



St Francis Xavier Primary School

Newsletter

Monday 13th July 2026
Term 3 Week 1

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

Email: principal@sfxballarat.catholic.edu.au

Term 3 (10 weeks)

Mon 13th Jul-Fri 18th Sep

Mon 13th-Wed 15th July

Yr 6 Melbourne CYC Camp

Thursday 16th July

Victorian State Cross
Country

Friday 17th July

9.30am Start of Term 3
Mass in school gym

No Assembly today

Monday 20th July

Silver Coin Challenge starts

Friday 24th July

2.40pm Assembly in
School gym led by 4RR

Thursday 30th July

Last day for Book Club
Issue 5 orders

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

Sat 22nd – Fri 28th August

Book Week

Monday 24th August

Book Week Dress Up Day
"Symphony of Stories"

On the Land of the Wadawurrung People

Dear Families,

Welcome to Term Three! I hope everyone enjoyed a restful and refreshing break. While the winter holidays may not offer an abundance of sunshine, the opportunity to pause, recharge, and spend time with family and friends is always valuable after a busy term.

As always, we have an exciting and eventful term ahead. Our Year Six students headed off to camp this morning, and we look forward to hearing about their adventures when they return. On Friday at 9.30am, we will gather in the gym for our Beginning of Term Mass. Families are warmly invited to join us as Fr Justin leads our community in prayer. During this special celebration, we will also acknowledge and give thanks for the rich culture, history, and contributions of our Indigenous communities as we mark NAIDOC Week in our school.

Once again, our term will run for ten weeks, so be sure to pack the winter woollies as we embrace another season of learning, growth, and opportunity together at Saint Francis Xavier School.

I look forward to sharing the term ahead with you all.

Kind regards,

God bless,

Mark Hogbin



Traffic Around Our School

Please be mindful of the traffic conditions outside our school. The start and end of each day can be very busy, so we all need to be mindful of the need to protect the safety of our children and all in our community as we enter and exit the school gates.

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

Trivia Night

Wednesday 9th September

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

Friday 11th September

No Assembly today

Thursday 17th September

School Disco

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

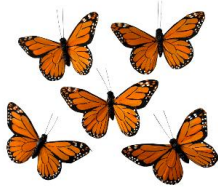
Friday 30th October

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



Prayer for a New School Term

Loving God,

As a new term starts today,
Walk beside us on our way.
Help us learn and help us grow,
In all we do and all we know.

May we be kind in word and deed,
Ready to help a friend in need.
May we listen, share and care,
Building community everywhere.

Bless our teachers, families too,
Who guide and support through and through.
Together as one school family,
May we grow in faith and unity.

Fill our hearts with hope and joy,
As we use each gift You employ.

Amen.



Improvements to Our School Grounds

While we were on holidays much work began around our school to improve playing surfaces and resources for all students. Our paddock play area now has some new and exciting play spaces, and work has commenced to create a new sandpit near the lower oval. We have also commenced work on tidying up an old garden bed near the music room and our adventure playground is being prepared for a new rubber underlay which will create a soft and clean surface for the children playing in this area. Recent rains have slowed down our progress a little, but we are hopeful of completing work soon.

If your child would like to play in the paddock areas or top oval, please note that cover up clothing is required at this time of year.



Year Six Camp Our Year six students started the term with a trip to Melbourne to experience all the city has to offer. We wish our senior students and staff well and look forward to hearing of their adventures when they return.



Congratulations Ms. Toohey!

Congratulations to Mrs. and Mr. Toohey (Yr.3JT) on the arrival of little Maeve Elizabeth who was born during the holidays. We wish you a lifetime of love and happiness as you all settle into life together.

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

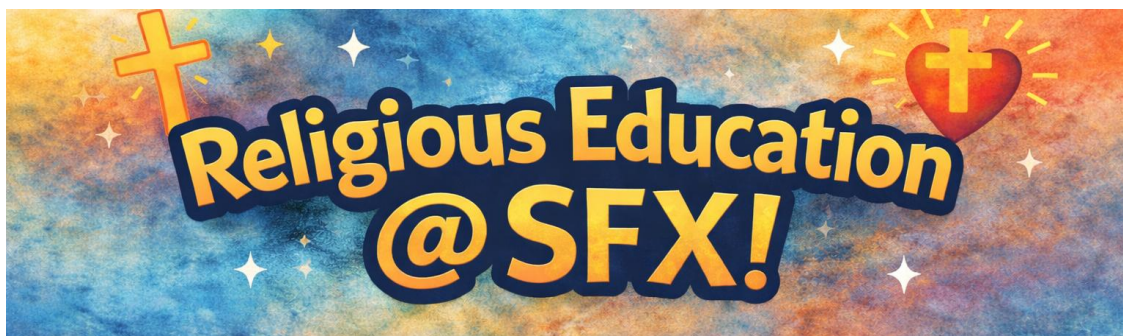
Wed 25th-Fri 27th Nov
Year 5 Kangaroobie Camp

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



Term 3 Mass- NAIDOC Week

We warmly welcome everyone back to Term 3 and invite families to join us this Friday for our NAIDOC Mass, which will be celebrated at 9:30am in the school gym.

This special Mass brings our school community together to celebrate the Eucharist while also recognising NAIDOC Week, a time to honour the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This celebration reminds us that God's love is like a seed planted within us. When we take the time to listen, learn and care for one another, those seeds can grow and flourish.

This Week's Gospel – The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1–23)

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus tells the story of a sower scattering seeds. Some seeds fall on rocky ground, some among thorns, and some on rich soil where they grow and flourish.

This parable reminds us that the way we listen, respond and act shapes how we grow. When we are open, patient and willing to learn, we create the conditions for good things to take root in our lives.

A message for families:

As previously mentioned, this week also connects with NAIDOC Week, a time to honour and celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is an opportunity for us to listen, learn and walk together with respect.

Throughout July, we also recognise Plastic Free July, encouraging us to take small steps to care for our environment and reduce waste.

A family reflection:

What helps us grow and flourish as individuals and as a family?

How can we be more open to learning from others and caring for our world?

Our challenge for the week:

Choose one small action this week that helps something positive grow.

- Show kindness and patience
- Listen carefully and learn from others
- Reduce waste and care for the environment

Small actions, done with care, help good things grow.



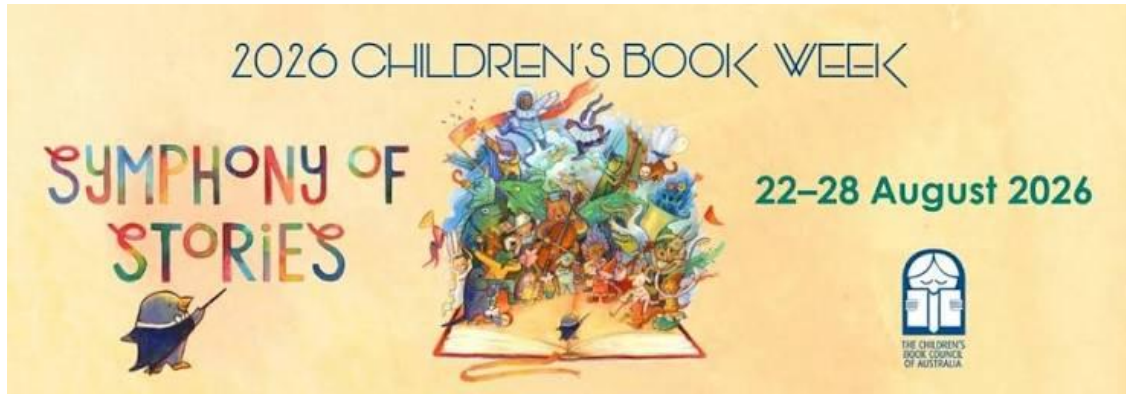
Michael Marshall, Religious Education Leader

*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.*

Semester One Reports on PAM



Your child's school report was made available on PAM late last term. Thank you for taking the time to read it and discuss it with your child. These conversations play an important role in strengthening the home-school partnership and supporting your child's learning through a shared commitment between home and school.



Upcoming Event Book Week 2026

Book Week 2026

Book Week is a much-anticipated annual celebration at St Francis Xavier, inspiring a love of reading and bringing stories to life through literature, imagination and dress-ups. It is a wonderful opportunity for children to celebrate books and the joy of reading. Please save the date, with further information to follow.

Book Week begins on **Monday 24 August (Week 7)**. We will kick off the week with our **Book Week Dress-Up Day** on Monday 24 August. Each year, Book Week features a new theme. This year's theme is "**Symphony of Stories.**"

NAPLAN 2026

Today we received the individual NAPLAN student reports from ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority). These reports will be distributed to families of students in Years 3 and 5 this week. We look forward to another wonderful Term 3 together.



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



School Mornings Without the Stress

After the relaxed pace of the school holidays, getting back into the school routine can be a challenge! For many families, mornings are one of the busiest and most stressful parts of the day.

Why are mornings so hard? Sometimes they can feel like the perfect storm! There are lots of things to do in a limited amount of time. Children don't always appreciate that the clock is ticking, while parents are trying to get everyone ready for school and work. Before long, stress levels rise, voices get louder, tears appear and someone inevitably forgets their lunchbox!

The good news is that a consistent and predictable morning routine can help reduce the chaos and make mornings feel calmer for everyone. When children know what is expected and what comes next, they are more likely to feel organised, confident and ready for the day ahead.

Here are a few simple tips that may help:

- **Prepare the night before.** Pack lunches, lay out uniforms and make sure everything needed for the next day is ready to go.
- **Use a simple checklist.** If your child finds it difficult to stay on track, a visual prompt can be a great reminder. Keep it simple: *Get dressed → Eat breakfast → Brush teeth → Put on shoes → Then play.*
- **Prioritise sleep.** A consistent bedtime routine (including weekends where possible) helps children wake feeling refreshed. Everything is harder when we're tired!
- **Keep breakfast simple.** Healthy options with limited choices can help avoid unnecessary negotiations.
- **Create a 'launch pad'.** Keep school bags, hats, drink bottles, library books, reading folders and Mykiss together in one designated spot to avoid those last-minute searches.

Remember, no family has perfect mornings every day. Small changes to your routine can make a big difference over time and help everyone start the day feeling calmer and more connected.

If you'd like some additional ideas, the following article offers practical strategies for getting children up, organised and out the door with less stress and conflict.

School Mornings Without the Stress

https://childmind.org/article/school-mornings-without-the-stress/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

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



Welcome back to another huge term for sport at SFX. There are lots of exciting events that we are looking forward to participating in, the big ones being Division Basketball and Athletics.

State Cross Country

We wish Nellie and Lawrence all the very best as they represent themselves and our school at this Thursday's Victorian State Cross Country event at the Yarra Valley Racecourse. We expect that the conditions will be tough but know that you both will give your absolute best. Good luck Nellie and Lawrence!

Greater Western Region AFL

What a wonderful day for our Girls AFL team at last term's Greater Western Region finals.

The girls represented our school with pride, determination and incredible teamwork, finishing as runners-up after a fantastic tournament. Their effort, sportspersonship and skill were on display all day and they should be extremely proud of what they achieved.

A huge congratulations to every player and thank you to the families and supporters who helped make the day so fantastic.





2026 SFX SPORTS DATES

Term 3:

- Week 1 - Thursday July 16th - Victorian State Cross Country
- 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) **also a student free day*
- 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)

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 brilliant week.



Shaun Carroll, **SFX Sport Coordinator**

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- **Silver Coin Challenge** – BRING IN ALL YOUR SPARE CHANGE

Starts next Monday 20th July – runs for 2 weeks

How Silver coin challenge works - each class are provided a container, children can bring in coins throughout the 2 week period, the class (1 from each year level) who collects the most amount of money will then have a pizza lunch as their prize at a date selected by the school – thanks to Carboni's

- **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 Mondays a few times 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 Monday 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.

- **SAVE THE DATES:** Trivia Night – Friday 4th September
School Disco – Thursday 17th September

- **DONATIONS/PRIZES needed**

As part of our Trivia night, we run a silent auction as well as a Raffle on the night – if you are able to assist with a Donation/Prize, please reach out to a member of our P&F or leave your donation in the office.

Attachments

ASSEMBLY AWARDS 26th June 2026 Hosted by 1EM Theme: Excellence

We show our personal best.

Excellence means being the best person we can be.

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

FLP	Oliver McMaster and Sage Buenen	4RR	Freddie Brown & Finn Burbidge
FJS	Layla Marshall & Tilly Dridan	4ZA	Noah McGregor & Lachie Purtell
FBO	Hallie Graham and Arthur Madigan	4KB	Harrison Madigan & Tex Brown
FTW	Archer Smyth and Harry Stanley	5CC	Casey Hartup and Jagger Van Langevelde
1GH	Peyton Hartup and Dinvi Kariyawasam	5LD	Archie Gerdtz & Lawrence Wilson
1EM	Lenny Richards and Aiden Graham	5ML	Myah Rivett and Austin Roberts
1GT	Evie Edgar and Atlas Moscaritolo	6PB	Joe Trigg and Minka Henjak
2GJ	Charlie Johnson and Millie Van Gaans	6JS	Jackson Roberts, Lucy Bromley and Betsy Nicholson
2MH	Murphy Daniel and Georgie Dwyer	6MM	Alexis Toohey and Sonny Troon
2TS	Parker Davis & Lola Troon	EE/Sci	3LL
3LL	Billie Dodd & Spencer Manning	PA	Oscar Johnson and Odie Brooks for excellence in helping others during performing arts
3JT	Greyson Broadbent & Daisy Whittlam	VA	Lily Martin, Mason Cadogan & Luciana Schweida
3ZP	Lachie White & Polly O'Loughlin	PE	Stevie Smith (1GT) & George Ellis (1GH)
		Tch	Archie Gerdtz (5LD) & Percy Veal (5CC)
Principal's Award: Layla Marshall and Mila Bridges for keeping our school yard clean and tidy			

Ministry District Newsletter

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A – July 12th, 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)

Finance: Jackie Wigglesworth

Natalie Gleeson (Admin Assistant)

Email: ballarateast@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Email: jackie.wigglesworth@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.

Safeguarding Officers: Ballarat East Parish – Emily Clarke 5331 1816; Bungaree & Gordon Parishes – Cathy Prunty 0437 505 517

MINISTRY DISTRICT MASS TIMES

Weekday Masses

Monday July 13 th	10.30 am	Funeral Mass Jim Stevens (Ss. Peter & Paul's)
Tuesday July 14 th	2.00 pm	Funeral Mass for Rob Sargeant (St. Brigid's)
Wednesday July 15 th	11.00 am	Mercy Place Ballarat East
Thursday July 16 th	10.30 am	St. Brigid's Ballan
Friday July 17 th	9.30 am	St Francis Xavier School
Saturday July 18 th	9.30 am	St. Alipius' Ballarat East

Weekend Masses – 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Saturday July 18 th		Sunday July 19 th	
5.00 pm	Ballarat East	9.00 am	Ballarat East Gordon
6.00 pm	Dunnstown	10.30 am	Buninyong Ballan

WE ASK YOUR PRAYERS FOR:

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Brian Lamb, Robert Rhodes, Rob Sargeant, Bill Spratling, Jim Stevens

THOSE WHOSE ANNIVERSARIES OCCUR AT THIS TIME

Nikolas Kane Barbara, Les Beacham, Neil Carey, Joan Duffy, Joan Graham, Lena Macklin, Alice McCarthy, Laurie McCarthy, Marie McEldrew, Anne Margaret McRory, Peter Saunders

THOSE WHO ARE UNWELL

Owen Widdison, Richard Wade

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 55:10-11
Romans 8:18-23
Matthew 13:1-23

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19
Romans 8:26-27
Matthew 13:24-43

UPCOMING DATES

July 14th
Gordon Parishes
First Eucharist Parent Meeting
5.30 pm
St. Patrick's School Gordon
July 16th
Ballarat East Liturgy Committee
5.30 pm
Parish Hub
July 22nd
Ballarat East
Confirmation Parent Meeting
10.30 am or 6pm
St Alipius' Parish Hall

FINANCES FOR JUNE 2026

	Gordon	Bungaree	Ballarat East
Parish	\$8,916.55	\$1,689.70	\$6,941.71
Presbytery	\$3,678.95		\$4,642.00

Thank you to all who contribute financially to our parishes, your support is appreciated.

TWO NEW PARISH ENTITIES

Following the decree of July 1st, Bishop Mark has announced the parishes of *Our Lady of Mercy and Peace*: Heartland Parish of Craters, Mountains, Lakes, and Plains (formerly Terang & Mortlake, Timboon & Simpson, Camperdown, Cobden & Lismore Parishes) with Fr George Kuruvila MST as Parish Priest. *Emmaus Catholic Parish*: Colac, Lakes to Coast (formerly Colac & Birregurra, Cororooke & Pirron Yallock, Apollo Bay & Lorne Parishes) with Fr Andrew Hayes as Parish Priest.

BAPTISMS

St. Alipius' Ballarat East

Billie Rose and Indie Blossom Dace
Children of Lewis and Sophia

Alice Elyssa Biesek
Child of Benjamin and Ebony

CONFIRMATION PROGRAM – BALLARAT EAST PARISH

Confirmation Preparation will begin on July 22nd with compulsory parent meetings at St. Alipius' church hall. People wishing to enrol their child in the program can choose between a meeting at 10.30 am or 6pm. Children who wish to receive this sacrament must have been baptised and need to be in Year 3 or higher. If you know someone who is ready to be confirmed this year, please refer them to our parish office.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING CATHOLIC?

The process for adults seeking to become Catholic will soon be commencing with the time to inquire for our local church communities of Ballan, Ballarat East, Bungaree, Buninyong, Clarkes Hill, Dunnstown, Gordon and Springbank. If you're an adult who's either not been baptized or has been baptized in another Christian tradition and would like to inquire about becoming catholic, we welcome you to 'come and see'. Please contact our Parish Hub, 86 Victoria St Ballarat East or 0437 505 517 or ballarateast@ballarat.catholic.org.au

EUCARIST PROGRAM – GORDON PARISH

Parent Information Meeting to commence preparation of children for their first reception of the Eucharist will be held in the first week of term 3 on Wednesday July 14th at 5.30 pm at St Patrick's School, Gordon. First Eucharist Masses will be held on Sunday August 16th, 9.00am Gordon, 10.30am Ballan.

MASS AT MERCY PLACE

Please note that From July 8th, the weekly 11.00am Mass at Mercy Place Ballarat East has returned to Wednesday. Parishioners continue to be welcome at Mercy Place each Wednesday for Mass.

FR SHAIJU COMMENCES ANNUAL LEAVE

After Masses this Sunday Fr Shaiju will commence annual leave, returning to Kerala, India to visit family, friends and the Missionary Society of St Thomas the Apostle. Safe travels Fr Shaiju and enjoy the time with your loved ones. Shaiju will return on the weekend of August 8th – 9th with Fr Eugene McKinnon and Bishop Paul celebrating weekend Masses in his absence.

MASS OF THE OILS STARTING TIME



Following a review of the Mass of the Oils this year, the Ballarat Catholic Diocesan Liturgical Commission is seeking feedback on the starting time for this annual Mass, which is held at St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat. Click or scan the QR to indicate your start time preference - 1.00pm or 6.30pm.

SEA SUNDAY: JULY 12, 2026



STELLA MARIS
SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS
AROUND THE WORLD

Sea Sunday and is a time to remember, celebrate, pray for seafarers and their families and give thanks for their lives and work. Seafarers work tirelessly in the high seas throughout the year, bringing us more than ninety percent of the goods we need. Stella Maris Australia is the official maritime welfare agency of the Catholic Church and cares for the spiritual, social and material welfare of all seafarers regardless of colour, race or creed. Knowing that people recognise and appreciate the efforts and difficulties for seafarers, is a great source of comfort and support. Please support this appeal. For more information click or scan the QR code.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY WINTER APPEAL



With fuel, the cost of living and rental prices higher than ever, an unexpected bill, the loss of a job or a relationship break down can be enough to push

someone into homelessness. For more and more people, homelessness is just one sudden crisis away. And this winter, more people than ever before are facing homelessness and poverty in Australia. Your generous gift today can help people at risk of or experiencing homelessness get the support they need to find and keep a safe place to stay. To donate online, go to <https://donate.vinnies.org.au/winter-appeal> or phone 131812.

VIGIL MASS TIME AT CLARKES HILL, DUNNSTOWN AND SPRINGBANK

With winter well and truly with us there have been requests to reconsider the time of the 6.30pm Saturday evening Vigil Mass at Clarkes Hill, Dunnstown & Springbank. Informal conversations at the lunch @ Wallace on Sunday showed openness to having the Vigil Mass at 6.00pm, though for some 'this isn't early enough' and for others 'it's a bit tight on away games of footy'. Following consultation with the Parish Leadership Teams of both Bungaree and Gordon, the Vigil Mass will be 6.00pm from Saturday July 11th and continue for the months of July, August and September.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults continues to be a priority in our parishes. Working with Children Checks (WWCC) are an important part of the safeguarding process and it is our responsibility as a parish to ensure that all those who minister in some way within our parishes are compliant. If you have access to any of the churches in our parishes or you read at Mass, are a communion minister, lead music at Mass, welcome people (just to name a few) you are required to have a current Working with Children Check and the parish office must have a copy of this. If you have not provided a copy of your WWCC (new or updated) to the office, we ask that you do so as soon as possible. This will be followed up with individuals in coming weeks. For more information or help obtaining a WWCC please contact Cathy in the parish office.

CHURCH/GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Given the age of the majority of the churches in our Ministry District, maintenance is an ongoing issue. Thank you to all who provide support in this area, People are asked to contact a member of your parish's leadership team or the parish office if you see something in your church or grounds which needs attention. This is particularly important if the required maintenance is also a safety issue.

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

Called to Connect with the Natural World

Reflection on the Gospel

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time A

(Matthew 13:1-23)

Veronica Lawson RSM

During the COVID 19 pandemic of 2020 to 2023, we necessarily distanced ourselves from others. Some of us focussed on the natural world so that our sensitivities sharpened and our planetary awareness heightened. We became more attuned to the complexity of nature and its rhythms. We observed the diverse feeding habits of the birds in the back yard, for instance, and their communication patterns. There was new and renewed interest in gardening, in the growing of vegetables and fruit in pots or in built-up garden beds. Such changes in lifestyle conditioned us to use our eyes to see and our ears to listen, as today's gospel invites us to do. Jesus' directive, "let anyone with ears listen", is a reminder that we do have ears and that we do not always hear, that we do have eyes and do not always see. Ann Lewin's words come to mind: "Seeing or not seeing cease to matter. You have been prepared. But when you've almost stopped Expecting it, a flash of brightness Gives encouragement" (Prayer is Like Watching for the Kingfisher, 2011).

To what sort of being, of looking and listening does today's gospel call us? The parable of the soil, of the seed, of the birds and the thorns, of the sun and the sower alerts us to Jesus' deep sense of connection with life in its multiple forms. It calls us to examine our connection with the natural world. For a long time, we have focussed on the human character in the parable, a character who evokes an agricultural world that



is far removed from our post-industrial world, but not so far removed from the world of millions of people in our planetary home who live close to the soil and to earth's elements and who struggle to produce the food they need to stay alive. Is the Matthean Jesus presenting in the sower an image of an estate owner or a tenant farmer or even a slave? Or is the reader being asked to imagine the sower, whether estate owner, tenant farmer or slave, as an image of an extraordinarily generous God whose life-sustaining gifts are there for all, no matter their readiness to receive? It may not be one or the other but both.

What of the silty clay loam or red sandy soil, of the wheat or barley seed, of the birds and the thorns and the sun? We know that barley was domesticated some ten thousand years ago in what became bible lands and that these lands are also the original home of the finest bread-making wheat. The birds and the thorns and the sun are for another reflection. We bring our experience of looking and listening and being into dialogue with the parable and search out its meaning for us. We trust that God will ensure an abundant harvest if we but learn to look and to listen to the needs of a planet in peril.

Cafs Connecting Families Group Programs

Cafs (Child & Family Services) offer a range of **FREE** parenting groups online or face to face, to empower parents and carers by providing an opportunity to learn more about children's development, increase understanding of behaviours and learn parenting strategies. To enquire about any of Cafs Connecting Families Programs (*formerly Early Help*), please contact:

family.support@cafs.org.au or **1800 692 237**

TERM 3 2026 GROUPS

Circle of Security – 8-week program: Designed for parents and carers of children aged 0-12 years who want to strengthen their relationship with their children.

Tuning in to Toddlers – 6-week program: Suitable for parents and carers with a child/children from 18 months to 4 years of age. This course gives parents information about their toddler's brain, physical and emotional development.

Tuning in to Kids - 6-week program: For parents and carers of children 1 to 11 years of age. Parents learn different ways to talk with and understand their child.

Tuning in to Teens - 6-week program: For parents and carers of children 12 to 18 years of age. Parents learn different ways to talk with and understand their child, as well as how to help their young person manage emotions and deal with conflict.

Dads Tool Kit – 8-week program: For dads/male carers to learn about how to meet their children's and family's needs.

Dads Tool Kit Intensive- 2-day program (8 th and 15 th September): For dads to learn about how to meet their children's and family's needs

Dad's Baby Bag – For new or expecting Dads/Caregivers to build understanding of baby's developmental needs..

Dad's Tuning in to Kids-For male parents and caregivers of children 1 to 11 years of age. Learn different ways to communicate with and understand their child.