



TOGETHER

IN THE DIOCESE OF WAGGA WAGGA



wagga.catholic.org.au

March 2017

FREE

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1917 - 2017

Marking a centenary

This year it is one hundred years since Wagga Wagga was separated from Goulburn to become an autonomous Diocese of the Catholic Church.

Our first bishop was Joseph Wilfred Dwyer, Australian-born of Irish parents, and at the time of his consecration, Parish Priest of Temora. Bishop Dwyer was well-respected not only as a pastor, but also, in the scientific community, as an amateur botanist. The red gum, *eucalyptus dwyeri* which he identified, was named for him.

To mark the centenary celebration, Father James McGee, one of our retired priests, and a member of a long-established family of

nurserymen, collected seeds from the small grove of eucalyptus dwyeri which was planted some years ago at Vianney College, supervised their germination, and is now growing them on as tube stock.

Potting mix for 1500 seedlings was donated by Rapley's Nursery, Lake Albert.

Eucalyptus dwyeri is particularly good as a paddock tree. In the right conditions it grows fairly rapidly, making it useful for shade and for paddock and property boundaries.

A good way to mark and remember the centenary of our community would be to plant *eucalyptus dwyeri* on your farm.

The Bishop's Tree

The first Bishop of Wagga Wagga, Joseph Wilfred Dwyer, was, from his schooldays, a keen student of Australian flora. During his time as Parish Priest of Temora (1912-1916) he collected plants in an area between 10 and 15 miles wide on either side of the railway line between Wyalong and Stockinbingal.

Among them was a hitherto unidentified red gum to which the botanists, Maiden and Blakely, gave the name *Eucalyptus dwyeri*. It grows on small stony ridges in well-drained sandy soils. It is widespread in central western New South Wales and as far south as Beechworth in Victoria. There is also an outlying colony of the species west of Warwick in Queensland.

Because of its twisted habit, it is not much use for timber – but beekeepers and bees love it.



Bishop Joseph Wilfred Dwyer
Archive Image



Retired Parish Priest, former Editor of this newspaper, and keen nurseryman, Father James McGee, has propagated 1500 *Eucalyptus dwyeri* in time to commemorate the centenary of the Wagga Wagga Diocese. See advertisement on page 3 to find out how you can obtain *Eucalyptus dwyeri*.

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Light and Darkness

There is an oil painting technique called chiaroscuro. It was perfected in the Renaissance by masters such as Da Vinci, Caravaggio and Rembrandt.

It contrasts darkness and light to produce an almost three-dimensional dramatic form. We see it also today in cinema and black and white photography. It can often elevate a rather ordinary scene into a wonderful masterpiece of transcendent beauty.

During our Lenten journey this year to the Easter Mysteries of our faith, we may wish to see a kind of theological/pastoral chiaroscuro in the events of our everyday life.

The dark sufferings of our daily Calvaries are placed together with the blazing light emanating from Jesus rising in the midst of all this chaos to bring redemption and hope into our lives.

All of this happens by placing our lives into the death and resurrection of Jesus. As St Paul says: "If we have died with him, then we shall live with him" (2 Tim 2:11).

These last days have been a kind of chiaroscuro for the Archdiocese and beyond.

The Darkness of the Royal Commission

There has been the darkness of all that has transpired at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse over these past weeks.

The Catholic Church's entry into this tragedy in recent history has been a real humiliation to us all. Pope Francis says: "It is a sin that shames us".

The only real heroes in all this chaos have been the victims/survivors.

They have had the courage to come forward and articulate what has happened to them and sought a compassionate response. Many have received this. Too many have received, however, responses from the Church authorities that have been disgraceful. We are so sorry for all this.

I am grateful that the Royal Commission has provided a foundation for this evil darkness to come to light. Hopefully, a long journey of forgiveness and healing has begun.

Progressively, newer mentalities and structures are being placed to bring the victims strength and help. It will take a long time to bring these "wounded healers" from the margins to the centre of Church life.

Mistakes on the journey happen but, please God, we learn, repent and continue alongside the victims, our new teachers, on the road to conversion.



Apostolic Administrator of the Wagga Wagga Diocese, Archbishop Christopher Prowse
Image contributed.

The Light of Vocations to the Priesthood and Deeper Prayer

Incredibly, in the midst of this darkness, has come an unexpected faith light. It is an increase in men offering themselves for the priesthood in the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese as seminarians [with another eight men commencing at Vianney College in Wagga Wagga - Ed].

"Jesus is our hope and salvation always!"

Just when you might think that people may be rushing to the exits, something opposite seems to be happening.

In these past weeks, I have sent three young men to the seminary to begin their formal discernment with the Church regarding the priesthood.

They are fine men, faith filled and full of hope. They truly believe that God is calling them to priestly service. We pray for them all and for more vocations.

They join four other men further down the discerning path towards priesthood. Also, there are quite a few more mature men who are indicating a desire to become permanent deacons in the Archdiocese. All of this is heavenly music to the ears of the bishop!

Attached to this "light" is the continuing enquiry from the general public about becoming a Catholic. This is done via the RCIA. How I have prayed that every parish has an active RCIA group!

So, dear friends in Christ, in the chiaroscuro of our Emmaus walk together to the Father's House, may we never give up.

Jesus is walking and leading us, even when we reject him and walk other paths.

He loves us and mercifully leads us back to him in the conversion we pray for during this Lenten season. Jesus is our hope and salvation always!

+Archbishop Christopher Prowse
Archbishop of Canberra-Goulburn
Apostolic Administrator of Wagga Wagga

TOGETHER

IN THE DIOCESE OF WAGGA WAGGA

is published monthly, eleven times per year, and is available free at parish churches, schools, presbyteries and religious houses throughout the Wagga Wagga Diocese.

TOGETHER is also available to subscribers throughout Australia and overseas.

Publisher

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga
McAlroy House
205 Tarcutta Street
Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

Managing Editor

Dominic Byrne

Printer

The Riverina Media Group
Trail Street
Wagga Wagga 2650

Submissions

TOGETHER would not be possible without the voluntary labour and cooperation of many contributors from within the diocese and beyond. Submissions for publication are most welcome but not always guaranteed to be printed.

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Copy deadline

15th of the month
prior to publication

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Chrism Mass Centenary Display

Come for a foretaste of centenary celebrations on April 11

Holy Week observances will have an additional touch of tradition this year as the Diocese of Wagga Wagga begins celebrating its Centenary.

The Chrism Mass, or Mass of the Oils, will be celebrated on the Tuesday of Holy Week, April 11 at 11am at Saint Michael's Cathedral.

The main celebrant of this Mass is to be the Most Reverend Christopher Prowse, Archbishop of Canberra Goulburn and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga. This is very fitting as Wagga Wagga was once included in, and serviced by, the Diocese of Goulburn.

Following the conclusion of the Chrism Mass there will be refreshments served in St Michael's Parish Centre, and the opportunity to walk through a historical display of vestments and other items of liturgical interest organised by the Diocesan Archivist, Kay Judd.

"Liturgical vestments form part of the archive collection and date from the early years of the diocese including pre and post Vatican II eras." Mrs Judd said.

"The Archive Collection includes the many and varied aspects of diocesan Church Life from pre 1918 to the present time."

The Diocesan Archives was established in 1987 and forms part of the Diocesan Offices at McAlroy House in Wagga Wagga. Records relate to the five diocesan Bishops, diocesan clergy, religious, schools, church organisations and associations. Although the archive is small in comparison to many city establishments it has been created in the Diocese by diocesan clergy and parishioners for the administration of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga and its parishes.

This display is a small precursor of the larger historical display planned for the Diocesan centenary celebrations to be held over the weekend of July 28-30 this year.



Diocesan Archivist, Mrs Kay Judd, discusses memorabilia with Father Justin Darlow, who has been charged with steering the celebrations for the diocesan centenary.

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 or will be available at all Diocesan Centenary Celebrations**

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Vianney College continuing to inspire and form priests for the future

By Matthew Biddle

Statistical observations of the Australian Catholic Church reveal that the Wagga Wagga Diocese has the largest priest to laity ratio in the country – a fact that can largely be attributed to the success of the diocesan seminary, Vianney College.

Tucked away in the outer Wagga suburb of Estella, the seminary has bucked the trend of reduced vocations in the past decade, producing a steady number of local priests as well as forming clergy for other regional dioceses.

At the forefront of the seminary's success is its rector, Fr Peter Thompson, who took charge 14 years ago when the seminary was on the brink of being unviable, with only four seminarians in residence.

Since then, Vianney College has grown quickly, with 25 seminarians from a variety of dioceses journeying towards priesthood within its walls.

Reflecting upon his time as rector, Fr Thompson said it was clear soon after his arrival at the seminary that it needed to train priests for other dioceses to survive.

"When I took over ... I could see that a seminary in a small diocese like Wagga would not be viable because Wagga could not produce enough vocations," he said. "In a seminary you need at least 15-20 to make it viable."

In the seminary's early days, there were men throughout Australia looking for the kind of seminary that Vianney College was, Fr Thompson said.

"The great majority of those early students did not come from Wagga," he said. "They came from other dioceses – Sydney, Melbourne, some came from Queensland, some came from South Australia and one came from Western Australia."

"It was a time when the other seminaries were in need of renewal and reform, but when that came ... that meant that the reason for the seminarians coming here had gone."

"So I could see that for the seminary to be viable we needed to look for other avenues, and then train them for other dioceses, and so by and large I looked to the other country dioceses."

Inspired by the original vision of

Bishop William Brennan in founding the seminary specifically to train future priests to work in a country diocese, Fr Thompson decided to approach the bishops of other country dioceses to inform them of his willingness to train seminarians for their dioceses.

"I said to them, 'I just want you to know that we're here and if you're interested in sending students in our direction we'd

present at the seminary is a great advantage to the formation of all the students."

"Probably more than half of the seminarians here were born overseas, we have a big contingent of Nigerians ... there are Filipinos, Vietnamese, there's an Indian and there's a Kenyan," he said.

"I think it's highly advantageous,

even further growth.

"Because we have a viable seminary here in Wagga, young men from the Wagga Wagga Diocese come in contact with our men, they see us, when we go out into the parishes, and I think that helps to promote vocations that come from the diocese," he said.

"Of the 10 seminarians for Wagga, most of them are actually from Wagga,

Eight new men commence training



Vianney College recently welcomed eight new seminarians to begin their priestly formation. The eight men are from six different countries and will train for the dioceses of Wagga Wagga and Lismore and for the communities of the Congregation of Christ the Priest (based in Wagga) and for the Association of Saint Anthony (a Vietnamese based community). Pictured from left to right with Father Sean Byrnes (the Director of First Year Formation at Vianney College) are (from left): Francis Mbithi, Brother Michael Pham, Brother Xavier Nguyen CCS, Anthony Gawlu, Mark Vettikombil, Father Sean Byrnes, Brother Richardson Patrick CCS, Brother Joseph Trinh, Prodencio Bognay.

be very interested'. It took them a few years ... but that's how we've grown largely," he said.

The current group of future clerics includes 10 for the Wagga Wagga Diocese, six for Lismore, four for the Brotherhood of St Anthony (a Vietnamese religious order), and two for the Confraternity of Christ the Priest.

Fr Thompson believes the diversity

because that's the kind of congregation they're going to face. I think it also broadens their outlook ... the challenge of different nationalities and backgrounds and even sometimes having to deal with men who are still struggling with the English language."

The seminary's visible growth over the past few years has had a flow-on effect locally, Fr Thompson said, leading to

whereas for the other dioceses, they're mostly overseas born. So it's certainly an advantage for vocations to have a seminary like this here."

That was certainly the case for 22-year-old Connell Perry, a third year seminarian for the Wagga Wagga Diocese, whose connection with Vianney College started well before he entered the seminary.

"I first learnt to altar serve at the

Continued on page 11.



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Project Compassion funds humanitarian and long-term development programs in more than 29 countries across Asia, Africa, the Pacific, Latin America and First Australian communities. It runs over Lent, the six weeks leading up to Easter, starting on Ash Wednesday (March 1). Last year Project Compassion raised \$11.1 million.

Through this year's theme "Love your neighbour," Caritas Australia demonstrates how this approach can transform lives.

"Caritas Australia has worked with partner agencies overseas and in First Australian communities to assist those communities lift themselves out of poverty. We have transformed millions of lives in the process, including over 2 million people directly last year through our emergency and development programs," said Paul O'Callaghan, Caritas Australia's CEO.

Focused on our "Love your neighbour" theme, Caritas Australia will feature human stories from the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Australia, Vietnam and Fiji.

"I encourage you to support Project Compassion because your donations make a big difference to our capacity to help impoverished communities become stronger and more resilient. This can only lead to a better future for our world," said Mr O'Callaghan.

During Lent, Australians are invited to support Project Compassion by making a donation, or by hosting fundraising events in their local school, parish, community or neighbourhood. Supporters can also to share their stories on social media at #ProjectCompassion.

To donate to Project Compassion or for fundraising ideas visit www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion or phone 1800 024 413.



Caritas Australia is working with communities like Nguyet's – supporting programs that strengthen, train and equip parents, children and communities through the challenges of disability.

Nguyet spent 14 years of her life in isolation. Her severe disability restricted her movements, her access to her neighbourhood, and her chance of an education.

Nguyet's life changed when a local teacher, Quynh, introduced her to a Caritas sponsored support program.

Quynh, who is also Nguyet's neighbour, is keenly aware of the need for such support programs in her village.

"The school doesn't have enough facilities for children like her," Quynh says.

The Capacity Building for Parents Associations Supporting Children with Disabilities (CBPA) program is managed by Catholic Relief Services, a local partner of Caritas Australia in

Vietnam.

Duong, Nguyet's case manager, spoke of the powerful impact the program was having on the community.

"The CBPA project aims to help parents by providing training so that they can support children with disabilities to integrate into the community, and be more confident in community integration," Duong says.

Parents' Associations in Vietnam have contributed considerably to communities, raising awareness of the needs and challenges faced by the parents of children with disabilities. Before, parents of children with disabilities were very reluctant to bring their children to join in public events. Now they are more confident, and can actively provide better care and education for their children.

"Parents' Associations have proved their ability to the local government in helping disabled children," Duong added.

"They also show that, whenever they are supported and cared for properly, children with disabilities can [achieve] change."

Learning to express herself creatively has opened a new world to Nguyet. She designs and sews clothes for her dolls, and makes traditional Vietnamese paper flowers, which she hopes to sell one day.

The whole family has benefited too. Her parents can go out to work knowing she will manage on her own and her quick maths skills help them with their shopping, and have introduced her to the world of business.

"We are very happy for her," Nguyet's mother Tim says.

Now, at last, she nurtures the hope that her child "can be independent, and build the future she wants".

Please donate to Project Compassion 2017 and help children with disabilities in Vietnam to learn new skills and connect with their communities.



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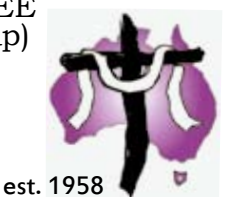
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Experience the story of Easter live in Wagga at the performances of *The Iona Passion Play* on Saturday April 8th and Sunday April 9th at Kildare College, Wagga Wagga.

Students from Kildare College will join with the touring cast to present the real meaning of Easter. Performing since 1958, it is Australia's longest-running,

touring Passion Play. The script has been uniquely designed so that locals can be absorbed into the touring cast at each location.

For nearly sixty years The Iona Passion Play has travelled Australia. It has covered more than 50,000 km and been seen and enjoyed by over half a million people, including Mother Teresa. The

audience witnesses a live dramatic performance of events that changed the course of history.

The Play involves a committed group of volunteers of all ages who devote many hours to the annual production including three months of rehearsals leading up to the Easter performance.

The Wagga Wagga performances are on

Saturday April 8th at 7:00pm and Sunday April 9th at 2.00pm at Kildare College, Coleman Street, Wagga Wagga. Tickets can be booked online at www.passionplay.org.au or purchased at the door (subject to availability). Early bird tickets and discounts for groups of 10 or more are available if pre-booked. For any enquiries email info@ipp.org.au or call (07) 3333 1993.

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Great Learning, Great Communities

From Sunday, March 5 – Saturday, March 11, Catholic schools across our region opened their doors to families, friends and community members to celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2017.

This year's theme, '**Catholic schools: Great learning, Great communities**' focused on forging and strengthening relationships between Catholic schools and their local communities which enable them to continue to thrive.

Schools hosted a variety of activities throughout the week to celebrate their

school community and raise public awareness of the many opportunities that Catholic schools provide.

Catholic Schools Week (CSW) also marked the start of the 2018 enrolment period for all 31 of the schools across the Diocese of Wagga Wagga.

This year, activities included open days, morning teas, open classrooms, liturgies, grandparent days, visits from emergency services personnel and much more.

We would like to say a heartfelt thankyou to Australian Catholic Superannuation Retirement Fund for their support with this year's events and especially all of our school communities around the diocese for helping to make this year's Catholic School's Week the best yet!

You can find your nearest Catholic School by visiting - catholicschools.nsw.edu.au



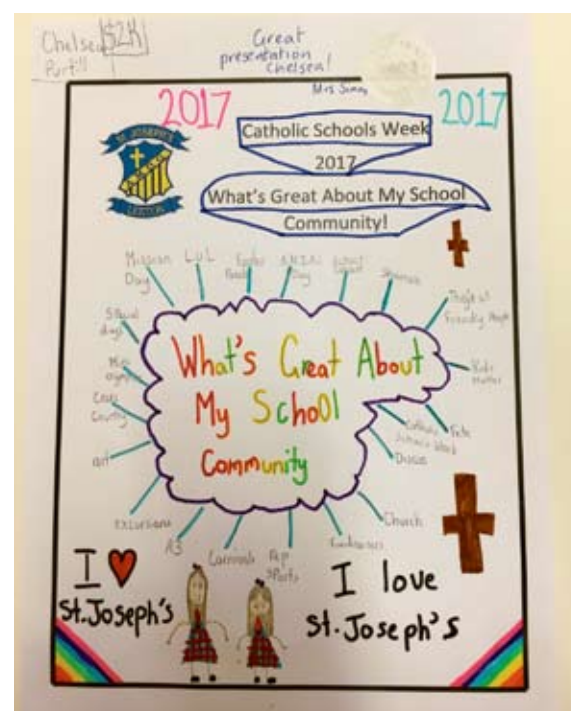
Students from St Joseph's Primary School in Junee spent some quality time with the residents of Cooinda Court Aged Care Facility.



The Junee community enjoyed the very popular bingo afternoon at St Joseph's



School families from St Joseph's Primary School in Leeton enjoying a community lunch together



St Joseph's Leeton student, Chelsea Purtill shares her thoughts on 'What's great about my school community'

To mark the centenary of the apparitions of our Lady of Fatima in Portugal in 1917, the Confraternity of Christ the Priest is offering a travelling statue to visit throughout the dioceses of Australia.

Since the early 1970s, the Confraternity of Christ the Priest has been in possession of an original Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which came from Portugal in 1949. It travelled throughout Australia promoting devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima in the early 1950s.

The travelling statue had a significant impact on the various Australian dioceses and parishes that it visited. Recounted in the article below is one example of an extraordinary healing that took place in May 1951 at Wagga Wagga.

The Confraternity of Christ the Priest from its inception (1954) has promoted the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the particular devotions of Our Lady of

Fatima, and the Green Scapular.

To mark the centenary of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Portugal, the members of the Confraternity are making available to Cathedral Parishes and others, an opportunity for a day of recollection and devotion promoting the messages of Our Holy Mother back in 1917.

Archbishop Prowse, Apostolic Administer for the Diocese of Wagga has granted permission for days of recollection and devotion promoting the messages of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The members of the Confraternity of Christ the Priest hope that the tour of this original travelling statue would begin in April and conclude by the end of October 2017. It is hoped that the statute will visit each of the deaneries in the Wagga Wagga Diocese. For further information: fatimastatue@christthepriest.com or www.christthepriest.com



Miraculous cure in Wagga Wagga

Originally published in Contact Magazine, August 1965

In 1950, Joan Westblade, a young nurse in an Adelaide Hospital, was stricken down with sickness.

The doctors diagnosed the dreaded disease of poliomyelitis. Instead of nursing others, Joan herself had to be nursed. She grew gravely ill. Joan's life was in danger.

However the good nursing of the nuns and their prayers, combined with the skill of the doctors led to an improvement in Joan's condition. Convalescence was slow. Although the paralysis yielded to some extent under treatment, all realised that Joan would be crippled for life.

Some time later Joan was brought back to her family and home at Wagga Wagga in New South Wales. But she was far from recovered. Joan's knees were stiff, she could not bend them. Her legs were strapped in calipers. Walking was most difficult. But trust in God and love of Our Lady were as strong as ever.

Then came the event which was to change the course of Joan's life.

In May 1951, the pilgrim statue of Our

Lady of Fatima arrived in Wagga. This was a beautifully carved wooden statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary depicting Our Lady as she appeared to the three children at Fatima.

The statue was being taken all around the world. It remained only a day or two in any parish. Everywhere it went, the devotion of the people was stirred up.

Midnight Masses were celebrated. Special sermons were preached. Hundreds crowded to the confessional and the altar rails.

Processions in honour of Our Lady were attended by great crowds. Thousands of people pledged themselves to say the daily Rosary.

Many people who had given up their religious duties came back to God.

The love of the people of Wagga towards Our Lady equalled that of other cities when the statue of Our Lady arrived there in May.

Confessions, Communion, Rosaries without number proved their devotion. One special feature of the Wagga

celebrations was the Blessing of the Sick.

Dozens of sick people on beds and stretchers and in wheel chairs were arranged in long lines at Calvary Hospital in Wagga.

The Bishop recited the Rosary and various prayers to Our Lady for the sick. Then taking the statue in his hands he traced with it the sign of the cross over each of the sick people in turn, invoking the blessing of Mary's Son upon them.

Among the sick lying there that morning was Joan Westblade praying with love and trust to the Mother of Jesus.

The blessing over, Joan returned home with her family. That evening when the caliper was removed Joan stood a moment on her legs. Joan bent her knee. It was unbelievable. She walked unaided. Joan's paralysis was gone.

Mary had heard Joan's prayers and had cured her.

In her excitement and gratitude Joan hurried out of the house, took her sister's bicycle and rode off to the Bishop's

House to let Bishop Henschke know.

Bishop Henschke knew Joan. He knew that she was paralysed and could get about only with the aid of crutches. Now he could see she was paralyzed no longer. The power and kindness of Mary's heart was evident.

Joan Westblade has not suffered pain or stiffness in her legs since that day Bishop Henschke blessed her with the statue of Our Lady of Fatima.

After a period of waiting Joan entered a convent and spent the rest of her life as a nursing sister, and her 'retirement' doing all kinds of work for the benefit of the people of East Timor.

To this day, Joan does not talk about herself, for she realises that the focus of this event is on Mary's goodness rather than on her illness. Some day, please God, Joan will write the full story.

Meanwhile, the cure of a polio sufferer in Wagga Wagga highlights the truth that the Mother of Jesus is ready to come to the help of her children in Australia as much as anywhere else in the world.




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Vianney College forming priests of the future



Two of our candidates for the priesthood for the Wagga Wagga Diocese are Michael (second from left) and older brother Connell Perry, pictured above with their family and Bishop Hanna last year. The family has often been described as the 'first seminary', for it is in the family where vocations to the priesthood are first nourished.

Continued from page 4.

well before he entered the seminary.

"I first learnt to altar serve at the seminary as a 10-year-old boy," he said.

"Being close to the seminary was a big inspiration in my discernment of a calling to the priesthood. The example of holy priests and seminarians from around the Wagga Wagga Diocese always kept the question of becoming a priest somewhere in my mind throughout my whole school life."

Connell decided to enter the seminary during his first year of a commerce degree in Melbourne, and this year he was joined by younger brother Michael at Vianney College.

Originally from Alice Springs, Connell has lived in the Riverina region for most of his life, and said his time at Vianney College had been "very joyful" thus far.

"It is great to be surrounded by like-minded men who are trying to become good priests for the future," he said.

"Every day is an opportunity to learn more about Christ, his Church and how to hopefully serve God better."

When asked what aspects of seminary life he enjoys most, Connell said "the beauty of the liturgy and the strong prayer life" were the first things that came to

mind.

"The studies and classes are great," he said. "Friendships with brother seminarians and pastoral work in the schools, nursing homes and parishes are also other aspects that are very enjoyable."

He said that the biggest challenge of seminary life is overcoming one's own faults, which is best dealt with through prayer and listening to the advice of his formators.

"We are very blessed to have such a great rector who is always there for us to keep us on the straight and narrow," he said.

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Policy Myths and the Meddlesome Priest

By Paul Jensen
Chief Executive Officer – Centacare South West

A number of recent credible reports from the Australian Council of Social Service , the OECD and the Australian Treasury evidence that economic and social inequality and poverty are growing in Australia. A range of social and economic factors such as digital disruption and neoliberal reforms drive inequality and poverty however, Government (should) plays a crucial role in moderating these factors.

Inequality and poverty are an injury to individuals and harmful to society - they create social vulnerability and undermine social cohesion. I, along with a slew of political commentators, maintain that social vulnerability was a key driver of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. However, neither outcome, in and of themselves, will successfully address inequality and poverty and both have created social division.

Generally, the Churches have been silent about growing inequality and poverty. Why? Perhaps we feel immobilized by shame – an understandable reaction to the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse.

A 2013 report by British Churches into churchgoers and the public’s perceptions of poverty and inequality posits another reason.

The report identified 6 shared public myths about poverty and inequality. I contend Australian Churchgoers and the public also share these myths.

They sound eerily familiar. Read any Australian tabloid newspaper, listen to the shock jocks or commercial TV commentators and you will experience these myths regurgitated and reinforced for general consumption.

Below are outlined the 6 myths that I have countered with evidence drawn from an Australian context. At best they reinforce inaction, and at worst hostility, towards addressing inequality and poverty.

Myth 1: ‘They’ are lazy and don’t want to work.
Fact: The majority of families in poverty are from low income, underemployed working households.

Myth 2: ‘They’ are addicted to drink and drugs.
Truth: While addiction is devastating for the families and communities touched by it, the percentage of welfare beneficiaries who are alcohol and drug dependent is roughly equivalent to the general community. Addiction is no respecter of social and economic boundaries.



New CEO of Catholic Social Services, Father Frank Brennan SJ, will be visiting the Wagga Wagga Diocese in April.

Myth 3: ‘They’ are not poor – they just don’t manage their money properly.
Truth: Living on a low income is one of constant struggle to manage limited resources, with small events having serious consequences. Statistics show that the poorest spend their money carefully, limiting themselves to the essentials.

Myth 4 - ‘They’ are frauding the system:
Truth: In reality around 0.5 percent of the welfare budget is lost to fraud .

Myth 5 - ‘They’ have an easy life; it’s a lifestyle choice:

Truth: Benefits do not meet minimum income standards. They have halved in value relative to average incomes over the last 30 years. The ill and the unemployed are the people least satisfied and happy with life.

Myth 6 - ‘Welfare’ is causing our national financial problems:
Truth: The proportion of our tax spent on welfare has remained stable for the last 20 years. In all areas apart from the aged pension welfare dependency is actually falling . Why is the problem of Public debt being laid at the feet of the poorest?

Let me make this personal. My wife and I have a close friend, Sally (not her real name), who is a very competent, compassionate middle-aged woman who left an abusive marriage of 20 years with next to nothing.

Sally raised her two children under very trying circumstances and is now struggling to run a small business.

Sally’s total net assets amount to about \$60,000. Sally received one of those Centrelink letters alleging an \$8,000 dollar debt that, after appeal, was revoked.

Sally is not lazy - she works around the clock. Sally is a spendthrift vegetarian who is living hand to mouth ... not by choice. Were it not for the generosity of her partner of the last 3 years, Sally would be at risk of homelessness.

We have come to believe things about poverty and inequality that are not grounded in fact. We need to develop an understanding of the depth and breadth of poverty that is compatible with the evidence available. Just as importantly we need to match the language of public debate - which often demonises the poor - with the reality of people’s lives.

It is time to create a new story about inequality and poverty; one grounded in Gospel virtues of truth, compassion and hope. Part of our calling as Christians is to seek after truth, and that means facing up to our own blindness as well as calling others to account.

Once referred to by former Prime Minister Paul Keating as ‘that meddlesome Priest’, Father Frank Brennan, Professor of Law, Australian Catholic University, and Adjunct Professor at the College of Law and the National Centre for Indigenous Studies, Australian National University has recently stepped into the role CEO of Catholic Social Services.

In this capacity he will be visiting the Diocese on April 26-27 across multiple venues including the Centacare staff day and addressing the vexed question of ‘Inequality and Poverty’ in Australia. More information about his itinerary will be forthcoming but I invite you to consider participating and join with us in this challenge.



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Vale James Joseph (Jim) Parnell

1926 – 2016

James Joseph Parnell died October 5, 2016, aged 90 years.

Jim was a Farmer.

Father Peter Thompson was the principal celebrant at Jim's Requiem Mass in St Michael's Cathedral. Eight priests concelebrated the Mass.

The Vianney College choir sang. The Cathedral was full. He was buried at Holbrook with his father, grandparents and great-grandparents.

Jim was born in Wagga in 1926 to James and Mildred Parnell of Granville, Mangoplah.

He was educated at a two family school within the house, followed by six years at Riverview in Sydney.

Jim joined the Air Force, and following the end of the war he returned to the property till 2001 when he retired to Wagga.

He married Barbara Gorman in 1951 and they had six sons, Robert, Phillip, Patrick, Stephen, Danny and Tom.

Jim was a Life Member of the Wagga Serra Club, being involved since it started and serving as president in 1989.

He was very committed to the aims of Serra, namely the promotion and support of priestly and religious vocations, especially through prayer. This led Jim to organise – for many years – a monthly prayer vigil for vocations.

He was awarded the Harry O'Haire award as a tribute to his dedication to the Serran ideal.

He was also a member of the Mangoplah Football Club, the Country Party, the Riverine Club, the Show Society.

Jim served on the Mangoplah School Board for 20 years.

Jim was a Justice of the Peace and a Councillor for the Kyeamba Shire and a member of Mangoplah Bush Fire Brigade.

May Jim rest in peace.



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Longest serving editor resigns

Managing Editor of Together, Dominic Byrne, has resigned after more than 13 years in the job. Dominic interviewed, well, umm, himself, to bring you this world exclusive:

The question on everybody’s lips: Why did you resign?

I took on the job in January 2004. My predecessor, Brother Michael McMurray CCS (RIP), had been head-hunting me throughout 2003. Br Michael told me that the paper had been at risk of being axed because it had formerly cost too much to run. I believed there was some financially-unquantifiable value in having a diocesan newspaper, so I took on the role, partly to ensure the newspaper was kept running, and partly to supplement my own income.

The reality is that I am now too busy in my ‘day job’ (Dean of St Francis College at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga). I have taken on extra duties at the college, and I am simply unable to give the newspaper the attention it requires. In conscience then, I had to resign.

Do you have any regrets?

A great deal has changed in 13 years in terms of media and the effective and timely delivery of news.

There are more cost effective ways of communicating with the Flock of Christ in a timely fashion. My one regret is that while I had big plans for revolutionising diocesan communications so that news and events could be communicated in a cost-effective and timely fashion, I won’t be able to execute those ideas.

Did you enjoy being the editor of the diocesan newspaper?

To be honest, it was always a bit of a cross. I never enjoyed it. I am not a journalist, and I have no training in graphic design. I think Brother Michael saw those two [primary and essential] skills as secondary to the more important fact that I was a ‘safe pair of hands’ politically/theologically.

Notwithstanding that being editor was always a burden, it was always a genuine privilege and an honour to serve the bishop and the faithful of the diocese.

Who would you like to thank?

First and foremost, I would like to thank former Bishop of Wagga Wagga, Gerard Hanna, for trusting me in the role. To all the clergy and religious of the diocese, and especially to all our loyal readers who look forward to wrapping their potato peels with the paper each

month (after enjoying reading the paper, of course).

I am enormously grateful to those businesses which advertise in *Together* – many of whom have been sponsoring the paper for years or even decades. Our advertisers’ sponsorship of *Together* through thick and thin is admirable and very much appreciated.

You could never be accused of pushing your own agenda. How did you manage to keep the newspaper so balanced?

For years I regularly quipped that as editor of the diocesan newspaper, everybody in the diocese hated me: The liberals hated me for being too conservative, and the conservatives hated me for being too liberal.

In all seriousness, I don’t think the liberal versus conservative paradigm is a healthy one in the Church of Christ.

Neither of the bishops under whom I served (as a seminarian, and later as a senior high school teacher, college Dean and diocesan newspaper editor) liked hearing the People of God characterised in that manner. Bishop Hanna didn’t like that paradigm, nor did Bishop Brennan before him.

In truth, our fallen human nature inclines us to lean one way or another politically. It is Jesus Christ who draws us to the narrow/middle path to the extent that we allow his Grace to work within us.

By the time you finish up next month, you will have published 144 editions of Together. Yet you only wrote a couple of editorials in all that time. Why the silence when you could have wielded unlimited power?

The truth is, I rarely thought I had anything worthwhile to communicate that hadn’t already been conveyed in more effective ways by others.

Aren’t you just deserting the sinking ship in the aftermath of the Royal Commission?

Further to the previous question, maybe I *do* have something to say, and here it is:

There is no denying that the revelations from the Royal Commission are gutting. Even so, my faith in Jesus Christ is steadfast. Saint Peter’s words always

come to mind in such circumstances:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life, and we have come to believe and to know that you are the Christ, the Son of God.” (John 6:68)

I have searched for meaning in life, and have come to the reasoned view that adhering to Jesus Christ and the sacramental community he founded (ie the Catholic Church) is the way to joy, peace and happiness in this life, and the hereafter.

We are rightly utterly scandalised when we hear that church personnel have committed egregious evils against children and other vulnerable people. But why are we so surprised? Church personnel are sinners, just like every other person in the Catholic Church.

That seems to be an odd attitude from someone who is a survivor of abuse himself. Please Explain.

Yes, my own childhood was highly traumatic and it did include being sexually abused. [My abuser was not employed by the church. My abuser was the very one who was meant to protect me from harm.]

I have always said that even one victim of abuse by church personnel is one too many. We need to also be aware that the number of children who have been abused by church personnel would be the small tip of a very large iceberg of children who have been abused by family members ‘out there in the suburbs’.

As a survivor myself, there are a few things I would like to say here:

- To those who have not been abused I would like to say that it is difficult to exaggerate the negative effect that such abuse has on the victim. Sexual abuse destroys something inside the victim that I am unable to describe with words. I fully understand how so many victims end up abusing drugs and/or alcohol or end their life by suicide. Many victims can’t see a way out of that dark place. [Now, before you write a letter of complaint, please know that I in no way condone suicide. I do not condone suicide. But I don’t judge others who cannot see another way out of the darkness.]
- As a church community, we must do everything in our power to support victims of abuse.

3. Perpetrators of abuse must face justice. Equally, perpetrators need to face mercy. Perpetrators of abuse are sick individuals who need healing. At the risk of sounding trite, Jesus died for them too. Perpetrators of abuse are sinners just like the rest of us. Christian duty obliges us to pray for the perpetrators too.

4. Those accused of abuse have a right to have the claims tested and are entitled to the presumption of innocence.

5. Counselling is important. Spiritual remedies alone such as ‘offering it up’ and churning out Rosaries will not bring about healing from the damage done by this kind of abuse. If you have been traumatised, get help. Don’t do what I did for far too long and dismiss the importance/validity of quality counselling.

6. Counselling is important, but forgiveness is even importanter. Forgiveness is the only thing that works. A victim can attend counselling sessions until the cows come home, but unless/ until the counselling culminates in forgiveness, the victim cannot be truly free of the abuse. When a survivor can find it within his/her heart to forgive, she/ he can transform form being a survivor to a thriver. That is a good place to be. In this way, good triumphs over evil.

7. The reason why I have revealed my past publicly is that as a community we must keep lifting the veil of secrecy surrounding this issue in order to protect the children of the future. It is time to end this heinous evil, wherever it occurs. The Royal Commission has been a painful but good starting point. Let’s do whatever needs doing to protect the vulnerable and rid our society of this evil.

There is currently no support group in the Riverina-MIA for adult survivors of child abuse. Can you help change this?

Maybe. I attended an eight week workshop in Wollongong a couple of years ago. It was hugely beneficial. It would be good to get a similar support group going in the Riverina-MIA.

If we can muster enough survivors we will be able to form a support group and organise workshops, etc.

Fellow survivors can email me at dbyrne@csu.edu.au and we can take it from there.

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Diamond Jubilee of Sisters of St Joseph



Forty Sisters of St Joseph (including nine unable to attend due to ill health) celebrated sixty years of Religious Profession in January.

Friends and family of the Diamond Jubilarians congregated in St Mary of the Cross MacKillop's chapel in North Sydney to celebrate.

After a joyful rendition of "Joseph, Holy" Sr Monica Cavanagh rsj (Congregation Leader) welcomed everyone to the celebration and congratulated the Sisters on a wonderful achievement. The theme for the Mass was "Gratitude is the memory of the heart".

Continued on back page.

Help Religious Sisters - the unsung heroines in the Church!

They smile, they heal, they teach, they comfort. Around the globe Catholic religious sisters quietly perform their dedicated and heroic service without remuneration and barely even noticed by the wider world. But in order to assist others, they themselves also need to be helped, for although they minister to so many, they themselves still need their daily bread and a roof over their heads.

Each year the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) supports over 9,000 religious sisters in every corner of the earth. Many religious congregations turn to the charity for help, not least for the formation of their precious new vocations. While many congregations in the Western world have few or no new vocations and even seem to be dying out, in other parts of the world the religious communities are filled with young and smiling faces.

Along with the contemplative orders ACN helps those sisters active in the charitable apostolate, relieving them of the daily burden of supporting themselves while they also care for the poorest of the poor, whether in the slum quarters of the great cities, in the vast expanses of the African continent, or in the besieged cities of Iraq and Syria.

It is vital that the indispensable work of religious sisters in Christ's Holy Catholic Church continues. Religious sisters are the unsung heroines in the Church. ACN is proud to assist the inspirational work carried out by religious sisters in some of the poorest, most dangerous places in the world.

The average grant ACN gives to support a religious sister or novice is \$300 - but whatever you can afford will be enormously appreciated. ACN forwards the donations directly to the religious superiors in charge of the religious communities and congregations.

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Sr Annie Demerjian works with those in need in war torn Syria.

"It is painful to see people without food and water. In them, Jesus is hungry and thirsty. What gives me joy is when I can help them and see the relief and happiness on their faces." Sr Annie

Mother Teresa, now St Teresa of Calcutta, was canonised on September 4th 2016. The rosary carries the following inscriptions on the reverse side of the crucifix and central medal: "A little pencil in the hand of God" and "It is not how much we do, but how much love we put into what we do".

The colours of the rosary beads represent the simple white sari worn by Mother Teresa and the blue, her devotion to the Virgin Mary.



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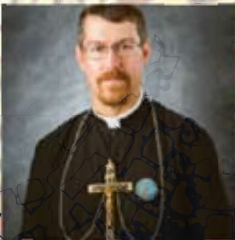
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8pm - Reconciliation

Tuesday May 2nd:
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Confidence in Mercy: The Sinful Woman
8pm - Reconciliation

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The Cross: Wellspring of Infinite Divine Mercy
8pm - Reconciliation

Supper in the Marian Centre to follow the Wednesday night mission. Please bring a plate to share.

Palliative care specialists speak out against assisted suicide

By Debra Vermeer

More than 30 of Australia and New Zealand's top palliative care practitioners have joined forces to oppose the introduction of euthanasia and physician assisted suicide, describing the practice as "unnecessary and unsafe".

A letter, authored by Professor Douglas Bridge and co-signed by 32 other palliative care specialists and medical professionals was published in this week's edition of the Medical Journal of Australia's MJA InSight..

It was a response to an opinion piece recently published in the MJA by Palliative Care Specialist, Professor Emeritus Ian Maddocks, who asked whether it was time to consider an integration of palliative care, euthanasia, and physician assisted suicide (EPAS).

"As palliative care practitioners, we know this supposed common ground is both a contradiction in terms and contrary to sound medical practice," the letter from the 33 practitioners says.

"Supporting people when they are dying is utterly different to intentionally causing them to die. What Professor Maddocks calls 'a single effective intervention' is in fact an act of killing."

The intervention comes as the Victorian Parliament prepares to consider a bill for assisted suicide later this year. Similar legislation has also been flagged in New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia.

"The term 'voluntary assisted dying' conceals the true nature of what is proposed in the bill before the Victorian parliament," the practitioners' letter says.

"The patient's dying is not assisted; rather, a doctor is required to kill the patient or to help the patient commit suicide. The word 'voluntary' attempts to emphasise the patient's autonomy.



Joel Britten, 21, from Bungendore, has widespread sarcoma and says he's grateful for the Palliative Care he has received at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. Joel said, "Without youse in Palliative Care, I'd be stuffed!"

Image courtesy of Debra Vermeer.

Ironically, EPAS legislation weakens patient autonomy by devaluing the final stages of life.

"Further, overseas experience has shown that supposed safeguards within these laws do not effectively guard the autonomy of those most vulnerable to the extension of these laws."

The doctors also take issue with the sanitising of language in the public debate on EPAS, noting the use of euphemisms such as 'voluntary assisted dying' and 'go gentle'.

"However, the inconvenient truth remains that at the heart of EPAS, the action of the doctor is to end a patient's life or assist

patients to kill themselves," the letter says. "This has profound ramifications for all health professionals. 'Do not kill' has been a core ethical principle of every civilisation and the practice of medicine; we violate it at society's peril."

The signatories, who include palliative care practitioners from both city, regional and bush hospitals, and palliative care facilities in Australia and New Zealand, say that quality health care manages the cause of a patient's distress, rather than ending life.

"In our experience, requests to terminate life prematurely are uncommon and often a cry for help. Such requests rarely

spring from uncontrolled pain, but rather from despair, a sense of loss of control, or fear of being a burden on others," the letter says.

"Evidence shows that a person's desire for hastened death changes over time and reduces when care is good. It is illogical and immoral to even consider euthanasia legislation before ensuring there is universal access to palliative care."

They conclude by saying that irrespective of whether EPAS is legalised in Australia or New Zealand, it has no part in the ethical and professional practice of palliative medicine.

Diamond Jubilees in Sesquicentenary Year

From previous page.

The musicians played beautifully throughout the Mass. The flautist complemented the singing and the organ music so well. The words of the thanksgiving hymn, "There is a place" were so moving that many were brought to tears as they reflected on the journey and remembered loved ones missed.

The Mass booklet was designed specifically for the occasion. An emblem in the shape of a diamond displayed a symbol in each facet. The brilliant yellow of the Kowhai (a Native New Zealand flower) is set next to the equally bold yellow of the Australian

Wattle. The Harp and the Shamrock in another facet acknowledged the Sisters with Irish heritage. All these elements came together nicely to create a beautiful diamond, just as the class of 1957 professed Sisters of Saint Joseph came together to celebrate 60 years of profession, the example of their lives shining just as bright as the diamond on their booklets.

Bishop Terry Brady officiated with Fr Philip Linder concelebrating the Mass.

Fr Philip asked the Congregation to reflect on "the vast number of people whose lives have been touched

by our jubilarians". Fr Philip said that Catholic Schools in Australia have flourished due to the generous and committed work of the religious sisters and brothers. They have been instrumental in the education of so many Catholics and we all owe them a great debt of gratitude.

Sixty years of Religious profession! What an incredible achievement and what great things have been done.

The Jubilarians continued the celebrations afterwards in various buildings around the chapel, sharing a beautiful meal with family and friends.

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