

St Francis Xavier Primary School

Newsletter



Monday 2nd February 2026
Term 1 Week 2

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

Email: principal@sfxballarat.catholic.edu.au

Term 1 (10 weeks)

Mon 27th Jan Thu 2nd Apr

Friday 6th February

9.30am in our Gym

Beginning of Year Mass

Tuesday 10th February

Year Ahead Meetings

Friday 13th February

2.40pm Assembly led by
6PB

Last day for Book Club

Issue 1 Orders

Mix & Mingle

Monday 16th February

5.30pm P&F Meeting in
Staff Room

Tuesday 17th February

Shrove Tuesday

Wednesday 18th February

9am Ash Wednesday

Liturgy in our Gym

Thursday 19th February

Division Swimming at BALC
(nominated students from
Yr 4, 5 & 6)

Friday 20th February

SFX Athletics Day at
Llanberis (ALL Year 3, 4, 5
& 6 students)

Monday 23rd February

School photo day

Friday 6th March

Pupil Free Day

Literacy PD

Monday 9th March

Public Holiday-Labour Day
Pupil Free Day

Wed 11th-Tue 17th March

NAPLAN Testing

Thursday 19th March

Student Led Conferences

Friday 20th March

Interschool Sport at STM
(Year 5/6)

On the Land of the Wadawurrung People

Dear families,

Welcome to a new school year! We commenced classes last Wednesday with 485 very happy, and somewhat nervous students and a very excited staff group. It was terrific to see everyone again and to be able to welcome all new members of our school community, including 72 Foundation students. There certainly is a buzz of energy around our school!

Each year staff from across our Catholic community gather on the day before classes commence to celebrate Mass together and to ask for God's blessings on the year ahead. This year our celebration was led by Bishop Paul Bird. During the Mass we were challenged to think about how we can bring peace to our individual school communities. Bishop Paul drew on the first words proclaimed by Pope Leo XIV last year when he was elected as Pope. From the balcony of St. Peters in the Vatican, he raised his hands and called "Peace be with you all!" This blessing has become the theme for Catholic education this year and I feel like it is a very fitting one indeed. If we could achieve peace in our world this year we really might be witnesses to a miracle. At school we will certainly do our best to work towards achieving peace in our classrooms, our playgrounds and our community.

I wish all members of the Saint Francis Xavier school community a very happy year ahead. May we all be the peacemakers, the achievers, the compassionate leaders and the people of faith that we are called to be every day. Happy 2026!

God bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Hogbin".

Mark Hogbin



Wednesday 25th March

Regional Swimming at Horsham (qualifiers from Division swimming)

Thursday 26th March

Student Led Conferences

MDASA U9 Primary Schools
Swim Sports (nominated students from F-Yr2)

Mon 30th & Tue 31st March

Year 4 Lady Northcote
Discovery Camp

Thursday 2nd April

Last day of term 1
2.20pm finish

Term 2 (10 weeks)

Mon 20th Apr-Fri 26th Jun

Tue 21st & Wed 22nd April

Year 5 Sovereign Hill
Costumed School

Fri 8th May

2pm Mothers/Special Friends Liturgy

Monday 8th June

Public Holiday-King's Birthday
Pupil Free Day

Term 3 (10 weeks)

Mon 13th Jul-Fri 18th Sep

Term 4 (11 weeks)

Mon 5th Oct – Fri 18th Dec

Wednesday 7th October

Year 3 Day Camp

Monday 2nd November

Assessment and Reporting
Pupil Free Day

Tuesday 3rd November

Public Holiday-Melbourne Cup
Pupil Free Day

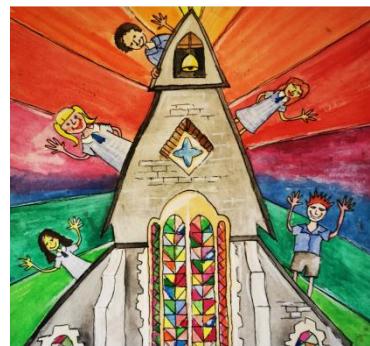
Wed 25th-Fri 27th Nov

Year 5 Kangaroobie Camp

Beginning of Year School Mass**Friday February 6 - 9:30am in the Gym**

A warm invitation is extended to all our families, friends and parish members who would like to join us in celebrating our beginning of the Year School Mass.

We have a beautiful tradition at St Francis Xavier whereby our Year Six children accompany our new Foundation children into Mass and lead a special blessing as a welcome to our school community. (At the End of Year Mass our Foundation children reciprocate and lead the blessing as our Year Six children go forward to high school).



We also look forward to welcoming our Parish Priest, Father Justin to our school.

News From Our Neighbours

We have been informed that our good friends at Woodman's Hill Secondary College have had to create a temporary alternative access point to their school via Fortune Street. The builders who will be using the new entrance are aware of the challenges we face at peak times and will do all they can to avoid adding to traffic congestion. They are hopeful that works will be completed by the end of second term. In the meantime, please be mindful when travelling along Fortune Street.

Assistance Sought

We are hoping to find a willing and able member of our school community who can stain and varnish some Mercy Crosses for our classrooms. Each cross is approximately 20 cm high and we have about 12 that need finishing off. Can you help? If so please let the office staff or Mr. Marshall know as soon as possible.

Traffic Around Our School

Please be mindful when approaching the school by car. We will publish more information about how to manage traffic conditions in next week's newsletter but if we can all be mindful of the road laws that will help everyone especially at busy times.

A Busy School

While we were enjoying our summer break Mr. Houlihan and our maintenance team has been very busy working behind the scenes to ensure that valuable maintenance is carried out in and around our school. Some of the tasks undertaken include a Sprinkler system installed in the top oval. Scaffolding erected to install new fascia, guttering, down pipes and paint to the rear facade of the art room. The art room was stripped back, and repainted and new doors fitted. New glass petition/wall installed in middle school building to create new office space. New handles placed onto cupboard doors and old ones patched and painted in LSO room. Installation of the infrastructure for a security access gate to the staff car park with a new electrical sliding gate to be completed in coming weeks. The music room has been painted and has been fitted with new sound absorbing carpet tiles. Soft-fall topped up on the playground. Clean up around lower oval, bush play area and school grounds. Thanks Jim, Rob and the team for your great work!

CLOSURE on a Day of CATASTROPHIC Fire Danger Rating

Please be aware that our school will always be closed on a day that has been declared as Catastrophic fire danger rating day in our Fire Weather District. This is a result of being listed on the Victorian Government's Bushfire at Risk Register (BARR). A Catastrophic fire day will be officially confirmed by the CFA on the afternoon of the day before. Once we are advised of the confirmation of the Catastrophic fire danger rating day we will provide that confirmation to you as soon as we can after that.

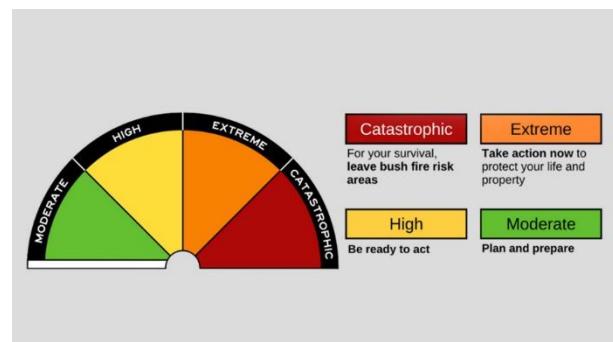
Once confirmed, the decision to close will not change, regardless of improvements in the weather forecast. This is to avoid confusion and help your family plan alternative care arrangements for your child. It is also important to note that:

- ✓ No staff will be on site on days where the school is closed due to a forecast Catastrophic fire day.
- ✓ School camps will be cancelled if a Catastrophic fire danger rating day is determined for the Fire Weather District in which the camp is located.
- ✓ All bus routes in the warning area should be assumed to be cancelled.

On these Catastrophic fire days families are encouraged to enact their Bushfire Survival Plan – on such days children should never be left at home or in the care of older children. As part of preparing our school for potential hazards such as fire, we have completed our Emergency Management Plan, [reprioritised any maintenance works that may assist in preparing for the threat of fire and cleared our facility's grounds and gutters].

What can parents do?

1. Make sure your family's bushfire survival plan is up-to-date and includes alternative care arrangements in the event that our school is closed.
2. Ensure we have your current contact details, including your mobile phone numbers. Keep in touch with us by reading our newsletters, by checking our website <https://www.sfxballarat.catholic.edu.au/> and by talking to your child's teacher or any other member of the teaching staff about our emergency management plan.
3. If your child is old enough, talk to them about bushfires and your family's bushfire survival plan.
4. You can access more information about children's services closures on the Department of Education and Training website – see <https://www.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-school-closures>
5. For up-to-date information on this year's fire season, visit the CFA website at www.cfa.vic.gov.au or call the 24-hour Victorian Bushfires Information Line on 1800 240 667.



Staff 2026

What a great team we have for the 2026 school year! We welcome all staff back to Saint Francis Xavier Primary School as they undertake duties in the following areas:

Classroom Teachers

- **Foundation** - Bianca O'Keefe, Tamara Wilson, Jessie Simpson, Liz Postlethwaite
- **Yr.1** - Grace Turner, Estelle McLean, Georgia Hudson
- **Yr.2** - Teresa Skrypko, Gemma Johnson, Mandy Hipke
- **Yr.3** - Jess Toohey, Leonie Leviston, Zoe Polkinghorne
- **Yr.4** - Kai Barclay, Zoe Astbury, Rose Russell
- **Yr.5** - Cynthia Cook & Liam Canny, Steph Downey & Sally Latchford, Shannon Macklin & Megan Leckie
- **Yr.6** - Petra Barclay, Michael Marshall & Sally Latchford, Jacqui Stahl

Specialist Teachers

- **Science/EE** – Olivia Haywood
- **PA** – Dan West
- **VA** – Jacinta Molloy
- **PE** – Neville Down
- **ICT** – Jack Ferguson

Positions of Leadership

- **Religious Education Leader** – Michael Marshall
- **Wellbeing/MiPHS** – Chris Meneely
- **Learning Diversity Support** – Brighid Ginnane-Smith
- **Auslan Leader (TCL)** – Stephanie Downey
- **Auslan (TCL) Coach** – Chantelle Stacey

Support Teachers

- Elisha Martin, Peter Mullane, Liam Canny, Caitlyn Keogh

Literacy Leader

- Lindy Harty

Wellbeing Leader (MHiPS)

- Christine Meneely

Digital Solutions & Communications Leader

- Jack Ferguson

Reconciliation Action Team

- Jacinta Molloy & Rose Russell

Library Support

- Sue Shuttleworth & Elisha Martin

Administration Support

- Anita Houlihan, Maureen McLean, Kerrie McTigue

Maintenance

- Jim Houlihan

Parish Priest

- Fr. Justin Driscoll

School Leadership Team

- **Principal** – Mark Hogbin
- **Deputy Principal** – Jane Clark
- **Deputy Principal** – Jayne Mohr
- **School Counsellor** – Christine Meneely
- **RE** – Michael Marshall
- **Literacy Leader** – Lindy Harty



Welcome back to the 2026 school year. Across the school, children and teachers are establishing strong relationships and classroom routines that support effective teaching and learning. These foundations are essential for creating calm, purposeful and successful learning environments.

Over the coming weeks, teachers will start beginning-of-year assessments in English and Mathematics. These assessments help teachers understand each student's strengths and learning needs and inform planning/teaching for the year ahead.



Year Ahead Meetings – Years 1–6

We are pleased to share a new, streamlined format for our Year Ahead Meetings. These meetings will be held **on one afternoon ONLY Tuesday 10 February (Week 3)** and are designed to provide flexibility for families and so that families with more than one child can attend ALL Year Ahead meetings on the one night. .

Sessions will run for **25 minutes**, repeated four times in the afternoon, allowing families to attend all relevant year-level and specialist sessions on the same day.

Session times:

- Session 1: 3:30–3:55pm
- Session 2: 4:00–4:25pm
- Session 3: 4:30–4:55pm
- Session 4: 5:00–5:25pm

Locations:

- Year 6: Petra Barclay's Room P
- Year 5: Shannon Macklin's Room M
- Year 4: Kai Barclay's Room I
- Year 3: School Library
- Year 2: Middle School Building
- Year 1: Mother Xavier Flood Building
- Specialists: School Gym

Families can plan the sessions that best suit their needs and move between sessions as required. This structure ensures consistent information is shared while offering flexibility and choice.

Please note Foundation families are not required to participate in these as they have their own structure for testing and sharing information.

Purpose of Year Ahead Meetings Year Ahead Meetings provide Parents and Carers with key information about teachers, learning programs and classroom organisation. They support strong partnerships between home and school and help establish shared expectations for the year ahead.

The meetings aim to help families:

- Understand what their child is learning and doing in class
- Recognise what successful learning looks like
- Promote high standards for student work
- Gain practical ways to support learning at home
- Understand how student progress is supported and monitored
- Meet their child's teacher(s)

We look forward to working in partnership with you throughout the year.

See you next week at Year Ahead sessions. Enjoy your week.



Jane Clark, **Deputy Principal – Teaching & Learning**

WEEKLY WELLBEING

Welcome to the 2026 School Year!

What a joy it has been each morning to feel such positive energy and to see our children so excited about another year of learning!

I would like to extend a warm introduction to new families in my role as School Counsellor and Mental Health in Primary Schools Wellbeing Leader. Throughout the year, I will contribute regular newsletter articles focused on strengthening families and supporting wellbeing, as a way of partnering with you in your very important role as parents and caregivers. Let me know if there is a particular topic or area you would like me to focus upon!

At St Francis Xavier, student wellbeing and mental health are central to our commitment to holistic education. We are fortunate to be part of the Mental Health in Primary Schools (MHIPS) initiative which strengthens our whole-school approach to mental health promotion, early intervention and targeted support. This framework allows us to continue building a school environment where every child feels safe, supported and able to thrive.

I have always been thrilled by the way wellbeing has been embraced by our community, especially by the children I work with. Many referrals come through children speaking with friends, parents connecting with other parents or teachers recognising when a child may benefit from extra support — a wonderful sign that wellbeing is truly a shared priority in our school and that seeking support is a positive and proactive step.

We are excited to introduce several new wellbeing initiatives in 2026. Our Year 4-6 students have received their new Read and Thrive journals- these are for recording their homework, using it as a reading log and highlighting events in our school calendar. These journals are designed to support student wellbeing through simple, practical activities focused on mindfulness, self-care and emotional awareness. By focusing upon the use of consistent mental health and wellbeing language, students become more familiar with words and concepts that help them understand their feelings, describe their experiences and seek support when needed. Building this shared language across school and home helps create a common understanding of wellbeing and supports more confident, open conversations. I like to think we are highlighting that wellbeing is as important to us as academic success! We are also implementing Linewise PULSE, a weekly wellbeing check-in program for students in Years 3–6 later this term- I'll share more about this later.

Alongside the continuation of our Student Wellbeing Leaders, who play an important role in representing student voice, we will be inviting expressions of interest from members of our school community to participate in small wellbeing focus groups. These groups will provide an opportunity to explore specific topics, share perspectives and collaborate with the school in shaping our wellbeing priorities and programs. Let me know if you are keen to be involved- everyone is welcome!

What an exciting year we have ahead! I look forward to working together to ensure a positive, supportive and inclusive year for all members of our school community.



Christine Meneely, MHIPS Leader (Mental Health in Primary School Leader)

2026 promises to be another big year of Sport at SFX with many exciting opportunities for students to represent both their school and themselves in various sports and activities. Please see below a list of the sports and dates that have been confirmed.

For our Division team Sports, these are open to all Year 5 & 6 students to try out for while for the Cross Country and Athletics events, students will be selected by Mr Down & Mr Carroll.

Yr 3 - 6 Athletics Day

Always a very popular event on our calendar is the Yr 3 - 6 Athletics Day to be held at Llanberris Athletics Reserve. Mr Down and myself are busy finalising the day. Please note our 2026 event is on Friday Feb 20. For all information please refer to the PAM notification.

Eureka Division Swimming

This year's Division Swimming meet will be held at BALC on Thursday Feb 19. Please see the PAM notification for further information and to express your child/s interest in participating. Please note that it is held in the 50m pool and certain qualifying times must be met.

2026 SFX SPORTS DATES

Term 1:

- Week 4 - Thursday Feb 19th - Division Swimming @ BALC (nominated students from Yr 4, 5 & 6)
- Week 4 - Friday Feb 20th - SFX Athletics Day @ Llanberris (ALL Year 3, 4, 5 & 6 students)
- Week 8 - Friday Mar 20th - Interschool Sport @ STM (Yr 5/6)
- Week 9 - Wednesday Mar 25th - Regional Swimming @ Horsham (qualifiers from Division swimming)
- Week 9 - Thursday Mar 26th - MDASA U9 Primary Schools Swim Sports (nominated students from F - Yr 2)

Term 2:

- Week 2 - Friday May 5th - Division AFL @ CE Brown Res, Wendouree - (selected students from Yr 5/6)
- Week 4 - Monday May 11th - Division Cross Country @ Fed Uni (selected students from Yr 3, 4, 5 & 6)
- Week 6 - Tuesday May 26th - Regional Cross Country @ Warrnambool (qualifiers from Division XC)
- Week 6 - Friday May 29th - Division Soccer @ Ballarat Region Soccer Facility (selected students from Yr 5/6)
- Week 8 - Friday June 12th - Division Netball @ Selkirk Stadium (selected students from Yr 5/6)
- Week 9 - Friday June 19th - Interschool Sport (Yr 5/6)

Term 3:

- Week 4 - Friday Aug 7th - Ballarat Catholic Primary Schools Athletics @ Llanberris (selected students from Yr 3, 4, 5 & 6)
- Week 5 - Friday Aug 14th - Division Basketball @ Selkirk Stadium (selected students from Yr 5/6)
- Week 8 - Friday Sep 4th - Interschool Sport (Yr 5/6)
- Week 9 - Wednesday Sep 9th - Division Athletics @ Llanberris (qualifiers from BCPS Aths - Yr 3, 4, 5 & 6)

Term 4:

- Week 1 - Friday Oct 9th - Regional Athletics @ Llanberris (Qualifiers from Division Aths - Yr 3, 4, 5 & 6)
- Week 2 - Friday Oct 16th - Division Tennis @ Ballarat Regional Tennis Centre (selected students from Yr 5/6)
- Week 5 - Friday Nov 6th - Eureka Division Cricket @ Alfredton Reserve (selected students from Yr 5/6)
- *Term 4 - F - 2 Junior Sports Day - TBC*
- *Term 4 - Division Golf Tournament - TBC*

Have a great week.

Shaun Carroll, SFX Sport Coordinator



- **P&F Meeting** – Monday 16th February – 5.30pm in the Staff room – everyone welcome
- Save the Date: **Mix & Mingle** – Friday 13th March 2026 – more info to come soon.....
- **Hot Lunch Reminder** – Hot lunches every Friday, place your child's order on Flexi Schools before 10am Thursday – no late orders will be taken – Volunteers needed to help pack – sign up available in your class chat group
- **Zooper Doopers** – Fridays at 2nd break - \$1
- **2nd Hand Uniform Shop** – our Second Hand Uniform shop has a lot of good quality second hand uniforms at an affordable price – all items \$5 with the exception of woollen jumpers & tunics which are \$10 -if you require any extra Uniform items please see the ladies in the office and they can assist you – we will be holding a Pop up shop in the next few weeks as well
- **Easter Raffle donations welcome** – please drop them into the office

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 – 12:00PM

Incorporating the faith communities of Ballan, Ballarat East, Bungaree, Buninyong, Clarks 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

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A – 1st February, 2026

MINISTRY DISTRICT MASS TIMES		
Weekday Masses		
Monday February 2 nd	9.15 am	St Brigid's Ballan
Tuesday February 3 rd	9.30 am	St Alipius' Ballarat East
Wednesday February 4 th	9.30 am	St Brendan's Dunnstown (Damascus)
	11.00 am	Mercy Place (All Welcome)
	2.00 pm	St Pat's Cathedral Funeral Mass, Jim O'Keefe
Thursday February 5 th	10.30 am	St Brigid's Ballan
	11.30 am	OLHC Wendouree Funeral Prayers Adrian Briody
Friday February 6th	9.30am	St Alipius' Ballarat East
	12.30 pm	St Alipius' Ballarat East (School Mass)
	2.30 pm	St. Alipius' Funeral Prayers, Grace Warren
Saturday February 7 th	9.30 am	St. Alipius' Ballarat East
Weekend Masses – 5 th Sunday in Ordinary Time		
Saturday February 7 th		Sunday February 8 th
6.00 pm	Ballarat East	9.00 am
6.30 pm	Springbank	10.30 am
		Buninyong Bungaree
		Ballarat East Ballan

WE ASK YOUR PRAYERS FOR:

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Grace Warren

THOSE WHOSE ANNIVERSARIES OCCUR AT THIS TIME
 Brian O'Neill, Nina Cassar, Kathleen Ryan, Patricia Ford, Kevin Johnson, James Robert Baynes, Eileen Haintz, Thomas Joseph Mullane, Reg Hayes, John Trounce

THOSE WHO ARE UNWELL

John White, 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.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION ACROSS OUR MINISTRY

DISTRICT

[St Alipius Parish Kindergarten - ECKA](#)

[St Alipius Ballarat East](#) – Emily Clarke, Principal

[St Brigid's Ballan](#) – Jayne Bosworth, Principal

[St Patrick's Gordon](#) – Paul McDowell, Principal

[St Francis Xavier B'rat East](#) – Mark Hogbin, Principal

[St Mary's Clarkes Hill](#) – Clare Scanlon, Principal

[Emmaus Mt Clear](#) – Ethan Corfee, Principal

[Damascus College Mt Clear](#) – Steven Mifsud, Principal

[Damascus @ St Brendan's Dunnstown](#) – Campus

Leader - Karen Goonan

[Saints College Bakery Hill](#) – Troy Strybosch, Principal

[Saints College @ Bungaree](#) – Renee Vallance

Deputy Principal

THANK YOU FROM ST VINCENT DE PAUL

The Ballarat East Conference of St Vincent de Paul Society is most grateful for the generosity demonstrated by the local school communities and parishioners to our Christmas appeal. This coupled with the support for our raffle has resulted in an excellent outcome.

The money raised will help those most in need across Ballarat. Once again, the true meaning of Christmas had been demonstrated by our parish. We were also delighted with the response to our card and calendar sales.

OPENING SCHOOL MASSES

With the return to school the cycle of opening school year Masses commences Monday on the Feast of St Brigid of Kildare with 9.15am Mass at St Brigid's Church Ballan. Students, staff, families and parishioners will come together to celebrate the Feast Day of their patron saint. Mass will be celebrated at St Brendan's Dunnstown at 9.30am on Wednesday February 4th with parishioners invited to gather with the first cohort of Damascus College Year 8 students for 2026 who will spend their term at the St Brendan's Campus.

On Friday February 6th, St Francis Xavier school will celebrate their opening school Mass in the gym at School commencing at 9.30am. St Alipius' Parish School will gather in the Church for their opening school Mass on Friday February 6th at 12.30pm.

In the following week St Mary's Clarkes Hill opening school Mass will be on Wednesday February 11th at 5.30pm. St Patrick's Gordon opening school Mass will be on Thursday February 12th at 9.15am and Emmaus Catholic Primary school opening Mass will be celebrated at St. Alipius' on Friday February 13th at 12 noon.

PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM

Weekend of January 24 th and 25 th	
Supporting our priests	\$1,026
Maintenance of parish buildings	\$418

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

EPISCOPAL ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF THE NINTH BISHOP OF BALLARAT

The ordination and installation of Fr Mark Freeman as the next Bishop of Ballarat will be held on Thursday March 19, 2026 at 11.00am at St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat. The Mass will be livestreamed. Further details to follow.

DIOCESAN CHOIRS – UPDATED NOTICE

Singers and musicians in the diocese are invited to join the music groups which are being formed for:

Episcopal Ordination and Installation of Bishop-elect Mark Freeman on Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 11.00am at St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat. The choir will be in the choir loft for this Mass. Rehearsal times are Sunday, March 1 and Sunday, March 15 from 6.15pm – 8.00pm and on the morning of the Mass.

Mass of Thanksgiving for Bishop Paul Bird CSsR.

Mass of the Oils on Monday, March 20, 2026 at 1.00pm at St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat. Rehearsal times to be confirmed.

Please contact Julie Boyd in the Pastoral Ministry Office to register your interest for any or all of these choirs julie.boyd@ballarat.catholic.org.au or ph. 5337 7159. All adults joining these choirs will be required to supply a copy of their Working with Children / VIT card to the Pastoral Ministry Office.

PROJECT COMPASSION LAUNCH 2026

Please join us for the launch of Caritas Australia Project Compassion 2026 on Sunday, February 18, 2026 at the 5.00pm Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat. Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Paul Bird.

WORD OF GOD SUNDAY

The Church in Australia celebrates the Sunday of the Word of God on the first Sunday in February. Pope Francis established the day, which is devoted to "the celebration, study and dissemination" of the Word of God.

CARING GROUP

The Caring Group will meet next Friday, February 6th in the St. Alipius' Hall at 2pm. Everyone is most welcome to come along to enjoy a cuppa and some good company. We hope to see you there. Please bring a small plate to share.

THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD AS THE ACTIVE SUBJECTS OF GOD'S MISSION

Via Zoom on Thursday February 5th 2026, 7:00 pm.
To register, please [click here](#).

In today's Church, theological competence is not reserved to priests and bishops. Lay faithful everywhere hunger for participation, equal access, and agency. The Pope, bishops and priests on their own cannot fully awaken or actualise the vision of Jesus – all Catholics have roles to play. Synodality is offered as a way to make this a reality.

Current theological thinking is also leading to the broader understanding that all humans are People of God, people to whom God is reaching out in love. Synodality and the heritage of Vatican II call us to invite everyone to discover God's unrestricted love, whatever their circumstances. This means opportunities for everyone to exercise their gifts and callings fully and freely as subjects of God's mission. Fr Ormond Rush will join Francis Sullivan to discuss this and related issues.

LITURGY ROSTERS

The Liturgy Roster for February and March has been published. Hard copies of the roster are available at the sound desk. Thank you to all those who participate in ministries at each of our Masses, your contributions are greatly appreciated.

BULLETIN EMAILS

Last week we found that not all weekly bulletins were delivered. We tried again on Tuesday with the same issue arising in most cases. Today we have been informed that the issue is email addresses which relate to Microsoft. Hopefully this issue will be sorted as soon as possible. We apologise for any inconvenience this has caused. Our bulletins are available on the parish website.

MASS OF THANKSGIVING TO MARK THE RETIREMENT OF BISHOP PAUL BIRD

The Diocesan Liturgical Commission invites people of the diocese to celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving to mark the retirement of Bishop Paul Bird CSsR, to be held on Monday, March 2, 2026 at St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat at 7.00pm. Supper will follow in the Hall. The Mass will be livestreamed – link to be advised.

UPCOMING DATES

Thursday Feb 5th
Baptism Preparation Sessions
Mary Glowery Room – St. Pat's Cathedral
10 am or 5.30 pm

●
RCIC
Parish Hub 4pm
●
Ballarat East Liturgy Committee Meeting
Parish Hub 5.30 pm

Friday Feb 6th
Caring Group
Parish Hall 2pm

Wednesday Feb 11th
Parish Finance Council
Parish Hub 7.30 am

Wednesday Feb 18th
Ash Wednesday

Thursday Feb 19th
Parents Meetings – Reconciliation Preparation
St. Alipius Hall 10.30 am or 6pm

●
RCIC
Parish Hub 4pm

Saturday Feb 21st
RCIA Rite of Election
St. Patrick's Cathedral 12.30 pm

Saturday & Sunday Feb 21st & 22nd
Enrolment Masses for the Sacrament of
Reconciliation

THE RITE OF ELECTION - RCIA

The Rite of Election is an important part of the process of a person's journey to full membership in the Catholic Church community and one which is greatly appreciated by all who participate. This applies to adults who have undertaken formation. The Rite of Election for catechumens and candidates will take place on SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2026 at 12.30pm in St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat. The presider will be Bishop Paul Bird CSsR. At the conclusion of the ceremony all are invited to join the Bishop in the Cathedral Hall for a light lunch.

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

A Message of Hope for a Troubled World

Reflection on the Gospel

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

(Matthew 5:1-12)

Veronica Lawson RSM

We have become so familiar with Matthew's beatitudes that there is a danger of our listening only to the mellifluous flow of language and of failing to attend to the extraordinary present and future reversal that they offer to those who suffer injustice and to those who choose non-violent ways of addressing the pain of our world. With the escalation of violence across the globe and with powerful leaders opting for military rather than diplomatic solutions to global conflicts or threats, it is time to listen anew to these opening words of Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount".

The mountain setting establishes Jesus as wisdom teacher like Moses of old. God's favour rests on the poor, on the gentle, on those who grieve for the pain of the world, on serious justice seekers, on those who know what it means to mercy, on the pure in heart, on peacemakers, and on those who suffer in the cause of right. The repetition of 'blessed are...' (a better translation of the Greek makarioi than "happy are...") provides multiple links with Israel's collection of sacred songs, the Psalms. For Israel's lyricists, God's favour or blessing is on those whose hope is in God, on those whose delight is in God's way, on those who take refuge in God, on the guileless in spirit and on those whom God forgives. The content of the beatitudes echoes the voice of Israel's prophets, especially Isaiah 61. God's spirit is upon Jesus of Nazareth. He brings the good news of God's present and future favour or blessing to the destitute and to those who mourn. The distinguishing mark of God's favoured ones is righteousness or right relationship.



God's favour or blessing on those who live the gospel message comes in diverse forms: the basileia or empire of the heavens; comfort in the face of grief; the earth for a heritage; the joy of being mercied; face to face encounter with God; a great reward "in heaven". If heaven were only a place to be enjoyed in the afterlife, it is little consolation for the desperately poor or for those who are persecuted or misrepresented, to hear that "the empire of the heavens is theirs" or that their "reward is great in heaven". "Heaven" is better understood as a way of talking about God or God's empire of justice and compassion in contrast with the heartless empire of Rome and its modern equivalents. Maybe the most urgent invitation in our present context is to mourn strategically the displacement, through war or climate crisis, of so many of earth's inhabitants who long for the blessing of God's kin-dom in the form of comfort and mercy and a share of the earth's resources. As we accept the Church's invitation to live into the way of synodality (walking together on the journey of faith), we might take time to ponder the meaning of Matthew's beatitudes and the message of hope they offer to those who espouse their vision.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Zephaniah: 1:3; 3:12-13
1 Corinthians 1:26-31
Matthew: 5:1-12

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah: 58:7-10
1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Matthew: 5:13-16



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