



The Carpenter

Building our Parish Community

No. 4 March - April 2026

150th Anniversary of St. Joseph's Parish Benalla

On 24 August 1876 the Benalla Mission was established under Fr. John Scanlon who continued as Parish Priest until his early death in 1880. Dean (later Archdeacon) Owen Davy was appointed Parish Priest and he is noted as the priest who built the new church. The foundations were laid in 1907 and Archdeacon Davy worked tirelessly to raise funds for the new church building. At the age of 67 years, Archdeacon Davy died in January 1908. The first Mass was held in June 1908 and records show that 1200 people attended that first Mass in the new church.

The design of the church is called 'Australian Romanesque with a touch of Spanish Baroque' and it is recognised as a very distinctive and interesting piece of architecture. Designed by the firm Kempson and Conolly, it was called 'the jewel in the crown' of the Diocese of Sandhurst.

The bell was a gift from Archdeacon Davy on his return from visiting his homeland, Ireland, in 1904. The stained glass window was commissioned and installation arranged by Dean James O'Reilly, the fifth Parish Priest of the Benalla Parish. It was designed by Van Treeck Studios in Germany in 1929. The crucifixion window is noted for its blue/turquoise and red/orange colours.

In 1989 fire destroyed much of the church, especially the interior and the roof. Fortunately the magnificent stained glass window was saved. The restoration of the fire damaged church took about a year to complete.

In 2004 to 2006 St. Joseph's church underwent refurbishment of the interior with a new look circular arrangement with a distinctive marble font and altar. The new altar was consecrated by Bishop Joe Grech, Fr. Denis Crameri was the Parish Priest at that time.

In September 2021 St. Joseph's church once again suffered damage when a Mw 5.9 earthquake centred on Woods Point caused structural damage. Once again the parishioners found themselves attending Mass in the hall. After a lengthy period, on 12 June 2024 Bishop Shane Mackinlay conducted the official re-opening of the once again restored church building. Fr. Vijay Bandanadam was the Parish Priest at that time.

Throughout this long 150 years of St. Joseph's Parish it is the people who have stood firm, loyal and committed to their faith. The various dramas have shown that the parishioners have been prepared to change their routines, accepting alternate locations for the liturgies and to dig deep when called upon.

From the Bulletin: 'This 150th Anniversary will be more than a celebration of years or buildings, it's a celebration of people. Those who have built, shaped, and continue to nurture the life of this parish. We give thanks for the many diocesan priests who have served here, and most especially, we honour the faith, generosity and perseverance of our parishioners'.



ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH BENALLA

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Office Hours

Tuesday to Friday 10am to 4 pm

Office Staff

Secretary - Michelle Cooke

Admin Officer - Cath Donehue

FCJ Sister

Sr. Liz

Mobile 0448 933 581

Child Safe Officers

Xavier O'Kane

Cath Duncombe

Parish Pastoral Council

Chair - Cath Duncombe

Parish Finance Committee

Chair - James Flynn

Mass Times

Benalla

Saturday 6 pm, Sunday 9.30 am.

Week days Tuesday - Friday 9.15 am

Thoona

3rd Sunday of each month at 12 noon

Cooinda 3rd Wednesday of month

Estia 2nd Wednesday of month

Morrie Evans 2nd Tuesday of month

Reconciliation by appointment

Baptism Preparation dates

Contact Michelle at the Parish Office via the email (above)

What's Coming Up in March & April

In this section we hope to give you all the important dates for the following two months, with details as they become available.

MARCH

Wednesday 4th	Stations of the Cross at 6 pm. PPC meeting at 6.30 pm
Friday 6th	Rosary, Adoration & Benediction at 6 pm.
Saturday 7th	Cuppa after Mass - in front of old Piety Stall or 31
Sunday 8th	Cuppa after Mass - as above, weather considered.
Friday 13th	Stations of the Cross at 6 pm.
Sunday 15th	Mass at Thoona at 12 noon, followed by lunch
Thursday 19th	St. Joseph's Day-Patronal celebration on 21st & 22nd
Friday 20th	Stations of the Cross at 6 pm.
Sunday 22nd	Opening Mass for 150th Anniversary celebrations with St. Joseph's School children participating.
Thursday 26th	Reconciliation at 6 pm
Friday 27th	Stations of the Cross at 6 pm.
Sunday 29th	Palm Sunday
Tuesday 31st	Chrism Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo

APRIL

Thursday 2nd	Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper at 6.30 pm
Friday 3rd	Good Friday Stations of the Cross 9 am, followed by hot cross buns The Passion of the Lord at 3 pm.
Saturday 4th	Easter Vigil Mass at 7.30 pm
Sunday 5th	Easter Day Mass at 9.30 am.
Saturday 11th	Cuppa after Mass
Sunday 12th	Cuppa after Mass
Tuesday 14th	'The Carpenter' out
Sunday 19th	Mass at Thoona at 12 noon, followed by lunch

MAY

Friday 1st	Victorian Heritage Trust Open Days at St. Joseph's 1-4
Saturday 2nd	Second Open Day 1-4 pm See details on page 3.



We, the Parish of St. Joseph's are working towards being a welcoming, supportive community, which encourages active participation in our life.



150th Anniversary Opening Mass Sunday 22nd March

The celebratory Opening Mass for the 150th Anniversary of the Catholic Parish of Benalla will be on Sunday 22nd March at 9.30 am.

In conjunction with the Feast of Saint Joseph, our Patron, this Opening Mass will include participation from the students and teachers of St. Joseph's School and morning tea.



You may have missed the Buy & Sell Board in front of the old Piety Stall lately.

Oliver is now the Sacristan and this takes up considerable time before and after Mass so he cannot fill both roles.

Could you help out? Maybe one person on Saturday and another on Sunday. Please see Oliver if you could help.



Benediction on Friday
6th March at 6 pm.

During Lent
walk and pray the
Stations of the Cross
in St. Joseph's Church
on Wednesday 4 March
then Fridays 13, 20 &
27 March at 6pm
& Good Friday 3 April
at 9am.

Holy Week & Easter Services

Thursday 2nd April

Mass of the Lord's Supper at 6.30 pm

Friday 3rd April

Stations of the Cross at 9 am, with hot cross buns afterwards

The Passion of the Lord at 3 pm.

Saturday 4th April

Easter Vigil Mass at 7.30 pm

Sunday 5th April

Easter Day Mass at 9.30 am.



The 'Cuppa' is back!

On the 2nd week-end of the month after both Masses, in front of the old Piety Stall or in 31 building, depending on the weather. All welcome.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults - RCIA

Preparation lessons continue on Sundays after Mass and you are asked to keep the candidates in your prayers as they continue their journey to Easter.

The candidates will be travelling to Sacred Heart Cathedral in Bendigo for the Rite of Election on 22nd February. The Rite of Election marks a new chapter for adults on their faith journey.

Victorian Heritage Festival Open Days

As part of the 150th Anniversary celebrations of the Catholic Parish of Benalla, the St. Joseph's precinct is being included in the Heritage Victoria Festival Open Days.

On Friday 1st & Saturday 2nd May we will have St. Joseph's Church, the Parish House, the old 31 building and part of St. Joseph's School open to view from 1 to 4 pm. (Limited time at the school)

Entry is by gold coin donation and afternoon tea will be available in the 31 building.

Low Impact Exercise Group



Every Wednesday at 9 am in the old 31 building area - inside with air con!

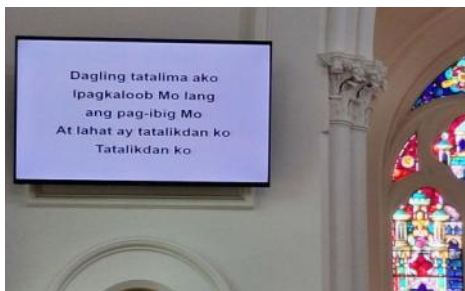
Helen Munro is the facilitator & there has been a great response.

The exercises are gentle with an emphasis on improving balance and flexibility. The Tai Chi elements of slow flowing movements and controlled breathing can be a challenge to some of us but the laughs offset the awkward moments.

Come join us!

The Past Two Months...

The Christmas Novena - hosted by the Filipino community on the nine days before Christmas. Every second evening a delicious dinner was provided, with great hospitality and fellowship.



Filipino music and food



Every evening Lucas, Samantha & Zara were the altar servers.



Some of those attending on night two, from left: Erika, Zaira, Eleanor, Jane, Susan, May, Mark, Carmen, Angelo, Alfie & Kevin.



Left: the group on the last evening, including selfie photographer Christian.



Christmas Vigil Mass



The Low Impact Exercise Group

began in early January and is a great success, with numbers growing steadily.

With Helen's gentle instruction, all are enjoying this easy tai chi style exercise class. Come along on Wednesdays at 9 am in the Parish Room at the 31 building.

The **Feast of the Baptism of the Lord** was celebrated on January 11th. Here is an excerpt from the Personal Ordinate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross Facebook page:

'This feast presses a personal challenge upon us. Do you remember your baptism day? Do you celebrate it? This is not a small or sentimental detail. It is the moment when grace was given, not earned, when salvation was offered as a pure gift. Challenge yourself to look up your baptism date and give thanks to God for what was done for you there'.

The Past two Months continues ...



To celebrate **Australia Day** Sr. Liz read a prayer for our country and people.

School has resumed and the students have returned to both St. Joseph's Primary School and FCJ College.

St. Joseph's held an Opening School Mass in the church on Friday 6th February. The Principal of St. Joseph's Primary School is David Keenan, contact via 5762 1347.

FCJ College has a weekly article 'Step Inside FCJ College' which will keep you up to date with activities at FCJ, see their web site. The FCJ Principal is Joseph Mount, contact via 5762 1222.

St. Joseph's Parish 150th Anniversary Celebrations

commenced with the launch of the big banner on the week-end of 31st January & 1st February.



Pictured: James, Sue, Maureen and Jan.

The banner, which will hang on the fence in front of 31 for the year, includes the new parish logo and photos of former priests.

It was an extremely hot evening on the Saturday (when even the sound system decided it was too hot), but a small group enjoyed coffee or cold drinks and cake to celebrate.

On Sunday more than forty people stayed for morning tea and I'm told it was a really lovely time with some reminiscing on years past.



On Saturday 7th February the new 'Celebrating 150 Years' banners were on display for the first time. These will be used throughout the year both in the church and also to mark the locations of events such as the open days during the Victorian Heritage Festival.

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In mid February Fr. Vijay is spending two weeks in India, and the Benalla Parish welcomes recently retired priest Fr. Joe Taylor.

'Retired' is not actually a word that has its full meaning where priests are concerned, and so we have Fr. Joe as our supply priest for two week-ends and the Ash Wednesday Mass. Welcome Fr. Joe!

2026 Year of Saint Francis of Assisi

On 10th January Pope Leo XIV proclaimed a 'Special Year of St. Francis' to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the saint's death. St. Francis died on 3rd October 1226 in Assisi, Italy.

This Franciscan Jubilee focuses on peace, reconciliation, and ecological conversion, and Catholics are encouraged to make a pilgrimage to Franciscan churches or special locations related to St. Francis anywhere in the world.

For us the most important church dedicated to St. Francis is the oldest Catholic Church in Victoria, built in 1842. St. Francis Old Cathedral (as it is often known) is located on the corner of Lonsdale & Elizabeth St in the city centre of Melbourne.





Let's Meet the new Sacristan - Oliver Raschke

Oliver says: 'We have been at St Joseph's Parish for nearly five years. I've not been a Sacristan before, but I did serve at St Patrick's Parish, Bega where we lived for two years.

I was an Acolyte there. The main difference, I think, is that at St Patrick's, the Acolytes prepared the church and surrounds before/after Mass as a Sacristan does, but we also served during the Mass itself.

Caritas Australia Project Compassion

The Long Walk for Water

Every day, 292 million people around the world walk 30 minutes or more to collect drinking water. Will you help vulnerable people access clean drinking water?

The Long Walk for Water is a fundraiser set up by Caritas where people are encouraged to walk at least 30 minutes a day for all of Lent, and to be financially supported by donations from family, friends & parishioners. Donations can be made on-line to Project Compassion - The Long Walk for Water.

Eleanor Macnamara has signed up to take the challenge of walking 40 minutes every day for 40 days, commencing on Ash Wednesday.

Fr. Vijay is fully supportive of Eleanor's fundraising plan and will aim to walk daily in support.

Your support would be greatly appreciated by Eleanor and more importantly, by Caritas Australia and those who will get clean water supply to their villages and schools as a result of this national fundraiser. To make a donation you can 'cut & paste' the link below into your browser and follow the prompts:

<https://www.projectcompassion.org.au/fundraisers/eleanormacnamara/the-long-walk-for-water>

Or use your phone to read the QR code, tap the Project Compassion tab and follow the prompts.



Cash donations can be handed to Eleanor but it is preferable to make donations on line to guarantee a tax deductible receipt.



A Jubilee Concelebrated Mass for the 150th Anniversary of St. Joseph's Parish will be on Sunday 25th October at 2 pm.

Save the date for the celebratory Mass with visiting past priests, followed by afternoon tea.



* * *



Open Day - During Victorian Heritage Festival Week the old 31 school building, now part of St. Joseph's precinct, will be open to the public. Many past students have expressed a wish to re-visit their old school. Pass this message on to all who may be interested. The dates and times are: Friday May 1st and Saturday May 2nd from 1 to 4 pm. More details on page 3.



Let the editor know if you or a family member is celebrating a special birthday, wedding anniversary or other celebratory occasion.

Email to thecarpenter3672@gmail.com or speak to Eleanor or Cath D (either one!)

St Joseph's Parish is a Child Safe Parish. We are committed to the wellbeing and dignity of all children and vulnerable adults. The Diocese of Sandhurst Safeguarding Committee is part of the structure under the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.



- to John Harris who celebrated his 90th birthday in late January. Remember 'Big O's' are celebrated for the whole year John!
- to John and Marie Binion who will celebrate 60 years of marriage on 5th March. Happy Diamond Wedding Anniversary to you both.

150 Years of Benalla Catholic Parish

Jubilee Prayer

Loving God, we praise and thank You for the gift of 150 years of faith, hope and love in Benalla Catholic Parish, within the Diocese of Sandhurst.

We remember with gratitude all those who came before us - the pioneers, priests, religious, and faithful people who built this parish through prayer, sacrifice, and trust in You. May their lives inspire us to remain faithful witnesses of the Gospel.

We place our parish under the gentle care of St. Joseph, our patron and protector. Teach us, like him, to listen attentively to Your will, to serve with humility, and to live with courage and quiet faith.

As we journey toward our Jubilee celebration, renew our hearts and deepen our unity as one parish family. Strengthen our commitment to prayer, service, and mission, so that we may joyfully pass on the faith to future generations. Bless our families, our young people, the elderly, and the sick. Guide our leaders and all who serve in this parish.

May the Jubilee be a time of renewal, gratitude, and hope, as we continue to walk together in Your love.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord

John Joseph Dale

14 May 1934 - 1 December 2025 - aged 91 years

Elaine Dawn Murphy

21 November 1941 - 7 January 2026 - 84 years

Brigid Mary (Harrington) Chalmers

25 May 1977 - 20 January 2026 - aged 48 years

Alison Olive (McIntyre) Saunders

4 April 1930 - 1 February 2026 - 95 years



The new Parish logo has been designed (with the help of AI) as another feature of the 150th Anniversary of the Benalla Catholic Parish. You will see it on the Bulletin, the Facebook page, the letterhead and just about everywhere that is a part of the St. Joseph's Parish.

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To subscribe to emails from our Parish, scan this QR Code, fill in your details, select Parish Newsletter (& others if wished) and press Subscribe.

We acknowledge the custodians of the land of the Yorta Yorta Nation and the Taungurung clan of the Kulin Nation whose lands are within our parish. We remember their ancestors with respect.