

The Eyrie

St John The Evangelist Catholic Parish Heidelberg



THE JOY OF THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL 2025

Young Catholics from across Australia filled the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre for the opening of the 2025 Australian Catholic Youth Festival. At the heart of the opening plenary was a surprise video message from His Holiness, Pope Leo XIV, who encouraged young Australians to embrace their God-given identity and walk boldly as disciples in today's world.



Annie shares her joyful experience of ACYF with us:

As a young Catholic woman, I have spent most of my life in a largely secular world, surrounded by worldly influences and very little Catholic motivation. Growing up in this environment while trying to live out my faith to its fullest has often felt isolating.

For this very reason, ACYF was a truly mind-blowing and uplifting experience. Being surrounded by **6,000 other young Catholics**, all on fire for and in love with the Lord, was incredible. It reminded me that I am not alone, and that the Church is not dying, something I am deeply motivated by and grateful for.

There were so many highlights. The final-day Mass, celebrated with a full orchestra and more priests distributing Communion than I've ever seen in one

place, was profoundly moving. We attended several talks and workshops; my favourite was the "Being a Fired-Up Catholic" talk. We learned about the forty Armenian martyrs who were tortured and abused yet refused to abandon their faith. They didn't pray for their suffering to end, but for the grace of perseverance, a lesson I hope to bring with me.

ACYF was unlike anything I have ever experienced: vibrant, joyful, and overflowing with love for Our Lord. I pray that the Church continues to burn with this same fire for Jesus, and I cannot wait to attend more events like it.

I will leave you with this final thought from Sr Mary Grace; "We do not need a crisis to come to Christ". Every day is an opportunity to grow closer to Jesus. We must not seek God only in moments of suffering but look for Him in everything. We need Him and He desires us, always. **Annie, 19**

Fr Vinh and Fr Geo along with two leaders, Joel Hodge and Michelle Burns accompanied 8 young people from our parish to the great event.





Joe Robello shares his ACYF experience with us:

Attending ACYF allowed us to connect with other young Catholics while sharing and deepening our understanding of the faith.

Through several inspiring talks, including one with AFL player Matt Kennedy, we heard firsthand how God plays a central role in everyday life, even within the high-pressure sporting environment. Matt highlighted how faith provides grounding and purpose, and showed us how we can prioritise Jesus through tools such as prayer, confession, and strong community support.

We also attended another talk, "Being a Fired-Up Catholic," led by Simon Carrington. He discussed being bold in faith, just as the many fearless martyrs of the past. His humble approach inspired us to invite God into our daily lives and share the love of Christ despite the fear of being judged.

Overall, the experience reaffirmed our faith and brought us closer to God.

(the pilgrimage walk below)



Reflection from Leader

ACYF 2025 has been a golden opportunity for me to experience Christian leadership in a young catholic community at such a massive scale.

On day 1, which was the Melbourne Festa we started off at St. Patrick's Cathedral where the Archbishop of Melbourne Most Reverend Peter Comensoli inaugurated the festival. But it felt like the odds were not in our favour with the typical Melbourne weather conditions. We had a constant barrage of rain during the 2.5 hour pilgrimage walk, yet everyone was so joyous and happy, praying, singing along and walking together. It was thrilling to see everyone fuelled by the fire of God's love.

These past 3 days have been an absolute eye opener where even as a group leader I've learned so much by listening in on all the talks and workshops.

We received a special video message from Pope Leo. Some notable speakers were Sr. Mary

Grace, Cardinal Mykola Bychok and Fr. Rob Galea.

The last day was the most epic conclusion to this festa.

We had the final plenary where we were led by some energetic worship music, following that we had the most intense and spiritually moving adoration. To see over 6000 people on their knees, heads bowed engaged in reverent silence, was something I have never experienced before in my whole life. Certainly, God was in this place and I knew it and strongly felt the Holy Spirit's presence. And to top it all off, we had the most spectacular commissioning mass led by a symphonic orchestra, I have never seen so many bishops and clergy serving mass at the same time. It was certainly an unforgettable experience.

I would like to thank Fr. Vinh for giving me this opportunity. Thank you Fr. Geo for assisting us during these three days and Joel a wonderfully experienced leader. Thank you to all the parents of our young pilgrims for trusting Joel and I to lead their children during this festival.

I hope and pray that the fire that has been lit in our hearts will continue to burn. By the Grace of God, this youth group that has now formed will grow onwards.

Michelle Burns (Group Leader)

What does Joy mean ?



Christmas is a time of Joy. Our parish has had many cribs over the years and our stained glass windows also show the joy and happiness of Christ's birth.

Joy comes in many forms in our life and recently a 93 year old lady told me she has been so lucky in life and the thing that has brought her the most Joy throughout her long life is FAMILY. One of 10 children growing up there—wasn't always the latest toy or gadget but there was always love and joy in the house. Yes, there were times of argument and chaos (particularly when many barracked for different footy teams but parental love guided the children to love and respect each other. Many are not as fortunate and some people don't have family around them. Let us make sure we share the love of family with those less fortunate. Let us build our family on love not presents and share in this wonderous time of year with simple pleasures and give time to each other in love and understanding. Take it from the 93 yr old parishioner—you can't beat the love of God and love of FAMILY.



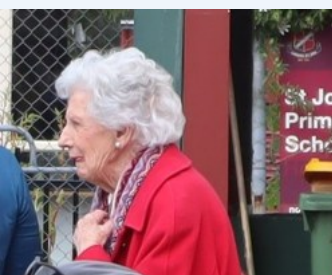
As an older person being included in happy and special times with family really does make life a JOY.



ST. JOHN'S TENNIS CLUB

Stephen Smith Friendship Cup

Each year, it is a joy for the tennis club to hold a friendly tennis competition that celebrates Stephen Smith, a club member for over 35 years until he lost his battle with cancer in 2016. The 2025 Stephen Smith Friendship Cup was held on Sunday 9th November with 24 participants (including Stephen's youngest daughter Petria). Pam Smith (Stephen's widow) and Barbara Smith (Stephen's mother pictured below) were eager onlookers as spirited tennis played out on the courts.



Congratulations to the winning team Julie and Toan (pictured with the Stephen Smith trophy). Over \$1,000 was raised for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness & Research Centre.

Paul Marcon



JOY OF PARISH FAMILY

TRIVIA NIGHT

Special guest
saxophonist!!



Winners are grinners

Yes, this was the wining table on the night.



Great minds at work



Listening to the questions and sharing the fun of trivia together.



TRIVIA NIGHT

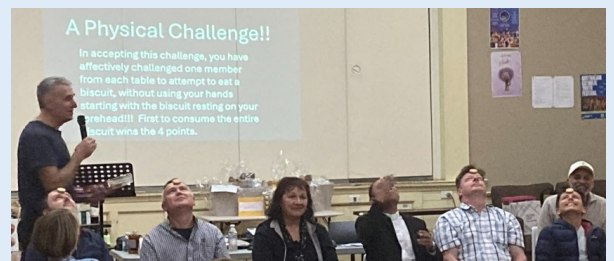


FUN FREINDSHIP LAUGHTER



There was fun and laughter all round with the Physical challenge (pictured right) and Paul Sapiano the host of the evening also doubled as the guest saxophonist! Fr Vinh visited all tables but would not share answers! Fr Geo certainly had fun with all on his table.

Families and children also enjoyed the evening. A raffle with prizes donated by the Liuzzi family and an auction with some great bidding wars took place and with door entry all added to a tidy sum of \$1,200 profit. (the start of our 175th fundraising to renovate our church). Thanks to all those who took part and those who donated prizes. *Many asked for another parish family fun night in 2026!*



Term 4

JOY at St John's Catholic Primary School

At St John's, joy is at the heart of who we are and all we do. It is reflected each day in the smiles, laughter, and sense of belonging that fill our classrooms and playgrounds. Joy at St John's comes from learning, growing in faith and being part of a community that celebrates the gifts God has given us.

This term, our students have experienced joy through a variety of meaningful experiences — from creative learning projects and sporting achievements to prayerful celebrations and community gatherings. Whether it's the excitement of Better Buddy Day, the fun of our Colour Fun Run, working on problem solving, learning about how to keep safe during the Day for Daniel sessions or the quiet joy of prayer and reflection during morning liturgies, our students continue to live out the spirit of the Gospel in vibrant and authentic ways



Students playing in mixed year levels during **BETTER BUDDY DAY** - learning about respect, inclusiveness and collaboration.

As a Catholic parish school, we are reminded that joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit — a gift that grows when we live with gratitude, kindness, and love. We see this joy in our students when they support each other, in our staff who teach with passion and care, and in our families who partner with us in faith and learning.



FOOTY COLOUR DAY— saw the children come in their favourite footy team colours and Fr Geo joined in and was given a lesson on how to kick the footy!

Term 4

JOY—THE COLOUR FUN RUN

At the start of November, we held our major fundraiser — the **Colour Fun Run**. It was a wonderful day filled with joy, laughter, and a strong sense of community spirit. The students were full of excitement as they ran around the obstacle course, cheered on by staff and families. Fr Geo joined in on the fun, adding to the joyful atmosphere as the children were showered with bursts of water and colour. The smiles and laughter shared throughout the day truly reflected the joy and energy of our St John's community



WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

This term we celebrated World **Teachers' Day**. It was a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge and thank the teachers who make a difference and the joy they bring to the lives of our students every day. At St John's, we are fortunate to have a dedicated team of teachers who inspire, guide, and support our children with passion and care. Staff at St John's inspire, support, and empower our students every single day.

The joy of teaching is found not only in seeing children learn new skills but also in sharing in their laughter, curiosity, and wonder. It is a joy that grows from connection — from those everyday moments of encouragement, discovery, and kindness that fill our classrooms. Our teachers embody this joy in the way they nurture each child's gifts, celebrate their progress, and help them to see the goodness and light within themselves

Whether it's in the classroom, on the playground, or through extra-curricular activities, our teachers play a vital role in shaping the minds and hearts of our students. At St John's, we give thanks for the joy that fills our community — the joy of faith, the joy of learning, and the joy of belonging.



We wish everyone in our Parish school community a Merry Christmas and a safe and blessed New Year.



PAPAL AWARDS

They have made a lifelong commitment to be truly apostolic in their faith.

In a beautiful ceremony at the Windsor Hotel, Most Reverend Archbishop Peter A Comensoli honoured those who have been great servants in the faith. 'All the honours that will be given today are to God's people, lay faithful, and I think that should be acknowledged,' he said.

Papal honours 'are a recognition of good and faithful servants in the life of the Church and in the living out of the Christian faith in society,' Archbishop Comensoli said, "It's not recognition that they may have given money for something but that they are God's servants and in an exemplary manner, and in that we honour them today by these papal citations."

The honourees, whose services were recognised some spanning decades and have a positive effect on countless lives through education, prison ministry, family advocacy and prayer, were recognised with awards including the Order of St Gregory the Great, the Croce Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice and the Benemerenti Medal.

The late Honourable Kevin Andrews AM was posthumously named a Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great, while his wife, Margaret Andrews OAM, was appointed a Dame Commander of the same order. The couple were honoured for over 40 years of work promoting marriage and family from a Catholic perspective.

Mr Andrews served in the Commonwealth Parliament for over 30 years, where he was noted for bringing a voice of faith into difficult national debates.

Alongside him, Mrs Margaret Andrews edited the marriage magazine *Threshold* for more than 25 years and together they served on the Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council for 17 years.



Archbishop of Melbourne Most Reverend Peter A. Comensoli with Fr Vinh who received the award for Hon Kevin Andrews (dec) and Margaret Andrews with her award and daughters Catherine & Emily with Kevin and Margaret's medals.

SPECIAL MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST COMMISSIONED

At the 10.30 Mass on Sunday 26th October Fr Vinh commissioned our Special Ministers of the Eucharist. Special prayers and a blessing were said over the group. As individuals all promised to deliver their ministry in a holy and reverent way. Special Ministers are on a roster and this ensures that the priests have assistance in giving out the Eucharist at the Masses with larger attendance and particularly at Christmas and Easter. Some special Ministers of the Eucharist give communion to the sick at home and in nursing homes.

Some Ministers of the Eucharist were newly commissioned and others who were previously commissioned many years ago were importantly renewed in their commitment. If you feel you are able to assist in this ministry then please see Fr Vinh to find out further information about the role.



SAFEGUARDING TRAINING SESSIONS



Thank you to Brech Burgess from the Archdiocese Safeguarding Unit who came out to our parish to give two sessions on the importance of Safeguarding in our parish and in life.

All volunteers are required to complete the training once every three years. Brech's presentation reminded all that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and his talk was very well received.

We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri People and their Elders past and present, the traditional custodians of this land on which our church and school stand. The St John's Community joins together in solidarity with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, working for justice and reconciliation.

SPONSORS

Many thanks to our sponsors

Please give them your support where you can.

KUMON IVANHOE Education Centre

19A Seddon Street, Ivanhoe 3079
Victoria, AUSTRALIA



Nora Amirthalingam

Kumon Instructor since June, 2003

+61 419 553 697

“ My Kumon dream is to
nurture all children so that
they grow up confident,
committed, independent
and happy people ”

Planning a funeral? We understand your needs

The Lonergan & Erbacher families have a long
association with St. John's Catholic Parish

**LONERGAN &
RAVEN**
EST. 1849
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

contact Robert Erbacher:

0408 179 553

or our Clifton Hill office:

03 9489 8711

for an obligation-free quote

www.ravensfunerals.com.au

Berloni appliances
specialists in kitchen & laundry appliances



89 BURGUNDY ST HEIDELBERG VIC 3084 | PH: (03) 9455 2888 | www.berloniappliances.com.au | proudly family owned & operated

Hear With Me
AUDIOLOGY CARE + AMDG

Experience compassionate audiology care at
top-rated Hear With Me in Heidelberg.

Our personalised approach ensures comprehensive
& honest support for your hearing needs.

BOOK IN TODAY

Adult & Kids Hearing Assessments
Ear Wax Removal | Tinnitus
No Pressure Hearing Aids

Book
hearwithme.com.au
Call
03 9002 4237
Visit
Suite 6.3, 10 Martin St,
Heidelberg, VIC 3084

**Save the date – a night to
REMEMBER REJOICE RENEW
ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST
CATHOLIC PARISH HEIDELBERG**

1851—2026

175TH ANNIVERSARY - Gala Dinner

FRIDAY 29TH MAY 2026

\$150 per head

The Centre Ivanhoe (Heidelberg Town Hall)

FRIDAY 29TH May 2026 7pm-10.30pm

Singles, doubles, groups, tables of 8 or 10

3 course dinner, wine ,beer & soft drink inclusive.



Prestigious consulting suites with full admin support,
ready to go and within walking distance of Heidelberg
Medical Precinct. Ideal for medical, surgical or allied
health practitioners. Viewing and bookings can be
made by calling us or by email. You can start immedi-
ately and nothing to bring with you. Prices negotiable.



Email: admin@austinconsultingsuites.com.au

Phone: 0401 100775 or 03 9498 6000



Educational
assessments may
help with the early
identification of
learning disorders
such as dyslexia.

Is your child having difficulties...

Reading?

Identifying
speech sounds?

Learning how sounds
relate to words?

Contact Ascension to book an assessment today!

INFO@ASCENSIONCLINIC.COM.AU ASCENSIONCLINIC.COM.AU

FR VINH NGUYEN—ST. JOHN’S PARISH PRIEST

As we enter this holy season of Advent, preparing our hearts for the great feast of Christmas, we find ourselves surrounded by signs of God’s goodness. Advent invites us to wait with joy, to hope in God’s promises, and to prepare a home for Christ in our lives. True joy is more than a feeling or an emotion—it is the deep confidence that God is near, God is faithful, and God’s love is stronger than anything that troubles or discourages us.

This year we conclude the Jubilee Year of Hope: a year in which we have prayed, shared our faith, and strengthened our parish family. We have seen God at work in new ways and in familiar faces. And we give thanks that joy does not originate within us—it comes from God who meets us in our ordinary lives and renews us by His love.

Just days ago, young people from our parish of St John the Evangelist Heidelberg joined more than six thousand young Catholics across our country at the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Melbourne. They returned with renewed energy, stronger friendships, and a deeper encounter with Jesus. Their voices, prayer, music, and enthusiasm remind us that the Church is alive and that the Holy Spirit is still stirring hearts. Their faith encourages our whole community to walk forward with courage, generosity, and joy.

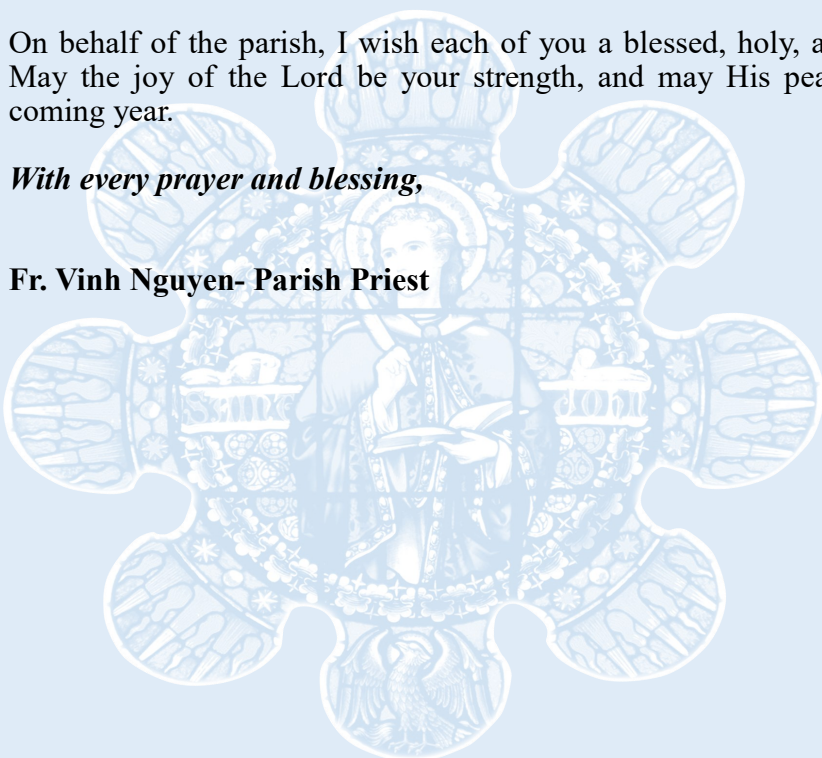
We also look with excitement and thanksgiving to a remarkable milestone: the 175th anniversary of our parish of St John the Evangelist Heidelberg in 2026. For nearly two centuries, generations of faithful parishioners have built this parish through prayer, sacrifice, and love. We are heirs of their faith and we now carry the responsibility to continue their mission. Let us move into this anniversary year with gratitude and hope, ready to listen to God’s call and serve with joyful hearts.

As we now journey through Advent toward Christmas, may the coming of Christ shine light in your homes, peace in your families, and joy in your hearts. May this season renew our faith and draw us more deeply into Christ’s love.

On behalf of the parish, I wish each of you a blessed, holy, and joy-filled Advent and Christmas. May the joy of the Lord be your strength, and may His peace remain with you throughout the coming year.

With every prayer and blessing,

Fr. Vinh Nguyen- Parish Priest



The Eyrie

OUR TEAM

Design & Layout • Content

Michelle Penson

Copy Reader

Elizabeth Williamson

Printer • Peter Burke

The views, thoughts and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors and should not be interpreted as theology or moral and ethical teaching.

**YOUR FEEDBACK and
ARTICLES MOST WELCOME**

heidelberg@cam.org.au

52 Yarra Street, Heidelberg 3084

*Please contact the parish
secretary 03 9457 1066*

2nd Rite of Reconciliation

Tuesday 16th December 7pm

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Christmas Eve

Wednesday 24th December

Carols 5.30pm

(Children Led Mass) 6pm

Children are invited to come dressed as Mary,
Joseph, an angel or a shepherd

Carols 8.30pm

Mass 9pm

Christmas Day

Thursday 25th December

Mass 8.30am & 10.30am

(no evening Mass on Christmas Day)

St. John the Evangelist Feast Day

Saturday 27th December

Mass 9.15am

Parish Picnic

**Sunday 25th January
after 10.30am Mass**

Our Parish of St. John the Evangelist Heidelberg is turning 175 years in 2026. We hope you will join in all the celebrations and special occasions planned. Please send us any photos or stories of days past you would like to share with us in the Eyrie 2026.

heidelberg@cam.org.au