priests. Most are lay Catholics. I've yet to meet one who has found the use for megaphones and placards as some of his or her Evangelical counterparts, but they have encouraged my own faith in their gentle manner.

It is to my understanding that proud Catholics tend to gravitate toward such sites as the Catholic Gentleman. I hope that my own words, poor as they may be, can be of some encouragement to be proud of your Church. To keep living your faith, to remain steady as the world falls into snares of its own making, is the most important thing you can do with your life.

By being bold enough to embrace your faith, willing to speak up for your faith even if a few family members or friends or co-workers might sneer at you for it, you may have already helped a stranger gain his or her soul, even if you'll never know about it on this side of life.

Troubles fall on us all: a person who rolls his eyes at you today may very well find well himself ready to give the Gospel an open ear tomorrow, or even some decades from now, and you, yes you, may have made the difference for him.



You'll just have to wait until you stand before God in Heaven's Halls to know the full impact that your life has had. I know this because I was once a prodigal who would have rolled his eyes at you. All the gold in the world will never match the value of a single precious soul, and all of Heaven rejoices when a single soul returns to God. That is how important you really are.

Extract from an article by Zubair Simonson entitled Be Proud of your faith you never know who it will save. Full article can be found at: <https://www.catholicgentleman.net/2019/09/be-proud-of-your-faith-you-never-know-who-it-will-save/>





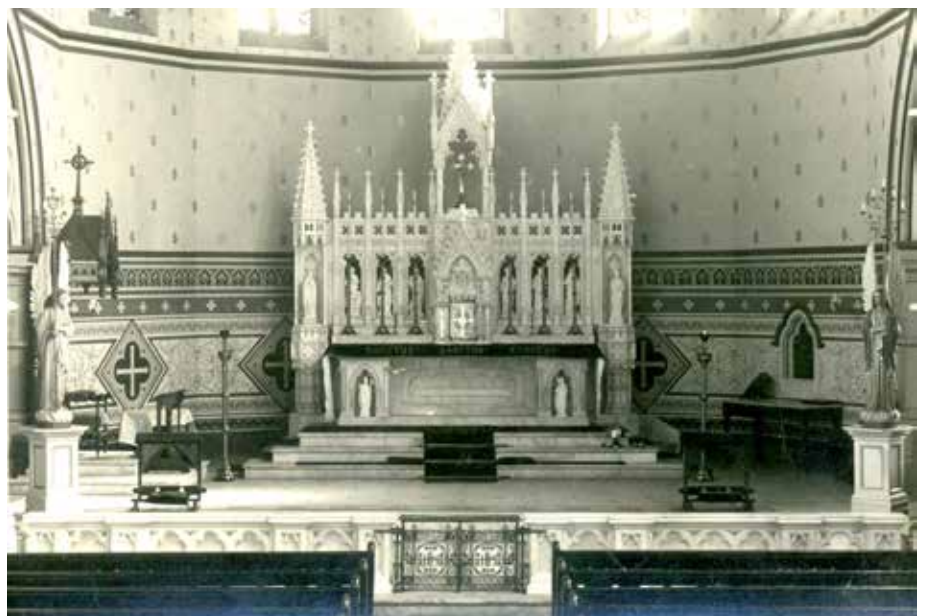
Introibo ad altare Dei

‘I will go up to the altar of God...’ The very first words that the priest used to say as he approaches the altar after having made the sign of the cross will be known to many of our older Parishioners who were altar servers. They would remember being drummed in those Latin prayers in the Older Form of the Mass. Many times, I have asked an elderly Catholic gentleman ‘were you an altar server?’. If they responded ‘Yes’ then I would say ‘Introibo ad altare Dei’ and they would all—to a man—respond ‘Ad Deum qui laetificat iuventutem meum’, the usual server’s response. Isn’t it amazing and telling that they could answer to those prayers even 60 or 70 years later, so well did they know them.

This 12 December the Mother Church of the Diocese, the Cathedral of St. Mary and Joseph, celebrated a great day liturgically and communally. On that day 100 years ago Bishop O’Connor dedicated the new altar and its pleasing surround, which had been designed to replace the original wooden “Bishop Torregiani” altar, were a fitting indication that Armidale Catholics ‘had arrived’.

100 years later much has changed in the Diocese, but that altar remains as an amazing testimony in stone to the faith and dedication of the Catholics of Armidale. Soaring above the pews, written in white Carrara marble, the magnificent altar is certainly that which draws the eye on entering the Cathedral. Think of how many of our forebears entered that Cathedral and, like us even today, genuflected towards its heavenly guest, Christ the Lord present in the Tabernacle, waiting silently for a ‘visit’.

That altar was of course where, until the reforms of the Second Vatican Council were implemented in 1969,



100th anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral Altar



the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated. The priest would go, from the people with their burdens and sacrifices, to offer their sacrifice to God as their representative. The incredible smallness of man in the face of God would have been easy to contemplate as the priest – and often the Bishop – was dwarfed by that marvellous altar as he raised up the host and the Chalice, calling Christ daily down into the midst of His people.

On 12 December 2019 at 5pm that ancient liturgy – now designated as the Extraordinary Form of the Liturgy or the Ancient Use – was celebrated once again upon the original marble altar with Bishop Kennedy, the tenth Bishop of Armidale in attendance at the Cathedral. Those same evocative words ‘I will go up to the altar of God’ were said by the Celebrant of the Mass just as they had been said possibly even as early as the third century AD. The celebrant then went up to that magnificent altar, and Holy Mass was offered almost as it was 100 years ago.

The haunting Gregorian chant for the Dedication Anniversary Mass was combined with a Franz Joseph Haydn Mass – Mass 7 in B Major – with Mr. Warwick Dunham on the Fincham organ. The Bishop’s homily spoke of the importance of the altar and Cathedral, as the natural focal point for all Catholics in the Diocese. Mons. Wilkes, the Vicar General, and Fr. Roel Llave, the Cathedral Administrator were Deacons to the Bishop. A combined choir of parishioners and visitors, other priests of the Diocese, and visiting priests were in attendance.

“I will go up to the altar of God”. May all Catholics rejoice at the 100th anniversary of this fine artistic testimony written in stone and may they find there ‘the

joy of their youth’.

The Extraordinary Form of the Liturgy

In July 2007 the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, in his Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum* made it clear that “As for the use of the 1962 Missal as a *Forma extraordinaria* of the liturgy of the Mass, I would like to draw attention to the fact that this Missal was never juridically abrogated and, consequently, in principle, was always permitted.”

After the Second Vatican Council some thought that the Old Latin Mass that they had known as a child was somehow banned.

Pope Benedict XVI made it clear that this was not so. He went on to say “There is no contradiction between the two editions of the Roman Missal. In the history of the liturgy there is growth and progress, but no rupture. What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful.”

Fr. Mark Withoos

(Fr. Mark Withoos is a priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne who is residing in Armidale Diocese for 12 months in order to complete his Doctoral studies. Father Withoos celebrated the Extraordinary Form of the Mass on the Cathedral High Altar to mark the centenary of the altar’s consecration).



Citizenship is a Gift that gives Rights and Privileges

To become an Australian Citizen is a perilous journey but very rewarding in the end. After seven years of staying in this country, I came to discover the hidden beauty and diversity that attracted many people from overseas, including me. My background as a Missionary of Our Lady of La Salette brought me to travel and share her message of Reconciliation with my fellow Australians. I am very grateful to my Community in the Philippines for giving me a chance to be an Ambassador of Mary our Mother through the hospitality of the Diocese of Armidale. Through the inspiration of Mary on the Holy mountain in 1846 I dedicated myself to the service of the people of God of Australia.

Citizenship is not just membership but a responsibility. I now assume a bigger responsibility to God and the people of Australia. My special thanks to the parishioners of Armidale, South Tamworth, Warialda, Bingara, Barraba, Upper Horton, Delungra, Mungindi and Moree and all parishioners of the Diocese of Armidale for allowing me to minister to them. All my experiences in meeting people and getting to know them brought me to a decision to go further, not only to be with them but to be like them as well. The right of every citizen matters in building a society. We cannot underestimate the idea of one person regardless of who and where he comes from. Everyone has a share



Fr Abmar Dumayag proudly holds his Citizenship certificate with Fr Vic Ignacio and Fr James Poovathinkal

in the development of a nation. Citizenship is a gift from the state that is to be accepted in humility and gratefulness. My fellow Filipino priests played a special role in my journey too. They supported me all the way. The Chancery office is very helpful in many ways as well. I did not even realize that I am already a citizen now when I look back. To Australia thank you for welcoming me.

Fr Abmar Dumayag

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Thank you, Fr Bernie Flood

Thank you Fr Flood, you have been a true shepherd to your flock and we wish you well for the future.



Fr Flood Concelebrating Mass with Fr Paul McCabe, Fr Bernie Frize, Fr Christopher Onuekwusi and Fr Ross O'Brien at St Michael's Dungowan

Parishioners from St Michael's Parish Dungowan including Kootingal and Nundle recently gathered to celebrate Fr Bernie Flood's wonderful gift to God and his people - 57 years of loving service and to thank him for his contribution to the parish as Administrator, during the past 16 years. Fr Flood was the main celebrant at Mass in the beautiful 104-year-old Dungowan Church with Fr Chris Onuekwusi, Fr Paul McCabe, Fr Bernie Frize and Fr Ross O'Brien concelebrating. Fr Michael Mullane and members of the Flood family were also present. Mass was followed by morning tea in the parched grounds of the

church before the congregation moved to the Dungowan Hall for lunch, where they were also joined by Fr Vic Ignacio and Fr John Curran. During the formal part of the celebrations, speakers from each of the three churches which make up the Parish of St Michael's Dungowan spoke of their gratitude to Fr Flood for his ministry and pastoral care of them and their families. Peter Flood, Fr Bernie's brother shared stories of growing up in Guyra before Wendy Emery and Paul Crayn presented Fr Flood with a gift and Testimonial.

(Photos by Lou Farina)



Fr Flood with his family

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“I Found God!”

- John Pridmore

Sts Mary & Joseph’s Cathedral Parish Mission

A Parish Mission is a time of wonderful Grace and renewal for all the people of a parish whether young or old, strong in faith or struggling.

Armidale Parishioners, O’Connor, St Mary of the Angels Guyra and St Joseph’s Uralla Students had the experience of meeting John Pridmore as part of the Cathedral Parish Mission. John is from the United Kingdom and is an ex-gangster who had a remarkable conversion to Christ. He is the author of ‘From Gangland to Promised Land’ and now travels the world, trusting in the providence of God and telling his story of how the love of Father God can transform a hardened self-focused life. John spoke at World Youth Day in Sydney in 2008 to over 400 000 young people. His stories are engaging and down to earth. His message is of a merciful and forgiving God.



Some reflections from O’Connor students after John’s visit and talk with them follow:

YEAR 7

“I thought it was very inspiring how he was a part of one of the toughest gangs in England and then the fact that his mother was praying for him and eventually he found God.”

“John had done some very unforgivable stuff but God’s love for us is so strong that he forgave John”



YEAR 8

“It opened my eyes to how little some people feel love and affection”

“I felt motivated to form a closer connection to God”

“I didn’t believe in God, Now I do”

YEAR 9

“It has made me think more about God”

“Helped me think about how God is always there for us”

YEAR 10

“Now I know how powerful reconciliation is”

“gave me a better understanding of what it means to have God’s love in your life”

“John’s talk made me appreciate what I have and how I have been raised and the opportunities I have”

YEAR 11

“He showed that anyone can have faith and be loved by God, no matter what their circumstances are”

“God is real, he is our friend, not just a distant concept that we can’t talk to, it also showed the great impact that God can have in our lives”

“John’s talk resonated with me in looking back on past actions and reflecting on the cycle of bad habits can be broken when God is part of our lives”

RCIA in the Diocese of Armidale

St Joseph's Parish Gunnedah

We welcome Judi Sheedy, Robyn Adams, Colin Rees, Megan Elbourne and Paul Williams as members of the People of God within the Catholic Community in our Parish of St. Josephs, Gunnedah.

The joy of receiving five adults into full communion within the Catholic Community was experienced on 24 September 2019 in the parish of St. Joseph's Parish. These five candidates joined the RCIA Programme and experienced being in solidarity with one another by meeting every week for the past few months, to learn, experience and to walk with Fr John McHugh, Fr Vince Amaro and Sisters Gabrielle and Christine.

Being with them in their faith journey of discovery and call to become full members of the Catholic Community has been a privilege for everyone participating. Each one shared their story of being "called" to enquire, learn more and experience the love of the members of St. Joseph's Community, their families and the wider Catholic Community.

O'Connor Catholic College

Micah Scholes-Robertson School Captain 2018 was

recently received into the Catholic faith. Micah has been doing a gap year as a LaSallian volunteer in New Zealand at De LaSalle Mangere. Cardinal Mafi of Tonga celebrated the Mass at the College and students and their families who Micah had been working with were part of the celebration.

Our Youth Ministers, Isaac Selvey, Eliza Clark and Brydie Hawthorne travelled to New Zealand to be part of this great occasion. Brydie Hawthorne was Micah's sponsor. Micah wore Samoan formal dress and the LaSallian tie. What a wonderful celebration of our faith!

Holy Trinity Parish Inverell

Can you tell us why you decided to become Catholic?

Through being a teacher at Holy Trinity School for the past 2 years, I have been learning more about the Catholic faith and have found that messages within the teachings of the religion, align with my own values. *Aimee Gaias*

I always felt at peace after leaving a Liturgy or Mass, I felt I belonged. When our REC mentioned the RCIA course I took the opportunity to participate. *Heather Williams*



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Who or what was the major influence towards this decision?

When my brother passed away I wanted a service of some sort of meaning. Father Joe was more than obliging to conduct the service considering my brother was not a church goer and he did not know my parents. I will be eternally grateful for his kindness and compassion extended to my family. *Heather Williams*

What sort of reactions did you get from your peers?

They're all very encouraging and supportive. I am lucky enough to have one of my work colleagues be my sponsor. Renee has been fantastic at helping me gain a better understanding of the Catholic faith. *Terri-Lea Selig*

What part of the Journey was most memorable?

I really enjoyed doing our lesson in the church. I learnt so much about the history of our local church and also the reasons why Father does particular things at particular times during a mass.

We could ask any 'silly questions' about things we wanted to know about and I felt comfortable with our group as we were all learning together. I also enjoyed reading about all of the Saints and then choosing one that was relevant to me. *Aimee Gaias*

I would say it will be the sacraments and officially becoming Catholic.

Veronica McCormick

Do you have any advice for others who are thinking about becoming Catholic or those who already are?

My only advice would be to go into the journey with an open mind and ask questions. As I found out there is no such thing as a silly question! *Heather Williams*

It is an extremely worthwhile experience, I found it a fascinating journey and is something that anybody could achieve. I can think of no greater motivation than the ongoing relationship I now have with God and the reward of eternal life.

Veronica McCormick



Fr John McHugh, Judi Sheedy, Robin Adams, Colin Rees, Megan Elbourne, Paul Williams



(L-R)Front: Hamish Dykstra, Meryla Lowther, Micah Scholes - Robertson, Brydie Hawthorne, Isaac Selvey, Eliza Clark. Back: Andy Carlos, Brother Wasim



Fr James Poovathinkal receiving Veronia McCormick, Heather Williams, Mary-Ann Wilson, Emma Starkie, Terri-Lea Selig and Aimee Gaias into the Catholic Faith



St Thérèse in the garden

Relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux to return to Australia in 2020

For the first time in 18 years, the relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux, one of the most popular saints of modern times, will visit Australia next year on a four-month pilgrimage with her parents, Saints Louis and Zélie Martin.

The Pilgrimage

From February through May 2020, the family's relics will travel to Queensland, New South Wales and ACT, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia. The pilgrimage was officially announced by Catholic Mission, who are partnering with InvoCare to bring the relics to seventeen Australian dioceses in both metropolitan and rural areas. The pilgrimage will link with InvoCare's funeral homes and memorial parks across the dioceses.

The October 1 announcement coincides not only with the feast day of St Thérèse of Lisieux, but also the beginning of the global celebration of the Extraordinary Missionary Month. St Thérèse, known as the Little Flower of Jesus, is the patron saint of mission. 'As the Pope's own mission agency, we are very pleased to be able to partner with InvoCare, who will undertake the

secure transport and housing of the relics, to bring this opportunity to Australians,' said Father Brian Lucas, National Director of Catholic Mission. InvoCare has funeral home locations across Australia and memorial parks in New South Wales and Queensland that will support the pilgrimage. 'We are proud to partner with Catholic Mission and the community in each location the family's relics will travel to,' said Damien MacRae, InvoCare Chief Operating Officer. 'Our people and our funeral homes are deeply embedded in the local communities and are well positioned to support the transport and access for the Catholic community at each location.'

Previous Tour

The relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux last came to Australia in 2002 where they were met with an outpouring of adoration among the faithful in Sydney. 'The plan at St Mary's Cathedral was to have a mass and about three hours of veneration,' recalls Father Lucas. 'As it happened, more than 20,000 people passed through the cathedral,

which remained open for 36 hours straight. There were also 400,000 people who venerated the relics nationally.’ The devotion to relics among many Catholics is complex, but Father Lucas likens it to a secular example. ‘People might go to a charity fundraiser and bid for a footy jersey signed by the team; something tangible and practical that serves as a reminder of the people or the event,’ he said. ‘That’s what the relics of the saints are intended to do, to remind us and give us the opportunity to enter into the life of those saints and what they can teach us.’

Family History

St Thérèse was born in 1873 and felt an early call to religious life. She entered the Carmelite order at age 15 after experiencing what she called her “complete conversion”. Her simple way of living, spiritual writings and commitment to small acts of charity and love made her an immensely popular figure, and her canonisation in St Peter’s Basilica in 1925, just 28 years after her death, was attended by over 60,000 people. Her parents, Louis and Zélie, became the first spouses to be canonised as a couple in 2015. Father Lucas says the togetherness of the family is an important feature of next year’s pilgrimage. ‘I think the connection between the relics of St Thérèse and [those] of her parents gives us an opportunity to consider the importance of relationships and family life.’

2020 Inspiration

While it is difficult to predict whether the February arrival of the relics will attract similar response as in 2002, Father Lucas believes the pilgrimage will be a powerful moment of connection between Australians and an immensely popular and beloved saint. ‘I think the great legacy of St Thérèse of Lisieux is the example she gave through her writings of her connectedness to

God,’ he said. ‘Her struggle with weakness but her fierce determination to be loyal and faithful to God’s will is the legacy that everyone can participate in.’ Father Lucas says the realisation of the simplicity of her message will give people a firm foundation for their own spiritual journey. ‘The pilgrimage of the relics in 2020 will be an opportunity for Australians to come together, to have that sense of belonging, and to find inspiration in the life of St Thérèse and her parents. ‘Ahead of the Plenary Council 2020, it affords us a chance for prayerful reflection and to feel a closeness to God in the way St Thérèse did.’



Louis and Zélie Martin, St Thérèse’s parents



St Thérèse of Lisieux

Relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux Diocese of Armidale Itinerary	
Thursday 20th February	Sts Mary & Joseph’s Cathedral Parish
Friday 21st February	St Mary’s Parish Tenterfield & Sacred Heart Parish Inverell
Saturday 22nd February	Sacred Heart Parish Inverell St Francis Xavier’s Parish Moree St Nicholas’ Parish Tamworth East
Sunday 23rd February	St Joseph’s Parish Tamworth West St Nicholas’ Parish Tamworth East
Monday 24th February	St Nicholas’ Parish Tamworth East

Around 'n About

We are all Champions!

Recently a number of students from Sacred Heart Primary Boggabri have excelled in both sporting and academic pursuits. Our PP5 relay team consisting of Digger Valks, Luke Grace-Hendrie, Tom Watt and Molly Rees come 8th in the final at the NSWPSSA Athletics Championships held at Homebush in November. Also, congratulations goes to Himaja Yerrapureddy for the outstanding achievement that she obtained with the Newcastle Permanent Mathematics Competition. Himaja's results indicated that she was the best performed student in the Barwon region, which in land size covers roughly a quarter of NSW. Again congratulations Himaja, you should be very proud of yourself knowing that you are one of the top mathematicians in the state.



Himaja Yerrapureddy with her award Newcastle Permanent Mathematics Competition award.



Holy Trinity Inverell students sporting Crazy Socks!

Crazy Socks and 'Socker' balls for Catholic Missions

Holy Trinity School students in Inverell enjoyed raising money for Catholic Missions in October by holding a crazy sock day. On this day students also made "socker" balls using old socks. Making the balls took patience and perseverance but were then lots of fun to play with. Many classes had a game of soccer using their home made balls on completion. The different shapes proved to be challenging on the field. The students raised just over \$700 by giving a gold coin donation and felt proud of their efforts. Congratulations to Mrs Guest our Religious Education Co-ordinator who made this activity a success.

All Souls Remembrance

The faithful of Warialda and Bingara Parishes celebrated Mass for the deceased at their local cemeteries in November. The Holy Souls are our brothers and sisters who have fought the fight as church militants on this earth and have reached the end of their battle. They won the battle but sustained some injuries. So, now, they are receiving treatment (purification or purgation) in heavenly hospital (purgatory) where they are undergoing surgery (suffering in flames of purgatory). The medication they need in order to heal faster is not our tears, crying nor weeping but our prayers, penance and Mass offerings. "Can you offer them the medicine?" this is what the Church bid us to do especially in the month of November and beyond. Remember, that when they are healed and discharged (get to heaven), they will pay us back through their intercession. Praying for the dead is a heavenly investment. "Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let the perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace." Amen



Fr Thaddeus Ike with the Parishioners of Bingara



Inspirational reflexes

Anthony Kelly visited St Mary of the Angels School Guyra and St Mary's School Armidale to share his accomplishments as a Martial Artist and World Record Holder. He is often called the 'Arrow Catcher' and is renowned for his fast reflexes, in particular his ability to catch fast moving items. Anthony demonstrated to the students the exercises he uses to train his reflexes and entertained the students with stories of his travels and the people he has met. Anthony's message to the students was "we can do anything if we set our mind to develop our bodies".

Anthony Kelly with Mrs Sharon Wittig and the students of St Mary of the Angels Guyra showing off his World Records listed in the Guinness World Records 2019

Crazy Hair! Crazy Socks!

St. Francis Xavier's School Narrabri was awash with bright coloured hair in all weird and wonderful styles and mismatched socks with fancy decorations for our Crazy Hair and Crazy Sock Day on for Catholic Missions. As well as having the chance to dress up the children were also able to buy yummy cupcakes on the day. Our wonderful and talented parents cooked so many cupcakes we took two days to sell them all! Thanks to the wonderful effort from parents, children and teachers, a large amount of money was raised for Catholic Missions.



Kate Leitch, Hattie Capp, Ali Murray, Maxine O'Connor, Lilly Bogdanoff, Josie Harvey, Aleria Sunderland with their crazy hair and socks!



Catholic Mission Day

St Joseph's Warialda Mini Vinnies held a fundraising day for Catholic Mission Month. They began the day with Ghanaian children's fitness games then experienced a tech-free morning. The children didn't mind forgoing their Chromebooks and iPads to empathize with children from developing countries who don't have access to technology or electricity. The Year 6 captains taught the playground game "ampe" at recess. They also helped cook a simple meal of rice, chicken, corn and peas for lunch. Jacqueline Toakley, Director of Catholic Mission Armidale Diocese, joined us for our Ghanaian lunch and watched the children play soccer at lunchtime; a game that is very popular in Ghana. After lunch Jacqueline introduced the 360 Virtual Reality goggles to the students who were fascinated with the realism of the experience. Our day ended with a moving liturgy centred on the Catholic Principles and Values of Life and Dignity of the Human Person and the Preferential Option for the Poor. The children came away with a new understanding of the work of Catholic Mission and the knowledge that they made a difference.

Year 6 students prepare rice for lunch.

St Joseph's Parish Gunnedah

37 candidates from St Xavier's Primary School Gunnedah and the surrounding State Schools gathered in St Joseph's Church, Gunnedah to make their Sacrament of Confirmation. Bishop Kennedy led the celebration and he noted how wonderfully prepared the candidates were, and how reverently they conducted themselves throughout the special Mass. A huge thank you needs to be extended to the St Xavier's Year 6 teachers and Catechists who prepared the candidates in the weeks leading up to Confirmation, the parents, families and sponsors who supported their children throughout the Sacramental Program, Father John and Father Vince who nurtured the faith of the candidates throughout the enrolment period and, finally, Bishop Kennedy for his



St Xavier's captains Alice O'Brien and Darcy Hannaford cut the Confirmation Cake

leading of the Mass, and for conducting a Pastoral Visit to the students of St Xavier's on the Friday before Confirmation Mass.



The St Joseph's Mungindi Confirmation candidates and Bishop Kennedy celebrating with cake

St Joseph's Parish Mungindi

Congratulations to our Confirmation Candidates Maddison Marchant, Charlotte Luhrs, Joseph Murphy, Annie Scriven, Isabelle Seigmeier, Edward Harrison, Georgie Wheer, Kolby Seymour, Tommy Tootell, Elliott Sykes Oliver Wheer Sloane Woodbridge, Riley and Clinton O'Neill (absent from photos) and Josie Malone (absent from photos) who received the Sacrament of Confirmation and were sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. A special thank you to Bishop Michael Kennedy for travelling to Mungindi and Fr Kingsley for assisting Bishop Michael in this very special Mass and occasion. Confirmation Candidates travelled from Boomi and Thallon.

St Patrick's Parish Warialda

It was a remarkable day at St Patrick's Parish Warialda when Bishop Michael Kennedy on his pastoral visit to the parish confirmed six children. This was the culmination of a four week catechesis program led by Fr Thaddeus Ike and members of the Parish Sacramental Team.

The parents, relatives and friends of the candidates were all happy witnessing the occasion. At the end of the Mass, the Bishop gave each of them a certificate and gift from the parish before proceeding to morning tea and other pleasantries.

Parents and sponsors join Aiden Andrew Sheehan, Molly Bernadette Armstrong, Lola Mary Barwick, Bishop Michael Kennedy, Fr Thaddeus Ike, Samuel Matthew Hall, William David Reardon and Os Francis Van Velthuisen out the front of St Patrick's Church.





Ella Murray, Mr Ken Riley, Thomas Errington, Chloe Rex and Ariel Mettam.

Mary MacKillop Public speaking Competition

St Michael's Catholic Primary School in Manilla recently hosted the Mary MacKillop Public Speaking

Competition founded by Mr Ken & Mrs Edwina Riley. Mr Riley was a student of St Michael's Primary School Manilla over 75 years ago. The competition aims to encourage students to improve their confidence and to develop their speech-writing and public speaking skills. The Mary MacKillop Public Speaking Competition is open to students in Year 5 to Year 6 in any Armidale Diocesan school. This year being the first year of the competition we had two schools participate, St Edwards Tamworth entered 4 students and St Michael's Manilla entered 6 students. "Without a detailed scoring sheet to allocate points to such aspects as clarity of diction, eye contact with the audience, and sticking to the topic, it would have been difficult to separate them", Mr Ridgewell said. St Edward's took the Mary MacKillop Gold Cup back to Tamworth, first-placed speaker being Ariel Mettam of St Edward's and runner-up was Quinn Ryman of St Michael's. Congratulations to all the students who competed.

Delightful Debutantes

Eleven debutantes were presented to Bishop Gerard Hanna at the 2019 Inverell Catholic Ball.

The event was held at the Inverell RSM Club where guests had gathered to watch these young ladies and their partners make their entry into society. Following the official presentation a two course meal was served and this was followed by dancing. Thanks go to Mr Anthony Michael and his team who organised this annual function.

Jada-Rain Daemon & Dylan Cochrane, Miranda Hodges & Jake Shepherd, Sienna Smith & Will Mclachlan, Amelia West-Green & Jayden Williamson, Bella Youman & Orrick Youll, Chloe Doran & Dominic Wales, Rachel McIntyre & Sebastian Blair, Alaina Crawford & Mitchell Stewart, Mikeely Kent & Ricky Muggleton, Montana O'Neill & Braden White, Lily Hamilton & Joeriz Aguirre



Tenterfield Debutante's

St Joseph's School Tenterfield P&F Debutante Ball was held in September at the Tenterfield Memorial Hall.

The 19 Debutantes and partners are pictured with Matron of Honor Mrs Lyn Ainsworth and the Debutantes were presented to Mr Gary Burdett. It was a very welcome social event for Tenterfield after recent fires and a fantastic evening enjoyed by over 500 attendees.

St Joseph's Debutante's for 2019 (photo by Peter Rickards Photography, Toowoomba)



Armenian Catholic priest and his father shot dead in Syria

Gunmen shot dead an Armenian Catholic priest and his father as they were traveling in a car in north eastern Syria. The attack was claimed by the so-called Islamic State group.

Father Hovsep Bedoyan, the head of the Armenian Catholic community in the the Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli, and his father, Abraham Bedoyan, were heading to the province of Deir Al-Zor when they came under attack on Monday, November 11.

The two men were reportedly due to oversee the restoration of a church in Deir Al-Zor.

A third man, a deacon from the town of Al-Hasakeh, was reportedly wounded in the attack.

The Kurdish-controlled area in eastern Syria is overseen by US soldiers who have still to pull out from the oil-rich territory, which lies east of the Euphrates River.

The Armenian Catholic community in Syria is a small one, but it goes back centuries having been officially recognized in 1742. Today it counts some 600,000 faithful. It is a “sui iuris” (autonomous or self-governing) patriarchal Church which is in full communion with the Bishop of Rome.

More than 100,000 ethnic Armenians lived in Syria, mainly in the north western province of

Aleppo, prior to the Syrian civil war. Many of them have fled, including thousands to Armenia.

Islamic State militants persecuted Christians and displaced tens of thousands of them when it ruled large parts of Iraq and Syria. Father Bedoyan is the most recent in a long list of priests and religious who have been killed or who have disappeared in the region since Syria spiralled into war.

By Linda Bordoni



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Eileen O'Connor takes next step to sainthood

The process for Australia's next saint has taken another step forward for Sydney woman and Servant of God, Eileen O'Connor, with a formal call for testimony to support her cause for canonisation.

Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP has issued an edict, requesting anyone who has "useful information" to come forward to assist Church authorities in Rome to consider her cause.

"I call upon any and all of the Faithful of this Archdiocese of Sydney, who may have useful information regarding the Servant of God, to bring such documents, materials or information to my attention," writes Archbishop Fisher in the edict. It comes after the Archbishop last year appointed Rome-based priest Fr Anthony Robbie as postulator – the person who guides the cause for beatification or canonisation through the church's rigorous processes for recognising a person as a saint. Fr Robbie is now asking Archbishop Fisher to seek through the people of Sydney further information on Ms O'Connor's "life, virtues and reputation of holiness" which he will collate and present to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Born in Melbourne in 1892, Ms O'Connor became a Servant of God in August 2018, the first of four steps towards sainthood. She is revered for having co-founded Our Lady's Nurses of the Poor, a religious order committed to visiting the sick in their homes and nursing the frail and the elderly, based in Coogee. Ms O'Connor was 28 when she died, in 1921, after spending most of

her life confined to a wheelchair because of a debilitating condition known as tuberculosis osteomyelitis.

Broken Bay Bishop-elect Anthony Randazzo, who as a canon lawyer was tasked in the early stages of investigating Ms O'Connor's cause, said the latest news was a major breakthrough.

"Eileen becomes for us a symbol of hope in our time when so many issues where the life and dignity of the human person are under question," he said.

Writer and historian Jocelyn Hedley, who co-authored a biography of Ms O'Connor, praised her as an ongoing inspiration in modern times.

"Eileen – a champion of the unborn and weak – stands completely counter to our society which says people like her should not exist," Dr Hedley said.

FULL STORY: Eileen O'Connor takes another step towards sainthood (Sydney Archdiocese)

Eileen O'Connor (Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor)





IRELAND PILGRIMAGE

During the last school holiday period the Catholic Schools Office, in collaboration with Harvest Pilgrimages, organised an opportunity for school leaders and CSO staff to participate in a pilgrimage to the Catholic heartland of Ireland. Twenty four pilgrims, including some partners, enjoyed a spiritual and tourist experience of Ireland. We were supported in our faith journey by our Chaplain, Father Anthony Koppman (Parish Priest of St Patrick's West Tamworth).

During our pilgrimage Father Anthony celebrated daily Eucharist and our homilies and evening conversations provided wonderful opportunities to reflect on the struggles of the Catholic Church in Ireland, and the amazing persistence and resilience of the faithful in those times. The complete selflessness and leadership of certain individuals lead to the founding of religious congregations—often in spite of strong opposition from the government, and sometimes church hierarchy. The common theme of providing education and health care to the poor was later to be repeated by these congregations when they migrated to Australia.

We were fortunate to have Father Anthony celebrate Mass for us in some beautiful churches and chapels such as St. Ignatius Church Galway, Knock Shrine, Kylemore Abbey, Franciscan Friary Ennis, Edmund Rice International Heritage Centre Waterford, St. John the Baptist Church Cashel, Killashee House Naas and St Mary's Pro-Cathedral Dublin. The devotion and generosity of the people of God to their Church community was on display in these incredible historical places of worship. We were humbled by the welcome of the Parish Priests and congregational leaders at every place. Our Irish heritage in our schools was most prominent in our visit to the Sisters of Mercy House in Dublin, founded by Catherine Macauley; the Christian Brothers Heritage Centre in Waterford; and the Patrician Brothers Delaney Centre in Tullow. Many of our pilgrims had direct positive experiences of these congregations in Australia, both as students and teachers.

There are many challenges to Catholic education in Australia but we continue to provide a high-quality system of schools that emphasise academic excellence, faith formation and pastoral care. This system of schools is built on the legacy of religious congregations that came from other countries, and in particular, Ireland. Our own Diocese of Armidale has benefitted from the pioneering efforts of the members of the De la Salle Brothers, Sisters of Mercy, Christian Brothers, Dominican Fathers, Dominican Sisters, Ursuline Sisters, La Sallettes, Sisters of Nazareth, Franciscans, and Patrician Brothers. The extraordinary efforts of Saint Mother Mary of the Cross MacKillop and her Australian order of the Sisters of St. Joseph has also left an incredible impact on the schools of this Diocese.

The challenge for today's school leaders is to ensure this story of Catholic education is not lost in schools of the Diocese that are now fully staffed by lay people. An increasing number of staff have never had the experience of being taught by nuns, brothers or priests. A faith formation experience such as this pilgrimage to Ireland has reinvigorated our commitment to providing authentic parish-school faith communities that celebrate the Gospel messages of love and hope in a welcoming, inclusive and caring environment. The pioneer saints of our Catholic schools would expect nothing less.

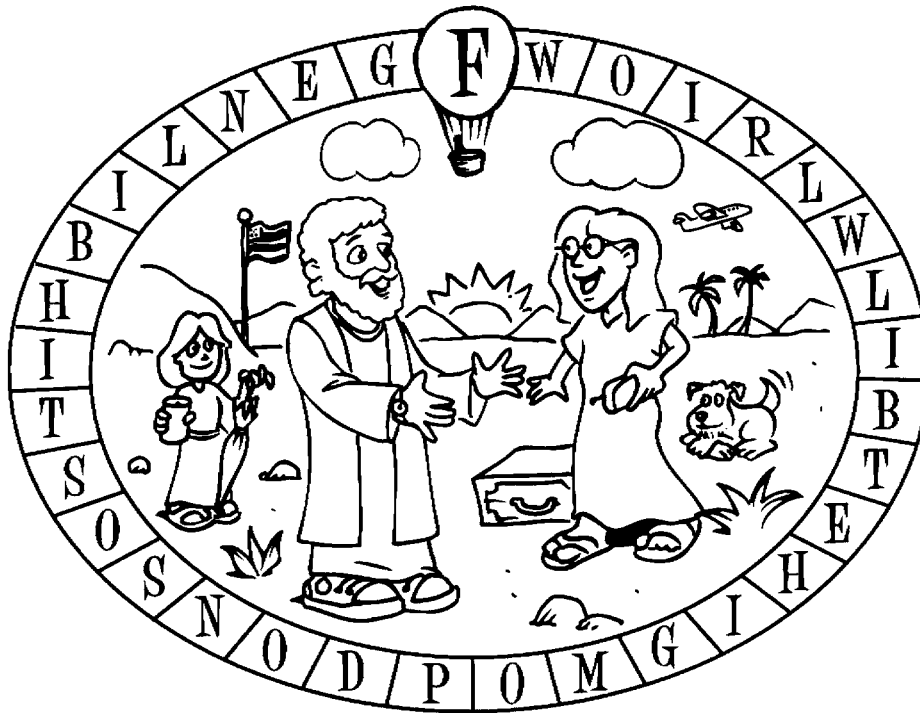
Director of Schools, Chris Smyth





Luke 1:26-56

You might get dizzy doing this puzzle! Starting at the letter *F* in the balloon, go clockwise around the circle, skipping a letter each time. Write the letters you land on and you'll discover God's secret message to you, the same message the angel told Mary! Go around the circle twice until every letter is used.



See Luke 1:37.

Find 10 things in the picture that aren't in the original story of Mary and the angel.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Pope demands tech giants block kids' access to pornography



The Vatican has sought to raise awareness about protecting children online

Pope Francis yesterday called for Facebook, Apple, Microsoft, Google and other tech companies to urgently take measures to remove child abuse materials from the web and prevent children from accessing pornography online. Source: Crux.

Francis told a Vatican conference of religious leaders and high-tech representatives that it's no longer acceptable to merely follow the law in monitoring online content, because technology is fast outpacing regulation.

He said tech and computer software companies should assume a moral responsibility to protect young people from what he said were the ruinous effects of pornography on their emotional and sexual development.

"There is a need to ensure that investors and managers remain accountable, so that the good of minors and society is not sacrificed to profit," he said.

Francis was addressing participants at the two-day "Promoting Digital Child Dignity" conference, which concludes today.

Francis cited obligatory age verification technology and artificial intelligence to eliminate criminal porn from the web as two concrete measures high tech companies and

software-makers could take to protect children.

The Vatican has sought to raise awareness about protecting children online as part of its response to the Catholic Church's dreadful record with clergy sexual abuse. The issue has hit close to home for Francis, after one of his diplomats was sentenced to five years in prison by a Vatican court for viewing child abuse materials, and one of his own Argentine bishops was placed under investigation by the Church after porn was found on his mobile phone.

In his remarks, Francis said technology has obvious benefits for children, but also poses risks and negative effects that often aren't apparent until it is too late to remedy them.

He indirectly dismissed claims by Facebook and other social media companies that they are merely "platforms" for others to share content.

"It is now clear that they cannot consider themselves completely unaccountable vis-a-vis the services they provide for their customers," he said. "So I make an urgent appeal to them to assume their responsibility toward minors, their integrity and their future."

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Months on, there is still much to do

Sunday April 21, 2019 will forever be remembered as a dark day in Sri Lanka's history. The Easter Sunday bombings claimed 259 lives but affected so many more. If there was a silver lining, it was the international community's rallying behind our brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka.

Worldwide, Church and secular organisations, including Catholic Mission, responded to the tragedy, contributing emergency funds which helped sustain immediate relief programs started by the government and the Church.

Eight months later, a pressing need to help the families and friends of those affected remains in Sri Lanka today. Catholic Mission's Christmas Appeal in 2019 aims to raise vital funds for programs offering trauma counselling and educational scholarships for children.

There are hundreds of tragic stories from that day, among them Susantha, who lost his wife, his two beautiful daughters, and seven-year-old son in the deadly Colombo bombings. On the very same day he celebrated the resurrection of the Lord with his family, Susantha was mourning their loss. Even months on, he relives the trauma daily as his work as a taxi driver forces him to drive past the church where they lost their lives.

Catholic Mission's Christmas Appeal shares the story of Susantha and others like him in Sri Lanka, as they come to grips with the devastating events that shook their country and work to rebuild their lives. The Church is by their side, implementing programs that provide women, men and children with the resources and support they need to recover and grow from the tragedy.

Father Basil Fernando, National Director of Catholic Mission in Sri Lanka, and his team have been instrumental in the creation of trauma counselling programs for people like Susantha, as well as scholarships for children who have lost their parents. 'I am trying to launch programs

to provide immediate relief to children and families affected by the bombing and to provide long-term trauma counselling and spiritual care for victims and their families,' Fr Basil says.

'We appeal to you to come forward and assist us in carrying out these programs, however you can. We are taking every opportunity to be of help and support to the affected in every way possible. We kindly look forward to your generous assistance in our darkest hours.'

Tenjuni was extremely lucky to have survived the bombing, along with her two sisters, and the crude scar along her hairline serves as a constant reminder of the day. Distressingly, her mother was killed in the blast, leaving Tenjuni's father to provide and care for the three daughters.

Tenjuni and her siblings are just three of 271 children assessed so far as being in need of educational scholarships so they can attend school and receive a good education for a brighter future. Programs like these are vital in supporting the survivors of the Easter Sunday attacks both now, and into the future, as the country rebuilds.

A generous gift this Christmas can support vital programs such as trauma counselling for people like Susantha, and education scholarships for children like Tenjuni who have lost parents.



Susantha kisses the grave of his seven-year-old son, buried between his mother and sisters in a gravesite of 43 victims of the Easter Sunday bombings at Shrine of St Anthony Church. Over 200 other people lost their lives that day.



Fr Basil with Tenjuni (right) and her sister, who will receive educational scholarships.



A Christmas reflection:

Success is in God's hands, not ours alone

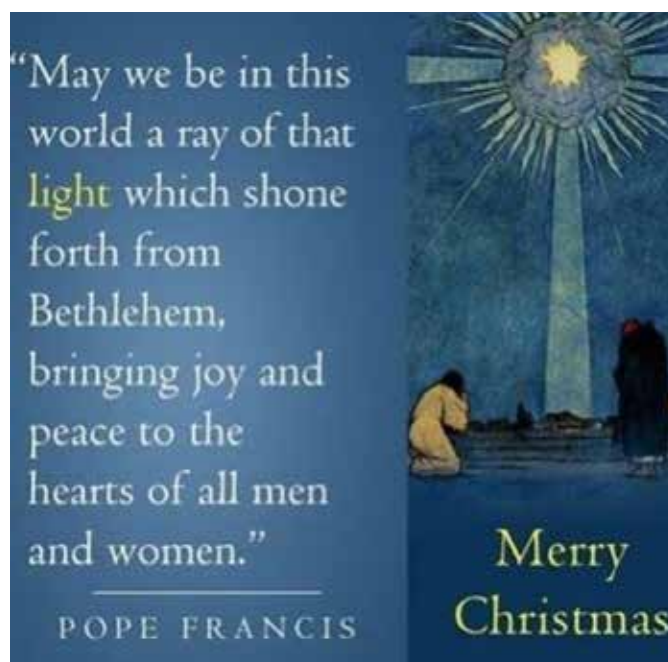
*"God's love for us is fundamental for our lives,
and it raises important questions
about who God is and who we are"*
(Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*)

Christmas celebrates the fruit of Mary and Joseph's trust in God. The long-awaited Messiah, sent to save us from our sins and win back the eternal blessedness lost by Adam's sin, is born. The Son of God is like us in all things but sin.

We learn from the Incarnation that our success is in God's hands. Without the Father's love we would be lost for all eternity.

Mary and Joseph sacrificed greatly to make the arduous journey to Bethlehem, to obey God's directive to flee into Egypt, and to go to Nazareth to raise Jesus. Ambiguity, uncertainty, and brokenness touched the Holy Family. Their lives teach us that we cannot understand God's designs.

This wonderful lesson urges parents to put their families in God's hands and trust that their efforts will bear fruit.



Faithful parents are examples for us, single or married. We, too, are to put ourselves in God's hands. In so doing God's grace helps us realise better the depths of who we are and what we are called to become.

Let us pray, asking the Holy Spirit to give us courage in difficult times to imitate the Holy Family.

Armidale Diocesan Catholic Women's League

The Annual General Meeting of Armidale Diocesan Council of Catholic Women's League was held at Quirindi in October 2019 at Stan Campbell Hall. Delegates and Observers from Armidale, Gunnedah, Guyra, Quirindi, Tamworth and Wialda attended. Sadly members of Moree Branch were unable to attend.

The meeting opened with a Prayer Service prepared by Diocesan Religious Assistant Sr. Christine Belling and read by Diocesan President Deirdre Andren.

Attendees joined Parishioners at the Vigil Mass on Saturday night followed by Dinner at the RSL Club where long time member of Quirindi Catholic Women's League Vashti Porter was officially farewelled having moved to the South Coast recently.

Sunday session commenced with a Prayer Service remembering those members who had died over the last two years with a candle being lit by other members from the branches concerned. This prayer service was also prepared by Sr. Christine Belling.

Deirdre Andren was elected Diocesan President for a further year, however Madeleine Hayes Diocesan Vice President and Elaine Smyth Diocesan Secretary have retired from the Diocesan Executive after six years and were honoured with a gift and thanks for their service.

Dara Kerklaan will continue as Diocesan Treasurer, Kathie Murphy as WUCWO International Secretary, Anne Jones as Social Responsibility Officer and Margaret Nott as Vice President.

Members of West Tamworth CWC Branch joined the meeting on Sunday and presented a report of their activities for the year as well as a written report from East Tamworth CWC Branch.

Thanks go to Quirindi Branch who arranged for the Catering of meals and picked up and delivered people who arrived by train for the meeting.

Deirdre Andren

Diocesan President



Maryanne Hill, Jan Jordan from Guyra and Anne Jones from Wialda



Elaine Smyth and Madeleine Hayes being presented with gift as they retire from the Diocesan Executive



Kathie Murphy from Quirindi and Elaine Smyth from Tamworth processing into Vigil Mass



Robyn Judge, Valmai Hunt, Margaret Edgeley and Claire Keoghan from Armidale

St Brigid's Parish Celebration for Dedicated Contribution Of 132 Years.



Sisters of St Joseph, Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of Nazareth gather in Quirindi for 132 year celebrations

On Saturday 26th October 2019, the Quirindi Parish of St Brigid's Catholic Church hosted the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, who came to celebrate the presence of their Order here in the Parish for 132 years. It is with a sad heart that they withdraw their presence following the retirement of Sister Therese Conroy after 23 years in our community, which she regarded as her second home.

The day began with the St Joseph Centre being open for visitors and morning tea. This centre, previously the convent, is regarded as Holy ground having had St Mary of the Cross Mackillop stay overnight on her travels throughout the Diocese. The Sisters were overcome with excitement at having the opportunity to walk through and view the beautiful display of memorabilia.

A Mass of Thanksgiving followed and was concelebrated by Fr Vic Ignacio with Monsignor Ted Wilkes, Fr Ross O'Brien, Fr Roel Llave, Fr Michael Mullane and Fr Anthony Castelli, all from the Armidale Diocese. The Mass, which was enhanced by the 'choir' of Sisters singing, was an uplifting ceremony, according to all who attended.

We are told that according to Filipino custom, "after the Misa (Mass) we go to the Mesa (table)", so a beautiful lunch at the Quirindi RSL Club followed the Mass. It was enjoyed by all, whilst renewing valued friendships and wonderful memories.

The Regional Leader of the Sisters of St Joseph, Sister Mary Ellen O'Donoghue addressed the gathering with an outline of the history of the Order in Quirindi. She stated, "Over 100 Sisters who have shared in your lives

and walked beside you in your joys and sorrows, have also been supported and encouraged by your generosity and friendship through the good and the hard times. As we all remember the past, we are filled with profound gratitude to this Parish community for being such an important part of our lives".

Sister then concluded by saying, "As we move into an unknown future, the Sisters of St Joseph would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Fr Vic and all the priests who ministered to us and with us. We also thank each member of the Quirindi Parish community for your friendship, encouragement, support and assistance received over the past 132 years."



Students from St Joseph's Quirindi greet the Sisters of St Joseph after Mass.

Guyra Family Night

Community spirit rallies in tough times



Amber McFarlane, Kristy & Jack Campion, Kellie Lockyer

As the long dry maintains its tight grip on the majority of North West NSW for the third successive year, the resilience of local communities continues to be tested. During times like this, the ability to maintain a sense of normality can weigh heavily on families in regional areas whether they are from farming operations, local businesses or even the general community.

St Mary of the Angels School Guyra, has recognised the ongoing impact that drought has been having on their school and parish community. The direct effect on the personal welfare of school and parish members is increasing with each day as pressure mounts on them



Kate & Eliza Wesley, Peter & Emma Heagney

personally, mentally, financially and spiritually.

Despite this, principal Mrs Sharon Wittig has taken the lead, engaging directly with the parents of her students through personal conversations to help ensure their wellbeing during this time. As a result, the school staff decided to facilitate an event that united the local community both at a school and parish level. The aim was to help reinvigorate the community and relieve some of the overriding tensions that drought has delivered.

Whilst the evening had direct drought support personnel and service agencies in attendance, the main purpose



Carlotta Chiesa, Emma Hodgens, Jess Sisson, Tanya Siddell



Jane McCowen, Vu & Nhu Nguyen

Guyra Family Night

of the night was to get the broader school and parish communities together in friendship and support.

The simple act of participants joining their community for a shared meal and drink enabled people to share their experiences or even just stay in touch with other people who are going through the same thing.

The students importantly, had their own event on the night. It was not possible to find anyone that did not like the disco, hot dogs, drinks and ice cream with no better way to laugh engage and have fun. If smiles were a measure of the night's success, then it would be safe to say that this was a "high achiever".

ADIG's role as major sponsor was significant in combining the broader Armidale Diocesan business units in one place to address and provide support for the Guyra school and parish communities. ADIG's underlying driving purpose is to enable grass roots services that tangibly support people's lives. Agencies involved in the evening included Centacare, St Vincent de Paul, Local Land Services, Healthwise, Rural Counselling Service but most importantly, the tremendous actions of Mrs Sharon Wittig and her staff who made it happen.



Lucy Mackenzie, Jane Mactier, Herb Mackenzie



Mary Gow, Shirley Lennon, Noreen Williams



Natalie Hope, Raylene Shearer, Krystle Cox



Sharon Wittig, Steve Adams, Dave Lockyer, David Bokeyar



Nicole Rooke, Nigel Bourne, Robyn Brazier, Bernadette Jackson



Trent & Kane Jones, Troy & Tiffany Martin



The Gift of Music - Rural Aid Comes to The Diocese of Armidale

St Joseph's School Uralla has experienced the wonderful generosity of the charitable organisation Rural Aid through its donation of over \$5500 worth of musical instruments.

Rural Aid's Gift of Music founders Wayne and Robyn Thomson arrived at the school to personally present the musical instruments and lego sets to our school. In making this donation they reassured us that "the generous people of Australia wanted to do something to let the people in drought affected areas know that we are being thought of."

The students and staff were overwhelmed when they took delivery of a drum kit, a digital piano, two nine-piece percussion sets and various other instruments as well as some lego sets.

In thanking Wayne and Robyn, Principal of St Joseph's, Judy Elks, said that "during these tough times we often get so caught up in the demands of dealing with the drought that we forget about how it is affecting our most precious gift, our children. Music is a great way for children to express their feelings and therefore help them cope with the circumstances that they are thrown into through no fault of their own. We are so grateful that the music program that we offer at this school can be enhanced by this significant contribution which will bring so much pleasure to not only these children but to the whole community. Thank you to Rural Aid for thinking of our children!"

St Patrick's School Walcha has been granted the Gift

St Joseph's Uralla Principal Judy Elks, staff and students with Gift of Music Rural Aid founders Wayne and Robyn Thomson.

of Music following a successful grant application. In November husband and wife duo from Rural Aid, Robyn & Wayne Thomson, came to our school and donated instruments to form a Woodwind Band; flutes, clarinets, trumpets and saxophones. 2020 will see the introduction of a music program into our school with New England Conservatorium of Music (NECOM) coming down once a week to teach the band to play our instruments. The students were thrilled with the generous gifts and our school community are appreciative and humbled at the generosity shown towards our little school and the opportunities our students will receive from the gifts.



"Thank you NECTOM for our beautiful Instruments" – Students and staff of St Patrick's Walcha



Caritas Australia's New CEO Driven by Hope for a More Just World

Caritas Australia's new CEO, Kirsty Robertson, has spoken of the renewed urgency with which we must end extreme poverty in our world today.

"People often ask, 'Is the world we have right now the world that God intended?' Ours is a world where we have nearly a billion people who will go to bed hungry tonight. I don't think this is the world that God intended." Ms Robertson said.

Caritas Australia has been working with marginalised communities for over 50 years, and in 2018-19 reached 1.52 million people worldwide in 20 countries.

For Ms Robertson, who was appointed to her role on September the 16th and was previously employed with Mary MacKillop Today, said the agency has always been part of her sense of purpose and of her hope for a more just world.

"One of the wonderful things about working with Caritas is to get to be part of the story of creating a more just world. I don't think there's anything more important to do with your life than that," she said.



"(As a child) I remember giving to a yellow Project Compassion box. The slogan said Dignity, not Charity, and that prompted a conversation with my mum about the idea that we're made in the image of God and therefore we all have inherent dignity, which nobody can take away from you".

"People talk about their careers, but I feel like this is my vocation and that I have a true calling to serve the poor. Caritas has over 50 years of doing this work; of authentically amplifying the voice of the poor."

Ms Robertson was liturgically blessed for her new position in a commissioning ritual on Wednesday September 25.

Chairman of Caritas Australia, Bishop Christopher Saunders, Deputy Chair, Bishop Terence Brady and Chair of the Australian Catholic Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen, were all in attendance. Bishop Saunders spoke of Ms Robertson's readiness for her new role.

"Kirsty has a keen sense of social justice and a proven track record of working to help those in our world who are disadvantaged and marginalised," he said.

"Grounded in strong faith, she will apply herself to ensure that Caritas Australia remains dedicated to living the Gospel, which promises hope to a world in need of charity and justice".

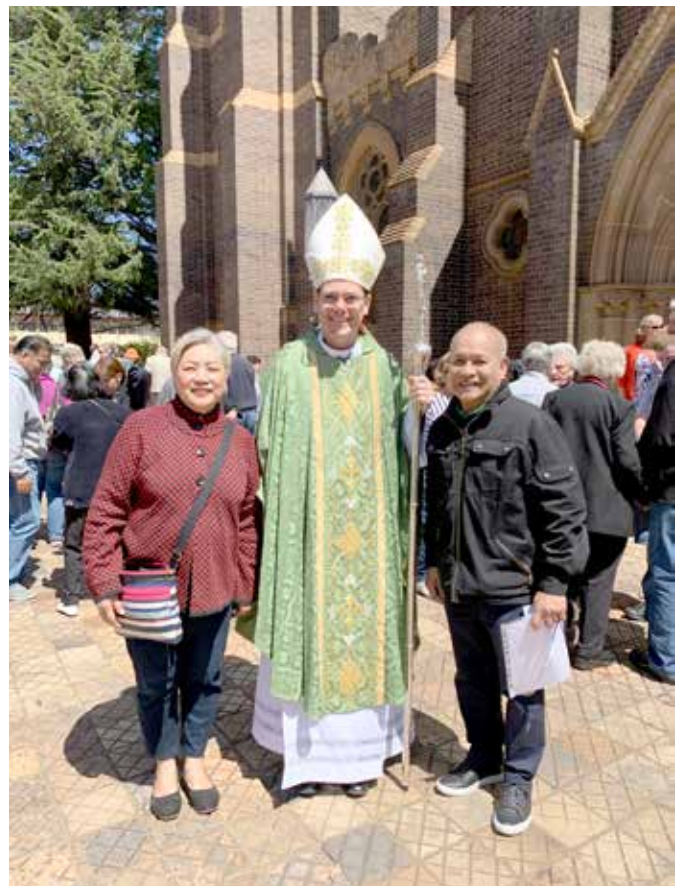


Caritas Australia's new CEO Kirsty Robertson with (left to right) Most Rev Christopher A Saunders DD, Bishop of Broome and Chairman of Caritas Australia, Deputy Chairman and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Sydney, Most Rev Terence Brady and Chairman of the Australian Catholic Bishops Commission for Social Justice- Mission and Service, Most Rev Vincent Long, Bishop of Parramatta.

Legion of Mary Sydney Senatus Visits the Diocese of Armidale



Sts. Mary and Joseph's Cathedral Parish in Armidale received a visit from members of the Legion of Mary Sydney Senatus. One of the charisms of the Legion of Mary's work is to conduct a "Peregrinatio Pro Christo", which aims to proclaim the Gospel. They visited a number of households, Catholics and non-catholics alike. They stayed in the parish for 2 weeks. A group of 12 came on the first week and another 10 came the second week. They distributed religious articles like rosary beads, Miraculous Medals and prayer cards to the families they visited. They also made friendly visits to households who welcomed them that were not Catholic but open to their visit. A summary report of their work was sent to the Armidale Parish for our records to help the parish in doing some follow up for those families who wanted to see or be visited by the priests.



Feel the Magic at St Albert's College



In November St Alberts hosted Feel the Magic for their second Armidale camp. Staying on site and utilising just about every function room at St Alberts, the Feel the Magic crew setup a number of spaces for the children and the camp activities to take place.

Feel the Magic's purpose is to create a world where children who are experiencing grief are supported to reach their full potential. Their program aims to inspire and empower the children to succeed in spite of their loss. Feel the Magic runs Australia's largest grief education program and is a leader in the area.

34 kids from the region joined upward of 60 dedicated Feel the Magic team members and volunteers at St Albert's College for a valuable experience like no other.

With a growing number of attendees Feel the Magic is looking to bring more children from the region into the camp. This can only be achieved with more volunteers. St Alberts will certainly be encouraging our students and broader community to take part in the 2020 instalment!

We look forward to hosting the camp again next year and wish their wonderful team luck in their future camps!



Back Cover: Fr Flood with fellow Priests and Parishioners of St Michael's Dungowan after celebrating a Thanksgiving Mass for his service to the community and Diocese of Armidale (Photo by Lou Farina)

