

The Eyrie

St John The Evangelist Catholic Parish Heidelberg



SURVEYS

EVANGELISATION

MINISTRY

CENSUS

VISION

PRAYER

WORSHIP

STEWARDSHIP

FELLOWSHIP

DISCIPLESHIP

HON KEVIN ANDREWS

Fr Vinh has asked me to speak to you about some current and future parish developments.

At the beginning of this year, Fr Vinh asked me to chair the parish finance committee, which has been meeting regularly for the past few months.

In three years time, we will celebrate the 175th anniversary of this church, which was opened in 1861 and dedicated to St John the Evangelist. It was designed by William Wardell, the celebrated architect, who later designed St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, and St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

The first Mass in the Heidelberg district was held in the home of Alexander MacKillop and his wife Flora Ann MacDonald on 23 May 1848. It was celebrated by Fr Patrick Geoghegan, a Franciscan priest first appointed to the Port Philip District, subsequently the colony of Victoria.

Present at that Mass was six-year-old Marie Ellen MacKillop, better known to us as Mary MacKillop - and now St Mary of the Cross - whose feast day we celebrate this Tuesday.

The parish was established in 1848. It was initially known as the Heidelberg Mission. Its boundaries extended as far as Warburton and the Yarra Valley to the east, Whittlesea to the north and Brighton to the south.

By 1851, a second church - St Monica's - had replaced the first temporary structure; the school was operational; and a priest was in residence, a Frenchman, Fr Viventius Bourgeois, who served

the Mission until 1857. St John the Evangelist is the third oldest parish in Victoria.

We can therefore look forward with excitement to celebrating the 175th anniversary of this church in 2026, mindful of our rich history and the efforts and sacrifices of so many parishioners over almost two centuries.

It is also an opportunity for us to contribute, as our forebears have done down the years, to the building and maintenance of the parish, so that we may hand on a vibrant and sustainable parish to future generations.

Now that the Covid restrictions are behind us, and life has returned to normal, it is time to look forward.

A missionary vision has been part of this parish from its earliest beginnings. That is why our priests have been chaplains to the hospitals in Heidelberg for decades.

This brings me to a number of practical matters and a schedule of coming events.

First, starting next week, we will be undertaking a **parish census**. This is usually done every five years to enable us to adequately understand the nature of our parishioners and to help plan for the future.

We will also be undertaking a **short survey of parishioners in September**, giving each of you the opportunity to express your vision for the parish for the coming decade. This will be an important aspect of our planning for the future.

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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 and sisters, working for justice and reconciliation.

Continued.....from page 2

Thirdly, we will be undertaking a **stewardship program in October.**

It is more than five years since we last conducted a stewardship program - and there are many needs. It is more than 30 years since maintenance was done to this historic building. Some things need attention, for example, the provision of a confessional that meets new legal requirements; steps at the rear of the church, which meet contemporary health and safety standards; and an upgrade of the toilets at the hall; and so on

We enjoy the facilities of this wonderful parish because of the sacrifices and generosity of people in the past; it is now our turn to ensure we are equally generous.

It is a time to rededicate ourselves to the mission entrusted to us 175 years ago - the mission that one of our earliest parishioners, Mary McKillop, embraced. That is the mission to evangelise in the spirit of St John, to whom this building is dedicated.

We look forward to engaging with you during the coming months as we continue our parish journey.



***Hon Kevin Andrews (& wife Maargie)
Parishioner for over 40 years and
Chair St. John's Parish Finance Committee***

(This piece was delivered at all masses in late August 2023)





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EXHILARATION AND EXCITEMENT

A little over one month ago, I had an amazing opportunity to travel to Spain and Portugal for World Youth Day with the best group of girls I could have hoped to travel with. We departed on the 27th of July and over 20 hours later we arrived in Madrid. We spent 3 days sightseeing and getting used to both the heat and the time difference, one of the big things being that the sun sets at 10pm!

On the 31st we took a bus trip to Fátima and got to visit the site of the apparition. It was super crowded due to all the pilgrims but this made it even more special and increased the excitement for the World Youth Day week. The whole time we were at Fatima, I could not believe this was where the apparitions I had heard so much about had actually happened.

The following day World Youth Day week officially began. The opening ceremony was so exhilarating and the massive crowds were a huge but happy shock to the system. The joy and excitement was like nothing I've ever felt and we could not wipe the smiles off our faces. It was so good to be with so many other young people united by our Catholic faith! As the week progressed we met so many people, guessed a lot of national flags and participated in many amazing activities, Masses and ceremonies, including a visit to the relics of St Therese of Lisieux, St. Jacinta, St. Francisco, St John Paul II and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati.



Hannah

One of my highlights was during the welcoming ceremony for Pope Francis where we arrived three hours early to the event, we secured a spot at the very front of the barricade in the hope we would be able to see the Holy Father drive past. After a hot three hours and a lot of uncertainty with noncommittal information from the volunteers and police, the pope drove right past us, waving and smiling! The week was so joyful, ***I wish I could go back to Portugal and experience it all over again.***



I am particularly thankful for the St John's community for the prayers, support and generosity which was so overwhelming. **You were all remembered in my prayers and I trust the graces from WYD will flow all the way from Portugal back to Heidelberg.**

Hannah Thorley

SO MANY CHURCHES & FATIMA VISIT

At World Youth Day this year, I had the incredible experience of meeting youth from all over the world and even got to see the Pope! I was lucky enough to get close enough to record a video of Pope Francis. The weather in Portugal and Spain was so lovely and on our first day in Spain, I got to see the cathedral of Our Lady of Almudena which was breathtaking. I had never before experienced the crowds that I did in Lisbon, with hundreds of thousands of people gathered together to celebrate mass. I also had the amazing opportunity to explore the beautiful countries of Portugal and Spain with my friends.

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A highlight of the trip was seeing so many churches, many of which had been built hundreds of years ago, and visiting Fatima, where I got to see the beautiful statue of Our Lady of Fatima. Another highlight was visiting one of the most renowned art museums in the world, the Prado, where I saw many stunning religious paintings and statues. It was so cool to experience a new culture and learn different Spanish and Portuguese phrases.

I also got the chance to pray in front of relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux, where I left a letter to pray for the Parish of St John's. From eating delicious foods, and visiting beautiful Cathedrals, to laughing with my friends, this trip has not only inspired me but given me so many memories that I will cherish for the rest of my life. **I am so grateful once again to the Parish of St John's for their generous support which allowed me to have this unforgettable adventure!**

Mikaela MGowan



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

I am so lucky to have visited not only Portugal for WYD but also the Holy Land for ten days beforehand. We began the journey in the Negev desert and looked up at the same stars which Abraham gazed at thousands of years ago, that numbered his descendants. Then off to the Dead Sea—the lowest point of the earth and 4700 ft! From there we worked our way to Galilee, visiting the places where Jesus grew up, preached and lived for the three years of His ministry, and appeared after His resurrection. A place where I felt an intense, intimate connection with Mary was at the Basilica of the Annunciation. We celebrated Mass there, before praying the Angelus where she spoke

those words and having two hours of silence. It was also special to renew my baptismal vows at the Jordan River and learn the biblical and historical significance of places like the Shepherds' Field and the Mount of Olives. Unfortunately, my notes are far too long and detailed to summarise. We focused much of our time on hours of silence and sessions of praise, which truly brought out the sanctity of every moment and holy site, and is a practice I've tried to continue at home.

Of course, it wouldn't be a pilgrimage to the Holy Land without going to Jerusalem, at the top of the mountain! One evening there, it was announced that there would be a Holy Hour at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at 5:30 the next morning—it was these impromptu opportunities, like visiting the Wailing Wall and night strolls over the rooftops of Jerusalem, that contributed to making the trip as fulfilling as it was. It isn't often that I have zero regrets about waking up two hours earlier than necessary, but there are few feelings that can surpass the knowledge that in that minute, kneeling beneath that altar, I was the sole person touching the rock upon which Jesus was crucified.

Those few moments that surpass it however, would be celebrating Mass and singing praise ten metres from where He rose again from the Dead, and touching His Tomb, both of which I did on the very last day of our stay. It was the culmination of all the graces over those ten days, and we sang our way through the markets, back to our hotel in the Old Quarter.

One of the main fruits of the trip, aside from the obvious, was beginning to understand the Jewish history and importance of the Old Testament in the Bible. **I now realise that so many details I previously overlooked in the Gospels have been placed there for a specific reason, because the customs and traditions of the Jews in the times of Jesus were so ingrained in the culture.** I am excited to see how the many other graces I received throughout Israel and World Youth Day manifest in my life.

Bella Mathai



Crossing the Sea of Galilee

St. Johns Acting Principal—Ms Elizabeth Whiting
Term 3

St. John's School Vision is *"An inclusive Catholic community fostering a commitment to faith and nurturing a love of learning."*

Throughout Term 3 it has been with much joy that we have been able to come together for many whole school celebrations, living our mission as a community of faith through building a sense of welcome and belonging. Two major events that were celebrated were *Grandparents Day & Book Week Parade* and our *St John's Arts Festival*.

Grandparents Day & Book Week Parade

St John's School came alive on Friday 25 August as we celebrated Book Week & Grandparents Day. The day started with a Book Parade in the bottom yard. It was a vibrant occasion full of fun, laughter and colourful costumes. Grandparents, parents and special people were invited to attend the parade, beaming as they watched the students parade their costumes proudly. The grandparents and special people were then invited into the classrooms to share their love of literature through reading a book with their grandchildren. After this grandparents and special people gathered in the hall for a morning tea hosted by St John's (PIC) Partners In Community.



St John's Arts Festival

We also celebrated our students' creativity at the St John's Arts Festival on Monday 11 September, where St John's school transformed into an art gallery.. Families were invited to view the many artworks on display, which showcased a wide range of techniques, skills, technologies and processes that the students developed throughout the year. The artworks exhibited included a variety of 2D and 3D pieces. Through this learning students developed confidence, curiosity, imagination and enjoyment for the arts

Additionally, we thank Australian author and illustrator, Sarah Allen for donating a signed artwork inspired by her 2022 Children's Book Council of Australia book 'Busy Beaks' for a silent auction raising funds for art endeavours in our school.



St. John's Religious Education Leader - Mr Adam Salamme

CONFIRMATION 2023

On Sunday 13 August, St John's students celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation at St Patrick's Cathedral. It was a joyous occasion as we came together as a faith community, witnessing the commitment of our students in strengthening their connection with God and the Holy Spirit. We thank the Very Rev Fr Tony Kerin and Fr Viinh for co-celebrating this Sacrament and supporting our students as they further grow as people of faith.



Part of their preparation for Confirmation included a family faith night for all candidates and their parents that was held at the school. We thank all the students, parents and sponsors that attended the evening in support of the students. Staff and students attended St Patrick's Cathedral during the week before Confirmation for a full rehearsal and attended the afternoon Mass. It was great to be able to spend time at the Cathedral to be immersed in the history and significance of the Church in our Catholic faith.

Mission

As a Catholic School, St John's aims to be a Christian community in which nurturing faith is integral as students in our care, grow and develop. This important mission nourishes and develops the gift of faith, integrating it with life experiences, enabling students to live and interpret their lives according to Catholic Faith values.

As part of our dedication to ongoing faith formation, our students continue to attend Mass each week, as a year level, and actively participate in prayer. This emphasises our Catholic identity, by bringing together Catholic teachings, values, and traditions as part of our educational process.

Earlier in August this year I had the privilege of attending the 15th World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. It was such an inspiring experience to meet so many incredible young Catholics from around the world in which I learned so much about community and the faith. I arrived earlier in Europe, prior to World Youth Day to live with my Croatian family and travelling to beautiful towns and villages! This was a sublime, peaceful time of spiritual preparation as I received loving prayers and blessings from those around me for the exciting and transformative experience that was waiting for me. We attended beautiful masses, went to an inspiring Fr Rob Galea concert, saw relics of saints such as St Anthony and the

Way of the Cross and a ceremony with the Pope Francis where he shared an inspiring message of hope for all Catholic youth.

One of the highlights of the week was going to see the "Christopher West - Theology of the Body" talk where I learnt a lot about Christian sexuality as God intended it, based upon Pope John Paul II's encyclical of the Theology of the Body. I met many lovely people from Austria, Brazil, Chile. It was so interesting to have a conversation with someone from such a different country and to learn about their culture and language. The Theology of the Body talk was so beautifully insightful about opening our hearts to God's compassionate love and how God created us



"unrepeatable, irreplaceable and indispensable". The talk was broken up with music which was a meaningful experience that really touched my heart.

It was a privilege to be a part of this WYD pilgrimage and to witness the Holy Spirit at work.

Thank you to all the St Johns parishioners and Fr Vinh for your magnificent support. I can now share all that I have learnt about my faith with others I meet, for the rest of my life.

Madeleine Kos

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SAMUEL THORLEY

St John's parishioners are blessed to have a small group of young people regularly serving at Mass. Samuel Thorley gives us a little insight into what it's like being in the sanctuary.

How did you come to start altar serving?

I started altar serving in April 2022 because I wanted to be closer to God, closer to the tabernacle especially and I saw other altar servers like Benny, Anh and Ezekiel doing it and I thought it was so cool. Fr Joel had told parishioners new altar servers were welcome so I kept asking him when the altar serving program would start. One day outside Mass my parents were talking to Ezekiel and I asked him if he could teach me and so he showed me around the sanctuary and explained what I would have to do. And I started!

Do you feel nervous when you are serving Mass?

Yes, sometimes when I make a mistake (and I hope no-one notices) or sometimes Fr Vinh asks me to do something a bit differently or something unexpected happens in the Mass and I can feel a bit anxious and nervous but I trust that I'm in the church and God's right there. And sometimes the bells get stuck! But Fr Vinh is very patient even if I forget something he just nods gently to remind me.

When I am in the sanctuary, I try to keep focussed even though it's very hard and I try to listen to what Father is saying and I try to pray in between.

What do you like best about altar serving?

The thing I like best about altar serving is being able to be closer to God and serve God at the altar and being able to help Father. The highlight has to be every time getting the Eucharist but also when Martin (another altar server) and I rang the Church bells at Easter. It was really hard to ring

the bells and someone had to help us get them going but it was very exciting because from the time I saw that St John's had big outside bells I had been waiting a long time to get the opportunity to ring them.



What advice would you give to other aspiring altar servers?

To be a good altar server you have to love God and be reverent and definitely do not stop in the middle of Mass for unnecessary purposes. Definitely don't touch anything you shouldn't or when it's not the right time.

I would say try to keep your mind fixed on God even though it is very hard (and I'm not the best at it) and try to pray in between doing what you have to do and to remember to thank God every time you receive the Eucharist for being able to serve.

Samuel

Fr Vinh presents the Annual Report for the past financial year and over the coming months has set a program in train to move us forward as a parish community including a census, thanksgiving campaign and a survey to seek our feedback on how we see our parish moving forward.



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Introduction

I am delighted to have been appointed the Parish Priest at the parish of St John the Evangelist, Heidelberg. This appointment was made in June 2022. I thank my predecessor, Fr Joel Peart, for his efforts, especially during the challenges occasioned by Covid, and look forward to working with parishioners in the coming years. This annual report is necessarily truncated because of my recent appointment and the challenges of the past few years.

Returning to normal

Covid-19 posed many challenges for the parish, especially in the provision of regular activities including the celebration of Mass. The return to normal operations enables us to welcome parishioners back. It is pleasing that many of the usual activities of the parish community have been recommenced. The number of people attending daily and weekly Mass is a welcome sign of the vitality of the parish.

Primary school

It is pleasing to see the Primary School continue to flourish with over 300 students enrolled. Although the administration of Catholic schools within the Archdiocese of Melbourne has altered, the parish maintains a very close connection with St John's Primary School. One of the objectives of the new Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools organisation is 'working in mission with our parishes'. I welcome the continued cooperation with the principal and staff. I also look forward to working with the new principal when appointed.

Heidelberg hospitals

I am pleased to be able to follow in the long tradition of providing chaplaincy services to the Heidelberg hospitals – the Austin Hospital, the Olivia Newton John Centre, the Mercy Hospital for Women, the Repatriation Hospital and the Warringal Private Hospital. The parish recently entered into a new protocol about chaplaincy with the Austin. This is important work of evangelisation that the parish has supported for many decades.

Finances

Lower than normal attendances at church services during Covid had a significant impact on the parish finances. In summary, there was a considerable reduction in income. There was also a reduction in expenditure because of the inability to conduct various activities. Although there was still a surplus for the year, the return to normal activities requires an examination of our thanksgiving program. I have appointed a new Finance Committee to assist me in this task. The parish will also work with the Archdiocese to ensure the necessary program of maintenance and development meets our contemporary needs. A census, a survey of parishioners and a stewardship program has been planned for the second half on 2023.

Although there was still a surplus for the year, the return to normal activities requires an examination of our thanksgiving program. I have appointed a new Finance Committee to assist me in this task. The parish will also work with the Archdiocese to ensure the necessary program of maintenance and development meets our contemporary needs. A census, a survey of parishioners and a stewardship program has been planned for the second half on 2023.

Looking forward

Established as the Heidelberg Mission in 1848, the parish of St John the Evangelist is the third oldest in Melbourne. The current church (replacing the first temporary wooden structure and later St Monica's) was opened in 1861. We look forward to the celebration of the 175th anniversary of the church in 2026. The coming years will be an opportunity for rebuilding and renewal following the challenges of the past few years.

Appreciation

I express my appreciation to parishioners for the warm welcome I have received in Heidelberg. I thank all the volunteers at the parish for their ongoing commitment and look forward to continuing our mission of evangelisation over the coming years.

**Yours in Christ,
Fr Vinh Nguyen
Parish Priest**

The Eyrie

OUR TEAM

Design & Layout • Content

Michelle Penson

Copy Reader

Elizabeth Williamson

Printer • Peter Burke

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.

Your articles and input most welcome

Please contact the parish secretary 0394571066

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday October 3rd

GEMS outing to Tesselaar Tulip Festival

Saturday October 8th

Pizza Night following 6pm Mass

All welcome in the Parish House

Sunday October 15th

Parish Lunch in the parish gardens TBC

Tuesday October 24th

First Reconciliation

Wednesday November 1st

All Saint's Day

Thursday November 2nd

All Soul's Day

Tuesday December 5th

Carols Night

Monday December 11th

GEMS outing to Christmas Melodies

Victorian Arts Centre

Morning Tea

Join us on the first and third Sundays of the month for Morning Tea following the 10.30am mass. A wonderful opportunity to enjoy the company of other parishioners
