



St Francis Xavier Primary School

Newsletter

Monday 8th December 2025
Term 4 Week 10

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

Email: principal@sfxballarat.catholic.edu.au

Term 4 (11 weeks)

Mon 6th Oct – Fri 19th Dec

Tuesday 9th December

Christmas Carols Night
5.00pm Food Vans
6.00pm Carols commence
(see running sheet
on page 3)

Friday 12th December

Yr 6 Students v Staff annual
netball match

Tuesday 16th December

5.30pm Yr 6 Graduation
Liturgy in our Gym

Thursday 18th December

12.40pm Assembly in Gym
Final 2025 day for students
2.20pm finish

Wednesday 28th Jan 2026

Classes resume for all
students

On the Land of the Wadawurrung People

Dear families,

Yesterday we lit the second Advent candle. Known as the Candle of Peace, it symbolises the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. Following the first candle—the Candle of Hope—we begin to deepen our understanding of the true meaning of Christmas during this season of preparation.

At school, our Christmas preparations are well underway. The children are learning about the importance of preparing, waiting, and being ready. We know that Christmas will come, but we also want to ensure that our hearts are open to receiving the message of Jesus through the miracle of His birth.

Each Monday morning at assembly we hold our own Advent ceremony. Together we light the candle, reflect, and pray as we journey toward Christmas. You are warmly invited to join us at 9.00am if you would like to be part of our wonderful and prayerful community of learners. Let's prepare for Christmas together through our words, prayers and actions in the remaining time we have left at school.



God bless,

Mark Hogbin



A Prayer for the Second Week of Advent

Dear Jesus,

You entered our world on Christmas as the Prince of Peace.

This Advent, as we strive to become the-best-version-of-ourselves, fill us with a deep and abiding peace. Help us share that peace with everyone we encounter, especially those who need it most. Amen.



End of Term – Start of Year!

We will finish classes for the final time this year on Thursday 18 December at 2.20pm. The new school year will commence for all students on Wednesday 28 January at 9.00am. Happy holidays!

Staff at SFX in 2026

We are delighted to be able to present our staff list for the 2026 school year. We have such a strong and dedicated staff team, and we are very proud of our line up for the new school year:

Foundation- Bianca O’Keefe, Liz Postlethwaite, Jessie Simpson, Tamara Wilson

Yr.1 – Georgia Hudson, Estelle McLean, Grace Turner

Yr.2 – Mandy Hipke, Gemma Johnson, Teresa Skrypko

Yr.3 – Leonie Leviston, Zoe Polkinghorne, Jess Toohey

Yr.4 – Zoe Astbury, Kai Barclay, Rose Russell

Yr.5 – Cynthia Cook & Liam Canny, Steph Downey & Sally Latchford, Shannon Macklin & Megan Leckie

Yr.6 – Petra Barclay, Michael Marshall & Liam Canny, Jacqui Stahl

Support Teachers – Liam Canny, Caitlyn Keogh, Elisha Martin, Peter Mullane

Learning Support Staff- Nicole Arnel, Aiden Atlas, Tom Bosworth, Kath Boyd, Shaun Carroll, Maree Dodd, Tegan Edwards, Jocelyn Goldsworthy, Andrea Grant, Leah Hanrahan, Gabrielle Leazier, Mikaela Monson, Tara Nicholson, Karen Nunn, Jack O’Brien, Ange Staley, Laura Stevens, Bianca Tocchet, Jacinta Waller.

Specialist Teachers

Science/EE – Olivia Haywood

Performing Arts – Dan West

Visual Arts – Jacinta Molloy

Physical Education – Neville Down

Information, Communication & Technology – Jack Ferguson

Positions of Leadership

Religious Education Leader – Michael Marshall

Wellbeing/Mental Health in Primary Schools – Chris Meneely

Learning Diversity Leader – Jayne Mohr

Learning Diversity Support – Brigid Ginnane-Smith

Learning & Teaching Leader – Jane Clark

Structured Literacy Leader – Lindy Harty

Auslan Leader (TCL) – Stephanie Downey

Auslan (TCL) Coach – Chantelle Stacey

Digital Solutions & Communications Leader – Jack Ferguson

Reconciliation Action Plan – Jacinta Molloy and Rose Russell

Library Support – Elisha Martin and Sue Shuttleworth

Deputy Principals – Jane Clark and Jayne Mohr

Office Personnel – Anita Houlihan, Maureen McLean, Kerrie McTigue

Maintenance – Jim Houlihan

Principal – Mark Hogbin

Staff movements We say a huge thankyou to the following staff who have supported our school this year. These people have worked with us to ensure smooth learning and great assistance have been provided for all. We have been delighted to have them on the team:

- ✓ Brooke Van Hammond has a long history of working as a Learning Support Officer at our school and more recently in the administration area this year. Brooke will be taking on an office administration role at Siena Primary School for the 2026 school year.
- ✓ Hayley Quinlan has taught in Year 5 this year and is very well known to our wider school community. Hayley is such a highly valued member of our team that I am sure we will see Hayley helping us out again in the future.
- ✓ Tonia Burrridge has been working in Year 5 this year. Tonia came to us with rich experience and has worked tirelessly with our senior students over the past three terms.

We wish our outgoing staff well and thank them for their kind service to our school.

Moving Up Day Our children had a very busy day last Tuesday when they moved up into their 2026 classes. Our Year 6 students were able to spend time in their new secondary schools, and we were able to welcome many new students who will be joining us next year. In case anyone is wondering, I can confirm that every child has been placed in a class with someone from their list, even if they can no longer remember who they might have named!

SFX Community Carols Are you ready for our Community Christmas Carols tomorrow evening? The evening's entertainment will commence at 6.00pm with our Foundation Nativity Story and the festivities will continue from there. Food vans will be selling food from 5.00pm and families are welcome to bring your own picnics if you wish. This is a relaxed evening, and we hope that everyone can join in the fun together. Please note that parking will be a challenge and we ask that everyone be mindful of others when parking your cars near the school.



Community Christmas Carols 9 December 2025 - Running Sheet

- Food vans operational from 5.00pm
- Carols commence at 6.00pm

5.50pm – Welcome and Introduction

6.00pm – Foundation Nativity

6.20pm – Year 1: Aussie Jingle Bells Little Drummer Boy

6.30pm – Year 2: Christmas Star Run, Run Rudolph

*** 15-minute break**

6.45pm – Choir: I want a hippopotamus for Christmas Rocking around the Christmas Tree

7.00pm – Year 3: Catch that Santa Silent Night

7.10pm – Year 4: Jingle bell rock Joy to the world

*** 20-minute break** *** Raffle draw**

7.30pm – Year 5 – Jesus lullaby Santa Claus is coming to town

7.40pm – Year 6 – Away in a manger Merry Christmas everybody

7.50pm – Staff / P&F item / Community

7.55pm – Conclusion



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

CHILDREN'S LITURGY St. Alipius Parish will hold Children's Liturgy each Saturday evening during Advent at their 6pm Mass. All children are welcome to attend. The children will be taken out after the opening prayer and will return during the Procession of Gifts. While out the children will complete an activity related to the readings for that Mass. We hope to see you there.

Religious Education News

THIS WEEK'S GOSPEL- Sunday December 7, 2025 Second Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

At that time John the Baptist came to the desert of Judah and started preaching.

John's clothes were made of camel's hair; he wore a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. People came to him from Jerusalem, from the whole province of Judea, and from all the country near the River Jordan. They confessed their sins, and he baptised them in the Jordan.

When John saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him to be baptized, he said to them, I baptise you with water to show that you have repented, but the one who will come after me will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He is much greater than I am; and I am not good enough even to carry his sandals. He has his winnowing shovel with him to thresh out all the grain. He will gather his wheat into his barn, but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out." *(Gospel passage taken from Good News Translation)*

Gospel reflection: John the Baptist lived at the time of Jesus. He had great faith and set an example for everyone of how to live a good life. John told the people coming to be baptised that they need to say sorry for the things that they have done wrong and change their lives for the better. Saint Oscar Romero is another great example of how to live a good life. He lived in El Salvador and stood up for poor communities. In El Salvador at the time some families were very rich, but most people were poor. Saint Romero saw that this was unfair and he spoke out against it. He is remembered for his courage, faith and love for the poor. Saint Oscar Romero wanted to change people's lives for the better. His example can show us how we can help others too.

Our Challenge: Can you speak up when you see something that is unfair? Can you help others when they are in need? Can you share? (Adapted from the CAFOD website)



Have you ever visited our beautiful school chapel?

As we continue our Advent journey, we warmly invite all families to take a moment of peace and reflection by visiting our School Chapel over the next two weeks.

Our antique stained-glass Nativity scene (lovingly handcrafted by past St Alipius parishioner Hank de Jong) is now on display—a gentle reminder of the hope, joy and love that the birth of Jesus brings to our world.

Families are welcome to stop in before or after school, or at any time that suits you, to pause, pray and share a quiet moment together during this special season of preparation.

We hope this sacred space brings a sense of calm and wonder to your Advent. All are welcome.

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A heartfelt thank you to our much loved Parish Priest, Fr Justin Driscoll, who celebrated our End of Year Mass with us last Friday.

We began our celebration with the Foundation children walking in with their Year Six buddies to the song “*Together As One*.” We concluded with our Year Six students receiving a special blessing—an important tradition as they prepare to leave St Francis Xavier and begin their next chapter.

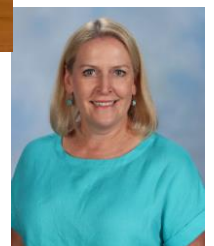
Congratulations to all of our students who participated so beautifully in our rituals, prayers and songs. Their respectful and reverent behaviour was noted and appreciated by staff and parents alike.

In his homily, Fr Justin invited to be like John the Baptist—people who prepare, who make space for hope, peace, joy and love to grow. We do this not just by words, but by our actions: showing kindness, saying sorry, including others, helping those in need, and taking a moment to pause and pray.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the many family members, friends and community members who joined us for the Eucharist. Everyone is always welcome at St Francis Xavier, and your presence enriches our celebrations.



Christine Meneely, **Religious Education Leader**
MHiPS Leader (Mental Health in Primary School Leader)



End-of-Year Reports

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

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

We encourage you to take the time to read the report thoroughly and discuss the feedback with your child. Most importantly, take this opportunity to celebrate your child's efforts and successes throughout the 2025 school year.



St Francis Xavier Primary School Ballarat East
Parent Access Module

Login

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



Success!



[Forgot Password?](#)

[Sign In](#)

Wow what a week with Seesaw!

With the end of our year close, all Specialist classes will be posting onto Seesaw. Please keep an eye out and don't forget to make a comment. We know this is a successful way of building Home/ School connections. Thank you in advance.

Week of November 30 - December 7 at St Francis Xavier Primary School - Ballarat East



201

New Student Posts



9

Comments

Moving Up Day



Last Tuesday, we enjoyed a successful and joyful Moving Up Day. While many of our Year 6 students visited their new secondary schools, our Foundation–Year Five children spent time with their 2026 teachers and peers. We recognise that change can be challenging, yet it is also a natural and constant part of learning and growth. Well done to all our students for embracing this transition with confidence and positivity.

Enjoy your week.

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



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

Child Safe Standard 8: Staff and volunteers are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.



SPECIAL REPORT

Surviving Christmas



A SPECIAL REPORT: Surviving Christmas

Many people see Christmas as a wonderful time of celebration and an opportunity to spend time with family and friends. However, there are some that view it as a time of stress and hardship. This may be due to a combination of things: financial pressures, relationship issues and, quite often, loneliness, making it a very challenging time.

Often the true meaning of Christmas can be lost due to commercial exploration, but there are a number of things you can do to create a magical Christmas, without the financial burden. Creating or maintaining traditions can contribute to a sense of comfort and belonging.

Unfortunately for some, there is also an ugly side to Christmas. Support organisations often report an increase in the number of calls from people seeking help due to their inability to cope during this time. If you, or a loved one, is finding that it is all too much, then it is important to reach out to a trusted friend, family member or medical professional.

In this Special Report, parents and care givers will be presented with a number of ideas on how to achieve a stress-free Christmas and where to seek help should you need it.

SchoolTV hopes you take time to reflect on the information offered in this Special Report, and as always, they welcome your feedback.



Here is the link to the special report: https://sfxballarat.catholic.schooltv.me/wellbeing_news/surviving-christmas-au

Sending cheers your way,

Gemma Johnson, **Wellbeing Leader**

- **CHRISTMAS RAFFLE IS LIVE** – Our Annual SFX Christmas Raffle is now LIVE – please scan the QR Code to purchase your tickets! 32 Prizes to be won – some amazing prizes – don't miss out. Thank you to all the Families & Businesses who have donated prizes – we really appreciate your support – please remember to support the Businesses who have made donations
- **CHRISTMAS CAROLS** – Tuesday 9th December – 5pm – 8pm
Food Trucks & P&F Sausage Sizzle & Hot Dog stand
Pre-order Carboni's pizzas or grazing boxes – order form in the office
Special visit from Santa!
- **Uniform Shop**
Our Second Hand Uniform shop is always open, please see the office staff if you wish to have a look at any items in our Second Hand Uniform shop, or reach out to a member of our P&F to help you with any of your Uniform needs.
- **Hot Lunches**
Please note, Flexischools have updated when you are placing your child's Lunch order, you are now able to select if your child has any allergies and it will print on your child's lunch bag label, we ask that you are selecting if they have any allergies as it makes it smoother process when it comes to packing lunch orders on a Friday. Also please note cut off for lunch orders is strictly 10am Thursday mornings.
Thank you to our Co-ordinators & Volunteers who come and pack all of the children's lunch orders on a Friday!
- **Zooper Doopers - every FRIDAY in Term 4 - \$1 each available at 2nd break**

SFX CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

**32 Prizes to be won - raffle drawn
at the SFX Carols night**



Purchase
your
tickets
here






SFX

Christmas Carols

TUESDAY 9TH DECEMBER - 5PM TO 8PM

- 
- PRE ORDER PIZZA/PLATTER BOX FROM CARBONIS (ORDER FORM IN OFFICE)
 - THE PAELLA GUY
 - THE DUMPLING MAN
 - GELATO IS KEY
 - SAUSAGE SIZZLE
 - HOT DOG STAND
 - POPCORN + SLUSHIES + LOLLIES
 - OR FEEL FREE TO BYO YOUR OWN PICNIC (NOTE THIS IS AN ALCOHOL FREE EVENT)

Special visit from Santa



Ministry District Newsletter

Priests Frs Justin Driscoll & Shaiju Mathew
 Ballarat East Parish
 Cathy Prunty and Natalie Gleeson
 0437 505 517
 ballarateast@ballarat.catholic.org.au
 Jackie Wrigglesworth (Finance Officer)
 5337 7128
 Jackie.wrigglesworth@ballarat.catholic.org.au
 Tuesday – Friday 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Incorporating the faith communities of Ballan, Ballarat East, Bungaree, Buninyong, Clarkes Hill, Dunnstown, Gordon and Springbank

Our parishes are committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults
 Child Safety Officers: Ballarat East Parish – Emily Clarke; Bungaree & Gordon Parishes – Cathy Prunty

2nd Sunday of Advent Year A – 7th December, 2025

MINISTRY DISTRICT MASS TIMES			
Weekday Masses			
Tuesday December 9 th	9.30 am	St Alipius' Ballarat East	
Wednesday December 10 th	9.30am	St. Brigid's Ballan – School Mass	
	11.00 am	Mercy Place (All Welcome)	
	6.30 pm	St Patrick's Gordon – School Mass	
Thursday December 11 th	11.00 am	St Brigid's Ballan Anointing Mass Mecwacare Canadian	
Friday December 12 th	9.30am	St Alipius' Ballarat East	
Saturday December 13 th	9.30 am	St. Alipius' Ballarat East	
Weekend Masses next weekend 3 rd Sunday of Advent			
Saturday December 13 th		Sunday December 14 th	
6.00 pm	Ballarat East	9.00 am	Buninyong Bungaree
6.30 pm	Springbank	10.30 am	Ballarat East Ballan

WE ASK YOUR PRAYERS FOR:

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Philo Bruty, Joseph Mathew (Father of Fr Sajan)

THOSE WHOSE ANNIVERSARIES OCCUR AT THIS TIME

Laurie Lavery, Margaret Fuller, Ronald K. Graham,
 Anna Bartaska, Brian James Shanahan, Margaret
 Toohey, Jeanette Kathryn Delbridge, John McCarthy

THOSE WHO ARE UNWELL

Daren Vukmirovic, Irene D'Arcy, Troy Watson
 (Steenhuis family), Elaine Conlan, Evelyn Farrugia,
 Patricia (Patty) Gannon, Michelle Hall, John Healy,
 Sarah McLachlan, Thelma Keating, Carole Simmons,
 Owen Widdison



Marantha

~Come Lord Jesus~

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

GOD'S WORD BOOKS FOR SALE

We have copies of God's Word Daily Reflection books available to purchase. These books are \$20 each. The books contain the readings of the day for 2026, weekdays and Sundays, as well as a daily reflection on the scripture. The books are available at the parish hub.

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Christmas Eve, Wednesday December 24th

4.00pm Mercy Place Ballarat East
5.30pm St Brigid's Ballan
6.00pm St Alipius Ballarat East
6.30pm St Peter's Clarke's Hill
7.00pm St Michael's Springbank
7.30pm Sts Peter & Paul Buninyong
9.00pm St Alipius Ballarat East

Christmas Day, Thursday December 25th

9.00am St Brendan's Dunnstown
9.00am St Alipius Ballarat East

THANKYOU

'Last Sunday evening parishioners from across the Ministry District came together at Donegan's Farm for a Christmas Celebration. This was a great night which was enjoyed by all who attended. Special thanks to those who took the time to organise this evening.'

OLHC PARISH WENDOUREE CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH

OLHC Parish Wendouree volunteers are hosting a free lunch on Christmas Day in the Parish Hall, 480A Gillies Street North, Wendouree from 12.00noon – 2.00pm (meal at 12.30pm). Bookings are essential as seating is limited, ph. 0491 029217. Thank you to all the very wonderful volunteers for their work in making the Christmas Day lunch at OLHC so special over all the years it has been held. We welcome all those who would like to volunteer on the day - please phone 0467 683504 to register. A Working with Children Check is required for all volunteers. They are also seeking volunteers to help clean up from 2.30 pm.

CHRISTMAS CHEER AT GORDON

Join us for some Christmas cheer following the 9am Mass at St. Patrick's Gordon on Sunday December 18th. Everyone is welcome.

UPCOMING DATES

Wednesday December 10th

7.30am Ballarat East Parish Finance Meeting
9.30am Mass with St Brigid's School Ballan
5.30pm Mass with St Patrick's School Gordon

Thursday December 11th

10.00am Ballan Mecwacare Hostel service
11.00am Ballan Anointing Mass

Tuesday December 16th

1.00pm Mass with Emmaus Primary

Wednesday December 17th

1.00pm Mass with St Alipius School

Friday December 19th

9.30am Bungaree Anointing Mass
9.30am St Alipius' Mass and 2nd Rite of Reconciliation.

FORMATION IN SYNODALITY

The Catholic Diocese of Ballarat is excited to be joining with the Catholic Theological College to provide formation in Leadership for Synodality in the Diocese of Ballarat through a bursary funded by the Therese D'Orsa Mission Fund. This formation opportunity emerged following the Ballarat Diocesan Assembly at the end of 2024. The Diocesan Assembly Report details the support for building a Synodal Church in this diocese with a prominent outcome of the Assembly being the need to provide formation for synodal leadership. Parishioners interested in joining this formation opportunity can find further information from the diocesan website

<https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/formation-in-synodality/> or scan or click the QR code



ANNOINTING MASS

Anointing Mass and 2nd Rite of Reconciliation will be held at St Alipius' Church on Friday 19th December at 9:30am. Morning tea will follow in the hall if everyone could please bring a plate to share. If anyone needs a lift to the mass please call the Parish Hub for this to be arranged.

VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL

The cost-of-living crisis has reached a worrying new low. 3.3 million people in Australia are currently living in poverty (that's more than 1 in 8). People are skipping meals so they can afford to feed their kids, pay their rent and keep the lights on. Others are desperately searching for a safe couch to sleep on. Thousands of families have reached out to Vinnies for the first time in recent months, while others are now regularly relying on short-term relief to survive long-term. Without urgent support, many people risk being trapped in a long-term cycle of poverty and disadvantage. Donations can be made to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal at <https://donate.vinnies.org.au/christmas-appeal>

VENERABLE MARY OF THE SACRED HEART GLOWREY

Pope Leo XIV has formally recognised the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Dr Sr Mary Glowrey JMJ, daughter of Victoria and missionary doctor in India. As of 21 November 2025, she now bears the title of Venerable Mary of the Sacred Heart Glowrey. This significant step in her cause for canonisation makes her only the second Australian, after St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, to be accorded this honour. Born in the Victorian town of Birregurra in 1887, Glowrey was an experienced doctor in Melbourne hospitals and private practice when she travelled to India, aged 32, and entered religious life in Guntur, located in present day Andhra Pradesh. She spent 37 years in service to marginalised women and children. Read more at the diocesan website <https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/cause-towards-sainthood-advances-as-pope-raises-mary-glowrey-to-venerable/>

MAKING A SCENE AT CHRISTMAS

Is a display of over 600 Christmas nativity sets from over 80 countries. 16 Bridge Mall at the corner of Coliseum Walk. From Monday 1st December to Wednesday 24th December. Weekdays 10am – 4pm and Saturday's 10am – 2pm.

BAPTISMS

Avril Mia & Zoe Eileen Fisher
Daughters of Ryan & Rebekah Fisher

CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD

Children's Liturgy of the Word continues at our 6pm Mass this weekend. Children who will be participating in the Liturgy of the Word are invited to join Fr. Justin at the Advent Wreath for the lighting of the first Advent candle. Following this the children will be accompanied to a room at the side of the church. Our thanks to Liz McCartin for co-ordinating this opportunity for children and to Sr. Kathleen Moran for assisting her. The children will return to the main body of the church during the Procession of Gifts.

INTRODUCING POPE LEO XIV: HIS STORY AND AUSTRALIAN CONNECTION

A book has just been published – *Introducing Pope Leo XIV: His Story and Australian Connection* – which tells the story of these visits to Australia. Many photos taken during these visits are also included. In word and image, we meet the man – Fr Bob Prevost – who a decade later would become Pope. Published by St Pauls Publications, the book is available from Catholic bookshops or direct from St Pauls Publications <https://secure.stpauls.com.au/stratfield/introducing-pope-leo-xiv-his-story-and-australian-connection.html>

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY 2025:

Next Friday is the International Day of Volunteers. Within our parish communities there are many volunteers who provide their talents and time to contribute to the mission of our church. While this day is devoted to our volunteers, we thank God every day and continue to pray for all those in our parish who continue to strive to make our parishes a place of welcome and prayer.

COLLECTIONS

The figures below are for last weekend.

Supporting our priests:	\$934
Supporting our parish:	\$ 538
November electronic giving to the parish:	
Credit Cards:	\$815
Direct Debits:	\$3,665
Tap n Go	\$778.55

Thank you to all who contribute to our parish.
Your generosity is appreciated.

We Prepare the Way by Expanding our Vision

Reflection on the Gospel-2nd Sunday of Advent Year A

(Matthew 3:1-12)

Veronica Lawson RSM

Wilderness or desert is a key feature of today's gospel reading. In these troubled times of ours when desertification of earth is becoming the norm, this imagery resonates powerfully with most readers. The desert is the biblical place of encounter with God, the place of beginnings and of testing. The voice of John the Baptizer is heard in the Judean desert. His food and clothing are desert-derived. He is identified as the one of whom Isaiah spoke, the voice crying out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way...." Ecologically, Isaiah's image is confronting: preparing the way involves major earthworks that reconfigure the landscape by levelling the mountains and filling the valleys to create straight paths. The way is never straight, however, and the metaphor must not be literalised. John knows this. The preparation he calls for is ongoing *metanoia* or re-evaluating: keep on turning your lives around, keep on expanding your horizons, for the kingdom of the heavens is "close at hand". The kin-dom is both present and yet still approaching; the verb used here, *ēngiken*, allows for this ambiguity.

The first reading from Isaiah (11:1-10) provides content to Matthew's notion of kin-dom or *basileia*: John is announcing the advent of God's long-awaited empire of justice and right relationship. He offers a baptism of repentance, of *metanoia* or life reorientation. In other words, John's baptism presupposes a commitment to a renewed way of life. His ministry is hugely effective. It attracts "people of Jerusalem, all Judaea and the region along the Jordan River." The arrival of two groups of religious authorities (Pharisees and Sadducees) prompts a fierce response: "you brood of vipers".



John has no patience with those who use their privileged positions to seek their own advantage. He challenges them with the striking image of the "more powerful one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire" and will sort out those who refuse to turn their lives around (the chaff) from those who listen to the call for *metanoia* (the wheat). The latter are "gathered in" while the former are burned "in a fire that never goes out".

Fire is a multi-faceted image in the biblical record. In this passage, it is used metaphorically for the judgment on the wicked. Fire, as we well know in this dry land, is a challenging symbol: it is both friend and foe. In the first-century *Manual of Discipline* from the Qumran community by the Dead Sea, water, refining by fire, and "a holy spirit" are listed together as the instruments of God's saving and purifying action. John, who may have been a member of the Qumran community, presents his own role as preparatory to that of Jesus, the Spirit-filled, powerful and enduring agent of God's refining and purifying work in the world. We recognise our own ongoing need for a "baptism" with the Holy Spirit and fire. We prepare the way by constantly expanding our vision and turning our lives around in the direction of God's reign of compassionate care.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah: 11:1-10
Romans: 15:4-9
Matthew: 3:1-12

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah: 35: 1-6, 10
James: 5:7-10
Matthew: 11:2-11

BALLARAT KIDS SUMMER FUN DAY

Monday, 05 Jan
Gates open 2.30pm

Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club
Ph: 03 5335 7201
f BallaratGreyhounds

FREE
Day of Fun
BBQ
Gold coin donation



GREYHOUNDS:
14 Action Packed Races

ACTIVITIES:

- Taylor Swift Tribute Show
- Lolly bag & Drink
- Rock Climbing Wall
- Jumping Castle • Animal Farm
- Cricket Clinic • Face Painting
- Incredible Hulk & Spiderman

Ballarat **VICTORIA**
State Government

Summer 2026 Vacation Care Program

5th - 28th January 2026

Operational Hours – 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday (*excluding Public Holidays*)

Parents are required to provide morning tea and lunch for their child (unless otherwise stated).

Base 1270 will provide an afternoon snack.

Besides the planned activities, children are free to choose from a variety of additional activities at Base 1270.

WEEK 1

Monday 5 th January	MONDAY MOSAICS When something breaks what do we do with it? Throw it out? Absolutely not! We pick up the pieces and we give them a new life. We are not going to be breaking anything today - safety first! However, there will be pieces of different materials that we can use to make many mosaic masterpieces!!
Tuesday 6 th January	AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL WONDER Did you know that Australia has one of the 7 Natural Wonders of the World? Well, we're going to go on a virtual tour, guided by Sir David Attenborough. Discover what life is like for all things living in the Great Barrier Reef. Maybe everything isn't as rosy as it appears... Is there anything we can do?
Wednesday 7 th January	BUBBLE SOCCER INCURSION Let's play soccer...with a twist!! No, we are not going to be blowing bubbles and kicking them around. You are going to BE the bubbles and attempt to kick a soccer ball around. Prepare to bump, roll and flip around the soccer pitch with the team from Ultimate Bubble Soccer
ADDITIONAL COST OF \$20 PER STUDENT	
Thursday 8 th January	THINK OUTSIDE THE SANDBOX We all enjoy building sandcastles or burying each other at the beach. Unfortunately, we don't have a beach but we can definitely get creative with sand! What sandy creations will you make?
Friday 9 th January	TABLOID SPORTS WITH A TWIST Summer and sports go hand in hand so why not have a day of sports - with a twist. Base 1270's tabloid sports are not like your regular tabloid sports. Sure, there may be some throwing and catching or jumping and bobbing but we can't make things too easy...
BRING A TOWEL AND A CHANGE OF CLOTHES THAT CAN GET WET/DIRTY	

WEEK 2

Monday 12 th January	BUBBLES GALORE Get ready for a day bursting with fun, friendship and bubbles of every size! Join us for a day exploring the magic of bubbles through art, play and experiments that will make your head pop with excitement. You won't want to miss the bubbly adventure where science and play collide!
Tuesday 13 th January	LIGHT UP BASE 1270 Get ready to shine bright at the Base 1270's electrifying neon inspired day! Step into a world bursting with colour, sparkles and creativity. Whilst grooving to the music at our dazzling neon disco, students will have the opportunity to create their own sparkling accessories and join in glowing games. Make sure to wear your brightest clothes, it's time to light up the day!
Wednesday 14 th January	MAKE A SPLASH Water play is the best solution for a scorching summer day, mixing in a few surprises and friends sounds like a dream come true. Put on your hat, it's time to make a splash! Please ensure you bring a towel, a change of clothes, and your biggest summer smile, it's going to be a day full of fun in the sun.
Thursday 15 th January	CANVAS AND CONFETTI Sit back, relax and get creative! With our can do attitude, students will dive into a world full of colour, imagination and self expression as they create their own beautiful artwork. Whether students prefer guidance or creative freedom each student will unleash their inner artist. By the end of the day students will not only have a masterpiece to take home but a sense of pride in their artistic abilities.
Friday 16 th January	PROACTIVITY WARRIOR COURSE Get ready to race against the clock, because the Proactivity Warrior crew are on their way to Base 1270, for an amazing day full of challenges, laughs and non-stop action! During your session you'll get to dash, climb, dodge and weave through a warrior inspired inflatable course. With the coaches from proactivity guiding every step, it's all about trying our hardest, building confidence and having a blast.
ADDITIONAL COST OF \$35 PER STUDENT	
MAXIMUM 45 STUDENTS TODAY	

Bookings are now open

To secure places for our Vacation Care Program, please book through Xplor.

For any enquiries or new enrolments, please contact -

Phone (work hours): 0481 574157 Email: oshc@buninyongps.vic.edu.au

Base 1270

Summer 2026 Vacation Care Program

5th - 28th January 2026

Operational Hours – 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday (*excluding Public Holidays*)

Parents are required to provide morning tea and lunch for their child (unless otherwise stated).

Base 1270 will provide an afternoon snack.

Besides the planned activities, children are free to choose from a variety of additional activities at Base 1270.

WEEK 3

Monday 19 th January	MAKE IT MONDAY It's time to get creative and think about the world around us. Your mission is simple but also top secret...so you won't find out what it is until today. Rest assured you will need to put on your thinking caps to discuss, invent, design and build something to complete your mission.
Tuesday 20 th January	AMAZING BASE RACE Make your way around the school grounds following clues and completing tasks along the way. You will need your mental and physical muscles today to help you complete the Amazing Base Race
Wednesday 21 st January	WILD WEST WEDNESDAY YeeHaw! Ride 'em Cowboy! "It's so hot out here you could fry an egg on my buckles!" Let's experience the wild, wild West without worrying about "Wild" Bill and his gang lurking in the shadows. Can you wrangle a "cow" or navigate the barrel race? WATCH OUT! Don't get pricked by a cactus!
Thursday 22 nd January	MAZE HOUSE EXCURSION All aboard the bus to get lost in nature! Can you find your way through the giant hedge maze? Don't move too quickly though because you will need to find some clues to get yourself a prize! There will also be some fun "old time" carnival games to challenge you while you are not in the maze. ADDITIONAL COST OF \$25 PER STUDENT MAXIMUM 45 STUDENTS TODAY
Friday 23 rd January	ARCHEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION Dig Site...check Tools...check Today we become Archeologists looking for ancient artefacts. We will need to find the perfect dig site and have all the right tools. Take your time and be very careful where you dig - we don't want to damage any of the hidden treasures.

WEEK 4

Monday 26 th January	AUSTRALIA DAY NO VACATION CARE TODAY
Tuesday 27 th January	SPORTING SPECTACULAR What's more Summer than a game of backyard cricket or a friendly hit of tennis? Let's slop on some sunscreen, slap on a hat and head outside to hit some sixes and serve some aces! Who knows, we might just discover the next Pat Cummins or Ellyse Perry. Or maybe we have an Ash Barty or an Alex de Minaur amongst us!
Wednesday 28 th January	A WEDNESDAY WITHOUT WORDS Have you ever heard the saying "Actions speak louder than words"? Discover some of the different ways that we can communicate with each other, without using our voices. How will you be able to tell someone your name? How will we give instructions to each other? How will we have a conversation?

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Give your child the confidence to stay safe around water!

Ballarat Aquatic & Lifestyle Centre's 3-day Inland Water Safety Program helps kids aged 6–14 develop essential lifesaving skills and water safety knowledge in real open-water environments. It's a fun, hands-on experience that builds confidence, awareness, and practical skills to keep them safe around water.

Inland Water Safety Program

Program Dates: 19 – 21 January 2026

Program Times: Session 1: 11:30am – 12:45pm or Session 2: 1:15pm – 2:30pm

Location: Ballarat Aquatic & Lifestyle Centre (Day 1), Lake Wendouree (Days 2 & 3)

Program Cost: \$90 per child

**For more information and to enrol online,
visit our website or scan the QR code.
www.ballarataquaticcentre.com**

