

Catholic Education

Today



CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
MELBOURNE



**Appetite
for opportunity**

TERM 1, 2016

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OF MERCY

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SCHOOL

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EDUCATION
WEEK

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IN THIS
TOGETHER

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ARCHDIOCESE

The Salve Regina

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,
our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
To you we cry, the children of Eve;
to you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this land of exile.
Turn, then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us;
lead us home at the end and show us
the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus:
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.
Amen.

(USCCB Modern translation)



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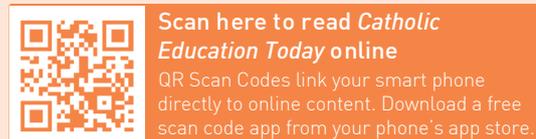
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Cover Image Appetite for opportunity: Foundation student Jahzarah Povey toasts the St Thomas Aquinas School *Breakfast Program*. Full story page 3.



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From the Executive Director



Stephen Elder
Executive Director

In this, the *Year of Mercy*, I am certain that all Catholic schools will focus heavily on compassion, forgiveness, responsibility and understanding in everything they do. Your school's faith is a lived experience taught every day in every class, be it literacy, numeracy, wellbeing, religious education and even through schoolyard adventures.

The spirit of mercy is everywhere. It's a theme we would all benefit from, reflecting among the ever increasing hustle and bustle of the modern world. Just like your children in class, the collection of high-calibre, caring learning and teaching professionals who form the framework of our schools are not perfect. Try as they might, decisions that principals, teachers and staff make will never please everyone.

Understanding is a key element of mercy, along with forgiveness. I ask that you understand that each and every one of almost 20,000 people employed within Catholic education shares the same goal: making sure our Catholic students are equipped to shape and enrich the world around them.

The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of Project Compassion, has already inspired many schools to investigate this spirit of compassion and mercy with wonderful effect. Catholic values are what long-time families say they love most about our schools and will always be at the heart of our identity.

Child protection is another essential component of Catholic education under scrutiny this year, as the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse continues to create headlines.

Let me assure you, Catholic school students are safer now than ever before.

Don't get caught up in the hysteria and paranoia of the 'good-versus-evil' sideshow that has enveloped the important work of the Royal Commission and fuelled the determination of some in the media to demonise leaders of the Church who are making a difference.

Today, there is no greater priority for principals, teachers and staff than the safety and wellbeing of the children under their care. The most important difference between Catholic schools and their leaders now, and those of decades past, is the non-negotiable duty of care and responsibility for students that supports mandatory reporting policy.

To the brave and courageous survivors who have told their stories before the Royal Commission, I say your evidence has not only been heard, it has been listened to, and it will form the basis of future reforms and even tighter child-safety procedures within Catholic schools.

Finally, as I said in the *Welcome* letter to parents you received via your school last month – full of examples of Catholic education achievement and accessible on www.cem.edu.au – 'your family is in the right place ... 2016 will be another good year'.



Ready to read: Community volunteer Pam McLean and Miracle Amol, Year 1, get down to business.



In need, you shall receive

A cornerstone commitment of Catholic education is to provide for families in greatest need. St Thomas Aquinas School, Norlane, is a shining example of the enormous difference Catholic school care and communities makes to vulnerable young lives.

While thanking community volunteers and supporters for their enormous time and effort, the story of a moving exchange between a six-year-old refugee student and a St Thomas Aquinas teacher is shared at the start of every new school year.

Common among the school's population, the student's family had little and were all regular attendees at the free breakfast program hosted at school three mornings a week.

'I feel really sad that you come to school hungry every day,' the teacher told her little friend.

'It's OK,' the girl replied with a smile. 'I don't go home hungry.'

That teacher's name is Jenny Griffiths. She began her 11th year at the Geelong primary school in January, determined to do even more to 'make a difference to their lives' in the role of Special Education and Welfare Leader.

'We are one of the lowest socio-economic schools in the state. At least 90% of our families collect family support allowance or welfare,' Jenny explained.

'I'd say half of our students are out of the education system by Year 9, some with their own children, many without a job, some, very sadly, even in jail. We are beginning to break the cycle and change the culture for these beautiful kids but no one school can do it on its own.

'Our parents support the concept of "creating a better life" and so does the broader community and that's what means we can make a difference.'

Every Catholic student is taught about the need to consider and provide for those less fortunate. But while the work of St Thomas Aquinas is typical of Catholic schools, few have been able to generate so much outside engagement.

'The education scholarships we have created with local Catholic secondary schools are a great example,' Jenny said.

'Last year a beautiful young lady named Mikayla became the first VCE graduate of our partnership with Sacred Heart College. Without our close connection she would not have achieved that.'



Hungry for knowledge: Jaidyn Kersting, Year 2.

>> CONTINUED PAGE 4

66 They don't judge you and help you out in so many ways. St Thomas is more than a school for us, it's a friend.



PARENT LAURA BASSO



Looking to learn: Teacher Ashleigh Graham and the St Thomas Aquinas Year 1 / 2 class.

Catholic Education Executive Director Stephen Elder applauded the 'extra yards' shown by all Catholic school teachers and staff, and said that while the deep connections made with children are not always obvious, they are always there.

'St Thomas Aquinas is such an important example of the effect education can have,' Mr Elder said.

'The school teaches its students life skills, and can be a life-saver for a lot of families. It provides breakfast, lunch and dinner at different times and the one-on-one volunteer literacy work – with both students and teachers – is amazing to watch. By including parents and younger siblings in excursions and events it's a full scale buy-in.'

Talk to marginalised parents and you hear nothing but high praise and respect for the school's understanding and the teachers' care.

'They don't judge you, and help you out in so many ways,' mother of two, Laura Basso, says.

'St Thomas is more than a school for us; it's a friend. They see the need in somebody and they've got a passion for kids and a passion for helping. My boys can't get here quick enough in the morning.'

In low socioeconomic schools, education is universally considered a vital link to changing lives. Building relationships with caring adults and sharing stories builds all-important confidence and self-esteem.

The list of partners St Thomas Aquinas has been able to engage in its mission of self-improvement includes local Catholic secondary schools St Joseph's College, Newtown; Sacred Heart College, Newtown; and Clonard College, Herne Hill; as well as the St Vincent de Paul Society, St John of God Hospital, Gordon Institute of TAFE, the City of

66 There are often hugs and squeals of joy when we arrive. Once you have been here for a while you love these children and will do everything possible to help them.

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VOLUNTEER PAM MCLEAN

Greater Geelong, Cotton On Foundation, Geelong Food Relief and Second Bite.

Individuals from these partner organisations contribute directly to a host of programs including:

STAMPS: A team of more than 20 volunteers spend 90 minutes each week listening to reading, helping with sounds and letter work and, critically, talking to the children.

'Many of the student's parents are illiterate so they can't help their kids as they'd like. Sometimes the Prep teacher is the first person that has ever read these students a book,' volunteer Pam McLean said.

'There are often hugs and squeals of joy when we arrive. Once you have been here for a while you love these children and will do everything possible to help them.'



Home schooling: One-on-one reading extends beyond the students. Teacher Jenny Griffiths works with St Thomas Aquinas mother Solange Vumiliya who arrived from Congo three years ago.



The Catholic ideals that we learnt as students and student-teachers shine through now in how we teach.



JENNY GRIFFITHS



BREAKFAST BAR: All family members are invited to share a free healthy breakfast, three mornings a week.

FRIDAY FILL-UP: Surplus food is collected around Geelong and distributed to needy families before the weekend.

LIFE SKILLS: Engaging directly with the community provides access to a range of activities students would never otherwise experience. Last year they included wood work, music, cooking, knitting, team sport and holiday programs.

'A lot of children don't go anywhere in their school holidays, they don't have normal adventures to write about or read about because they have never experienced them,' Jenny Griffiths said.

'That makes a huge difference to your literacy skills; if you've never been to the zoo it's hard to write about it. Some of them had never been to the beach and they live in Geelong, but if you don't have a car it's tough.'

FAMILY CONNECT: Volunteers work with refugee parents to offer support moving into new homes, learning a new culture, and improving reading and writing skills.

The success of this approach is also seen in recent enrolment growth. An itinerant work force in surrounding areas means the population will forever fluctuate, but student numbers have increased by more than 50 per cent since 2010 and enrolments have topped 150 this year – including 40 Foundation or Prep students.

It says much about the quality of a Catholic education when families choose to spend part of the little

money they have to send their children to a Catholic school.

'Our fees are low to begin with but we would never turn a family away,' principal Rod Sims explained.

'It's the same with the local Catholic secondary schools that we have great connections with.

'It's not an education for free; our families that move onto Sacred Heart or St Joseph's pay what they were able to pay here. The parents always make some sort of contribution and I know that's really important to them,' he said.

The connection with Sacred Heart College also includes a once-a-term exchange where a bus arrives to collect 30 girls from St Thomas Aquinas to introduce them to the wonders of secondary education. The project is called *The Felicity Program*, after the Sacred Heart student who instigated the concept 10 years ago.

But, all that aside, it's the unique bond that develops between loving students and caring teachers that means the most at St Thomas Aquinas.

'School is absolutely everything to these children and their families,' Jenny said.

'They arrive with no lunch and staff give up their own food. They just hand it over, it happens a lot.

'One time three girls were about to play interschool netball but didn't have runners, so a teacher just jumped in the car, went off to K Mart and came back with three pairs of runners.

'A lot of our staff are really young and it is so beautiful to see the Catholic ideals that we learnt as students and student teachers shine through now in how we teach.'

Family fare: Laura Basso says son Max, Year 4, and her children love the fact St Thomas Aquinas doesn't judge, and helps them in many ways.



Food for thought: Luke Ahmar, Year 3.



St Patrick's School, Mentone

Why We Love School

While not every student is as excited as their parents when school resumes after summer holidays, there is always much joy when the gates reopen.

We asked children from **St Patrick's School**, Mentone, and **Kolbe College**, Greenvale Lakes, what they loved most about Term 1 of the new school year.



Kolbe College, Greenvale Lakes

Leonardo, Year 11

Being back at school helps me appreciate what I've been given, things such as an education, which some others unfortunately are unable to receive, along with minor blessings that we have but take for granted, like friends.

Neive, Foundation

The hot dogs are really yummy. I have one every time the canteen is open, I think that's Tuesday. My buddies are really fun to play with ... we play hide and seek and make secret paths near the big trees. One of my buddies is called Chelsea. My other buddy has an unusual name and I can't remember yet.

Prabh, Year 8

I enjoy learning new things and knowing that I'm getting the most important thing in life, education, which some kids aren't lucky enough to get, so I just thank God for giving me that opportunity.

Ella, Year 6

Our teachers have time for everyone. If you have trouble understanding something like maths, the teachers help you to become more independent and confident. The teachers sit with you so you understand it better then they get you to have a go on your own. This means the teachers are helping you but not doing the work for you.

Loreen, Year 11

I love that I get taught new things like atoms in chemistry or getting to know more about my own religion, I know that these notes will be kept with me forever.

Timothy, Foundation

I love St Pat's because we get to feed the chickens and play games in the playground. I love the big kids' playground cos it has the creek and the sandpit. I've made a lot of new friends already. Everyone is friendly. My favourite time is snack 'cause I can eat and talk.

Hannah, Year 8

I get to learn at a higher academic level ... challenge myself to improve rather than being at home watching TV. Coming to school each day gives me something to do and look forward to. To be proud of my work, that's why I love being back at school.

Scarlett, Year 6

At St Pat's over the years I have noticed that everyone is well-mannered. When I get to school in the morning everyone greets you with a smile and a hello. I also realise most people remember to say thank you and please. That's how I know St Pat's is well-mannered.

Paloma, Year 11

I like learning about new ideas, concepts and topics and building upon the knowledge I have. I like the sense of achievement I get from accomplishing challenges I face at school.

Cooper, Foundation

The Atrium is awesome. I like the rug because it is a learning rug. There is a lot to do and it helps you learn about God. We only have one rule at school and that's on laminated paper. It says Respect and that's it. ✝



Eat,
Pray,
Work, Play.

Research shows that having a family meal five times a week has unexpected wellbeing benefits.

This is the first article in a four-part series from the Life, Marriage & Family Office in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne
www.cam.org.au/lifemarriagefamily.

How does increasing your child's academic achievement, boosting their vocabulary and building up their resilience and self-esteem, while lowering their risks of obesity, eating disorders, substance abuse and depression sound?

If that sounds like the stuff of parenting dreams it doesn't have to stay that way. These great outcomes can become a reality in your own home simply by sitting down to dinner.

Juggling work and children's schedules can make finding time to cook seem hard enough sometimes, but research shows prioritising meals around the dinner table can address common childhood learning and health concerns. Children in families who eat together at least five times a week are said to experience the greatest benefit.

The benefits are worth the effort according to co-founder of *The Family Dinner Project* clinical psychologist and family therapist, Dr Anne Fischel.

'If you think of family dinner as a time to nourish your family, to prevent all kinds of problems, to increase your children's cognitive abilities, and to provide pleasure and fun that they can build on for the rest of their lives, a nightly meal is an efficient use of time,' she said.

Judging by Pope Francis' weekly Wednesday catechesis on the family in St Peter's Square, he believes so too. Last November the Pope spoke about the importance of gathering as a family to share meals, affection, stories and events.

'A family that hardly ever eats together, or does not talk at the table but watches television, or looks at a smartphone, is a "barely familial" family,' he said.

'The Lord Jesus gladly taught at the table, and sometimes portrayed the Kingdom of God as a festive banquet. Jesus also chose a meal time to cosign to his disciples his spiritual testament – he did so at supper.'

Historically, meals and feasts have served as expressions of common identity, social unity and communal celebration for kings and commoners alike. So too, despite our demanding modern-day schedules, making the effort to eat together daily at breakfast, lunch or dinner offers a unique opportunity for people to connect and share by talking and listen to one another.

Mealtimes can also be seen as the 'home-school' of family unity. By demonstrating hospitality and generosity parents, as the primary educators of their children, can teach their kids the basics of building and maintaining positive relationships.

Keeping meals simple and conversations lighthearted are a couple of ways to ensure family mealtimes become a much-loved tradition in your household.

For more tips, resources, and recipes or to join an encouraging online community to help make family mealtimes fun for the whole family visit: thefamilydinnerproject.org.



Time to Shine 2016

After its triumphant debut in 2014, *Time to Shine* returns with an exhilarating day of performances at Melbourne iconic Regent Theatre in Collins Street on Saturday 30 April. Bringing together singers, dancers and musicians from over 60 Catholic secondary schools, *Time to Shine* provides the perfect opportunity for students to showcase their extraordinary talents in a two-hour theatrical extravaganza that honours the outstanding gifts and talents that exist in Catholic schools.

Cast members from the original production now 'shine' in performing arts courses at some of Australia's leading universities as well as 'treading the boards' in shows both nationally and internationally. *Time to Shine* is not only a unique celebration of Melbourne's Catholic schools but is the launching point for the next generation of Australia's talented performers.

With almost 30 acts (as well as a surprise special guest or two) *Time to Shine* will light up Melbourne for two shows only: 2.00 pm and 7.00 pm on Saturday 30 April. Tickets are available from Ticketmaster (www.ticketmaster.com.au) for \$35 (full) and \$25 (student/concession). †



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Catholic Education Week

13–20 March 2016

Drawing from the Church's extraordinary jubilee year of Mercy, Catholic Education Week 2016 is embracing the theme 'Be the face of Mercy' this March. Coinciding with the church's feast day of St Patrick of Ireland, Catholic Education Week is a time to recognise the spirit of more than 150,000 young people who attend primary and secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

The **Young Speakers Colloquium** (17 March) provides a popular opportunity for secondary students to hear personal stories of life-changing moments and high achievement from those who have gone before. Presenting at the colloquium this year are two former school captains from Sacred Heart College, Newtown, who carried the spirit of mercy from their school all the way to the United Nations in New York. The afternoon also features Bishop Mark Edwards in conversation with students from secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne who participated in the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Adelaide in December 2015.



The **Concert in the Park** (17 March) is always a scene of great excitement for the students who descend on Treasury Gardens following the Mass of St Patrick for Schools. With performances by bands from Emmaus College, Vermont South, and Sacred Heart Girls' College, Oakleigh, as well as the stars of Catholic Education Melbourne's *Time to Shine*, the concert in the park is a high-energy event with music and activities to delight students of all ages.



The **Visual Arts Exhibition** (15–19 March) provides the opportunity for our students to be recognised for their artistic talents in a diverse range of media. With oil and watercolour paintings, mixed media, photography and sculpture, the exhibition is a showcase for the creative gifts of our students as well as the teachers and families who support them. A selection of student artists are also invited to a special presentation ceremony on Sunday 20 March where a number of awards are presented to recognise excellence in the arts.

Catholic Education Week is also celebrated in our individual school communities with school tours, information sessions, visits from high-profile former students and special events from families and the community. As places of learning and of faith, we gladly accept Pope Francis' challenge to open the doors and embrace the spirit of mercy during Catholic Education Week.



The **Mass of St Patrick for Schools** (17 March) provides the religious centrepiece for the week's events. Student representatives from every primary and secondary school in the Archdiocese of Melbourne join Archbishop Denis Hart for a celebration of the Eucharist. Led by Celtic pipers and a procession of school banners, the Mass recognises the charism of the Catholic education community in a ceremony that honours the commitment to our shared tradition.



We're all in this together

Rachel Saliba

Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body

What is a parent's role in their child's education? Where does it leave me when my children begin school? How can I best support them?

In my tenth year as a Catholic school parent and through my work as a school consultant in parent engagement, these questions arise constantly.

By way of answer I know this much. The learning journey begins from birth, and parents automatically become the most important teacher. Gradually more people and environments are introduced to your children's world and begin to influence them and their learning, but you are their lifelong guide.

When our children begin their formal education at school parents begin an education partnership with that school. Parental support and guidance is



“There are many opportunities to be involved in your child's school. This demonstrates to them that you respect and value their learning.”

essential because involvement and engagement in a child's education makes a tremendous difference to their aspirations and achievements.

As a member of a learning community, there are many opportunities to be involved in your child's school. This demonstrates to them that you respect and value their learning.

As members of a broader community, we can all be leaders, learning and leading with purpose for children. Whether you are a parent helper in the classroom, contribute to fundraising, join a committee or develop ways to connect to others in your community, it all makes a difference.

Supporting your child's learning at home is also imperative to the success of their education journey. It's important to be proactive, aware and engaged in what is happening in their world, and a vital part of the parent-school partnership.

Having experienced the value of this partnership first-hand, I decided to become a member of the Victorian Catholic School Parent Body (VCSPB) in 2014 to encourage and promote family engagement in Catholic education.

The VCSPB works collaboratively with Catholic Education Melbourne and represent parents on important issues within the Sale, Ballarat and Sandhurst dioceses, along with state and national levels when required. We recently completed our strategic plan for 2015-2018 and will continue to reach out and represent collective parent voice, particularly in the lead-up to the upcoming federal election.

As a Catholic school parent you are already a member of the VCSPB, so welcome aboard. I encourage everyone to visit the website vcspb.vic.catholic.edu.au or email secretary@vcspb.catholic.edu.au to learn more about our activities and look out for quarterly VCSPB newsletters via your school.

Tweet of the Term



Your Say

At Catholic Education Melbourne we are always interested to know what parents and families think about critical matters in education, and what's important to them.

On this page of *Catholic Education Today* you'll find a simple multiple-choice question directly related to parents and their children's school that we would love you to respond to via email or our Twitter account.

Please have 'Your Say' and we'll collate the results in the next edition.

Stephen Elder, Executive Director

What do you enjoy most about Catholic education:

- Inclusive community
- Catholic values, beliefs and morals
- Academic achievement
- Teacher quality
- Affordability
- Other

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Mary Fitz-Gerald

Principal – Mater Christi College, Belgrave



I spent several happy years in Ballarat teaching French, English, history and social sciences at Sacred Heart College before taking on leadership roles at Damascus College, Mount Clear, and then arriving at Mater Christi, Belgrave, in 2001.

I'm a principal because ... I am passionate about working to ensure the best of conditions for meaningful and relevant learning experiences which will empower girls to participate actively and creatively across all walks of life.

My favourite teaching moments ... are when learning activities create that 'a ha!' response, a student 'gets it' and is bursting with eagerness to take on the next challenge. A close runner-up is meeting with a former student and realising the positive impact of our teaching and nurturing programs. It's not so much the individual success stories, but the significant and now global contributions that excite and inspire us who teach. We can and do make a difference in the world.

A Catholic education means ... that our girls experience and participate in a faith-filled community where all are invited and encouraged to seek God, especially through the person of Jesus, and understand the power of love and forgiveness as key agents for a better and more socially just world. Catholic schools provide a sound framework for students to become informed and compassionate global citizens, ready and willing to work for a better world.

The greatest challenge for parents today is ... to be significant and wise influences in their children's lives. Parents lead their students most effectively when they are learners themselves. Authentic parenthood encourages independence but firmly in the context of unconditional love and support.

In the future ... I look forward to schools which offer personalised programs for each student, with unique entry and exit points in every subject. How wonderful it would be to start my teaching career again, now, with all the possibilities that online global interaction offers!

I also want to say ... that teaching is a most wonderful privilege. To walk alongside young people, to witness their joy, determination and hopefulness, it is forever inspiring and amazing. ✦

Kim Saltmarsh

Year 1 and Library teacher – St Mary's School, Hastings

After 10 years in the IT industry, a trip to Africa inspired me to become a teacher and it still is the best decision I have ever made. I have now been teaching for six years.

I'm a teacher because ... I want to create an environment that allows children to be the best they can be and develop a love of learning while feeling safe and confident. I want to get rid of words like 'I can't' and replace them with 'I can!'

My favourite teaching moment was ... when a child told me 'I've got it!'. She was so excited and I was excited as well because we were both discovering the best way for her to learn. She was a very visual, hands-on learner and, as a result, I always have that in mind now when teaching new concepts.

A Catholic education means ... each child is surrounded and guided by the values of the Church as evidenced by the people they come into contact with. Students learn values with which to enhance our society such as compassion, trust, and forgiveness.

The greatest challenge for parents today is ... finding the right balance with technology. Children love iPads, apps and games and these are great, but what are they missing out on? Children also need to run, jump, interact physically and enjoy books, play instruments and have unstructured time to explore the world.



In the future ... I hope that someday I can help children in indigenous communities get a better education while keeping their own culture intact.

I also want to say ... how lucky I have been to work with such dedicated and committed staff at St Mary's. Our school has strong links to the community and heavy involvement in successful programs such as *Reading for Life*, *Linking Schools* and *Early Years*. I am very thankful for being part of a wonderful education system and such a beautiful school. ✦

Opening the door to a Year of Mercy

Siena College, Camberwell, is a Catholic school in the Dominican tradition, and Pope Francis' declaration of an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy coincided with an 800-year Dominican Jubilee since the founding of the Dominican Order in 1216, the college motto for which is 'To preach the Gospel of Mercy'.

Inspired by the ceremony of the Opening of the Holy Door in Rome, Siena's Principal Gaynor Robson-Garth decided to perform a similar ceremony at the college. Utilising a normally unused door into the college chapel, the idea to formally open the Holy Door came about quickly.

'We had the door retiled for the occasion. The Holy Door tiles were made and decorated by ceramic artist, Mary-Lou Pittard. The border of the tiles is a deep blue to match the dome of the Chapel and

they feature Dominican symbols: the Jubilee shield, an older crest, and lilies featured on our College crest and to represent our Patron, St Catherine of Siena. The tiles came up really well; we're so pleased with the result.' Ms Robson-Garth said.

In a ceremony on 4 February 2016, local Dominican Sisters and Friars, and Siena staff and students processed through the convent cloister to the Holy Door as part of the opening rite. The College Chaplain Fr Dominic Murphy struck the door three times with a wooden staff to open it, reminiscent of St Dominic the itinerant preacher.

'As we pass through this door over the year, and particularly during the season of Lent, we are invited to enter a new relationship with God and to reflect on God's unbounding love and compassion.' Ms Robson-Garth said. ✝



L-R: College Chaplain Fr Dominic Murphy OP, College Captains Jaya Gaillard and Niamh O'Farrell, and Principal Gaynor Robson-Garth

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Join your Voices! A song for homelessness

The Year 5 and 6 Social Justice Team from St Anthony's School, Lara, discussed many world issues including *homelessness* and decided to take action. They decided to make a song to spread awareness about homelessness.

Teachers led the students through the project, parents helped with the music and song lyrics and Oxygen Tuition recorded the song. All money raised from the sale of the CD will go to the St Vincent De Paul Society. Contact the school on 5282 1415 to order a copy. ✦



Faith in Action

In response to studying the Genesis creation stories and Pope Francis' recent exhortation in *Laudato Si'* to care for the world, Year 9 students at Santa Maria College, Northcote, engaged in a day of environmental action at the Merri Creek parklands, including tree planting. ✦



I sea, I care School of the Year

Last year, St Catherine's School in Moorabbin was jointly awarded the *I sea I care (ISIC) School of the Year* for 2015 with Mentone Primary School. The program provides an opportunity to learn and educate people about sustainability and its focus for learning about this is by looking at Port Phillip Bay.

The school also participated in the Dolphin Research Institute's biggest fundraiser in support of Western Port Bay and raised money towards conservation. ✦



Students with Kayne from ABC3



Students with Deputy Principal Julie Percy (L) and Director of School Community Emma Canning (R)



ResourceSmart Community Leadership School of the Year

When student representatives from St Peter's Primary School, Epping, heard the announcement that they had won the ResourceSmart Community Leadership School of the Year award they 'were all so happy and we jumped on the stage to get our award. It was really nerve-racking going up and talking about achievements but we enjoyed the moment. We had a great day and were so proud of our school'.

The school is involved in many environmental and community programs including Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden, Kids Teaching Kids (including the Melbourne Water Kids Teaching Kids Conference), Kids of the Yarra, an annual Green Day, Walk to School Days, Clean Up Australia Day and National Tree Day. ✦

Inaugural Book in a Day winner

The team from St John's Regional College in Dandenong won the Southern Independent Schools (SIS) 'Book in a Day' competition, held in August 2015, with their novella *Out the Window*. The Publishing Manager at Scholastic Australia said their novella, 'incorporated a clever structure, good use of various narrative voices, emotionally engaged the reader, and had a strong ending.'



St John's Regional College Dandenong's Book in a Day team (L-R): Mikko Manuel (Year 8), Naisha Pande (Year 9), Sara Stanisavljevic (Year 10), Terence Kozoolin (Year 10), Christine Lopez (Year 10), and Bernadette Kulscar (Year 7).

Western Desert immersion trip

Fourteen Year 10 students and four teachers from St James College, East Bentleigh, recently visited Luurnpa Catholic School in the Western Desert of the Kimberley in the remote Aboriginal community of Wirrimanu Balgo Hills in Western Australia.



Benjamin Hibbert and the Balgo boys ready for action



Jarrod Downall provides one-on-one literacy and numeracy support to a student from Luumpna

National History Challenge

The 2015 National History Challenge's theme was 'Leadership and Legacy'. Students at St Monica's School, Footscray, researched their topics, wrote 600-word essays, a bibliography and 50-word descriptions of their presentations, and were rewarded when three entries were awarded State titles and two with Certificates of Excellence.



Anh Le with her project on Weary Dunlop



Nancy Bach and Cassie Han with their project on Malcolm Fraser



Tri Quach and Jessica Nguyen with their project on the Magna Carta

Walk through Bethlehem

Last Christmas, St Peter's School, Epping, working with volunteers from the local community, held an event known as 'Walk through Bethlehem' which told the story of the birth of Jesus. There were live animals and scenes from Bethlehem, as well as well-known characters from the Nativity story itself. Thousands of people attended 'Walk through Bethlehem' over the three nights to experience the true message of Christmas.



Staff and students promoting 'Walk through Bethlehem' in the city.

Holy Spirit Skype-a-thon

Holy Spirit School, Ringwood North, students recently completed an overnight 'Skype-a-thon'. E-learning teacher Ben Lannen said the Year 5/6 students logged on to Skype and talked to classes in Africa, Europe and America. 'We spoke to children in Nigeria, we were treated to a Bollywood dance in India, we learnt the Haka and did an Irish jig,' Mr Lannen said. 'The highlight was when our session was broadcast on a news network in Croatia.'



Jack, Charli and Sahana and fellow classmates enjoyed the Skype-A-Thon. Picture by Janine Eastgate

Remembrance Day

On 11 November 2015, Emily Hall, from Year 5 at Genazzano FCJ College, Kew, was honoured to win the Remembrance Day 2015 poster competition. The Victorian Premier, the Hon. Daniel Andrews MP, announced the award to Emily, whose poster will become the official Remembrance Day poster for 2016 and appear on flyers and posters around the City of Melbourne. ✦



Emily's winning poster



Emily Hall with the Victorian Premier, the Hon. Daniel Andrews MP

2015 VCE Leader of the Year

On 23 November 2015, Victorian Minister for Education the Hon. James Merlino MP announced St Monica's College, Epping, student Rachael Davies as VCE Leader of the Year at the 2015 VCE Leadership Awards ceremony held at Queen's Hall, Parliament House. ✦



Rachael receives her award from the Minister for Education, the Hon. James Merlino MP

2015 VCE Results

A detailed analysis of this year's VCE results shows that – across all 62 secondary schools in and around Melbourne and Geelong – 45 schools registered median study scores above the all-Victorian schools average. This year is the 14th consecutive year of better than average results since the median study score was introduced in 2002.

Identical twins **Nicholas** and **Nathan Cheng** from Marcellin College, Bulleen, studied almost identical subjects and, incredibly, achieved identical results – ATARs of 99.85. The twins have been named Marcellin College's joint duces for 2015 and plan to study law or arts. ✦



Nicholas and Nathan Cheng, Marcellin College's joint duces for 2015

Victorian Schools Garden Awards

On 26 November 2015, students from St Joseph the Worker Primary School, Reservoir North, attended the Victorian Schools Garden Awards presentation at the Royal Botanical Gardens. The students were very excited when their school was announced as the winner of the biggest prize, \$4,500 worth of turf donated by Turf Victoria.

Winners of the Catholic Education Melbourne – Most engaging garden for teaching and play award were:

- Bentleigh Secondary College
- Rosedale Primary School
- Athol Road Primary School
- Brunswick South West Primary School. ✦



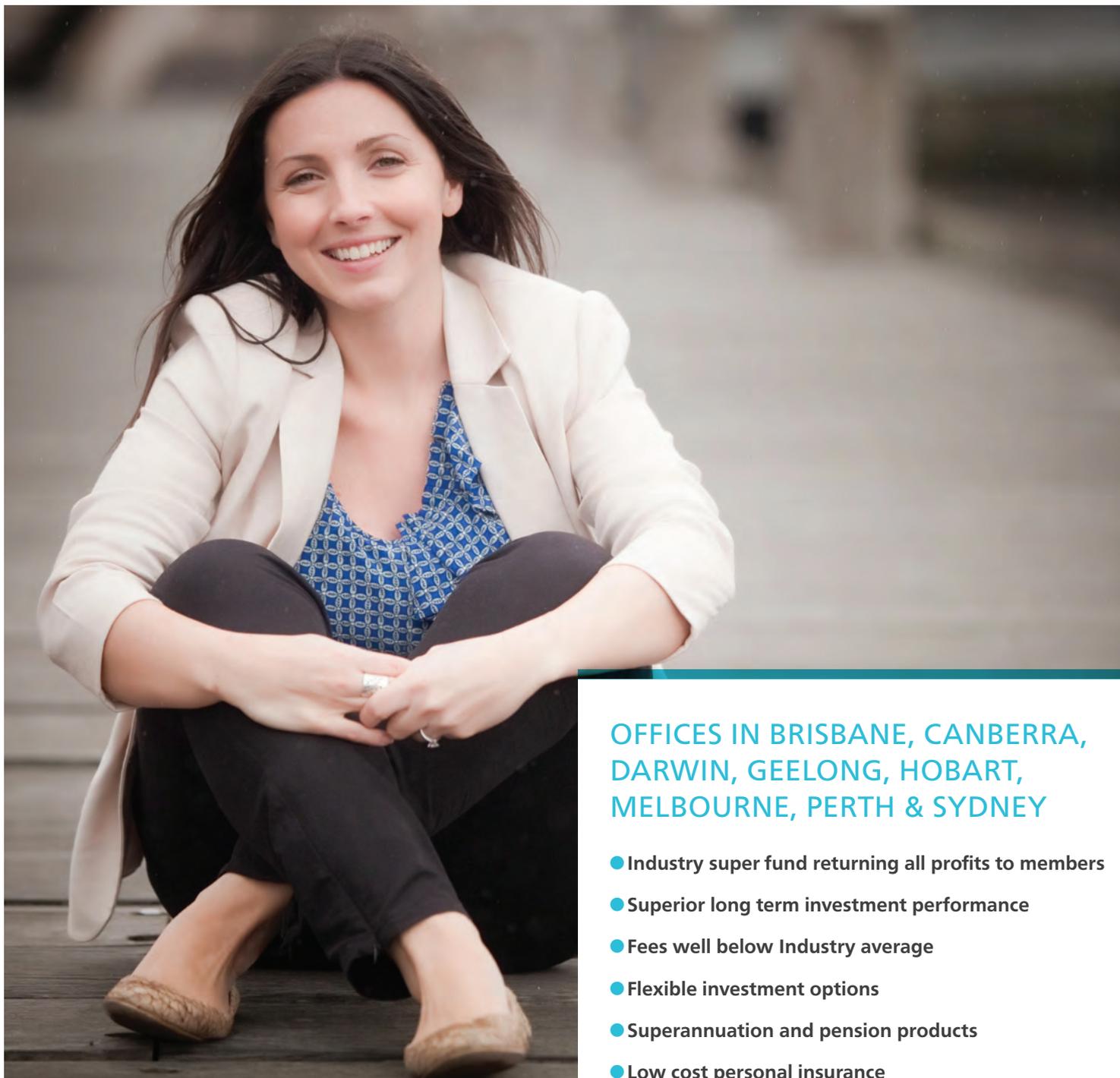
School chicken coop



St Joseph the Worker receives the VSGA award

Kitchen garden at St Joseph the Worker

Catholic Super – providing
superannuation services
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