



# Sandpiper e-News

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## RIPPLES ON WATERS OF SANDHURST

Dr Elissa Roper threw a skipping stone into the waters of Sandhurst catalysing infinitely expanding ripples of synodality throughout the Diocese at the inaugural Sandhurst Assembly in Kialla on 15 February.

In her keynote address, Dr Roper presented imagery of the Church as a series of ever-expanding and continuous concentric circles of inclusion and expansion. The inner circles, representing the Church looking into itself for nourishment in Christ and in Communion; the outer ever overflowing circles representing where the Church moves beyond itself in missionary and evangelising ways.

Some 330 participants representing almost every parish, school and Catholic entity in the Diocese participated at the Sandhurst Assembly on 15 February, a major milestone in Sandhurst's synodal journey.

Addressing the Assembly, Bishop Shane invited participants to reflect together more deeply on Pope Francis' call to synodality. Referencing the Synod on Synodality in particular, he said, "It's a process that we are all part of, it's not just about what will happen at the Assembly in Rome; the consultation process has involved people from all over the world." Bishop Shane acknowledged the commitment, not only of those present at the Assembly, but also the hundreds of people who joined preparation and consultation meetings for the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC), as well as listening and dialogue sessions for the Australian Plenary Council and the Synod on Synodality.

He asked participants to consider how we are renewed and inspired by our Faith in Jesus, ways we can reimagine our commitment to journey together

as Jesus' missionary disciples and how we can truly be people who are committed to participation, communion, and mission.

The day was divided into four sessions. The first session was livestreamed across Diocesan social media channels and included Welcome to Country, the Liturgy and Dr Roper's Keynote Address.

In the second session, participants entered into Listening and Dialogue and reflected on feedback harnessed from preparation and consultation meetings for the SMPC; the decrees and decisions of the Australian Plenary Council; and, the contribution of our own Diocese to the Synodal process which, with contributions from people from all over the world, will be used to develop the working plan for the Synod on Synodality in Rome in October this year.

After this discernment process, participants were asked to submit one concrete proposal for the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC) to action. These submissions will be used by the SMPC to set priorities and direction for the Diocese. In the next session, participants worked in their parish, school or organisational groups to design Local Action Plans to enable their respective communities to implement the learnings of the day, 'live synodality' and further missionary discipleship in and beyond their communities. Bishop Shane then called for participants to consider submitting an expression of interest to become a member of the SMPC, or to encourage others to do so.

Water was a key theme of the day and references to our shared baptismal responsibilities flowed throughout the Assembly – in the keynote address, in the Liturgy, listening and dialogue, and music inspirationally led by Gen Bryant and the GB Team.

Yorta Yorta/Dja Dja Wurrung man and Educator, Troy Firebrace, welcomed participants to Country, inviting them to close their eyes and listen to the echo of the didgeridu as it “takes you and settles you into this Country”.

As members of the Assembly prepared for a day focusing on change and renewal in the Church, Troy spoke about the strength and resilience of Aboriginal people who faced unwanted change which was violently and swiftly forced upon them. He welcomed participants in Yorta Yorta and then in English, “Walk with Spirit, walk amongst the waters, walk amongst the earth with fire in your hearts. We ask that you do this while you are here in Yorta Yorta Country, Welcome.”

Master of Ceremonies, Audrey Brown thanked Troy for his welcome and said that participants will certainly be walking with the Spirit on such an auspicious day of prayerful discernment, companionship, and renewal.

In her address, Elissa said Synodality requires us to be led by the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit which transforms us in, and through love, listening, compassion and renewal in the Church.

Synodality requires us to listen. It requires us to “quieten our voices so we can listen ... (and) to listen in ever-widening circles of interest with ever-softening hearts and intelligent minds,” said Dr Roper.

Synodality requires healing. “Synodality requires us to flow out beyond our parish and diocesan communities, to those who have experienced abuse, trauma or been rejected by the Church ... We share a common baptism; therefore, we are all equal in God’s call to be loving, gifted, holy, yet we are a wounded body of Christ. We must attend seriously to a ministry of healing,” she said.

Synodality requires us to live with our hearts. It requires us to move with compassion, the way we know Jesus responded to suffering and injustice, said Dr Roper. In essence, it requires all the ingredients of friendship. “*I matter*’ is what people experienced

when they encountered the friendship of Jesus. *I am loved,*” said Dr Roper.

Did you know that the Yorta Yorta word for the Goulburn River is ‘Kialla’; the place where the Diocesan Assembly was held after the original venue was flood damaged late in 2022?. ‘Kialla’ is also the Yorta Yorta word for ‘father’, according to Yorta Yorta/Dja Dja Wurrung songwoman Lou Bennet.

### **VIEW RECORDING OF MORNING SESSION**

The morning session of the Diocesan Assembly can still be viewed on the Diocesan YouTube Channel. It includes Welcome to Country by Troy Firebrace, an overview of proceedings by Bishop Shane, Dr Elissa Roper's Keynote address and music by Gen Bryant and the GB Team.

[http://YouTube.com/watch?v=gM\\_WUmusWzs](http://YouTube.com/watch?v=gM_WUmusWzs)

### **ONLINE FOLLOW UP FOR LOCAL ACTION**

Follow-up meetings for Diocesan Assembly On Thursday 2 March two online follow-up meetings were held online to provide opportunities for participants at the Diocesan Assembly to share ideas and learn from each other as they design their local action plans. People who had not attended the Diocesan Assembly were also invited to attend these meetings. Communication and listening, hospitality and welcoming, were key focuses for parishioners working on the synodal journey in their parishes. Almost all of the meeting participants felt that it was important to share what they had heard and workshopped at the Diocesan Assembly with their own parish communities. Many had decided to set the ‘pause’ button and start to work more on listening and dialogue rather than jumping straight into ‘action’ for the sake of action without truly considering its purpose or mission.

Fr Novie, Parish Priest of Echuca summed this up, “People are longing for the experience of being listened to,” he said. “With everything we do, we need to actively engage in listening and dialogue.” Alana from Kyabram said Kyabram parish leaders felt communication was the most important of the five key themes which emerged from the Preparation and Consultation Meetings for a Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council. “We need to keep parishioners on the journey with us, so at Sunday Mass, we reported about what had occurred at the Diocesan Assembly,” she said. “We need to reach out to our parishioners and keep them informed about the issues impacting

the Church. We are now having cuppa after Mass, so people have an opportunity to chat.”

Hospitality was a key theme of the online conversations. All the attendees felt that hospitality was a way of engaging parishioners which can lead to more authentic long-term relationships and a deeper sense of belonging in community. Sally Holmes from the Chancery suggested that small gestures make a difference, “Picking up the phone with a smile on your face, or laughing out loud can be contagious,” she said.

Christine Sebire of Echuca Parish said that Echuca was creating a Welcoming Team. “This Team is not a greeting or hospitality team, but a team which helps people to connect with other parishioners and parish groups by finding opportunities for people to make long-term connections and find a sense of belonging to the parish,” she said.

Fr Junray Rayna, Parish Priest of St Kilian’s had just returned from the Divine Renovation Conference in Sydney when he attended the Diocesan Assembly. The Divine Renovation Conference, he said was about moving from being a maintenance Church to a missionary Church. “I’ve learned that it’s important to understand *why* we do things,” he said. “As Catholics, (and especially) as cradle Catholics, we have warmed the pews for a while now, but now it’s time to warm people’s hearts,” said Fr Junray. “Do people experience warmth and connection in the Church?” he asked.

Fr Junray gave examples of local action in St Kilian’s Parish which is aimed at creating a sense of belonging, a sense of feeling valued. Having specific hospitality volunteers take turns each Sunday after Mass has been very fruitful for parish life. “We have hospitality themes, and we have greeters who welcome people before Mass. We don’t have a Children’s Liturgy, so we prepare a folder for every child,” he said.

Fr Junray gave an example of finding ways to include and engage people in a way that works for them. He said after trying different approaches to encourage the Karen people to participate more in the leadership team, he found that the community garden was something they felt they could confidently and enthusiastically take stewardship. “The Karen also have hosted hospitality after Mass, they are so natural with hospitality and they want to share their culture,” he said.

A phrase Fr Junray used – tapping people on the shoulder to give them the confidence or

encouragement to take part in something and then thanking them with a pat on the shoulder– reflected a concept mentioned by several others over the course of the two meetings. It was also agreed that it is important that the same people are not repeatedly tapped on the shoulder as this could alienate other would-be participants or volunteers.

Almost all of the online participants agreed that listening and dialogue should be a strong focus for any community group.

Fr Novie said that Echuca was in the process of creating a parish hospitality space. For this to be successful there must be a process of listening to hear what kind of hospitality space people need and ask ourselves what the purpose of this hospitality space is.

Sr Cecilia Merrigan said that Echuca Parish established a ‘Care for Creation Team’ in 2022. “We’re trying to encourage the community have a sense of positive stewardship of our earth and the gift that we have. We’re working with the Uniting Church to establish a Repair Café which will reach out to a wider community than our own,” she said.

Sr Cecilia explained “We are probably guilty of leaping into action, but we need to spend more time on reflection and understanding the sacredness of all God’s Creation,” she said.

Connection between parish and school communities also featured in the discussions. It was put forward by Lee Pethybridge, St Mary’s Echuca Vice Principal, that for authentic connection between school and parishes both sides need to work together on shared goals and each need to regularly invite the other into their space to eliminate a sense of divide.

Dr Elissa Roper who attended the evening meeting commented that it’s terrific for people from different parishes in the diocese to be talking about their parish landscapes and the challenges they face. “You’re learning from each other,” she said. “The spirit is moving.”

## **SANDHURST MISSION AND PASTORAL COUNCIL (SMPC) CALLS FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

Bishop Shane has called for Expressions of Interest from those who feel called to become Members of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council. Twelve members will be appointed to the SMPC, including three lay people and one priest from each of the three Sandhurst deaneries (Goulburn Valley, Northeast and Western).

If you would like to express interest but do not have access to the internet, please contact the Chancery on 5445 3600.

**Expressions of Interest close on Friday 10 March 2023**

### **POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE FOR LENT**

In his Message for Lent 2023, Pope Francis highlights the relationship between the Lenten journey and the synodal journey, which are both rooted in tradition

#### **MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER for Lent 2023**

##### **Penance and the Synodal Journey**

Dear brothers and sisters!

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all recount the episode of the Transfiguration of Jesus. There we see the Lord's response to the failure of his disciples to understand him. Shortly before, there had been a real clash between the Master and Simon Peter, who, after professing his faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, rejected his prediction of the passion and the cross. Jesus had firmly rebuked him: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a scandal to me, because you do not think according to God, but according to men!" (Mt 16:23). Following this, "six days later, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John his brother and led them away to a high mountain" (Mt 17:1).

The Gospel of the Transfiguration is proclaimed every year on the Second Sunday of Lent. During this liturgical season, the Lord takes us with him to a place apart. While our ordinary commitments compel us to remain in our usual places and our often repetitive and sometimes boring routines, during Lent we are invited to ascend "a high mountain" in the company of Jesus and to live a particular experience of spiritual discipline – asceticism – as God's holy people. Lenten penance is a commitment, sustained by grace, to overcoming our lack of faith and our resistance to

following Jesus on the way of the cross. This is precisely what Peter and the other disciples needed to do. To deepen our knowledge of the Master, to fully understand and embrace the mystery of his salvation, accomplished in total self-giving inspired by love, we must allow ourselves to be taken aside by him and to detach ourselves from mediocrity and vanity. We need to set out on the journey, an uphill path that, like a mountain trek, requires effort, sacrifice and concentration. These requisites are also important for the synodal journey to which, as a Church, we are committed to making. We can benefit greatly from reflecting on the relationship between Lenten penance and the synodal experience.

In his "retreat" on Mount Tabor, Jesus takes with him three disciples, chosen to be witnesses of a unique event. He wants that experience of grace to be shared, not solitary, just as our whole life of faith is an experience that is shared. For it is in togetherness that we follow Jesus. Together too, as a pilgrim Church in time, we experience the liturgical year and Lent within it, walking alongside those whom the Lord has placed among us as fellow travellers. Like the ascent of Jesus and the disciples to Mount Tabor, we can say that our Lenten journey is "synodal", since we make it together along the same path, as disciples of the one Master. For we know that Jesus is himself the Way, and therefore, both in the liturgical journey and in the journey of the Synod, the Church does nothing other than enter ever more deeply and fully into the mystery of Christ the Saviour.

And so, we come to its culmination. The Gospel relates that Jesus "was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light" (Mt 17:2). This is the "summit", the goal of the journey. At the end of their ascent, as they stand on the mountain heights with Jesus, the three disciples are given the grace of seeing him in his glory, resplendent in supernatural light. That light did not come from without, but radiated from the Lord himself. The divine beauty of this vision was incomparably greater than all the efforts the disciples had made in the ascent of Tabor. During any strenuous mountain trek, we must keep our eyes firmly fixed on the path; yet the panorama that opens up at the end amazes us and rewards us by its grandeur.

So too, the synodal process may often seem arduous, and at times we may become discouraged. Yet what awaits us at the end is undoubtedly something wondrous and amazing, which will help us to understand better God's will and our mission in the service of his kingdom.

The disciples' experience on Mount Tabor was further enriched when, alongside the transfigured Jesus, Moses and Elijah appeared, signifying respectively the Law and the Prophets (cf. Mt 17:3). The newness of Christ is at the same time the fulfilment of the ancient covenant and promises; it is inseparable from God's history with his people and discloses its deeper meaning. In a similar way, the synodal journey is rooted in the Church's tradition and at the same time open to newness. Tradition is a source of inspiration for seeking new paths and for avoiding the opposed temptations of immobility and improvised experimentation.

The Lenten journey of penance and the journey of the Synod alike have as their goal a transfiguration, both personal and ecclesial. A transformation that, in both cases, has its model in the Transfiguration of Jesus and is achieved by the grace of his paschal mystery. So that this transfiguration may become a reality in us this year, I would like to propose two "paths" to follow in order to ascend the mountain together with Jesus and, with him, to attain the goal.

The first path has to do with the command that God the Father addresses to the disciples on Mount Tabor as they contemplate Jesus transfigured. The voice from the cloud says: "Listen to him" (Mt 17:5). The first proposal, then, is very clear: we need to listen to Jesus. Lent is a time of grace to the extent that we listen to him as he speaks to us. And how does he speak to us? First, in the word of God, which the Church offers us in the liturgy. May that word not fall on deaf ears; if we cannot always attend Mass, let us study its daily biblical readings, even with the help of the internet. In addition to the Scriptures, the Lord speaks to us through our brothers and sisters, especially in the faces and the stories of those who are in need.

Let me say something else, which is quite important for the synodal process: listening to Christ often takes place in listening to our brothers and sisters in the Church. Such mutual listening in some phases is the primary goal, but it remains always indispensable in the method and style of a synodal Church. On hearing the Father's voice, the disciples "fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Rise, and do not be afraid.' And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone" (Mt 17:6-8). Here is the second proposal for this Lent: do not take refuge in a religiosity made up of extraordinary events and dramatic experiences, out of fear of facing reality and its daily struggles, its hardships and contradictions. The light that Jesus shows the disciples is an anticipation of Easter glory, and that must be the goal of our own journey, as we follow "him alone". Lent leads to Easter: the "retreat" is not an

end in itself, but a means of preparing us to experience the Lord's passion and cross with faith, hope and love, and thus to arrive at the resurrection. Also on the synodal journey, when God gives us the grace of certain powerful experiences of communion, we should not imagine that we have arrived – for there too, the Lord repeats to us: "Rise, and do not be afraid". Let us go down, then, to the plain, and may the grace we have experienced strengthen us to be "artisans of synodality" in the ordinary life of our communities.

Dear brothers and sisters, may the Holy Spirit inspire and sustain us this Lent in our ascent with Jesus, so that we may experience his divine splendour and thus, confirmed in faith, persevere in our journey together with him, glory of his people and light of the nations.

Rome, Saint John Lateran,  
25 January, Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul

## **SANDHURST LENT LEAFLETS**

The Sandhurst Diocese Lent leaflets for 2023. These simple resources, prepared by Lyn Breen, draw upon Scripture readings for Lent, stories and insights of Saints. They offer a structure for reflection suitable for praying alone or praying in a group.

These leaflets can be downloaded from the Diocesan website. Your parish will be able to supply you with printed copies.

## **CATHOLIC BISHOPS RELEASE STATEMENT ON OCEANS**

Gathering in Suva last month, the Bishops of Oceania prepared a statement, *The Oceans of the World are Interwoven with the Future Hopes of all Peoples*, the statement speaks of the need for "deeper ecological conversion" and to embrace "the challenge of integral ecology" recognising that "our economic systems need to be in balance with the pulse of life".

### **The oceans of the world are interwoven with the future hopes of all peoples**

This Assembly of Bishops from across Oceania, held in Suva this week, is a significant experience of being Church in the world today. We have been enriched by listening to the diversity of peoples and learning from their ancestral stories about deep relationships with land, sea and sky, the vanua. We have celebrated

with communities and received the hope of young people and families with their dreams for a flourishing future with the oceans. The nations and peoples of the Oceania region are facing some of the world's greatest uncertainties with growing anxiety, but with faith, hope and resilience. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, human and economic insecurity, compounded by exploitation and pollution threaten the survival of many communities. The decisions we make today will determine the region's tomorrow, and how the vaka (canoe) of our peoples is held by the oceans. Our previous meeting was in Port Moresby in 2018. Since then, the Bishops of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands with their communities successfully stopped deep seabed mining. Yet deep sea mining is still being considered in some communities of the Pacific which would adversely affect fish and marine life. People continue to face mining of sands with heavy metals, deforestation and the enormity of the climate crisis in fires, floods, coral bleaching, droughts and extreme temperatures across the region. A Preparatory Event was held in November 2022. This online event offered people in Oceania the opportunity to participate openly in the process towards this Assembly in Suva. It brought together decision makers of the Church across oceans with an 'international assembly of experts' as envisaged by the global synodal process. One of the most inspiring engagements in Suva was the call to climate action through an artistic presentation by the local community that related the historical suffering during a colonial period, the concerns of losing local livelihoods, resources and lands and having to migrate. This event called Tagi (to lament) and was sung in traditional powerful forms of multiple intonations involving all generations from the local community who have roles and responsibilities including Chiefs. This helped us to understand more fully the historical injustices and contemporary economic greed causing ecological damage to life and livelihoods. "The synodal path to which Pope Francis has called the whole church means a church of hospitality, encounter and dialogue with the realities of peoples' lives in Oceania today. We came together to learn and this has been a time of grace and deep conversion. We see our purpose of working together to care for oceans through synodality and mission as an essential dimension of preaching the Gospel" said

Bishop Anthony Randazzo, President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania. "The unique face of Oceania has called us together for deeper ecological conversion and to respond from the heart. Embracing the teaching of Laudato Sí and the challenge of integral ecology, we recognise that our economic systems need to be in balance with the pulse of life. We are hearing the cry of the land and water, we are hearing the cry of the poor, we are hearing the cry of the ocean. We are also hearing the Holy Spirit present in all these moments. As disciples of Christ, we commit ourselves to His mission to bring life to all, reconciliation and healing of all the many relationships of which we are part – with God, with our fellow human beings, with sea, earth and sky" said Bishop Anthony. This week has been a kairos moment and the bishops have been strengthened by the synodal process to lift up their voices for our region and affirm their deepening commitment to our ocean home.

10 February 2023, FCBCO, Suva

#### **FR JACKSON SAUNDERS APPOINTED WORLD YOUTH DAY (WYD) CHAPLAIN**

Bishop Shane has appointed Fr Jackson Saunders as Chaplain for the Sandhurst Pilgrimage to World Youth Day (WYD) in Portugal.

Fr Jackson says that as Sandhurst WYD Chaplain he will, amongst other things, provide spiritual direction, celebrate Mass, give opportunities for Reconciliation and be an encouraging presence to Sandhurst Pilgrims. "I'm looking forward to getting to know our young adults more and to supporting them in their faith journey as I grow in my own faith. This is a great blessing which I am very grateful for."

Fr Jackson has participated at two World Youth Days, as a pilgrim to Sydney in 2008 and as a Leader to Rio de Janeiro in 2013. He recommends World Youth Day as a way for young people of faith to learn more about the plans God has for them – their purpose in life – in a very formative and positive way.

Fr Jackson said he encourages anyone who is perhaps a bit hesitant about joining the Sandhurst WYD

Pilgrimage to make the leap to attend. He recalls that he was nervous about attending WYD in Sydney, but it proved to be an amazing experience, and he was thrilled that he made the decision to go. "It helped me to grow in my own faith," he said.

Fr Jackson said his pilgrimage as a leader to WYD Rio de Janeiro helped him to discover his vocation, his calling to the priesthood. "It's a fantastic opportunity to grow closer to God," said Fr Jackson.

Of course, not everyone will be called to the priesthood, or religious life, but connecting with God, with faith, finding a sense of purpose, a vocation are all things which are intrinsic to living life to the full. It's also important for all young Catholics to feel they are worthy of joining the pilgrimage, as Fr Jackson explains, "It doesn't matter what level of faith somebody has, whether they are an active Catholic, or just wanting to learn more about their faith, all are welcome."

"As a global event, WYD reinforces how Catholic faith is universal; there are so many believers across the world, which is very inspiring," says Fr Jackson. For Fr Jackson personally, the most memorable and significant moments of WYD include the Saturday Night Vigil under a sky full of stars and the deafening silence of hundreds of thousands of people reflecting in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

Ruth Lawlor, Sandhurst WYD Pilgrimage Coordinator, says she is looking forward to working collaboratively with Fr Jackson to provide all pilgrims with the best possible experience.

"Fr Jackson's previous experience in Youth Ministry gives him an insight into how all the different elements of a pilgrimage work together to allow pilgrims a chance to grow in faith individually and as a community. We are both excited to think about the wider reach the WYD experience can have beyond the pilgrims, for the young people not able to travel with us, but also for the parishes and whole Diocesan community," said Ruth.

The Sandhurst Pilgrimage will start on 29 July and end on 11 August and will include a day trip to Fatima and Post WYD Retreat in Avila. If you are interested in

learning more about the Sandhurst Pilgrimage to World Youth Day and sponsorship opportunities, please go to: <https://sandhurstwyd.com/>. Expressions of interest close 10 March 2023.

Millions of young Catholics from all corners of the globe will gather in Lisbon Portugal from Tuesday 1 August to Sunday 6 August this year for World Youth Day celebrations, where they will unite in prayer and partake in Sacraments, daily catechesis, and Stations of the Cross. Highlights are events in which Pope Francis is present, such as the concluding Evening Vigil and Final Mass.

A Youth Festival Program including live music, theatre and art exhibitions will parallel the World Youth Day events, providing opportunities for pilgrims to celebrate their Catholic faith with others, irrespective of language and culture.

## **TOP SCHOLARS AWARDED HANSEN SCHOLARSHIP**

Three students who graduated from Sandhurst Schools in 2022 have been awarded the prestigious Hansen Scholarship from Melbourne University. The trio graduated from their respective Colleges last year, achieving academic success and demonstrating a commitment to their communities.

Ethan Lay from Sacred Heart College Yarrowonga, Ella Gibson from Catholic College Wodonga and Lochlan Tresize from Catherine McAuley College Bendigo were among only 23 students Australia wide to be awarded the significant scholarship.

The scholars will be supported with a full scholarship for the duration of their bachelor's degree at the University of Melbourne. They will also receive a living allowance, mentoring and pastoral care, academic, cultural, career and other development opportunities, and free accommodation in a purpose-built student residence, Little Hall.

From this year, scholars will be able to access these benefits when they continue into an honours degree at the University of Melbourne following their undergraduate degree, or if they study a Diploma of Languages alongside their degree.

Program Patron and University of Melbourne Chancellor Jane Hansen AO and Vice-Chancellor Professor Duncan Maskell presented the 2023 Hansen Scholarships at a ceremony in the new Arts and Cultural Building on the Parkville campus.

"I am delighted to welcome the fourth intake of Hansen Scholars to the University of Melbourne," Ms Hansen said.

"These impressive young students have been selected in recognition of their outstanding academic success, resilience and determination to achieve their ambitions."

"The scholars will be supported and encouraged to aim high and pursue their dreams while studying at the University. I look forward to watching their progress as they form life-long connections, a strong sense of purpose and develop into the future leaders they aspire to be."

Professor Maskell congratulated the 2023 cohort and applauded the Hansen Little Foundation for their generous support.

"The Hansen Scholarship provides a transformative opportunity for students to access an outstanding university education and to embrace that opportunity in full," Professor Maskell said.

"Like the cohorts before them, I have no doubt that these students will fully embrace the opportunity which has been provided thanks to the vision and generosity of Jane Hansen AO and Paul Little." We wish Ethan, Ella and Lochlan all the best with their studies this year as they commence their respective courses. Ethan Lay (Bachelor of Biomedicine) - Ella Gibson (Bachelor of Arts) – Lochlan Tresize (Bachelor of Science).

## **TOP MARKS FOR ST JOSEPH'S BENALLA AND ST MARY'S MOOROOPNA**

St Joseph's Benalla and St Mary's Mooroopna have been identified by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) as high-performing schools. Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Education Sandhurst, Mr Paul Desmond said he was enormously proud of all Sandhurst schools.

St Mary's Mooroopna and St Joseph's Benalla have been identified by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) as high-performing schools. Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Education Sandhurst, Mr Paul Desmond said he was enormously proud of all Sandhurst schools. "I acknowledge the commitment to continued improvement in quality learning and teaching from all schools in the Sandhurst Diocese. However, on this

occasion I would like to celebrate the two Sandhurst Primary Schools that were recognised as high-performing schools on the relaunched MySchool website," he said.

ACARA has identified high-performing schools in each state and territory, including primary and secondary schools, all sectors, high-and low-ICSEA schools, and big and small schools.

St Mary's Mooroopna and St Joseph's Benalla were both listed as high-performing schools, using 2022 NAPLAN results to indicate that students have been performing significantly above all other students nationally with similar socio-educational advantage. Principal of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Anthony Butts said he was filled with great pride and excitement after hearing about the outstanding results.

"Being officially recognised as a high-performing school is a great acknowledgement of the dedicated and hard-working staff of St Mary's," he said.

"Over the last three years our results have been extremely pleasing and this is the product of a lot of hard work from our teachers, students and families." "Our most recent School Improvement Plan (SIP) focused on our staff working as professional learning communities along with developing a new assessment and reporting schedule. This has resulted in a cycle of assessment, teaching and learning that allows teachers to track students and plan the curriculum at individual levels."

Mary Dunstan from St Joseph's Benalla was also thrilled to receive the news as she thanked staff for continually striving to put in place evidence based Visible Learning thinking into day-to-day classroom practices. She also took the opportunity to acknowledge past principal, Trish Merlo and Deputy Principal, Leigh Symons who implemented this vision from 2019 with all staff.

"In 2020, St Joseph's School joined only a handful of other schools in Australia to achieve Visible Learning certification, in recognition of the progress, as well as the achievement the school had made with the *Visible Learning+* system," she said.

“From that time, they committed to raising student outcomes, having high expectations for all students and implementing many strategic plans to achieve their goals,” said Mary.

Both Principals were delighted to share the good news with their wider school communities.

## **NEW ORDAINED REFLECT ON PRIESTLY MINISTRY**

**By Fr Jackson Saunders**

A group of newly ordained priests from the Sandhurst, Ballarat and Sale Diocese's are gathering for an in-service with the topic 'Reflections on Lived Experience of our Priestly Ministry.' The occasion gathers priests, who have been ordained five years or less, in Moama from March 6-9.

Among those in attendance included the Bishops of the three regional Diocese of Victoria, Bishops Shane Mackinlay, Paul Bird and Greg Bennet. Fathers Joe Taylor VG, Brian Boyle EV, and Jake Mudge (Sandhurst), Kevin Maloney VG (Ballarat) and Denis O'Bryan EV (Sale) also supported the occasion.

The program included daily talks, lectures, prayer, Mass and fraternity.

Echuca Parishioner, Christine Sebire, and Chris Cotter (Director of Mission and Pastoral Life for the Sandhurst Diocese) also had an involvement in the program.

Topics covered included human formation, priestly identity, safeguarding those in our care, synodality in parish ministry, the art of presiding as a priest and ministry supervision.

Another blessing of the occasion was being able to gather with other young priests in ministry, who we studied with at the seminary and to renew these friendships.

I speak on behalf of all of the newly ordained priests in expressing our gratitude to those who have arranged and enabled this in-service to take place.

## **NEW MASS SETTING EVOKES CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME**

Not many priests can say they've concelebrated Mass at a Cathedral while a Mass setting they have composed is debuting. This, however, is the lived experience of Jesuit Fr Christopher Willcock when his composition '*Mass: Our Common Home*' was recently sung publicly for the first time at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The new Mass setting was led by Sarah Gould (Cantor), Thomas Heywood (Organist) and members of the Cathedral Choir (directed by Paul Taylor) at the 11.00 a.m. Mass on Sunday 19 February 2023.

Fr Willcock was commissioned to compose a Mass setting for the the Diocese of Sandhurst and Sacred Heart Cathedral parish by an anonymous supporter. Heeding Pope Francis' *Laudto Si'* call to find ways to creatively give praise and thanks for God's Creation during the Celebration of the Eucharist, Fr Willcock titled the Mass Setting, '*Mass: Our Common Home*'.

Fr Willcock wanted to foster congregational participation in the Mass, so he underpinned most of the composition with the melody of a pre-existing composition HYFRYDOL, which is used for texts such as *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling* and *Lord, You Give the Great Commission*. Using a melody that already sits in the collective memory of many Church-goers is a clever approach that will hopefully foster more participation in the music of the Mass and more uptake of the Mass setting locally and more broadly around Australia and beyond. (A traditional approach in the history of Church music and western music composition in general).

Fr Willcock was commissioned by an anonymous supporter to compose the Mass setting for the Diocese of Sandhurst and Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish. He has generously agreed for the *Mass: Our Common Home* Settings to be uploaded to the Diocesan website so that parishes, schools and other communities can freely download and use the score.

### **About Fr Chris Willcock**

Fr Willcock has an international reputation as an outstanding composer of liturgical music during the

post-conciliar era. Born in 1947, he has written several hundred compositions, both for the Church and the concert platform. Several of his Masses, and collections of psalmody have been published by Oregon Catholic Press.

Fr Willcock was commissioned to write music for the papal visit of Pope John Paul II (1986), World Youth Day (2008), and has undertaken commissions from local Cathedrals, orchestras, and choral ensembles such as the Tallis Scholars. He has always been particularly generous in responding to commissions from Dioceses and religious congregations for compositions and arrangements for special occasions.

In 2022, Christopher Willock was awarded an honorary Doctorate from Australian Catholic University for his services to liturgical music within the Catholic Church.

## **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

### **EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP OF SANDHURST**

This is an exciting opportunity for a highly organised, proactive, and detail-sensitive individual to provide administrative support to the Bishop.

Key responsibilities will include the provision of high-level administrative and secretarial support to assist the Bishop manage his workflow and commitments, including:

- diary management and travel arrangements
- efficient and effective records management
- correspondence and communications
- coordination and management of events.
- coordination and distribution of agenda papers and minute taking.

For more information contact:  
[hr@sandhurst.catholic.org.au](mailto:hr@sandhurst.catholic.org.au)

Applications should be forwarded by 5:00 p.m. 20 March 2023.

## **ST PATRICK'S DAY CONCERT** **'A Golden Hour of Irish Music, Culture, and Song'**

**3.30 p.m. 17 March at the Bendigo City Library**

The Central Victorian Irish Association and City of Greater Bendigo Library will help to celebrate St Patrick's Day with a concert showcasing the richness of Irish musical and literary culture. Performances from five solo singers sharing folksongs, art songs and heartfelt ballads will be interspersed with the high energy of Irish dance, haunting instrumental music and readings from Irish literature.

You don't need to be part of Australia's large Irish diaspora to celebrate St Patrick's Day or appreciate the incredible richness of Irish musical and literary culture. Come along to a free concert to be immersed in Irish music, song, dance, and literature at Bendigo City Library on the day.

Five solo singers will share stirring Irish folksongs, heartfelt ballads, and Irish art songs from over a 300-year period. The concert is directed by John Clancy, an Irish (Gaelic) singer who will accompany four other singers – Irish tenor Frederick Kelly, Bryan Milne, David Stephensen, and Kay Ross.

John, Frederick, and Bryan have regularly enhanced the music at special Masses at St Therese's Church Kennington on occasions such as Australia Day and ANZAC Day. Kay is a stalwart member of the Sacred Heart Cathedral Choir.

The high-energy O'Shea-Ryan Irish dancers will be a highlight of this concert. Coached by their remarkable and illustrious teacher, 92-year-old Geraldine Ryan OAM, who started teaching Irish dancing in Bendigo in around 1947 and continues to do so today.

Entry to this concert is free, however a donation box for the Central Victorian Irish Association will be in place. Seating is limited, so audience members are advised to arrive at around 3.15 p.m. This concert is perhaps not suitable for children under the age of eight, so parents and grandparents are advised not to bring them to the concert.

A Happy St Patrick's Day to all Sandpiper readers!

## **BENDIGO PALM SUNDAY GATHERING FOR REFUGEES**

This year, Palm Sunday falls on **2 April**. The day provides an opportunity for people of faith and good will to gather again to promote Bendigo and Australia as a welcoming and just community; calling on our parliament to replace cruel practices of exclusion and detention with a compassionate and supportive welcome to those who flee to us for sanctuary.

There has been some significant improvement in the prospects for asylum seekers and refugees since we gathered in 2022, but there are still thousands of refugees trapped in a limbo of temporary protection with no clear indication of a fair, just and compassionate pathway to permanent residence and citizenship. There is also no indication that the Federal Government has a clear plan to increase the refugee and humanitarian intake to make a fair contribution to addressing the worldwide pain that refugees of war and famine are suffering.

## **CARITAS PROJECT COMPASSION**

### **FOR ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS**

Throughout Lent, Caritas Australia's Project Compassion, draws our attention to many important issues in our world and invites us to take up the cross and follow Jesus in our own time.

This Lenten season Caritas shares four stories of people whose lives have been transformed thanks to the support of Caritas Australia's Project Compassion. This week we focus on Thu from Vietnam, who despite losing his lower right leg can earn extra income and care for his family.

### **Thu's story [Vietnam]**

Thu lost his leg after stepping on a land mine in Vietnam. With your generosity, Thu can now earn extra income and support his wife as she recovers from a stroke.

Thu was just 12 years old when he lost his leg. One day, he was looking after his cows when he stepped on an unexploded land mine.

"War is most terrible with great loss. At the end of the war, there are still consequences such as unexploded ordnance, causing many losses, casualties and death," Thu says.

Thu lives in the Quảng Trị province, located on the Northern Central Coast of Vietnam. Situated along the demilitarised zone that divided Vietnam, the province was one of the most heavily bombed areas during the Vietnam War and is considered one of the most polluted provinces in terms of unexploded ordnances (UXOs) in Vietnam.

In addition to being the breadwinner for his family, Thu had to take on the role of caring for his wife, Linh, after she suffered a stroke.

"She almost lost herself after the stroke and had to lean on me. I could understand how she felt because I had experienced the same at the age of 12 after a landmine accident took one of my legs," Thu said.

Determined to turn their lives around, Thu and Linh joined the Empowerment of People with Disabilities program, run by Caritas Australia's local partner in Vietnam, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD).

The Empowerment of People with Disabilities program supports people living with disabilities to establish Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLA) so that they can access affordable loans. Through the VSLA he was able to obtain a low-interest loan, which he used to open his own barber shop on a new road that was constructed near his home.

For Thu, the greatest impact that the program has had is seeing the change in Linh's physical and mental wellbeing. With the support of a physiotherapist, Linh can now walk short distances with the aid of a walking stick.

"I am grateful to Caritas Australia for the help they give to people living with disability like me and my wife," Thu says. "Thank you to Caritas Australia and the Australian people."

*Along with your generous support, this program is also supported by the Australian Government, through Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).*