

Living



WATERS MAGAZINE

Our Lady Help of Christians

OUR LADY HELP OF
CHRISTIANS PARISH,
NARRE WARREN

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the 2024 issue of our parish magazine! As I write this note, I am simply amazed at how quickly the year went by. It feels like not long ago, we welcomed our new parish priest Fr Michael Willemsen and waited nervously, yet eagerly to be guided by his leadership. I vividly remember his first Mass with us and as I stood there, excited about this special moment in the history of our Parish, it became very evident that our new shepherd was equally excited and pleased to be among his new flock. With both Fr Michael and Fr Ajin tending and caring for their flock, we are truly BLESSED!

As one spiritual writer said: "There are moments and there are moments." Parish life seems to move seamlessly from one event to the next and we have tried to capture some of the highlights that spoke to our heart and seized our vision. This issue focuses on our community's engagement and service, with articles highlighting the wonderful work happening in our parish and beyond. We are excited to show case the diverse talents and dedication of our members, from our littlest members from the catechism ministry to our senior citizens who serve across so many ministries in our parish- a testament to the strength and spirit of our community.



As we continue to journey together as members of one big family, where its members are known and loved and are supported in their call to holiness, I hope this magazine serves as a reminder of the important work we do, to build up the Kingdom in this patch of the world.

A special thanks to Elsie May Hanna for collating and designing the magazine and to our photographers - Selvaraj Ronald and Ken Sequeira for capturing some precious moments in the life of our parish and thank you to all the ministry leaders for your input.

I invite you to contribute to the upcoming editions, by sharing your stories, stories that have shaped and nurtured our community, leaving a legacy of your own footprint for generations to come. May this issue inspire us all to be more connected, more compassionate, and more committed to serving our Lord and one another. Happy Reading! *Emily D'Sylva*

MY FIRST YEAR AS PARISH PRIEST

Being here for over a year now, I have experienced the light of Christ in so many people and in so many ways. As much as I experienced a dying to Parish life in beautiful East Gippsland, I am loving being here as I experience a rising to new life in Narre Warren. And, what life there is! In abundance, thanks to the faith filled nature of this Parish built up over 45 years, providing the energy that all who come here can sense and then connect into, like connecting into a power grid.

Upon arrival in January, I could see that the Parish profile had changed a lot since I was a parishioner here in the early 1990's. I did some investigating and discovered that the 2021 National Census showed about 17,000 Catholics, of which 59% were born in Australia. The next largest country of birth was India (5.9%), then Sri Lanka (4.6%), Philippines (4.0%) and Mauritius (3.1%). I expect those minority percentages are higher now and will show in the 2026 census.

All these numbers, of course, represent people. And, as Bishop Coffey used to say, "we are in the business of people." Having experienced a full liturgical year, with the crowds who come at Easter and Christmas, as well as every Sunday, there is much I give thanks to God for about our Parish. The faith and devotion of parishioners here, as I suggested earlier, is a powerhouse of prayer that lights up our world from within. Visitors here sense it, testifying to how welcoming and vibrant this Parish is, based on their experience. It is an outward showing of an inner reality, based on the light of Christ within the lamp (Mt 5:15). This imperfect reality gives me tremendous confidence that the Parish Vision Statement, launched in 2024 - *a Community Living the Way of Jesus Inviting Everyone to Experience the Love of God* - will continue to strengthen, as will the light of Christ within. *Fr. Michael Willemsen*

Our Lady Help of Christians Youth Group had an amazing year continuing from the great programs of 2023, such as our usual Friday night youth group and sports night. But most exciting we embarked on some new exciting programs in 2024!

EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT YOUTH GROUP MEET IN THE PARISH CENTRE. 2024 WAS A VERY BIG YEAR FOR NEW INITIATIVES WITH THEOLOGY OF THE BODY WORKSHOP AND FIRST FRIDAY HOLY HOUR.

The Empire of Faith senior youth, along with young adults, studied Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body in a 10 week workshop program called 'YOU'. At the end of this workshop, 60 youth graduated. One of the greatest from many fruits was the realisation that we need to let our youth experience the love of Jesus in the Eucharist through Adoration, and the mercy of our Lord in the sacrament of confession. In August we started a monthly First Friday Holy Hour for the youth which also gives them an opportunity to go to confession. The following are some highlights from 2024. *Elsie-May Hanna*

YOU WORKSHOP (THEOLOGY OF THE BODY)

In an age of "selfies" and egocentrism, YOU cuts through the noise to present an authentic view of the human person.



It presents young people with the extraordinary story of their creation as unrepeatable individuals. But the program doesn't stop there. YOU. Life, Love, and the Theology of the Body introduces teens to the truth that life is not, in fact, all about them; it is about going out of themselves to be a sincere gift for others.

THE MASS EXPLAINED SERIES



Fr. Michael and Fr. Ajin explained the 4 main parts of the Mass in a 5 week series as an effort to take them deeper into their understanding of what they experience every Sunday at Mass.



Youth GROUP

YOUTH FROM GRADE 4 TO YEAR 12



SPORTS AND GAMES NIGHT

Our youth have a great energy and are a very sociable group, so once a month we run a night of team



in the Don Bosco School Hall. Basketball, dodgeball, volleyball, soccer and cricket are some of their favorites. For the 'non sporty' youth, we offer them a chance to play board games.

FIRST FRIDAY HOLY HOUR - ADORATION



YOUTH BAND / YOUTH MASS



Children's Catechism Ministry



The Children's Catechism Ministry at Our Lady Help of Christians thrived in 2024, thanks to the dedication of our wonderful volunteers. Our team of passionate individuals have been instrumental in nurturing the faith of young children in our parish community. Using the Christ Our Light and Life teacher manuals, the team delivered lessons with sensitivity and in an age-appropriate manner. To support their learning, each year level worked through specially designed workbooks, reinforcing key concepts of our Catechism.

In addition to the weekly lesson, the students in the Catechism Program also participated in various enriching activities throughout the year. The Catechism students played an active role in the Parish Feast Day Celebrations on 26 May 2024, demonstrating their love of our Catholic traditions. Another highlight was the children's visit to Calvary St Jude's Residential Aged Care facility on 14 September 2024. This heartwarming experience allowed the children to practice compassion as they spent quality time with the elderly residents, bridging generations and sharing the love of Christ. The children also showcased their talents and understanding of the Nativity story through a heartwarming play, bringing the Christmas spirit to life for the entire parish during the OLHC Christmas Carols evening.

The success of our Children's Catechism Program relies heavily on the commitment of our volunteers. We are always seeking more dedicated individuals to join this fulfilling ministry. If you feel called to share your faith and make a difference in the lives of our young parishioners, please contact the Parish Office at (03) 9704 7935. *Lakshini Mendis-David*

Equipped for Mission - 2024



This event featured a key note address by Dan O'Rourke, President of the Divine Renovation Ministry who shared the three keys to Parish renewal namely - the Power of the Holy Spirit, the Primacy of Evangelisation and the Best of Leadership. The three keys equip Parishes who are already on a journey to take the next steps.

The Strategic Leadership Team of OLHC helped with hosting an "Equipped for Mission" conference on Friday 12 April and Saturday 13 April 2024. The key objective of the event was to inspire Parishes to take up the journey of Parish renewal through keynote speeches & workshops.

The conference also featured three other facilitated sessions on topics like Alpha (Barb Conlon), Creating an Invitational Culture in your Parish (Kevin Bailey) and Empowering Young People for Discipleship (Tomasz Juszczak).

All four facilitators were exceptional in their delivery and focused on practical strategies for Parish renewal and evangelisation, aiming to equip participants with the tools necessary to foster vibrant faith communities. With many visitors coming from both Melbourne Parishes and from our Diocese, this event was also a great opportunity for our Parish to extend our hospitality to those Parishes interested in beginning this challenging, yet exciting journey, in forming missionary disciples. *Paula Rebeiro.*



DON BOSCO CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

At Don Bosco Catholic Primary School, we have enjoyed a year filled with blessings as we continue each day to joyfully serve the Lord with gladness. Guided by our commitment to being safe, respectful, and responsible, we live out the Catholic Social Teachings by showing care for others, promoting justice, and working together to build a welcoming and inclusive community.

HARMONY WEEK



During Harmony Week at Don Bosco we celebrated the many cultures that make up our community. We made colourful flags representing different countries and shared their meanings with our friends. One of the highlights was our cultural parade, where everyone dressed in traditional clothes from their heritage and proudly walked together. It was a fun and exciting week, filled with learning, respect, and appreciation for each other's backgrounds. Harmony Week reminded us how important it is to celebrate diversity and stay united as one community.

PRAYER BAGS



At Don Bosco, we have recently created classroom Prayer Bags that students take home each week. Inside the bag are items to help them create a peaceful space for prayer with their family. After spending time in prayer, students are encouraged to write about their experience in a reflection book. When they bring the Prayer Bag back to school, they have the opportunity to share their reflections with their classmates, helping us all grow in faith and community together.

Students from Grades 3 to 6 participated in Shepherd's Table this year. Every fortnight, they worked together to prepare a dessert for the weekend lunch prepared by Shepherds Table, learning valuable cooking skills along the way. These meals are shared with those in need, helping to strengthen the bond between our school, parish and the wider community. Participating in Shepherd's Table provides our students with a meaningful opportunity to show compassion and live out their faith through service to others.

SHEPHERDS TABLE



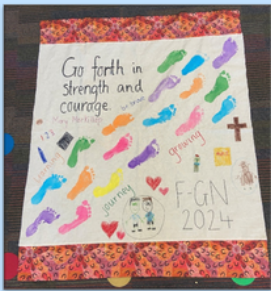
Our students have the wonderful opportunity to participate in the school choir, where they share their musical talents by singing at some special school Masses. With the guidance and support of Clyde and Martina, the choir helps to create a prayerful and uplifting atmosphere, enriching our liturgical celebrations and fostering a deeper connection to our faith community.

SCHOOL CHOIR



MARY MACKILLOP PRIMARY SCHOOL

At Mary MacKillop School, we are blessed to incorporate Catholic class prayer cloths into our classrooms, which are placed in the centre of the circle when students gather for prayer. These cloths create a sacred space that encourages focus and reflection during prayer time. While the prayer cloths serve as a reminder of God's presence, we also embrace the diversity of faiths within our school community. We encourage dialogue, respect, and inclusivity, fostering an environment where students of all backgrounds feel welcome to share their beliefs and values. Through these practices, we nurture both the spiritual growth and academic development of every student, fostering a deeper connection with faith and respect for others. Our students have shared a few examples of their class prayer cloths, along with the meaningful messages behind the images.



Foundation Class.

Ariana: We acknowledge Indigenous and Torres Strait Islanders on our mat with their artwork

Scarlett: We have used the Mary MacKillop quote "Go forth in strength and courage"

Izzy: We have put our footprints on our mat when things are tough!

Zac P: We put a cross to remember Jesus.

Julia: We can make others happy by smiling and being kind.

Grade 3. The Mary MacKillop quote we chose is, "Let us be humble and grateful". As a class, we believe it is very important to be humble, respectful and kind towards others. Being grateful is about focusing on the things that we have rather than focusing on what we don't have. Our hand print on the cloth represents us, celebrating that we are all different and unique. We drew symbols like the cross and hearts that represent Jesus' love. The Indigenous artwork shows our respect and connection towards the Indigenous culture and the respect we have for the traditional owners of our land.



Grade 4. The Mary MacKillop quote we chose is, "In God we trust". We chose this quote because we believe, as followers of Jesus, we know that we can always trust in God. Our symbol is the cross. This represents how much Jesus loves us. In each cross we added symbols that are special to us.

Grade 5. The Mary MacKillop quote we chose is, "Trust in the goodness of God." As a class, we interpreted 'Trust' as the ability to rely on a person. This led us to ponder what it means to trust in God and His ways. We selected the following symbols to illustrate our understanding of the quote:

Cross: Symbolising our trust in God's love.

Praying Hands: Signifying our belief that we can always turn to God in prayer.

Dove: Representing the trust that, despite our mistakes, we can seek forgiveness and start anew.

Mirror: Reflecting our understanding that each of us is unique and valued, as we are all created in God's image.

Rainbow: Symbolic of our trust in God's gift of a beautiful world, which we are entrusted to care for.



Grade 6. The Mary MacKillop quote we chose we chose is, "We must teach more by example than by word". The central symbol, the Holy Trinity, represents the unity of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, reflecting the class's unity and equality. The handprints from each student, in their chosen colours, symbolize the individuality and togetherness of the class. The Aboriginal border honours the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, acknowledging their ownership and creation of the land.

TRINITY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

At Trinity Catholic Primary School, we have had a blessed year, guiding our students to grow in faith, hope, and love through the grace of God. Through inquiry in Religious Education, students have explored their God-given gifts and talents and how they might use them to serve others in love.

Exploring our Catholic Identity

At Trinity, our Catholic Identity is more than the symbols and artwork displayed in our halls—it is reflected in how we live out our faith through words and actions. We have been deepening our understanding of what it means to be a Catholic school by embracing our values in meaningful ways. Our Grade 3 students have taken a creative approach by designing scripture tiles, each featuring a verse from the Bible. These beautiful tiles serve as a reminder of God's word and inspire our community to live with kindness, compassion, and faith every day.

Altar Servers

A growing number of students have joyfully answered the call to serve as altar servers at school Mass. Their dedication and reverence inspire younger students to follow in their footsteps. Guided by the Holy Spirit, these students deepen their faith while enriching our liturgies with devotion and service to God.



Parish- School Partnerships Our parish schools are deepening their connection with the community through outreach and fellowship. Students actively serve those in need by partnering with Shepherd's Table and St. Vincent de Paul, living out their faith through acts of service and compassion. We also celebrate unity through the Parish Cup, where students come together in sportsmanship and prayer, fostering friendships and shared values. By engaging in service and faith-filled activities, our students build a stronger bond with the parish, growing spiritually while making a meaningful impact. Together, we continue to live out our mission of faith, service, and unity.

Family Prayer At Trinity, each year level gathers with parents to celebrate the sacred gift of family prayer. This special time allows families to come together, speak to God, and explore different ways to pray. Through reflection, gratitude, and shared moments of faith, we strengthen our connection with God and each other as a community.



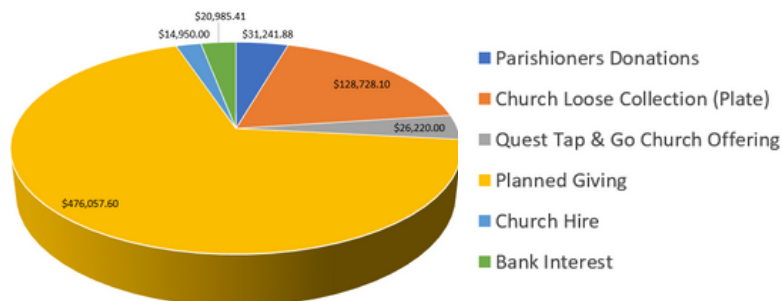
CHURCH & PRESBYTERY FINANCIAL YEAR

01 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024

MAJOR CHURCH INCOME

The major Church Income for 2023/2024 Financial Year is \$698,182.

The average weekly Planned Giving is \$9,155, which was higher compared to the previous year figure of \$8,477.



The increase was mainly due to:

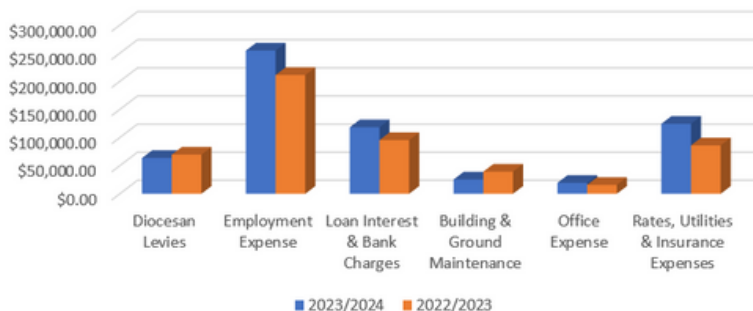
- An increase in the Planned Giving, which is the main source of income for the Parish.
- A significant increase in the donation through Quest Terminal (Church), Church Loose Collection and Parishioner Donation (Church).

The Church Loose Collection and the donation from the Quest Terminal (Church) have increased compared to 2022/2023 figure, which provides an additional total increase of \$21K throughout the year. The total contribution from the Planned Giving has also slightly increased by 8% from the previous year.

MAJOR CHURCH EXPENSES

The major Church Expenses for 2023/2024 Financial Year is \$606,299.

In comparison with previous year figure, there was an additional expense in the employment due to an increase in the number of Parish staff working hours in overall.



Another major Church expense was rates, utilities and insurance. It was mainly due to a significant increase from \$27K to \$62K in the insurance expense. There was a need to change the insurance provider, which results in this additional expense of the insurance premium.

The charts above shown although the income from the Planned Giving and Quest Terminal showed a positive outcome compared to the previous year, however, the most of the major expenses also increased significantly. From the major income and major expenses perspectives, the major income just about offsets the major expenses, which allow only an average of \$7K per month.

The Stewardship Program that starts around middle of this year will hopefully boost the income from the Planned Giving even further, which enables the Church to overcome the unexpected and an increase in the future expenses.

CHURCH & PRESBYTERY FINANCIAL YEAR

01 APRIL 2023 – 31 MARCH 2024

PRESBYTERY INCOME AND EXPENSES

The major Presbytery Income for 2023/2024 Financial Year is \$170,012. It mainly consists of the Presbytery Collections and the donation through Quest Terminal (Presbytery). They have shown an increase of \$10K in comparison with previous year figure, which elevates the total Presbytery income in overall.

The major Presbytery Expenses for 2023/2024 Financial Year is \$127,682, which covers stipends of the Parish Priest and the Assistant Priest. It also includes expenses such as groceries, petrol, utilities, etc. They slightly increased compared to the previous year figure.

Good to know

- Capital repayments made on the building loan were \$129,000 per year.
- Interest repayment on the building loan average approximately \$9,807 per month.
- Still estimate of \$1.8 million outstanding debt.

Our list of works include, but not limited to:

- Installation of internal church blinds.
- Upgrade of electronic key system.
- Repairs to failed rendering in Church forecourt.

BIG THANK YOU

The generosity of parishioners is greatly appreciated and reflects people's generosity of spirit.

2024 statistics

78

Baptisms

120

First Reconciliation

111

First Eucharist

120

Confirmation

08

RCIA

33

Funerals

07

Marriages

12

New Parishioners

406

Volunteers

Charismatic Prayer Group

NAVIGATING 2024 WITH THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



The OLHC Servant Community, also known as the Charismatic Prayer Group, has been serving the Parish with the same fervour as it had been for the last 27 years.

To continue renewing its mission, vision and values, while celebrating long and short-term goals, a change of leadership was discerned and for three years, the Tri-Servants, now compose of Roy Baker as Head Servant, Dina Delfino as Ministries Servant, and Jiji Giaccotto as Formation Servant, function with specific roles but are always unified in their message of love, joy, and peace.

They are wonderfully supported by the Servants Council, whose names we are mentioning here as part of our gratitude for their generous and committed service over the years: Fernando and Luz De Larrazabal, Tina and Roy Baker, Ian and Assu Gozmao, Mele Ierome, Jiji and David Giaccotto, Tes Halili, Dina Delfino, Linda D' Addazio, Abing Balaba and Carol De Guzman. They meet monthly to pray and discern the will of the Lord on the undertakings of the prayer group.

Year 2024 was earmarked with weekly Friday prayer meetings, Cell group meetings, Healing Masses, facilitating retreats/seminars, visits of overseas speakers/clergy, nurturing members in their grief



"LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY, TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER IN ALL WISDOM, SINGING PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS." COLOSSIANS 3:16

and bereavement, celebration events, comforting the sick, supporting the Sale Diocese in Renewal days, assisting in the growth of sister prayer groups in Warragul/Drouin, Pakenham and Oakleigh.

While navigating the changing spiritual needs of individual members, the OLHC Servant Community contributed joyfully and actively to Parish programs, activities, and requests, solidifying for year 2024, its mission for clarity, strength, and resilience.

The Prayer Group is very blessed to have nurturing priests, along with the parish team, past and present who allowed them to serve over the years with open minds and hearts, supporting the primary vision of the group, through prayer, intercession, praise, worship, sharing the Word of God, regular teachings,

fellowship, and witnessing to God's blessings bringing themselves and others to a deeper personal relationship with Jesus, nurturing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in their desire to bear fruit that will last for the Father's kingdom. *Dina Delfino*



Our Lady of Velankanni

Our Lady of Good Health also known as Our Lady of Velankanni is a title given to the Blessed Virgin Mary by devotees. She is said to have appeared in the mid -16th century and is attributed to three miracles: the apparition of Mary and the Christ Child to a slumbering shepherd boy, the curing of a lame buttermilk vendor and the rescue of Portuguese sailors from a violent sea storm.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Velankanni is one of the most frequented religious sites in India, where Catholics, Hindus, Muslims and Christians from all over India congregate in large numbers and worship in harmony. Hundreds of miraculous cures are reported every year.

Here at Our Lady Help of Christians Parish we come together and honour Our Blessed Mother of Velankanni each Tuesday from 6:30 pm where we recite the Rosary, then the Novena followed by Benediction and the celebration of Mass.

The feast of Our Lady of Velankanni is celebrated annually here at our Parish.

This Year we will celebrate the 9-day Novena commencing on Saturday 30th August till Sunday the 7th of September and the Feast Day on the 8th of September.

We invite many parishioners to come join us and give honour and thanks to our Blessed Mother of Good Health - Our Lady of Velankanni. *Glenn Reincastle*



Good Friday 2024

For the past 15 years, a group of devoted parishioners have come together each Good Friday to prayerfully reflect on the Passion of Our Lord through a moving enactment of the Stations of the Cross. This sacred tradition invites us to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ's suffering, offering us a glimpse—however small—of the immense pain and sacrifice He endured for our salvation on that sorrowful day at Calvary. Held at the Don Bosco School Oval, the outdoor setting provides a fitting and solemn backdrop, allowing the faithful to journey with Christ in a setting that mirrors the solemnity and spirit of the first Good Friday.

Each year, the parish community of Our Lady Help of Christians eagerly looks forward to the Good Friday enactment of the Passion of Christ—an event that beautifully embodies the spirit of unity, faith, and collaboration. This moving tradition is brought to life solely through the generosity, dedication, and heartfelt commitment of parish volunteers who willingly offer their time and talents in service to God and community.

This year, approximately 45 to 50 volunteers of all ages came together to faithfully present the Stations of the Cross. The result was a powerful and

Children's Liturgy

Every Sunday during the 11am Mass, the Children's Liturgy Group invites our youngest parishioners to experience the love of God in a joyful and engaging way. Guided by our parish vision, volunteers help children unpack the Gospel message so they can understand how it speaks to us today. Through prayer, storytelling song, and fun activities, children deepen their faith while learning the importance of coming together as one in joy. This special ministry not only nurtures spiritual growth



but also fosters a welcoming community where every child is encouraged to know and share God's love. *Emily Rogers*

moving reenactment that touched the hearts of all who witnessed it—a testament to both the grace of God and the tireless devotion of each participant. With each passing year, the audience continues to grow, drawing faithful attendees not only from our own parish but also from neighboring communities.

More than just a performance, this sacred tradition stands as a poignant reminder of Christ's suffering and love, and of the profound impact that a faithful, united community can have. The dedication of these volunteers not only enhances the spiritual journey of Holy Week but also strengthens the bonds within our parish, making this enactment an essential and cherished part of our Easter celebration. *Sally D'Souza*

Altar Servers Ministry



There are 55 children currently enrolled in the Altar Server Ministry and serving across the five weekend Masses. A workshop was held in November for all existing servers and other children wishing to join the ministry. Fr Michael and Fr Ajin led the session, engaging with the children and their parents. Each server received a booklet, 'An Altar Server Guide', to help familiarise and remind them of the role of the Altar Server. Parents were reminded of the importance of signing their children in when they arrive to serve, and signing out before they leave the church. Sixteen new servers were commissioned in December and welcomed to the ministry.

We would like to thank Fr Michael and Fr Ajin for their ongoing support and encouragement of our young people as they focus on this Ministry in our Parish. As always, we wish to thank all our Altar Servers and their families for their continued commitment and service to our Parish. *The Altar Server Team.*

THE COMPELLING EVIDENCE TO
CHRISTIANITY AND AN OPPORTUNITY
TO ENCOUNTER GOD.

ALPHA



Since its inception in 1977, the Alpha course has been widely adopted by many Christian denominations including the Catholic church and has been attended by over 24 million people worldwide. In 2024 alone the Alpha course was facilitated across 148 countries.

Following the completion of the Alpha training course in late 2023, the Alpha team successfully completed two Alpha courses in 2024 at our Parish.

Alpha is an attractive evangelization platform, perfectly aligned to the Mission of our Parish which states- "A community living the way of Jesus, inviting everyone to experience the love of Jesus". Alpha guests form a community sharing a free meal, fostering a relaxed environment to discuss life's big questions such as - Is God even real? What evidence exist for Christ? Does science disprove God? Is God active today? Why is there so much suffering in the world? Can I experience God? The course explores the basics of the Christian faith and presents compelling evidence to make a rational decision on God's existence and to encounter the reality of God through the works of the Holy Spirit.

Our guests came from both within and outside the Parish. A team from St. Thomas the Apostle, Clyde North joined our course as guests to receive training in preparation for starting Alpha in their own Parish. We were blessed to welcome participants from other faith traditions including Buddhism and non-believers. Following their transformative journeys, several guests volunteered to join the Alpha team so that others could "experience the love of Jesus"

Alpha has now been established as the primary evangelization tool in our Parish to be held twice a year and financed through fund raising events and donations. As we reflect on our remarkable journey at Alpha, we give thanks to the Holy Spirit for guiding us and to all individuals who made Alpha at

OLHC in 2024 a fruitful ministry. We look forward to welcoming many more guests, especially those who are yet to encounter Christ. *Warren Perera*

OUR GUESTS SHARED DEEPLY ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES AND BELOW ARE SOME OF THEIR FEEDBACK:

- "Alpha course gave me meaning to my faith, strength to keep going from one day to the next and also gave me new friends." – Roger
- "The Videos and teachings have inspired me to grow in my faith and develop a clear relationship with Jesus" – Prema

A Transformative Encounter with the Holy Spirit

The Alpha retreat on 16 March 2024 was an emotional, spiritual, and physical experience unlike anything I had ever encountered.

To give some context, three key struggles had been weighing on my heart:

1. Some of my long-standing petitions remained unanswered. I knew I had to trust in God's timing, but what did that truly mean?
2. Patience was never a strong virtue in me. I was used to taking action...making things happen. Yet, I kept hearing and being told, "Have patience, pray to the Holy Spirit."
3. The Holy Spirit— I knew it was part of the Holy Trinity ... but, what was it really? How do I pray to the Holy Spirit? How could I be filled with it? I longed for a deeper understanding.



Alpha retreat



To have some of these questions answered, I decided to give 'Alpha' a try. As I participated in more sessions, I found myself on a journey of discovery, which led to the Retreat.

From the moment I stepped in, everything felt divinely aligned—the prayerful atmosphere, the beautiful altar, the music, the fellowship... I knew I was in the right place. Deep down, I longed for a sign of affirmation. I didn't know what it would look like, but I prayed fervently, calling out to the Holy Spirit. I meant every word as we sang, "Holy Spirit, You are welcome here."

Then came the Holy Spirit hour. I was fully immersed in prayer, surrendering everything—my thoughts, my petitions, my heart—to Jesus. My hands, clenched tightly at first, slowly outstretched as I called out for guidance, inspiration, and enlightenment. And then it happened!!!

I felt a tingling sensation in my arms, like gentle waves moving under my skin from my elbows to my

fingers. My whole body felt like jelly, overcome with a deep sense of calm and peace. My fingers tingled as an unbelievable sensation washed over me. And then, I heard it—the Holy Spirit whispering, "I am with you."

At that moment, I knew without a doubt that I had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Tears streamed down my face—waves of emotion so powerful and unexplainable. But instead of fear or doubt, I felt strength, courage, and reassurance. I knew I was being called to move forward, to be guided by the Holy Spirit. This has been nothing short of a conversion experience—a deep, spiritual awakening that has reshaped my faith and trust in God. Through Alpha and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I have been transformed—empowered with faith, courage, and clarity.

They may be small steps, but for me, they are monumental. I am truly walking in God's grace, and for that, I am forever grateful. *Lorraine Jennings*

Cuppa Ministry

2024 was a year to continue the momentum generated since Feb 2023, when the ministry was re-ignited, particularly by PPC members Antony Francis and Vivian D'Cruz. The cuppa ministry has two coordinators, five different facilitators and together with 4-5 volunteers on each team, who work together to make the cuppas happen week after week. With such efficient networking, the Cuppa ministry has rolled out a cuppa after Mass every weekend (with an exception of a very few) for the last 100+ weeks consecutively, which is a great achievement. Ken Sequeira and Antony Francis were the Cuppa coordinators for 2024, and introduced a few innovative ideas, together with suggestions from parishioners and other team members.

For every Mass approximately \$50 is spent in buying food items, while some of it is sponsored by fellow parishioners. Thanks to our parishioner's generosity, the two sausage sizzles in 2024, (expenses covered by Cuppa volunteers) brought in over \$5000—which funds the cuppas every weekend.

The encouragement from the Parish team, especially our priests, cannot be understated. Thank you Fr Michael and Fr Ajin. Parishioners are welcome to join our friendly team and contribute by taking on this very satisfying volunteer role. *Anthony Francis & Ken Sequeira*

SOME FUN FACTS OVER A 12 MONTH PERIOD IN 2024

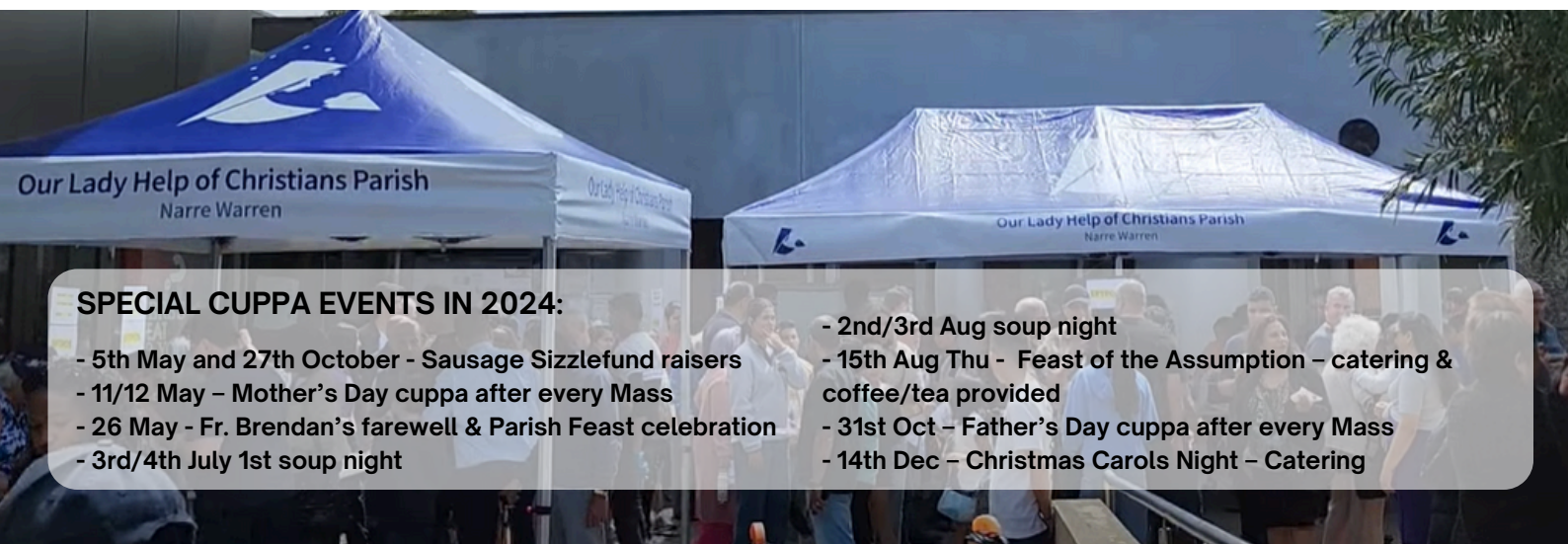
What was used:

4300+ hot cups
2900+ paper plates
2000+ serviettes
1200+ stirrers
2300 biscuit packets
180 milk cartons
100+ cake bars

SPECIAL CUPPA EVENTS IN 2024:

- 5th May and 27th October - Sausage Sizzle fund raisers
- 11/12 May - Mother's Day cuppa after every Mass
- 26 May - Fr. Brendan's farewell & Parish Feast celebration
- 3rd/4th July 1st soup night

- 2nd/3rd Aug soup night
- 15th Aug Thu - Feast of the Assumption - catering & coffee/tea provided
- 31st Oct - Father's Day cuppa after every Mass
- 14th Dec - Christmas Carols Night - Catering



Shepherd's Table

Shepherd's Table has been operating for more than 5 years. In October 2020 we had our first meeting as the Shepherd's Table Management Committee and our first meal on January 5, 2021.



From the outset Shepherd's Table has felt an obligation to be transparent to the Parish community through a formal structure, good financial management, annual reporting and emphasis on efficient use of funds.

In the past 12 months we have continued to provide meals on the first and third Saturdays of the month and support families in 5 local schools by the provision of food vouchers. Our meals are graciously received by our guests and the school families are extremely grateful for our assistance. We can continue this work because of Parish member's financial contributions and the wonderful support of our volunteers without whom we could not exist. We have also had large donations from a Parish member and the John Mc Foundation Inc.

Going forward we will continue our efforts in assisting those in need. To do this we require volunteers and people wishing to take a leadership role. We would like to thank Fr Michael and the Parish team for their support of Shepherd's Table.
Max Bennett

St Vincent De Paul

We have just celebrated 170 Years in Victoria. The Narre Warren Conference has been active in our Parish for 43 years.

Our Narre Warren Conference visit about twenty families a week. We assist with food vouchers, furniture, medical expenses, rental, bill arrears, and provide a listening ear for people who need to talk.

We delivered 80 Christmas hampers with food and gifts provided by Parishioners and our three Parish Schools. They were received with many thanks and much joy.

We are regularly visiting families who are relocating due to domestic violence, those who have had to leave their homes with absolutely nothing. We assist them with beds, bedding and furniture plus vouchers to our Vinnies stores to purchase all the incidentals needed to set up home. We also spend time listening to their stories and allow them to vent which is an important part of our ministry.

A few of our Conference members also volunteer in our call centre and our soup van and are often the first contact people have with St Vincent de Paul Society. Through all these interactions, it is becoming more evident that these days people are really struggling with the high cost of rent, high food prices and lack of social housing and many people are having to call us and request assistance for the first time, which is not an easy thing to do.

One of the highlights for 2024 was our own Trevor Scott receiving one of the five *A Call to Serve* honours across Victoria, for "compassionate service and a dedication to alleviate the hardship experienced by the poor, the lonely and the marginalised." (Michael Quinn, State President)

St Vincent de Paul society continues to be a beacon of hope for the community and we are always looking for volunteers to join us in our Ministry. We meet on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 7.30 pm in the Parish Keogh Room and I hope you can join us in this rewarding ministry. For more information please contact me on email narrewarren.conf@svdp-vic.org.au. We would love you to join us. *Carol Arnett*



The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, hope and joy and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

Parish Bible Study Group

We're grateful to be part of our vibrant Bible Study group, which began in 2019. Our weekly sessions, held Mondays from 7:30-9:00pm, cater to both adults and children, running simultaneously.

In 2024, we explored the journey from the Red Sea to the Jordan, delving into Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Through Moses' story, we learned valuable lessons on obedience, faithfulness, and surrender. Personally, this journey has deepened my faith and nurtured a closer relationship with Jesus.

Our in-depth study, fruitful discussions, and inspiring teachings have made this journey truly enriching. We've not only gained a deeper understanding of Scripture but also learned how to apply its teachings in our daily lives.



In 2025, we'll embark on a new journey, exploring St. Paul's letter to the Romans. We warmly invite you to join us! Our sessions are designed for both adults and children, running concurrently on Mondays at 7:30pm in our parish centre.

This is a wonderful opportunity for families to grow in faith together, shining as beacons of God's love in our homes, schools, and workplaces. God bless!
Ian Gozmao

Spiritual Renewal Ministry (SRM)

SRM was founded in 2007 in Melbourne, when a few families encountered the power and love of Jesus Christ in a very personal way. This life changing experience led the group of believers to commit their lives to building and growing God's kingdom. Although the ministry commenced in Melbourne it was not long before it branched out to Sydney and Perth. Our regular services include weekly prayer meetings, street evangelisation, mid and annual retreats, outreach to the sick, children's ministry, media ministry, healing ministry, deliverance ministry and much more. In 2024, Frenclio Bernard was appointed as SRM youth leader and under his leadership. SRM focussed on three of the following initiatives at OLHC.

MAGAZINE LAUNCH

SRM launched their first ever Magazine 'Light House' in May 2024. This marked a significant event in 16yrs of ministry here in Australia. The magazine illustrates the history of Ministry in Australia, mission



activities from various states, articles, testimonies and many more. The magazine was launched in Melbourne by Lenyce Willason (Director, Melbourne CCR).

NON-STOP 24HRS BIBLE READING

SRM conducted their 4th, 24hrs Non-Stop Bible Reading for 2024. The event was inaugurated by Fr. Ajin. The whole of the New Testament and Psalms were read by 50+ participants. The participants were encouraged to read the Bible in their own language and this resulted in the coming together of many nationalities and cultures with one purpose and focus. The reading started at 3pm on Sunday 9th June and was completed on Monday 10th June at 4pm. It was a faith building experience and the participants received many blessings during and after the event.

YOUTH CAMP

SRM conducted their 2nd National Youth Camp from 12th-14th July '24 at Rumbug Camp, Foster. The Theme was 'ABLAZE' and was attended by over 30 youth from different states across Australia. It was led by the National youth leader - Reshma from Perth and National coordinator Sr. Bobby and Rony. It was a spirit filled experience for all the youth. Many lives were transformed and testimonies shared after this enriching experience. *Rony George*



