Celebrating 160 years of Mercy in Geelong

Deputy Principal Seminar at Padua College
Commissioning and Blessing of Sr Ana Vanderfeen Building at Catherine McAuley College, Bendigo
2019 Mercy Education Leadership Day
Seeds of Justice Student Conference
Seminar for Directors of Faith & Mission and RE Coordinators

Sacred Heart College Geelong
Celebrating 160 years of Mercy in Geelong

INSIDE
This edition of the Mercy Ed newsletter features some significant events on the Mercy schools and Mercy Education calendars. Sacred Heart College Geelong acknowledged and celebrated the 160th anniversary since the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in Geelong. So many years ago, six Mercy women with enormous courage and faith in God, accepted the invitation from Archbishop Goold to venture halfway across the world to unknown shores, to unknown places, and to meet unknown people to continue the founding works of Catherine McAuley. Aren’t we glad they did and aren’t we glad they accepted many other similar invitations to create the wonderful Mercy ministries we have in Australia today?

Catherine McAuley College Bendigo recently opened and blessed the refurbished capital works and commissioned a new Sr Anastasia (Ana) Vanderfeen Building. The new building will provide state of the art and much needed facilities, enabling additional student pathways with a full commercial kitchen and a multi-bed Allied Health teaching area. The development also added a new canteen, indoor eating area and outdoor landscaping.

Regular Mercy Education events included the Seeds of Justice project in Melbourne, the annual RE seminar and the second Deputy Principals’ seminar for the year. The DP seminar was hosted for the first time by Padua College Mornington and the quality of hospitality, facilities, collegial networking and presenters was outstanding. The Mercy heritage at the College is strong and clearly evident in its buildings, culture and daily expression and enriches the Gospel message that is always at the forefront of life at Padua College.

The second Mercy Education Leadership Day was held in October and was well received by all participants. Keynote speakers Lana Turvey-Collins and Cathy Jenkins engaged the audience and challenged each of us to continue to work within our communities to enhance the mission of the Church today.

On behalf of all at Mercy Education, I wish everyone the peace, joys and blessings of the coming of the Child Jesus.

Eugene Lynch
Editor
Income was generated from funds earned from lending books from their public library, fees from teaching music and from their needlework, hand sewing gentlemen’s shirts for a firm in Melbourne.

The anniversary celebrations took several forms: Mass celebrated in the heritage precinct in front of the college grotto, a blessing and rose ceremony held in the Sisters of Mercy cemetery, Afternoon tea, Launch of the book, Mother Xavier Maguire – A Women of Faith and Vision, written by Sr Helen Delaney RSM and launched by former Melbourne Congregation Leader, Sr Kathleen Tierney RSM.

Sr Christina Aitken RSM welcomed all to the gathering on behalf of the Sisters of Mercy. “We have come,” Sr Christina said, “because we have experienced at this place aspects of the Mercy of God made possible because of the courage, dedication and passion of the first Sisters of Mercy to set foot in Geelong.”

Bishop Mark Edwards was principal celebrant, assisted by college chaplain Fr Jim Clarke, and eight priests of the Melbourne Archdiocese.

In his homily Bishop Mark spoke of his admiration for Mother Xavier and her companions: “Their ambition and vision astounds me. Starting with a 4,000-pound debt, they changed Geelong. Their hearts were in their work and, over the next 20 years, 47 young women, largely from their students, applied to join them, of whom 20 became sisters. God did bless these strong, brave, intelligent and articulate women of faith on their journey.”

Following the Eucharist, Bagpipers led the procession of Sisters, celebrants and special guests through a student guard of honour to the Sisters of Mercy cemetery on the site. Anna Negro, College Principal, carried the Mercy cross. Spontaneous applause broke out as the procession moved off, recognition of the contribution of the Sisters present in all they, too, had contributed to the education, health and welfare of the citizens of Geelong.

Catherine Middlemiss – SHC Director of Development, Marketing and Communications
Each year Mercy Education holds a Deputy Principals’ Conference. This year 39 Deputy Principals from Mercy Education and Mercy affiliated colleges in Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria, along with representatives from MEL Directors and Executive staff, came together at Padua College, Mornington for a 2-and-a-half-day seminar. The seminar focussed on the theme of ‘Managing Staff Effectively’ and was opened by Padua College Principal - Mr Anthony Banks and hosted by Vice Principal – Learning & Teaching – Ms Kelly McGurn. The hospitality and organisation at Padua College was extraordinarily generous and extended graciously by the College Leadership Team, staff, students and particularly by the Principal’s EA, Carolyn Cockerham.

Guest Presenters included Joel Zyngier – Principal Gilchrist Connell Solicitors, Jessica O’Dell – Professional Standards Claims Specialist, Catholic Church Insurances (CCI) and Judy Young, Mercy Education – Head of People and Culture. We thank CCI for the generous sponsorship it provided to the seminar and for the ongoing excellent service it provides to its many clients such as Mercy Education and ISMAPNG.

Joel Zyngier, from Gilchrist Connell Law Firm, provided the keynote address and workshops on important industrial matters such as workplace investigations and processes around Fair & Reasonable Performance Management and Disciplinary Action (or FARMADA) as Joel liked to ‘coin’ it. Jessica O’Dell - Professional Standards Claims Specialist from Catholic Church Insurances joined Joel for a Panel session and on Friday, Judy Young presented on staff appraisals and managing difficult parents, with particular reference to the recently released Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct.

All participants thoroughly enjoyed the presentations, the seminar dinner and the collegial company of the Mercy Deputy Principal network.
On Thursday 21 November 2019, the newly refurbished Sr Anastasia Vanderfeen Building was commissioned and blessed by the Most Reverend Bishop Shane Mackinlay DD, Bishop of Sandhurst.

The ceremony took place in comfort despite very hot and windy conditions on the day. The building which dated from 1976 and originally housed classrooms and the canteen, underwent major refurbishment through 2019, including the demolition of the original canteen. The project, which was undertaken by RMG, included a new canteen with indoor eating area, outdoor landscaping, full commercial kitchen and multi-bed Allied Health teaching area, transforming this building into an enviable learning area to equip young people for future pathways.

We were fortunate to have the newly ordained Bishop, Shane Mackinlay present to commission and bless the building. He commented that he too was fortunate to have had part of his education with the Sisters of Mercy.

Sr Anastasia was born Annie Vanderfeen in 1896 and attended St Mary’s College as a boarder from 1912. She professed her vows in 1916 and began her long teaching career in 1917 at St Kilian’s. In 1930 Sister Ana moved to St Mary’s and continued teaching until 1973. Sister Ana was recognised for her wonderful ability to know every student and family. She was blessed with good health and continued to work past retirement age. After retiring from teaching, Sister Ana continued her works of mercy, comforting the sick and bereaved. Her passion for capturing the history of the Sisters of Mercy in Bendigo saw her begin to record the details of this incredible story, a story which helps us share in the amazing legacy of these women, their commitment to Catherine’s dream and their faith in their God.

Eight members of the Vanderfeen family attended the Commissioning and Blessing; representing the descendants of four of Sr Anastasia’s siblings over three generations. Some of them remembered visiting Sr Anastasia in the convent and some of them are also past students of our College. They were proud that Sr Anastasia’s life-long service to education and the care of others is being acknowledged in the legacy of the Sr Anastasia Vanderfeen Building.
MERCY EDUCATION
LEADERSHIP DAY

Mercy Education has enjoyed a past of engaging professional development opportunities for senior executive staff from Mercy Education and affiliated Colleges. On Friday, October 11, 2019 – 75 Leaders, Sisters and friends of Mercy Education came together at the Airport Motel and Convention Centre in Attwood for the second annual Mercy Education Leadership Day and introductory Dinner.

On Thursday evening 10 October a relaxing formal dinner preceded the leadership day, where Mercy Education brought together many from the Mercy community, Mercy Schools as well as Mercy Ministries & Associates, to join in good cheer, good conversation and fine food. Sister Sylvia Williams RSM, Board Chair, extended her thanks and appreciation for all who attended and travelled far and wide, balancing busy schedules for the coming of the final school term for the 2019 year.

MEL LEADERSHIP DAY PRESENTATIONS

Ms Lana Turvey-Collins – Plenary Council Facilitator

Lana was appointed in November 2017 by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to the position of Facilitator for the 2020 Plenary Council. Lana has a wealth of knowledge and experience in senior leadership, strategic planning and stakeholder engagement and in her previous roles she earned a reputation as a ‘Trail Blazer’.

Lana’s introduction began with an overview of the journey that we are on towards the Plenary Council 2020. It was outlined with what has been accomplished so far, where we are right now and what is still yet to be done. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss and share with each other, their hopes and ideas and to ask questions about the Plenary Council process as we move toward the future as the Church in Australia.

Lana invited Catholic schools into the space of the Plenary Council and to provide our leaders with a greater understanding of what the Plenary Council involves and how schools can be part of this opportunity for a voice in our Church today. Participants were asked to think deeply about, discuss and begin to plan how they might be able to engage staff, students and communities within the Mercy Education family.

Ms Cathy Jenkins – MEL Board Director and Director of the Archbishop’s Office for Evangelisation (Melbourne)

Cathy’s theme was ‘Church – Looking to 2020’ which explored the Catholic imagination we need today to develop and participate in what Pope Francis calls this ‘change of era’ Church. Building on her experience of facilitating the work of the Plenary Council in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne she shared with us some of her insights and learnings about the hopes and dreams of contemporary Catholics and offered some thoughts as to how we can work for the mission of the Church.

The MEL Leadership Day concluded with Celebration of the Eucharist by Fr David Carwright PP of Catholic Parish of St Fidelis, Moreland. The Eucharistic celebration was enriched by the angelic sounds from the St Aloysius College North Melbourne choir. The choir was led by Natalia Ward and we are most grateful to St Aloysius College Liturgy Coordinator, Michael Chesser, for his detailed planning and organisation of the Mass.
We welcomed our second annual Seeds of Justice student conference for 2019, held at the Holy Cross Centre in Templestowe.

During the course of the 2 day seminar, 42 students and 11 staff from St Joseph’s College, Mildura; Mount Lilydale Mercy College, Lilydale; Sacred Heart College, Kyneton; St Aloysius College, North Melbourne; Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy; Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg and Sacred Heart College, Geelong came together to interact and learn about “Hearing the Cry of the Poor”.

Day one of the event began with Bernadette Hogan, Social Justice Coordinator at Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg - sharing the aim of the program, launching the theme, allocating prayer time which then led straight into an ‘Ice Breaker’ session, where games were played to stimulate the minds as students were challenged on what they knew about poverty and homelessness.

Several placements were on offer to the students during the conference proving to be a memorable and impacting highlight of the two-day event. Visits included Exodus Community, Big Group Hug, FareShare, Saint Vincent de Paul and St Mary’s House of Welcome. Students returned inspired and with insight, as eyes were opened about these organisations and how they assist lives in a real way. The afternoon concluded with a ‘Placement debrief’ a time allocated to share thoughts and feelings, reflecting on what the students had learnt.

Day two opened to inspire students with a panel of guest speakers, Tanya Mathias, McAuley Community for Women Services; Br Harry Prout and Kerry from Exodus Community along with Sarah Taylor from St Vincent de Paul.

Students were informed, challenged and inspired, at the enormity of domestic violence and homelessness, hearing about real life struggles and statistics. One student commented – “It enabled me to listen and see what I can do to help my community, seeing that faith and persevering can truly get you through”.

The conference proved to be a great success with students commenting that it had been the ‘best conference yet’. They left with information and ideas on how they can apply the mercy way of life into their school lives and own lives.
The annual Mercy Education seminar for Leaders in Faith & Mission and Religious Education Coordinators was held at Alphington on 25 November this year. Sixteen participants were energised by the three-part program which commenced with a deeply theological experience delivered by Emeritus Prof Anne Hunt. Anne is a former lecturer in Systematic Theology and held the position of Rector/Dean of the Ballarat Campus of ACU for seven years and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Theology & Philosophy at ACU for five years. Anne’s presentation was titled, ‘Illuminating our faith, fostering a Trinitarian imagination’ which engaged participants through the medium of art and challenged each of us to interpret the meaning of the Trinity through the eyes and minds of the artist. While Anne looks forward to the homily at Mass every year on Trinity Sunday, participants felt blessed to have experienced such a rich insight and scholarly presentation on the Holy Trinity.

The second presentation shared insights on the Mount Lilydale Mercy College’s Youth Ministry Program and was delivered by Liz Keogh, MLMC Deputy Principal – Faith & Mission. Liz was joined by recent past MLMC Youth Ministry students and current MLMC Youth Ministers, Ava Brown and Ashleigh Clinton. Liz, Ava and Ashleigh spoke about the foundations of the program, its embedding into the RE curriculum from Year 10 onwards and the opportunities it provides to the life of the college and for future bonus ATAR points in ACU degrees and post-school youth ministries.

The final presentation on Mercy Education Values was delivered by Education Consultant and former MLMC Principal, Bernard Dobson. Bernard centred his presentation on the Gospel teachings of Jesus, the lens through which Catherine McAuley saw those teachings and the social teachings of the Church which focus on the dignity of the human person. Bernard referenced Scripture frequently and commented that while the Mercy Education values of Compassion, Justice, Respect, Hospitality, Service and Courage are taught formally in the RE class, most are caught in the school setting and daily encounter.