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The relics of Louis, Zelie and Therese Martin.

The relics of St Therese of Lisieux and her parents St Louis and St Marie-Azelie (Zelie) will be taken through a number of dioceses early in 2020. Many people wonder why the Church persists in what seems to be a mediaeval piety, an archaic practice. Why tour the remains of saints and make them available for the veneration of the faithful? Is this an outdated superstition?

Despite the scenes of intense religious devotion around relics, there is certainly nothing magical or talisman like about the relics of saints. Of themselves relics are not holy. It is more correct to say, they are the remains of a holy person, a saint and on account of their connection to that holy person are revered.

In Australia we are used to caring for and respecting sacred sites. A place may be sacred for a number of reasons. It may be a place of spiritual significance to a people who identify with and are defined by that place; as is the case with many indigenous Australians. It may be a place where an important event took place and now is part of the national identity, such as Gallipoli. It may be a building in which over hundreds of years people have prayed and worshiped, such as a church or cathedral.

We all have souvenirs of people we have loved, insignificant items of little value, but to us they are treasured gems which move us to remember a loved one or an event. When the item attaches to a person it can bring to mind the attributes and goodness of the person. In some cases it can even encourage us to live according to higher values. The relics of saints fall into this category. Relics are physical remains which connect us with the goodness and holiness of the saint. They remind us of the saint and through the saint move us to live better lives.

The saints who are “visiting” Australia are a mother, a father and their daughter. St Louis and St Zelie are the only married couple to have been canonised and they have a daughter who was called by Pope St Pius X, the greatest saint of the modern times. St Therese, who died in 1896, was a woman of precocious virtue and prayer. She says, “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.” She shows us that holiness is simple and hidden, it does not seek recognition but turning away from self to God, it makes within the human heart a place for Jesus.

As is the case with Jesus, holiness and goodness does not exist in a vacuum. It has a context. In Jesus’ case the context was the holy family. Extraordinary goodness does not exist in isolation. If you see a good child, you can generally presume that this goodness comes through the parents. Jesus was taught by Mary and St Joseph. St Therese is the daughter of holiness. The Church recognised that goodness is caught and so investigated her parents and found two saints.

These three saints show us the integrity of virtue and holiness. The path to holiness is the path of struggle and ordinary life. It is carried and lived with love and dependence on God. They experienced the mercy of the Father and this mercy crafted the way they lived and loved. In this they are of great relevance for us. They have been where we are and have together allowed God to perfect them. Being a family, the Martins prove that the family is the seed ground of holiness and goodness. We can learn from them.

Visit one of the churches which will host the relics. Pray and experience the saints. You will experience God and perhaps your life will change. As with a sacred site or souvenir, you can, through the saint, experience and connect with the holiness of God.

With my prayers and best wishes,
✠ Bishop Greg Homeming OCD
The facade of the Catholic Cathedral in Manila is bathed in red light during the observance of Red Wednesday on Nov. 27, 2019.

Christians who suffer from persecution across the world were honoured during the observance of “Red Wednesday,” a global campaign to encourage people to stand up for religious freedom.

In the Philippines, red lights illuminated at least 2,000 prominent landmarks and churches across the country to highlight global religious persecution.
As one year slowly comes to an end and another waits to be hailed, there is always a foreboding as we remember the wish: “May you live in interesting times”. For others who have seen more years ending than they choose to recall, they silently hum: “Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile”.

On the ninth of November 1989 we saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ripping down of the Iron Curtain. The end to the Cold War was declared at the Malta Summit three weeks later. It became one of the most significant events in modern European History. I recall it as we prepare to enter a New Year. From being a symbol of oppression, death and destruction, the wall tumbled down and freedom and hope for many was born.

On the 6th of May 2016 Pope Francis told the European Union to ‘tear down the walls’ and build a better, less discriminatory society.

Pope Francis has offered the same advice to the Church in these troubled times: “Tear down the walls, open the doors, let the Church always be a place of mercy and hope, where everyone is welcomed, loved and forgiven” (July 12, 2017). His advice is timely.

The church is in free fall. Some would even say that society has put the church out in the cold. Gone are the days of thronging congregations, political influence and being part of the privileged set. Now it is no longer a question of whether the prodigals will return. Rather it is about what they will find if and when they return. It is no longer a question of increasing numbers of adherents, but humbly welcoming the poor in spirit with a sense of repentance and with open doors as we beg pardon for our sins. It is within humble and welcoming communities that we will be empowered and sustained.

Over the past fifty years in Australia, we have been tardy in Pastoral Planning. We have enjoyed being a pampered church, with high social status and enjoying a comfort zone.

We enjoyed the Second Vatican Council but have been selective in what we took to heart. I have read the projection that a third of parishes in Australia will close within twenty years. Hard to believe but where is the forward planning to offer a new path to follow? Hopefully the upcoming Plenary Council will offer some direction. If the Australian Church seems weakened, then there is every reason for each diocese to have a Pastoral Planning Office staffed with spiritually convinced and competent people, who understand demographics, trends and onward planning.

As we look over the wall into 2020, there will be the usual plethora of issues and causes clamouring for attention. I believe we need to get back to the real mission of the church and re-establish its identity as truthful, caring and generous.

We can only do this with transparent procedures that will open the way for laity and clergy to work together.

In many ways the church of the future will continue to reflect many of the same issues that are reflected in our society in governance, politics, the way we treat one another and the challenge to care for the environment.

I believe that the church we build tomorrow is born on a return to deep personal prayer that we say today. We have new hope for 2020 that will help us go beyond the wall of common opinion that offers only defeatism and pessimism. With true intent to heal our church may it be a time to sit with those who suffer, to be supportive of victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence and to be last with the least.

I wish you the Blessings of Christmas and a purposeful New Year on the other side.

Father Peter M. Karam. Editor & Publisher.
Catholic education is an unbroken tradition in this country, commencing with the establishment of the first Catholic school in Parramatta in 1820.

Founded by the Irish priest, John Therry, Parramatta Marist School’s records reveal 31 students comprised the school’s enrolment in early 1821.

Catholic education in this country has come far since the founding of Parramatta Marist 200 years ago. The steady growth of Catholic education in Australia can be attributed to the commitment and funding by the dioceses, religious orders and families. In 2019, Catholic schools in New South Wales educate one-fifth of the state’s students. This equates to 254,952 students across 598 schools in NSW. In the Diocese of Lismore alone, approximately 18,500 students attend one of the 46 schools across the diocese.

In early 2014, His Holiness Pope Francis expressed that, ‘Catholic educational institutions offer everyone an education aimed at the integral development of the person that responds to the right of all people to have access to knowledge and understanding’. Education of the whole person is the founding philosophy of Catholic education and we recognise that parents are the first and primary educators of children and young people. Our role as Catholic educators is to complement the role of parents in the education of their children.

Taking this further, Pope Francis in 2018 stated that Catholic education gives ‘soul to the world’. I love what this challenges us to do and be. In these contemporary times, where change is rapid and unrelenting, it is important that those involved in Catholic education continue to be attentive to the following:

- Creating spaces for cultural encounter and dialogue and make schools educating communities.
- Educating with a sense of hope, teaching our young people to face social change optimistically by immersing our young people in ‘reality with the light that radiates from the promise of Christian salvation’.
- Maintaining continuity between our foundational mission and the Church’s mission of evangelisation.

It is my firm belief that Catholic education in the Diocese of Lismore is well positioned to provide an education which gives soul to a globalised world. There is much to celebrate in the legacy of the 200-year history of Catholic education in this country.
Imagine you could meet and greet a saint, which saint would you choose? This book offers a virtual encounter with 100+ saints from all around the world. Woman and men, carpenters and scholars, mothers and popes, princes and paupers: their inspiring life stories are linked to real life modern questions and together with them answers are found.

Anyone can become a saint! Every saint is different, with their own unique personality and destiny. Each of them found their vocation in a different way – demonstrating that God has a special plan and vocation for each individual.

Great as a gift, for Parishes and for School R/E

Fr Michel Remery is a Catholic priest, founder of Tweeting with God and author of various books. He studied architecture (1992-1996) and worked several years before studying philosophy and theology in Rome (1999-2006). His PhD was on the relationship between liturgy and architecture. He became an assistant priest in Leiden in the Netherlands (2006-2012), where he mainly worked with young people and students. It was here that Tweeting with God came into being. As the Vice Secretary General of the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (2012-2017) Father Michel was, among other tasks, the secretary of commissions related to Social Communications, Youth and Catechesis. In 2018 he continued his priestly mission in Luxembourg, where he is the national youth chaplain and committed to youth ministry on an international level as director of Tweeting with God.
Newman College Rector Fr Bill Uren says the Timothy Schmalz sculpture, Homeless Jesus, has been placed in the courtyard at the college’s entrance, in front of the chapel, to call people’s attention to those on the margins of society.

‘We decided to put it in front of the chapel for a couple of reasons. Firstly, so that everybody coming in and out of the college would see it and it would remind them of the plight of the homeless in Melbourne and other places.

‘Secondly, we have a lot of weddings at our chapel that are often big events. And we thought it would be a timely reminder to people coming to worship at the chapel, not only weddings, but people generally who come of a Sunday to Mass.’

The original Homeless Jesus sculpture was installed in 2013 at the Jesuit-run Regis College at the University of Toronto, after it was rejected by two other churches because of its confronting nature.

Schmalz presented a miniature version of the statue to Pope Francis in 2013 and another cast of the statue was installed on the street leading to St Peter’s Basilica in 2016. There are currently casts of the sculpture around the world, including one outside Sacred Heart Cathedral in Townsville.

Originally, the plan was to install a sculpture of John Henry Newman, who was canonised last month by Pope Francis, at Newman College, as part of its centenary anniversary commemorations.

However, Fr Uren said it was decided that Homeless Jesus might have a more timely message for the community. The college contacted Schmalz and a cast of the statue arrived and was installed last week.

Fr Uren said many of the students at the college come from privileged backgrounds and that he hoped the statue might inspire more of the students to undertake outreach activities such as those offered through the college.

‘Some of our students do go out with one of the vans – Coats for the Homeless – which the Order of Malta organises’, he said. ‘It’s a long term investment and a challenge to everybody, both students and visitors to the college.’
Broken Bay’s Ashleigh Green will represent young Australian Catholics on the Church’s new International Youth Advisory Body, which the Holy See has just established.

Miss Green, who was the Australian delegate at preparatory meetings for the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, said that experience was a transformative one for her as a Catholic.

“Some of the young people I met challenged me to look at my faith as a gift and not just something to be taken for granted,” she said.

“I mixed with young people from countries where Christians are persecuted, where they have to flee their countries in order to practise their faith. I met one young person from Syria who, for years, travelled from country to country as a refugee and said that the Church was her only home.

“I was challenged not only to appreciate my faith but to consider how a young refugee would feel if they turned up at my parish. I was challenged to ask myself: ‘If a young refugee came to my parish, would they experience welcome?’”

It was from that Synod of Bishops on Young People that the recommendation came for an international advisory group to be established.

When she received the invitation to be a member of that group, Miss Green went through a range of emotions.

“At first I was just shocked. Then came the excitement. And then an overwhelming feeling of responsibility,” she explained.

“Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I would be given such a platform in the Church. I am committed to using it well – not for my benefit, but for the young people of Oceania and beyond.”

Miss Green works for CatholicCare, the social welfare agency of the Archdiocese of Sydney. The 28-year-old said that work will also significantly shape the way she represents her fellow Catholics.

“I will continue to make a case for a Church that engages young people who are disconnected and marginalised,” she said.

“We now have the wisdom of Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation Christus Vivit to draw upon, which speaks to the dignity of all young people, but particularly young people who are hurt and suffering.

“One of the key themes of Christus Vivit is ‘accompaniment’ and I am committed to building a Church that is more about relationship and less about a one-size-fits-all approach.”

Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE, the Bishop Delegate for Youth, said Miss Green will be a strong voice for young Australians and young Catholics across the world.

“Ashleigh has been someone who has represented herself, as a young Catholic woman and represented the Church in Australia with great distinction as we all prepared for the Youth Synod,” he said.

“Our Church in this country is blessed to have such fine young people and Ashleigh will be able to take her wisdom to the universal Church through this group, but also bring wisdom back to us to help grow the Kingdom of God here.”

The first meeting of the International Youth Advisory Board will take place in April. Miss Green said “in the spirit of a true Millennial”, she will be sharing her experience using social media, multimedia and blogs.

“This appointment isn’t about me. It is about the young people of Australia and I’ll do whatever I can to share this journey with as many people as possible.”

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.lismorediocese.org
It’s Time.

A n appointment that extends beyond three Bishops is a long time. I refer to my appointment as Media Director, Editor of ‘Catholic Life’ and in more recent years, Media Spokesperson for the Diocese. I was appointed Media Director for the Diocese on the 1st October 1976. The December 2019 edition of ‘Catholic Life’ marks my retirement from these positions.

I am grateful to have served the people of our diocese and beyond over this period of time in various aspects of the Media Apostolate, including twenty one years in radio broadcasting, production of television programmes, publications, setting up and maintaining the Diocesan Website and ‘Catholic Life’. I would like to thank so many wonderful and talented people over the years with whom I have worked in such a challenging industry as media.

I have special thanks for my Secretary Mrs Peggy Butts and my Graphic Designer Johanna Evans.

My core belief has always been that each of us is here for a purpose and discerning that purpose takes honesty and a deep knowledge of our heritage, our society and our religious beliefs.

When what we want to do meets with what needs to be done, then that is where God wants us to be.

Farewell and best wishes,
Father Peter Karam.

Questions you ask about the Catholic Faith

Q: I had a friend who died last year and me and my close friends wanted to do a ceremony in her memory. I believe that she was baptised. I was wondering if there were appropriate ceremonies that we could do together to remember her.
A: You do not say if you or your friends are Catholic. If so, the ideal memorial would be to gather together and arrange with one of your parish priests to have a memorial Mass offered. Alternatively, It would be possible to arrange your own memorial service and I include a few suggestions below.

Gather together at a suitable and convenient location, perhaps at the burial site, or at one of your homes or a place that was special to your friend. Use some symbols that will set the scene; consider lighting a candle; displaying a photo of your friend or something that was important to her or some other symbol(s) of her life. Play a song that has meaning or brings memories and creates the appropriate atmosphere. Listen to a reading/reflection about the value of friendship or some other aspect of “the meaning of life”. Say a prayer for your friend. Conclude by playing another song.

Follow your ceremony with some refreshments and a chance to share your stories of your friend.

Q: I am a Catholic by birth and have lived my life following the catholic church. I will be having my first baby soon and my sister-in-law suggested that I should consider cord blood banking. I am not sure if this is approved by the Catholic Church. Could you please provide me information from the Catholic point of view because if it is not approved by the Catholic Church then I will not be considering this as an option. Thanks.
A: In terms of general principles the Church is supportive of advances in medical science and all efforts to alleviate suffering and bring about healing and wholeness.

In terms of cord blood banking, as I understand it the idea is that the umbilical cord is kept in storage as it contains stem cells. It is also my understanding that in terms of stem cell development, it is currently possible, or is theoretically possible to stimulate the stem cell to grow in such a manner that it grows into an organ. In terms of Church teaching the Church is not opposed to stem cell research and application. What the Church is opposed to is embryonic stem cell research. That is the killing of an embryo in order to “harvest” the stem cells that are contained in the embryo. Cord blood banking is not intrinsically wrong in that it does no damage to anyone or anything.
Pope Francis delivers his speech at the Atomic Bomb Hypocenter in Nagasaki on Nov. 24. He railed against the use of nuclear weapons as he paid tribute to the ‘unspeakable horror’ suffered by victims of the Nagasaki atomic bomb.

Pope Francis called for sustained efforts to end the resource-wasting arms race to create a world free of nuclear weapons as he visited the nuclear-bombed Japanese city of Nagasaki. The head of the Catholic Church made the call on Nov. 24 at the Atomic Bomb Hypocenter Park in Nagasaki, one of two Japanese cities bombed by the US 74 years ago.

“This place makes us deeply aware of the pain and horror that we human beings are capable of inflicting upon one another,” Pope Francis said.

The pontiff is also scheduled to visit Hiroshima, the first of the two Japanese cities bombed with nuclear weapons during the Second World War.

“The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, just as the possession of atomic weapons is immoral,” he said. “We will be judged on this.” The US bombings in 1945 devastated the two cities and killed an estimated 226,000 people instantly and a large number over a period of time.

Pope Francis recalled that a damaged cross and statue of Our Lady recently discovered in the Cathedral of Nagasaki “remind us once more of the unspeakable horror suffered in the flesh by the victims of the bombing and their families.”

The world longs for “security, peace and stability... but possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is not the answer to this desire; indeed they seem always to thwart it,” he said.

“Our world is marked by a perverse dichotomy that tries to defend and ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust, one that ends up poisoning relationships between peoples and obstructing any form of dialogue.”

The arms race waste “precious resources” in a world where millions of children and families live in inhumane conditions, he said. The money used to manufacture, upgrade, maintain and sell destructive weapons is “an affront crying out to heaven,” he said.

The involvement of all sections of society needs to create a world free from nuclear weapons. Individuals, religious communities, civil society, countries that possess nuclear weapons and those that do not, the military and private sectors and international organisations have a role in making the world free of nuclear weapons, the pope said.

The “joint and concerted” effort against nuclear weapons must be “to build mutual trust and thus to surmount the current climate of distrust.”

The pope said the climate of distrust could lead to a dismantling of the international arms control framework and erosion of multilateralism. It is “serious in light of the growth of new forms of military technology,” he said.

The situation calls for the attention and commitment of all leaders, he said without naming any country or leader.

The number of nuclear weapons is decreasing globally but the pace is slower compared to what it was 25 years ago, according to published records of the Federation of American Scientists.

While the United States, Russia and the United Kingdom are reducing their overall warhead inventories, France and Israel have stable stocks, while China, Pakistan, India and North Korea are increasing their warhead inventories, according to the federation.

The Catholic Church is “irrevocably committed to promoting peace,” Pope Francis said. The Church supports international efforts to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, he said.

He said that “a world without nuclear weapons is possible and necessary” and urged political leaders not to forget that “these weapons cannot protect us from current threats to national and international security.”

He wanted world leaders to reflect on how the world’s resources can be used for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to achieve integrated human development.

Francis declares that possession of nuclear weapons is as immoral as the use of atomic energy for purposes of war.
Life shocks are leaving older Australians homeless for the first time in their golden years.

Older Australians are increasingly at risk of homelessness, with life shocks in senior years leaving many without a roof over their head for the first time, new research shows.

Health problems, relationship breakdowns, deaths in the family and rental evictions are among the key factors leaving lifelong renters and property owners homeless in later years, according to an Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) report.

The proportion of homeless people aged 65 to 74 years old jumped almost 40 per cent in the five years to 2016, and one in every seven people homeless at the last Census was over 55.

“I don’t think people realise how quickly that problem has grown and how much further it has to grow,” said report co-author Professor Andrew Beer of the University of South Australia.

With more Baby Boomers reaching retirement and those in Generation X more likely to rent for life, Professor Beer said, Australia was at “the very start of a tsunami of older persons becoming homeless”.

“That’s a major concern because unless we get the structural issues right to fix the problem, we’re going to see elderly people dying in the streets.”

Domestic and family violence, housing crises and financial difficulties were the three main reasons older Australians sought specialist homelessness services in 2017-18, according to the report by researchers from the University of South Australia and Swinburne University of Technology.

Indigenous people over 65 were 12.3 times more likely to access services than their non-indigenous counterparts.

Those with “conventional housing histories” who experience a financial or other shock late in life are one of three broad groups of older Australians that become homeless.

People with a history of transient work or unstable housing and those who previously experienced homelessness, are the others.

Support for these groups is fragmented, poorly resourced and unable to provide long-term solutions, the report found. Of 1518 homelessness services across the country, only three are specialist services for older people.

“When homelessness is experienced for the first time later in life, people commonly have limited knowledge of welfare and homelessness services,” the report said. “In addition, as often happens, if they do not see themselves as someone who is homeless, they are less likely to access traditional homelessness services.”

Those older clients that do seek help are spending longer in those services, which the researchers say suggests they are having difficulty finding appropriate housing options.

With about a third of people over 55 living on less than $400 a week, boosting the supply of affordable, secure and appropriate housing was key, Professor Beer said.

“[The government] simply has to build the housing that needs to be provided,” he said. “Older homeless Australians can never get a job again; a market-based solution simply isn’t going to work for them,” he added, noting supplying housing would cut costs for other government services.

Making welfare support – particularly online systems – easier to use for older Australians was also key, with the report noting: “Centrelink has become more difficult to navigate over the past two decades”.

In one incident, recounted at a workshop for the homeless and those in the sector, an older migrant was deterred from seeking help when they were shouted at and told to sit down while standing close to Centrelink reception to make sure they could hear when called.

Other priorities include funding to enable aged-care providers to build specialist facilities for older clients, and reviewing, increasing and indexing the Homelessness Supplement for aged-care providers, the report said.
While there are two different Easter Masses, one for the Vigil and another for Easter Sunday, four different sets of Mass texts are provided for Christmas – the Vigil Mass, Mass at Midnight, Mass at Dawn and Mass during the day. It is important that the texts chosen fit the actual time of the celebration as they include images corresponding to a gradual movement from darkness into daylight.

The different Masses now celebrated at Christmas developed over a period of time. The present Mass during the Day was the original papal Mass celebrated at St Peter’s from the feast’s establishment in 336. The theme of light shining in the darkness which is predominant in the readings and prayers of this Mass is appropriate for a feast celebrating the triumph of the ‘unconquered son’ of justice.

The Mass at Dawn, or ‘Shepherd’s Mass’, was the second to develop. It was celebrated at St Peter’s from the end of the 4th century. From around 550, however, the Mass of St Anastasia, an Eastern martyr whose feast fell on December 25, replaced it for a while. Later the Shepherd’s Mass was restored with a simple commemoration of St Anastasia included. The latter was removed by post-Vatican II reforms of the calendar.

The Mass during the Night is the newest of the Christmas Masses. Since the middle of the 5th century, Roman Christians have celebrated the liturgy ‘at night’ (neither the old or new Latin missals specify midnight) near a replica of Bethlehem’s manger in the Basilica of St Mary Major. In fact, the original Mass seems to have been celebrated at cockcrow at the end of an all-night vigil. By this time, the theme of the feast had changed from a holistic celebration on the incarnation and manifestation of Christ to a more particular celebration of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

When we gather for Christmas Mass as a community of faith, we leave behind the commercial hype and the vaguely religious figure of Santa Clause. We don’t come together to listen to lovely music or to watch a splendid ritual, but to meet and worship the Lord, who is God’s great gift to the world.

A week after Christmas is the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, the Church’s most ancient and most important festival related to Mary. It is also New Year’s Day. What liturgical New Year resolutions might we make to extend this season of peace and goodwill throughout 2020. Perhaps to become better informed about liturgy which is, after all, “the work of the people”, or to support those who prepare and lead worship in parishes by offering positive feedback rather than only criticism when something doesn’t suit us, or to enter wholeheartedly into parish liturgical celebrations by being attentive and welcoming and by singing and responding enthusiastically!

“When the Word became man, earth was joined to heaven.
May he give you his peace and good will, and fellowship with all the heavenly hosts.”
(Solemn Blessing, Midnight Mass)

A BLESSED AND PEACEFUL CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!
There have been many, many bush fires on the east coast of Australia, but it seems a lot of them have been in our Lismore Diocese.

Scores of houses have been destroyed, many properties damaged and many people are now in need.

The Diocese intends giving some Christmas support to all households who have lost their dwellings. We also propose working with local councils to find ways to help build up local communities where there has been significant damage.

We will certainly do whatever we can, within our means, to help those who have suffered.

Should you wish to help us in this, you can send your donations to the Chancery Office, Fire Appeal, PO Box 1, Lismore NSW 2480 or by electronic transfer to the following account:

**BSB:** 062 565  
**A/c No:** 10854726  
**A/c Name:** Diocesan Investment Fund  
**Ref:** Fire Appeal

**All Wednesday Masses in the Diocese, between now and Christmas, will be offered for the gift of rain.**
LATEST IMPACT ASSESSMENT
in Force from Friday 28 November
as at 28 November 2019

559 Homes destroyed
190 Homes damaged
3,161 Homes saved

36 Facilities destroyed
53 Facilities damaged
238 Facilities saved

1,100 Outbuildings destroyed
439 Outbuildings damaged
3,023 Outbuildings saved

So far this bush fire season, 658 homes have been destroyed with more than 9,400 buildings saved.
Aboriginal and Catholic faiths blended in stained-glass window of Alice Springs church

It’s the Mother Mary and Jesus Christ, but not as you might have seen them before.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) Catholic church in Alice Springs has commissioned an Aboriginal artist from its congregation to design a new sanctuary window celebrating the blending of Catholic and Indigenous beliefs, to pay homage to its many Aboriginal parishioners.

“I thought about how my ancestors taught me, their beliefs and I remembered how they celebrated...”

In the Northern Territory, a third of Catholics are Aboriginal.
God in their own way,” said the artist, Kathleen Kemarre Wallace, an eastern Arrernte woman. “I feel so happy to see it because this is my first stained glass and I’m so happy to give it to the parish and all of the Arrernte people of this land,” she said.

Ms Wallace was 13 when she moved from the bush to Santa Teresa, an Aboriginal community an hour’s drive from Alice Springs.

“When I went to Santa Teresa, nuns taught me the Bible. When I came to Santa Teresa I couldn’t speak English – I learned it there,” she said.

“(Catholicism and my family’s traditional beliefs) are similar – it wasn’t hard for me. My grandfather’s ancestors gave him a dream of three circles – grandfather, father and totem spirit – like the Holy Trinity.”

That design sits in the window’s apex.

“I became a Catholic. My family all came from the bush and they all became Catholic,” Ms Wallace said.

The church’s Aboriginal congregation chose Ms Wallace to design the window. Her design shows Mary and Jesus as Aboriginal people and she painted their bodies with designs used in traditional Arrernte celebrations.

“I first started painting on bodies for celebration when I was six. It has been really different learning to paint on canvas.” The mural’s eight distinct oval designs represent Arrernte anpernirrentye or skin names. Ms Wallace said the painting’s dots represented “everything in the world – we are all connected”.

‘A very humble beginning’

Missionaries brought Catholicism to Central Australian communities in the early 20th century, building missions, translating the Bible into local languages and encouraging the adoption of Catholicism.

“It’s an ongoing process,” said Father Asaeli Raass, the OLSH Alice Springs parish priest. “The fusion of much western Catholicism and trying to explore the deep-seated wisdom of the Arrernte people and how they understand the mystery called God, has been challenging and faced a lot of misunderstanding in terms of culture.”

Early Catholic missionaries encouraged Aboriginal people to abandon their language and belief system and to fully adopt Catholic beliefs.

Today, Father Raass said that attitude had changed and he referenced Pope John Paul II’s 1986 speech in Alice Springs to Aboriginal Catholics:

“Your culture, which shows the lasting genius and dignity of your race, must not be allowed to disappear. Do not think that your gifts are worth so little that you should no longer bother to maintain them. Share them with each other and teach them to your children. Your songs, your stories, your paintings, your dances, your languages, must never be lost.

“We have struggled, the Arrernte have struggled,” Father Raass said. “We hope that we will respect more of their culture, more of their religiosity and also not undermine what the missionaries are trying to do.

“This is a work of art displaying Mary the Mother of God as our patron from an Arrernte worldview. It’s exciting, I’m so happy today – I hope that all Catholics consider this church a home.

“Deep down, it has been the desire for everybody to come together to appreciate each other’s cultural, artistic contribution. And we hope that this is just a very humble beginning and we grow closer and closer to each other.”

Strong ties

Bishop for the Northern Territory Charles Gauci said the window was unique in the Northern Territory and symbolised how far the church had come. “A third of the people in the Northern Territory diocese are Aboriginal,” he said.

“We acknowledge mistakes done inadvertently over the years and we want to move on from there, but we acknowledge that there were mistakes made. “That journey is an ongoing journey and forever we keep looking at how we can build on the goodness of thousands of years of tradition and spirituality.”

The window design celebrates the parish’s strong ties to the local Aboriginal community.
Catholic communities across Australia are being urged to help shatter the stigma surrounding mental illness by supporting and welcoming those who suffer and their families.

With one in five Australians experiencing a mental health illness each year and mental illness being the third-leading cause of disability, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference on Friday released new mental illness and outreach guidelines for parishes.

The extent of mental illness in Australia is reflected in annual suicide rates, which show that 3,128 people died from intentional self-harm in 2017 – an increase of 9.1 percent from the previous year, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

In a letter to parishes throughout Australia in preparation for World Mental Health Day on October 10, Bishop Don Sproxton said the motivation to create the new resources was captured in the powerful opening words of the document’s title – “Do Not Be Afraid” – from Matthew’s Gospel.

“These powerful words challenge us all to be authentic. The Christian community is mandated to include every member by acknowledging their baptismal call and their gifts and presence,” he said.

“The guidelines provide parishes with very useful information about mental illness in its various forms and the issue of suicide in Australia receives special attention.

“When your parish or Church community gathers, nearly everyone there will know someone who has a mental illness; few will come forward, but it is there.”

Bishop Sproxton, the Bishop Delegate for the Australian Catholic Disability Council, said the stigma of mental illness can be just as damaging to families and carers as the illness itself.

“In fact, misconceptions about mental illness often exacerbate the condition,” he said, “Pope Francis reassures us that: ‘A God who can enter into the depths of our suffering is not repulsed by our woundedness or disfigurements, but who meets us whenever and whoever we are, heals us by bringing us ever closer to himself’.”

“So, if God can meet us whoever we are, surely we are called to meet our brothers and sisters suffering with the isolation and loneliness that mental illness can sometimes bring.”

Sr Myree Harris RSJ, acting chair of the Australian Catholic Disability Council, said the guidelines were designed to provide information about mental illness, in order to promote understanding and lessen stigma.

“Parishes across Australia want to show people with mental illness that they are welcomed and valued as members of the parish community. However, they are often unsure how to do this,” she said.

“There is material that may assist people with mental illness to realise God’s special love for them. There are suggested prayers and points for homilies that may assist liturgical celebrants.

“Having lived with people with mental illness at Gethsemane Community (Petersham, New South Wales) for the past 30 years, I believe that this is a valuable resource for many sections of the Church community.

“It may inspire people to advocate for better funding for mental health services and for more social and affordable housing.”

Dr Paul Fanning, a former New South Wales area director of mental health services, said recent research showed that mental health is now the most frequently consulted upon health issue by general practitioners in Australia.

“Epidemiologically, I think we are still only seeing the tip of the iceberg and I have serious concerns for the welfare of people with serious and complex mental illness, such as schizophrenia, who also suffer much lower life expectancies due to coexisting physical illnesses and high rates of suicide. The systems are simply not there to care for them adequately,” he said.

“Their carers also suffer greatly on a lifelong basis as a consequence.”

To access the guidelines and associated resource materials, including a prayer card and poster, go to: https://www.catholic.org.au/donotbeafraid.

If you or someone you know is in immediate need, call the following (24/7) crisis support numbers: Lifeline: 131 114 Suicide Callback Service: 1300 659 467 Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800 Menslink: Australia 1300 789 978 Family Drug Support: 1300 368 186

It’s time to end the stigma AROUND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
“By Deeds Not Words”

It’s 9.30am Tuesday, Lunch With Friends day, at St. Joseph’s Parish kitchen, as Ian and Colleen start cutting up fruit kindly donated by Ozharvest. Soon Laure turns up with Peter and Gabe to help. By 10.30 they have a large pot of fruit salad ready for the day. Meanwhile, Bill and David pack the van with paper plates, cups, plastic cutlery, tea and coffee, cordial, urns, bread, serving utensils and countless paraphernalia. John checks that all is done and Pat locks up the kitchen. Off we all go to the park.

It’s 10.45am at the park as the van arrives. The other volunteers are already waiting. Everyone has a job, if you don’t— you just pitch in. Tables and drink stations are quickly set up and the area tidied up. By 11.00am we’re sitting around taking turns to guess what will be on the menu today. Peter reckons it will be parmigiana but the money’s on roast chicken. Our volunteers come from diverse areas, denominations and backgrounds, but with a common purpose. The crowd begins to arrive, mostly familiar faces, some cheery, some gruff, some lonely, most quiet and appreciative. Some drive, some walk, some live in government housing, some live with friends, some sleep in cars and some are not sure where they’ll sleep tonight.

Meanwhile, John and Matthew take the van to collect the cooked meal. Back they come with roast chicken and vegies, kindly donated by Tweed Heads Bowls Club and South Tweed Sports. The crowd numbers are down today (about 40), down on the usually 60-80. Not to worry, any leftovers are taken up to Anglicare Blair Athol. The odd visitor comes along, passing through pulling a small suitcase, stopping for a meal and thankful for the hospitality. John says grace and thanks the volunteers, who then line up to tray meals to the gathering crowd seated on the park benches and stretching out on the grassy mounds. As the masses are fed, the volunteers take theirs and join the crowd. Time to catch up with friends.

Everyone coming together around a meal. This ministry can be a wonderful experience, reaching out to help the less fortunate and marginalised in our community. As Jesus said – “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me”. With appetites satisfied, we pack up and head back to St. Joseph’s kitchen for a final wash-up with Leonie. Many hands make light work so that we are out the door by 1.30pm.

If you would like to contribute more to our community, meet some like-minded people and help the marginalised, you can volunteer or make a donation by contacting St. Joseph’s Parish office on 5536 7522.

Pat Twohill
Koala Friends

During the founding years of Holy Family we aimed to establish our grounds as a koala friendly environment.

Holy Family now has approximately 200 healthy mature koala friendly trees on site and it was with great excitement that recently a young two year old male koala decided to make Holy Family his home. After a short stay with the Friends of the Koala organisation and a little bit of TLC, “Cassidy” will be returning to our school shortly to share this wonderful environment with us. It is hoped that he will be joined in the near future with a young female koala and establish a colony of koalas at our school.

Cassidy was named by the students after Mr Peter Cassidy, a founding teacher at Holy Family, who has been instrumental in this process. Peter has been planning for this day for many years, supporting the planting of our current mature trees with students many years ago.

Holy Family was recently successful in securing a grant that has enabled us to plant an additional 800 koala friendly seedlings. The Spirit of Jesus was definitely alive in our school with Peter Cassidy and some wonderful volunteers from our community joining our Holy Family Students and teachers planting these trees during the last few weeks.

This forest will contribute substantially to filling an urgent need for alternative koala habitat sites in the Ballina district. With so much disaster and loss in our community at the moment we are feeling blessed to be able to give some of our wildlife a home here at Holy Family.
Play based Learning

In Kindergarten we are learning through play. We have engaged in a play based approach because we value the importance of play to young children’s development and their learning. Play is viewed as the vehicle by which children learn. Our Early Years staff have been researching and inquiring into best practice in play based learning. This Term we have provided opportunities for our Kindergarten learners to engage in different types of play each morning for one hour. There has been dramatic play, role play, construction play, musical play, outdoor play and social play. We have also visited other schools and pre-schools to share and gather ideas. It has been wonderful for our Kindergarten students to demonstrate leadership and orientate our Minifins students into play-based learning in the Kindergarten classrooms in readiness for 2020.

Tim Bleakley (Principal)
The #Lismmeditates project was crafted by the Student Leadership Team of St Mary’s Catholic College with an aim to raise awareness of mental health not only in our school, but within the wider diocese. The students wanted this to be a powerful symbol of solidarity – a unified demonstration of support for all people affected by Mental Health.

SMCC Student Leadership Team invited all schools in the Lismore Diocese to unite, taking part in 5 minutes of Christian meditation, at the same time, with the same hope. “We want students to recognise that God is alive in their life and in the life of the school community through the Holy Spirit.”

The decision was made to coincide #Lismmeditates with RUOK Day, providing the perfect opportunity for the students of the Lismore Diocese to reflect on the stigma of mental health and through Christian meditation, pray for those whose lives are touched by Mental Health. Through this student are encouraged to ask a potentially life-changing question to their peers; ‘Are you ok?’.

At 8.50am on Thursday 12th September numerous Primary and Secondary Catholic Schools in the Lismore Diocese along with CSO Staff stopped and prayed together. At the BBI Religious Education Symposium Lismore CSO representatives, clergy and other delegates from across Australia and New Zealand stopped and joined #Lismmeditates.

Exuro

On Tuesday 30th October nine of our Year 5 students travelled to Mt St Patrick’s School at Murwillumbah to attend ‘EXURO’. Exuro is a faith retreat for year 5 students and was facilitated by the year 9 Ministry students.

Students from the catholic schools in the Tweed region gathered together for a day of sharing their faith stories, discussing the challenges they face as a person of faith and exploring what it means to be a ‘disciple’.

The focus of the day was on the youth and their faith and their role in the church, their school and the community. We are reminded of the importance of believing in and listening to our youth by Timothy 4:12 “Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers in your speech, your conduct, your love, faith and purity”.

The message from the day was clear: young people have a voice and can ‘set the world on fire’ by living a good life and loving and respecting each other. We are proud of our year 5 students who are living MJR on a daily basis and are role models within our school community.
Faith Immersion

Recently thirteen Year 11 students along with five staff members embarked on a faith Immersion Experience to Timor Leste (East Timor). Students participated in a wide range of activities with members of the local communities and in particular with the students of the village of Turiscai. Students were able to assist students of the same age with conversational English, spend time reading stories at the local preschool as well as participating in cultural nights.

A significant part of the immersion was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, joining Xavier Catholic College to Our Lady of Fatima Secondary School which is now our ‘sister school’. The document was co-signed by the Archbishop of Dili and Mr Michael Vella, Principal of Xavier Catholic College. Our Lady of Fatima School lacks many of the resources found even in the poorest of schools with no library, few textbooks and little technology. In addition, a bare classroom with a mishmash of donated desks and chairs makes for a rather primitive learning environment. However, of most concern was the fact that 400 students and eight teachers all share just one toilet which is at least 200m from the school building. In discussion with Fr Annabil, the Parish Priest at Turiscai, it has been decided that the Xavier Catholic College community will target this project as its major fundraiser. An anonymous $1000 donation has already been gratefully received. Any donations from members of our Lismore Diocese are warmly welcomed and can be made via the College front office either in an envelope marked “Timor Leste Project” or by contacting the office on 66 180180.

The HSC Class of 2020 recently travelled to the beautiful setting of QCCC North Tamborine for our annual Senior Retreat. The students were fortunate to be joined on retreat by Jesuit priest, Fr David Braithwaite SJ from the Sydney based Cardoner Project. The students participated in workshops on Pursuing the Magis and Living our Ignatian Values led by The Two Wolves Leadership Collective (a group of mostly Sydney University students who are graduates of Jesuit schools).

Xavier Catholic College congratulates the graduating class of 2019 as they have completed their examinations and celebrated with the annual College Formal.
Parish School Christmas Carnival

Our 2019 Christmas Carnival marked the 36th year the carnival has been bringing our parish together to celebrate being part of a vibrant Catholic community. As the smell of beef rolls and steaks cooking on the barbeque filled the air, the excitement started to build.

It was heart-warming to see the joy and smiles on the faces of both children and adults as they enjoyed the rides, caught up with people they haven’t seen for a while.

The night concluded with a wonderful Christmas Tableau presented by all of the students. This year the students retold the story of Christmas. It was a beautiful story and a reminder to us all why we truly celebrate Christmas.

The success of the Christmas Carnival takes an enormous amount of hard work from a dedicated team and I would personally like to thank everyone who gave of their time to ensure it was such a positive afternoon for our parish school community.
Congratulations Australian Training Award Winner

Arcadia Meldrum was announced Australian School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year 2019 at the Awards ceremony at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre last night.

Supported by family and staff from Newman College and the Lismore Diocese, Arcadia graciously accepted the award amongst the six finalists from all over Australia.

“Thanks to all the wonderful finalists who deserve another applause. Thank you to my employer Rydges Port Macquarie for the Traineeship opportunity. Thank you to NSW Training for helping me get here. Thank you to Newman College for delivering these courses and supporting me through this process, your amazing and lastly a big thank you to my Mum and Dad and family, who have always been a solid support.” Words spoken by Arcadia upon accepting her award.

Arcadia commented “My legs were shaking so much I was glad I could hide them behind the lecturn”.

“It’s been a huge couple of weeks firstly in Sydney with NSW VET ambassador training, then the finalist panel interviews in Brisbane. But it’s been an amazing experience. The skills and friendships I’ve gained and the experiences I’ve been given, will stay with me forever.”

After winning the NSW Training Awards School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year, Arcadia attended professional development in Sydney ahead of the National Training Awards in Brisbane. This included developing communication, interview and public speaking skills, photo and video shoots and meeting with the Hon Dr Geoff Lee MP, Minister for Skills and Higher Education.

Recently completing her HSC at Newman College, including a Certificate III in Tourism and Certificate II in Business Services and her Traineeship with Rydges in Port Macquarie, the next step sees Arcadia returning to Newman College, not as a student, but a Teacher’s Assistant Trainee in Sport Leisure and Recreation. This gap year position combines Arcadia’s talent in event coordinating and her love of sport.
Ahead of next week’s UN climate summit, Pacific Island voices are highlighting the need for climate action to be front and centre of the Australian government’s Pacific Step Up.

The 2019 Caritas State of the Environment for Oceania Report shows that in the last year, extreme weather events such as cyclones and floods destroyed hundreds of homes, displaced thousands of people and created food shortages. Communities saw the ongoing erosion of their coastlines and infrastructure due to rising seas.

“When coastlines are being eroded, hospitals and other essential infrastructure being destroyed or damaged and water sources being poisoned, we know we are facing a true emergency in our region,” Mr Nelson said.

“If Australia wants to be seen as a good neighbour in the Pacific region, then it needs to step up in this regard, putting words into action by committing more funding to climate change adaptation strategies.”

Each year, the Caritas State of the Environment for Oceania Report gathers personal accounts of Pacific people and communities experiencing changes in their climate and environment. It examines five issues affecting people’s lives: extreme weather, impacts on food and water, coastal erosion and sea level rise, offshore mining and drilling and climate finance.

The report also highlights actions needed from the Australian Government and others to respond to climate change.

“We are in a critical year for action on climate change,” says Nic Nelson, Caritas Australia’s Director of Advocacy and Communications. “Australia needs to step up our leadership on climate. We need to deliver on the commitments we made under the Paris Agreement.”

“Firstly, our Pacific neighbours are looking to us for real action to reduce emissions at home. Secondly, we should be providing Australia’s fair share of global climate finance – that’s funding to help countries like our Pacific neighbours tackle climate change. These are two basic aspects of climate justice. It’s also just being a good neighbor,” said Mr Nelson.

One of the key issues at next week’s climate summit will be climate finance. In 2019, the Prime Minister announced that Australia would stop contributing to the Green Climate Fund, the globally agreed vehicle for providing climate finance. This puts us at odds with almost every other country in the Paris Agreement. Caritas Australia urges the Australian government to re-instate its funding for the Green Climate Fund.

The report was published by the Caritas agencies of Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Tonga.

For an interactive map of this year’s stories, visit www.caritas.org.au/oceania

Caritas Media contact: Daniel Nour on 0407 536 130 or caritasmedia@caritas.org.au.
On Sunday 3rd November 2019, Macleay Valley Parish celebrated the blessing and official opening of their new parish office by Bishop Greg Homeming.

Also in attendance was Kempsey Shire Council Mayor, Liz Campbell. The celebrations began with a special Mass, followed by the blessing, unveiling of the plaque, and a scrumptious gourmet morning tea.

The new office was possible because of the remarkable generosity of the late Matthew Riordan who left the parish a bequest in his will. The parish office has been built in memory of his late parents Denis and Isabella Riordan. Various members of the Riordan family, including Matthew’s brother Ken, were present for the celebrations.

In blessing and opening the office, Bishop Greg prayed that it would always be a place where the Gospel of love was lived and shared with the community. He hoped that it would always be a place of hospitality and welcome, helping people especially those who are poor and most in need within the community.

The office is adorned with original artwork and photography by parishioners. The works were chosen to represent how the parish is there seeking to be the face of Christ, serving and journeying with all people in the Valley; across the many townships, mountains, parks, rivers, farmlands, and beaches.

The office’s completion brings to fruition many years of planning, design and construction that was led by former Parish Priest Fr Paul Gooley. During the Mass, which also marked the annual Parish Feast Day (All Saints), current Parish Priest Fr James Foster remarked that “the new parish office is truly a wonderful blessing that will serve our community for decades to come! I sincerely thank the Riordan family, Fr Paul, the Parish Finance Council, the parish staff, parishioners, and all those who ensured the great success of this project.”
St. Michael’s Golden-Domed Monastery is a functioning monastery in Kiev, Ukraine.

The monastery is located on the Western side of the Dnieper River on the edge of a bluff northeast of the St. Sophia Cathedral. The site is located in the historic and administrative Uppertown and overlooks the city’s historical commercial and merchant quarter, the Podil neighborhood.

Originally built in the Middle Ages by Sviatopolk II Iziaslavych, the monastery comprises the Cathedral itself (Mykhaylivs’kyi zolotoverkhyi sobor), the refectory of St. John the Divine, built in 1713, the Economic Gates (Ekonomichna vrata), constructed in 1760 and the monastery’s bell tower, which was added circa 1716-1719. The exterior of the structure was rebuilt in the Ukrainian Baroque style in the 18th century while the interior remained in its original Byzantine style. The cathedral was demolished by the Soviet authorities in the 1930s, but was recently reconstructed after Ukraine gained its independence.

More than 5,000 Sydneysiders have processed through Sydney this afternoon, united in a prayer for Christ to bless the city.

The Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, the Most Rev Anthony Fisher OP led the large crowd in the Walk With Christ procession, which has become an annual event in Sydney over the past decade.

Archbishop Fisher said the procession brought together Sydneysiders across different age groups including young adults, families and the elderly, not out of “some triumphalist desire to rub people’s faces in our religion, nor because we are in denial about our failings”.

“We walk with Christ through our streets because He is the source and summit of our faith, our institutions, our very lives”, Archbishop Fisher said.

“God is really with us, as one of us, from which our identity and mission and endeavours flow.”
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