

SANDPIPER

NEWS FROM THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SANDHURST

ISSUE 64: 6 OCTOBER 2023

“RUTH HAS LEFT THE BUILDING!” A HEARTFELT FAREWELL TO RUTH LAWLOR



“Ruth has left the building” – a catchphrase fitting for this passionate, effervescent woman who has led Sandhurst Youth Ministry with all the pizzazz fitting of a drama teacher, while drawing from the gospels to reach young people in ways that matter to them. We farewell Ruth, who has served Sandhurst with commitment and passion over the last five years.

More On Page : 10



Chancery Staff took time out to farewell Ruth Lawlor, in her final week of work with the Diocese. Ruth has been Sandhurst's Youth Ministry Coordinator for the last five years. We wish her well in her journey ahead.

FR BONIFACE MISSIONARY ZEAL WHEREVER HE GOES



The tranquillity of regional Victoria is sonorously appreciated by a man who has lived all his years in societies working through the aftermath of violence and conflict, yet whose main desire is to serve where he is needed most.

After three months as Priest in Residence at Rutherglen and Chiltern, Fr Boniface Kamulegeya has returned to Rwanda. He says he is enriched by his experience and takes home many lessons learned.

More On Page : 08

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI STATUE UNVEILED AT ST BRENDAN'S



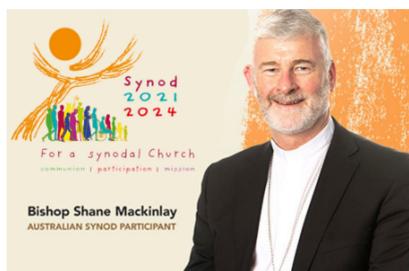
St Brendan's Shepparton has a new statue of St Francis of Assisi thanks to the generosity of longtime St Joseph's Undera parishioners, the late Cath and John Hogan. The statue was blessed by Fr Joe Taylor in the presence

of Cath and John's family and friends. Sheila Griffin spoke about these generous parishioners at the unveiling and blessing ceremony.

More On Page : 07

SYNOD A “SAFE SPACE” FOR PARTICIPANTS

by Bishop Shane Mackinlay



In October, I will be one of 15 Australians and hundreds of people from around the world gathering in Rome for the first assembly of what has become known as the “Synod on Synodality”.

Next month’s assembly, and another to follow in October 2024, are the continuation of what has been dubbed “the world’s largest ever consultation”. When you consider that almost 120 bishops conferences, from every part of the world, gathered the thoughts of the People of God in their dioceses, that claim makes sense.

This consultation has also been marked by an openness and transparency that hasn’t always been characteristic of Vatican processes. It is part of a wider awareness across the Church internationally of how much we can learn from good practices in other parts of society.

Much like the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, the Synod’s process reflects a conviction that by sharing the fruits of the community’s prayer, conversation and discernment, we can build a shared spiritual and emotional investment in what is being discussed, as well as having new opportunities to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

As the Synod on Synodality prepares to open on October 4, there has been some discussion about how the openness and transparency that has been evident over the past three years might continue over the next few weeks.

This is similar to issues that we grappled with during the Plenary Council journey.

After more than 220,000 people had shared their joys and their hopes, their griefs and their anxieties, we wanted to invite those people to continue their journey with the 275 members who would participate and vote in the Council’s two assemblies.

At the same time, we wanted to create a protected space for Council members to engage in prayerful and deeply personal conversations, while still sharing the fruits of that discernment with the Australian people.

It wasn’t an easy balance to find, but daily updates through stories, photos and videos sought to capture the essence of the discussions and the spirit – and indeed the Spirit – that was present in those conversations.

Council members were able to share their own experiences and their own views on the important topics that were on the agenda as they chose, but with an understanding that the views of others were theirs alone to share (or not).

At this stage, it appears that during next month’s assembly of the Synod on Synodality, the priority will be on ensuring that the confidentiality of the “conversations in the Spirit” is protected, so that there can be a free exchange of people’s thoughts across the questions we will be praying with and reflecting upon.

Pope Francis, when asked recently about the upcoming assembly, said, “There is one thing that we must safeguard, the synodal atmosphere. This is not a television show where you talk about everything. No. There is a religious moment; there is a moment of religious exchange.”

We know that our faith is one of the most deeply personal parts of our being. Sharing our innermost thoughts on such matters can be hard, and it is certainly important that any vulnerability in those moments is respected.

It is in this context that Pope Francis and his collaborators are seeking to create a “safe space” for Synod participants during the assembly.

Paolo Ruffini, the prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Communications, explained it this way: “Maintaining the confidentiality, the privacy, and, I would say, the sacredness of certain places for conversation in the Spirit, is part and parcel of the desire to make these moments a true opportunity for listening, discernment and prayer, rooted in communion.”

To that end, some aspects of the Synod will be livestreamed and it’s expected there will be regular updates on the discussions that are taking place.

As the Holy Father has reminded us, “the Synod is not a parliament”, and so the proceedings of the Synod will not be captured like the debate in Parliament. However, it is expected that a synthesis report on the first assembly will be published to guide ongoing discernment by the whole People of God, in preparation for the second assembly next October.

With that in mind, we see the rationale for Pope Francis’ desire to safeguard the prayerful exchange of ideas during the assembly, while still promoting the participation of the whole People of God in the broader synod process. As we Australian participants travel to Rome, we ask you to accompany us in prayer and to stay connected to this ongoing journey of renewal in Jesus Christ.

For our part, we will do what we can to share our reflections on our experiences as part of this global exercise in synodality, both during the assembly and after we return to Australia later in the year.

Bishop Shane Mackinlay was elected as a representative of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference at the Synod on Synodality. He was also vice-president of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia.

SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

**“The Holy Spirit often shatters our expectations
to create something new that surpasses our predictions and negativity.
Let us open ourselves to him and call upon him, the protagonist, the Holy Spirit.
And let us walk with him, in trust and with joy.”**

Pope Francis: Homily at the Opening Mass of the Synod

The Opening Mass for the Synod on Synodality on 4 October, commenced with a procession of Synod participants through St Peter's Square.

The pageantry was fitting for this historic Synod in which lay men and women have been granted full voting rights for the first time; and the submissions of everyday Catholics – from what has been an unprecedented scale of global consultation will be formally considered.

For the next three weeks, Synod participants, including Bishop Shane Mackinlay and eleven others from Australia, will meet in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall to engage in conversations of the spirit and eventually advise Pope Francis on the theme:

“ For a Synodal Church:

Communion,
Participation,
Mission.”



“WALKING TOGETHER WITH THE GAZE OF JESUS”

In his Homily, Pope Francis reminded participants that the purpose of the Synod is not to carry out a parliamentary meeting or a plan of reformation, but a convocation of the Spirit.

Pope Francis asked participants “to walk together with the gaze of Jesus”. He said, when each one of us keeping the gaze of Jesus, the Church grows as one with God firmly at the centre; it reaches out to the world; ‘stirs the indifferent’; remains true to the teachings of Jesus and does not lose heart – even in amid the ‘sometimes agitated waves of our time’.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SYOD

Twelve people from Australia are participating at the Synod as delegates with full voting rights and three people are facilitating. They have asked for your prayers as they undertake their important tasks over the next three weeks.

PRAYER for the Synod

(Adapted)

**We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.**

**With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;**

**Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.**

**Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and remain faithful to the way of truth
and what is right.**

**All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever.**

Amen.

Approved by
Bishop Shane Mackinlay
Diocese of Sandhurst



‘TOWARDS THE REFERENDUM’ ISSUES AROUND THE VOICE ARE MORAL, NOT JUST POLITICAL

Australia’s Catholic bishops say the issues surrounding the proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice “are not just political”, but are also “moral and ethical”, in a statement ahead of the referendum on 14 October.

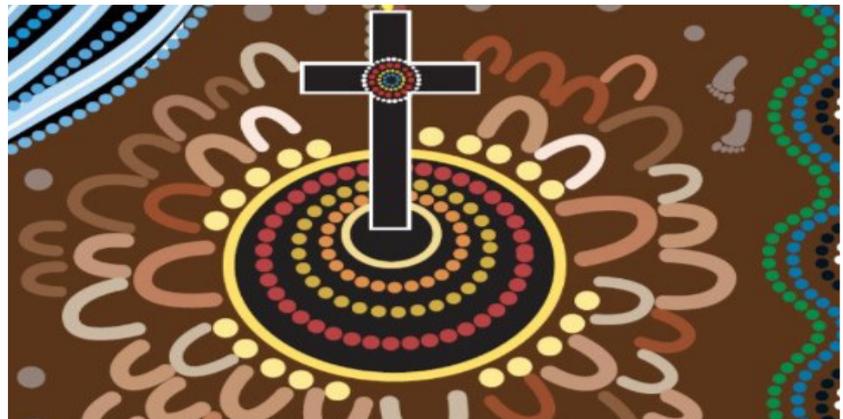
In **Towards the Referendum**, the bishops encourage all Australians to educate themselves, including by reading the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the bishops’ 2023 Social Justice Statement. They also invite people to listen to others’ hopes and fears.

As with statements the bishops made earlier this year, there is no advice on whether people should vote Yes or No at the referendum. The bishops instead call for people to consider and seek to understand the country’s past, present and future.

“We need to see the truth of what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have suffered and the disadvantage many experience to this day. Justice demands that we seek to rectify this disadvantage,” the bishops write.

“We urge all Australians to listen to the hopes and fears of each other. We urge people to act in a way that commits to redressing the disadvantage suffered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and will allow them to reach their potential, thus promoting reconciliation for the good not just of some, but of the whole nation.”

The statement contains comments from Australia’s first bishop, John Bede Polding, on the harsh mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the 1840s. It also draws on statements from Pope St John Paul II in Alice Springs in 1986, and Pope Francis more recently.



The bishops conclude the statement by imploring the Holy Spirit, “who opens locked doors”, to “give us light and strength to keep working for a better and more equitable Australia”.

In May, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference issued a statement on the Voice, calling for the debate to be conducted civilly and respectfully. They acknowledged that Australians have differing views on the referendum and the expected outcomes were it to succeed.

The bishops’ 2023-24 Social Justice Statement, published in August, called for a “new engagement” with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, “an engagement which involves a commitment to listen to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander sisters and brothers and to learn from them”.

“This listening and learning and the actions which flow from them must be grounded in a spirit of love if there is to be a change for the better,” the statement said.

At the statement’s launch, Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission

and Service chair, Bishop Vincent Long OFMConv, said people need to listen to First Nations people “with deep respect and learn from them about what needs to be done to improve their situations”.

“We need to walk with them, day by day, and work with them to bring about change for the better – for their people and for all of us,” he said.

“Strengthening our relationship with our First Peoples is integral and indeed critical to the strengthening of the whole nation.”



TOWARDS THE REFERENDUM A STATEMENT FROM AUSTRALIA'S CATHOLIC BISHOPS

In 1842, Australia's first Catholic bishop, John Bede Polding, criticised the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: "The life of an (Aboriginal) human being is valued no more than the life of a kangaroo, and far less ...than that of a bullock". In 1849, he wrote to the people of Sydney in his Lenten message, "The wretched unfortunate Aborigines of the country – the first occupants of the lands over which your flocks and herds now roam – have a very strong claim upon you".

There emerged in time a policy of assimilating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into mainstream Australian culture. However well-intentioned it may have seemed, the policy led to the dissolution of Indigenous culture. Within our nation's history, the Church was regrettably part of that policy's implementation.

We are now familiar with the concept of terra nullius (the view that before European settlement the land belonged to no one), the tragedy of the Stolen Generation and the fact that the prior habitation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was not recognised in the Australian Constitution.

We need to see the truth of what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have suffered and the disadvantage many experience to this day. Justice demands that we seek to rectify this disadvantage.

Australians are now being asked to consider a constitutionally enshrined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice as one way to address this disadvantage. This was asked for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The hope of those who prepared the Uluru Statement is that this will not only offer constitutional recognition, but also assist progress towards a more just and equitable Australia, helping to tackle not just the symptoms but the causes of chronic disadvantage.

Pope Francis wrote recently of the Indigenous people of the Amazon, and how best to engage with them on issues particular to them: "They are our principal

dialogue partners, those from whom we have the most to learn... Their words, their hopes and their fears should be the most authoritative voice at the table... Otherwise, the result would be, once again, 'a plan drawn up by the few for the few.'" The same could be said of the Indigenous peoples of Australia.

In 1986 at Alice Springs, Pope St John Paul II said to the Aboriginal people: "You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received."

Pope Francis and Pope John Paul ask us to listen to the Indigenous peoples and to receive joyfully what they have to offer the whole nation and the world. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's statement on the Voice in May urged that the debate be conducted civilly and respectfully; there are some who strongly support the Voice and others who have concerns, including whether the Voice would benefit those most in need or could stifle good governance.

However differently they are viewed, the issues surrounding the Voice are not just political; they are moral and ethical. Therefore all Australians need to educate themselves. One way we might do this is by a careful reading of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and this year's Social Justice Statement, Listen, Learn, Love: A New Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

We urge all Australians to listen to the hopes and fears of each other. We urge people to act in a way that commits to redressing the disadvantage suffered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and will allow them to reach their potential, thus promoting reconciliation for the good not just of some but of the whole nation.



FORMATION FOR MISSION

The third decree of the Fifth Plenary Council is a challenging but joyful reminder to all Catholics of the mission that has been entrusted to them through their Baptism. As disciples of Christ, the baptised are called to give loving attention to our world – marked by both sin and grace – to prayerfully read the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel, to seek to grasp the meaning of human strivings and to discern God's will under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gaudium et Spes* nn. 3-4, 11).

Using the Third Decree of the Plenary Council as an example, Dr Chris Cotter and Leslie Cooper will work through the study guide released by the ACBC 'Carrying Forward the Plenary Council'. Participants will be guided through a process of spiritual dialogue, starting with reading the first question of the decree, praying, reflecting on it, then reviewing what their community is already doing, or could be doing to implement this part of the decree. This process is then repeated for each question of the decree.

It is hoped this will assist parishes to facilitate meetings as they carry forward the plenary Council implementing decrees.

Choose from two sessions hosted on Zoom.

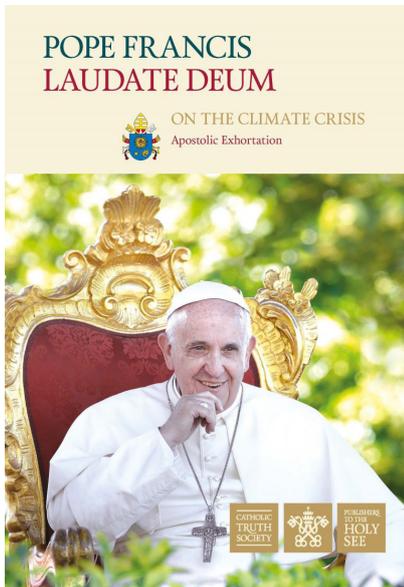
6.30 p.m. Wednesday 25 October,
or

9.00 a.m. Thursday 26 October.

For further information please contact
Leslie Cooper on Tel: 5445 3600
E: Leslie.Cooper@sandhurst.catholic.org.au

SEASON OF CREATION

'LAUDATE DEUM': TO ALL PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS



Pope Francis released 'Laudate Deum', his apostolic exhortation on the climate crisis, on the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi. Officially titled, 'Laudate Deum: To all the People of Good Will on the Climate Crisis',

The exhortation has been commonly awaited as the 'sequel' to his 'groundbreaking' exhortation, 'Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [2015].

"Praise God" is the title of this letter. For when human beings claim to take God's place, they become their own worst enemies. [73]

For Pope Francis, climate change is the single most pressing issue for all humanity and it reflects a cultural, ideological, and spiritual problem, in which we fail to see ourselves as part of creation. At the heart of the climate crisis is the anthropocentric world view of polluters entrenched in a technocratic paradigm. For when, as human beings, we think we can be substitutes for God, we become our own worst enemies, endanger everyone and, ultimately, lose the game.

Pope Francis calls us to humbly praise our Creator for the abundance and beauty bestowed on us. He asks us to pray for help to shift the status quo and move circles of influence to a new paradigm so that we can do justice to each other and heal our common home.

Laudate Deum is Latin for 'Praise God'. The title is the essence of Pope Francis' message in which, in a less kind nutshell, is this:-

As humans we are now too big for our boots, we need to stop seeing ourselves as masters of our domain, but as an intrinsic part of it; we are removed from nature and need to rekindle a sense of awe and wonder for the beauty of this planet which we did not create and do not own; climate change is real, it is caused by humans and there is no point to denying it; people with money and power have no more right to the world's resources than anyone else; we need to remedy the impact of human-caused global warming, especially on the world's most vulnerable people, and this will mean people in the developed world will need to live with less; we can't solve all of our problems with technological solutions, but we can start with shifting our values, changing our lifestyle, living humbly and of course, with prayer.

Catholic Earthcare presents online screening of 'Rachel's Farm'

6.00 p.m. 26 October 2023 via Zoom

Catholic Earthcare invites you to an online screening of 'Rachel's Farm'. In this uplifting documentary, actor-director Rachel Ward sets out to regenerate her northern NSW beef farm, with the help of experts and neighbours.

After the screening, David Marsh – a regenerative farmer from Boorowa, NSW will join everyone online for discussion.

You must register to attend the online screening. Contact your parish for assistance.



ST BRENDAN'S UNVEILS NEW STATUE OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Thanks to generosity of late parishioners Cath and John Hogan

(continued from Cover)

By Sheila Griffin

On behalf of John and Cath's family we thank Fr Joe and Saint Brendan's Parish for recognising John and Cath's generosity with the purchase of this statue of St Francis of Assisi. They would both feel very humbled and honoured to have this beautiful statue named in their honour.

I was reading about St Francis and discovered that his given name at birth was John. I thought, how coincidental it was as John Hogan's Christian names were John Francis.

I'd just like to share a little about the life of Cath and John.

They were siblings and had worked and lived all their lives on the family property at St Germain's or, as some would say, Undera. The property had been in the Hogan name for over 100 years until it was recently sold when John passed away.

Cath and John both left school at an early age. Along with their parents, Mary and Patrick, they worked on the family farm. Their property was easily recognised by all as it had a beautiful dam on the corner and ducks would glide upon the waters. It was predominantly a sheep and wheat farm; however, like St Francis, Cath and John tended to a variety of animals. From sheep, cattle, ducks, pigs, dogs and, of course, their pet budgie, rosella and galah [which outlived them both].

In the early days, John rode around the farm on a pushbike but later progressed to a motor bike.

Life was very simple for Cath and John. They loved their farm life, and both were involved in the local tennis club and, of course, their church – St Joseph's, Undera.

Cath served as sacristan right up to the days she became ill. She was a catechist at the local primary school, led the Children of Mary Guild and of course tended to her beautiful ducks, chooks and lambs. After her parents died, Cath cared for John.

John was a Tigers supporter and loved the Trots. Both Cath and John attended trotting meetings in Shepparton, Echuca and sometimes ventured to Bendigo.



When Cath died in 2013, we wondered how John would cope by himself. However, being the independent person he was, John managed to care for himself until he too took ill.

John was a member of the Holy Name Society, he read at Mass, and took up the collection. Cath and John were faith-filled people and when St Joseph's Church closed, John continued to attend Mass regularly at St Mary's, Mooroopna, where he became well known.

Cath and John were both well known throughout the area and had connections with many people locally and from afar. Their generous hospitality was evident. When people called in, there was always a cuppa and something to eat. Neither John nor Cath needed all the mod cons of this day. They were content with what they had and shared their generosity with many.

Two generous faith-filled people will be remembered through the naming of this beautiful statue in their honour.

Thank you!



Fr Joe Taylor and some of Shepparton's youngest parishioners looking forward to the Blessing of the Animals on the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi. The Statue behind sits waiting to be blessed and unveiled later in the day.

Fr Boniface brings missionary zeal wherever he goes



After three months as Priest in Residence at Rutherglen and Chiltern, Fr Boniface Kamulegeya has returned to Rwanda. He says he is enriched by his experience and takes home many lessons learned. Fr Boniface will be missed by people in his Sandhurst parishes, who no doubt, are reflecting on the lessons and blessings this dynamic priest brought and left with them.

Fr Boniface Kamulegeya was born in Uganda in 1982, three years after the ousting of dictator, Idi Amin in 1979. He moved to Rwanda as a seminarian in 2010, six years after the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Butare, Rwanda in 2015.

Fr Boniface had a peaceful and happy childhood in Uganda where he and his six siblings were raised in parish life. "I'm from a staunch Catholic family. I don't know anybody in my family who is not a Catholic," said Fr Boniface. "My great-great-grandparents were Catholics; they lived at a time when missionaries had a lot of influence in their lives."

As a child Fr Boniface attended Mass with his family and became an altar server, but never considered the priesthood until his Bishop made a direct suggestion to him. "Our Bishop would say Mass at my parish every Tuesday at 5.00 p.m. I remember the moment he asked if I'd ever thought of becoming a priest. That sowed a seed, and eventually I joined the seminary. Even though my Bishop suggested it to me, I believe it was the Holy Spirit working through him," said Fr Boniface.

"This Bishop passed away in 2020 due to COVID-19, he accompanied me through much of my priesthood and I will remember him as the person who allowed me to see myself as someone who could possibly become a priest," said Fr Boniface.

Fr Boniface is incardinated to the Diocese of Butare in Rwanda. He explained how this came about:

"After the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, so many Rwandan priests had died. Their Bishop started looking to other countries for priests. So, I went to Rwanda as a seminarian and became a priest there because I felt my services were more needed there. I don't regret the decision; it has been amazing!"

"The majority of people in Rwanda are Christian or Catholic, so for priests there is a lot of work to do," says Fr Boniface.

"Rwanda, its developing," explains Fr Boniface. "So many things were destroyed during the genocide. The new regime is doing everything possible to take back students to the schools; they have free education almost up to university level; they are trying to fight poverty; what little resources they have they manage very well for the development of the country."

"The best thing the new regime did was fight corruption. In Africa, Rwanda is among the countries that is fighting corruption," says Fr Boniface.

Fr Boniface says that Rwanda now feels more like home than Uganda. "I have been in Rwanda for thirteen years, and while in Australia, I missed Rwanda more than Uganda mainly because of the parishioners and my brother priests," he says.

Rwanda is one of the few African nations which has only one official national language, which is the mother tongue of almost every Rwandan.

(continued from Cover)

"When I first moved to Rwanda, I had to learn Kinyarwanda, but this was easy compared to priests in Uganda who have to learn different languages for different parishes," says Fr Boniface.

Uganda, unlike Rwanda, is a multilingual country with over 56 languages which fall into four main families. English and Swahili are the official languages, but Fr Boniface's mother tongue Luganda is the most spoken language in country. Fr Boniface himself speaks eight local languages as well as English and Kinyarwanda.

Reflecting on colonialism and its impact on Africa, Fr Boniface is surprisingly positive. "There are negative elements – we know this. So many resources were taken – and there was the slave trade," he says. "There are also many positive things about colonialism, and we focus more on the positives than negatives. Christianity was brought to us by colonials and schools and hospitals were built by colonial leaders. I think now we are at peace."

When asked what people in his parish of Kansi can learn from people in Rutherglen and Chiltern, Fr Boniface suggests, it's supporting the Church. "In Australia people support their Church, they don't come asking for something. The parishioners in Australia support their parish," says Fr Boniface.

When asked what lessons we can learn from the Parish of Kansi and people in Rwanda, Fr Boniface elaborates:

"The people in Kansi are very active in Church activities, in big numbers. There's a sense of solidarity, if something happens to a Catholic in Kansi, they take it as if it has happened to all of them. So that solidarity, that is the major difference, the coming together. If someone misses Mass, they look for them, are they ok? They have to look for him."

During his time at Rutherglen Fr Boniface says he had to get used to the different way people interact. "As a priest in Rwanda there are Christians around me all the time. In Rutherglen they are there, but not all the time. In Rwanda people don't make an appointment, they just turn up. There is always a crowd to pray the rosary with, someone spontaneously asking for a blessing ... In Africa, a priest is there for the people; if you don't see the people around you, your priesthood lacks something. Without people in your life, priesthood doesn't make sense."

Fr Boniface says he is very grateful to the people of Rutherglen and Chiltern for their hospitality. "I was so well received there. People would call for an appointment, respect my time; things were orderly. I'm going to miss that! I'm also grateful to my fellow priests in Sandhurst".

For Fr Boniface, who has also worked as a supply priest in the United Kingdom on two separate occasions, working in different cultures enriches his priesthood:

"Wherever I go, I learn new things, and I am enriched. That's the beauty of the Catholic Church. As a priest, we can go anywhere, and we work and do what Jesus Christ sent us to do – go and preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. I think that's when, as a priest, you feel that you have given service."

I'm happy to celebrate Mass for the Christians in Rutherglen and Chiltern.

I think when my time will be ending, I will boast about it, 'Lord, at least I did what I could, I preached in Uganda, I preached in Rwanda'. I think that gives you joy as a priest, to know that you are doing God's work everywhere. That's what I love most.

For me personally, I don't think I work for the Church in Rwanda, or Uganda; this Church belongs to Christ. If I'm given a chance, I'm happy to do God's work to help the people in coming back to the Church and God's work is everywhere.

I want one day to be like St Paul in his second letter to Timothy [4:6-8]. The guy was proud, he said, 'I did what I could'. I want to say, 'I fought the good fight.' Of course, I'm still fighting. The Church did so many things for me, and this is the time I'm now doing things for the Church."

NOTES:

Fr Boniface is incardinated to the Diocese of Butare, Rwanda, in 2015, where he has been a parish priest since 2016. Since his ordination, he has completed a postgraduate diploma in Human Resource Management and commenced an online course in parish administration through Villanova University (USA). He has also undertaken two periods as a supply priest in Southwark, London.

Prior to serving as Priest in Residence at Rutherglen and Chiltern, Fr Boniface is stayed at St Kilian's Presbytery and completed a program of welcome and induction. He also attended this year's clergy celebrations for the ordination Jubilees in Wangaratta, and joined Sandhurst priests at the Priest's Inservice.



LITURGICAL SEMINAR AND WORKSHOPS

DESIDERIO DESIDERAVI



APOSTOLIC LETTER ON THE
LITURGICAL FORMATION
OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi* (2022) on Liturgical Formation of the People of God invites renewed reflection on the preparation and celebration of the Church's liturgy. In this keynote address, Prof. Clare Johnson, Director of the ACU Centre for Liturgy will provide an overview of Pope Francis' letter and suggest some implications for liturgical ministries.

This will be followed by a choice of three workshop options which will explore areas of affirmation, challenge and invitation in these ministries:

1. Ministry of the Word (Dr Chris Cotter)
2. Extraordinary Ministry of Holy Communion (Ms Lyn Breen)
3. Ministry of Liturgical Music (Dr Paul Taylor).

You must register for these workshops. Please ask your parish for assistance, or call the Chancery. (Tel: 5445 3600)



RUTH (continued from Cover)

Just over five years ago, Ruth Lawlor, a teacher at Nagle College, Bairnsdale, was supervising students at a Year Ten Retreat when she found herself thinking, "I'd like to do something like this." That evening, an advertisement for the Sandhurst Youth Ministry Coordinator position popped up in her Facebook feed. Whether it was the Holy Spirit moving, or simply that Ruth was open to new ideas, (or both) it changed the course of Ruth's career path. "I love working with young people and building relationships, and I'm deeply committed to our Catholic faith, so the role just seemed to fit," said Ruth. The role also provided an opportunity for Ruth to return to her hometown of Bendigo, and parish of St Therese's, Kennington.

Two weeks into starting work at Sandhurst's Youth Ministry (SYM) Ruth embarked on her first 'gig'. "Samuel Matuszek (former Youth Ministry Officer) and I attended Wodonga Parish's 'Stronger Rally'. It was a good opportunity to see what these rallies were like without the pressure of organising an event ourselves when so new to the job," said Ruth. "The people I met in those early weeks have been of great assistance to me all the way through my ministry," said Ruth.

Indeed, for Ruth, it is the people of our Diocese who have enriched and sustained her throughout her time working in SYM, and it is these people and connections which Ruth says she will miss most about her role with the Diocese of Sandhurst.

Ruth has engaged with hundreds of people in parishes and schools across the Diocese, in capacities that extend beyond youth ministry. As Youth Ministry Coordinator for the Diocese, she worked closely with staff and teachers from Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd, teachers in schools, and people in parishes.

Ruth has also collaborated with youth ministry workers in other dioceses and Catholic organisations and recently was appointed Co-chair of the Australian Catholic Youth Ministry Network. As a Sandhurst Member of the Australian Plenary Council, and while working with Dr Chris Cotter on the Preparation and Consultation for the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC), Ruth had the opportunity to meet with many people across the Diocese in a broader context.

"The Australian Plenary gave me this amazing opportunity to meet so many wonderful people across this country who share in this great vision that we have for our Church. I was able to take this experience of the Plenary and go out into parishes to continue that work. I very much appreciate the opportunity to build relationships with such amazing, devoted, and joyful people and feel privileged that they could share, not only their love for the Church, but also their sadness and hurt," said Ruth.

Ruth brought a diverse skillset to her work in Youth Ministry. Expertise earned while

studying for a Master of Theology degree ensured that every project undertaken by Sandhurst Youth Ministry was well-researched and grounded in Catholic teaching; while skills and experience honed as a university drama student were deployed to project-manage SYM events from start to finish. This was no mean feat, considering these events ranged from hosting local World Youth Day events, retreats, webinars, videos, daily prayer podcasts during COVID-19 lockdown, livestreamed daily Advent prayers, livestreamed Christmas events and, of course, the Sandhurst Pilgrimage to World Youth Day, Lisbon.

Youth Ministry is largely recognised as a challenging area of ministry. While Ruth understands the macro-level issues facing youth in western society today (see box below), she believes it is critical to also focus efforts at the micro-level.

"I think we often think we know what the challenges for young people are. Yes, we know mental health, climate change, global security ... are big issues for young people, but when we actually start digging into it, when we ask young people on an individual level – What matters to you? What challenges you? – they more often reply, 'friends, family, school, finding a job at the end of it,'" said Ruth.

Ruth believes that young people in Sandhurst do share the same challenges and concerns of young people more broadly but, for many Sandhurst youth, their immediate challenges are smaller, more local. "Sometimes we say we need to get young people through these big issues, but what we need to do, is get them through things that matter to them," explained Ruth.

"In our local context, not in the context of Melbourne, or America. Think about young people in Yarrowonga or Wangaratta – what are their lives like? Many spend a lot more time with their families than kids in other places; family tends to matter more to them. Many are isolated in a different way; they live on farms, or big blocks without public transport or a means to get to a part-time job, or extra-curricular activities. We have to listen to what they actually need and respond in a way that matters to young people in our Diocese."

"We often try to create grand youth ministry programmes which appeal to the masses, but that's not what we need. If we look to the Bible, that's not what Jesus did – Jesus started

Jesus started with twelve disciples. I'm not saying that we should focus only on small groups, but we do need to start focusing on young people as individuals; what works for one young person, might not work for another."

We need to start thinking about how we can reach young people as people, and one way to do that is accompaniment," said Ruth. Pope Francis is really big on accompaniment. This was a focus in *Christus Vivit* (2019 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and the Entire People of God). Accompaniment is something I have strived to do – although I haven't always got it right. It's about walking alongside our young people; it's about going to them where they are, standing with them, and then saying, "Hey, let's move along together."

"Every single time I got stuck thinking about what to do in youth ministry, I turned back to the Gospels and looked at how Jesus worked with his disciples, and personally, I looked at how he worked with the women in the Gospel. How did Jesus connect with people? Often not with a big group. Yes, there were times when he did connect with big groups – we need big events as well – but the Gospel was about the day-to-day life. It was about having a place for everyone, and a role for everyone, and a personal relationship with everyone. Being seen and known is what drew those people in. If we can't do that, then we're not reading the Gospels properly.

For Ruth, it is critical that youth ministry needs to be underpinned by strong relationships and communities. "We don't need 'youth ministry bubbles'; we need to invite young people into parishes, to share their gifts and talents with us, so they can be part of the parish and learn and grow in the midst of the people in their parishes," explains Ruth. "It's by doing these things that we can make sure that young people are in a community and remain connected to something bigger than themselves."

Immersing young people in community is one tonic for the sense of isolation and uncertainty which many youths today feel.

"In the past, we would turn to our friends, families, and communities when we felt uncertain or lonely," said Ruth. Young people are still doing that, but in a different way. Now they connect with each other online, more than in person," says Ruth.

Young Australians have grown up with fewer siblings than their parents and grandparents and are not being sent to fight a war. The vast majority are highly educated, live in creature comfort

and have a plethora of information (true or false) at their fingertips. All a blessing and a curse. The struggle of young Australians today is quiet, largely unseen – like snowflakes when they've hit the ground, or the pit of avocado mash.

"Our young people have never known a world without fear; now, with climate change, there is a real sense of hopelessness," said Ruth. Many young people, from their earliest years, have vivid memories of New York's twin towers crumbling on their television screens. They have grown up with the fear of terrorism, the global financial crisis, and the global pandemic; with no real way to shut off from the constant negative media messaging," explains Ruth. Closer to home, many have experienced floods and fire and are acutely aware of the ever-increasing threat of climate change and increasing violence in their communities. Most expect they will never own their own home. These challenges are the type that rolling your sleeves up and "getting on with it" won't solve.

Appropriate delivery of youth ministry needs to be underpinned by an understanding of the challenges specific to young Australians at various contextual levels. "Simply doing what we've always done the same way we've always done it, is ignoring the fact that young people have different needs now," says Ruth. "We need to learn from what we've done in the past, take the things that work, shift them, and make them new and relevant for our young people. We need to shift our understanding of what we are trying to do. A lot of schools are now recontextualising through the Enhancing Catholic Identity Project. They're doing things to make our faith come alive for young people in our current context," said Ruth.

"In my youth ministry, I started from a place of community, rather than from a place of faith. When we look to the Gospel, we see that Jesus would call people into community, and then, as they went along on their journey, as they became more connected to their understanding of who they were and their connection to their world and their faith, they would come to Christ. Without community they couldn't have done that," said Ruth.

"Today, we're seeing people who have had an encounter of Christ, which is amazing, but we need to bring them into community, because it's in community that faith flourishes. It's hard to sustain and grow in faith by yourself. This is the Catholic Church; we need to stay connected; we need to make sure that we aren't each becoming inward-looking or insular," said Ruth.

Ruth explains this is not a phenomenon unique to the Church. Special interest groups are now connecting online rather than in person. "If the global pandemic hasn't taught us anything else, it's shown that we need to learn that we need physical contact," said Ruth. "Too often people are connecting through social media, they're coming in through Christ, but not through community."

"Our young people are searching," said Ruth. "The lost generation isn't just our young people; it's their parents and sometimes even their grandparents and yet, we're focusing on young people." "Where do parents fit in?" asks Ruth. She actively encouraged organisers of youth ministry events to host a parallel gathering of parents nearby.



Ruth at World Youth Day in Lisbon this year

RUTH (continued from page 10)

"We need to not just care about our young people, but their parents as well," explained Ruth, acknowledging that it takes a village to raise a child and that parents too often can feel isolated in their sometimes-onerous vocation as parents.

"I think we need to look at new models of ministry all together. We need an active children's ministry that supports children before Confirmation, and after Confirmation. I think we're missing the years 7-9 students, and we need to look at young people and their families." said Ruth.

For Ruth, recontextualisation of our faith, and a change of language will help to sustain the Church in an age where most stories about Christianity and Catholicism in mainstream media are bad news stories.

"The Church has often asked – how do we fight against secularisation? But the question we need to ask is – how do we work in this space?" said Ruth. "Jesus worked in a secular world. He went out into the thick of it. He didn't just go to the temples."

Ruth believes the future of Sandhurst Youth is in good hands as there are many brilliant and dedicated young leaders in schools and parishes across the Diocese. "I am most proud of the relationships that I have helped to form within the communities of young adults," said Ruth. "I know I am leaving those young people with strong connections and know they will find inspiration and strength from each other."

"I've been privileged to connect with so many people, young and not so young, in parishes across the Diocese. I will miss the beautiful people who have welcomed me so warmly to their parishes – luckily, I know where to find them," said Ruth.

With the departure of Ruth, all positions at Sandhurst Youth Ministry are now vacant. The Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council and the newly established SYM Reference Group will take time to consider a way to move forward with youth ministry in Sandhurst.

As for Ruth, she leaves this chapter of her life (and us) on a "cliff-hanger" with no set plan. Whatever lies ahead for Ruth, we do know one thing for sure. She will find the answer to her questions in the Gospels.



2023 OCTOBER MARIAN FESTIVAL
Dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo. **Sunday 15th October**

11:00 am - Mass celebrated by Bishop Leslie Tomlinson
12:00 pm - BYO Lunch at colonnade on High St side
1:00 pm - Scapular enrolment
1:30 pm - Procession and Rosary outside Cathedral
1:50 pm - Crowning of Fatima Statue
2:30 pm - Guest Speaker - Bishop Leslie Tomlinson
3:00 pm - Exposition and Benediction
3:40 pm - Bells ring and afternoon tea in the colonnade
conclude the festival. Piety stall inside cathedral.

Finally my Immaculate Heart will Triumph
- Our Lady of Fatima, July 15th, 1917

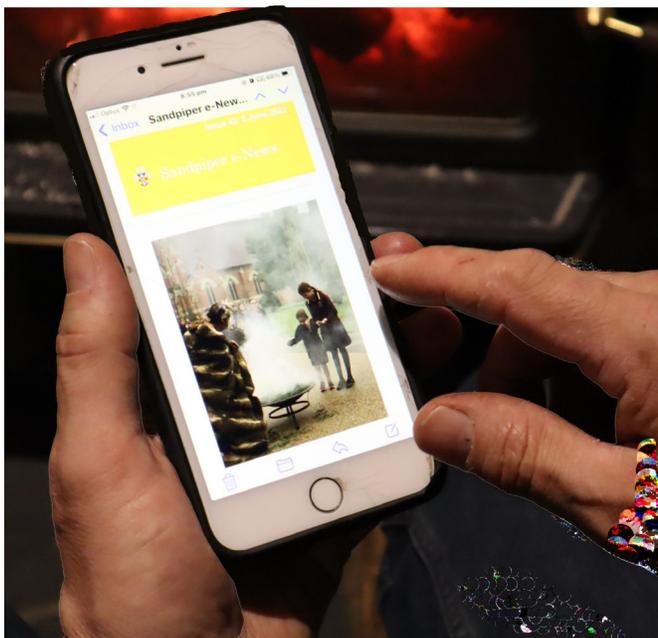
PRAY THE ROSARY FOR WORLD PEACE

ST MALACHY'S, NAGAMBIE 150TH CELEBRATIONS

10.00 a.m. Sunday 19 November 2023 ALL WELCOME



Parishioners at St Malachy's invite you to join them as they commemorate their history. Festivities will commence with a Thanksgiving Mass celebrated by Bishop Shane Mackinlay, followed by the blessing and renaming of the presbytery to 'The Kearns Centre', then light refreshments at St Joseph's School.



SUBSCRIBE !



SANDPIPER e-NEWS : DIRECT TO YOUR INBOX

THE BEST WAY TO READ OUR NEWS.

**More stories,
more photos,
more timely,
more environmentally sustainable**

Subscribe to Sandpiper e-News and catch up with all the news of the Diocese from the convenience of your email inbox.

You can easily link to supplementary information, download documents and click to register for events.



Bishop Shane's Calendar

- Wednesday 4 October – Sunday 28 October –
Synod for a Synodal Church, Rome
- Monday 30 October – Friday 3 November –
Methodist–Roman Catholic International Commission, Jerusalem
- Monday 6 November –
Permanent Committee, Australian Bishops Conference, Sydney
- Tuesday 7 November – Thursday 9 November –
Australian Bishops Conference, Sydney
- Friday 10 November –
Interim Synodal Roundtable, Sydney

To contact the Editor: Katrina Strong
Email: editor@sandurst.catholic.org.au
Tel: 03 5445 3610
Mbl: 0419 015 696

