



St Francis Xavier Primary School

Newsletter

Monday 23rd February 2026
Term 1 Week 5

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 27th February

Casual Clothes Day - gold coin donations to support Caritas Australia

2.40pm Assembly in school gym led by 3JT

Friday 6th March

Pupil Free Day Literacy PD

Monday 9th March

Public Holiday - Labour Day
Pupil Free Day

Friday 13th March

2.40pm Assembly in school gym led by 5ML

7pm - 11pm Mix & Mingle on lower oval

Wed 11th - Tue 17th March

NAPLAN Testing

Thursday 19th March

Student Led Conferences

Friday 20th March

Interschool Sport at STM (Year 5/6)

No Assembly today

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)

Friday 27th March

Casual Clothes Day - gold coin donations to support Project Compassion

No Assembly today

Mon 30th & Tue 31st March

Year 4 Lady Northcote
Discovery Camp

On the Land of the Wadawurrung People

Dear Families,

Our Lenten journey has begun.

Last week we gathered to commemorate Ash Wednesday, and our students and staff received ashes on their foreheads as a sign that we are entering this important and sacred season in the Church year.

Lent is a significant time for us as a Catholic community. Over the forty days ahead, prayer, reflection and almsgiving become our focus as we prepare for Easter. During Lent we are reminded that our world is bigger than ourselves. We are called to be mindful of others and to consider what it truly means to be of service.

Through prayer, we are invited to deepen our relationship with God. Through reflection, we are encouraged to examine how we are living out our faith each day. Through almsgiving, we are challenged to reach out in practical and generous ways to those in need. The invitation to grow spiritually — by strengthening our faith, making small sacrifices and extending kindness to others — can be demanding, but it is a challenge we are well capable of embracing.

As we journey through these forty days, we might ask ourselves:

What can I do to prepare my heart for Easter?

How can I create time and space for reflection?

In what ways can I be more generous to others?

These are important questions — and perhaps that is exactly what Lent is meant to be: a time to pause, to grow and to renew.

We have received ashes and commenced the season. We are reminded that Lent is a time of renewal. It is an opportunity to look beyond ourselves so that when Easter arrives, we may celebrate with joyful and open hearts. We warmly invite you to join us on this meaningful journey.

God bless,



Mark Hogbin

Thursday 2nd April

Last day of term 1
2.20pm finish

12.40pm Assembly
in school gym

Term 2 (10 weeks)

Mon 20th Apr-Fri 26th Jun

Tue 21st & Wed 22nd April

Year 5 Sovereign Hill
Costumed School

Friday 24th April

Start of Term 2 Mass

No Assembly today

Friday 1st May

Division AFL @ CE Brown
Reserve Wendouree
(selected Yr 5/6 students)

2.40pm Assembly in
school gym led by 4KB

Friday 8th May

2pm Mothers/Special
Friends Liturgy

No Assembly today

Monday 11th May

Division Cross Country @
Fed Uni (selected Yr 3, 4, 5
& 6 students)

Thursday 14th May

Last day for 2027
Foundation enrolments for
existing and new families

Friday 15th May

2.40pm Assembly in
School gym led by 6MM

Friday 22nd May

2.40pm Assembly in
School gym led by 1EM

Tuesday 26th May

Regional Cross Country @
Warrnambool (qualifiers
from Division XC)

Friday 29th May

Casual Clothes Day - gold
coin donations to support
Cystic Fibrosis

Division Soccer @ Ballarat
Regional Soccer Facility
(selected Yr 5/6 students)

2.40pm Assembly in
school gym led by 2MH

Friday 5th June

Pupil free day

Monday 8th June

Public Holiday-King's
Birthday
Pupil Free Day



Invite Us Deeper

Almighty and ever living God,
you invite us deeper into your world, your people, your Lent.

May this time be one of outward focus;
seeking you in those we often ignore.

Help us live a Lent focused on freedom, generosity, and encounter.

Give us hearts hungry to serve you
and those who need what we have to give.

Amen

School Photos

We had our annual school photos at school today. The children certainly shone and we were very proud of them! Thank you to all parents who worked so hard to ensure that your children were neat and tidy, and ready to go!

Foundation Rest Days

Our Foundation students are certainly enjoying their Wednesday rest days, and I know that parents are too! Thank you to all families for supporting these days and for bringing your children in for their interviews with the class teachers. Foundation students will commence fulltime school on Tuesday 10th March (no rest day on Wednesday 11th March).

School Closure Day

Our first school closure day will be held on Friday 6th March. Please note that there will be no classes held at school on this day.

Safety at the School Crossing

We are very fortunate to have Chloe from the City of Ballarat to escort our children and families safely across the road each day. Saying hello and greeting Chloe with a smile is greatly appreciated. What is not appreciated is any form of verbal abuse or negative comment. If you are in a hurry to drop the children off, please leave yourself extra time knowing that Chloe will do her best to ensure safety for everyone in our school community.

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.

Friday 12th June

Division Netball @ Selkirk Stadium (selected Yr 5/6 students)

2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by 5CC

Friday 19th June

Interscholar Sport (Yr 5/6)

2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by 3LL

Friday 26th June

Last day of term 2

Casual Clothes Day - gold coin donations to support Ballarat East Vinnies group

12.40pm Assembly in School gym led by FJS

2.20pm finish

Term 3 (10 weeks)

Mon 13th Jul-Fri 18th Sep

Mon 13th July, Tues 14th &

Wed 15th July

Year 6 Melbourne CYC Camp

Friday 17th July

Start of Term 3 Mass

No Assembly today

Friday 24th July

2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by 4RR

Friday 31st July

Casual Clothes Day - gold coin donations

2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by 3ZP

Friday 7th August

Ballarat Catholic Primary Schools Athletics @ Llanberris (selected Yr 3, 4, 5 & 6 students)

2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by FBK

Friday 14th August

Pupil free day (to be confirmed)

Division Basketball @ Selkirk Stadium (selected Yr 5/6 students)

Friday 21st August

2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by 1GH

Casual Clothes Day – Friday 27th February

We will hold our first **Casual Clothes Day** for the year on **Friday 27th February**.

Students are invited to wear casual clothes and bring along a **gold coin donation (or two)** to support a very important cause.

This month, our donation will go to **Caritas Australia**. Caritas works to support vulnerable communities around the world, helping provide access to food, clean water, education and opportunities for people to build better futures.

As we journey through Lent, we are reminded that compassion is not just something we talk about — it is something we live. By supporting Caritas, we are standing in solidarity with those who need support and showing that even small acts of generosity can make a big difference.

Our Project Compassion focus will continue throughout Lent, but this Casual Clothes Day gives us the opportunity to make a strong start.

Let's dig deep and show what our SFX community can do — together, we can make a real difference.



NAPLAN 2026



NAPLAN will commence on **Wednesday 11 March**. While the official testing window spans two weeks, at SFX we aim to complete all assessments by **Tuesday 17 March**, with a few additional days scheduled for catch-up sessions if required.

If your child will be absent or if these dates present a conflict, please notify your child's classroom teacher as soon as possible.

Foundation/Prep Enrolment 2027 – Existing and New Families

Enrolments for children of **existing** and **new families** who start Foundation/Prep in 2027 are open.

Parents of **existing** and **new families** who have a child to start in 2027 - must complete the **'Enrolment Application Form'** form by clicking on the following link to submit your application:

<https://dobcel.catholic.edu.au/our-schools/enrolments-expression-of-interest-form/>

Please note this is an essential step for existing families in ensuring you child is enrolled in Foundation/Prep 2027.

Enrolments close 14th May 2026



Friday 28th August
Casual Clothes Day - gold coin donations

2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by FLP

Friday 4th September
Interschool Sport (Yr 5/6)
Fathers/Special Friends Liturgy (to be confirmed)

No Assembly today

Wednesday 9th September
Division Athletics @ Llanberris (qualifiers from BCPS Aths – Yr 3, 4, 5 & 6)

Friday 11th September
No Assembly today

Friday 18th September
Last day of Term 3

Footy Colours Day - gold coin donations to support Fight Cancer

No Assembly today

Term 4 (11 weeks)
Mon 5th Oct–Fri 18th Dec

Wednesday 7th October
Year 3 Day Camp

Friday 9th October
Start of T4/Mercy Day Mass

Regional Athletics @ Llanberris (qualifiers from Division Aths-Yr 3, 4, 5 & 6)

No Assembly today

Friday 16th October
Division Tennis @ Ballarat Regional Tennis Centre (selected Yr 5/6 students)

2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by 5LD

Friday 23rd October
2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by 1GT

Friday 30th October
Casual Clothes Day - gold coin donations to support MercyWorks

2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by FTW

Monday 2nd November
Assessment and Reporting
Pupil Free Day

Tuesday 3rd November
Public Holiday-Melbourne Cup
Pupil Free Day



Ash Wednesday Liturgy

On Wednesday we gathered as a whole school community to mark the beginning of Lent with our Ash Wednesday liturgy.

Thank you to our Year 6 students for leading the liturgy so reverently and confidently. They did a wonderful job guiding us into this sacred season. We are also grateful to the staff and families who joined us in prayer.

Receiving ashes reminds us that Lent is a time to pause, reflect, and begin again — turning our hearts back to God and preparing for Easter with hope.

This Week's Gospel – Jesus in the Desert (Matthew 4:1–11)

In this Sunday's Gospel, we hear how Jesus spent forty days in the desert. During this time, he was tempted to take the easy path — to choose power, comfort, or shortcuts. Instead, Jesus chose trust. He stayed grounded in who he was and in God's Word. The desert reminds us that life is not always easy. We all face moments where we are tempted to give up, to take shortcuts, or to choose what feels good in the moment rather than what is right.

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Friday 6th November
Eureka Division Cricket @
Alfredton Reserve (selected
Yr 5/6 students)

2.40pm Assembly in
School gym led by 6JS

Friday 13th November

2.40pm Assembly in
School gym led by 2TS

Friday 20th November

2.40pm Assembly in
School gym led by 4ZA

Wed 25th-Fri 27th Nov

Year 5 Kangarooie Camp

Friday 27th November

Casual Clothes Day - gold
coin donations to support
Ballarat East Vinnies group

No Assembly today

Friday 4th December

End of Year Mass

Thursday 17th December

Last 2026 day for students

Lent invites us to grow stronger in those moments.

A message for families:

The “desert” doesn’t have to be a real desert. It can look like:

- sticking with something when it feels hard
- choosing kindness when we feel frustrated
- turning off distractions and making time for prayer
- saying sorry and beginning again

Jesus shows us that strength comes from trust, not from control.

A family reflection:

What is something challenging our family is facing at the moment?

How can we support one another through it?

What might we choose to “give up” or “take up” this Lent to grow closer to God?

Our challenge for the week:

Choose one small Lenten action as a family:

- Give something up
- Take something positive on
- Make time for prayer together

Small, consistent choices shape strong hearts.



Michael Marshall, **Religious Education Leader**

Wellbeing News



A NOTE FROM MS MENEELY

Welcome to Week Five of our term!
This week we have introduced the Wellbeing Continuum to our children– it is a wonderful way for them to identify how they are feeling and seek help when they need support.
Check it out here:
[Animated Children Wellbeing Continuum](#)

RIGHTS, RESILIENCE AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS (RRRR) PROGRAM

If you have any questions about Respectful Relationships education, you can talk to me, your child's teacher or visit the Victorian Government's Respectful Relationships page:
<https://www.vic.gov.au/respectful-relationships>

COMMUNITY NEWS

Did you know CatholicCare Victoria has FREE parenting workshops?
Click on this link to check out what is available
[Parenting Workshops](#)

CONTACT DETAILS



cmeneely@sfxballarat.catholic.edu.au

READ AND THRIVE JOURNAL FOCUS

Our Read and Thrive Journal topic this week focuses upon the skill of Grounding.

Grounding and Mindfulness can be described as attention training for your brain, enabling you to focus on something without judgement and to stimulate curiosity. Mindfulness can be practised in a number of ways and is something that can be done by everyone – no matter what your age! .

It is especially important in this era of information overload as our attention is constantly being pulled in many directions making us more distracted.

In this edition of SchoolTV, parents can learn the best way to introduce mindfulness to their children, implementing it into their daily lives to have an overall positive impact on family relationships.

Here is the link to your Edition

<https://sfxballarat.catholic.schooltv.me/newsletter/mindfulness>

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES FOR THE SENSES

5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE 

4 THINGS YOU CAN TOUCH 

3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR 

2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL 

1 THINGS YOU CAN TASTE 

Yr 3 - 6 Athletics Day

The annual SFX Yr 3 - 6 Athletics Day was a wonderful celebration of energy, teamwork, and school spirit! Held at Llanberris last Friday, the day was filled with excitement as the students participated in a variety of track and field events.

Every child participated in all of the events with enthusiasm, showing determination, resilience, and excellent sportspersonship throughout the day.

One of the highlights was hotly contested Champions races where the fastest 2 boys and girls from each year level race off to be crowned the SFX sprint champion. Birdie Toohey in Yr 3 took the honors in the girls race, while Noah McGregor became the first boy to claim back-to-back titles.

We were especially proud of how supportive the children were towards one another. It didn't matter where they finished, every student gave their best effort and demonstrated that they had a go, did their best and most importantly had fun.

A huge thank you goes to our magnificent staff for their efforts on the day, and to all of the families who came along to support the event. Your encouragement helped make the day extra special for everyone involved.

Congratulations to all our students for making this year's Athletics Day such a memorable and successful event.

I am busy collating the results and will announce the winning House at next Monday's morning assembly.





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Division Swimming

Last Thursday, we had a small but very capable group of swimmers participating in the Divisional Swimming event at BALC involving several schools from Ballarat and surrounds.

A big well done to Noah R, Levi C, Emily B, Olivia F, Mitchell B, Imogen S and Louie E for your amazing efforts

Every SFX swimmer gave their absolute best in the pool, representing our school with pride and confidence.

A special mention to the boys relay team for taking on an enormous challenge but displaying true SFX spirit and never giving up!

A big thankyou to the parents that can along to support all of the students.



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2026 SFX SPORTS DATES

Term 1:

- Week 8 - Friday Mar 20th - Interschool Sport @ STM (Yr 5/6)
- 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)

Have an awesome week.

Shaun Carroll, **SFX Sport Coordinator**



P&F News

- **P&F Meeting** – Monday 23rd March 2026 – 5.30pm
- **Mix & Mingle** – Friday 13th March 2026 – **BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW!**
Join us for a night out under the stars! Meet fellow parents and make new friends!
SFX Lower Oval 7pm – 11pm
Book your Tickets via Flexi Schools \$25 – *includes drink on arrival, finger food & music*
- **TUITION RAFFLE**
WIN - \$1,500 OFF Tuition Fees – Raffle – tickets available via QR code
or <https://rafflelink.com.au/villa2026fees>
- **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
- **We are on the hunt for Easter Raffle donations please** – *please drop them into the office at your earliest convenience*
- **RYANS IGA COMMUNITY REWARDS Program**
For the months of March & April 2026 – St Francis Xavier Primary School has been selected to participate in the **Ryan's IGA Community Rewards program** at the **Pleasant Park store** – corner Sturt & Pleasant Sts.
If you are in the area, pop in and collect your groceries and put you tokens in our token box.



SFX Mix & Mingle

Join us for a fun night out under the stars! Meet fellow parents and make new friends!

Friday 13th March 2025

SFX Lower Oval

7pm - 11pm



Tickets: \$25

includes drink on arrival, grazing table/fingerfood & live music

Purchase your tickets on Flexi schools

2026 SFX TUITION RAFFLE



**Win \$1500 off
your school fees**

Buy tickets NOW!



1 ticket \$10
3 tickets \$25
5 tickets \$35
8 tickets \$50

Attachments

ASSEMBLY AWARDS 20th February Hosted by 2GJ Theme: Justice

We make fair choices. Justice means being the best person we can be.

We always try our hardest, even when it's difficult, just like Jesus did.

FLP	Peyton Cheeseman and Henry Sordello	4RR	Years 3-6 at Athletics
FJS	Harry Baldwin & Nina Trigg	4ZA	Years 3-6 at Athletics
FBO	Daisy Bye & Lenny Rumble	4KB	Years 3-6 at Athletics
FTW	Ivy Jolly and Harry Stanley	5CC	Years 3-6 at Athletics
1GH	George Ellis and Kenzie Wilson	5LD	Years 3-6 at Athletics
1EM	Zane Carter and Hadley Mullane	5ML	Years 3-6 at Athletics
1GT	Lyla Quick and Louis Dreher	6PB	Years 3-6 at Athletics
2GJ	Blake Pitman and Jimmy Robinson	6JS	Years 3-6 at Athletics
2MH	Ava Kelishadi and Harry McMahon	6MM	Years 3-6 at Athletics
2TS	Max Banwell and Harlee Answer	EE/ Sci	
3LL	Years 3-6 at Athletics	PA	Jude Reus and Angus Morley 4KB
3JT	Years 3-6 at Athletics	VA	Imogen Curtain & Patrick Olechnowicz (2GJ)
3ZP	Years 3-6 at Athletics	PE	
		Tch	
Principal's Award:			

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,
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

1st Sunday of Lent Year A – 22nd February, 2026

MINISTRY DISTRICT MASS TIMES			
Weekday Masses			
Monday February 23 rd	10.00 am 2.00 pm	Funeral Mass for Frank White (St Alipius) Funeral Mass for Margie Wilmott (Cathedral)	
Tuesday February 24 th	11.00 am	Mercy Place	
Wednesday February 25 th	9.30 am	St. Alipius' Ballarat East	
Thursday February 26 th	11.00 am	Estia Aged Care Mt Clear	
Friday February 27 th	9.30 am 11.45 am	St. Alipius' Ballarat East Damascus College Opening Mass	
Saturday February 28 th	9.30 am	St. Alipius' Ballarat East	
Weekend Masses – 2 nd Sunday of Lent			
Saturday February 28 th		Sunday March 1 st	
6.00 pm	Ballarat East	9.00 am	Ballarat East Gordon
6.30 pm	Dunnstown	10.30 am	Buninyong Ballan

WE ASK YOUR PRAYERS FOR:

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Margie Wilmott, Frank White, Peter Cash, Suzanne Olive, Robyn Sexton

THOSE WHOSE ANNIVERSARIES OCCUR AT THIS TIME

Tom Shannon, Anne Kane, John Quick, Jack Gittings, Kevin McGuigan, Con McTigue, Lil Wickson, Con Carey, Williams Ernest Rosenow, Bill Wheelahan, Tommy Simpson, Gert Cummins

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.

LITURGY NOTES FOR LENT

Lent is the time in which the Penitential Rite can be highlighted. Sung responses may emphasise the penitential nature of the season - using either the Greek Kyrie, eleison or the English Lord, have mercy. The Gloria is omitted during Lent as it is festive in nature. It is sung for the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday and again at Easter. The Gospel Acclamation, the Alleluia is not used in Lent. In this season of purification and conversion, the alleluia, "which gives a glimpse of final destiny, is put aside, so that it can be taken up with renewed joy at Easter" and replaced by Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory.

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

PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM

Weekend of February 14 th & 15 th	
Supporting our priests	\$1,002
Maintenance of parish buildings	\$614.20

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

MISSION THROUGH ENCOUNTER

A Lenten Retreat Day – ‘Exploring our call to follow Christ rather than worldly desires.’

A retreat day of Ignatian contemplations of various Lenten gospels – incorporating the Arts (Optional – using simple techniques)

Date: Saturday 14th March

Where: Ss Peter & Paul’s Catholic Church
701 Fisker St., Buninyong

Time: 10 am – 4pm

Bookings: Ministry District Hub by March 9th
ballarateast@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Cost: \$25 (including morning tea and light lunch)

Retreat Facilitator: Anna Schlooz

RECONCILIATION PREPARATION

As part of the preparation for Reconciliation, the children who have enrolled in this program will be presented to the parish community during all Masses this weekend. When presented the children will receive the books which will be used with their families at home as they learn more about this sacrament. The children will receive the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time during the final week of March. Please keep these children and their families in your prayers.

INVITATION TO COMMISSIONING SERVICE

Rev Andrew Shearer-Cox will be commissioned to Pastor the Uniting Church communities of Buninyong, Sebastopol & Meredith, Creswick and Clunes on Tuesday, March 17th 2026, 7.30 pm at Buninyong Uniting Church (302 Scott St, Buninyong). Parishioners from Ss Peter and Paul and St Alipius are invited to attend.

CLERGY RETREAT

This week Fr Justin will join 20 priests of the diocese, together with Bishop Paul and Bishop elect Mark Freeman at Halls Gap for the annual retreat. The retreat will be led by Bishop Tim Norton SVD of Broome, W.A.

BAPTISMS

Alexander Austin O’Reilly
Child of Thomas and Samantha O’Reilly

MASS OF THANKSGIVING TO MARK THE RETIREMENT OF BISHOP PAUL BIRD – UPDATED NOTICE

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 at <https://youtube.com/live/yPV7UjsWoow?feature=share>

PROJECT COMPASSION

Boxes and envelopes for Project Compassion are available in the foyers of all our churches. Please consider taking either of these home for the Lenten Season.



First Sunday of Lent 21–22 February 2026

Project Compassion 2026 shares four stories from around the world. We’ll meet Sisilia from Tanzania, Monoranjon from Bangladesh, Manaini from Fiji and Ahmad from Gaza.

Each of this year’s stories highlights unique challenges, yet they are united by the determination to rise above adversity and to build brighter, more hopeful futures for themselves, their families and their communities.



**UNITE
AGAINST
POVERTY**

this Lent

Please donate today.

You can support Project Compassion 2026 through the donation boxes, envelopes or by scanning the QR code.

Or online at: www.projectcompassion.org.au/donate

Or by calling: 1800 024 413

Thank you for standing with us, as we *Unite Against Poverty this Lent.*

ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF BISHOP-ELECT MARK FREEMAN

Thursday March 19th at 11.00am in St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat. Each of the parishes of the diocese are invited to send two delegates to attend the ordination and installation. In the parish of Ballarat East and Buninyong, parishioners are invited to enter the 'draw' to attend with one parishioner attending from St Alipius Ballarat East and one from Ss Peter & Paul Buninyong. To enter, please place your name on the pages in the foyer of the respective church or contact the parish office, indicating your name and church community.

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

A Marriage Encounter weekend is a gift for every married couple

Every married couple deserves this very special weekend. Time-out for the two of you to focus on your most precious relationship.

You will come away feeling more deeply connected and with tools to help keep your renewed intimacy alive. No group sharing is required.

The weekend is based on Catholic values and couples of all faiths are very welcome.

We are currently offering 2 weekends in 2026. Please check our website for more details and to book your special weekend:

April 24 - 26th

St Paul's Retreat Centre, Wantirna South.

November 6 - 8th

St Paul's Retreat Centre, Wantirna South

Starts Friday evening at 7pm and finishes Sunday afternoon around 4:30pm

Information/Bookings: Please phone **Mercy & James 0409 183 676** or

Email: vicbookings@wwme.org.au Website: www.e.org.au

POSITION VACANT – WENDOUREE PARISH COORDINATOR

Applications are being invited from suitable candidates for the position of Parish Coordinator for the Wendouree Parish. Position description and application detail information available from the diocesan

website <https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/our-diocese/employment/>. Applications close Friday, March 6 at 5.00pm.

UPCOMING DATES

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

●
Monday Mar 2nd
Thanksgiving Mass for Bishop Paul Bird
St. Patrick's Cathedral
7.00 pm

2026 ROUNDTABLE ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY SESSIONS

Venue: Mercy Centre Ballarat East (Gent Street entrance). Dates: February 24, March 24, April 21, May 18, June 18, August 19, September 15, October 13, November 17. Times: Afternoon sessions: 1.30pm - 3.00pm; Evening sessions: 7.00pm - 8.30pm.

To register, text Sr Veronica Lawson on 0408392297 or email veronica.lawson@mercy.org.au

BALLARAT DIOCESE LAY PASTORAL MINISTRY PROGRAM – ONLINE STUDY

The Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) is a growing initiative to offer adult religious education and faith formation anytime and anywhere, online. This low-cost (\$500USD) online study and formation for employed or volunteer lay workers in parishes is available through our partner, Dayton University. The next Cycle, which begins March 9 is a short cycle of 3-week e-seminars only. There are 15 subjects to choose from – find one that interests you! Registrations are open now until March 5. email djurdja.klaric@ballarat.catholic.org.au or ph. 5337 7121.

CATHOLICCARE VICTORIA

CatholicCare Victoria offers a variety of workshops and services for all. View details at <https://www.catholiccarevic.org.au/>

PALM SUNDAY RALLY

The Ballarat Rural Australians for Refugees invites you to support the Refugee Advocacy Network's Palm Sunday Rally in Melbourne on Sunday, March 29, 2026. Program for the day: 1.00 pm - gather on Princes Bridge with banners and placards; 1.30pm - Solidarity walk to Birrarung Marr Lower Terrace (Angel statue); 2.00 pm – 3.30 pm - a full program of speakers and music. More information available at <https://refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au/>

Being Sons or Daughters “of God”

Reflection on the Gospel

1st Sunday of Lent Year A

(Matthew 4:1-11)

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Lent is a time to enter into the “wilderness” and grapple with the mysteries of life “in Christ”. It is also a time of preparation for Easter. It presents us with a challenge to take stock of our lives, to see more clearly what is in our hearts and to discover what might be calling us out of our comfort zones. Today’s liturgy invites us to reflect on Jesus’ forty-day experience in the wilderness. Jesus is “filled with the Holy Spirit” and, like so many humans before and since, is “led by the Spirit” into the wilderness of life to be “tested” there. [“Tested” is a more accurate translation of the Greek than is “tempted”].

Forty is a significant number in Israel’s story: the great flood lasts forty days and forty nights; Moses spends forty days and forty nights on the mountain of God; Israel wanders for forty years in the wilderness; King David reigns for forty years; the prophet Elijah travels forty days and forty nights in the wilderness on his way to Horeb, the mountain of God. Explanations of its significance vary: a round number suggesting a long period of time; a time of testing or trial; totality or fullness.

In Israel’s story, the wilderness is the place of testing for God’s people: “Remember the long way that your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness... testing you to know what was in your heart” (Deuteronomy 8:2). In Matthew’s account, the “devil” is the “tester” or “tempter”, the instrument of God’s testing. In each instance, the test is expressed in terms of Jesus’ relationship to God: “If you are the son of God....”



The Matthean Jesus passes the tests that the people of Israel have failed in the wilderness of Sinai. He refuses the way of special favour from God, the way of status or of self-aggrandisement. He is prepared to suffer whatever it takes to bring healing and wholeness to a broken world. In other words, he chooses the way of God’s empire or the empire “of the heavens” rather than the brutality of the Roman Empire. Jesus demonstrates that he is indeed “of God”. This testing in the wilderness foreshadows later events in the gospel such as Peter’s attempt at Caesarea Philippi to deflect Jesus from his mission and the bystanders’ challenge in 27:40 to prove he is “son of God” by coming down from the cross.

Most people of faith would agree that being son or daughter “of God” right now has more than a little to do with the way we relate to all of Earth’s human and other-than-human inhabitants, the value we ascribe to Earth’s precious resources, and the respect we show for life through our responsible use of those resources. Lent calls us to reject the path of domination or of greed or status or entitlement so that, like Jesus, we may truly be “of God”.

THIS WEEK’S READINGS

1st Sunday of Lent

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

NEXT WEEK’S READINGS

2nd Sunday of Lent

Genesis 12:1-4

2 Timothy 1:8-10

Matthew 17:1-9