



St Francis Xavier Primary School

Newsletter

Monday 27th April 2026

Term 2 Week 2

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

Email: principal@sfxballarat.catholic.edu.au

Term 2 (10 weeks)

Mon 20th Apr-Fri 26th Jun

Wednesday 29th April

5.30pm P&F Meeting
in Staff room

Friday 1st May

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

2.40pm Assembly in
school gym led by 4KB

Tuesday 5th May

Foundation & Year 1
Mother's Day Stall

Wednesday 6th May

Year 2, 3 & 5
Mother's Day Stall

Thursday 7th May

Year 4 & 6
Mother's Day Stall

Friday 8th May

Catch up for anyone
who missed out on
Mother's Day Stall

Mothers and Special
Friends Day

2pm Afternoon Tea in Gym

2.40pm Liturgy in Family
Groups

Final day for Book Club
Issue 3 orders

No Assembly today

Monday 11th May

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

Full winter uniform to be
worn from today

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

On the Land of the Wadawurrung People

Dear Families,

It has been a smooth and positive start to the term, with everyone quickly settling back into the 'swing' of things. Classes are already engaged in excursions, sporting events, assemblies and our beginning-of-term school Mass. Please refer to your year level newsletter and the dates listed alongside this newsletter to stay informed. Our newly designed website is also a valuable and up-to-date source of information about what is happening at St Francis Xavier.



Autumn always brings a gentle reminder of change, and here in Ballarat we have certainly been treated to a feast for the eyes, with the rich colours of the leaves across our homes, school grounds and throughout the city. There is something special in this season that invites us to pause and notice what is around us.

A special mention also to all those who took part in the Ballarat Marathon on the weekend. Congratulations on a wonderful achievement. While I wasn't among the runners, I was a very supportive spectator, cheering on such a dedicated and inspiring group.



As Mark continues with his enrichment leave and walking the Camino across Spain, (where people walk for reflection, challenge and personal growth) he may be far away but our SFX community is close to his heart. Here is a message Mark sent us.

"Hola team!

I have made it to a significant part of my pilgrimage today. At the Akron Cross people traditionally place a stone from their home in memory and as a prayer for those at home. I placed a small quartz rock from the top oval at SFX at the foot of the cross in thanks for the community that I am so fortunate to be placed in. Keeping all at SFX in my prayers."



Wishing you a great week 2 of term 2.

Jane Clark, Deputy Principal – Teaching & Learning



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Friday 22nd May

2.40pm Assembly in
School gym led by FJS

Mon 25th – Friday 29th May
Catholic Education Week**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

Staff Professional
Development
Pupil free day

Monday 8th June

Public Holiday-King's
Birthday Pupil Free Day

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
2.20pm finish

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

12.40pm Assembly in
School gym led by 1EM

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



ANZAC DAY: Saturday saw us pause, reflect and remember ANZAC Day, an important moment in our national story. It is a time to honour the courage, sacrifice and spirit of those who have served our country, both in the past and today. For our students, it is an opportunity to begin to understand the values of bravery, loyalty and respect, and why these continue to matter for us and for future generations. In remembering together, we help ensure that these stories and the lessons they hold are not forgotten.

TERM 2 WEEK 1 MASS:

Last Friday we gathered for Mass celebrated by Fr Justin, a time that invited us to pause and reflect together. His message of peace and hope felt especially relevant in our world at present, offering a gentle reminder of what we are called to bring to those around us. Many of us were also reminded that after the 40 days of fasting during the Lenten season, we now enter the 50 days of feasting in the Easter season—a time of joy and renewal. Here at St Francis Xavier, we are so fortunate to have a parish priest who connects so easily with our community, making these moments both meaningful and accessible for all.

WORKS COMPLETED OVER THE HOLIDAYS:

A special thank you to Jim for the many improvements completed over the holidays: new tiles in Mother Xavier Flood building and the Middle School building, freshly painted tables in the Friendship Garden, painting across the school, new intervention space in the Year 6 area, new storage in the Art room, new stairs to the Mother Xavier Flood building and the organisation of Tradies for the staff car park. Great job Jim!

STAFF NEWS:

As is often the case in schools, there are a few staffing changes taking place at St Francis Xavier, beginning next week. We warmly welcome Stephanie Valentine to our teaching staff, who will take on the role of Technologies Specialist for the remainder of the year. Liam Canny will move into Year 3 as the classroom teacher of 3JT, as Jess Toohey begins her maternity leave. We also welcome Maddy McMorrow back to Year 5CC each Friday for the remainder of the year, and Julie Swan to our Education Support team, where she will work alongside our LSOs one day a week through to the end of the year.

SCHOOL CLOSURE DAY TERM 2

Please note that in Term 2 we have set aside one school closure day for Staff Professional Development. This will be held on Friday 5 June. There will be no classes at school on this day.

PARKING AROUND OUR SCHOOL:

As we settle into the term we ask that all drivers be mindful of children and other pedestrians when approaching or departing from school. Road rules must be followed at all times. Let's work together to keep everyone safe.

SCHOOL UNIFORM:

We have certainly been fortunate to experience such warm weather so late into April. A reminder that Weeks 1 to 3 serve as a transition period between summer and winter uniform, allowing students to wear either option depending on the conditions. From Week 4, full winter uniform will be expected. We are also pleased to introduce the St Francis Xavier puffer jacket, now available as part of the uniform for \$67. All uniform items can be purchased from Noone on Armstrong Street.

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

Friday 28th August

Casual Clothes Day - gold coin donations

2.40pm Assembly in School gym led by FLP

Friday 4th September

Interscholar 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

Foundation Siblings 2027

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



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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

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

Literacy Learning in Foundation

Our Foundation students have been making exciting connections with their Unit of Inquiry, *Family and Community Celebrations* and Literacy. To launch their new class text, *The Eleventh Hour* by Graeme Base, each class received a mysterious birthday party invitation. When they arrived, they discovered a cake with a missing piece! The children eagerly searched for clues around the classroom— following crumbs, solving hints, and identifying suspects (some with chocolate on their faces!). The celebration concluded with sharing cake and playing party games, helping students connect their learning to real-life celebrations. We invite you to explore our Book Snapshot to see what Foundation students are learning.



THE ELEVENTH HOUR, A CURIOUS MYSTERY



ST FRANCIS XAVIER
PRIMARY SCHOOL | BALLARAT EAST

At St. Francis Xavier Primary School, we believe a love of reading grows when school and home work together. This book snapshot is designed to help you connect with your child's learning—through classroom experiences, conversations, and shared stories at home. By reading together, talking about books, and making time for reading each day, you play a vital role in building confident, capable readers.



STORY SNAPSHOT

Horace the elephant is turning eleven and plans an extravagant birthday feast for his friends. He spends the morning preparing games, decorations, and a lavish menu, timing it so the meal will be served exactly at the eleventh hour. Guests arrive and enjoy the party, but just as they are about to eat, they discover the entire feast has been stolen! The rest of the book becomes a puzzle to figure out which guest is the culprit.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Horace the elephant – the generous host
Arthur the Bear – calm and polite
Bruno the Pig – Food-loving and enthusiastic
Chad the Crocodile – Smooth and confident
Delilah the cat – Elegant and refined
Eric the Monkey – Playful and cheeky
Frances the Rabbit – Gentle and sweet
George the Dog – Friendly and loyal
Hugo the Kangaroo – Energetic and bouncy
Isabel the Mouse – Small but observant
Jack the Tiger – Bold and Strong

RESPONDING IN CLASS

Students in **Foundation** will sequence parts from the story engaging in picture retells, group performance, character verb charades and the creation of a story map. Students will learn to identify and use nouns in simple sentences.

THEMES

This text explores:

- Friendship and celebration
- Mystery and problem - solving
- Observation and attention to detail

CONVERSATION STARTERS

How do you think Horace is feeling as he gets ready for his party?
How do the illustrations help us to understand what is happening in the story?
Why do you think following the steps carefully is important when making a birthday cake?
How do people around the world celebrate birthdays in different ways?
Can you think of a time when you used your brain or words to solve a mystery?
Why do you think the guests are so excited to be at the party even before they eat?

IF THEY LOVED THIS, TRY...

Elmer's Birthday by David McKee
Detective Dog by Julia Donaldson
The Tiger Who Came to Tea by Judith Kerr
Celebrations Around the World by Melissa Reve.



Lindy Harty, Literacy Leader

Wellbeing News

Rights, Resilience and Respectful Relationships (RRRR): This term, our social and emotional learning will focus on building skills in **Positive Coping, Problem Solving and Stress Management.**

These important life skills support our children to:

- recognise and manage their emotions
- respond to challenges in safe and constructive ways
- build resilience when things don't go as planned
- develop confidence in solving problems independently and with others

Throughout the term, children will engage in age-appropriate activities, discussions, and reflections that help them to:

- identify a range of coping strategies for different situations
- practise flexible thinking and decision-making
- understand how stress affects their bodies and minds, and how to manage it effectively

By strengthening these skills, we are supporting our children to feel more confident, capable and ready to learn. We encourage families to continue these conversations at home by talking about emotions, modelling positive coping strategies and supporting children to work through everyday challenges.

Have a wonderful week!

Christine Meneely (**School Counsellor and Wellbeing/ MHiPS Leader**)
Contact me on : cmeneely@sfxballarat.catholic.edu.au



Sport/Physical Education News

Eureka Division Football (AFL 9's)

SFX will be represented by 2 Girls and 2 Boys teams at this Friday's Eureka Division Football tournament at C.E. Brown Res Wendouree. Training has been going well so far and the students are eager to play some games and represent our school.

Ballarat Marathon Running Festival

Congratulations and well done to all of the students, staff and families that participated and supported others over the weekend at the various running events associated with the Ballarat Marathon Running Festival. It was wonderful to see and hear the Villa determination and spirit in action at a wonderful event.

2026 SFX SPORTS DATES

Term 2:

- Week 2 - Friday May 1st - 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)

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- 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)

SFX Football Jumpers, Singlets & Netball dresses/bibs

If you have any SFX Football jumpers, singlets or netball dresses/bibs at home could you please return them to Mr Down or Mr Carroll or drop them into the office.



Have a great week.

Shaun Carroll, SFX Sport Coordinator

P&F News

- **P&F Meeting** – Wednesday 29th April 2026 – 5.30pm – Staff room
- **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
- **Milkshake Mondays** will commence next Monday at first break
\$1.50 for a milkshake & freckle/or marshmallow
The P&F are looking for anyone who would like to learn how to run Milkshake Mondays – they will then be put on a rotating roster to Co-ordinate Milkshake a few time each term so that we are not reliant on the same 1 or 2 people running this each week – if this is something you would like to do please contact Lisa on 0412 647 737 and come and learn next Monday at our first Milkshake Mondays for term 2. *Please don't think that someone else will sign up so I don't need to – if we cannot get the volunteers to co-ordinate this each week we will not be able to run this and then the Children miss out.*
We will also require 5 additional volunteers to assist each week via sign up in your class chat.
- **Uniform Shop**
Did you know our Second Hand Uniform shop is always open? Please see the ladies in the office if you wish to look at any items in our Second Hand Uniform shop, or reach out to a member of the P&F to help you with any of your Uniform needs.
All items in the Second Hand Uniform shop are between \$5 and \$10.
- **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 St
For the months of May & June 2026 – St Francis Xavier Primary School has been selected to participate in the **Ryan's IGA Community Rewards program** at the **Mount Clear store**
If you are in the area, pop in and collect your groceries and put you tokens in our token box
- **Mother's Day Stall – Gifts priced between \$2 and \$7** The P&F will be running a Mother's Day Stall between Tuesday & Friday next week for students to purchase a gift for their mum or special person – we will require volunteers to assist in running these – sign up via your class chat
The stalls will be held at first break as follows:
Tuesday 5th May – Foundation & Grade 1
Wednesday 6th May – Grade 2, 3 & 5
Thursday 7th May – Grade 4 & 6
Friday 8th May – catch up for anyone who missed out



Ministry District Newsletter

4th Sunday of Easter Year A – April 26th, 2026

Incorporating the faith communities of Ballan, Ballarat East, Bungaree, Buninyong, Clarke's Hill, Dunnstown, Gordon & Springbank

Priests: Frs. Justin Driscoll & Shaiju Mathew

Staff: Cathy Prunty (Parish Co-ordinator)
Natalie Gleeson (Admin Assistant)

Finance: Jackie Wrigglesworth

Email: ballarateast@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Email: Jackie.wrigglesworth@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Phone: 0437 505 517

Phone: 5337 7128

Our parishes are committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

MINISTRY DISTRICT MASS TIMES

Weekday Masses			
Tuesday April 28 th	11.00 am	Mercy Place Ballarat East	
Wednesday April 29 th	9.30 am	St. Alipius' Ballarat East	
Thursday April 30 th	10.30 am	St Brigid's Ballan	
Friday May 1 st	9.30 am	St Alipius' Ballarat East St Michael's Bungaree	
Saturday May 2 nd	9.30 am	St. Alipius' Ballarat East	
Weekend Masses – 5 th Sunday of Easter			
Saturday May 2 nd		Sunday May 3 rd	
5.00 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

THOSE WHOSE ANNIVERSARIES OCCUR AT THIS TIME

Phillip John Camiller, Laurie Flynn, Reginald Haintz, Carmel Angela McAloon, Jack McGuigan, John McRory, Jeffrey Micallef, Mary Murphy.

THOSE WHO ARE UNWELL

Owen Widdison, Richard Wade

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

4th Sunday of Easter

Acts: 2:14,36-41

1 Peter 2:20-25

John 10:1-10

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS

5th Sunday of Easter

Acts: 6:1-7

1 Peter: 2:4-9

John: 14:1-12

CELEBRATING THE RCIC

This weekend at St. Alipius we are pleased to welcome eleven children into the church. These children have been working with their families and the parish to learn more about the church in the lead up to this very special occasion. Some of the children will only be baptised, while others will receive all the sacraments of initiation. We welcome and congratulate Evelyn, Sylvia, Leopold, Salvador, Alex, Scarlett, Jasper, Quinn, Sonny, Malachi and Sadie. Please keep each of these children and their families in your prayers.

UPCOMING DATES

April 30th

Parent Information Session Eucharist
St. Alipius Parish
10.30 am or 6 pm – Parish Hall

May 7th

Baptism Preparation Session
10 am or 5.30 pm
Mary Glowrey Rooms – Cathedral

May 13th

Ballarat East Finance Committee Meeting
7.30 am
Parish Hub

May 28th

Bungaree Parish Leadership Team Meeting
7pm
St. Brendan's Dunnstown

EUCHARIST PREPARATION



On Thursday April 30th there will be a compulsory Parent Information Session in St. Alipius' parish for parents/carers of children who wish to enrol to prepare to receive the Eucharist for the first time. Parents can choose between a 10.30 am session or a 6 pm session, both will be held in the parish hall. If you know of anyone who might appreciate this information, please pass it on. People with queries are welcome to call the Parish Office on 0437 505 517.

BAPTISMS

Sunday
St Alipius'

Vanessa Edwards
Daughter of Stephen and Elizabeth

Arlo Louie Watson
Son of Troy and Tessa

Oscar Jack & Tom Edward Balkin
Sons of Nick and Danielle

Lucia Candelaria
Daughter of John and Janice

WELCOME BISHOP PAUL

This Sunday, Bishop Paul Bird will celebrate the 9.00am Mass at Gordon and the 10.30am Mass at Ballan. This is his first visit to our Ministry District following his retirement in March, when Bishop Mark Freeman was ordained and installed as Bishop of Ballarat. As Emeritus Bishop, we welcome Bishop Paul and thank him for celebrating Masses with us.

WELCOME SIMON

As part of Good Shepherd, Vocations Sunday, we welcome Simon Zakari, one of two seminarians for the Diocese of Ballarat at the Regional Seminary, Corpus Christi College Carlton. On Sunday morning, Simon will speak at Masses at Ballarat East and Buninyong that Fr Shaiju will celebrate.

PRAYER FOR ANZAC DAY

God of Life, In this season of Easter,
We rejoice in the New Life your Son the Risen Jesus gives us.
You offer us hope. You offer us peace.
We thank you for this treasured land of ours,
Today as we remember the ANZAC soldiers who fought to protect our country,
Help us to strive for peace in all we do.
We make our prayer in the name of our Risen Lord.
All: Amen

AUTHORING THE UNIVERSAL PRAYERS (PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL)

Each week, a parishioner is rostered to compose the prayers of the faithful that are prayed at our Sunday Masses. Thank you to Teresa Fletcher & Allan McKinnon who continue this ministry for the Ballarat East and Buninyong church communities. We also acknowledge the late Sr Berenice Kerr RSM for her commitment to writing these prayers. Expressions of interest from parishioners to join this writing team are invited to contact the Parish Office. Formation in this ministry will be provided. Parishioners from Ballan, Bungaree, Clarkes Hill, & Dunnstown as well as Ballarat East & Buninyong are invited to join this ministry.

In the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), the General Intercessions, petitions, Prayer(s) of the Faithful: lots of ways this section of the liturgy is described. First up is a description of what is intended by this part of the Mass:

68. The people, for their part, stand and give expression to their prayer either by an invocation said in common after each intention or by praying in silence.

69. In the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal Priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all.

70. The series of intentions is usually to be:

- a) for the needs of the church;
- b) for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world
- c) for those burdened by any kind of difficulty;
- d) for the local community.

The intentions announced should be sober, be composed with a wise liberty and in few words, and they should be expressive of the prayer of the entire community.

UNIVERSAL CHURCH MARKS WORLD DAY OF VOCATIONS

This week the Universal Church marks the World Day of Vocations. We pray for families, schools, colleges, and our parish communities around the Diocese, that we will be places of faith, nurture and encouragement to support our young people in their future vocation to the single life, marriage, religious life or priesthood. For the full text of the Message of His Holiness, Pope Leo XIV, for the 63rd World Day of Prayer for vocations, go to <https://shorturl.at/UzWV> Holy Spirit, stir within us the passion to promote vocations to the single and married life, consecrated life, societies of apostolic life, diocesan priesthood and permanent diaconate. Inspire us daily to respond to Your call with boundless compassion, abundant generosity, and radical availability.

Help us to remember our own baptismal call to rouse us to invite the next generation to hear and respond to Your call.

Inspire parents, families and lay ecclesial ministers to begin a conversation with young Catholics to consider how they will live lives of holiness and sacred service. Nudge inquirers and motivate discerners to learn more about vowed and associate commitment in apostolic life, cloistered life, evangelical life, lay ecclesial ministers, missionary life, monastic life and societies of apostolic life.

Ignite our Church with the confident humility that there is an urgent need for all the baptised to live their vocation in solidarity with those who are poor, neglected, and marginalized. Amen.

MASS COUNTS IN MAY

National Mass Counts will take place over the first four weekends of May. Total attendance will be recorded in Weeks 1 and 2, gender information in Week 3, and age demographics in Week

4. Counters please check with your parish for forms.

CARING GROUP

The Caring Group will meet next Friday, May 1st in the parish hall. Please bring a plate to share. All welcome.

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

The Source of Abundant Life for All

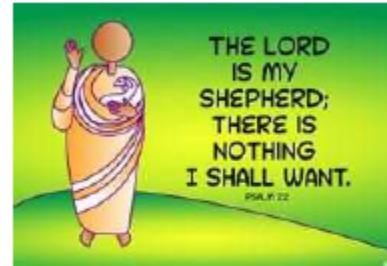
Reflection on the Gospel-Easter 4A

(John 10:1-10)

Veronica Lawson RSM

Sheep were domesticated in Palestine some eight thousand years ago. In biblical times, shepherds would lead their sheep out to graze by day and bring them by night to a communal enclosure, the entrance to which was guarded by a gatekeeper. Shepherds knew their sheep and the sheep knew them. Thieves would have to scale the wall of the enclosure and watch for the chance to get away with a few of the sheep. The loss of even a few sheep was a deeply personal loss for the shepherd and the shepherd's family. Furthermore, the personal relationship between sheep and shepherd made theft a traumatizing experience for the sheep. Little wonder that the biblical tradition is replete with ovine images.

In John 10, Jesus directs a parabolic image of sheep and shepherds and thieves to the religious authorities of the previous chapter. They fail to understand, mainly because they are hostile and choose not to understand. While they claim to shepherd God's people, they do not even know them and have no capacity to lead them. Jesus is, by contrast, both shepherd and gate for the sheep: such are his identity claims. The former claim becomes explicit later when he states, "I am the good shepherd." It follows his twice repeated claim, "I am the gate". The "I am" echoes God's self-revelation to Moses in the burning bush. Jesus contrasts the access he provides as "the gate" with the unauthorized access gained by others "who have come before" him, namely the religious authorities. They gain access to the sheepfold on false pretences and lead God's flock into pastures that fail to satisfy.



In Psalm 23, God is the shepherd of Israel who leads the people into nourishing pastures and restores life to the depths of their *nephesh* or being. *Nephesh* is the Hebrew word used in Genesis 2 for the life that God breathes into all beings. God leads the people in the way of justice or righteousness. Psalm 118 sings of God's gate through which the just or righteous will enter and give thanks. As the gate to the sheepfold, Jesus is the way into safety and the way out to life-restoring pastures. In other words, he is the gate to abundant life. As shepherd, he monitors the movement of the sheep so that they are not tempted to stray along the paths of unrighteousness and destruction.

Finally, Jesus makes a claim about his mission: "I have come that they (the sheep) may have life and have it abundantly". This has a particular resonance at a time when so many lives are threatened by war and by climate change and when life has changed dramatically for the whole Earth community. Abundant life for all is our deepest desire and we must search to discover what that means in uncharted territory. As usual, the gospel text is multi-layered. The images pulsate with life and energy. They invite to vigilance on the one hand and hope on the other. They offer yet another way of celebrating Easter.



**OUR LADY HELP
OF CHRISTIANS
AFTER SCHOOL**
care program

We cater to the needs of all children and offer a range of activities including sports, games, arts and crafts, cooking, creative and expressive arts such as drama, singing and dancing, board games and puzzles and much more. We also provide healthy and delicious snacks.

For more information call 0491 743 126
or visit yballarat.org.au



Auskick is back for Term 2!



Local Auskick centres will be starting across our region in the coming weeks, offering a fun, safe and inclusive way for children to get active, build confidence and learn new football skills.

If your child is interested in giving footy a go, now is the perfect time to get involved.

Keep an eye out for local centre information or reach out to find your nearest Auskick program.

Don't miss out on a great season of footy fun!

Follow the link to find your nearest Centre: <https://play.afl/club-finder-map?formats=auskick%2Csuperkick>



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.