

The Monica December 2016

St Monica's Parish Moonee Ponds

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Greetings from the Editorial Team

This year has been an exceptionally busy one in St Monica's Parish.

In this edition, we have profiled some of our selfless parish volunteers, we also celebrate the recent First Eucharist Masses and give an insight into the activities of the Bereavement Group.

In Rome, Pope Francis has bid farewell to the Year of Mercy. In his apostolic letter he reminds us that "Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the Church; it constitutes her very existence, through which the profound truths of the Gospel are made manifest and tangible.

Everything is revealed in mercy; everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father."

Wishing everyone in St Monica's Parish a wonderful Christmas filled with the joyfulness of Christ's love.

*Thank
you*

The Monica would like to take this opportunity to say a big Thank you to Lesley-Ann Wilson, Parish Secretary, who has been a

wonderful support over the last two years. We wish Lesley-Ann all our love and prayers as she heads off on her next adventure.

A Pastoral Letter



My last sermons I gave before heading off on holidays was about we are all 'Companions of a journey', that journey being the journey of growing in and into the love of God. The same love that was made manifest in Jesus, Son of God born of the Virgin Mary and whose 'birthday' we are preparing to celebrate at Christmas.

Speaking of pilgrimages, as I write these few words I have not yet left on my holidays, especially that part of the holiday that will be a pilgrimage to Nepal.

Before leaving I told you that that the money which so many of you and my family gave me for my 70th birthday I was going to give to the 'Shalom Orphanage' in Kathmandu.

Whilst in Nepal, I will be taking part in an organised trek to approximately 3.600 metres, during which we will visit one of the villages that was severely damaged by the earthquake that struck Nepal earlier in the year. The village school along with many houses were knocked to the ground. Hence there is no schooling for the children at this moment in time.

Seeing as my visit to Nepal is a pilgrimage, I have decided that I will share my monies between the Shalom Orphanage, which was unaffected by the earthquake, and the village wherein the one and only school was been destroyed.

I will be reading these words for the first time after my return from Nepal. I hope to be able to share some photos with you of both the Orphanage and the village where the school was destroyed, as well as the spectacular scenery I will without a doubt see during my trek.

Thank you for your prayers in my absence, your loving support of Fr. Minh and that little bit of you, you allowed me to leave behind in Nepal in the shape of the money given to help the children in Orphanage and the children whose school was destroyed in the earthquake.

- Fr. Tony Feeney



Parish Profile : ST MONCIA'S STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The continuing prosperity of St Monica's Parish relies on the goodwill of our parishioners. Those who attend Mass are aware of the two collections that occur to support our Priests and our Diocese. Another way to support our Parish is through regular financial contribution via a weekly envelope, or by monthly/quarterly or half yearly direct debits. This is known as the Parish Stewardship Program, or sacrificial giving.



Recently Elise Rizzo had the opportunity to ask our financial registrar Bernard Angel, some questions about the St Monica's Stewardship program and as he explains, the program is a vital financial lifeline and greatly assists in all aspects of building maintenance and capital works, such as the Symons Centre.

Can you please explain what the Stewardship Program is about?

The Stewardship Program has been set up to challenge everyone in how to best use their gifts of time, talent and financial resources so as to benefit the parish and in particular the church. Volunteering one's time and services plays as much a part as committing financially to the Thanksgiving Program.

How did you become involved in the Stewardship Program?

I am not directly involved in the program as I am not a parishioner of St Monica's. However, through my work as book-keeper for the parish, I oversee and account for all financial contributions made by the Moonee Ponds parishioners.

In what ways does the program benefit the St. Monica's Catholic Church?

The program enables parishioners to provide practical help and support to both individuals and the general church community and generous giving of a financial nature completes the stewardship picture. The most obvious outcome of both a generous and consistent financial commitment is the Symons Centre building and the excellent condition of the Church itself.

What do you enjoy about being so heavily involved in the Stewardship Program?

I think the most impressive thing about the Program is the number of people involved considering all the other commitments people have to meet in this day and age. It shows that many people really do care about their parish life.

How can others within the parish become involved in the Stewardship Program?

If there are more people interested in getting involved, it is just a matter of contacting the parish office. Information can be sent out detailing the types of thing you can get involved with – all with the aim of benefiting the church itself or individuals within the church community.



Golden Oldies

A lovely personal mass is held in The Symonds Centre first Wednesday of the Month at 11am. This Mass is open to all parishioners, especially those who have retired.

After Mass, participants all contribute a plate of excellent home-cooked delicacies and everyone enjoys a lovely banquet lunch.

The next Golden Oldies Mass will be on 7th December and we're all looking forward to a joyful Christmas get together. All warmly welcome.



L to R. Jenny Barrett, Lina Savoia, Sheila Cotter, Beverley Solomons, Fr. Tony.

Celebrating First Communion

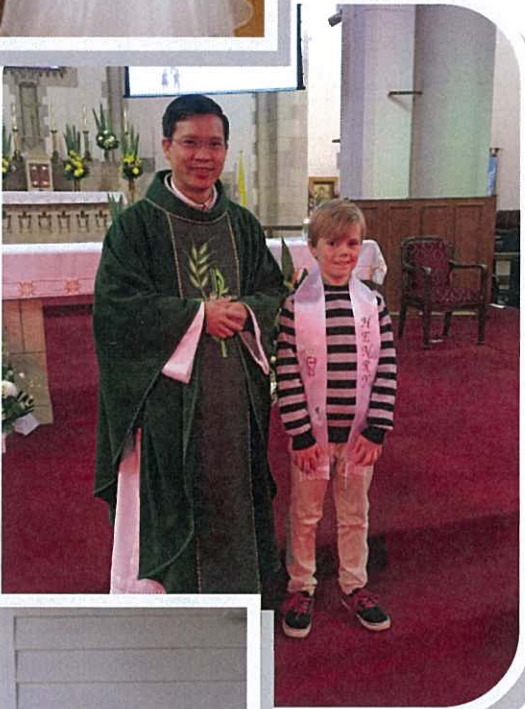
Over three weekends in October Fr Tony and Fr Minh celebrated 11 first Holy Communion Masses. It was a special time for year 3 students, who were filled with excitement and anticipation as they prepared for the sacrament.

Students spent time in the lead up to their Mass discussing the significance of the Eucharist with their teachers. While it was a happy and joyous occasion, it was also a moment to privately reflect on this next important step in their relationship with God. After receiving the Eucharist, each child knelt in a moment of solemn prayer which was very touching and truly epitomised the honour of first receiving the body of Christ and all that this Holy act embodies.

Our wonderful priests made the occasion very special and memorable for the children, who looked absolutely gorgeous in their outfits. A big thanks to Year 3 teachers Miss McDonald, Mrs Barbey and Ms McPherson and Religious Education leader Mrs Mifsud, as well as the staff present at each Mass for preparing the students so beautifully. Also thanks to our amazing Catechistic instructors Diana Dumapias and Dayanthie De Silva for preparing the Sunday school participants.

After the final First Communion Mass, St Monica's Year 3 enjoyed a thanksgiving Mass with Fr Tony and a special pancake breakfast to celebrate this spiritual milestone.





Friends of the Parish - Elise Rizzo

Recently Elise Rizzo had the pleasure of meeting two of St Monica's loyal and long-standing parishioners Stella and Sam Maurici. As well as being members of the parish community for over 44 years, raising four children who all attended St Monica's school, (and Sam was a former student himself) the dynamic duo are also known by the more formal title of - *Friends of the Parish*.



The Maurici's are ably assisted by Lesley-Ann and the parish house team as they set out to recruit volunteers for various projects throughout the year. *Friends of the Parish* came about in early 2016. As Sam says "It's rewarding to have the time to make a difference. It's too hard for a Parish Priest to have to manage all the jobs which are expected of them, as well as manage and maintain such a large house".

Stella agreed and said "we just noticed things which needed to be done around the Parish and thought we could help get them done".

And indeed they have. During the year have managed the overhaul of the courtyard, attended to insurance emergencies within the Robinson St house and Mercy Place, painted the hallway of the Parish House, updated heaters and repaired fireplaces, hosted a confirmation dinner for the Bishop, priests and teachers, removed trees and engaged trades to update electricals.

Sam says that Stella is the creative force behind the whole venture and he just makes sure the work gets done, Stella in turn says it works because Sam just 'listens and does!'

What is evident though is that although the Maurici's are a formidable duo who have achieved remarkable things in the last 9 months, they really need your help.



In the long-term, *Friends of the Parish* want to establish a roster to assist with the weekly maintenance tasks, as well as to create a list of families with skills and services they would be willing to make available to the Parish from time to time.

The pair identify the difficulty that they are a reactive group, busy attending to urgent jobs, and therefore have no time to stop and think about the logistics of expanding the group. They hope they are able to significantly increase numbers in the group so it will continue to support the Parish for many years to come.

I was privileged to meet such an amazing couple and encourage others to think about what they might have to offer to help and support them. For now, they will continue to 'chip away' at the mammoth task of bringing the Parish house and grounds into the 21st Century.

If you would like to volunteer to assist *Friends of the Parish* please contact Stella and Sam Maurici via parish house on 9370 5035.



Bereavement Mass Program 2016



The final Bereavement Mass for 2016 took place on 8th November. It was the sixth mass arranged by St Monica's Bereavement Group since it was formed.

After initially conducting three masses per year, we have settled on two well-attended masses and invitations are sent to the family members of those who have died in the six months prior. All bereaved parishioners, however, are welcome to attend.

Attendees are encouraged to bring a photo of their loved one to display at the front of the altar which evokes a feeling of their presence and reminds all of us of their continued place in our lives.

A poignant feature of the mass is the candle ceremony. Family members are invited to come forward and light a candle and for all of us to acknowledge that we grieve together as a community and that the 'light' of those departed continues for all of us - providing hope in darkness.

We have been blessed by tremendous musical talents during six masses over three years. Guest artists have included the St Bernard's Boys Choir, Terresa and Dunata (organ player) and more recently *Music for Funerals* all offering their time and musical flair. These guest artists have been a very special part of the mass and helped to create a feeling of reflection and reverence.

The Bereavement Group provides supper in the Symons Centre and this is an opportunity for family and friends to gather in mutual support.

As a group we are always incredibly humbled by the positive feedback received from attendees. Often receiving an invite is the first step is letting those bereaved know that 'you are not alone, we are here for you and we know you are hurting'.

Invitations are often combined with a phone call from one of our bereavement support volunteers. Calls are made to offer support, lend an ear and advise of the upcoming Bereavement Mass. The volunteers feel that they gain so much more than they give in providing a little comfort to those who are grieving. In our busy lives this special mass provides an opportunity to stop and remember. In the midst of grief and loss, it is a valuable and comforting experience. The group also sends a card on the 12 month anniversary of a death to let the bereaved know that the parish is remembering their loved one at this difficult time.



*For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given:*

**AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL
BE UPON HIS SHOULDER**

and his name shall be called

Wonderful,

Counsellor,

The Mighty God,

The Everlasting Father,

The Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9.6

Kelly Maltman has dedicated many hours to organising the Bereavement Mass, issuing invitations, making calls to the bereaved and assigning tasks to the volunteers. Kelly is grateful for the team effort of the bereavement group and attributes the success of the program to the adage - 'many hands make light work'. Kelly writes: "I'm always astounded by how willing our volunteers are to devote their time, talents and finances towards the supper or to provide flowers for a death in parish. Most volunteers are balancing work and other commitments yet they are very generous with their time".

Kelly and the team also wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Parish Office in arranging the masses. Particularly the efforts of Lesley-Ann in putting together the beautiful commemorative brochures provided to all in attendance. Also the wonderful role of our priests Fr Tony and Fr Minh in leading each mass with compassion.

Class of 2015—St Monica's Reunion

On Sunday 6 November the St Monica's grade 6 class of 2015 got together at the 5.30pm Mass and afterwards had pizza in the Symons Centre. David Mathews recounts their reunion.

About 40 of us attended which was a very good number. It was great to catch up with everyone because we are now in year 7 at many different schools: St Bernard's; St Columba's; Ave Maria; St Kevin's; Lowther Hall; PEGS to name a few. We had the chance to talk about what we had all been doing over the last year. We also had a slide show of photos taken during our years at St Monica's. It's amazing how much we have changed and grown over the years.

The Mass was organized by the school captains: Matthew Lynch, Lil Morgan, Caitlyn McDonald, Jonah Phelan, Joseph Romero and Nicole Eshak. Some of them had roles reading at the Mass or taking up the offertory.

It was a really fun evening and the pizza was delicious.

We would like to thank Fr Minh for having the idea and all the families of the school captains who helped organize the night.



**WELCOME
BACK!!**

Tuck Shop Ladies Reunite

Together again! During Father Tony's 70th birthday celebration these ladies were reliving great memories of their own. Having actively participated in the St Monica's community over the years, the majority of the ladies were also "Tuck Shop Mums" during the 1960s and 1970s. Over their journeys they have all been wonderfully supportive of St. Monica's and have created life long friendships. Pictured here with St Monica's Parish Education board member Annmaree Carmichael, they are quoted as being "sisters forever."
L. To R: Jenny Barrett, Ann McCullough, Paula Mitchell, Margaret Saundry, Mary Walker, Annmaree Carmichael, Margaret Mogg, Joan Nunan, Sheila Cotter.



Saint Profile: Saint Catherine by Andrea Medic

Saint Catherine was born in Siena, Italy, in 1347 into a large family. At 16 years old, motivated by a vision of St Dominic, she entered the Mantellate - the female branch of the Third Order of the Dominicans. Catherine dedicated herself to prayer, penance and works of charity, especially for the benefit of the sick.

Over time, Catherine became sought out as a spiritual director. When the fame of her holiness spread, she became sought out to provide spiritual guidance for people from every walk of life: nobles and politicians, artists and ordinary people, consecrated men and women and the religious, including Pope Gregory XI. She travelled widely to press for the internal reform of the Church and to foster peace among the States. It was for this reason that Venerable Pope John Paul II chose to declare her Co-Patroness of Europe.

Catherine experienced a "mystical marriage" with Jesus. That is, she had a vision that was ever present in her heart and mind; one of Our Lady presenting her to Jesus and giving her a splendid ring, saying to her:

"I, your Creator and Saviour, espouse you in the faith, that you will keep ever pure until you celebrate your eternal nuptials with me in Heaven" (Bl. Raimondo da Capua, S. Caterina da Siena, Legenda maior, n. 115, Siena 1998).

For her, Christ was like the spouse with whom a relationship of intimacy, communion and faithfulness existed; he was the best beloved whom she loved above any other good.

This profound union with the Lord is illustrated by another episode in the life of this outstanding mystic: the exchange of hearts.

According to Raymond of Capua who passed on the confidences Catherine received, the Lord Jesus appeared to her "holding in his holy hands a human heart, bright red and shining". He opened her side and put the heart within her saying:

"Dearest daughter, as I took your heart away from you the other day, now, you see, I am giving you mine, so that you can go on living with it for ever" (ibid.).

Another trait of Catherine's spirituality is linked to the gift of tears. For her, they expressed an exquisite, profound sensitivity, as well as a capacity for being moved and for tenderness. According to Catherine, the tears of saints are mingled with the blood of Christ, of which she spoke in vibrant tones and with symbolic images that were very effective.

Catherine committed herself to the belief that we can all let our hearts be transformed and learn to love like Christ in a familiarity with him that is nourished by prayer, by meditation on the Word of God and by the sacraments, above all by receiving Holy Communion frequently and with devotion. Catherine sadly died at the young age of 33 in 1380. She was canonised in 1461.

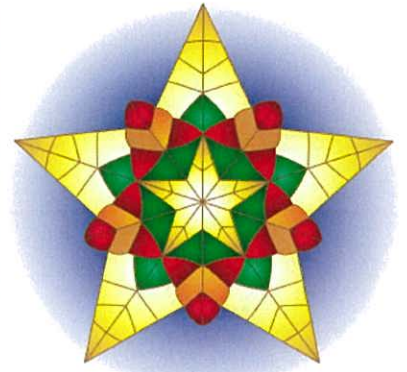
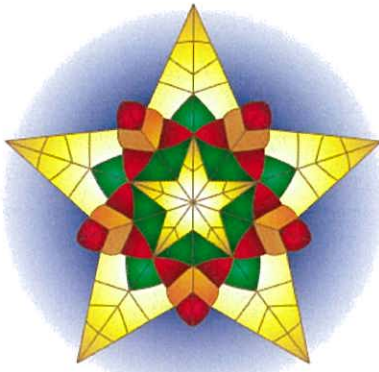
Catherine truly embodied the words of St Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20).



St Monica's St Vincent De Paul

Celebrating Christmas and a job well done this year at Moonee Valley racecourse, the hardworking St Monica's St Vincent De Paul volunteers took a moment to enjoy the fruits of their labour. These volunteers work tirelessly for the St. Vincent de Paul soup van every Monday and Tuesday night, supplying soup as well as other nutritious items to around 120 people in need.





Away in a Manger

William J. Kirkpatrick (1838-1921)

1. A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed, The lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down His sweet head; The stars in the heav - ens looked down where He lay, The lit - tle Lord Je - sus, a - sleep on the hay.

2. The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes;
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

3. Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for Heaven to live with Thee there.





Parish Office : Update One

In April 2012, the Victorian Government initiated a landmark inquiry into the handling of child abuse allegations within religious and other non-government organisations. The inquiry's final report, "Betrayal of Trust" (November 2013) contained 15 recommendations. The Victorian Government Responded by giving support or in-principle support to all of the recommendations and will also follow closely and engage with the national Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and consider any relevant findings and recommendations made.

Criminal law reform

The first priority of the Victorian Government has been the immediate safety of children. Three new criminal offences to further protect children from abuse have been introduced.

The three new offences are:

- a grooming offence** which targets communication, including online communication, with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse
- a failure to disclose offence** that requires adults to report to police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child (unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so)
- a failure to protect offence** that applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Creating child safe organisations

The Victorian Government is implementing a range of measures to create child safe organisations, to strengthen the capacity of organisations to prevent and respond to the risks of child abuse. There are new child safe standards that aim to drive cultural change in organisations, so that protecting children from the risks of abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice. The standards are being implemented in two phases, and will become compulsory by 2017 for all organisations that provide services to children. Our Parish Church needs to be compliant by January 1st 2017. All Victorian schools will be required to implement the child safe standards and adopt consistent policies for responding to allegations of abuse.

At St. Monica's Church work in this area is ongoing and on many levels. Heightened community awareness is needed to help identify and respond to gaps and inconsistencies in our Child Safe Practices. Children with Disabilities and those from aboriginal and linguistically diverse backgrounds are particularly vulnerable. More rigorous risk management and employment practices of all church staff and volunteers need to be implemented. A whole community response is needed to create a strong, open and aware culture.

The Parish Council is currently reviewing " St. Monica's Catholic Church Child Safety Policy" and " St. Monica's Parish Child Safety Code of Conduct". A noticeboard in the Church foyer is for Child Safety Information. The Archdiocese has provided many resources to help our Church Community be a much safer environment for children. Next issue will contain more information about the Child Safe Standards.

Any queries or comments about this – please contact Sonya Bading (St. Monica's Church Child Safety Co-ordinator) on 9370 5035.



Children's Christmas Activities



Here are some great Christmas-themed activities that children may like to create as we lead up to Christmas.



Christmas Stockings

Materials:

Red felt
Needle and thread
Sequins, buttons and other decoration
Fabric glue
Ribbon

Instructions:

Fold the felt in half and cut two stockings out. Use blanket stitch or a small running stitch to sew the stockings together, leaving the top edge open.

Cut a length of ribbon and fold in half to make a loop and sew or glue inside the stocking. Decorate with buttons, glitter, felt shapes, sequins, beads - however you like.

Christmas Tree Decorations

Materials:

Ice-cream sticks, green (or plain, painted green)
Green pipe cleaners (chenille stems)
Beads (optional)
Glitter glue (optional)
PVA (white) glue - for making a card or hanging decoration
Ribbon - for hanging the decoration

Instructions:

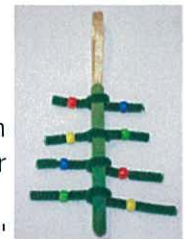
To make a Christmas card

Place the pipe cleaner on top of the lollipop stick, at right angles to it, and about 1 inch down from the top with about 1 inch protruding to one side. Holding it in place with your thumb, wrap the pipe cleaner tightly round the lollipop stick and then trim.

Do the same 2 or 3 more times down the lollipop stick, each time making the "branches" slightly longer. Run a thick line of PVA glue along the lollipop stick and place the tree onto a folded card.

To make a hanging Christmas tree decoration

To make a hanging decoration, you will need two lollipop sticks. Make a loop of ribbon and sandwich it between two lollipop sticks, gluing it in place. Hold the sticks firmly in place while winding the first loop of pipe cleaner around the lollipop sticks!



Button Christmas Wreath

Materials:

Pipe cleaner
Buttons
Ribbon

Instructions:

Thread the pipe cleaner in and out through the two holes of each button, spacing the buttons as you go. Bend into a circle, then twist the top of the circle together to secure the buttons in place. Tie a ribbon bow around the top on the wreath.

