

EASTER MESSAGE FROM FR MARTIN

In the gospel of Mark, the first account of the Good News of Jesus Christ to be recorded, the Resurrection, takes place in silence! The three women went to the tomb in the silence of the night. They met an angel who told them Jesus, the crucified one, had risen. Then, trembling and bewildered, they fled.

There is almost something modest and ordinary about it. There was a quiet foreboding, with a stillness that only love and trepidation can create. Some in the early Church apparently had difficulty with the silence of Mark. The initial and original ending was too sharp and abrupt for them. How could the resurrection, which had begun in abandonment and despair, not end in joy? How could it end in silence and apprehension?

Our Trinitarian God is a mystery. A mystery is not a problem to be solved. A problem is a puzzle to which techniques can be applied, intuition brought to bear, and a solution found. Science tackles problems. It's great at it. But a mystery is not amenable to that strategy. And life is littered with them.

We especially see all around us the terrible mystery of evil, as it manifests itself in the chaos of war and conflict in the Ukraine, Myanmar, the Congo, Palestine and Israel to name only a few places. And how can we ignore the grinding poverty of so many people and ecological plight of our fragile precious planet?

Human life is brutally devalued in the plight of refugees fleeing their homelands and in the tragedy of so many human beings whose precious dignity and vulnerable lives are threatened and diminished. We also are constantly bewildered by the ongoing injustice still perpetuated against indigenous peoples and the horror of violence especially against women and children. Not to mention the tragedy of natural disasters like the recent catastrophic earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

Where can we turn as Easter people full of hope?

Jesus is our only answer to these great mysteries that sometimes seem to overwhelm us. For all that we know of God, is of course, revealed definitively in Jesus of Nazareth.

But, have you ever noticed how many times in the Gospels Jesus himself asks questions, rather than gives answers? Our journey living the Paschal Mystery is often more about the questions than the answers. Pontius Pilate asks Jesus a series of questions and Jesus answers cryptically as if to say, you are really missing the point. And have you noticed that Pope Francis when unjustly criticised also prefers to remain silent rather than repay pettiness with revenge.



Let's recall then, this Easter 2023, that the Easter mystery moves us through the terrible suffering and death of the Son of God, the profound love and courage that kept the women by his side despite their own fears, and the time in the tomb, that in-between space in which we spend much of our lives.

It invites us to rest in mystery and then the movement to the joyful and decisive moment of Resurrection where even the disciples do not have the right set of questions anymore because they fit the old answers.

Is this not the journey of our whole lives: the movement from sorrow to courage, to grief to waiting for joy, often holding elements of each at the same time?

What are the questions stirring your soul these days? Can we make space to live in them, not needing to have all the answers?

Dare we listen to the concerns of those who live on the margins and make room for the Holy Spirit in our busy lives?

In the face of painful transition, let us be empowered by the presence of the Risen Lord, calling us beyond the fear of the unknown. The Paschal rhythm summons us to die to the old and rise to the new.

May the Easter season renew your faith and breathe into your lives energy, purpose, compassion and hope.

"From Little Things, Big Things Grow"

Children's Liturgy at Sacred Heart Parish

embraces the Catholic Education ideal of 'Preparing the Good Soil'. We have witnessed growing attendance, nurturing the faith of over thirty students.

Our first Lenten Children's Liturgy witnessed many enthusiastic and eager students striving, to learn more about the Gospel. The message of, 'Spending Time with Jesus, during Lent' was interwoven into the story of Jesus' time in the desert and making choices in life.

Later the children reflected on their learning and shared their understanding with Fr. Martin and our parish community. This experience, illuminates our growing commitment of fostering Catholic Education and inclusion in many arenas.

To our dedicated teachers; Gen Hamam, Kim Miller and Cassandra Jones our parish says, "thank you". Also, we are truly blessed by the contributions of many parents and helpers who recognize the essential ingredient of, developing the whole person.

Susan McLaurin

Parish Pastoral Council

**Mrs Hamam listening to the
childrens' feedback**

**Mrs Miller inspiring
Lizzy and Annie**

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR LEARNING



Aviva learnt that Jesus refused to do what the man in the desert wanted. Jesus made the decision to do what God wanted.



Neve recalls her understanding of Lent... "On Sunday 26th of February, we made watches that signified that we should spend time with Jesus. "



Tully embraced time with friends and creatively reflected upon his learning.



Jariath's faith was nourished with the Gospel, as he reflected on the story - Jesus took time out. He needed to do this to reflect on his choices and decisions. He was there for 40 days and 40 nights

EASTER DAY



Sunrise Easter Day 2022, Moruya Heads Beach

The opening phrase of the Gospel of John, “In the beginning ...” (1:1) is an allusion to the Genesis story in which the “the tree of life (is) in the midst in the garden” (2:9). The cross is also in a garden (19:41) and becomes the tree of life.

In this reflection I have chosen to concentrate on one sentence in the Johannine narrative of the death of Jesus Christ. When the soldiers came to Jesus he was already dead (v. 33). Nevertheless, the author tells a story of one of the soldiers piercing his side with a spear, detailing that “at once there came out blood and water” (v. 34). This is important theologically because the author states that he writes of it so that we “may also believe” (v. 35b).

From as far back as the Middle Ages this image has been interpreted as being maternal in nature (Julia of Norwich, Bernard of Clairvaux and Aelred of Rievaulx) and remains so for contemporary biblical writers (Barbara Reid, Mary Coloe and Sandra Schneiders).

For any woman the fleshly reality of blood and water is a strong birthing image; the blood and water of menstruation a constant reminder of the potential of new life, the blood and water present in the birthing process bringing forth the new born child. The blood and water pouring from the side of Jesus at his death is reimagined as the blood and water of the birthing of new life.

In emphasising this image however, it is important not to romanticise giving birth. I am conscious of a first-time mother about to give birth to twins, one with trisomy 13 who predictably will die soon after birth while his twin sister without abnormalities will live a full and healthy life. There can be no stronger experience than this of the reality of death and life occurring at the same time.

Having faced the trauma of the cross the Johannine community has been able to re-image the death of Jesus as the birthing of new life. The Johannine experience is not that of escaping from the reality of life nor of denying pain but is that in facing the trauma of the cross, life is transfigured. Jesus reveals his glory, reveals his identity as the resurrection and the life. “Suffering is the consequence of a choice to entrust oneself to love” (Coloe, 2021). The cross becomes the tree of life.

Do you have questions in life?

Try Alpha... (Alpha.org.au)

Great news for this year's Alpha program as we are holding a combined parish and schools' program which Xavier has offered to host in their new St Francis Xavier Centre!

This is seen as a great and real opportunity for parents and teachers from the local Catholic schools to begin a new journey with God that will lead them into a tangible relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. It's also an opportunity for parishioners to not only invite someone to Alpha, but also to bring someone along or just attend! The format consists of guests being welcomed with a glass of wine and then sitting down to a home cooked meal. Then a short video is shown introducing our faith followed by discussion over dessert.


The first night is a *"come and try"* night, and there is no commitment, no fee and no follow-up! Alpha will be launched early May with the program beginning towards the end of May. If you would like to visit the Facebook page use your device camera on the QR code which will take you straight to our page or search "Alpha Sacred Heart North Albury".

Please pray for many people to attend Alpha and experience God's love, also the team and volunteers, and how you could help in anyway.


Wishing you a blessed Easter.

Michael and Fran

ALPHA CO ORDINATORS



Stay up to date with the
Sacred Heart North
Albury
Alpha Program



SCAN THE
QR CODE TO
LINK TO OUR
FACEBOOK PAGE

Adrian Mitchellhill



Adrian Mitchelhill and his wife, Trish.
Adrian is on Parish Pastoral Council

I was born in the 1960s as the second of six children to Zetta and Tony Mitchellhill in the western NSW town of Balranald. Other than going to church with mum on the weekends, my first impression and experience of the clergy was the fact that our local priest (Father Bongiorno) from the Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese, was our swimming instructor and taught us all how to swim in the Murrumbidgee river as the town didn't have a swimming pool. I'm not sure how Father Martin would have pulled this off!!



PROFILE OF A PARISHIONER cont..

My schooling commenced at St Joseph's under the guidance of the Mercy nuns. Balranald was a great town and place to grow up, with lots of freedom and good people. We moved to Finley when I was 9 and began at another St Joseph's Primary school with Mercy nuns but only stayed for three years until dad received a promotion to Albury, which, with six children to educate, was appreciated. This happened when I started high school and I began at Aquinas College with the Christian brothers. We soon joined the Sacred Heart Parish where I was an altar boy. My mother, Zetta was an inspiration to us all with her faith and community involvement. We continued to get involved in the community, including the St Patrick's Cricket and Football Clubs which were amazing organisations even in the 1970s.

It was during this time that I also met my wife (Trish) to be who was at our sister school, St Joseph's and daughter of Bevin and Anne Marie McGrath from our Sacred Heart Parish. I was fortunate to receive a sports scholarship to attend Assumption College at Kilmore where my education under the Marist brothers continued and was very fortunate to have the wonderful experience of boarding. I continued my faith journey and established lifelong friends.

Upon completion of my secondary schooling, I moved to Melbourne to study real estate at RMIT before obtaining my first job at Elders as a Stock and Station agent at Newmarket Sale Yards. It was during this time that Trish undertook her nursing training at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and our romance continued to blossom.

After three years in Melbourne, I was transferred to Ballarat for 12 months which was excellent except for the weather! I was then transferred to Hay in western NSW only to be reunited with my brother Tim who was also working in the town for another agent.

It was not long before Trish joined me when she took up a position at the Hay hospital and starred on the local netball team. We were engaged in May and married at Sacred Heart Church North Albury in 1984 by Father Flanagan, so we are ready to celebrate 40 years happily married next year.

After three wonderful years in such a vibrant community we left Hay in 1987 and joined my father's real estate business in Albury and it wasn't long after that we started our family with the arrival of Simon. Shortly after I was reacquainted with my old mates at St Patrick's Cricket Club and enjoyed getting back involved in the community. Simon was soon followed by Tim, our second boy and we had lots of fun and busy times with two active boys.

It was a busy and enjoyable time of our lives with two young children and a developing career in real estate and lots of community involvement.

Sadly in 1994, what was a remarkable and great lifestyle came to a crashing halt when I suffered a stroke due to a blood clotting disorder at the age of 33. Unable to work and continue to do work, I undertook up to 6 months rehabilitation in Melbourne and Albury. My recovery was slow and to this day I still carry the effects of cognitive and physical impairment. Unable to return to real estate work and continue with my goal to take over the business from my father upon his retirement, I worked in a few different jobs. However, Mr Bruce Duck from our parish was very forthcoming and I was employed at the Commercial Club where I am still working part-time as of today. 1996 was a difficult yet joyous year for us when we lost our beloved mother Zetta suddenly and then welcomed our third son, James, who has been a delight to us over the years.

Suffering from the stroke as I did, certainly tested yet strengthened my faith, as I was able to lean on my faith to see the good times as well as the bad over the years. Also, I feel blessed that I have been able to be a better parent and father to my boys by having more time rather than money to devote to them over the years. Having been back and involved in the Sacred Heart community, I have enjoyed the involvement and friendship. Also, to participate in Alpha, such a wonderful program last year was remarkable. I am looking forward to being a positive and productive member of our parish for many years to come.

OUR BIBLE STUDY GROUP



Following our Parish Alpha program last year, several follow-on groups were formed in the parish— a night time and a day time Bible study group, as well as a follow-up group to Alpha called “Beta”. Everyone is welcome. For information call Michael on 0419 982 574

A Community of Faith, Service, Learning and Welcome at Xavier

At the start of this year we were reminded by our Bishop, the Most Reverend Mark Edwards, with the new Bishop's Charter that our schools aim to educate the whole child so that they can grow academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally. We achieve this as communities of Welcome, Faith, Service and Learning.

Xavier High School has embraced this reminder of who we are as a Catholic school with enthusiasm and passion. We live the qualities which reflect the work and life of Jesus Christ. We celebrate the fact that we are called to be challenged, compassionate, collaborative, courageous and Christ-like. The 5 Cs are

our set of values which we ask our whole community to embrace in their day to day life. This is how we aim to educate the whole child.

So far in 2023, Year 12 students prepared to transition into the next phase of their academic lives, quite often faced with stress and uncertainty. That's why the theme of this year's retreat was connection. By focusing on building meaningful connections with themselves, their peers, and the world around them, they could find the support and guidance they needed to navigate this exciting but challenging time. The retreat took place over three days, GreenHills, Canberra once again, with a variety of activities designed to encourage personal reflection, social bonding, and engagement with faith. Each day started with a mindfulness practice, followed by a group discussion about the challenges they were facing and how they could support each other.

One of the key activities of the retreat was a series of team-building exercises that encouraged them to work together and develop their communication skills. In addition to group activities, there was plenty of time for individual reflection, self-care and faith formation.

The Retreat concluded with a workshop where the students worked as a group to create a year group motto. This was a powerful reminder



Year 12s mask painting at their Retreat

of the connections they had made with themselves and each other, and a source of inspiration as they moved forward, ***"Individually we aspire, collectively we succeed"***.

Furthermore, over 180 Year 7 students were accompanied by 30 Year 10's and 20 staff members participated in this year's Yr 7 Adventure Camp. The camp at Feathertop Chalet, Harrietville had a "team" theme, emphasizing collaboration and communication. Students worked together to complete challenges and develop a sense of camaraderie. The camp reinforced the importance of trust and belonging, with staff making students feel welcome and included. The students left with a newfound appreciation for teamwork and a sense of excitement to start their high school journey together. It was a great 'welcome' to our community of 'faith, service and learning'.



Bishop Mark welcoming new staff to the Diocese at the Holy Spirit Parish



Fun and adventure at the Year 7 Camp

In addition, we have opened our school year with a beautiful staff liturgy and whole school mass celebrated by our Parish Priest Fr Martin. Students were actively involved in the planning and ministry of the Mass. Our annual Year 7 Youth Mass also took place in our local parish and was highly supported by the community. Our elements of service have been highlighted in the way we celebrated Catholic Schools Week, cooked pancakes for the whole school

and launched a plethora of initiatives throughout the term to raise awareness and funds for Project Compassion. It is with an abundance of excitement that we are forging forward with plans for our new Social Justice Team in Term 2.

Overall, the faith formation element of term 1 has provided important opportunities for students to explore and deepen their spiritual beliefs, while also connecting with their peers and the world around them. Xavier High has continued to offer our students and staff a chance to develop a sense of purpose and direction, and to build a strong foundation for their future lives and careers. We are proud to declare that our students will continue to grow academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally and we are excited to continue to share how we achieve this as a community of Welcome, Faith, Service and Learning.

Yours in Catholic Education

HEATH NEVILLE

Director of Faith Formation and Mission
Xavier High School, Albury



Students prepare pancakes for Shrove Tuesday



XAVIER
HIGH SCHOOL ALBURY

ST ANNE'S SCHOOL NEWS

This year has gotten off to a speedy start of learning, sports and fun. Some of our highlights so far this year include:

Kinder's First Day and Director Dr Andrew Watson's visit

We welcomed 54 students into our Kinder classrooms this year. Our director Dr Andrew Watson visited our Kinder students on their first Friday of the school year.

Opening School Liturgy

We celebrated the beginning of the new school year with a Liturgy presided over by Fr Martin. This year's theme is 'Rise Up! Don't Hold Back.' Our Kinder students were officially welcomed to our school community and our Year 6 School Captains and Councillors were also officially announced and presented with their student badges.

Sporting Events

Some of the sporting events that were provided for students this term included:

- **Swimming Carnival** – Students in Years 3-6 participated in a swimming carnival. A great day was had and it was wonderful to have parents and family members assisting in our sporting events. It was a closely fought carnival with Flanagan House (Green House) claiming victory.
- **Athletics** – Students in Years 3-6 also participated in an Athletics carnival this term. Participation by all students was incredible and Flanagan House won the carnival overall.
- **Cross Country** – Students enthusiastically participated in the school Cross Country carnival. This is our only sporting carnival that involves all students from Kinder thorough to Year 6. In a hatrick, Flanagan House stormed home to win the carnival overall.



Shrove Tuesday - Pancake Day

We celebrated Shrove Tuesday with pancakes offered for a gold coin donation that would go towards our fundraising efforts to Project Compassion. We particularly thank the parents and staff members who assisted in the making and cooking of these for students, as well as the Year 6 Liturgy Team who assisted also.

Harmony Day

Harmony Week celebrates Australia's cultural diversity and is about inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone. Students from Kinder to Year 6 wore orange to commemorate this day and classes engaged in a variety of activities.

Catholic Schools Week

We celebrated with a whole school liturgy and opened up our classrooms to parents, grandparents and visitors. All schools in our Wagga Diocese presented an art display to capture the school's history and story.

Whole School Concert - Matilda Jnr

Save the dates – Our whole school concert is back this year after Covid restrictions didn't allow us to have them over the last couple of years. Performances are coming up in September with matinee and night performances. Our students in Years 5 and 6 have been auditioning for various roles and we look forward to putting this on for our School, Parish and the wider communities

CASSANDRA JONES

Religious Education Co-Ordinator

St Anne's Primary School

