



Dear Parents and Friends of St Mary MacKillop Primary School,

Yesterday our school community celebrated Ash Wednesday through mass and liturgy. This marked the beginning of Lent, which is the season of preparation for Easter. During these celebrations the congregation received ashes in the sign of the cross on their forehead. This is to remind us that Jesus lived and died for us all and that we need to live our lives caring for and loving one another.

### LENTEN PRAYER

*Almighty and Everlasting God,  
 You have given the human race Jesus Christ our Saviour  
 as a model of humility.  
 He fulfilled Your will by becoming man  
 And giving His life on the Cross.  
 Help us to bear witness to You  
 By following His example of suffering  
 And make us worthy to share in His Resurrection.  
 We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son.  
 Amen.*

### TEACHERS AND PARENTS WORKING TOGETHER:

There is no question that a great teacher can make a huge difference in a student's achievement. New studies are also showing that teachers cannot do it alone. Parents focused on their children's education also make a huge difference in a student's achievement. How do we know? Every three years, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) conducts exams as part of the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, which tests 15-year-olds in the world's leading industrialised nations on their reading comprehension and ability to use what they've learned in maths and science to solve real problems — the most important academic skills for succeeding in college and life. To better understand why some students thrive and others do not, the PISA team interviewed parents about how they raised their children and then compared that with the test results for each of those years.

### THE FINDINGS:

- **Fifteen-year-old students whose parents often read books with them during their first year of primary school show markedly higher scores than students whose parents read with them infrequently or not at all.** Even when comparing students of similar socio-economic backgrounds, those students whose parents regularly read books to them when they were in the first year of primary school score higher than students whose parents did not.
- **Parents' engagement with their 15-year-olds is strongly associated with better performance.** Just asking your child how was their school day and showing genuine interest in the learning that they are doing can have the same impact as hours of private tutoring. It is something every parent can do, no matter what their education level or social background.
- **The kind of parental involvement matters.** For example, the score point difference in reading that is associated with parental involvement is largest when parents read a book with their child, when they talk about things they have done during the day and when they tell stories to their children. The score point difference is smallest when parental involvement takes the form of simply playing with their children.
- **Parental actions that support children's learning at home are most likely to have an impact on academic achievement at school.** Monitoring homework; making sure children get to school; rewarding their efforts and talking up the idea of going on to further education and training: these parent actions are linked to better attendance, grades, test scores, and preparation for further education.

Of course there is no substitute for a good teacher. There is nothing more valuable than great classroom teaching. We also need parents because parents can make every teacher more effective and improve the educational outcomes for every child.



### **New Requirements for Student Holiday Absence**

The following information outlines the changes that have been implemented as a result of the changes to the *Education Act 1990* regarding attendance. These changes take effect immediately. Exemption from attendance no longer applies to travel and holidays, both domestically and internationally. The new requirements are:

- **1-9 days absence:** Parents are required to notify the school principal by mail or email.
- **10-100 days absence:** Parents must complete and submit the application for extended leave form (A1) prior to commencing leave. The principal will issue a certificate of extended leave (C1). The A1 form can be downloaded from the school website or collected from the school office.

### **PARENT HELPERS:**

All parent helpers at St Mary MacKillop are required to complete an online Child Protection Training module every two years. If you are unsure whether your training is up to date, please contact the school office and the office staff will be able to help you. When you come to school to help out in any area of the school you are required to sign in and out at the office. If you would like to do the online Child Protection Training module, please go to: <http://childprotection.parra.catholic.edu.au>

After successfully completing the module, an email notification will be sent automatically to the volunteer's email address and the school will be notified. Grandparents who would like to help in any way are also very welcome and also need to comply with this requirement and be added to our list.

Thank you for your generous support, enthusiasm and willingness to get involved and thank you for working together to ensure our children are kept safe at all times.

### **Thankyou to our P&F:**

Sincere thanks, to the 2014/15 St Mary MacKillop Parent and Friends committee members. As you are aware these wonderful volunteers assist our school in a multitude of ways and their generosity is truly valued. Please join me in acknowledging these big-hearted members of our community by attending the P&F Annual General Meeting (AGM) 7.30pm on Tuesday, 3 March.

### **Government funding of NSW Catholic systemic schools:**

The following funding information has been provided to inform parents of the funding situation in our diocese, in the lead-up to the NSW election on 28 March, as we continue to seek a fairer share of public funding for Catholic schools. All funding information is based on 2012 MySchool data (the latest funding information available). The key messages are:

- A significant public funding gap exists between Parramatta's Catholic systemic schools and government schools in the same area
- Catholic schools save taxpayers billions of dollars each year by educating 251,000 - or one in five - NSW students
- Catholic schools require a more equitable share of capital funding to expand school places to meet growing demand
- Parents of Catholic school students contribute to the NSW education system twice – as taxpayers and through school fees

### **Thought for the Week**

*"Virtue is perfected in adversity."*  
*Rev Julian Tenison Woods 1864*

Have a Blessed Week

Mr Michael Siciliano  
PRINCIPAL

### **"REMINDER"**

**STAFF DEVELOPMENT DAY—PUPIL FREE DAY**

**THURSDAY 2 APRIL 2015**

### The Season of Lent:

The Season of Lent began yesterday with Ash Wednesday. Lent offers us all a chance to grow in our relationship with God through regular prayer and works of love. In our busy world, Lent provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon our lives, to pray more deeply, experience sorrow for what we have done and failed to do, and to come back to God with a change of heart.



During Lent we look for a renewal of our lives and we seek the meaning of Jesus' self-less love, so that we might reflect that love to others. We have to work hard to resist temptation and to change some of our bad habits. We know that this will not be easy but we are encouraged by the mission that Christ gave us:

*Feed the hungry  
Welcome the stranger  
Clothe the naked  
Comfort the sick  
Visit the imprisoned*

During this Lent Christ is asking us: who might we feed, welcome, clothe, comfort or visit?

### Project Compassion 2015 (Social Justice Initiative):

This week the season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, which also marks the beginning of the annual Caritas Australia Project Compassion appeal. The theme for Project Compassion 2015 is "Food for Life". Food is essential for all life, yet many of the world's poorest people do not have food security. That means they live from day-to-day, uncertain of how to afford or how to access their next meal. Without food, the rest of life is impossible to contemplate: how can you plan for the future or educate your children when you fear you will be hungry?



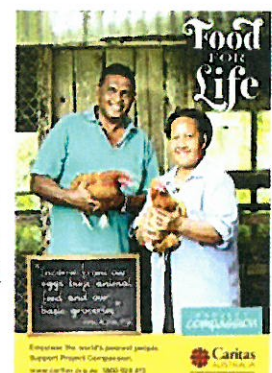
As Pope Francis says: "It is a well-known fact that current levels of production are sufficient, yet millions of people are still suffering and dying of starvation. This is truly scandalous." Project Compassion 2015 explores how Caritas Australia is helping the world's poorest people establish sustainable food, walking with them as they free themselves from the burden of food insecurity and develop new, improved income streams for a better future.

This year's Project Compassion stories focus on the ways in which Caritas Australia is working around the world to empower vulnerable people to establish sustainable food sources and develop income streams for life.

Your donations to Project Compassion allow Caritas Australia, the Catholic Agency for International Aid and Development, to work towards a more just and fair world, where the basic human right for food is met and sustained.

This week all classes received a Project Compassion box to place in their sacred space. Over the next few weeks the students will be encouraged to give generously to those less fortunate than themselves. It would be appreciated if you could support your children in putting their compassion into action this Lent by supporting the 2015 **Project Compassion Appeal**. You can also donate online via the website [www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion](http://www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion).

**Project Compassion**, Week 1, brings you the story of Eric and Ma from Fiji Growing Food For Life: Twenty-five years ago, married couple Eric and Ma worked hard, but their farm was unprofitable. They had a very limited income and diet, until they took a training course at the Tutu Rural Training Centre (supported by Caritas Australia). Using the skills they learnt there, the couple have built a successful family life, and a thriving farm that provides them with a healthy diet and sustainable source of income. Your donation to Project Compassion helps people in isolated areas of Fiji gain the skills they need to grow food for life.



**Project Compassion**, Week 2, brings you the story of Mariama from Niger Essential Food For Life: This week Project Compassion focuses on Niger, where life is very tough. Many live in extreme poverty, often unable to afford or access food and water. This week we meet Mariama who is raising her daughter in Niger, a country that suffers widespread poverty. When her little girl became malnourished, she received life-saving food and care at a Nutrition Centre, supported by Caritas Australia. Your donation to Project Compassion 2015 helps save the lives of people living on the brink of survival in Niger, giving them access to nutritional support and essential food for life.



### **Grade Liturgies and Masses**

This year we are trialling having all grade liturgies and masses in the hall. It is hoped that this space will be more sacred due to the sound system, data projector and increased space. Please note that no food or drink can be bought into the hall for a variety of reasons:

- During liturgies and masses the hall becomes a sacred space, just like a church, and out of respect we do not eat or drink during mass.
- Work, Health & Safety regulations about hot drinks around students.
- The need to protect the hall flooring and musical instruments stored in the hall

Thank you in anticipation of your support.

Mrs Leesa Gillard

*Religious Education Coordinator*

### **P & F News**

#### **Annual General Meeting (AGM) - Tuesday, 3 March 2015 @ 7:30pm**

ALL FAMILIES ARE WELCOME. Please come and join us for the 2015 AGM. Reports are provided by the President, Treasurer, Fundraising team, Parents Representative Council (PRC), Class Parent Representatives and the school Principal. ***All positions of the P & F Association are declared open and new nominations will take place at this meeting.*** Please do come along to the meeting and get to know the current and new Parents and Friends Committee members. It takes a good team to encourage positive results for our school.

#### **Class Parent Representatives - 2015**

Class representatives become the central person for parents who may have questions or want to know the channels to follow regarding a query. Please don't forget to hand in your nominations form and return it to the front office ASAP. Communication will be sent out announcing the representatives before the AGM as this will be the first meeting. We currently need 4 class parent representatives for the following classes: 2A, 3M, 4BL, 4M, 5G.

#### **Zooper Dooper Sales:**

Zooper Doopers sales will be taking place every Wednesday and Friday till the end of Term 1. Prices for Zooper Doopers are 60c for a full/30c for a half. Thank you to all the parent helpers, your assistance is always appreciated.

#### **Volunteer CALL OUT - We need you.**

Parents and friends. As you know our beautiful school has a positive reputation about its P & F Association and the community feel that it exudes throughout. This would not be possible without the parents and friends that love to help out our school wherever its needed. The P & F wish to extend an invitation for volunteers to come forward to help out with the fundraising events for 2015. Teams can be set up to do only 1 fundraiser for the year so the burden won't be on the same people all the time, whilst at the same time we all are making a contribution towards our school and living by St Mary MacKillop's words of 'Never see a need without doing something about it'. If you are interested in helping out with fundraising events (the littlest job can always make a big difference), please forward your name to Liz Whalen on [dexa1972@gmail.com](mailto:dexa1972@gmail.com), by providing you name and contact number. And please remember this is a great way to meet families from the school and commence the bond of friendship that can last for many years to come with a common goal. Thank you.

God Bless

Liz Whalen - President on behalf of the P & F Executive Team

## Dates for Your Diary Term 1 - 2015

DAY	DATE	TIME	EVENT
Friday	20 February	9:15am 2:20pm	Parent Literacy Workshop Whole School Assembly & 3M Assembly Item
Sunday	22 February		Reconciliation Enrolment Masses
Monday	23 February		Year 4 PCC Incursion
Tuesday	24 February		Nepean Zone Swimming Carnival @ Glenbrook
Friday	27 February	2:20pm	Diocesan Swimming Carnival @ Blacktown Whole School Assembly & 1R Assembly Item
Monday	2 March		2016 Kindergarten Enrolments Open
Friday	6 March	9:15am 2:20pm	Year 1 Grade Liturgy Whole School Assembly & 2M Assembly Item
Tuesday	10 March	2:00pm & 7:00pm	Numeracy Parent Workshop
Friday	13 March	2:20pm 3:45pm	School Cross Country Whole School Assembly & 3W Assembly Item Reconciliation Practice @ St Nicholas
Tuesday	17 March	7:00pm	First Reconciliation @ St Nicholas
Friday	20 March	9:15am 2:20pm	Year 2 Grade Liturgy NSWCPS Swimming Trials @ Homebush Whole School Assembly & 6PM Assembly Item
Monday	23 March	7:00pm	Year 6 Young Leaders Day 2016 Kindergarten Parent Information Evening
Friday	27 March	9:15 2:20pm	Year 3 Grade Liturgy Whole School Assembly & 5M Item
Monday	30 March	TBA	Easter Celebration: Stations of the Cross
Thursday	2 April		<b>Staff Development Day—Pupil Free Day</b> Holy Thursday - End of Term 1
Friday	3 April		Good Friday

### YMCA Swimathon:

Hi my name is Azahlia, and I am in 6PM. One of my hobbies is swimming laps with my mum. This is why I am splashing out in the national YMCA Swimathon at Hawkesbury OASIS on 1 March 2015, so that together we can support people with disabilities in our community.

I believe that everyone who wants to enjoy the water should be able to do so safely. People with disabilities often require specially qualified swimming instructors, or accessible facilities and equipment, but do not always have access to these. That's where the YMCA comes in, providing people with disability the opportunity to learn to swim and enjoy the water safely through YMCA centres around the country.

My goal is to swim 1km in an hour and raise a combined \$500 with my mum. This is important to me because people with disabilities should be given the same opportunity to enjoy the water as everybody else.

All support is greatly appreciated. Click on the GIVE NOW icon on the link <https://ymcaswimathon-hawkesbury2015.everydayhero.com/au/azahlia> or simply share the link or spread the word, or join us on the day. All sponsorship can be done anonymously.