



SANDPIPER

News from the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

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ST MALACHY'S NAGAMBIE CELEBRATES 150TH ANNIVERSARY

On Sunday 19 November, St Malachy's Nagambie, one of the founding parishes of the Diocese of Sandhurst, commemorated its 150th anniversary. It was a joy-filled occasion which echoed with nostalgia and community spirit, bringing generations of clergy and parishioners together to celebrate the historic occasion.

The celebrations commenced with Mass celebrated by Bishop Shane Mackinlay. Former priests of Nagambie Fr Tony Hill joined Fr Rene Ramirez RCJ and Fr Ruel Desamparado, who are now serving Nagambie and other priests of the Rogationist Fathers to concelebrate with Bishop Shane.

After Mass, the congregation gathered under the shade of a magnificent Moreton Bay Fig to witness the blessing of the Kearns Centre, a community centre for the whole Nagambie community, in what was the original presbytery.

The congregation then gathered next door at St Joseph's Primary School where they enjoyed a display of photographs and memorabilia as well as refreshments. Before a celebratory cake was about to be cut, Monsignor Frank Marriott, a former parish priest of St Malachy's, spoke fondly of his time at Nagambie to a delighted audience. His joke about the cakes in the old days never being as good as the cake of the day was mockingly considered 'unfunny' by the cake-makers of yesteryear, who obviously were familiar with the humour of Monsignor Marriott!

As parishioners shared memories with old friends, and enjoyed

retracing the steps of their childhood, it was clear that the heart of the Nagambie celebrations lay in the reunion of those who still call St Malachy's home and those who have left Nagambie, but never quite left St Malachy's. It was very apparent that, for all who were present, the parish has played a significant role in their lives and holds a special place in their hearts.

Helen, now a resident of Melbourne, grew up in Avenel where she attended Avenel Primary School. She recalls Fr George Shanahan visiting her school to give Religious Education lessons and prepare students for their sacraments. "Fr Shanahan would travel to Avenel to say Mass every second Sunday, and the Avenel kids came here to St Malachy's for our First Holy Communion," said Helen as she reminisced with photographs of her First Holy Communion.

Helen was joined by Nagambie local girls, Maureen (Moz) and Pam, to be photographed in front of St Joseph's School office, recreating a photograph of the day they celebrated their First Holy Communion so many years ago.

Maree Findlay is obviously very proud of her parish community. She has the rare privilege of being a student, teacher and now Principal at St Joseph's Primary School in Nagambie. Maree has recorded a fascinating series of oral histories as part of the school's 100th anniversary celebrations last year, including stories from a Josephite Sister who taught at St Joseph's.

Former Principal of St Joseph's Primary, Sue Dean was also present at the celebrations. Now retired, Sue played an active role in the conversion of the original presbytery into the Kearns Centre.



ROGATIONIST PRIESTS WELCOMED TO SANDHURST



On 26 November, Rogationist Priests, Rene Ramirez RCJ and Ruel Desamparado RCJ were formally welcomed to the Diocese of Sandhurst at an Installation Mass celebrated by Bishop Shane Mackinlay at St Mel's Church in Shepparton South.

With Fr Rene as leader, the two priests have established a community of Rogationist Fathers of the Heart of Jesus at St Mel's in South Shepparton and will also serve at St Malachy's in Nagambie.

The occasion was an opportunity to unify the congregation of parishioners from Shepparton South and Nagambie who gathered to witness the formal installation of Fr Rene to their parishes. The Mass and festivities afterwards also fostered a sense of shared purpose and spiritual camaraderie.

This momentous day was made even more special by the presence of various groups and individuals: concelebrating priests included Fr Joe Taylor (Vicar General and Parish Priest of Shepparton); Fr Orville Cajigal (Provincial of the Rogationists in Asia-Pacific); Monsignor Peter Jeffrey, Fr Cornelio (Jinjo) Solis; Fr Dean Bongat; Fr Michael Grace (former Parish Priest of St Mel's and St Malachy's now retired) and Rogationist Priests from the Philippines, Vietnam, and the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

A delegation from Holy Family Parish in Braybrook and Maidstone (VIC), where Fr Rene previously served as a parish priest for eight years, also attended. Additionally, staff representatives from St Mel's Primary School (Shepparton South) and St Anne's College (Nagambie) were present.

After the Mass, a Welcome Dinner was held at the GV Hotel in downtown Shepparton where priests and their flock took the opportunity to get to know each other better. Fr Rene and Fr Ruel bring a rich tradition of faith, service and community engagement to their new parishes of St Mel's and St Malachy's and Fr Rene, apparently, is a very good cook who enjoys both classical and pop music!



ST MALACHY'S NAGAMBIE 150th ANNIVERSARY

From page one:

Jennifer Finnigan proudly explained a photograph of St Malachy's debutantes in circa 1937, which included her mother Josephine Furlong. "My mother met my father, Patrick Finnigan, at a ball in Nagambie. My Dad was from Costerfield; he'd travel up for the dances. They married in 1942 at St Malachy's. My great grandfather came out from Ireland and settled in the area; my family have been parishioners here for a very long time," said Jennifer.

At the door of the school, a history of St Malachy's Parish was available for sale. Written by parishioners Rhonda Robinson and Mel Arnold, it provides a history of the Parish and associated schools over the last 150 years. This history skilfully recounts the intriguing story of Fr Kearns' abrupt departure from the parish and Diocese, and the amusing story of the missing foundation stone.

In the forward of this book, Diocesan archivist, Dr Donna Bailey, writes "The gift of the laity in building communities such as St Malachy's Nagambie is often underrated, but without them there would be no story."

History has never stopped repeating. The laity in Nagambie, along with their priests continue to build community. Today, they are reaching out, providing a space for all people in Nagambie to come together and connect in a community hub, The Kearns Centre, named after their first parish priest.

As time goes by, it will be interesting to know, to what sights and sounds that majestic Moreton Bay Fig in the grounds of St Malachy's bears witness. One can only imagine.

Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council setting Strategic Direction

At their fourth and final meeting for 2023, members of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC) continued their collaborative work documenting a strategic plan for the Diocese based on the results of the dialogue and consultation which took place last year and the concrete proposals from the Diocesan Assembly. The members have formed three strategic direction interest groups and are defining goals to give life to their respective strategic directions. They are committed to using a synodal process, emphasising dialogue and collective discernment as essential components of decision making.

The meeting was held at St Brendan's Shepparton and commenced on Friday evening, 17 November. The meeting continued on Saturday, 18 November, following morning Mass celebrated by Bishop Shane Mackinlay.

As well as working on the strategic plan, members were kept up to date with developments in the Diocese and beyond:

Bishop Shane shared an overview of the Synod on a Synodal Church and his time



in Rome at the First Session; Dr Chris Cotter shared some of his experience at an intensive course on Enhancing Catholic School Identity and the Searching for Parish Engagement Scale research projects at KU Leuven; Christine Sebire reported on the recent meeting of the College of Consultors; Mick Chalkley reported on his first meeting as a member of the Diocesan Finance Council; Fr Jackson Saunders reported on the first meeting of the Youth Ministry Reference Group; and plans for the 150th Anniversary of the Diocese were included in the meeting papers.

Members of the SMPC share a desire to strengthen the sense of communion and

shared responsibility among the faithful, and aim to foster a more missionary, responsive, and inclusive Church. Their commitment to transparency and accountability is evident in the Meeting Reports which can be downloaded from the diocesan website. where Mick's depth of knowledge and experience, and commitment to Christian values are being deployed for the common good of those in the Diocese.

If you would like to get in contact with the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council, please phone the Chancery on 5445 3600, or email: admin.smpc@sandhurst.catholic.org.au

Sacred Heart joins Night of the Witnesses

On 22 November, Sacred Heart Cathedral Bendigo illuminated the night sky in a radiant shade of red in a show of solidarity with persecuted Christians around the world. The stunning transformation of the Cathedral marked the Diocese's participation in the global initiative known as 'Red Wednesday', or the 'Night of the Witnesses'.

Fr Brian Boyle, Administrator of the Cathedral Cluster of parishes, led a Vigil for persecuted Christians on the Wattle Street stairs of the Cathedral just as the night fell. The small gathering of the faithful dedicated prayers for those facing persecution due to their Christian beliefs. It was a moving demonstration of faith, compassion, and unity.

This year was the first time for Sacred Heart Cathedral to join the global

campaign. "We now have the technology installed to make this happen," said Fr Boyle. The new lights were installed only days before Red Wednesday and the Diocesan project manager and technicians had been busily testing and adjusting the lights in preparation for the night.

Fr Brian expressed his gratitude to the people who joined him in prayer, acknowledging that everyone present felt safe to stand outside on the Cathedral stairs at night and pray openly.

There were just over 20 people who attended the prayer vigil. Fr Boyle aims to have a much larger gathering next year and hopes that a Red Wednesday prayer vigil on the stairs of the Cathedral will become a Diocesan tradition – for the sake of our fellow Christians who are less fortunate than us.



Festival of the Sacred embraces God-given talent



Students from Catholic primary schools in the North-East took to the stage this week to perform at the Festival of the Sacred.

The concerts, which were held over three days at the Wangaratta Performing Arts and Convention Centre on Monday and Tuesday and The Cube in Wodonga on Wednesday, showcased the extraordinary talents of students from St Patrick's, St Bernard's and Our Lady's Wangaratta, St Joseph's Chiltern, St Mary's Myrtleford, St Joseph's Beechworth, St Mary's Rutherglen, St Joseph's Benalla, St Augustine's and St Monica's Wodonga, St

Francis of Assisi Baranduda and St Michael's Tallangatta.

Well known songs from musicals such as Matilda and Pippen had toes tapping, and the solo and choral performances were simply spectacular. High-energy dances and drama presentations were also a feature of the festival performance.

The Australian School of Performing Arts (ASPA Ed) team has been working alongside specialist Performing Arts and Classroom teachers throughout the term to prepare the students for Concert Day.

The program ensures that all students in Sandhurst Primary Schools have access to a quality Performing Arts experience in their primary years. The Festival of the Sacred program also develops teacher capacity in the development of best practice and teachers are supported with extensive resources to support the delivery of the program.

The benefits of engaging in the Performing Arts through a program such as the Festival of the Sacred include the development of resilience, confidence, and social skills. Extensive research shows that participating in Arts activities promotes wellbeing and brain plasticity, enhancing the growth of the whole person. The Festival of the Sacred program aligns with the Victorian Curriculum for Music and Dance.

One of the most heartwarming aspects of this year's Festivals of the Sacred was the diverse range of performances; students from various backgrounds and schools coming together to share their unique talents.



As the curtains closed on the Term 4 Festivals of the Sacred, it was evident that the festivals not only celebrate the Arts, but also underscore the importance of fostering creativity and cultural appreciation among the younger generation.

During the year, around 2000 Catholic School students have performed at the festivals which were held across the three deaneries of the Sandhurst Diocese. The biennial performing arts festival will return in 2025 with Sandhurst Arts on Show taking place next year.

SAUSAGES AND FAITH A BURNING CONCERN FOR KNIGHTS OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS

Next time you walk past a Bunnings Sausage Sizzle check if it's the Knights of the Southern Cross and, if it is, make sure you buy two sausages, knowing you're helping these men keep more than just the barbeque flame alive.

To encourage praying the Rosary, the Bendigo Knights have made it their mission to gift a Holy Card and Rosary Beads to every child who has completed their sacramental program, thus helping to keep the flame of faith ever present in each recipient's life.

The Knights might not wear shining white armour when they present these gifts to students at School assemblies; they might not rescue any damsels in distress or scurry orphans bravely to safety; but who knows – in the future, a young adult might hold onto their Rosary Beads and pray. Pray, remembering the soft strong presence of the Knights at their school assembly seemingly a lifetime ago.



In a constantly evolving world, full of challenges and uncertainties, the need for good faithful men as role models becomes increasingly imperative. Simple actions, such as turning a sausage on the barbeque and giving a gift such as Rosary beads, can have a profound impact on another – the irony is that the Knights will never know of this impact.

The Knights of the Southern Cross Bendigo Branch also give a bursary of \$200 to every Catholic Primary School in the Bendigo area, to be awarded, at the Principal's discretion, to a Year 6 student or students who exemplify Christian values in their daily life.

Through their good works, and as visible role models, the Knights of the Southern Cross, contribute to a stable foundation for our communities to thrive. Their influence helps to shape the character and aspirations of future generations, especially in a world that often grapples with uncertainty, and search for purpose and meaning.

The Knights of the Southern Cross form an Australian Catholic fraternal organisation which advocates Christian values and supports educational, religious and social welfare work.

Pope Francis calls on Young People to become Sowers of Hope

"Dear Young People,

*Do not be afraid to share with others the hope and joy of the risen Christ!
Nurture the spark that has been kindled in you, but at the same time share it."*

Pope Francis in his message for World Youth Day 2023.

In his Message for the 38th World Youth Day titled, "Rejoicing in Hope" [Rom 12:12], Pope Francis invites young people to take care of their hope by:

- taking time to pray so that the spark that is lit within is not smothered by everyday concerns;
- sharing words of hope, especially through social media, rather than passing on bad news; and
- adopting a lifestyle of concrete actions based on hope, sensitive to the needs of

others and rooted in the reality of daily life.

'Hope' will lead young people over the next two years towards the Jubilee Year 2025 which is themed "Pilgrims of Hope".

The Theme for the local WYD event in November 2024 has been announced as, "Those who hope in the Lord shall walk without growing weary" [Isaiah 40:31].



*"Those who
hope in the Lord shall
walk without
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[Isaiah 40:31].

Carrying Forward in pursuit of Synodality



One “particular grace” of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia has been its encouragement of many initiatives in the Church across the country, according to a letter to the People of God prepared for the Solemnity of Christ the King.

As the Church marked the end of the liturgical year, the letter provides an update on work carrying forward the Plenary Council’s outcomes while awaiting the Holy See’s formal recognition of the Council’s decrees.

More than a dozen people – clergy, religious and laity – gathered in Sydney recently to provide a report on work undertaken since the Council’s conclusion in July 2022. Such a report had been called for in the Council’s decrees.

The group’s members had been nominated by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia and the Association of Ministerial PJP’s. They decided to offer the report in the format of a letter to the People of God.

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, who served as the Plenary Council’s president said, while there is a keen desire to receive the Holy See’s recognition, the Church in Australia has not been sitting idle.

“This letter to the People of God outlines just a selection of the initiatives that are being pursued, including diocesan synods and assemblies, national conferences and events hosted by various Church entities,” he said.

“As the letter says, ‘there are many participants in a shared journey which continues to unfold.’”

The letter, which considers the complementary nature of the ongoing Synod of Bishops for a Synodal Church, includes reminders of some of the key milestones since the Plenary Council’s celebration phase ended last year:

- The approval of the Council’s acts and decrees;
- The submission of the acts and decrees to the Dicastery for Bishops;
- The publication of Carrying Forward the Plenary Council: As we continue the journey together at Pentecost, inviting local Catholic communities to reflect on their own engagement with the Council’s decrees.

“In providing this report, the Bishops of Australia share their commitment to honour and implement the remarkable work of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia,” the letter says.

“It remains fresh and alive in our planning for the future. We look back in gratitude for the breadth of engagement on every level of the life of the Church and for the experience of encounter, listening and discernment (which lies at the very centre of a synodal framework) afforded by the experience of the general assemblies of the Plenary Council.

“We look forward with anticipation and hope that, with the promulgation of the Decrees of the Plenary Council, the Church in Australia will be graced with both a deepened experience of communion and participation, and at the same time a revitalised impetus to mission.”



Last year, the Advent Appeal for Ukraine raised almost \$430,000 to support people in war-torn parts of Ukraine through the work of Mudra Sprava, a Patriarchal Charitable Foundation in Ukraine. This year, the Australian Bishops are again calling on Australian Catholics to contribute to this appeal which will help to evacuate and feed and shelter internally displaced persons.

An initial report sent by Mudra Sprava, to the Bishop of the Australian Ukrainian Eparchy in May last year detailed the extensive works undertaken by Mudra Sprava with funds raised using the first part of the Advent Appeal. A second report, detailing works undertaken with the remainder of the 2022 Advent Appeal, has now been published.

Over 7000 food packages were delivered to Ukrainians in need with the second portion of funds raised from the Australian Advent Appeal auspiced by the Ukrainian Eparchy (the Eparchy of Saints Peter and Paul of Melbourne).

“... Mudra Sprava continues to respond promptly and effectively to the challenges of the war in Ukraine, trying to care for all those in need and heal the wounds of war ... All this is possible thanks to the constant support of Ukrainians and benefactors from all over the world,” states the report.

When the Australian bishops met in early November, they were reminded of the continuing suffering of the people of Ukraine and the gratitude of Ukrainian people for the support they had received from Mudra Sprava, thanks to the generosity of Australian Catholics. The Australian Bishops therefore agreed it would be appropriate to give parishes the opportunity to again contribute to an appeal during this Advent.

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ACN Supporting Christians in the Holy Land



The pontifical foundation Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) has committed an aid package of 190,000 AUD to support the Christians of the Holy Land during the current crisis. This aid will assist impoverished Christians in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, as well as Christian migrant workers and asylum seekers in Israel.

Gaza Strip

In the Gaza Strip, where approximately 1,000 Christians reside, the majority seek refuge from the ongoing conflict in the Holy Family Catholic parish and the Greek Orthodox church of Saint Porphyrius. Church compounds are now housing hundreds of families, with reports indicating severe shortages of food, medicine and water.

ACN is supporting an initiative of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (LPJ) aimed at securing a constant supply of basic necessities, including hygiene kits, medicine, food and fuel, for the isolated Christian communities in the Gaza Strip.

West Bank and East Jerusalem

While the conflict is primarily centred on the Gaza Strip, its repercussions have significantly affected Christians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The West Bank is home to roughly 37,000 Palestinian Christians, with an additional 10,000 Christians residing in East Jerusalem.

Christians in the region heavily rely on the tourism sector for employment. With most pilgrim and tourist traffic halted, many local Christians have lost their main source of income, while others are unable to travel to work due to the closing of checkpoints, and other restrictions.

ACN is collaborating with the LPJ to provide emergency assistance to Christian communities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This assistance primarily includes medical support, food coupons, and subsistence aid for rent and essential bills, such as water and electricity.

Israel

In September 2021, the LPJ established the Vicariate for Migrants and Asylum Seekers (VMAS) to care for the 100,000 Catholic migrants and asylum seekers residing in Israel. These migrants have various legal statuses, and many are employed in low-cost labour jobs.

Hundreds of migrant Christians working in the areas surrounding the Gaza Strip were forced to flee and seek refuge in temporary shelters in East Jerusalem, mainly in convents, Christian guesthouses, and other Church facilities. Others have found shelter in churches in different parts of Israel, such as Tel Aviv.

ACN is actively assisting the VMAS to provide accommodation, health care, and other essential services for displaced Christian migrants living in Israel.

Latin Patriarch thanks ACN
The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, expressed his gratitude to ACN for the foundation's ongoing collaboration with the LPJ and for the support given to the Christians in the Holy Land during this time of crisis: "Thank you for your donation and solidarity with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Please continue to pray for our small Christian community as they give unwavering witness to the faith and hope."

To donate to Christians in the Holy Land visit www.aidtochurch.org/

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Parish Collections

The Bishops have suggested Parished hold a third collection for Ukraine at a Mass during Advent.

Or you can make a donation by cheque to:

Trustees of the UCC in Au and post to
Bishop's Chancery,
35 Canning Street,
North Melbourne, VIC 3051.

If you require a receipt please provide the following information:

Name of person seeking a receipt;
Name of Church entity (e.g. parish name and suburb);
Date the deposit was made;
Amount of deposit; and Contact details – postal address or email account.

'Shining A Light' Report recommends a Whole Church Response to Domestic Violence

Victorian Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Ms Vicki Ward MP, has shown her support for the work conducted by Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV) and the Catholic Diocese of Sale in helping to educate, inform and equip parish communities to address domestic and family violence. Together with Bishop Greg Bennet of the Diocese of Sale, Minister Ward launched the report, *Shining a Light: A collaborative project working to build capacity for a whole-of-Church response to domestic and family violence* last Friday in Warragul.

The report outlines the findings of a pilot program, 'Shining a Light', which took place between March and July last year in the Catholic Diocese of Sale, in partnership with Catholic Social Services Victoria, the peak body for Catholic social and community service organisations across the state, and Sr Nicole Rotaru, a Mercy Sister, social worker and counsellor with many years' experience of working with victims and survivors of family and domestic violence, including children.

A total of 127 people (89 women and 38 men) participated in the pilot program, which assisted participants to recognise the signs of domestic and family violence and the impacts on women and children; to be more confident in starting a 'careful conversation'; and to know some domestic and family violence resources in the local community and beyond.

Participants included Church clergy, parish staff, members of Religious congregations, Diocesan safeguarding staff and other organisation volunteers and staff, including those from across local social service agencies, schools, and healthcare.

In addressing the report, Minister Ward noted its message that 'the prevention of domestic and family violence is contingent on strong, local communities'. She said,

'This is a conversation that has to happen across communities and the work that you have done, with your 127 participants and conversations is really important, because those conversations will ripple out and will lead to other conversations.

'We know that up to 50% of people in Victoria, and nationwide, still think that it happens "somewhere else", that it "doesn't happen" in their community, in their street, or in their schools, or in their churches. And it does. So, to continue to have those conversations, to plant those seeds of openness is really important. It's also what develops a strong community because a safe community is a strong community.

'Every home should be safe, and these conversations are part of the way of delivering that.'

Bishop Greg Bennet expressed his commitment in 'sharing those efforts to address the terror of domestic and family violence and violence of any kind'. He said, 'We are constantly reminded of the turmoil, violence, injury, and deaths of those victims of such terror, darkness, and silence.

'The evaluation report highlights that no community is free from domestic family violence ... We cannot fool ourselves. It is a matter of pastoral care that we create within our parish communities, pools of safety, where people will find the courage to speak to clergy and pastoral leaders, and that our parishes will be well-equipped and available to know what resources are available to support, accompany, and ensure people are

safe.'

The report outlines six recommendations that aim to enhance the Catholic community's role in responding to and preventing domestic and family violence in light of the learnings from this pilot program. Among these, there is an emphasis on the importance of providing ongoing support for the workshop participants, and a need to secure resources for further work. It is recommended that follow-up workshops making clear specifically on what constitutes effective approaches to violence prevention be rolled out across every diocese in Australia with the intent to open space for conversation and build general knowledge about drivers and prevalence of domestic and family violence in Australia.

The recommendations also propose the development of communities of practice and broader organisational training initiatives. Collaborative partnerships with social service organisations and ongoing training for personnel in areas such as health and education will strengthen the overall response to domestic and family violence.

Sr Nicole Rotaru RSM, workshop facilitator, and a member of the CSSV council and CSSV Domestic Violence Working Group commended the participants of the pilot program, and for their insightful feedback, which has informed the evaluation report. She said,

"Implementing these recommendations is vital for the Catholic community to proactively contribute to preventing and addressing domestic and family violence in Victoria and beyond.

'While violence against women is a problem of epidemic propor-

tions in Australia and children suffer the consequences intensely, it is not inevitable. It is preventable.

‘The lid must come off. The silence must be broken, so that children, women and men can be safe,’ said Sr Nicole. ‘The Sale Diocese has made a clear commitment to addressing domestic and family violence and to working towards prevention. Such resolute commitment needs to go beyond Sale, to the whole of Victoria and to all dioceses across Australia.’

Bishop Greg made a similar call: ‘The evaluation report highlighted that there is a real need to form and educate people in their awareness and their confidence to even speak about domestic violence. So, if there is a challenge for the church, it’s that other dioceses can learn from this report, and similarly, through their networks begin a similar project to educate clergy, to educate pastoral leaders, religious and those within their parishes.

‘We need to create environments where people feel safe. And if we can help by such a project to develop people’s confidence to speak about domestic violence and to make sure parishes are well resourced, then I would encourage my brother bishops, where possible, to begin to move in this direction.’

As a result of the pilot program and evaluation, a further step is planned—Spreading the Light—which will involve inviting safeguarding volunteers and pastoral workers to train as workshop facilitators. The volunteers will be supported by staff from Catholic Care Victoria, and members of the Sale Diocese will be invited to participate in a workshop.

Speaking on behalf of CSSV, Felicity Rorke, Executive Director of The Good Samaritan Inn, and Chair of the CSSV Domestic Violence Working Group said, ‘Catholic Social Services is committed to being a platform for collaboration in the

Accompanying A Person Considering Euthanasia

Australia’s Catholic bishops have released a new document to guide priests, chaplains and pastoral workers who are asked to provide pastoral support to Catholics who are considering euthanasia.

The publication of the document, *To Witness and to Accompany with Christian Hope*, follows the legalisation of euthanasia in all Australian states.

Archbishop Peter A. Comensoli, chair of the Bishops Commission for Life, Family and Public Engagement, said the Church has been confronted with the difficult question of how to attend to the spiritual and pastoral needs of Catholics contemplating euthanasia.

The focus of the priest or pastoral worker is on providing patients with God’s grace and mercy.

“*To Witness and to Accompany with Christian Hope* is particularly timely, given the many enquiries bishops have received from chaplains for guidance and the fact that euthanasia is available throughout the country,” said Archbishop Comensoli.

“It is vital that chaplains and pastoral workers have the information to confidently respond to the realities that are facing them as they minister to Catholics in hospitals, in aged care and in their own homes.”

In preparing the document, the bishops consulted widely with a range of people including theologians, ethicists, liturgists and medical doctors. The bishops have also worked with the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The document points out that “Catholic teaching on euthanasia flows from our understanding of the human person”.

“Euthanasia contradicts the goodness and dignity of each human person, created in the image of God – a unique, irreplaceable individual,” it says.

“Accompanying someone who is expressing a desire for euthanasia is an act of charity that should be offered in a way that does not require the pastoral companion to suspend their firm commitment to the Church’s clear teaching that euthanasia is never morally permissible.”

The document points out that “... the tension between supporting a person in contrast to supporting their actions is very familiar to family members, especially spouses, parents and siblings. However, family members should strive to remain faithful to each other despite the disagreements and tensions that arise.”

The document carefully outlines the circumstances in which people can receive sacraments, with the presumption being that the person is acting in good faith.

“By accompanying a person and listening to their griefs, fears and sufferings, as well as offering the Prayers of the Dead after death, we can share with them (and their family) the love of Christ without condoning any choice to intentionally end their life,” the document says.

If you would like a copy of this document, please ask your parish office.

awareness raising and prevention of family and domestic violence. The Shining a Light program is an example of such collaboration with parishes and organisations working together to create momentum on this significant social problem.

‘No one can do this work alone. It takes a village—organisations, schools, parishes, faith communities, and guidance and an au-

thorising environment established by government.

This is what can bring about the change we need to see, if we want a community that is free from violence. We are convinced that we need to work together in a collaborative and authentic way.’

If you would like a copy of this report, please ask your parish office.



Bishop Shane's Calendar

Saturday 2 December

– Marist College Confirmation and First Eucharist, St Kilian's Church, 3pm

Sunday 3 December

– Sunday Mass, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo, 11am

Monday 4 December

– Blessing and Opening of new building, Holy Rosary Primary School, Heathcote, 11am

Tuesday 5 December

– College of Consultors, Bendigo

Tuesday 5 December

– AGM, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria

Wednesday 6 December

– Blessing and Opening of new building, St Mary's Primary School, Rushworth, 11:30am

Wednesday 6 December

– AGM, St Catherine's Hostel, Wangaratta

Thursday 7 December

– Diocesan Finance Council, Bendigo

Friday 8 December

– Victorian Bishops and Corpus Christi Seminary Trustees, Melbourne

Friday 8 December

– Catholic Theological College Senate, Melbourne

Sunday 10 December

– Sunday Mass, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo, 11am

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