



DECEMBER 2025

MAGAZINE

Revelations

Remembering the Old, Embracing the New



St Mary's Parish
ECHUCA
Growing in faith together

Editor's Note

Cindy Narvasa



As we open another edition of Revelations, we are reminded of how beautifully our parish community continues to grow. We are blessed to belong to a diverse community where people of different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences come together in faith and service.

This edition celebrates our theme:

Remembering the Old, Embracing the New.

As we mark the 150th anniversary of our parish, we honour the devoted parishioners whose tireless support has sustained our community through liturgies, ministries, and outreach. At the same time, we warmly welcome those whose energy and creativity continue to shape new initiatives. Our kids have added life to our worship through the choir, and our G'day Weekend continue to foster fellowship and friendship. New groups are forming, opening doors for deeper connections and shared missions.

We are also excited to launch a brand-new feature in this issue- Auggie's Trivia Corner! Our friendly character Auggie will pop in to share special tidbits, interesting facts, and trivia connected to our parish, faith, and community life.

As you journey through these pages, may you feel the warmth of our past, the joy of our present, and the hope of our future.

Together, old and new, let us continue to grow in faith together as one parish family.

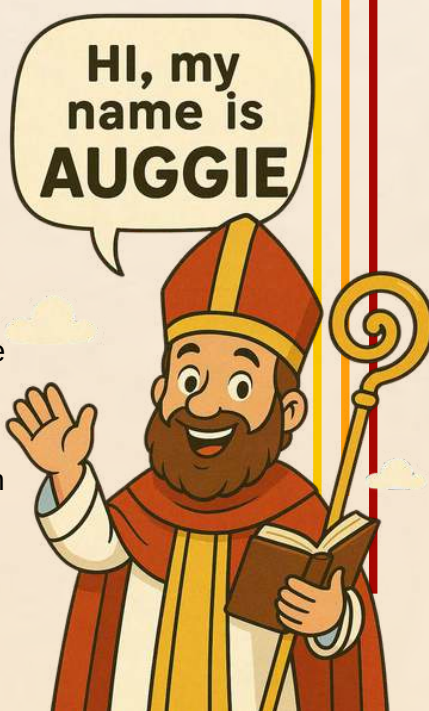


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A Community United in Love: **REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR PARISH PRIEST**

Fr. Novie Lim

Another year has come and gone, and what a remarkable year it has been. Not only has it been a Jubilee Year for the Catholic Church—a time of renewal, mercy, and God's abundant grace—but for us here at St. Mary's, it has also been a year of profound blessing. We have had the privilege of celebrating a milestone the 150th anniversary of St. Mary's Parish. This celebration is much more than a historical marker. It is a living story—a story of faith, dedication, and hope that has shaped our identity and our journey as a community.

Our sesquicentennial has truly been a grace-filled celebration. Its beauty was not simply in the ceremonies, gatherings, and liturgies, but in what these revealed: the beating heart of our parish. What stood out most was a community that pulls together, supports one another, and embraces the mission entrusted to us by Christ. I offer my heartfelt gratitude to our anniversary committee, volunteers, benefactors, and every parishioner who worked so generously and tirelessly. Your commitment reflects a deep love for this parish and for the Lord.

As we look back on 150 years—from our small beginnings to the vibrant community we know today—we see a journey marked by both joy and challenge. We've experienced moments of triumph and seasons of difficulty. And yet, through it all, St. Mary's has grown. It has been shaped and strengthened by generations of people who offered their time, talents, and hearts to build up this community of faith.

To the priests who served before me, to the Religious who nurtured the seeds of faith, and to all parishioners—past and present—who have given themselves to the life of the Church: thank you. What we commemorate today is not merely longevity, but a legacy. Because of your generosity and faith, we can confidently say: St. Mary's has flourished. We have grown in faith, in unity, and in mission.

But as we celebrate our past, we must also look ahead. The question now is: **Where to from here?** What do we need in this time and place?

We are all aware that the landscape of the Church in Australia is changing. Our parishes, demographics, and needs continue to shift. Yet one great blessing in St. Mary's stands out: we have become a community where everyone belongs—the young and the elderly, long-time locals and newcomers, families and individuals, people from all cultures and backgrounds. This is a gift we must treasure and protect.

To keep moving forward, we need a renewal of heart. We are called to a spirit that does not choose whom to serve or whom to welcome. As Jesus reminds us, "Whatever you do to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do to Me." Our service must not depend on who the person is or what they can offer. A true Christian community chooses unity over division, generosity over comfort, and the good of many over personal preference.

When we cultivate this attitude—of openness, humility, and self-giving—we allow each person's gifts to shine. A parish grows not because of a few, but because the whole community contributes. When we make space for each other, we make space for the Holy Spirit to work among us.

As we close this extraordinary year and prepare our hearts for Christmas, let us remember why we belong to this parish: **We are here because of Christ.** We are here to deepen our relationship with Him—in the Eucharist, in prayer, in service, and in each other.

As we step into a new year, may the legacy of 150 years inspire us with renewed hope, deeper compassion, and stronger faith. With Christ leading us, St. Mary's will always remain a home where faith is lived, love is shared, and the Gospel is proclaimed.

To the next 150 years—rooted in Christ, united in love.

Thank you, and God bless St. Mary's Parish.



A YEAR IN REVIEW: PARISH LIFE AND MINISTRY

Rob Morris

Welcome to another AGM of St Mary's Parish. An opportunity to report the successes and growth over the past twelve months.

Thank you and congratulations to the many parishioners who have participated in so many successful events throughout the year. In particular I would like to mention those who have taken a leadership role and led the way within their ministries or parish leadership positions. There are so many people who contribute to this Parish in many ways, from maintenance and every day running procedures, cleaning, hospitality, administrative, finance, social, ministerial, social justice and liturgy groups. We have 34 ministerial groups with many, many people involved in making our parish alive and engaging.

The Finance committee works tirelessly to maintain our balance of payments and provide for ongoing running costs as well as much needed maintenance and improvements around the church and parish surrounds. It is an ongoing challenge in these times of increasing costs, but they have done a marvellous job again this year.

The ever-increasing numbers at mass and the developing liturgies that we are so lucky to have available in our parish, are all uplifting and have consistently been enhanced by the many willing participants who contribute their talents and energy to the cause. We are so fortunate to be served by our Parish Priest, Father Novie. His passion and guidance has encouraged and welcomed many new and old parishioners to participate and to be involved.

Our Parish Pastoral Committee – meet regularly, each month. We have been fortunate to have added extra members throughout the year, to create a team of 12 members. A diverse group of individuals who meet and discuss ways that we can further enhance our parish community, by introducing new initiatives that enliven our place of worship and support the many wonderful ministries that we have in place.

Working to update the Parish Strategic plan for 2026-2029 has been the most recent project that is in progress for the PPC. We are working on a plan that will guide our parish over the next 3 years. Hopefully our new plan will be presented and functional, early in the new year.

A number of events that we have held during the year, have strengthened our community and encouraged others through hospitality to be involved and participate.

The G'Day Weekends continue to flourish on a monthly basis. Thank you to Angela Victor for her organisation and coordination of this initiative.

Thank you to Barb Green and other regular helpers who lend their support. This event continues to grow in numbers and allows the opportunity to meet and greet.

The Celebration of Fr Novie's 10-year ordination was a special event. The number of people who gathered to share in the lunch and festivities spoke loudly of the appreciation and love that the community has for Fr Novie. Once again, we had many people who contributed to the organisation and success of this day.

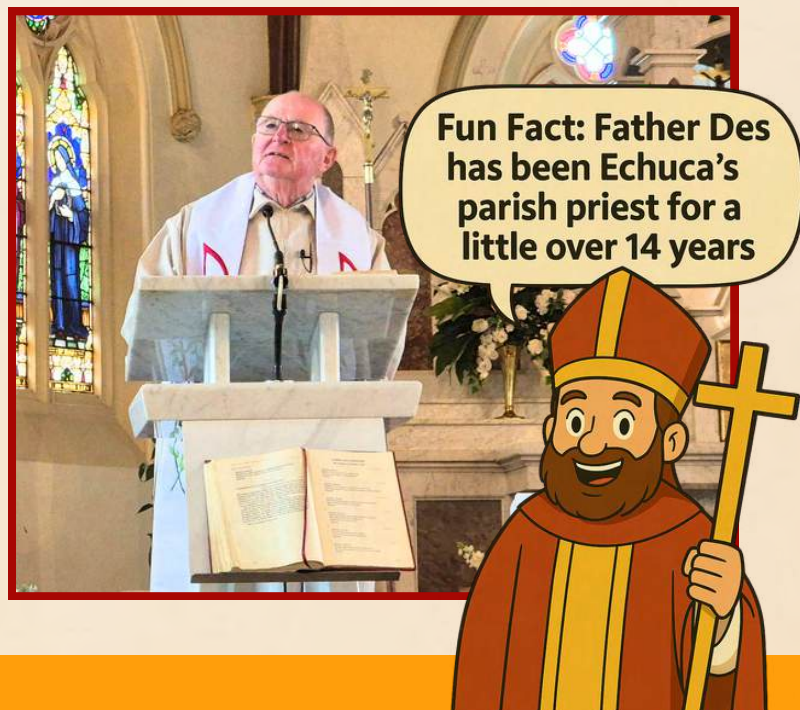
The 'Building Communities of Belonging' conference in Shepparton, provided many ideas for development in parishes and highlighted the many similar challenges faced by all parishes in the diocese. It was refreshing to listen and to contemplate how fortunate we are here in Echuca with the number of ministries and initiatives that are present in our community.

The combined family group luncheon held at the Moama RSL Club in October, demonstrated the growing strength in togetherness, that is evolving in our parish. We have growing numbers in our four Parish Family groups who regularly support each other in fellowship. The presentation by our guest speaker, Ken Uzoh, highlighted how fortunate we are to have our parish reinvigorated by different cultures, who are contributing so much to our parish life and diversity.

The Multicultural Mass, which celebrates our diversity as a parish, was another wonderful opportunity for individuals to become involved, share their talents and create stronger bonds within our community.

We were very fortunate to have Father Des Welladsen available as our supply priest, during Fr Novie's sabbatical leave in the later part of the year. We thank Fr Des for his efforts in maintaining the life of our parish during this time. I am sure he will enjoy moving back into his life of retirement.

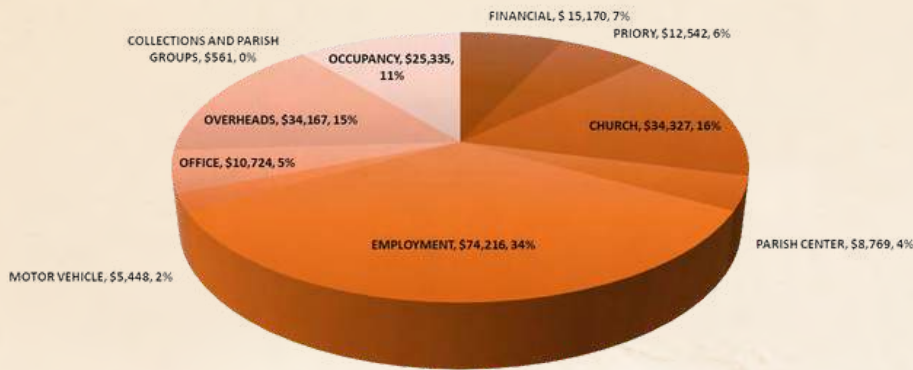
From the Parish Pastoral Committee, we wish you all a Merry Christmas and encourage your continued support into the new year.



ST. MARY'S CHURCH FINANCE

Margaret Hart

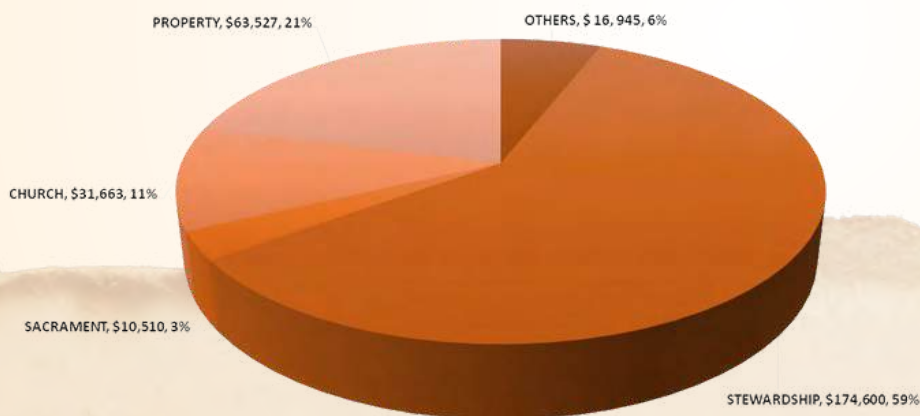
ST. MARY'S PARISH – EXPENSES BY CATEGORY 2024/2025



Coming to the end of the celebration of our St Mary's Church now 150 years of age, we can say thank you to the men and women who have worked tirelessly to maintain the Parish financially and practically over this period—but will we be in the same position in 150 years time.

The Parish has an ageing population—more than 75% of our parishioners who contribute to the Stewardship Programme are over 70 years of age. What is required now is for more of the younger parishioners to make an on-going finance commitment to the well-being of our Parish and our priest.

ST. MARY'S PARISH – REVENUE BY CATEGORY 2024/2025



The Parish has an outstanding debt of \$199,278. Each quarter we pay \$6,549 off the loan (\$2,183 per month), which with a quarterly interest payment of \$3025, means the Parish is reducing this debit by around \$3,500.00 per quarter.

But of course, the Parish is faced with continual increases in all expenses including Council rates, insurance, gas, electricity, wages, repairs and maintenance.

But on the positive side, the Parish is in a much better position financially than it was two years ago.

My sincere thanks to members of the Finance Committee—Michael Delahunty, Graham Jefferson, Max Marchetti and Julie Moyle (Julie resigned from the committee over the years and we thank her for her great work and insight). Thanks also to Colin Height who collates and presents the financials to the Committee at all meetings. And rest assured Fr Novie keeps a very keen eye on all the Finance Committee processes.

Attached below for your information are graphs relating to the Parish's income and expenditure for 2024-2025.

OPERATING STATEMENT 2024/2025

	2024/2025	2023/2024
REVENUE	\$297,245	\$346,409
EXPENSES	(\$221,260)	(\$242,340)
OPERATING SURPLUS	\$75,985	\$104,069



St. Mary's School

ST. MARY'S

Primary School

Jasmine Ryan

This year as we journeyed as 'Pilgrims of Hope' throughout 2025, we walked side by side through many opportunities to build self, others and our community.

Throughout the season of Lent, we gathered in our shared Communities at St. Mary's being hope filled as we journeyed towards the season of Easter. As our tradition of outreach continues, we celebrate Pancake Tuesday, supported by our wonderful parent community, cooking and eating pancakes while raising important funds for Caritas Australia. We acknowledge the importance of outreach to those who are less fortunate than ourselves as we mission to local and global initiatives. Supporting St Vincent de Paul Society during the colder months with donated blankets, jumpers and sleeping bags alerts us to those in need within our local community. Catholic Mission also supports the most vulnerable and is another organisation who we stand by during the month of October.

At St. Mary's Primary School, we relish any opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate those who are in our community including Mother's Day morning tea, Father's Day breakfast and Grandparent's Day. We acknowledge that we are each the best version of ourselves when we are surrounded by people who care and love us. That is truly something worthy of a celebration!

Throughout the year, each Year Level has planned, celebrated and gathered during liturgy or Mass across many settings including classrooms, the Brigidine Centre and in St Mary's Church. Walking alongside Fr. Novie enables us to strengthen connections with our God, self, learners, staff, parents and our Parish community.

The combined staff at St. Mary's gathered online as one for a Diocesan Spirituality Day learning more about the mystics. The day was a time for staff to pause, connect and reflect with both input and reflection. A variety of workshops were on offer including delving deeper into the life of mystics including Teresa of Calcutta, St Francis of Assisi and Thomas Merton.

Our F.I.R.E. Carrier program (Friends Igniting Reconciliation through Education) is to promote respect, fairness and inclusion for Aboriginal people. At St. Mary's Primary School, our learner and staff F.I.R.E. Carriers lead and share information regarding our responsibility to engage in action to work towards reconciliation. The F.I.R.E. Carrier Project seeks to keep the Reconciliation flame alight, educating the wider community about Reconciliation, our shared history and cultures. Each year new candidates are commissioned ensuring this program is strengthened and celebrated.

The Parish Sacramental Program has welcomed candidates who have received the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist throughout this year. We continue to play an important role in this formation as we educate all at St. Mary's Primary school about the gift of the Sacraments through our curriculum and the way we live and learn.

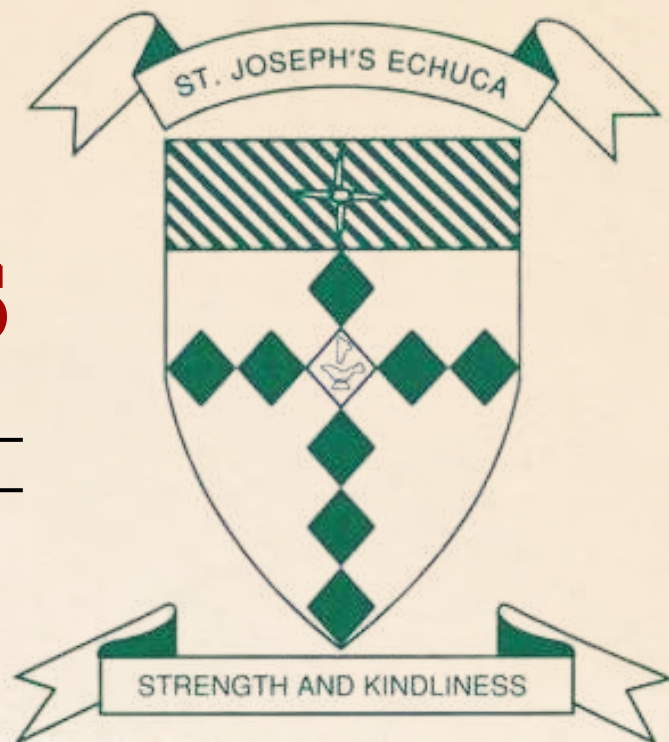
The introduction of a school choir at St. Mary's this year, engages twenty-four keen volunteers from across Years 1 to 4. The gift of joy and song has already been shared with the residents of Wharparilla Lodge, patients at Echuca Regional Hospital along with the congregation at midday Mass at St. Mary's Church on a Wednesday. Promoting a sense of outreach along with an opportunity to bring joy to others is the focus of this group which provides a positive lens for both the listener and the Choir members.

'Faith, Trust, and Love' at St. Mary's Echuca is the school's motto and core identity, representing a 'faith community, learning together, spreading the Good News of Jesus through positive relationships, trust, and love.'

'We make a living by what we get. but we make a life by what we give.' Sir Winston Churchill

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

Lee Pethybridge



Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds

Guided by the theme "Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds," we have embraced the joy of welcoming others with warmth, generosity, and compassion. Through our actions, voices, and celebrations, we have lived out the heart of our Brigidine tradition and our shared commitment to the Living Justice, Living Peace Charter.

House Gatherings and Church Celebrations

This year, our House gatherings have been filled with energy, reflection, and joy. More than meetings, they have become opportunities to build connection, celebrate belonging, and strengthen our sense of community.

Students, supported by Father Novie and House staff, have led creative and prayerful liturgies that honour the legacy of their House Patrons. Music, storytelling, and acts of service have brought each celebration to life, reminding us that hospitality begins with listening, to one another, and to the quiet needs within our community.

Each time we have gathered, whether to pray, to celebrate, or to serve, we have shown what it means to be people of faith and, inclusive, and joy-filled. We have also been able to share these times of gathering with the wide Echuca community particularly St Mary's Primary School.

Celebrating Hospitality in Community

This year, our sense of welcome has reached beyond classrooms and Houses to embrace the wider community. Events such as Father's Day and Mother's Day breakfasts, and the celebration of International Women's Day, where we were privileged to welcome guest speaker Dalal Smiley, have been moments of joy, gratitude, and connection.

Students have taken an active role in organising, hosting, and serving at these events, greeting guests, preparing spaces, and sharing their gifts of music, speech and creativity. These simple yet powerful acts of kindness have reminded us that hospitality is more than a theme, it is a way of being that brings justice and peace to life.

Each event has deepened our understanding that when we open our doors, we also open our hearts, to learning from others, to giving freely, and to celebrating the goodness within our community.

Learning and Living in Faith

In our Religious Education learning, we have explored how hospitality calls us to live the Gospel with joy and courage. Through class projects, reflections, and shared dialogue, students have discovered that to welcome is to witness God's love in action.

From writing letters of gratitude to community members, to creating artworks that express inclusion and hope, students have put their faith into practice. These moments of creativity and compassion have shown that hospitality is not only taught, it is lived every day through small acts of care and big hearts willing to listen.



DEEPENING FAITH THROUGH EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

Kath Quinn

In July 2024 Fr Novie travelled to Indianapolis USA, to attend the National Eucharistic Congress. On his return he invited me to join him in bringing about an Eucharistic Revival in St. Mary's Parish. We now celebrate the Rite of Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on the first Friday of the month at 11.30am and followed by Mass at 12.00pm. During this time of Adoration we listen to a Eucharistic reflection, pray together and spend time in silence before the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. It is a time to speak heart to heart with Jesus and to encounter him in our lives in a deeper and meaningful way. This is followed by Benediction. We encourage parishioners to come and join us, to love and honour Jesus present in the Eucharist that is the source and summit of our christian life.

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH OUR FAMILY GROUPS

Carol Purdon and Helen Taverner

The four family groups gathered for a luncheon on Sunday 12th October 2025 at the Moama RSL Club.

All family groups were well represented, and it was a great day shared together as a Christian community. Five people from St. Aloysius, including Father Tink came along - 57 in total, which was a great effort!

We started the celebration with a prayer prepared by Helen Taverner and read by Rob Morris who was our MC for the duration of our time together. Rob brings friendship to all and a great sense of humour.

We all settled in with lots of laughter and chatter and enjoyed a raffle also. Pat Oliver won first prize and was thrilled with the beautiful hanging plant!

Kenneth Uzoh was our guest speaker. Everyone enjoyed his story of relocation to Australia. It was truly moving to hear all they had to sacrifice to relocate here, leaving behind family and friends and how they have adapted to the Australian way of life with many new friends and cultures here in Echuca. Of course St. Mary's Parish has warmly welcomed them.

We as family groups welcome newcomers, so please contact me—Carol Purdon 0467 363 861 - if you are interested. We would love you to come along and share in our Christian community.



Bereavement Team

HONOURING OUR LOVED ONES

Noela Boyer

As we come to the month of November, members of St. Mary's Bereavement Support Group begin preparing for our yearly Mass of Remembrance and Thanksgiving. This Mass is held each November, the month in which traditionally in our Catholic faith, we remember our deceased family and friends.

The group chooses readings and hymns, candles are ordered, roses and rosemary are gathered and handed out to bereaved families, which makes it all a lovely experience.

This Mass is for all parishioners, however invitations are sent out to families who have had a bereavement during the year. Our Mass is one of Remembrance and Thanksgiving, attracts a large crowd, and is a chance to pause and reflect on the memories shared with our loved ones. An opportunity to offer comfort and support is provided after Mass during supper.

Over the year our group has been able to offer support and assistance to 18 families. We are a group of 7 members, led by Fr. Novie, and we all feel it is a privilege to be involved in this ministry.



WALKING FOR A CAUSE: PARISH AND SCHOOL UNITE FOR CARITAS

Matthew Butler

A standout moment in 2025 was the involvement of our Year 8 cohort in the Caritas K's event, in partnership with St. Mary's Parish. This day was an outstanding success, raising both funds and awareness for people in need around the world. By walking with buckets of water, sticks, and other items, our students were able to symbolically represent the daily struggles faced by many people globally. Their efforts made the event truly impactful with vital funds being raised for Caritas. The ongoing partnership between our school and the parish continues to strengthen particularly through this event, and we hope this meaningful event will remain a key part of our calendar for many years to come.



Sacramental Team: Guiding Families Through the Sacraments at St. Mary's

Tania Dixon

St. Mary's Sacramental Team is a group consisting of Fr Novie, teachers, parents, and parishioners. We meet about 6-8 times over a year and come together with families for Faith Formation Evenings, Mass and liturgies. We follow the Sandhurst Diocese Steps in Faith approach to prepare candidates for the Sacraments of Reconciliation (Rite of Penance), Confirmation and Eucharist (First Holy Communion). This year we have approximately 12 families engaging in this preparation. Candidates have recently prepared for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, meeting weekly in family groups. On Wednesday November 19th we celebrated their First Reconciliation at St. Mary's Church. In early 2026 we will continue with the preparations for the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist. We will celebrate these sacraments with Fr Novie on the 2nd and 3rd of May 2026. Within our team there are many opportunities to contribute to our parish by taking on roles, such as Family Coordinator, Faith Formation or Enrolment Officer. If you are interested in joining our team please contact myself or the parish office.



COMMUNITY IN ACTION: CELEBRATING OUR G'DAY WEEKENDS

Angela Jefferson

We extend a warm welcome to all new groups who have joined our community this year.

The G'day Weekend has been enthusiastically embraced, with each Mass seeing increased attendance and becoming a preferred occasion for many parishioners to gather, connect, share experiences and enjoy refreshments.

The G'day Weekend serves as a valuable opportunity for fostering conversation and forming new friendships, while also ensuring that visitors feel welcomed within our community.

We wish to express our gratitude to everyone who have hosted these weekends throughout the year, as well, as those who consistently assist with setup and cleanup after each event. Special thanks to Barb Green for her contributions.

The G'day Weekend takes place every third weekend of the month following the Saturday 6pm and Sunday 9:30 am Mass, except during January and December.

We look forward to seeing even greater participation, new groups and anticipate many exciting weekends ahead in 2026!

God bless.

Building Family and Community in Echuca Couples for Christ

Jonas Narvasa

It's been an incredible year since Couples for Christ (CfC) began its mission here in Echuca. Our core mission is simple yet profound: Building the Church of the Home and Building the Church of the Poor.

We strengthen the "Church of the Home" through our regular household meetings. These gathering bring families together in an intimate setting for shared prayer, scriptural reflection, and mutual encouragement. It's within these homes that faith is actively nurtured, families are renewed, and we build a culture of discipleship.

Our commitment extends beyond our homes to the marginalized through ANCOP (Answering the Cry of the Poor). ANCOP is CfC's social arm, actively working to build the "Church of the Poor" by providing hope, dignity, and sustainable support to the needy.

We are especially thankful to Father Novie for his guidance and for making us partners in the parish. Involving us in various parish activities like the G'day Weekend and the 150th anniversary celebration. As we continue to grow, we want everyone to know that all are welcome to join us in this work of renewing the family and serving the poor.



FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP Young Adult Ministry

Kenn Liwanag

Our Young Adult Ministry meets every 1st Tuesday or Wednesday of the month for an evening of fellowship and reflection. Together, we discuss prayer, faith, and the life of Jesus, sharing how His teachings guide us in our daily lives. Each gathering ends with joyful food sharing and monthly themed celebrations that strengthen our bond as a parish family.

We warmly invite everyone to join us in nurturing the next generation of faithful disciples.



St. Mary's Echuca

**CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF FAITH
1875-2025**

Theresa Jacobs

St. Mary's Parish Echuca marked its 150th anniversary with a jam-packed three day celebration.

St. Mary's was formally declared a Parish in 1875, and over the years has grown under the guidance of both Augustinian and Diocesan priests.

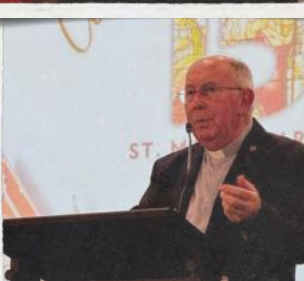
The celebration began on Friday, May 23rd with a meet and greet evening, with parishioners catching up and reminiscing with Augustinian priests, including Fr Peter Jones, who is now the provincial of the Augustinian Order. Also attending the evening were Fr Paul Maloney, Fr Dave Austin, Fr Michael Sullivan, Fr Sennan Ward and Fr Peter Tangey.

On Saturday, a pilgrimage was held starting at the Echuca Cemetery, where prayers were said for past parishioners, Augustinian priests and Brigidine Sisters buried at Echuca.

On Saturday evening, the vigil Mass led by Sandhurst Bishop Shane Mackinlay was a wonderful celebration. During the vigil, a former resident priest of St. Mary's, Fr. Peter Jones, congratulated the parishioners on achieving the milestone. At the end of the vigil, Bishop Shane unveiled a plaque in honour of the anniversary. After the vigil, guests and parishioners gathered at the Moama Bowling Club to socialise and enjoy a two-course dinner.

During the evening, Rob Morris welcomed and acknowledged guests in attendance. A message and grace were offered by Fr. Joe Taylor and subsequent messages and reflections were offered by Fr. Dave Austin, Augustinian Priest, Sr. Cecilia Merrigan, Brigidine Sister and Mr. Brian O'Meara, the first lay principal of St. Mary's Parish School. The final message was delivered by Theresa Jacobs, representing St Mary's parishioners. Fr. Novie, Parish Priest, then thanked all parishioners and everyone present for their contribution and for a wonderful evening of celebrations.

The festivities continued on Sunday with a well attended family Mass at St Mary's Primary School, which was led by Bishop Shane Mackinlay. After the Mass, parishioners were invited to enjoy the Parish carnival atmosphere, which was hosted on the school grounds complete with plenty of food for all and lots of entertainment for the children, including jumping castles and live entertainment. A wonderful and successful weekend of celebrations came to an end with lots of great memories for everyone.





Mary's

MAKERS

Julie Moyle and Jan Tarr

Mary's Makers began in late 2024. It is a group of dedicated crafting ladies who enjoy sewing, knitting, crocheting and producing quality blankets, rugs, shawls, toys etc. The group's charter is to support our local Echuca Regional Health with trauma teddies, blankets and rugs and hearts. It's also to support the several aged care homes in our community with blankets, rugs and shawls. Since the group's inception we have made a staggering 50 blankets, 5 shawls, 1 scarf, 90 teddies/toys, 136 hearts for the hospital, 10 beanies, 160 poppies, 50 bags for Share The Dignity and 488 Christmas decorations for our friends in aged care! What an amazing effort from a group of local women to share their skills and talents with the Echuca and wider community. We have currently supported Echuca Regional Health, Wharparilla Lodge, Glanville Village, Bupa Aged Care, Rochester Hospital and Aged Care, Tongala Aged Care, Share The Dignity and Legacy Echuca.

These ladies are simply amazing! The group offers friendship, kindness and motivation with great connections being made. This group of ladies love sharing skills and ideas with one another, always encouraging and supportive and we all look forward to our next craft morning. Rarely a gathering goes by without a belly laugh or two!

We'd like to thank all those who have donated wool or fabric etc. to our ladies. They have certainly made good use of your donations. We're always on the lookout for more resources, please do not hesitate to contact us to arrange delivery of your wool, fabric, felt, buttons etc.

Looking forward to crafting in 2026 and beyond!



**CONGRATULATIONS
BISHOP SHANE
AS THE 7TH
ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE**



Women Through the Ages

Mary Marwood

Eliza (Keresey) Sutton 1837-1899.

Our Great Grandmother was born in Lismore, Waterford, Ireland in 1837.

The Keresey's were a poor family. The Keresey children were born into the greatest catastrophe in Irish history. By 1852 the population of Ireland had been decimated by famine. Their father saw no future for his children so by unknown means he put his 3 daughters Eliza, Ellen and Margaret on the ship "Shuckamaxon", and they emigrated to Australia in approximately 1859. Their older sister Catherine arrived earlier on the ship "Medway" on the 13/12/1856.

After a brief stay in Bendigo they arrived by Cobb and Coach in Echuca/Moama in 1863. In 1864 Eliza married George Sutton, a baker, who had arrived in Australia from London in 1849 with his baker's oven. They may have been married in Moama by a travelling priest from Deniliquin as there was no established church in Echuca at that time. They established a bakery first in High St, which later burnt down. In 1864 they purchased land in Hare St from Henry Hopwood and built the baker shop on that site, the reason being the railway was coming, which arrived in 1865.

In 1870 George died of meningitis aged only 38 years leaving Eliza alone with three children to raise, the youngest being only 10 months old. She also had a bakery to run and employ a baker.

Eliza built 2 more brick shops adjoining the current Hare St Bakery site, one of which she managed as tea rooms. She also built 5 cottages facing Nish St which she rented out to provide an income for her family. Eliza not only continued to manage and expand the bakery she also led many charitable causes involving women who had lost husbands and were destitute.

Many current issues were brought to people's attention by Eliza as she frequently engaged in public debates. In one of these debates she was one of very few women who signed petitions for the Eight Hour Movement (1874) moving the Post Office from High St to Hare St in 1875, sanding and gravelling Nish St also 1875 and drainage for the Echuca Market in 1878.

Eliza realized the need for a permanent, substantial church to be established, and she recruited a number of volunteers including her two sisters and her niece to aid in the building fund of St Mary's Catholic Church. The "Roman Catholic Bazaar" acknowledges Eliza's leadership, commitment and authority in fundraising exercises as early as March 1876. Eliza was also presented with a book in 1884 for her charitable and fundraising work for St Mary's Church. The book was found in the cellar at the bakery.

Letters from Eliza were often printed in the Riverine Herald. Reading these letters it is obvious she was a very articulate, determined and compassionate woman.

The five Keresey sisters all lived in Echuca when they first arrived. Margaret, one of Eliza's sisters ran the "Rose of Denmark Hotel" from 1870-1875 then ran the "Murray Bridge Hotel" with her husband John Downing from 1875-1880. These were both situated where Aldi's is now. Another sister Ellen, also owned a property opposite the old Echuca Post Office. In those days women were not taxed so everything was put in their name.

Eliza died from heart failure on the 16th November 1899 aged 62 and is buried in the Echuca Cemetery with her husband George.

Due to Eliza's perseverance, her legacy has continued through seven generations of Sutton's living in Echuca with the Sutton Buildings still being owned by her family. Because of her, the Sutton, Summers and Marwood families are still connected to the Parish Church and education facilities of St Mary's Echuca.



ST. MARY'S SOCIAL COMMITTEE: A YEAR OF JOY AND CONNECTION

Margaret Hart and Cecilia Merrigan

For many years the Social Group has been hosting gatherings which bring together members of St. Mary's Parish and the wider community. This year has been no different.

Over the last year the social committee has worked alongside other community minded Parishioners catering for the 2024 Christmas Party and the 150 Years' Celebration of the Parish

The Social Committee also hosted the very popular Ladies Breakfast. More than 80 ladies attended the morning, enjoyed a wonderful breakfast and were entertained by Mary Marwood and Josie Drakatos who spoke of the courage of the pioneering women in their families. Mary shared the story of Mrs Sutton, Mary's Great Grand Mother, who arrived from Ireland as a very young girl, became the owner of Sutton's bakery and used her entrepreneurial skills to further many early town developments in Echuca. Josie's mother brought her young children by ship to join their father who was working in the Werribee market gardens. Both women had few of the support networks we take for granted today but achieved so much.

The Social Group look forward to hosting the 2026 Women's Breakfast in late February.

During the winter months, the Social Group provided soup, sandwiches and other goodies after the midday Mass on the third Wednesday from May through to October. This provides a time for people to catch up and share stories and support each other.

As we come to the end of another year, we say THANK YOU to all the girls of the Social Committee who always respond enthusiastically when asked to provide goodies for various occasions. Thank you too, to the many other members of St Mary's community who also "bring a plate" and support our events. All have contributed to the success of our festivities during this 150th Year of Celebrations for our great Parish.

Aged - Care Liturgy: A Ministry of Presence

Malia Black

This beautiful ministry brings together the aged care residents of Wharparilla, BUPA, and Glanville each month for an ecumenical liturgy that nurtures spiritual enrichment, joy, and friendship among both the residents and the aged care liturgy team. The resident's life stories are rich and varied and belie the fragile state they are often in. Without exception, every resident loves the chance to see new faces, have a chat, sing hymns that they have sung all their lives and pray together. Many times they have told us how much they appreciate our visits as it makes them feel a part of our community, important and loved. If you are ever free on the second Friday of each month we would love to have you join us. Everyone is very welcome.



Children's Choir and Music Ministry: Finding the Spirit in the Song

Barbara Pavone, Mike McCleary and Cindy Narvasa

The role of singers and musicians—whether in a choir or as lead singers—is to lead the congregation in hymns and responses during Mass. When the assembly joins in and responds with joy, there's a shared sense of elation, a feeling that we've found "the Spirit in the Song." Or, in simpler words, "we nailed it."

The future of the Music Ministry in our parish looks bright, with young people, young adults, and even the not-so-young coming forward wanting to be part of this ministry. It's all about teamwork—learning what works and growing together in faith. - Barb and Mike

Below are reflections from some of our youth after joining the choir:

For Callie, joining the choir made Sunday Mass something to look forward to, deepening her connection with God.

Rhianne discovered stronger faith and friendships through music, while Pia finds joy in worshipping with friends.

Sophia stepped out of her comfort zone and became more active in the church, treasuring new lessons and friendships.

Elysha sees the choir as both a blessing and a purpose—a chance to praise God and unite the community through song.

We would like to thank everyone who supported our youth as they found their place in the Music Ministry. - Angela & Cindy



A BENCH OF REMEMBRANCE

Cindy Narvasa

On June 15, 2025, a garden bench was blessed in loving memory of Margaret Spedding, generously donated by the Spedding family to mark the second anniversary of her passing. This beautiful tribute offers a peaceful space for reflection and remembrance within our parish community.

A huge thank you to the Spedding Family for providing a beautiful new bench for the Parish!



Women of St. Mary's: Fellowship Night

Ladies Drinks

Julie Moyle and Jan Tarr

The ladies of the parish attend the parish meeting room each 4th Wednesday night of the month. We meet from 5pm onwards and rotate the hosting each month. Some 15-18 women attend regularly and enjoy each other's company over a glass of wine, a water or a cup of tea. You can be guaranteed a laugh or two as we share recent experiences with one another, both good and bad. We often share stories of the past, which can lead to some very funny memories being shared. It's a great way for us to get to know each other better and deepen our love and care for one another. Many have commented on the deeper relationship they have formed with other parishioners that they've know for years. We warmly welcome you to attend and make a new friend or two!



HOMELESSNESS SLEEP OUT

Fr. Novie Lim

As the Church observed Homelessness Awareness, I found myself asking: How can I truly preach about this issue if I have never experienced it? To understand more deeply, I decided to participate in the homelessness sleep-out alongside other members of the Echuca community.

Sleeping outside in the cold and strong winds was a harsh and eye-opening experience. It made me realise that life on the streets is not just uncomfortable—it is dangerous, lonely, and unpredictable. We often hold misconceptions about people experiencing homelessness, assuming they are lazy, irresponsible, or to blame for their situation. Yet, spending even one night outside showed me the resilience and courage required just to survive.

Pope Francis reminds us: "Homelessness is not an abstract reality; it is a daily humiliation. Let us not forget that each person is a child of God, deserving of dignity, care, and love." This challenge calls us to act, not just to feel pity. It is a call to see the humanity in every person and to offer practical help and support wherever we can.

My brief experience of the cold winds and sleepless night humbled me. It deepened my compassion and strengthened my commitment to advocate for those struggling. May this experience remind all of us that homelessness is not distant—it exists in our streets, in our community. And may we respond with empathy, solidarity, and action, offering a hand to those who need it most.



KIDS AND YOUTH MINISTRY: GROWING IN GOD'S WORD

KENN AND ABILAIN LIWANAG



*"Nourishing Young People
as Christ's Witnesses"*

Proverbs 22:6

*"Train up a child in the
way he should go: and
when he is old, he will
not depart from it."*



Every **3rd Sunday of the month**, we joyfully celebrate our **Children's Liturgy**. The kids gather outside the Parish to listen to the Gospel and learn its message in fun and child-friendly way. Through prayers, storytelling, and reflections, they discover how deeply God loves them.

Altar Servers: Forming Young Hearts for the Liturgy

Kenn and Abilain Liwanag

We continue to nurture the spiritual growth of young ones in the continuation of our altar servers ministry. This provides opportunities for learning, reflection and deeper understanding of the Eucharist and their roles in the liturgy. Our altar servers are guided to serve with reverence and joy, recognizing the privilege of assisting at the Lord's table. They have grown not only in skill but also in faith, service and love for the Church.



Decade of Devotion: Parish Celebrates Fr. Novie's 10th Year of Priesthood

Hannah Jurolan

The parish community came together in heartfelt unity on Sunday 7th September to celebrate a remarkable milestone: the 10th anniversary of Fr. Novie's Priestly Ordination. The celebration followed his final Mass before beginning his sabbatical, marking both a moment of thanksgiving and a warm send-off.

During his homily, Fr Novie reflected on the true meaning of discipleship, reminding parishioners that following Christ requires sacrifice, service and a steadfast commitment to placing God above all. He shared that this calling extends beyond priests and religious brothers and sisters—it is a mission entrusted to every Christian. With the celebration coinciding with Father's Day, he beautifully acknowledged the sacrifices fathers make for their families, drawing a parallel to Christ's own loving service. His message encouraged everyone to offer their kindness, time and talents to strengthen the faith community.



After the Mass, the celebration continued with vibrant fellowship. The youth choir rendered a touching musical performance, filling the hall with songs of gratitude and joy. Parishioners also enjoyed a series of fun games prepared for Father's Day, creating moments of laughter and connection among families. Tables were lined with food lovingly prepared and shared by the community, turning the gathering into a warm and festive feast.

A special highlight of the program was a tribute video for Fr Novie featuring messages from parishioners, friends and loved ones. His family was also present, adding even more meaning to the occasion as they joined the parish in honouring his decade of service. As the celebration concluded, the atmosphere was filled with both joy and wonderful sentiment. It was a proper send-off for Fr Novie's sabbatical.

MULTICULTURAL MASS CELEBRATION UNITES THE PARISH COMMUNITY

Paul Tape

The parish joyfully marked the Solemnity of Christ the King with a vibrant, heartwarming Multicultural Mass held over the weekend of November 22 and 23. With the Saturday Vigil at 6:00 pm and the Sunday Mass at 9:30 am, parishioners from diverse cultural backgrounds gathered as one faith family to honour Christ's reign of love, unity, and peace.

The celebration highlighted the rich tapestry of cultures within the parish, beautifully expressed through music, liturgy, traditional attire, and a warm spirit of hospitality. Flags, colourful garments, and multilingual prayers reflected the parish's shared desire to celebrate diversity while deepening unity in Christ.

After the mass, a G'Day Weekend was also held, giving parishioners the chance to spend meaningful time with people from cultures they may not often encounter. Laughter, conversation, and fellowship filled the parish grounds, reminding everyone that the Catholic Church is truly universal—one body made up of many nations, languages, and traditions.

The community came together for a festive gathering where parishioners shared homemade dishes representing their countries of origin. Tables were filled with flavours from across the globe. Everyone was invited to taste and appreciate the uniqueness of each culture. The shared meal encouraged parishioners to exchange stories, discover cultural similarities, and enjoy the differences that enrich the parish family.

The celebration of Christ the King served as a beautiful reminder that, although parishioners come from different corners of the world, they gather at one table, united by one faith. The parish looks forward to continuing this tradition of multicultural fellowship, grateful for a community that welcomes and joyfully embraces diversity.



CROSSING CONTINENTS: OUR STORY OF HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY

Kenneth Uzoh

It is an honour to share my story with you today. This is not just my journey, but also the journey of my wife, our three children and myself—from the life we had in our homeland, Nigeria, to the reasons that prompted us to immigrate and finally, how we managed with the transition to a new life here in Australia.

Nigeria will always be home. It is a land filled with vibrant culture, strong traditions, and communities where people truly look out for one another. Life there was full of energy—markets bustling with activity, children playing on the streets, family gatherings filled with laughter and food that always brought people together.

For us as a family, Nigeria gave us love, resilience, and values. My children grew up surrounded by cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents. My wife and I worked hard to give them the best, but we also wanted them to experience the joy of belonging to a wider community.

But as beautiful as life was, it was not without challenges. Opportunities were sometimes limited. Things many people in other countries take for granted—like stable infrastructure, predictable economic conditions, and long-term security were not always certain for us. As parents, my wife and I often found ourselves asking: What kind of future do we want for our children?

The answer to that question eventually became clear. We wanted to give our children a future filled with opportunities—educational, professional and personal. We wanted them to grow in an environment where they could dream freely and pursue those dreams without as many obstacles.

As the saying goes, “It is better to be prepared for an opportunity and not have one than to have an opportunity and not be prepared.” So, we prepared ourselves, and luckily for me, I got a job offer in Australia. At this point, it became clear to us that it was God's plan for us to move to Australia.

When we first arrived in Australia, everything felt different. For me, one of the biggest surprises was the silence in the streets compared to the constant buzz of Nigerian cities. My wife on the other hand, was amazed at how orderly everything seemed—public transport on time, traffic rules being followed, and systems that worked.

For our children, the transition came with both excitement and challenges. On their first day of school, they came back with stories about how different the classrooms were—how the teachers encouraged questions, how technology was everywhere, and how children from so many cultures played together. They were excited, but they also missed their friends and cousins back in Nigeria.

And then, of course, there were lighter moments. I remember my youngest daughter asking why the birds in Australia sounded so different. In Nigeria, we were used to chickens and goats waking us up. Here, it was magpies, cockatoos and kookaburras—and sometimes those birds sounded more like laughter than singing! And for me personally, the accent was a hurdle at first. I remember nodding politely in conversations, pretending I understood, only to later ask my wife, “What did they just say?” We laughed about it often, and slowly, we got better at it.

Adjusting as a family took teamwork. Resilience helped us stay strong for our children, even when we missed home. Openness allowed us to embrace a new culture—trying new foods, meeting new people, and letting our children adapt in their own way. Community was a great blessing; African, Asian and Australian families welcomed us, and the support from St. Mary's church made our first months in Echuca much easier.

Looking back, our move from Nigeria to Australia was a journey of growth. Nigeria gave us our roots—our values, strength and love for community. Australia gave us opportunities and a future for our children.

Today, our children are growing into confident individuals who proudly carry their Nigerian heritage while also embracing their Australian identity. My wife and I are grateful every day that we took that leap of faith. Immigration is not just about changing our location, rather, it is about changing our life.

Our journey from Nigeria to Australia has taught me that with resilience, openness and community, a family can thrive anywhere.

I am proud of where we come from, grateful for where we are and hopeful for the future that lies ahead. Kenneth Uzoh – and family – Chinyere, Lorraine, Kendra, Nathan and now baby Johan.



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A dedicated group of parishioners who volunteer their time to care for our church. They serve on a monthly or rostered schedule, helping keep our sacred space clean, welcoming, and ready for worship. Their quiet service is a true blessing to our parish community.

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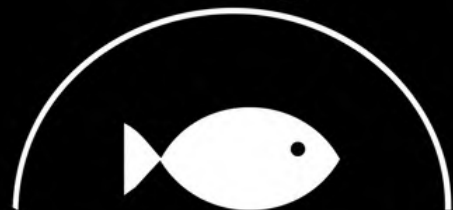
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and its many beautiful stories.*

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