

The Eyrie

St John's Catholic Parish Heidelberg



Welcoming the Stranger— as in our Parish Prayer

Michelle LeMaster

I grew up outside of Cincinnati Ohio in the USA with my wonderful parents, two sisters, and horses. I lived in Florida for a few years before moving to Australia. At the end of 2019 I moved to Melbourne to pursue my PhD in Food and Meat Science at the University of

Melbourne. While I had done mission work in Africa and South America, this was the first time I was moving away from family for an extended period of time, to a country that entered several major lockdowns that created an incredibly isolating environment, especially for someone who already felt so far from home.

After days at the university, tasked with a rather large project, I quickly found my comfort came from reading my grandma's Bible and the only place that felt like home, or like I belonged anywhere was Church. Often on my way home from uni when the doors were still opened, I could just pop in, talk to God for a minute, and leave feeling at peace and filled with strength.

Since moving here, I had to face a lot of health issues and adversity. Being away from family made it so much more challenging and difficult. Luckily, I grew up in a family that put faith in God first, knowing that He never gives us more than we can handle, just sometimes, we have to realise our potential too. The main thing that kept me grounded during all of this was my faith and being able to read during mass made me feel at home. This parish has been a blessing in many ways.

When I was growing up my dad, was very involved in our church as mass coordinator and I would always tag along. My parents very much encouraged my faith journey! My grandparents were also heavily involved in the Church, and always asked me to decorate but I would also read when they were short of volunteers. After mass, we would always invite the priests over for dinner for some of mine and my dad's BBQ and to this day, I still receive hand written letters from them and even catch up over zoom with a few of them.



.....cont'd overpage

I became one of their primary readers but it was my grandma's funeral that really tested me. She had me read the Bible to her when she was sick and she always requested 2 specific readings: Job 39 and her favourite verse, 2 Timothy 4 - the same reading I was asked to read at her funeral. I cherish the moments I had with her when she passed away and she is always close in my heart when I read at St. John's.

This year will be the third Easter I will be spending away from my family. It's difficult because my family and I are so close and always went to the Easter Vigil together; our amazing friends would sing and I was always blessed with the opportunity to read at the Easter Vigil and make flower displays. Three years away from family makes things tough but I still hold to these traditions and attend Easter Vigil every year. This year however, things at home will be a bit different because Easter is also the due date of my sister's second baby! I am to be godmother of this baby girl which is such a gift to me. Come Easter I will have two nephews and a little niece back home.

My church in America was the place I could feel a source of strength and comfort when battling a lot of illnesses: it felt like home. The funny thing is that St. John's also feels like home to me because of the architecture and stained-glass windows look so much like my Church in America. The people however, are the best part. Ever since I stepped foot in St. John's, I could tell that the community embraced the parish prayer and really lived a life of faith and it was truly refreshing in the midst of so much chaos in the world.

I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

I was lonely and you gave me hope and a place at your table.

I was even in need of a home for a while and a very generous family opened theirs up to me. For that, and for everyone in this parish who has welcomed me and made me feel like family while mine is so far away,

I am forever grateful.

Michelle LeMaster

ST. JOHNS TENNIS CLUB - Junita Richardson

SJCTC are back in full swing after the lockdowns and cancellation of competitions and events over the last 2 years.

New coaching arrangements in place with Gripping Potential, Head Coach John Paci.

Coaching is also picking up and there are opportunities available for individual, group and cardio tennis coaching/training.

Competitions are in full swing with juniors and adults in the North Eastern and Eastern Regions.

We have recently replaced the fence in the car-park and installed drainage and concrete to the entrance. Further plans are underway in 2022 to improve the Facility.

We have also implemented the Tennis Australia 'Book a Court' system which allows non-members to book and pay for courts at their convenience.

New membership enquiries, book a court information and coaching services can be found on our website:

<https://www.tennis.com.au/sjctc>

SJCTC look forward to seeing you at the courts soon.

Junita Richardson—President

Celebrating our young people - Confirmation March 2022



*Filled
with
the
Holy
Spirit*

We congratulate our 2021 Year 6 students who returned to the Parish in February to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. Thank you to Fr Tony Kieran, Fr Joel Peart, Elizabeth Williamson (Pastoral Associate) and Mary Peeris (from the parish office) for their support of these students as they received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We pray for these students as they continue their faith journey.

SAFEGUARDING -Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (including St John's Heidelberg)

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. In our parish and in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, we consider the safety and wellbeing of all persons to be our highest priority.

We acknowledge that children, young people and adults at risk may require additional safeguards to promote their participation, wellbeing and safety.

We respect the human dignity of each person and strive to create an inclusive and welcoming Church that enables its people to grow and develop their faith freely and in a caring and supportive environment. Further Safeguarding information available in the folder at the back of the church or on line at <https://melbournecatholic.org/safeguarding>

A COVID Nurse's Story

Nicole Balbaris

In February 2020, I drove 1776kms from my home in Brisbane to Melbourne to relocate and pursue my career as a Registered Nurse leaving all my immediate family and friends. It was only a matter of a couple of weeks after I had slowly settled in that COVID-19 became a reality. It was first announced in January 2020, that almost everyone on the streets and the media started to speculate about this rather severe respiratory disease that was causing deaths in other parts of the world.

I had arrived in Melbourne unemployed and moved into an apartment on my own in Ivanhoe initially living off my savings. After some unsuccessful job applications, the Department of Health put an urgent call out for nurses to assist with the COVID-19 response. I had a decision to sit comfortably in my apartment hidden, from exposing myself to the disease or respond to the duty of care as a nurse to assist in the outbreak. My hole being chose the latter.

I applied for the role and was immediately sent out to do COVID-19 testing in the commission housing towers in the city. I was on 12hour shifts, not knowing a single person I was going to work with that day, not knowing exactly where I was going to perform the testing, especially, not knowing where to park my car in the city which for me at that stage was probably the biggest stress.

The first thing in the morning the team gathered around in a circle to listen to the instructions of the team leader. We were assigned to which commission housing tower we were testing that day. The names and the apartment numbers were given to us. We then wrapped ourselves in personal protective equipment (PPE) and set out to test in our small teams. Many residents were so kind and understanding, even though there was a significant language barrier. I always made sure I gave a smile and hoped they could see that I could be trusted and was non-threatening. There were also some people who were not so kind to our team and many abuses and swear words were thrown at us during the testing round. I went home alone every night, although exhausted and slightly beaten, but at ease knowing I was doing all I possibly could to assist in the COVID 19 response and help prevent the spread of the disease.

A few months into the pandemic, I also started to work as a Registered Nurse and then was promoted as an Associate Nurse Unit Manager in the COVID-19 Screening Services at a major Hospital. The services comprised of running the COVID-19 testing clinic and screening desks at all the main entrances on all three campuses. Every shift we were wrapped in plastic, sweating through our uniforms, providing education, isolation instructions, comfort and reassurance to all the patients that came through to get tested.

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



The past two years has certainly tested me and although both physically and mentally strained at times I feel it has made me stronger in many ways.

I am reminded of the footsteps in the sand

“My precious precious child

I love you and I would never leave you.

During times of trial and suffering when you see only one set of footprints in the sand

It was then that I carried you”.

Nicole Balbaris.....

Our team of nurses, personal care assistants, doctors and administrative staff were working through some of the toughest days. We constantly were ensuring we abided by Infection Control procedures and the many changes to the way things needed to be undertaken (and over the months there were many).

The Department of Health gave instructions to the hospital, informing, reassuring all the staff that we must work together as a team and follow all protocols carefully. They did acknowledge and understand that we were only human and still had lives at home to look after.

It is now February 2022 and looking back it seems that the past two years were like a flash of constant stress and pressure. I now know that whatever future challenges and obstacles come my way, that I will be able to overcome them.



Thank you to all of our doctors, nurses, care staff, hospital admin staff and laboratory staff who have worked tirelessly over many many months to assist us all in the prevention and spread of disease.

Term 1

Goal: To strengthen and enrich our school as a contemporary Catholic community

It was a busy Term One for the community of St John's Catholic Parish Primary School, with teachers, parents and students excited to be back on-site. We quickly found our groove and we were back into the swing of school life. We began the year with our Whole School Welcoming and Commissioning Liturgy, where our school leaders were formally introduced to our school community and received their leadership badges, and our staff were commissioned for the 2022 school year.

We celebrated the beginning of Lent, with our Year 5 and 6 students returning to mass on Ash Wednesday. The students, teachers, parents and parish community were thankful to be able to gather together at mass for this special day in our faith. Our St John's Faith and Social Justice Student Leadership Team then led a whole school online liturgy with students from Grade One to Four. As part of our Lenten journey, Caritas' Project Compassion 2022 was also launched. The theme for Caritas' Project Compassion 2022 is 'For All Future Generations'. Each St John's classroom and family are invited to raise money and pray for those less fortunate.

Term One also saw the celebration of Catholic Education Week in March. Our school captains, Georgie and Zac and Deputy Principal Connie Bandiera represented St John's at the celebratory mass at St Patrick's Cathedral.

The rest of the school participated in a wide range of reflective art and prayer activities led by our wonderful classroom teachers to celebrate Catholic Education Week 2022.

With Covid restrictions easing, we look forward to scheduling class and year level masses throughout the year. Our students, teachers, carers and parents are eager to celebrate and engage in our faith development with our parish community under the direction and leadership of Fr Joel Peart.



back Mitchell, Sebastian (Faith and Social Justice Student Leader), Georgie (School Captain)
front Zac (School Captain), Ann

Ms Elizabeth Whiting—Acting Principal St. John’s School

Term 1 2022

As we commence the 2022 school year, I wish Mrs Maureen Stella our Principal well as she enjoys long service leave for Term 1, Term 2 and Term 3. We hope that Maureen enjoys her break as a time of rest and finds meaningful ways to connect with family and friends.

After two years of interrupted schooling, with learning being delivered both online and onsite, I reflect upon returning to onsite learning for 2022 with gratitude. I am grateful for noisy classrooms, busy playgrounds, friendly smiles, warm greetings and inquisitive minds. I am grateful for a welcoming and friendly community and parent partnerships. I am grateful for dedicated staff and a supportive leadership team and parish community. It is indeed a privilege, as Acting Principal at St John's, to be working in partnership with staff, school families and the parish community in the best interest of our students and families.

As members of this faith community we each play a part in living out the gospel through our actions and words, showing respect for diversity and acceptance of differences. These actions and words shared in person and online when inspired by the gospel are life giving, building up those around us, with the dignity of the individual at the centre. Over the last month I have witnessed the community live out our gospel through the welcoming of new families, new students and new staff.

A warm welcome to our new staff to St John’s - Marianne DiFabio (Prep Teacher), Paul Tarabay (Year 4), Shane Thompson (Year 5), Ben Friggi (Year 5, PE and Interschool Sports), Nicky Dunne (Year 6, Teaching and Learning Leader),



Elizabeth Whiting—Acting Principal

Adam Salemmme (Year 6, RE and Wellbeing Leader), Carmel Locaso (Languages - Italian) and Chloe Livy (Learning Support Officer). We also welcome two Pre-service Teachers - Chloe and Karolina. I thank the staff of St John’s for the many hours spent preparing their learning spaces and curriculum planning for the students’ return to school.

Best wishes to all as we look to 2022 with hope and optimism for a positive year together as a community of faith.



Sally Tramontana—

Chair of the Heidelberg St. Vincent De Paul Conference

“The strongest bond of true friendship is charity, and the exercise of good charity is the practice of good works.” A Man for our Times, The Story of Frederic Ozanam, Lila El-Hage, 1999 p 16

The strength of our conference comes from the commitment and dedication of our members and associate members. We desire to continue the example set by Frederic Ozanam to recognise those in greatest need within the community and to do what we can to bring them comfort and dignity. To ensure the continued growth of our conference we are looking for new members.

Have you thought about giving back? We need people in the community who want to make a difference. It only takes an hour a week to change someone’s life (and yours)! Take action and become part of the Vinnies’ team who support the community with its home visitation program.

My name is Sally Tramontana and I have been involved with the St Vincent de Paul Society for 8 years. I would like to thank the Heidelberg parishioners for the wonderful support you have all offered the St Vincent de Paul

Society over the many years here in the parish. The members of the Heidelberg conference assist local families who are experiencing hardship— national statistics show us that many families are only three wage packets away from financial hardship—mum gets sick or dad is injured at work or retrenched and suddenly the family is unable to cope.

The St John’ the Evangelist Heidelberg conference has been in operation since 1927. After 95 years of assisting our community, and our current members have no intention of stopping this important work, but we need more members and volunteers to help us to continue our good work. The Society operates a number of programs in Melbourne and I would like to highlight a few. The first is Vinnies Shops, where second-hand goods are made available for sale to raise money that funds our outreach programs, there are breakfast programs, reading programs, and Vinnies Youth. But the core work of the Society and us here at Heidelberg is the home visitation program where our members and volunteers work in pairs to visit people in

their homes. Their mission is to provide material aid and an attentive listening ear to help people in times of crisis. In the past 12 months the Society here in Heidelberg has visited more than 100 homes and given assistance to the value of approximately \$60,000.

To further explain the work we do, in the coming weeks, we will be running a ‘Come & See’ information evening and there will be flyers by the church porch door, and I encourage you to take one.

The work of our members can be easily summed up by the words of Christ in St Matthew’s gospel: “When I was hungry you fed me. When I was naked you clothed me. When I was lonely, sick or in prison you visited me.”

So if you feel you can give a few hours to make a difference in people’s lives, please come along to the information session to hear more.

If you have any further questions, please don’t hesitate to approach myself or other members of the Society.

You can contact me

Sally Tramontana, via the parish office on 9457 1066.

AGES 2 TO ADULT

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“ My Kumon dream is to nurture all children so that they grow up confident, committed, independent and happy people ”

Robbie Dawson

Serving

My family and I have been parishioners of St. John's for 15 years. My sister and I began Altar Serving for Father Ted soon after joining the parish. I have continued to serve at the 8.30 Mass since then. Participating actively in the Mass (for me), gives the Mass more meaning. It is a great honour to altar serve and I would encourage other young people to take up the same opportunity.

I originally studied piano and classical guitar, however, in Grade 3 I asked Mum for a trumpet. My wish was granted, and we were given the name of a great trumpet teacher. When we met Sue Wedding she asked, why did I want to play the trumpet? The simple answer was - I wanted to play the Last Post. She said - "Well that will take at least two years and lots and lots of practice". I did the work and in Grade 5 I auditioned at the Templestowe RSL Club and the President asked me to play at the next Anzac Day service and I have continued to do so (pandemic permitting). I have also played the Last Post at nursing homes, schools, Rotary Club services for ANZAC day for

school students, another RSL club, and football matches that have been held on ANZAC day. So on occasion I have played for 8 different services in the one week. I consider it privilege to contribute in a small way to honour the men and women who gave their lives so that we can live in peace. I played at the Remembrance Day services until I commenced work and was unable to continue. I continued studying with Sue and completed all the AMEB exams to Grade 8 with excellent results and with Sue always in the background making sure I worked hard.

I spent 5 years as an Army Cadet at Simpson's Barracks, Watsonia, enjoying the discipline, skills learnt, and camps offered - advancing to the rank of corporal. I am hoping to return as a volunteer in the near future.

I am currently in the 4th year of a metal fabrication apprenticeship. I have my own blacksmithing forge and hope eventually to be



able to combine these skills. Music, archery and a keen interest in war history beginning with the Vikings and Saxons has resulted in a collection of helmets, chain-mail, garments and overflowing bookcases complete the picture.

I have been a member of the Manningham Concert band for 4 years. Hopefully our concert program will be able to restart after the hiatus of the pandemic. Sr Loretto has been kind enough to ask me to play at some Masses and at Christmas and I thank her for that. I feel serving, music and singing add an additional element to our Masses and find it a joy to be able to participate in this way.

Fr Joel Peart—Parish Priest

Priests and Pets

I've heard it said that pets will often reflect their owners, and after some (very) basic research, studies done suggest there is some truth to the theory. As a member of the priestly fraternity, I'd go further and say the theory is rock solid! We priests come in characters of all shapes and sizes, and the array of pets that priests have out there reflects just that.

Dogs from German Shepherds to chihuahuas and some cats with real charisma. But there's also roosters, rabbits, a yabby and even a snake out there. Yep, that's right. A carpet python apparently. You might be a bit worried about the priest that owns him but I can assure you he's a top fella.

You likely know that this here priest was one of those pet owners, if only for a few months. I had never been a pet owner previously and didn't grow up with pets, so it was a foray into the unknown when George the cat was offered to me by a brother priest in May of last year. I agreed to take

him on, but on the proviso that I could give him back if it wasn't working out. After less than a week I had decided he was a keeper! It was cool having him around and I became so much more comfortable with pets and animals generally. Alas, George went missing late last year and hasn't been seen since. Goodness knows what happened to him, but I do hope he's doing okay out there.

I've no doubt that as priests have increasingly found themselves living alone, the number of pet owners amongst us has grown as well. Limited as they are, they do provide a companionship that I have missed since moving into parishes alone. Having another living being in the house changes things, and almost always for the better.

It's now that I'll go back comparing priests with pets. As much as our furry friends provide some company, it doesn't compare with the fraternal charity that is built with other

people. Part of the change in the future of our diocese and the restructuring of parishes is the encouragement for priests to live in common and work together. Done properly, I think this will help increase the health and holiness of our priests very much. As the psalmist says, "How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to live in harmony! It is like precious oil upon the head..." (Psalm 133)

Never knowing what the future holds, I can only say that if I was to work and live with a priest in the future who had a pet, I would welcome it with open arms...except maybe that python!

With every blessing,

Fr Joel

The Eyrie

OUR TEAM

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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

Palm Sunday—10th April

Holy Thursday—14th April

(no morning mass)

**7pm Mass of the Lord's
Supper**

Good Friday—15th April

11am Stations of the Cross

**3pm Celebration of the
Lord's Passion**

Holy Saturday—16th April

(no morning mass)

8pm Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday—17th April

8.30am Mass

10.30am Mass

(no evening mass)

First Holy Communion

14th May 11am

& 21st May 11am