

The Eyríe

St John's Catholic Parish Heidelberg



Row Boats, Motor Boats & Helicopters

Since adolescence, I had been steadily moving away from the image of God as Santa Claus, Band Aid, Ledger keeper or Fairy Godmother towards a much more personal, 'being with' God who was loving and grace giving but not prepared to interfere with his frighteningly awesome gift of free will.

But during John's illness and dying and the barren wasteland that came after, this image and relationship was sorely tested. I questioned the point of prayer, of miracles, my perception of the Eucharist - and I struggled with the purpose of the pain which John's death caused to me, his beautiful children and his grief-stricken mother, father and siblings. I slowly came to recognise, with the support of others in the same boat and through counselling, conversations, reading, prayer (which has become much more conversational) and reflection, that pain, suffering and struggle are a natural part of the life God has given us and that he, in the person of Jesus, showed us just exactly how to embrace it. Jesus himself did not avoid pain and death (in fact, if he had he would not have been truly human) but he also sought to let it pass him by. I take great comfort from this when I am feeling overwhelmed by loss and wishing things were otherwise. But he opened his arms to what was coming and that is an example I try, with difficulty, to follow.

This does not make me exceptional.

In St John's Parish alone, I am sure there are many people who are struggling with grief of some form or another on a daily basis but facing their new world with courage.

Despite getting back into work and involvement with the parish reasonably soon after John's death and despite the constant but quiet support of the 'regulars' at 8:30 Mass it has taken many months for me to stop feeling like I am now a 'spectator' of life (and that feeling will perhaps never leave me completely.) But I was and am very grateful for that support, as I am of the support offered by our extended families and by my exceptional children (Aislinn & Patrick) of whom I could not be prouder or love more.

I realise now that there is no end-point to grief – it changes but it never goes away. I will always feel the loss of my amazing husband but I will not just survive, I will, with God's grace, (shown to me in moments of quiet, and through

the actions, words and affection of others), continue to find joy and happiness in the life left for me. In fact, my situation reminds me of a joke I once heard:

A fellow was stuck on his rooftop in a flood. He was praying to God for help. Soon a man in a rowboat came by and the fellow shouted to the man on the roof, "Jump in, I can save you." The stranded fellow shouted back, "No, it's OK, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me." So the rowboat went on.

Then a motorboat came by. "The fellow in the motorboat shouted, "Jump in, I can save you." To this the stranded man said, "No thanks, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me. I have faith." So the motorboat went on.

Then a helicopter came by and the pilot shouted down, "Grab this rope and I will lift you to safety."

To this the stranded man again replied, "No thanks, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me. I have faith."

So the helicopter reluctantly flew away. Soon the water rose above the rooftop and the man drowned. He went to Heaven. He finally got his chance to discuss this whole situation with God, at which point he exclaimed, "I had faith in you but you didn't save me, you let me drown. I don't understand why!"

To this God replied, "*I sent you a rowboat and a motorboat and a helicopter, what more could I have done?!"*

So I say a profound thanks to all the 'rowboats', motorboats' and 'helicopters' who have and will continue to offer me help as I continue my life without John.

Marguerite Ryan



Aislinn, Patrick & Marguerite

In this edition of the **Eyrie** we have a theme of grief and loss and how faith can carry you forward.

Marguerite, Pam & Domenica have written their stories and graciously agreed to share them with us. Their stories show, that even in the hardest of times, their faith carries them forward on their journey. In fact, their faith shines through in their stories and in them as they continue to contribute to our parish family—all three are on the Readers Roster and committed to their faith and our parish.

Vin Sier has given us some learned insight into legal areas we need to have in order and Ezekiel Bartlett who you have seen on the Altar over recent months (when our church was open) shares his life journey to date and reminds us of the need for patience, waiting, praying and trusting in God to guide us in our journey through life.

We are buoyed by St. John's School contribution and delight in their ongoing acceptance of all the lockdowns and they still come up with 101 reasons to smile! Michelle Penson

Losing your life partner

Pam Smith

It's never easy at any stage of life to lose the person you have partnered with to set up the enterprise of a family, to raise, sustain and try to influence and be the future co-workers in your life of faith.

I, sadly too often nowadays, see footage of military funeral ceremonies, where widows whose husbands gave the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan are given the nation's flag and eternal gratitude. Often these are young women and I think to myself: "she's young, she'll restart her life". Then I see the bewildered youngsters clinging to her, and my heart sinks with trepidation of the years ahead, and wonder if she will

be obliged to do it alone.

Yes, when your partner dies too young, you are left to do double the load of just the usual day to day stuff, working full time if you're lucky to have that job, and when that's all done, you've not got too much to give at the end of the night. Apart from not having anyone to vent off at, there is also no second parent for the children.

While fortunately most of them were young adults, I'm certain that these missed having the solid, steady guidance that a father brings to the family in his own way. Not to mention having that other parent to share your joys, successes and tribu-

lations with, other than that frazzled and over-tired person flunked in front of the TV. Not to mention the youngest child who would go through her entire teenage years without the understanding and support of her dad.



We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri People and their Elders past and present, the traditional custodians of this land on which our church and school stand. The St John's Community joins together in solidarity with our Indigenous brothers

Continued.....

Stephen and I were very different people and had very different tastes and talents. I like to think that together we covered all bases. But one thing we had in common was a staunch adherence to our Catholic faith, mine borne of growing up in political turmoil in my homeland, Malta, during the Cold War, his borne of his parents' orthodox faith and practice. Our faith was fundamental to our being able to cope with the never-ending stream of difficulties, of one degree or other, that life will inevitably put each and everyone through in every different way imaginable. It was difficult and financially punishing trying to raise and afford five children in a society which largely disdains large families, let alone supports them.

Then cancer struck. This had a huge impact on us, particularly on Patrick, our only son. However, armed with the strength given by his faith and personal courage, Stephen battled the disease for five more years before finally leaving to his well-deserved rest. I hope that his example will be remembered by his children when one day they are settled enough to look back and appreciate it.

To this day "Dad" remains a mainstay in our family conversations and we pray for him every night. His memory and legacy I hope remains to the fore of our children's



Pam, Stephen and their family

family experience. I am lucky to have a good full-time job in Defence, and have been part of the Military Christian Fellowship for some years. The MCF is an ecumenical, mainly Pentecostal, organisation, but in this day and age any display of Christianity is a welcome change, and I have been fortunate to have support on that front too. And I must not forget the wonderful support Stephen's family also provides and their various social family gatherings.

Through all the difficulties and frustrations, my faith has definitely been my strength and comfort, and I feel sorry for the majority of people in the affluent world who do not have recourse to such support.

Without trying to be smug, I do wonder at the level of mental anguish that exists in our world as a result of being too smart to need God.

It is hard to impart this to the young, especially as the influences of the external world are so all-pervasive. I worry, but am conscious that I can only do what I can do. I look back and remember that my "uneducated" and oft frustrating mother somehow managed to teach me some very fundamental prayers that "hit the mark" and taught me to call on Our Lady for assistance in every need. It is something that is now engrained in me, and will be with me hopefully till the end.

Pam Smith

Loss & surviving grief

Domenica Ashworth

The cataclysm that results from the extinguished life of a sacramental partner through sudden death is followed by the rollercoaster that is grief. The pledge of our love before God, forged as one in body, heart and soul is torn apart.

While the medicos prepared me for the physical and emotional rollercoaster with treatment to save life, hospitalization and care, we are remarkably unprepared for the loss of life or rather denying its plausibility. It felt like trying to survive the aftermath of a tidal wave and its abyss. There is this desperate struggle to emerge from the wreckage. Bereft, numb and facing the reality of the empty, dark loss of spouse, mentor, best friend, confidante, protector, soul mate, my reason for living,

I kept asking myself why is there nothing that prepares you for this catastrophe. How does one cling to life with overwhelming grief. How does one navigate the chasm left in front of you.

The lightbulb moment in answer to “nothing prepares you” was staring at me in the face all along. Our parish pastor directed my gaze to St John’s beautiful stained-glass windows above the altar, where blessed Mary stood at the foot of her Son on the cross, sorrowful and anguished. We are not alone in our mourning and grief. More importantly, with concerted determination towards my baptism into a faith community, I decided to focus on a continuum that is life.

Tapping into my undying love for Keith, years of faith instruction in that death was not an end but a catalyst of new beginning, an ‘eternal’ living for Keith and me, yes, in an ‘*undying*’ love.....

Jesus our Saviour was our role model, becoming one of us, human and humbling himself to suffer death as we must, suffering the path of being human, but not only dying for us, but destroyed death on the cross for us all, to instil hope and joy. I had to feel this for Keith and for my own path in joining him.

We are born in God’s image, and to remind us of His Love for us, he sent His only Son for us to follow. The proof of joy was in His resurrection on the 3rd day, introducing Himself as still living by conquering death, in appearances as the ‘gardener’ near the open empty tomb, as the ‘companion’ on the road to Emmaus, and appearing to the apostles in the upper room, living the proof to His teachings, to reassure them....and us. And furthermore, leaving earth in the Ascension, He descended in Spirit to protect and guide us. So it follows, born in God’s image, that through my love in Keith, I continue to meet him in the spirit and gift of his loving legacy, and thus through our daily experiences with creation, as the abiding image of God.

Grief is real and painful and never leaves one, this is a human emotion after all, experienced by Mary, the disciples, and indeed, Christ himself. But the spiritual emotion is one of joy. And there lies the ultimate grief therapy:

Due to deep and abiding love of Keith is where I meet the Love of God, therefore, the continuum of life, an eternal living, I continue to meet with Keith and his spirit in the engagement within my faith community in celebrating Eucharist, with our belief system designed to sustain us in hope and joy despite death. It is seismic balancing act, that cannot be done on our own, instead, we reach out to God, in our deep love, offered to us in family, Parish family, friends and community as the lifeline. It follows, that although born mortal, we are all born into Kingdom of God and to the invitation and promise of a life immortal.

Meeting this challenge is different for all of us, but for me, I was refurbished celebrating liturgies and Eucharistic, the sacrifice of life, death and communion with God, at one with Keith, together with Parish family. It was rekindling the undying love offered to me by Keith continued through love and our gift of our experiences together, now at one with God. To give witness in the light and joy of life immortal for all, that is our Christian mission. I continue to build my strength following Christ’s journey.

Continued.....

I also took heart in a quote I read years ago by Mother Teresa, that

the mysteries of the rosary are our walk with God, our template in life's cycle. We too, are born in God's image.

These are not called mysteries for nothing, hard to rationalise in the limitations of our mortal thinking, but with faith and believe, we hold strong.

The Joyful mysteries representing God's incarnation, we we too, are born in God's image. Through the mysteries of Light, which represent Jesus' public ministry, we too, take on our careers to serve and work in community, giving witness in every day living to our faith.

The Sorrowful mysteries representing passion and death of Christ, we too will meet our passion whether through to ravages of age or illness.

What we so often deny ourselves is



Domenica & Keith Ashworth

the reality of the Glorious mysteries, representing Christ's destroying/conquering death in resurrecting, appearing in body to prove the teaching, but more importantly ascending in body and descending down as the Spirit entity, three in

one. It is not unreasonable to believe that Keith through my love, now in Christ, is present in this Spirit illuminating the remainder of my earthly path.

Domenica Ashworth

Remembering - JOAN GEOGHEGAN - Parishioner and Teacher at St. John's for 29 Years

Joan Therese Geoghegan was born 22nd August 1928 in Ivanhoe to Minnie and Sylvester Mullens. The importance of family and faith was held very dear in the Mullens' household. Growing up in their home in Athelstane Grove Ivanhoe, Joan had a happy childhood even though the family lived through the restrictions and troubled times of the Great Depression and the Second World War. Joan met Jack playing tennis and they married and moved into the house that Jack built, in Martin Street Heidelberg in 1954 and lived there for sixty-six years. With teachers in short supply in 1963 Joan was again asked to "fill in" (as she had done at other schools in need), this time at St John's Primary School in Heidelberg. This 'filling in' interval, lasted for *twenty-nine years*, teaching various grade levels.

When Joan's beloved husband Jack died suddenly in May 1976, Joan appreciated the support given to her by the St John's Parish and School community which helped her through this distressing time. Ex-St John's teachers and friends including Elizabeth Grist, Maureen Clifford, Elizabeth Williamson and Marianne Letts continued to remain great friends. As a great teacher, particularly of Grade 1, Joan instilled a love of reading into her pupils. Thank you Joan—for so many years of a **job well done**. Joan died in Villa Maria Catholic Homes in Sept aged 93.

Term 3

Maureen Stella—St. John's School Principal

It is with much pride and appreciation that I write this item for the Eyrie, Parish Magazine. This is due to the incredible amount of support and engagement by our St John's community throughout this term. This time last year, I wrote about the Remote and Flexible Home Learning that we were working with and the frequently used words like pandemic, masks, social distancing, virtual hugs, isolation, one hour exercise, hand hygiene, temperature checks, contact tracing etc. At the time, many people didn't think that we would have to do Remote Learning again, however we have come to the realisation that while things changed, the more they stayed the same.

What this global pandemic continues to teach us is the uncertainty of the situation and the need to be flexible when planning and the importance of demonstrating gratitude and kindness and this has been apparent in our school setting here at St John's. We have worked in partnership with our students' families in adapting to the needs of the children, our students, in delivering a well balanced remote learning and teaching program.

We miss seeing our students and their families onsite this term, as well as all our staff. We are grateful for the connections which

technology provides however it does not replace the human touch, smile and laughter, face to face. We remain a community of hope and this has been exemplified in the students' learning, in particular their prayers and during quiet moments of reflection and meditation.

It is also apparent in the wonderful learning that has taken place this term using technology and I invite you to read about our "101 days in Prep" article, as well as the students' work on Creation and preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

I share this prayer of Hope with you and look forward to our St John's community uniting again in the near future.....

Dear Lord,
At this time of pandemic,
Let us foster respect and solidarity with others, especially those who are weak or poor.
Let us remain calm and ignore unsubstantiated rumours.
Let us take advantage of living together as a family.
Let us attend to moments of prayer.
Let us cultivate responsibility, patience and hope.
Lord Hear Us. Amen.



Our new entry



Enjoying the vegetable garden

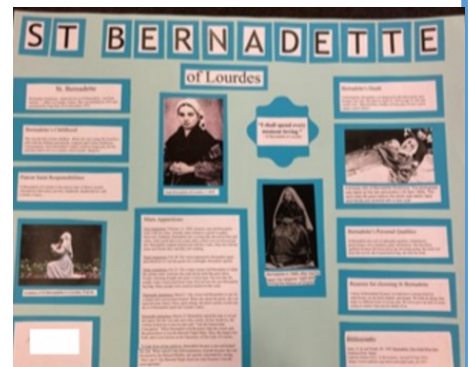


Education and Learning

St.John's Education in Faith Sphere Goal:

To strengthen and enrich our school as a contemporary Catholic community

Our Year Six students, as part of their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, have researched and developed a detailed understanding of their chosen Saint and completed a poster to present to their peers. Have look at just some of the saints chosen by the students.



Our Year Three and Four students have explored the concept of Stewardship of God's creation through sacred scripture and Laudato Si, the second encyclical of Pope Francis. As a response to this exploration, the students created a personal prayer. Here are samples from 3J.

By Rachel

Dear God,

Thank you for trees because they help me stay alive. Also thank you God for water, so I can stay hydrated. God, can you make me a good steward by making me stop polluting, please.

Amen.



By Zara

Dear God,

Thank you for the cool animals and for the interesting trees you gave us.

Please remind me to encourage my parents to plant more animal friendly trees and plants.

Amen.



Celebrating 101 plus days of learning at St John's

On Wednesday 25th of August, the Preps celebrated 101 Plus Days of Learning with an online celebration! Despite not being able to be together to celebrate this amazing achievement there was much excitement throughout the day as we met for lots of fun GoogleMeets.



There was much laughter and excitement as everyone came along all dressed up. There were lots of old grandpas and grandmas, some dalmatians, some fabulous homemade 101 days t-shirts and decorations galore!



Wills—Do I need one?

Vin Sier - Parishioner and retired solicitor

A will is a document that specifies how your property is to be dealt with upon your death. It provides details of, and directions on, the distribution and management of your assets. The will only comes into effect after your death.

The benefit of having a will is that you can choose who you want to benefit from your assets after you die and the ability to choose who you want to appoint to take care of distributing your estate as you want. A will makes this process so much easier for those whom you leave behind. If you die without making a will, then distributing your assets is a much more complex process and is done according to the rules of intestacy. Under these rules only spouses or immediate family can inherit your assets upon your death. It requires someone to make an application to the Supreme Court of Victoria for Letters of Administration. The distribution is made strictly to the Parties set out in the Administration of Probate Act – there is no discretion. If you have no living blood relations upon your death, your entire estate goes to the government – as “bona vacantia”.

As mentioned at the beginning, your will disposes of any asset in your name.

During your lifetime you can for a number of reasons choose to put some of your assets in a trust. A trust (and there are many types of trust) is sometimes confused as being the same thing as a will but they are quite distinct and separate, and designed to achieve different goals. A trust deed is a document used to set up, hold and manage certain assets outside your personal wealth and has a life of its own, and income and assets are distributed to named beneficiaries. When you die, if you have loan accounts or vested entitlements in the trust these are assets which will be dealt with in your will.

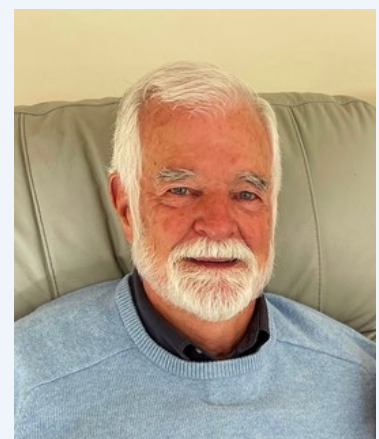
WHAT IS A POWER OF ATTORNEY?

During our life we can personally manage our assets or set some aside in a trust of which we could be the trustee. A Power of Attorney enables us to put in place a mechanism whereby you give someone else the ability to step into your shoes and make decisions for you and deal with your assets whilst you are alive.

There are two main forms of Powers of Attorney. Firstly, the Enduring Power of Attorney is a legal document that lets you appoint someone to make decisions about personal matters (such as where you live) or financial matters (such as

paying your bills or buying or selling your assets). This person is called your attorney. It is called an Enduring Power of Attorney because the document specifically states that the power endures - or continues – if and when you are unable to make decisions. You can revoke the power if you still have the mental capacity to do so, otherwise it cannot be revoked. Secondly, there is a separate document known as an Enduring Medical Power of Attorney. This is a document where you appoint someone (your agent/attorney) to make medical decisions for you – like agreeing to medications or surgery. Again, enduring means continues. This document cannot be used to make financial, legal or guardianship decisions.

Both these documents are prescribed by legislation and forms can be downloaded from the internet or from the Public Advocate, or you can consult your own lawyer.



Vin Sier

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Ezekiel Bartlett

A WAITING GRACE

I was born into a nominally Catholic family, the youngest of three kids to be raised in Brisbane. Entering a family where the faith wasn't really mentioned, the four-year old me used to play "Church", standing behind my toy-box elevating a loaf of bread. Life carried on seemingly normal, until my family hit tragedy and completely fell apart when I was ten.

For years I battled through school, sport and life trying my best to hold onto the faith I couldn't deny, as I watched the rest of my family fall away. Graduating high school at seventeen, I started my travels as a Catholic missionary with NET Ministries. This took me all over Australia evangelising in schools, universities and parishes; I also did a stint in Ireland.

In 2019 after a holiday in the US where I started dating a fellow missionary (she's actually a Nun now), I accepted a job offer for a Catholic organisation in Melbourne. I started studying theology, working as a lay prison chaplain in two max-security prisons and started Catholic speaking engagements with a desire to start my own ministry.

At the end of the year, I decided to pack up and ship out to the US looking to work for the Church.

I got a job in Missouri and flew back to Australia to pack up the rest of my things, but I flew straight into the first ever lockdown; I had never even heard of covid until I landed in Australia.

During the nine months of waiting to get back to my "new life" in the US, I had a lot of time to truly discern what God was asking of me. I was greatly blessed with the opportunity to stay with Father Joel at St John's, a friend and shepherd whom I had met when I was a missionary way-back-when.

With the guidance of holy priests and a lot of time spent before our Blessed Lord, I looked deeper into something I thought I had once said no to, the priesthood.

After realising that all I've ever wanted to do is give my life to God, I finally said yes to His call, the priesthood. With much discernment and many long conversations with a Bishop I stayed with in Ireland, I applied and was accepted to start my journey toward the priesthood for the diocese of Waterford and Lismore, Ireland.

My missionary heart and zeal for places in need, led me to pursue my vocation in a country that was once the land of Catholics. There are still boxes to be ticked until I can move to Ireland, however, I trust in God's timing. I've moved



around quite a bit with each time feeling like the last and often, it's contained elements of long periods of waiting in the unknown. As we all know, the unknown is a scary place to be and a place you never really get used to.

However, I've learnt to trust that God provides the grace necessary to always find peace no matter the circumstance, close to His heart and under Mother Mary's mantle. I might not know what's to come or how far away it is, but I know I can lean on our Blessed Lord who walks before me. If you feel you are close to the cross, you are closest to the Resurrection.

Ezekiel Bartlett

Fr Joel

Parish Priest, St John's Heidelberg

I saw a fella in a t-shirt once that had emblazoned on the front "Safety Third". It made me laugh at the time and I've quoted it on a few occasions since. It is of course a parody on the more often quoted and more sensible saying of "Safety First" when it comes to sport or physical activity or manual labour. One can only surmise what the number one and two things are the supposed priority of our shirt wearer, but I'm imagining that it's something along the lines of having fun and looking cool while doing it.

This past week we received some correspondence at the school, which was passed on to me at the parish. It was from the local police. There has been some concern regarding a rather large group of local kids cruising around on bikes and causing some disturbance; some of that disturbance including vandalism and disrupting a church funeral which is no good. That latter behaviour certainly ought to be discouraged, but I'd be a little concerned if the idea was to stamp out the practice of young people getting together and going for a roll altogether. Getting on your pushy and catching up with mates would have been part and parcel for many of us growing

up in the suburbs. It gave you a sense of freedom with the ability to explore further than your backyard and the street you lived on, and away from the eyes of mum and dad for a time.

I've actually seen the said group roll up and down Yarra Street a couple of times. They are rowdy and some of the kids aren't wearing helmets, but a few of them have some real skill in doing wheelies and other tricks which are impressive. That element of it reminded me of my younger days when I used to skateboard with my brothers and a few other mates. Designated skate parks were fun with purpose-built ramps and ledges, but street skating was the real deal. Finding spots with a smooth surface, a good set of stairs or benches was part of the life.

Problem with street spots is that you would always be getting kicked out by security guards and even some over entitled lay folk who were suspicious of our activity or were simply enforcing the policy of the shopping complex or business park. Some were pleasant about it but most weren't which led to a few unfortunate run ins

Some of you would be familiar with popular psychologist and author Jordan Peterson. In his book *12 Rules for Life*, rule number 11 reads: "Do Not Bother Children When They Are Skateboarding".

The reasoning he has for that is that for young people (and young boys especially), testing danger with its possibility of pain builds up their courage and is a way for them to experience a sense of achieve in the face of adversity. It sparks in them the pursuit of excellence and paves the way for proper socialisation. It's often only when you take on these pursuits with others that you test those limits and push yourself to be better.

Keeping safe and well is certainly important: we shouldn't be reckless with the life and limbs that God has given us. But at certain times and in some circumstances, it actually doesn't pay for it to be the number one priority. If we deny young people the chance to push some boundaries and perhaps experience a little pain and suffering, we may well be saving them from certain costs but at the expense of a far greater good.

With every blessing,

Fr Joel.

The Eyrie

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The views, thoughts and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors and should not be interpreted as theology or moral and ethical teaching.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday 19th & Tuesday 26th October

First Reconciliation

St. John's Primary School

Saturday 23rd October

Sacrament of Confirmation for 12md

Sunday 31st October

Fr Teds 80th Birthday

Morning Tea after 10.30 Mass

Saturday 20th November

Parish Community Dinner

(venue to be announced)

Friday 3rd December

Journeying in Hope—Mass 7.30pm for parishioners and friends who have lost a relative in the past 12 months.

Tuesday 7th December

Parish Carols Night hosted by St. John's Primary School 5pm- BYO picnic

Monday 13th December

Grade 6 Graduation Mass

**Friday 24th & Saturday 25th
December**

Christmas Day & Vigil masses

24th -6pm,9pm & Midnight;

25th—8.30am& 10.30am

Monday 27th December

St. John the Evangelist

Parish Patron Saint Feast Day