

CATHOLIC VOICE

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SPECIAL
BUSHFIRE
EDITION

Cobargo residents Deb Taylor and Carolyn More found themselves in the fight of their lives in the battle for the Cobargo Church. Page 3

In a time of bushfires, drought and smoke

ARCHBISHOP'S BUSHFIRE MESSAGE

As we all know, we are in the midst of a most dangerous bushfire season.

Already too many lives have been lost. The destruction of properties, livestock and native animals is widespread.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and communities impacted during this time of bushfires. We continue our prayers for more rain in our drought-stricken land. We are most grateful for the heroism of the emergency services.

Our Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn has been severely impacted with the drought and now the bushfires. Also, the smoke haze is virtually a daily health concern for so many people.

Typically, the practical generosity of the Archdiocese has been immediate. The financial twinning of city parishes with fire-affected

parishes and the generosity of so many others is a wonderful example of practical charity. Extra coordination of our education, health and social services is evident to ensure those most in need receive help and our prayerful support.

During my pastoral visits to our South Coast parishes, and parishes in the high country, I have assured them all of our prayerful and practical support. These embattled communities are tremendously grateful for all our concern and help.

The bushfire season and drought are far from over. We continue to pray humbly to the Lord for help in our time of great need and danger. Our prayers are particularly directed to those who have died and their grieving families, and all who are suffering.

• *This is a bushfire message Archbishop Christopher delivered in early January.*



Archbishop Christopher with Parish Priest, Fr Pale Leota saying liturgical prayers at the site of the former Kiah Church.



Lending a helping hand at the Bega Book sale for the bushfires.



Archbishop Christopher visits Rita Conden from Lilli Pilli.



Archbishop Christopher with teachers from the Batemans Bay region

The small church taken by the bushfires

The bushfires that claimed so many lives also took one of our smallest churches, Our Lady of the Princes Highway in Kiah. Archdiocesan Archivist Denis Connor shares the history of the Bega Valley church.

BY DENIS CONNOR

“Our Lady of the Princes Highway” was named by the Parish Priest of Pambula Fr Clarence Lehane. The Kiah church was blessed and opened by Bishop Barry in April 1929.

It replaced an earlier church that had been burnt by bushfires in December 1926. Those fires also claimed the post office and general store. No further information about this earlier church has been located.

The cost of the new weather-board church had been estimated at c. £1 000. A key parishioner in fundraising for the church was Mrs Isabella McMahon, described as ‘one of the most highly esteemed residents of the district’. She was the wife of local James McMahon. At its opening the debt on the church was c. £400.

Fr Lehane noted in a letter



Our Lady of the Princess Highway, Kiah.

to Bishop Barry in January 1931 that ‘Seats, vestment press, vestments and Benediction requisites had been purchased for Kiah’. The church is also noted as having stained glass windows, statues of the Sacred Heart and the Blessed Virgin Mary as well as a set of Stations of the Cross.

Pastoral reports through the 1930s to 1960s indicate that Mass was offered at Kiah monthly, except from 1945 to 1955 when it was offered fortnightly. Mass attendance was as high as 70 around 1940 and dropped to 20-25 in the 1960s.



The site of the church after the fires.

The battle for the Cobargo Church

Amid tragic stories of loss come tales of courage, determination and community spirit. On New Year's Eve, Cobargo residents Deb Taylor and Carolyn More found themselves in the fight of their lives in the battle for Cobargo Church. Here Deb and Carolyn share with the Catholic Voice their account of the day.

Deb: We received general warnings but it wasn't really expected that the fires would come here. We're not really in the forest. You would have thought this town would be safe.

Everyone was surprised. We were watching the *Fires Near Me* app which showed a potential threat of an ember attack but it was a fair way away from us.

We got up at 4am, looked out the window and we could see it. We were very concerned about the older people who live down the street, so I ran to their houses to alert them.

It was totally underestimated.

You get sent text messages if you're in danger. Two texts came at 4.50am. *"There's a fire in your immediate area. Decide whether to stay or go."* And, *"It's too late to leave. You're in immediate danger."* We didn't actually see the texts until later because we were too busy.

We sorted out what we would do, getting the hoses together and buckets. We had known enough the night before to have clothes ready; woollen gear, masks, gloves, scarves to wrap around your head.

It was just the two of us. We've got the presbytery, the church, this convent where we live and Doris who lives next door.

I don't know if you've seen an ember attack but it's just like little bombs that fly through the air and wherever they land catches on fire. Then they fan out in a circle.

There was a north-westerly wind behind it which was pushing the fire towards us. Because the paddocks were so dry, the paddocks just burst into flames.

Carolyn: Paul Tarlington's house up on the hill survived. His family go back to the 1800s. The windows in the back of the church were dedicated to the family and put it in by them. They were made in England and cost more than the whole convent.

There was a shed behind the church that went up. We were trying to save the bell tower so it wouldn't fall on the church. Losing it would have been a big thing, it's living history. The people attending this church now have great great grandparents who came here.

But when the wind changed the trees at the front of the church caught. The only way



Cobargo Church tower saved from the fires and the destroyed shed at the back of the church.

Deb could save the church was to chainsaw the tree down. At the same time the water stopped, which was pretty terrifying. It's amazing how close the fire came to the church.

Deb: About 4:30 everyone else was gone. We've met up with one of the nice fires who was there that morning. We think they dowsed the back of the presbytery with foam. I think we were very fortunate to have that happen before they actually knew the scale of the fire because it just went ballistic.

You're looking down the main street towards Cobargo and there are just balls of flame and you're looking over on that hill, more houses going up ... and hearing the explosion of the gas cylinders.

Carolyn and I were left on our own among these five properties in the street. We love these old buildings. The presbytery is at one end and Doris' house is down the other. Every so often we would look in between the buildings, running and putting out little fires here and there.

At first the hose was working, but for a terrifying moment the water slowed, then stopped. The emergency services had diverted it. It is at that point you need to decide what can be left to burn and what should be saved.

We were lucky enough to have a group captain of the RFS who called up Narooma RFS and they

Two texts came at 4.50am. "There's a fire in your immediate area. Decide whether to stay or go." And, "It's too late to leave. You're in immediate danger." We didn't actually see the texts until later because we were too busy.

put out the presbytery. I thanked them personally after it was all over.

Carolyn: We were literally running from one place to another putting out embers. We could show a very good graphic of it because we were both wearing fitbits. As it turns out Deb should be dead. Her heart rate was in the 190's for four hours. I got eight fitbit awards on the day of the fires. I walked over 26,000 steps, nearly 20km - Deb did over 20km.

It was just crazy. The fences were burning and when the shed at the back went, I rang 000 and we were on hold for five minutes. They said they'd try to send someone but no one came.

Deb: There was an instance when I was on one end of the hose and Carolyn was behind me



Top: Carolyn and Deb at home in their kitchen. Above: Carolyn attends to the roses outside the Old Convent house.

holding it up out of flames so it wouldn't burn. I think I was a bit disorientated.

Carolyn: I'm pulling this hose back, which has no one at the end of it. It's melting in my hands and the actual nozzle is still working though it had burnt. I didn't know where Debbie was but I can't go looking for her. I just had to focus; it was pretty scary.

We knew that if we weren't putting out the spot fires, the place definitely would have gone up. We didn't want to stop then. We've saved the buildings up to this point. We got into the swing of it and not long after we felt it had actually turned

I don't know how but we got through it. Next day I woke up and the weird thing is it didn't feel like day or night. It was dark for days with this red and orange glow. It's a bit like jet lag; you are totally time disorientated.

Deb: We didn't have power, we didn't have water. No one could get into Cobargo, no one could get out.

People in the town were really pleased we had looked after the "Catholic Precinct". I understand

Fr Joe Tran, the Parish Priest of Cobargo had received news during the fires that all the building had been lost. That would have been tragic. We spent the next three days madly cleaning up all properties because it was predicted there would be another wave of extreme weather.

The day after the fires was so surreal. The red. The winds, the hot winds, the red sky. And then the total black. Totally black and then raining ash. You feel so isolated, and I think in shock.

The people who lost houses, there's a lot of them up the back end of this street, but at the same time, there is a bit of resilience.

There was an attitude of "I'm just going to get on with it. We're going to deal with it and get through it and move on." There's a lot of worry about the future of the town, seeing the historic buildings that went in town.

This week there's been a lot of activity: people coming, because the church is open every day and people come in. They are great buildings. That's why people love this street. And you do have a sense of civic custodianship.

The comfort offered by parishes

FR TONY PERCY, VG

TOWARDS the end of her life, poet Anne Bradstreet's library went up in smoke. British-born Bradstreet (1612-72) was the first poet in the modern era to have a book of poems published. Losing her cherished library prompted her to pen *Upon the Burning of our House*, which begins:

*In silent night when rest I took,
For sorrow near I did not look,
I wakened was with thund'ring noise
And piteous shrieks of dreadful voice.
That fearful sound of "fire" and
"fire,"
Let no man know is my Desire.*

Our recent fires have been devastating. Floods at least leave something behind. Fires do not. Nothing is left. Lives have been lost. Property has disappeared almost without trace.

One of our churches did not survive, Our Lady of the Princes

Highway, Kiah, on the south coast. It was opened in 1929, ironically replacing an earlier church which was razed by fires just three years earlier.

Some of our parishioners have lost their family homes. It was not until last year that I began to understand the effect of losing your home to fire.

Retired Deacon Paul Rummery and his wife Jo were out to dinner in December 2018 when their house burnt down. A neighbour took them in. Waking the next morning, they realised they did not even have a tooth brush. Everything had gone.

With so many houses lost, the Archdiocese mobilised her parishes.

Unaffected parishes contributed at least \$3000 to people who had lost their homes. These small but significant contributions have helped families until other relief arrives. The expressions of gratitude have been edifying, to say the least.

I marvelled at the ease and accuracy with which my brother priests and parishioners shared information.

This meant that parishes and the Archdiocese could pay money directly into the bank accounts of those most affected. We have the joy of knowing that the money given is the money received, and speedily.

It is true that in times of crisis the goodness of people seems to be like incense rising to the heavens.

Perhaps people do experience the grace of acceptance, a sense of the mystery of God's love amid the horror and a new awareness of the fragility of earthly riches.

We pray for everyone who has suffered from this calamity. And we hope those families feel some comfort in knowing the 51 parishes in the Archdiocese keep them in their prayers.



Thank you to all the parishes, communities and individuals who have given to bushfire-affected parishes in our Archdiocese

Diocese of Wagga Wagga
St Mary's Parish Crockwell
Mary Queen of Apostles Parish, Goulburn
Mary Help of Christians Parish South Woden
Corpus Christi Parish South Tuggeranong
St Christopher's Cathedral
St Benedict's Parish Narrabundah
Canberra Central Parish
Korean Catholic Community Canberra
St Anthony of Padua, Wanniasa Parish
Holy Spirit, Gungahlin Parish
The Transfiguration Parish Woden North
St Patrick's Boowra Parish
St Joseph's Grenfill Parish
St Mary's Young Parish
St Thomas the Apostle, Kambah Parish
Order of Malta



Archbishop Christopher's pastoral visit



The spontaneous giving of our parishes

Archbishop Christopher spent a week in January visiting bushfire-affected parishes and communities. This is an extract from his homily at St Bernard's Parish in Batemans Bay.

"YOU have gone through, you are going through a traumatic experience and I want to offer you not just mine but the entire Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn's prayers and loving support.

"My visit is a pastoral one to be alongside you, listen to your stories and understand how the reverberations of this trauma are still echoing in your hearts and minds.

"The best way to gather is around the table of the Lord to give us strength as the Lord always does.

"It is good to be together

as Catholics to point out Jesus to one another. Where is Jesus in these terrible experiences? Where is healing? Where is peace? We do that as we listen to each other, not just today but in the weeks and months ahead.

"Australians are practical and generous people and in times of distress, the greatness of the Australian spirit comes forward.

"I have been overwhelmed with the spontaneous "twinning" of parishes where people in our Canberra parishes gave immediate financial help to parishes in need."



Saint of the battlefields to visit fire-ravaged towns

BY CATHERINE SHEEHAN

AS the Relics of St Therese of Lisieux tour a country reeling from bushfires, the Prioress of Canberra's Carmelite Monastery said it was timely to remember the French saint had a heart for people doing it tough, particularly those in the midst of warfare.

"She's such an amazing saint and has done so much for so many people," Sr Mary Agnes told the Catholic Voice.

The Monastery in Red Hill will host the Relics of the French Carmelite saint and her parents, Sts Louis and Zelie Martin, on 28 and 29 March.

Sr Mary Agnes, who has been Prioress for 23 years, hopes the visit will bring "much comfort" to people at this difficult time.

The 91 year-old Sister also expressed a desire to see the forgotten stories of St Therese helping those in need brought to light once more. In particular, the once well-known reports of French soldiers during the First World War who claimed they had seen the saint walking through the battlefields, even though she had died in 1897, long before the War broke out in 1914.

"It was particularly during the First World War when that terrible fighting on the Western Front was raging that she would appear on the battlefields," Sr Mary Agnes said.

The 40 reported apparitions were recorded in a series of books titled Shower of Roses and published in 1920.

The books detail how the saint appeared to soldiers amid the blood and mire of the trenches, providing encouragement, comfort and protection. They nicknamed her their "little sister of the trenches".

"Actually it was the soldiers who petitioned the Pope to beatify her, that's where it all came from," Sr Mary Agnes said. "These things are forgotten, I don't know why. It's a wonderful story and it needs to be brought to light."

When St Therese's Relics first visited the monastery in 2002, enormous crowds flocked to venerate "in great reverence, joy and awe", Sr Mary Agnes said, with many returning to the



Sr Mary Agnes at the Carmelite Monastery in Red Hill where she has been Prioress for 23 years.

sacrament of Confession.

Kevin Croker, coordinator of the 2020 Relics tour through the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese, recalled the large number of people wanting to attend Reconciliation during the last visit.

There was a "mystical" sense, he said, that the saint was drawing people back to the sacrament.

"It was a joyous celebration with standing room only to venerate the relics at the Cathedral," Mr Croker said.

"And school children were lining the streets to welcome the relics."

During the 2002 visit, Mr Croker ensured the Relics made an unscheduled stop at the Mount St Joseph Nursing Home in Young where an elderly Carmelite Sister was living.

Sr John of the Cross, who was in her 90s at the time, was able to silently venerate the relics, he said, before she passed away peacefully that night.

This year the Relics are scheduled to visit 10 parishes in the Archdiocese from March 25 to April 1.

"Given the devastating fires and subsequent loss of life

across our country, the visit of the Relics to the region of Bega and Cooma parishes will be especially relevant," Mr Croker said.

Parish Priest at St Patrick's in Bega, Fr Luke Verrell, said the "presence" of St Therese could potentially help people in the area to move on following the devastation of the fires.

While Bega was not hit directly, the town has suffered due to fires in neighboring towns, particularly Bemboka.

"Bega was affected mostly in terms of taking people who had been evacuated, from Eden, Merimbula, Bermagui, Bemboka and other places," Fr Luke said. "We had 3,000 in the show-ground at one stage."

The town also endured 24 hours of complete darkness, he said, when the fire front first struck on New Year's Eve.

"The fires were just continually burning," Fr Luke said. "It was hard for the firefighters, so black they didn't know where the fire front was."

"Everyone has been affected with the

horror of the weather and the doom of the impending fires. Everyone has gone through the unease of not knowing what's going to happen."

While his parishioners are still coming to terms with the tragedy, Fr Luke said the visit of the Relics of St Therese and her parents to the parish on March 30 could help people find some healing.

"There's a great love for her which goes to show there's a true relationship there," Fr Luke said. "People feel her presence and her closeness."

"The saints are our friends and when you look at someone who has lived a good holy life, yes it does encourage us to be like them but also it's a source of grace. Her good life opens the doors of heaven and makes heaven available for all of us. It's a great source of joy."

Go to page 10 for the full Itinerary for the visit of the relics of St Therese and her parents, Saints Louis and Zelie Martin to the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn





Archbishop's Message
Archbishop Christopher Prowse

2020 - Plenary Council Pilgrimage

EITHER directly or indirectly we have begun already our Plenary Council Pilgrimage in Australia. Directly – our representatives coming together in Adelaide (October 2020) and then Sydney (2021) is approaching. Indirectly – our gatherings of all those interested throughout Australian parishes and communities is now well advanced.

I can only – once again – encourage you to participate in our pilgrimage journey together, to where the Holy Spirit is leading the Australian Catholic Church in these times. How can we become a more Christ-centred Church?

Through Baptism, we all become participants in the mission of Jesus in His Church. This mission of Jesus has three aspects according to our ancient Tradition – sanctifying (priest), prophetic (prophet) and governing (King).

GOVERNANCE

Much emphasis has been given to the governing (Kingly) office of Jesus' mission. Clearly, the sex abuse scandal raises this dimension. However, even without this scandal in Australia, society's aggressive secularism demands governing structures and foundational attitudes that are both transparent and accountable. So much of the helpful feedback so far is focussed on governance issues. We are grateful. This is surely a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

SANCTIFYING

When I attended the spectacularly successful Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Perth (Dec 2019), it was clear to everyone that the almost

6,000 new Millennial Catholics from throughout Australia were focusing on another aspect of Christ's Mission: the sanctifying (priestly) dimension.

The youth took for granted that the Catholic Church is to be transparent and accountable in Her governance. Yet, their incredible thirst and hunger for Jesus in Scripture and Tradition (especially our Sacramental life) was a great surprise to others.

Their insistence was for the Catholic Church in Australia to re-discover with the young a new and vibrant evangelising energy of the Holy Spirit. Just when many were surmising that the young had abandoned the Church, the opposite seems to be happening! The Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation were in great demand. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament (long periods of Ritual Silence) were a highlight for many.

It is especially pleasing to know that Regional Youth movements through large parts of Australia have now reached a certain level of sophistication. Returning from national (or international) youth kerygmatic festivals youth are able now to engage in the essential catechetical formation directed at missionary discipleship when they return to their home dioceses.

PROPHETIC

During the Perth Youth Festival, the third dimension of Christ's mission became, for me at least, manifest in a most subtle manner. It was through the considerable presence of so many youth from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. The prophetic (prophet) dimension

of Christ's mission was heard in their essential "voice" for the future of the Catholic Church in Australia.

I recall participating in several Plenary Council – "Listen and Discern Youth gatherings." One had a good number of Aboriginal youth present. The affirming atmosphere of the festival gave them extra confidence to share openly their hopes and anxieties. Their sharings were prophetic. How can we be the Church that Jesus wants us to be without allowing the Holy Spirit to speak through this ancient culture in our midst who continue to be marginalised in our land of plenty? There was no doubt about their love of the Catholic Church and their desire to be active in Her future here in this new but ancient land.

THE HEAD, THE HEART AND THE HANDS

Pope Francis often talks about the Church's mission embracing together the head, the heart and the hands. After all, we are the one Body of Christ. Let us avoid any fragmentation of our tri-partite Baptismal Mission of priest, prophet and King. We need a logical and pragmatic HEAD to embrace the kindly/governance dimension. We ask for a HEART that is open to the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit, to a conversion, like the youth. We pray too for HANDS that are ready to serve the marginalised and prophetic voice in our midst (especially the first Australians).

This is the Plenary Council worthy of the Lord's blessing!

Archbishop's Diary - February 2020

SUNDAY, 2 11.00am Mass, Feast of Senior Santo Nino, St Christopher's Cathedral

TUESDAY, 4 7.30am Prayer Opening of 2020 Parliamentary Year, St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Forrest
12.15pm Mass, St Christopher's Cathedral

SUNDAY, 9 Installation Mass for Fr Lolesio Gisa, St Anthony's Church, Cootamundra

TUESDAY, 11 4.00pm Blessing of the Australian Catholic University Health Science Facilities, Dickson

THURSDAY, 13 7.00pm Prayer Service, Community of the Risen Lord Conference, St Francis Xavier College, Berwick

SATURDAY, 15 – SUNDAY, 16 "Strength in Weakness" Conference, Melbourne

WEDNESDAY, 19 10.00am Diocese of Wagga Wagga Consultors
THURSDAY, 20 9.00am Marist College Commencement Mass, Pearce

FRIDAY, 21 9.00am Bishop's Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry, Sydney

SATURDAY, 22 12 Noon, National Day of Prayer and Fasting, Parliament House, Canberra

SUNDAY, 23 8.00am Mass, St Christopher's Cathedral

WEDNESDAY, 26 10.00am Project Compassion launch, St John Paul II College, Nicholls.
12.15pm Ash Wednesday Mass, St Christopher's Cathedral

THURSDAY, 23 6.00pm Book launch "*Leaning into the Spirit*", Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Barton

IN THIS Edition



One Mission



Inviting young people to Belong, Believe, Become



FEATURE: St Therese of Lisieux



Living among poverty and plenty



Offering a healing touch, today, next week and next year

New Catholic Voice editor

NEWSPAPER journalist Felicity de Fombelle has been appointed editor of the *Catholic Voice*.

A mother-of-four, Felicity began her journalism career at *The Sun* newspaper in Melbourne in 1990 and covered state and federal politics. She was a reporter in London and has spent more than 15 years working as a federal political staffer.

For the past year Felicity has been the Media and Policy Adviser at the National Catholic Education Commission.

Felicity starts as *Catholic Voice* editor on February 4.



EDITORIAL TEAM: communications@cg.org.au
ADVERTISING: jeanine.doyle@cg.org.au
ADDRESS: GPO Box 3089 Canberra ACT 2601
www.catholicvoice.org.au

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Cover picture: Deb Taylor and Carolyn More outside Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church, Cobargo

Restoring a unique Goulburn beauty

BY STAFF WRITERS

A TOTAL of \$5 million will be spent by the Archdiocese to continue restoration work of the unique Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral in Goulburn.

The Cathedral has national and international significance as the only greenstone building of its type in the world.

The Cathedral is also important to the Archdiocese because it was the seat of the former Diocese of Goulburn that began in 1864, which then became the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn in 1948.

The Diocese of Goulburn began to serve the mostly Irish Catholic families of the south coast, southern highlands and south-west areas of New South Wales.

Former parish priest and now Vicar-General Fr Tony Percy said Bishop Lanigan was enthroned in 1866 and served for 33 years. He built the Cathedral, which was the seat of the Diocese for almost 85 years.

“The restoration has been underway for 30 years and was started by Fr Laurie Blake,” Fr Tony said.

“About \$4 million has already been spent and fortunately the most important jobs have been done to secure the building which had a huge problem with rising damp.

“There is now some more structural work and then we can move inside and do a beautiful job of restoring that grand old cathedral.

“We also want to improve and beautify the grounds so families can visit not just the building but enjoy the grounds, perhaps pray the Rosary and have the Stations of the Cross, to be engaged spiritually. We will explore all of these options.”

A new committee to be run by the Archdiocese will oversee the next stage of the restoration project. Its membership is due to be announced this month and work will begin in March.

Fr Tony said there would be a Mass at the Cathedral, to be celebrated by Archbishop Prowse, to acknowledge all the donors who have contributed to the project over the last 30



Top: Workers put the finishing touches to the copper shingle spire.
Middle: Restoration of St Peter and Paul's Cathedral.
Above: An original sketch of the Cathedral.

years plus the many workers and parishioners.

“With Goulburn growing in population, this project will be a major boost to our faith community and the wider community,” Fr Tony said.

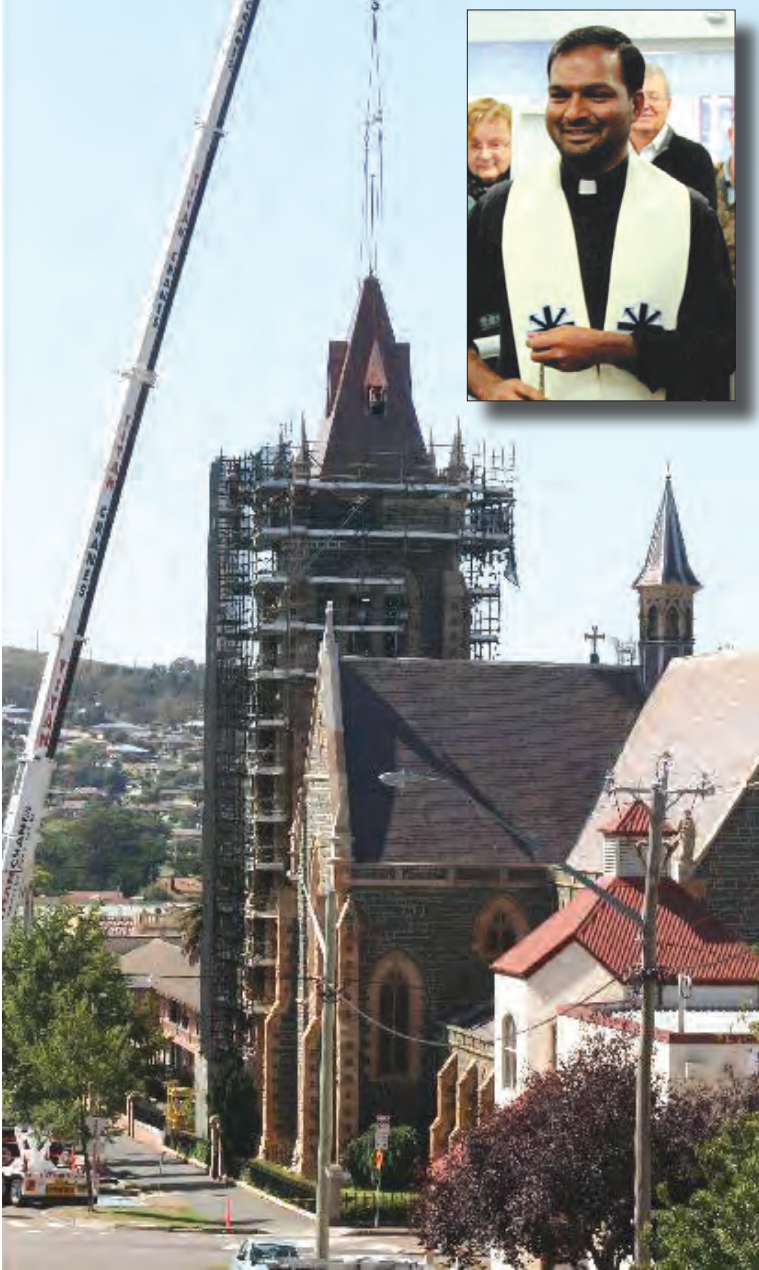
“There are two other fine, beautiful churches in Goulburn, the Anglican Church and the Uniting Church.

“We hope to make our

Cathedral a place of pilgrimage. We want to make it a Minor Basilica and need to apply to Rome for that.

“Pilgrimages provide people of faith with places where they can be refreshed and comforted and challenged by the word of God.”

The Archdiocese hopes the restoration project will be complete within three years.



Top: Fr Joshy Kurien, Parish Priest at Goulburn.
Above: Lifting the copper shingle spire into place.

To donate to the restoration appeal, contact the Archdiocesan Office 02 6239 9800. Donations are tax deductible through the National Trust.

Every vocation is an exodus from self ... It leads us on a journey of Adoration of the Lord ... and service to him in our brothers and sisters POPE FRANCIS

Are you considering a vocation as a priest in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn? If so please contact Fr Paul Nulley paul.nulley@cg.org.au




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“It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelization unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him . . . ” Evangelii Gaudium, #266

BY MGR JOHN WOODS



In 2017 Catholic schools educated 62.2 million students worldwide, many of whom were not Catholic. Since European settlement, the Australian Church has responded to a changing education landscape. In NSW rudimentary education was initially provided by individuals. The introduction of government funding for both public and denominational schools ended for the latter in 1880. As a result, Catholic schools were without government assistance and staffed almost entirely by religious sisters and brothers until ‘State Aid’ was granted some 80 years later, following the symbolic ‘Goulburn Catholic Schools Strike’ of 1962.

Catholic Schools further the mission of the Church, the mission of Jesus. One might speak of the Church’s mission as being to Witness (to teach), to Celebrate (to sanctify) and to Enable (to govern) for the sake of the reign of God. These three related aspects encompass the understanding of Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King with whom the individual is called into relationship as part of the pilgrim People of God.

In essence, Catholic Schools are evangelising communities founded on Jesus Christ, where faith and a way of life in a Catholic ethos are proclaimed and experienced in the pursuit of educational excellence for the fostering of ‘integral human development’. The life of the school points to the story of salvation manifest in the Church’s liturgy, especially the Mass and

one’s spirituality arising, not forgetting the governance and pastoral outreach of the Church otherwise (cf. CatholicCare, Marymead and Vineries) in service of the common good.

In our archdiocese 25,000 students attend one of the 56 archdiocesan or ‘systemic’ schools supported by the Catholic Education (CE) Office, or one of the three congregational schools (St Edmund’s, Marist and Daramalan). There are eight Early Learning Centres. The budget of \$330 million for CE comes from parents and the Federal, NSW and ACT Governments and educates students across an area 30 per cent bigger than Tasmania.

Legislation prevents cross-funding between NSW and ACT schools. The Church has been grateful to government for recent engagement around proposed religious freedom legislation. Collaboration with state and national ecclesial bodies as well as the commitment of the 152 CE office staff ensure that our schools and 1825 full time teachers and support staff are well resourced. The response to the recent bushfires highlighted close collaboration between the office and schools in service of the local community.

CE is addressing particular challenges with respect to teacher performance, student achievement and government funding. For many people, education is a product to be purchased (or not) and some Catholics do not maintain the tribal affiliations of their forebears. Government funding is problematic longer term. What should be the future



Students at St Benedict’s Primary, Narrabundah.

footprint of Catholic education, particularly in the ACT? These and other issues challenge the Archdiocesan Catholic Education Commission in supporting the CE Director Ross Fox and in making recommendations to Archbishop Christopher.

In May Pope Francis will host an international gathering to affirm the value of education. Foundational to it will be the notion of ‘integral human development’, predicated on listening and sharing in the belief that the Church has much to bring to the table. The Church is anything but a ghetto; so too a Catholic school.

The purpose of CE is “to build Catholic learning communities of hope, joy and wonder where all are welcomed

and inspired to grow to their potential.” This openness to all is reflected in over 30 per cent of students being other than Catholic. Combined with the majority of Catholic students and their families not regularly identifying with the parish community and there is a rich field for evangelisation.

How might parents as ‘first teachers’ be assisted other than at times of sacramental preparation? A particular challenge is to teach religion and to form people to be religious: to know and to witness in a manner engaging head, heart and hands. The ‘Catholic Schools Youth Ministry Australia’ (CSYMA) has had wide appeal and seeks the same in a parish setting. Again, closer collaboration between

School Councils and Parish Pastoral Councils is called for. The negative impact of the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse and the resultant call for transparency and accountability in Church governance and the cultural emphasis on individuality and relativism have been noted in discussions leading to the Plenary Council.

Nonetheless, the strength of the Church is always in relationships. Only together can our families, parishes and local and regional schools build on a rich legacy so that in Christ we “might have life and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10).

• **Monsignor John Woods**
is Vicar for Education

Anything but an Ordinary Time

BY SHARON BOYD



AFTER the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the liturgical calendar turns to the season of Ordinary Time where the liturgical colour is green.

With much of our country suffering drought and bushfires, our eyes this summer have become accustomed to shades of browns and reds. In some parts of the country that have had rain, we welcome shoots of green transforming our scared landscape.

The new growth brings relief and hope for better things to come.

Likewise green in the liturgical calendar shifts our attention to the ministry of Jesus after his Baptism by John the Baptist.

Jesus’ earthly ministry was a short three years and it is this timeframe that we journey in through the season of Ordinary Time. In regular parlance, when something is referred to as being “ordinary” it is a disparaging comment. The multiple of the

loaves and fishes and the healing of the sick and lame by Jesus is anything but “ordinary”.

This liturgical season takes its name from being “ordered” in that we have 33 Sundays in Ordinary Time spread throughout the liturgical calendar, broken or interrupted by Lent, Easter and returning after Pentecost Sunday, reaching its conclusion with the beginning of Advent.

These liturgical seasons have a particular focus (e.g. penitential, the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ), whereas Ordinary Time focuses on those

three years when Jesus walked the earth mingling with the likes of you and me.

As the colour green symbolises new growth, so too does Ordinary Time call us to grow in our faith and commitment to Jesus. To know someone we need to spend time with them or hear from others who knew them.

This is what the New Testament gives us; opportunities to hear these great stories of Jesus and stumbling disciples. The Hebrew scriptures that we hear in the First Reading and Responsorial Psalms give us the stories and

hymn that shaped Jesus; these are our heritage along with our Jewish brothers and sisters. Stories shape our identity, of who we are and who we are becoming.

With more hot weather ahead, may our hope and faith be nourished and sustained as we journey through the season of Ordinary Time where the Church adorns herself in the beautiful colour of green.

• **Sharon Boyd** *is a Specialist in Liturgy Education at ACU’s Centre for Liturgy*

Inviting youth to belong, believe and become

BY HUW WARMENHOVEN

WHERE do you belong?
What do you believe?
Who do you want to become?

These are the questions that will guide the Archdiocese as it seeks to realise its vision for youth and young adults: that all would come to know they have been created out of love, for a life of love, by a God of love.

To realise the aspirations that lie beneath these questions, the Archdiocese will invite young people to **Belong** to the Church (2020), **Believe** in Christ (2021) and **Become** a Disciple (2022) over the next three years.

This will include a focus on each of the three great truths of Christianity that Pope Francis shares in *Christus Vivit*:

- God Loves,
- Christ Saves,
- He is Alive and I am Alive.

Youth Minister Christopher Gilroy says that at the heart of this vision is “a calling to give young people a vision of faith relevant to our time, in 2020”. “We want to help young people clearly see that they belong



Enthusiastic Youth Ministers

to the Church, that are loved beyond measure and Christ has great plans for each of them,” Christopher said.

But how? The next three years will include a focus on

identifying key ‘entry points’ such as our Catholic primary and secondary schools and University chaplaincies, and supporting discipleship pathways for our young people to enter into the

life and mission of the broader Church, including our parishes, movements and communities.

Practically, this means deepening the Junior and Youth Ministry across our Catholic school and parish communities and exploring avenues for the development of young adult ministry.

This will draw on more Youth Ministers, with more than 25 to be employed across the Archdiocese in 2020, across these communities. Finally, a greater focus on leadership formation will be explored, to continue to form those at forefront of the faith in our Archdiocese.

Speaking on this new generation of leaders, including Youth Ministers coming from within our Archdiocese, Chiara Catanzariti said that she is “so excited to join with them this coming year to proclaim the Gospel by our lives, calling those around us to know they belong to the Church!”

• **Huw Warmenhoven is Archdiocesan Youth Minister Coordinator.**
huw.warmenhoven@cg.org.au

Key 2020 Events

Youth Ministry Equipping School:
27th February - 1 March

Cultural Festival:
1 March

SHINE Youth Gathering:
7 August

Ignite Conference:
1 - 4 October

Youth Pilgrimage and Marian Procession:
25 October

ILLUMINATE Junior Gathering: 20 November

To find out more 2020 dates for youth in our Archdiocese do to <http://bit.ly/CGYOUTH2020>



Weston Creek Parish Youth Leadership Team



Youth Ministers Nathan Piper and Anjaue.



Youth Minister Theresa Corson



St Therese of Lisieux relics touring Australia with parents

Over one week in late March the relics of one of the most loved saints of modern times – St Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower - will tour churches, a Carmelite monastery and one school in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

The relics of St Therese of Lisieux

BY MOST REVEREND GREGORY HOMEMING OCD, BISHOP OF LISMORE

The relics of St Therese of Lisieux and her parents St Louis and St Marie-Azelie (Zelie) will be taken through a number of dioceses early in 2020. Many people wonder why the Church persists in what seems to be a mediaeval piety, an archaic practice. Why tour the remains of saints and make them available for the veneration of the faithful? Is this an outdated superstition?

Despite the scenes of intense religious devotion around relics, there is certainly nothing magical or talisman like about the relics of saints. Of themselves relics are not holy. It is more correct to say, they are the remains of a holy person, a saint, and on account of their connection to that holy person are revered.

In Australia we are used to caring for and respecting sacred sites. A place may be sacred for a number of reasons. It may be a place of spiritual significance to a people who identify with and are defined by that place; as is the case with many indigenous Australians. It may be a place where an important event took place and now is part of the national identity, such as Gallipoli. It may be a building in which over hundreds of years people have prayed and worshiped, such as a church or cathedral.

We all have souvenirs of people we have loved, insignificant items of little value, but to us they are treasured gems which move us to remember a loved one or an event. When the item attaches to a person it can bring to mind the attributes and goodness of the person. In some cases it can even encourage us to live according to higher values. The relics of saints fall into this category. Relics are physical remains which connect us with the goodness and holiness of the saint. They remind us of the saint and through the saint move us to live better lives.

The saints who are “visiting” Australia are a mother, a father and their daughter. St Louis and

St Zelie are the only married couple to have been canonized, and they have a daughter who was called by Pope St Pius X, the greatest saint of the modern times. St Therese, who died in 1897, was a woman of precocious virtue and prayer. She says, “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.” She shows us that holiness is simple and hidden, it does not seek recognition but turning away from self to God, it makes within the human heart a place for Jesus.

As is the case with Jesus, holiness and goodness does not exist in a vacuum. It has a context. In Jesus’ case the context was the holy family. Extraordinary goodness does not exist in isolation. If you see a good child, you can generally presume that this goodness comes through the parents. Jesus was taught by Mary and St Joseph. St Therese is the daughter of holiness. The Church recognized that goodness is caught, and so investigated her parents, and found two saints.

These three saints show us the integrity of virtue and holiness. The path to holiness is the path of struggle and ordinary life. It is carried and lived with love, and dependence on God. They experienced the mercy of the Father and this mercy crafted the way they lived and loved. In this they are of great relevance for us. They have been where we are, and have together allowed God to perfect them. Being a family, the Martins prove that the family is the seed ground of holiness and goodness. We can learn from them.

Visit one of the churches which will host the relics. Pray and experience the saints. You will experience God and perhaps your life will change. As with a sacred site or souvenir, you can, through the saint, experience and connect with the holiness of God.

Published with thanks to Catholic Mission.

Catholics from across our vast Archdiocese are expected in big numbers to a range of services including Masses, overnight vigils and prayer services when the relics of St Therese of Lisieux visit from 25-31 March.

When St Therese’s relics last visited Australia in 2002 an estimated 700,000 Catholics turned out to pray seeking her intercession. Greater numbers are expected on this tour.

On this occasion her relics will be accompanied by those of two other modern saints: her mother, Zelie and father Louis.

The dates and locations of the visit of the relics of the three saints from the one family were issued in December by Catholic Mission, the Church’s agency in Australia which supports missionaries around the world.

Saints Louis and Zelie Martin are the first married couple to be canonised in the history of the Church, reflecting in part the repeated urgings of the-then Pope John Paul II to find lay candidates whose causes might be promoted.

Throughout his papacy St John Paul II repeatedly called for ordinary laity – men, women and youth - who might be canonised to emphasise the call to personal holiness expressed by our baptismal vocation. This was also strongly

Despite never having set foot outside her monastery after entering, Therese was named in 1927 as co-patron of the Church’s entire global missionary effort

emphasised by Vatican II.

Pope Francis canonised Saints Louis and Zelie in 2015.

The relics of the three modern saints will spend two and a half months touring Australian diocese from January 22 to May 10.

There are few – if any – other saints so beloved in the modern Church.

Although she died virtually unknown at the age of 24 in her monastery at Lisieux in France after having more or less forced her way into being accepted as an underage Carmelite at the age of 15, Therese is regarded as a giant of the Christian vocation to holiness.

She died in 1897 but her writings and her reputation for an astonishing (but at the time largely-hidden) sanctity saw public demand for her canonisation continue to grow until she was officially beatified by Pope Benedict XV in 1921 and declared a saint by Pope Pius XI in 1925.



Despite never having set foot outside her monastery after entering, she was named in 1927 as co-patron of the Church’s entire global missionary effort, joining

the legendary 16th Century Jesuit missionary, St Francis Xavier.

In 1997 Pope John Paul II declared her to be a Doctor of the Church, a title which means



an individual is recognised by the Church as a gifted teacher of the Christian faith. She became the 33rd person to be so recognised in the history of the Church.

Therese was also the youngest, and only the third of four women to be recognised with the title; the three others are fellow Carmelite St Teresa of Avila, St Catherine of Siena and St Hildegard of Bingen.

Therese’s appeal has grown steadily since her death.

Key to her influence on the modern Church is the only work she ever wrote, a series of letters on her spiritual journey, which were edited by her sister who also became a Carmelite and eventually published under the title of The Story of a Soul.

In her letters, Therese set

out her

famous ‘Little Way’ to holiness, which was to seek friendship with God in the small, ordinary daily events of life rather than big achievements or widespread influence.

Circulated first to other Carmelite monasteries, the book was published a year after her death and has had a phenomenal impact on the Church. It has never gone out of print.

Modern devotees of St Therese have included Beat Generation writer Jack Kerouac, philosopher and Nobel Prize winner Henri Bergson, legendary French singer Edith Piaf who maintained that she was cured of blindness as a child through St Therese’s intercession, and Mother (now Saint) Teresa of Kolkata, founder of the Missionaries of Charity, who chose Therese for her own name as a religious sister.

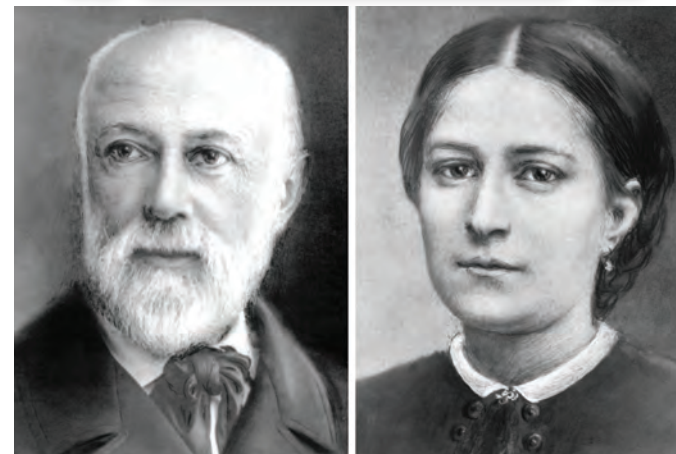
St Therese’s feast day is 1 October.



Do you have a story to share with the Catholic Voice about how St Therese has helped you in your life?

Tell the Voice. 02 6239 9833

Email your story to: catholic.voice@cg.org.au



Itinerary

Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

Wednesday 25 March
8pm: Arrive St Peter and St Paul’s, Goulburn

Thursday 26 March
12 Noon Depart Goulburn,
3pm-6pm St Anthony’s Waniassa,
7pm-9pm St Monica’s, Evatt.

Friday 27 March
8am Depart St Monica’s, Evatt.
9-11am Merici College, Braddon, then pilgrimage to St Patrick’s, Braddon.
11.30-1pm St Patrick’s Braddon,
1.30-5pm, St Joseph’s, O’Connor,
5.30pm St Benedict’s Narrabundah for healing Mass and overnight vigil

Sat 28 March
8.30am Depart St Benedict’s,
9am-1pm Apostolic Nunciature, Red Hill
1.15pm Carmelite Monastery, Red Hill. The Carmelite Chapel will remain open for overnight prayer

Sunday 29 March
9am Carmelite Monastery Mass,
10.15am Depart Monastery
10.45am St Christopher’s Cathedral, Forrest
11am Mass, followed by devotions and 5pm Mass,
6pm Depart for St Patrick’s, Bega. Arrive 9pm

Monday 30 March
9.30-1pm St Patrick’s, Bega, 4pm arrival St Patrick’s, Cooma for Mass, Rosary and veneration

Tuesday 31 March
9am Depart Cooma,
12noon arrive St Patrick’s, Gundagai until 3pm departure.

Source: Catholicmission.org.au

Living among poverty and plenty in Manila

Canberra priest Fr Steve Tynan of the Missionaries of God's Love reflects on his 23 years in the Philippines.

BY FR STEVE TYNAN

IT WAS in October 1995 that I first visited the Philippines with our Moderator Fr Ken Barker as we hoped to begin a mission there.

The years since have been a rollercoaster and learning a new culture continues to be a fascinating experience.

Back in 1995, Fr Ken and I met with then Cardinal Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Sin who invited us to serve in Manila.

How the Church works and ministers in the Philippines is very different to Australia as both the culture and conditions are very different.

Coming to grips with living in the midst of both poverty and plenty is a constant challenge. There are so many needs, spiritual and physical, that one has to make a choice about how to use limited resources. Being an MGL this meant a focus on evangelization, youth and the poor.

For the first eight years, I spent much of my time in the Parish of St Peter (45 Masses on a Sunday in 15 different Mass Centres).

I have also worked with many charismatic communities and experienced the full range of Filipino organizations and spiritualities which include mission work with the poor, large movements like Couples for Christ and individual ministries such as homes for the aged (Anawim), unwed mothers and abandoned children.



Fr Steve Tynan giving a talk at a Life in the Spirit Conference 1998

There have been some extraordinary experiences such as baptizing 273 children in one ceremony. Tempting to use a fire hose but I refrained!

The experience of Simbang Gabi - 3am, 4am and 5am Masses for the nine days leading to Christmas - is enjoyable and exhausting, as are the multitude of Masses and other Sacraments.

Education

It is unreasonable to expect people who are struggling to get by day to day to have much time or energy for spiritual activities.

This led to the creation of a scholarship program with about 75 students. We could increase it with more funding. Education is the 'silver bullet' helping students



Celebrating Mass at 'The Feast' a Catholic movement for the unchurched 2015

get a better paying job and life choices.

Without education, the only jobs are poorly paid with minimal security.

One of the beautiful realities of Filipino culture is how they stick together as a family. I have lost track of how many times I have heard a student say they want a degree "to help their family."

The average assistance we give amounts to about \$600 a year; a small price for the massive opportunity it brings.

Mission

Youth Ministry, started by Fr Brian Steele, continues to develop. It has constant challenges yet is so rewarding. Fr

Alex Nolasco pioneered youth mission trips into the provinces and to the indigenous people of Mindoro (Mangyan) and Pangasinana (Aeta).

We run several missions annually. Our youth missionaries are usually from poor backgrounds and grow in skill and confidence as they bring the Gospel and Discipleship Training to places with few resources.

Parents of our scholars have complained that we do a lot for the youth but not much for them!

Disaster Relief

After the recent big cyclone/typhoon that devastated a swathe of the Philippine islands we did a lot of recovery work with

extraordinary locals in some of the hardest hit areas.

Australians donated generously and we distributed 5,000,000 pesos (\$145,000) of aid. Half went on food and immediate necessities.

I have never seen anything like it – enormous trees uprooted and carried down the road; entire neighborhoods flattened and washed away; farmers and fishermen suffering devastating blows.

More money bought boats and fishing supplies for church cooperatives. We also bought water buffalo to help families till their land. We helped one family who were still without electricity five months after the typhoon.

I said Mass for a fleet of new boats and people's gratitude was overwhelming.

Having spent most of my priestly life in the Philippines. I could not have wished for a more varied, exciting and rewarding ministry. And the fullness of our reward is not now – it awaits us in heaven!

To donate to the MGL Missions or Typhoon Relief:

Missionaries of God's Love Manila Commonwealth Bank 062-902 1016 5274.

Fr Steve can be contacted at frstevemgl@gmail.com



Disciple of Jesus Covenant Community, Manila 1998



Preparing coconut milk to make chicken curry, 1998

Table manners and morals: who is teaching our kids?

BY CATHERINE SHEEHAN

WITH an impressive 35 years of teaching experience under his belt, Eamonn Moore is excited to be kicking off the 2020 school year by taking up his new appointment as principal of McAuley Catholic Central School (Years K to 10) in Tumut.

The married father of two has spent the last 11 years as Deputy Head and Head of the Junior School at Marist College.

Throughout his career, Eamonn has taught at schools in rural NSW and Canberra. McAuley will be his ninth school and the fourth time he has taken up the role of Principal.

He recently spoke to Catholic Voice about all things teaching, from the increasing pressure on teachers to be “quasi-parents” to the lack of male Primary teachers and the importance of homework.

How are you feeling about your new role as Principal at McAuley?

I’m really excited about being part of a rural community again and I’m really excited about the opportunities that a Kinder to Year 10 school will bring.

We’ve already had some impact from the bush fires down there in Tumut. I know about 15 families have been impacted in various ways. One family and one member of staff have lost their homes so we’ll be looking to support them in lots of ways. So I’ve started a little earlier than I expected but I’m looking forward

ward to making my mark in another school.

What do you love about teaching in rural schools?

I think there’s a greater sense of community in a rural school and I sense that families really value what teachers do and they are really interested and committed to the school. The school is really the focal point as part of the parish and the church. There’s also that heritage and the history that it’s a country town where their father, mother and grandparents went to the same school. There’s that history and link with the place that makes it really special.

What attracted you to teaching in the first place?

Teaching was something I always wanted to do. I was influenced by a couple of teachers I had, male teachers especially. I think teaching for a man can be a really rewarding career. Sometimes it’s seen as a bit of a woman’s domain but I’ve always really enjoyed being a positive male role model.

Currently, only about 18 per cent of primary teachers are men. Why is that?

I sense that some young guys get put off by the fear of being too physical with kids or not being able to give a kid a cuddle in the playground when he’s fallen over and skinned his knee. That creates nervousness in some young guys.

So I think that’s possibly a large part of the problem but



Eamonn Moore is the new principal of McAuley Catholic Central School in Tumut.

there’s also a lot of expectation on teachers now days. There’s a lot of data gathering and comparing, where people might feel under the pump to be seen performing well.

What’s your response to the view that primary teaching is just “glorified babysitting”?

I challenge anyone to spend a morning in front of 30 kids and then you can see whether it’s babysitting or not. That’s a really uneducated kind of view. We have an Australian curriculum we need to cover, we have increasingly the demands of society that schools teach table manners, sex education, morals, which is kind of taking away from the responsibility of families.

Teaching has become really multi-faceted. It’s way beyond the years of reading, writing and arithmetic. It’s the whole gamut of socialization. There’s huge pressure on schools to create citi-

zens for the world, which is of course what we do, but with less and less support from home.

Does homework have value?

Homework that is carefully constructed is very worthwhile. The most worthwhile part about homework is building routines in kids. It’s about just having a daily routine, doing some reading, writing and maths, just to prepare them for high school and university where they have to have that organizational routine.

What can parents do to support literacy in the home?

Parents can model literacy and they can trick their kids into being literate. It’s about the mum or dad who says, “Grab a pen and paper and I’m going to stand here at the kitchen cupboard and you write down what we need for the shopping this week”. It’s that everyday literacy. So just building

literacy into everything they do without making it a task.

“Eamonn has led our Junior School with vision and generosity. The task of a school leader is to ensure they leave a community in a better position than when they started. Eamonn has done this in spades. It has been a job Eamonn has loved. His legacy will live on here in all of us, and in all of the hundreds of boys who have grown into fine young men having passed through our Junior School gates during Eamonn’s time with us.

The fact that Marist is a school of first choice for so many Catholic families in Canberra is testimony to the quality of Eamonn’s leadership. Our College is widely known to be a vibrant faith community, characterised by strong relationships, innovative approaches with a rigours attitude to learning, and an ethic for work and participation that is the envy of many schools. All of these strengths have flourished under Eamonn’s careful guidance and inspiration, in collaboration with the talented and highly effective leadership team and staff.”

Matthew Hutchison, Marist College Headmaster

Movie Review

BY VERITY DUNN, KAYE DUNN, ALICE AND SAMANTHA

The masterful adaptation of Louisa May Alcott’s 1868 novel of the same name received six Academy Award nominations and had taken more than USD 100 million in the box office by mid-January.

Little Women’s lead is 25 year old multi-Golden Globe winning Irish actress Saoirse Ronan as Jo and the cast includes Harry Potter’s Emma Watson as Meg and Laura Dern as mother Mary March.

The story follows the Little Women of the March family;

Little Women an entertaining and thought-provoking classic

sisters Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy who grew up in Massachusetts, USA in ‘genteel poverty’ in the 1860s.

We witness the joys, tragedies and wonders for young women, families and communities in America at the time.

This interesting adaptation starts with Jo’s adventurous life, passionately writing stories in New York City and thumbing her nose at the prospect of marriage.

The audience glimpses flashbacks of the girls’ energetic and cosy adolescence through to adulthood during a time of conflict, with limited options for

independence or creativity.

The cinematography is stunning and inspires a move to Concord where the story was set and the movie filmed.

The costumes are delicately designed with the idiosyncrasies of each character in mind and the talented cast exquisitely portray Gerwig’s reimagined characters for a modern audience in a way that would make Alcott proud.

An all-round entertaining and thought-provoking classic.

“While not completely faithful to the book, the story resonates today with its examples of family unity

and forgiveness. Woven skillfully through the movie are messages of how unpredictable, complicated and at times downright unfair life can be,” **Kaye** “Little Women was great. I love the story it is based on as well. Though I found the different timelines were confusing,” **Alice** **8** “Little Women was fantastic. They kept key components of the book and added scenes that fitted in with the story. Amy’s character was a lot more developed, making her a key part of the movie. If you hadn’t read the book, you would find it quite confusing as it flicked back and forth between time periods. I definitely recommend it”. **Samantha 11**



Rating: PG
Little Women is a timeless story with relevant messages for all ages, from a grandmother and retired English teacher to a 30-something feminist and two young Queanbeyan sisters aged eight and 11.

Pope appoints woman to senior diplomatic role

POPE Francis has broken a Vatican glass ceiling by appointing the first female manager at the Holy See's Secretariat of State.

Dr Francesca Di Giovanni has been given a senior diplomatic role as the new Under-Secretary at the Section for Relations with States and will have responsibility for working with international bodies such as the United Nations. Her role makes her one of two deputy foreign ministers at the Holy See's ministry for foreign affairs, which is led by Archbishop Paul Gallagher.

Dr Di Giovanni, 66, is an official at the Secretariat of State where she has worked across with multi-national bodies on migrants and refugees, international humanitarian law, communications, private international law, the status of women, intellectual property, and tourism.

"It's the first time a woman has had a managerial position in the Secretariat of State," she told Vatican News. "The Holy Father has made an unprecedented decision, certainly, which, beyond myself personally, represents an indication of attention towards women. But the

responsibility is connected to the job, rather than to the fact of being a woman".

Throughout his pontificate, the Pope has named a small number of women to senior positions in the Vatican, where the vast majority of leadership roles are held by male clerics.

He chose the first female director of the Vatican Museums, the first woman consultants to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and the Synod of Bishops' secretariat. He's also appointed the first women members to the Vatican body overseeing religious life.

Elsewhere, he's appointed two female undersecretaries at the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, a woman undersecretary at the religious life department and the first female deputy director of the Holy See Press Office, Paloma Garcia Ovejero – although she resigned her position at the end of last year. Another woman, Cristiane Murray, was chosen as her replacement.

The Pope has also made provisions for those who are not priests to hold one of the top two positions in some Vatican departments, of prefect or secretary.

Nevertheless, being a cleric remains



The Under-Secretary of the Section for Relations with States, Dr Francesca Di Giovanni, at the United Nations. Photo:Vatican News

the traditional prerequisite for holding a leadership position in the Holy See hierarchy, with reformers arguing that this will remain the case until priesthood is de-linked from holding positions of power.

"I cannot fail to recall the words of the Holy Father in his homily on 1 January, in which he presented, we could say, a 'tribute' to the role of women, saying that women are givers and mediators of peace and should be fully included in

decision-making processes. Because when women can share their gifts, the world finds itself more united, more peaceful," said Dr Di Giovanni.

"I would like to be able to contribute to the realisation of the Holy Father's vision, with my other colleagues who work in this area of the Secretariat of State, but also with other women, and there are many of them, who are working to build fraternity in this international dimension too."

Church agencies come together for bushfire response

ACBC MEDIA BLOG

A NEW whole-of-Church initiative to help people and communities recover from the bushfire crisis will set the blueprint for how the Catholic Church responds to natural disasters in the future.

Earlier this month, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and a number of other national organisations encouraged Catholics to donate to the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal, which is supporting people who have lost loved ones, homes, property and animals.

Those organisations, representing parishes, religious orders, social service agencies, schools, hospitals and aged and community care providers, have spent several weeks responding to the bushfires, which are not yet over.

"Our response to the bushfires, and the drought that has exacerbated the fires, has demonstrated once again the collective power of the Catholic Church to respond to disasters in all sorts of ways," Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge said.

"At its core, the Catholic Church is about people, about families, about parishes, about school communities, about ministries that proclaim and live out the Gospel of Jesus. Most

of those ministries are local, but there is a national – and universal – dimension of the Church that can sometimes be under-utilised."

The new national collaboration is called CERA – Catholic Emergency Relief Australia – and will serve as a coordination point for Catholic agencies responding to natural disasters.

The founding organisations are the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia, Catholic Social Services Australia and the National Catholic Education Commission. Other Catholic organisations are expected to join the collaboration soon.

Ursula Stephens, the CEO of Catholic Social Services Australia, said organisations like Catholic-Care, Centacare and Vinnies are embedded in local communities and are therefore trusted and able to deliver the right services.

"One of the Church's key social teachings is about 'subsidiarity', which means that we empower local communities to respond to their realities as they best see fit," she said.

"Alongside that, though, sits 'solidarity', which compels us to see the needs of others and work collaboratively to respond to those needs. That response can be most effective when it's coordinated and focused."



Vinnies shop, Moruya; staff and volunteers at the St Vincent de Paul Society have given generously to support families in need of help.

Dr Stephens said while the national Vinnies appeal continues to be a channel for people to support Catholic agencies responding to the bushfire crisis, CERA will also receive donations that will be distributed through a recovery grants application process managed by Catholic Social Services Australia.

"We are establishing the appropriate governance, accountability and transparency measures to ensure that those who see the Church as a key responder to national emergencies know

financial and practical support is going to those who need it," Dr Stephens said.

"CERA will allow us to help people on the long road to recovery from this ongoing bushfire crisis and to mobilise as soon as our country is struck by another natural disaster – mindful that it's sadly a matter of 'when', not 'if'.

"This is ultimately about us being more responsive in a crisis. This is faith in action and a call to follow our Christian vocation."

One of the key features of the CERA website, which was

launched today, is the volunteer management portal. It will allow organisations to list volunteer opportunities for people looking to provide practical, material and financial support in the journey of recovery.

"Our parishes, agencies and ministries are constantly receiving requests from individuals and families who need a place to stay, who need new clothes or appliances, who need a listening ear," Archbishop Coleridge said.

"Much of that support will come from government, from Catholic and other charitable organisations, but volunteers can carry out some of the urgent tasks to help people in their daily lives."

Archbishop Coleridge said Catholics, individually and collectively, continue to pray for an end to the current fires, for rain to quench drought-stricken lands, for those affected by the fires and for those on the front line of responding to the fires.

Dr Stephens said CERA's focus will be on domestic natural disasters, noting that Caritas Australia is the Church's agency tasked with responding to emergencies overseas.

Visit the CERA website at www.cera.catholic.org.au

Coming Events

JANUARY 27 – FEBRUARY 1: Trendsetters 2020. Trendsetters is a catholic training program organized by Jesus Youth Australia for youngsters (Year 12 completed or Current University students), aiming to equip them with skills to live a witnessing lifestyle for Jesus while at University. For more information contact Jesus Youth on 0433 828 266, jesusyouthcanberra@gmail.com or www.jesusyouth.org.au

FEBRUARY 15: St Valentine's Mass 2020. The Parish of St Thomas the Apostle, 37 Boddington Crescent, Kambah invite you to celebrate the Love, Romance and Joy of Christian Marriage with a St Valentine's celebration Mass on Saturday 15th February 2020 at 6pm. Mass will include a Renewal of Marriage Promises for married couples, and a Special Blessing for engaged couples. EVERYONE is welcome. Any enquiries to Elizabeth 6231 9219 or Trish 6231 8468

FEBRUARY 16 – APRIL 5: Series of Talks on Prayer. Fr Michael is proposing to hold a series of talks on prayer. Beginning on Sunday 16 February 2020 after the 9.00am Mass at St John Vianney Church. It will run every week until 5 April. Topics include 'What is prayer?', 'How to pray with the bible "Lectio Divina"', 'Ignatian Contemplation' and more. Everyone is invited to attend. Tea & coffee available.

MARCH 1: Rite of the Elect, St Christopher's Cathedral

MARCH 22: Multicultural Mass, 11am, St Christopher's Cathedral

MARCH: 26-31: St Therese of Lisieux Relics

APRIL 6: Chrism Mass/Dinner

AUGUST 8: Mary MacKillop Pilgrimage,

Coastal Deanery, Eden (Solemnity of St Mary of the Cross)

OCTOBER 25: Marian Procession, Galong

NOVEMBER 7: Catholic Charismatic Teaching Day with Archbishop, Hayden Hall, St Christopher's Pastoral Centre, Forrest

REGULAR GROUPS
CANBERRA CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY (CLC): meets fortnightly. It's part of an international lay organisation originating from St. Ignatius of Loyola who formed the Jesuits. Groups are based on ordinary people leading ordinary lives practising Ignatian spirituality, the essence of which is finding God in the everyday. Contact Steve on 0407 147 540.

CATENIANS IN CANBERRA: A Catholic men's group sharing faith and friendship and supporting each other and their families. Meet on the third Thursday of each month, 6.45pm Southern Cross Club Woden followed by dinner, often with guest speaker. Contact: Phil Murray 0419 695 927.

COMMUNITY OF THE RISEN LORD CANBERRA: Meet at 7.30pm each Friday evening in St Brigid's Church parish hall (2 Bancroft St Dickson) for charismatic praise and worship with an anointed sharing of the Word. Contact Shan on 0412 310 364 or Sean 0448 510 237.

CONCERNED CATHOLICS OF CANBERRA-GOULBURN is a group actively committed to church renewal and reform in the spirit of Pope Francis. For further information, go to www.concernedcatholicscanberra.org or contact John Warhurst (john.warhurst@anu.edu.au – phone 0439 498 283).

COUPLES FOR CHRIST (CFC) CANBERRA CHAPTER: For more information contact Chris Carlile 0414 938 831.

DOMINICAN LAITY: Meet on the fourth Thursday of the month at 13 Blair St Watson for prayer and reflection in the spirit of St Dominic. Contact Peter (62477036) or Michael (62497026).'

GOOD SHEPHERD PRAYER GROUP: Meets each Wednesday from 7pm to 9pm in the parish room at St Peter Chanel's Church Yarralumla. Rosary, charismatic praise and worship, teachings, testimonies, prayer ministry, intercession and fellowship. Contacts Susanna on 0419 902 293, Neda on 0415 266 019 and Gabriel on 0432 082 642.

HOLY SPIRIT SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY: Meet on the third Friday of the month at 7.45pm, St Augustine Church, 262 Beasley St Farrer. Secular Franciscans try to follow Christ in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi. Call Tony on 0407 072 139 or Hélène on 0420 533 264. Email: sfo@fastmail.fm

LEGION OF MARY: Join for rosary, prayers and apostolic works for the glory of God under the banner of Our Lady. Weekly meetings held at:
* St Joseph's, O'Connor (Sat after 8am Mass)
* Mary Queen of Apostles, Goulburn (Wed 2pm)
* St Matthew's, Page (Sat 10.30am)
* St Monica's, Evatt (Tues 6.30pm)
* Holy Spirit, Amaroo (Thurs 10am & 7.30pm)
* St John the Evangelist Chapel, ANU (Tues 6pm).
Contact LegionOfMaryCanberra@gmail.com.

MAN OVERBOARD: A monthly gathering of young men discerning priesthood. It is a time to gather, reflect; and commune in order to feel supported during a time of such importance. Each gathering will be held on the first Friday of every month

(public holidays excepted). Please RSVP to Fr Paul Nulley at paul.nulley@cg.org.au For catering purposes or follow the prompts at <http://www.manoverboard.org.au/>

MARIAN MOVEMENT OF PRIESTS: Meets to pray a Cenacle at St Joseph's Church O'Connor each Wednesday following the 8.00am Mass. Contact Maria on (02) 6247 4026.

menALIVE: Encouraging authentic Christian manhood, the Canberra chapter of 'Men Alive' meet on the first Monday of each month at St Christopher's Cathedral for Mass at 5pm. Mass is then followed by drinks at 'Public Bar' in Manuka.

MINISTRY TO THE NEWLY MARRIED: A mentoring program for newly married couples or engaged couples soon-to-be married. Contact Debbie and Brian on (02) 6231 3389 or 0414 878 167. Email: mnm@grapevine.com.au

ST JOSEPH'S PARISH GROUPS: These monthly groups all meet in the O'Connor Parish Centre. View parish group details at; <http://cg.org.au/oconnor/home.aspx>

TAIZE PRAYER GROUP: The Canberra Friends of Taizé Ecumenical Group Ecumenical group meets regularly for prayer every second Sunday of the month at Weston Creek Uniting church at 5.30pm. Prayers, songs, Scripture readings and silent meditation as used in the community of Taizé, France. All welcome. Enquiries to Annemarie (0421 492 554).

TEAMS OF OUR LADY: Teams is a movement within the Church that encourages couples to grow in love via having open communications, processes for ongoing spiritual growth and being open in sharing their experiences. Contact Genevieve and Tim on teamspower@bigpond.com or 0437 013 328.

YOUR HELP GROUP: Share your talents and time with others. Free exchange or low cost. Assist pensioners, low income, needy and less-fortunate people. Volunteers required to provide haircut, massage, nails, food, odd jobs etc. Massage improves circulation, mobility and well-being. Confidential. Phone 0403 050 960 anytime. John.



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JUSTICE MATTERS
CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

BY MIKE CASSIDY

THE principle of subsidiarity is a key element in the Church’s doctrine on social justice. At its core is the Church’s concern for social justice for the disadvantaged and their economic viability in the community. The principle has been given significant attention in several encyclicals, including *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), and *Centesimus Annus* (1991). The principle was best articulated by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* when the spirit of initiative in local communities floundered due to liberalism and individualism. It was a call for people to become involved in civil life. It also operated as a check against utopian socialism.

Subsidiarity involves individuals and social groups taking on responsibility for productive activities in society at the lowest or simplest level within the social strata, where desired goals for the common good can be effectively achieved. It places the integrity

The principle of subsidiarity and the bushfires

The Archdiocese’s Social Justice Commission offers some reflections on subsidiarity in these time of crisis

and dignity of the individual human being, created in the image and likeness of God, above that of the collective or the State. It, therefore, is most likely to flower in a democratic State where individual rights and responsibilities are fully respected.

Subsidiarity has a complex history within the teaching of the Church and its focus and application in some cultures have varied somewhat depending on the socio-political climate at the time. Effective subsidiarity is most prominent amongst Church community voluntary organisations and functions closely with another element of social justice, that of solidarity. Solidarity is about people working together cooperatively and in support of one another in pursuit of the common good.

One area in which Australians have been recently working together in solidarity and where the principle of subsidiarity would appear to be working very effectively, is in relation to our response to and recovery from,

the unprecedented bushfires (exacerbated by the extensive drought).

The volunteer bushfire services and other voluntary groups – in Church parishes, shires, towns and rural areas – have been and are continuing to work closely together with professional bushfire, emergency and environmental services as well as other agencies throughout Australia. The response from unaffected church parishes in support of the affected parishes has been very positive by contributing at least \$3000. This money went straight into the bank accounts of those who lost their family homes. A good demonstration of both solidarity and subsidiarity.

All these cooperative efforts have required leadership, planning, and resourcing between all levels of government and administration, as well as Church communities and other voluntary organisations.

Mistakes have been made. Sadly, families have lost loved ones, people have been injured,

and many will suffer from trauma for years to come because of what they have been through. But the recent months have seen Australia and her people at their most united with all communities working in solidarity against the common threat.

Self-interested parties have been known to try and manipulate the principle of subsidiarity for their own ends. Factors which impact on the success or otherwise of the principle in a community will be varied but can include; human and material resourcing, planning, education levels, competing interests, and most importantly, but often overlooked, the need for discernment and prayer. The last is critical if the community is to have a sense of what is God’s will in determining priorities in decision-making, especially when most parish communities are constrained by limited resources when an activity is inordinately extensive and/or complex in nature.

As the work to control the bushfires and the recovery

process continues, with communities giving of their very best, there can be a tendency for a few to lay blame. We should not let this cloud our experience and understanding of just what the country has been going through. We have demonstrated our capacity for solidarity in standing up to these tough times. And the importance of Christian subsidiarity speaks for itself where individuals and communities work together with governing bodies in their various voluntary and professional capacities, all doing the very best they can with the best possible intentions for our families and neighbours. However, the emotional drain on the community is showing and some of those without faith may be beginning to experience a sense of hopelessness, even dread. It is important, therefore, to also remember all of our brothers and sisters in our prayers.

Please send comments on the article, or requests for further information about the Commission, to SocialJustice@cg.org.au.

Retiring to a quiet busy lifestyle, and volunteer firefighting

WHEN Marie Cook and her husband retired to their 75-acre property near Batemans Bay, signing up as a volunteer firefighter was not part of the plan.

The couple left their Public Service lives in Canberra 25 years ago for the peace and tranquility of a bush lifestyle at East Lynne.

Bushfires changed that.

Marie signed up for a brigade 15 years ago and is one of four female firefighters in the 11-member group.

“One lady is probably in her 40s and the rest of us are in our 60s,” Marie said.

“When people think of firefighters they assume they need to be big and muscly. That’s not the case but you do need to be fit. There are actually a lot of women.

“I joined because you need to know what you’re up against. You need to become wise about fire”.

Marie has attended many fires including a big one at the Western Milton 18 months ago, but nothing compares to the fires that ripped through the

Eurobodalla area at New Year.

Firefighting consumed her December and early January.

“It was very confronting going into places that had been burnt,” Marie said.

“There were firefighters who lost their homes which was very sad.

“The community is in shock. I still feel it. Thousands of houses were lost. One township I visited lost 106 houses out of 200.

“This is the last thing people would have expected as it was so early on New Year’s Eve. People may have received a text message telling them to get out but they were probably asleep.

“Five people died. It came across so fast. From the firefighters’ point of view, none of us had seen anything like it.”

Marie and her husband had to evacuate their own property for four nights at the start of December and there was some damage, but their home was spared.

Luck played a part.

A tank sprang a leak exactly where it was needed to put out a fire.



Volunteer firefighter, Marie Cook has retired to the coast 25 years ago.

“This was fortunate because it would have wrecked our water system and electrical system and been a major disaster rather than

just a tiny inconvenience,” Marie explained.

It is the quietness of the area that appeals to Marie.

“We have about five acres cleared where our buildings are and we have wombats and kangaroos and a lot of native animals, which is very special,” she said.

“But you realise how tenuous our hold on our civilization is.

“Everyone is in shock, even those who were not affected but maybe had to evacuate. They have gone through the ‘what if’ situation and the worry, which is very confronting.”

Find out more about volunteer Firefighting

Country Fire Authority:
<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/volunteer-careers/volunteers>
<https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/volunteer>

NSW Rural Fire Service:
<https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/volunteer>

ACT Emergency Services Agency:
<https://esa.act.gov.au/join-us-volunteering/act-rural-fire-service/rfs-volunteers-training>

Prayer and panic replace surf and sea

BY MARGARET O'DONOVAN

The bushfire crisis had not affected our family’s plans for our annual escape to the coast.

Rental property booked, we did a big shop at Moruya and as we arrived at Broulee I could feel the bustle of Christmas fading away.

Two swims a day, with rest, reading and watching test cricket in between. Regular morning coffees and endless discussions about the best surf around.

New Years Eve 2019 started with a bang, or several. My husband Phil set off for his 6am bike ride to Mogo. Bing went the message on his phone at 6.30 am: Mogo on fire, head east to the coast immediately. He did.

By 9am there was heat and wind and talk about how bad the bushfires were. Broulee was directly in its path.

Then a Big Bang. The power went out. We expected it would be fixed in a few hours. Power

didn’t return for more than a week.

Then the mood started to change. We packed and moved our cars to a clearing near the beach. Neighbors informed us the evacuation point was Broulee Surf Club. No need to panic. So we had breakfast and read the papers outside the Broulee Bubble cafe.

By 10am the heat and wind had become more intense and gas bottles were exploding up the street. We could see flames and smoke so secured the house and walked down to the beach.

The throngs: babies, pets, retired folk and families of all ages. Sobering talk about which houses had been burnt.

After two hours the southerly buster arrived dropping the temperature from 40 degrees to around 15 degrees. It felt cold. The bushfire changed direction and was heading back towards Batemans Bay.

It was safe to return home



Canberra resident Margaret O'Donovan

but, as the day progressed, we became more aware of no power, no radio (except in the car), no phone, no petrol and no shops.

The worst was knowing that a quarter of a tank of

petrol would not get us back to Canberra.

The next day was Wednesday, New Years Day, and still no information.

We, and thousands of others, were stuck.

By Thursday morning we learned there was petrol at Bawley Point and authorities were urging people to leave the South Coast ahead of catastrophic weather coming on Saturday.

The queues at Batemans Bay were unbelievable. Once we cleared that log jam, we found a petrol station with only 20 cars waiting. CASH ONLY. Fortunately I always carry cash, my children never!

The mood was upbeat now with petrol in the car, an open highway and the prospect of being home in five to six hours.

Then we hit the biggest traffic jam ever going into Ulladulla. What started as a 10 kph crawl came to a standstill. I later learned that 57,000 cars had left

the South Coast that Thursday and Friday.

We were thankful to arrive in Ulladulla at 2pm; food and somewhere to walk around.

By 10pm we attempted sleep in our small Toyota Yaris car. At 4am on Friday, after 14 hours at Ulladulla, the convoy slowly started moving north again.

As we passed Lake Conjola it became clear why we had been stopped. There were tree stumps and embers on both sides of the narrow road, appearing as glowing red columns in the middle of the night.

I prayed the traffic would keep moving because falling trees were a real possibility. It did, and once we had passed the devastation it was an easy drive home.

I have a new found appreciation for the everyday services we take for granted: power, food, petrol, phones, water and cash.

The open and outstretched arms of good and generous parishes

BY HOWARD EMANUEL.

IN THE early hours of Tuesday December 31 2019, a massive bushfire described by some in its aftermath as Australia's worst natural disaster, swept through large tracts of native forest and descended on the rural communities of Wandella, Yowrie, Verona, Cobargo, Quaama and surrounds.

This malevolent and destructive force had been months in the making, perhaps longer as under average rainfall over an extended period had left the forests tinder dry, waiting to explode.

High fuel loads added to the catastrophe about to unleash.

My wife Madalen and I were living on 100 acres of native bush within the confines of the Wandella state forest. We evacuated our home and property when the worst case scenario began to look a certainty.

During the next 24 hours, as the full extent of the damage became apparent, we began a process, individually and together, of accepting that this time around, life had dealt us a blow of considerable magnitude.

In our hearts and minds what was happening would challenge us to the very core.

Years of toil and residence were to be destroyed beyond any reasonable chance of repair.

Some days after the fire we

were allowed to pass through the torched land to see the stark remains of our home, of the life we had built together.

The cataclysm that greeted our eyes is seared into our memories, for all time I imagine.

Only a pile of charred rubble and twisted metal remained of the substantial property. The sheer violence was obvious. Nature had once again taught us that in the end we can only resist, with no guarantee we can prevail.

Now we begin the process of healing, of supporting and caring for one another as we have so many times in our 33-year marriage.

We are to begin a new journey into what was decreed to be our destination.

Australia offers one of the most wonderful lifestyles in the world largely built on its natural beauty.

At the same time, on occasion this most beautiful land, our home, unleashes such violence, force and power as to leave us gasping in its wake, struggling to retain our lives.

Nature reveals its benign omnipotence usually hidden beneath its obvious beauty.

In the wake of this event, the Catholic parishes of Cobargo, Bermagui and Narooma have opened their arms and hearts and have harbored us into her bosom.

To care, heal and nurture us through the days ahead.

That our parishes have more than answered our cries, have embraced our fears and shown us the way to healing, has once again reinforced in my mind the innate good of the human spirit and the dignity of the Catholic Church as a body and institution.

Life can be beautiful. The birth of a child. At the same time life can cut to the core and damage our very being to breaking point.

To buttress these extremes one seeks solace and surety in a solid foundation.

For Madalen and I that foundation is our faith; that constant presence of nurture and good, of strength and certainty.

Amid the destruction of so many homes and termination of lives, it is in the wholeness of our families and communities, and above all in the potency of our faith, that we can accept our pain, rebuild and once again celebrate the awesome gift of life.

Madalen and I would like to express our deep gratitude to people who have contributed to securing the financial foundation of our situation including those in the Catholic parishes in Canberra who have sponsored the Cobargo parish.

Bless you and thank you all.



Top: Howard and Madalen Emanuel.
Middle The burnt remains of the couple's property.
Above: Madalen at home before the fires.

Tucking into takeaway to show support

CATHOLIC teacher Michael Nicoletti has a novel way of showing his support for businesses affected by the fires – dining out.

The pastoral care coordinator at Carroll College in Broulee has been eating out at local restaurants for the past few weeks and, as they say, putting his money where his mouth is.

"People have lost their homes and businesses and it's important that we buy things from them," Michael said.

"Donations are great but for me I'm been buying lots of takeaway meals to show my support and do my bit."

Having been alerted by the Royal Fire Service on New Year's Eve to evacuate, Michael cleared flammable material around his property.

"The fires were only one kilometre away so I had to get rid of as much flammable material as possible," he said.

"The garden waste bins were full so the safest way of disposing of the leaves was to bury them. I was digging in the garden for six hours straight."

"It was an eerie day. At mid-day the sky turned dark and the light went from an orange glow to a red glow.

"We had one text message

from the RFS, then the power went and our phones went down.

"The biggest issue was lack of information. It seemed that no one knew what was going on."

Many of Carroll College's staff, students and families have been affected, particularly families with their own businesses.

"I've been going through my stuff and finding things they can use," Michael said.

"Many people have been very generous with material goods and their time. Businesses need to be supported so they can start to move forward again."



Michael Nicoletti, Pastoral Care Coordinator at Carroll College in Broulee

Offering a healing touch, today, next week and next year

BY GEOFF ORCHISON

THE fires haven't reached us.... yet. It's hard to fathom how some are spared, some are not. But we are grateful that we are safe for now.

It seems churlish to complain about the choking smoke when the blazes of this summer haven't physically touched us.

They have entered our house and our psyche in another way, however, through the TV news, news feeds on our phones, the Fires Near Me app whose notification signal focuses the attention immediately.

It's not the pungent smoke that causes our eyes to water as the ghastly infernos portrayed on our screens touch us all. We see when a nation's tears are gathered they can become a mighty tide for good.

To donate is good, but it's not all about money. One columnist acidly put it: "As millions of dollars in donations roll in ... one can't help but wonder, if someone donates to the various appeals and doesn't post a photo of their receipt to Instagram or Facebook or Twitter, did they really make a difference at all?"

Many Australians believe we are a generous nation, particularly when others are in strife. Give us a hospital telethon or national disaster appeal and we are eager



and happy to do our bit, and then some.

In the cold light of day, when the emotion of the moment has passed, when days of need become weeks and years of rebuild, our patience and good cheer can be stifled.

As the frightening bushfires have turned the equally catastrophic drought into death, mayhem and trauma for so many mainly non-city communities a lot of Australians, perhaps for the first time, have responded willingly to the plight of the bush.

The choking smoke haze enveloping cities such as Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney remind everyone that payment for the bushfires is made by us all.

Never has Ben Lee's "We're all in this together" seemed more appropriate as a secondary choice for national anthem.

Regular updates by the Archdiocese's Vicar General Fr Tony Percy on our own Daily Voice e-news reflect a heart-warming move by parishioners untouched by the flames to reach out to others, particularly on the South Coast who have borne the brunt.

After all, as Christians we are called on to show love and, importantly, to bring hope.

The increasingly haunted looking NSW politician Andrew Constance, whose South Coast

electorate was devastated, stood amid the ruins and asked the poignant question: Where's the hope in this?

And the answer is really up to the rest of us whose lives have been inconvenienced rather than incinerated.

The hope we offer can come through money donated, but it could include the personal touch of a visit to the coast or the mountains, an invitation to the afflicted to take time out with us at no expense to them, a message of love and support, prayer and many other ongoing expressions of compassion that are limited only by our imagination.

It isn't, and will not be, only about the money.

As Catholics of our Archdiocese, our schools and parishes are ideal vehicles to offer a healing touch. Not just this week, but next, not just this summer but next.

It is suggested in the story in Mark's Gospel of Jesus healing the paralytic, who was lowered through the roof of a house at Capernaum, that Jesus was moved not only by the helplessness of the victim but also by the faith, compassion, imagination and hope of the companions.

It's up to us how we answer the murmurings of our heart.

• *Geoff Orchison is a former editor of the Catholic Voice.*



Top: Archbishop Christopher and Fr Martins, with resident Mick Lowe.
Middle: Burnt remains of a Batemans Bay home.
Above: An orange haze over the streets of Pambula.

The fires that have made us kinder to each other

BY STEVE CENTRA

FOR our school community, the summer holiday period began with a sign of relief.

The next six weeks would see relaxing days at the beach with a book, pitching a tent bushland a world away from the busyness or a stint of backyard cricket with relatives we had not seen since the last innings the previous Christmas.

Now, as we prepare to head back into the classrooms of our 56 schools, we reflect on the rather surreal events during the break. It is difficult to fathom.

More difficult will be the challenge of supporting our students, staff and families, many of whom have been traumatised.

Vast tracts of property have been destroyed, businesses have

been decimated financially, and sadly, some families have lost loved ones.

In the midst of tragedy, I have been amazed, but not surprised, by the level of care and support from within and beyond our Archdiocese.

The Front Office at Lumen Christi is filled with backpacks loaded up with back-to-school supplies organised by the parish of St Anthony of Padua, Wanniasa.

Many other schools on the South Coast have also benefited from the generosity of this community.

Schools on the North Coast have donated and even parishes in the United States!

From the "animal shelter" set up in the art room for evacuated pets at St Patrick's Parish School,

Cooma, to the open doors of many homes across the state to people forced to evacuate, it has been heartening to witness the solidarity and strength of human spirit that has emerged in the face of significant adversity.

A young girl who called in to ABC South-East commented "the fires seem to have made Australians kinder to each other."

I think she is right, but it is also my hope that we can sustain this level of kindness long after the smoke haze has cleared.

Perhaps this is the inspiration we need to ensure we open our hearts to all and continue to fill the world with unconditional love.

St Pat's Cooma has captured this in their theme for 2020, emphasising a sense of hope and a need to focus on new horizons. As the pain and suffering ease,

hopefully we can lift our eyes and keep our gaze firmly fixed on that new horizon.

The hardship will be overcome and we will emerge stronger and more resilient people.

We on the Far South Coast would also like to send a clear

message to people forced to flee our pristine holiday locales that we are open for business and would love to see you soon!

• *Steve Centra is principal of Lumen Christi College, Pambula*



A loss of history and a day we'll not forget

BY CECILIA JACKSON

The 2019/2020 fire season had devastated the South Coast. From Nowra to the Victorian Border, communities are recovering and in some cases are still under direct threat from the fire front.

St. Bernard's Parish in Batemans Bay is one such place. Spanning from Nelligen in the West, Durras to the North and Tomakin to the South, our parish was hard hit on New Year's Eve 2019.

People have lost houses, businesses and outbuildings but luckily we have not lost lives.

Living at the southern end of the parish our day started with a 6am text message warning the village of Mogo to evacuate to the coast.

As this was still kilometres away many coastal towns began instigating evacuation plans thinking they would have plenty

of time.

They were wrong.

Within a couple of hours the fire travelled 7km, the power was out and the sky was dark red.

Another text message arrived from the Rural Fire Service "Batemans Bay, Malua Bay and Surf Beach and surrounds - seek shelter as the fire arrives".

For many people the only place to go was the beach, with roads cut off to the north and south and communications lost by mid-morning.

We were lucky to be able to return to our home that night but were on edge, watching for spot fires and embers until the lightest of rain dampened the ground and gave a small reprieve to the horrors of the day.

Power was out for up to eight days for some people with little to no communication.

For others, infrastructure damage continues to hinder vital services including water,



Mogo Pottery before the fires

electricity and sewer. And we are the lucky ones.

One of the more heartbreaking losses for our parish occurred in Mogo.

Since 1980, Mogo Pottery have been the owners of the former Catholic Church of St Mary's, Mogo and relocated in



The site of the original St Bernard's Church, Mogo.

the late 1980s, the original building of St Bernard's, Batemans Bay.

Both buildings are about 125 years old.

As the fire hit the northern end of Mogo the churches didn't stand a chance and unfortunately the owners are uninsured.

Batemans Bay will bounce

back but we need support.

The South Coast relies on tourism at this time of the year and many businesses have suffered. Come to the coast and visit our villages and towns, support our businesses and help us as a community get back on our feet.

The Archdiocese kept parishoners informed about how the bushfires were affecting our parishes and communities. This prompted a great show of support and compassion, as we see here.



I very much appreciate these updates. Thanks for the clear reports. It is so heartening to see the Catholic community of Canberra-Goulburn supporting each another with such goodwill and generosity. God Bless our priests, parishioners and all those families and people affected by this crisis. Paul

My husband and I feel the love and support from our parish community following the loss of our 2 homes and livelihoods on our property west of Bodalla. Jesus is carrying our cross. Jenny

Thanks for these terrific updates Fr Tony - it is good to have such clear and important information. It is heartening too to see how parishes are supporting one another. So proud to be a Catholic in this generous Archdiocese. Peter

My heart aches for those affected by the devastating bushfires. I pray for those who have lost their lives as well as their families. I pray for those who now face the future with nothing, but please know that you are surrounded in love and the prayers of many. Marcia

A strength of the Catholic Church is its structure of parishes and diocese which can move very quickly to meet the needs of those who have sustained heavy losses. The south coast of NSW and the high country of NSW, located in our Archdiocese, were heavily impacted by the recent bushfires so it is wonderful that we can respond in the ways that have already been demonstrated. Gabrielle