

The Eyrie

St John The Evangelist Catholic Parish Heidelberg



1851—2026



In our 175th Anniversary Year we remember those that have gone before us and given us much to be thankful for—a magnificent church, a wonderful organ, property, buildings and infrastructure in our hall, tennis courts, primary school and garden.

It is now up to us to take care of these assets and leave them in top condition for future generations.

This year we hope to Remember, Rejoice and Renew.

Late last year we put out our calendar of events for this year and invite all to take part and be a part of these special events. (Calendars are still available in the church porch.)

Our parish is made up of many parts and many groups, it is not just bluestone and bricks but it is the priests as our shepherds and us the flock that make our parish the vibrant place and parish family it is today.

In this issue of the Eyrie we focus on remembering.

Did you know that at the end of year mass for our 150th Anniversary some 25 years ago we planted a time capsule under the tiles in the foyer of the church. We hope to add another smaller capsule to this at the end of this year. They will then be opened in 2051 to celebrate 200 years!

Older members of the parish may not be around but some younger people will know and hopefully they will remember.

Fr Anthony Girolami placing the time capsule with members of the 150th Committee looking on Dec 2021.



150th Anniversary Mass 2001



PAULINE GRIFFITHS—REMEMBERS

The good old days!**St John's Mother's Committee Trip
to the Winery at Yarra Glen****(40 - 50 years ago)**

Our committee decided to arrange a trip to a winery in Yarra Glen so a few of us went up to Yarra Glen to check it out and book the Winery. We were having trouble finding it, so we stopped at a house and one of the ladies went up the driveway to ask for directions, only to see her running back to us followed by a barking dog chasing her. Unfortunately, the ladies in the car saw the funny side to this with their friend running as fast as she could and safely reaching the car (she wasn't amused at all).

It was a wet, foggy night when the bus left the carpark of Heidelberg Safeway. On arriving at the Winery, the fog was so thick we couldn't see out the windows. The bus stopped, lurched to the left, and stopped about 100 metres from the entrance.

The bus was jammed and the only way we could get out of the bus was through the front side window. It wasn't easy for the ladies as most were dressed in frocks (some long) which was awkward as the men had to help all through the window and men outside the bus helped us reach the ground. Finally we arrived inside the winery, some more than a little stressed!

I think the winery staff felt sorry for us and they were very kind. The wine was on tap and too

readily available in some cases. Despite the trauma on arrival most of us had a fun night, some even dancing on the tables.

The bus was righted for our journey home and after all that had happened it was a very quiet ride home!



ELEANOR MURPHY—REMEMBERS

My Mum and I moved to Heidelberg in 1973 and my mum (who was also Eleanor was called "Lena", Lena Murphy - some may remember her). Mum went to mass daily. One day she was on her way to mass when a dog bit her leg and made it bleed quite badly, however she continued up the hill to church. Someone at church helped her to the hospital – she didn't ring me as didn't want to disturb me as I was teaching! Later a rather annoyed nurse rang me to let me know I could come and pick my mother up!



Mum loved St. John's and when we arrived at the parish it was a lovely surprise to see Fr Sheehy Parish Priest as we had had him some decades earlier at St. Joseph's Northcote. Also at St. Josephs Northcote was a close friend of my brother, Frank, he was Joe Casamento and now some 60 years later I sometimes see him at St. John's.

After attending daily Mass mum walked up that Hawdon St. hill to our house for over three decades and it is quite the hilliest part of Heidelberg. Her determination amazed people but nothing was more important to her than her faith and family and attending daily Mass was not a chore but rather a complete joy.

Some ladies of mum's era use to have prayer meetings in their homes. Yes, there was lots of praying but there was also the sharing of friendship, a cup of tea and delicious cakes. Names that come to mind and are part of the parish history are, Phoebe Mount and Cath Sims.

Mum went through life giving joy, consideration, care and loving her God. St. John's was where her faith was nurtured and a vital part of her daily well - being, sharing time with the Lord and enriched by her parish family .

Now over 50 years since coming to St. John's I also feel very much as my mum did, nurtured and enriched in my faith by our priests and a sense of belonging to my parish family at St. John's Heidelberg.

ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON—REMEMBERS

My family moved to Eaglemont from the Western Suburbs in 1964. A friend of my mother advised her that because of where we were living, we would be in the parish of Mother of God, East Ivanhoe. So for eight years my family attended Mass there and was actively involved in parish life.

In 1970 I graduated from Christ College (teacher's college) and, unlike the employment practices of today, I had to select three Catholic schools at which I would like to teach. The only caveat being that I could not select my parish school. My selections were -1. St John's School Heidelberg, 2. Immaculate Conception School Ivanhoe, 3. St Martin's School Rosanna.



I can still remember the phone call from Father Tom Doyle, the then Director of Catholic Education in Melbourne, informing me that I been appointed to teach at St John's Heidelberg. My joy was abundant as was my beautiful mothers as she hovered by the phone to await the news. That phone call was the beginning of a 45 year teaching career at St John's School Heidelberg, teaching students and the children of students.

You may be confused as I mentioned that in selecting a school to teach at, it was at that time, not permitted to teach at your parish school. It was about two weeks into the school year when the Parish Priest, Father Michael Sheehy, approached my mother sharing with her his disappointment that I was not attending Mass and how inappropriate that was for a teacher in a Catholic school.

My mother assured Father Sheehy that our family attended Mass each week at Mother of God Parish East Ivanhoe. 'ST JOHN'S IS YOUR PARISH! was his reply! My mother had been misinformed regarding the parish to which we belonged. Thank the Lord I wasn't asked to leave! I ended up at St John's by default but how blessed I am that it happened that way.

As I walked from my car, passing our magnificent, historic church for those 45 years, and still today, I remembered in awe, gratefulness and admiration for those who came before us in establishing our parish and building our beautiful church.

REMEMBERING DAYS PAST PARISH DINNER—ITALIAN THEME



St. John's is made up of many different nationalities and in the past there was as a very large Italian population. Many generous people of Italian decent have contributed much to our parish.

Some years ago an "Italian Dinner" was held with a true red, white and green theme. Many packed into the hall and enjoyed a scrumptious Italian meal made by the Italian ladies of the parish. The Italian ladies had working bees to make the pasta sauce and handmade the pasta.

The dinner was a great success raising lots of funds for maintenance works of the parish. Maria Bechelli and Bill Barnes (recently deceased) were the main dish washers on the night. Maria then asking that thought be given to putting a commercial dishwasher in the hall kitchen. This was finally achieved a few years later!

Parish Picnic 2026

January 25th



The prayers for a fine day were answered and the weather was perfect, an Aussie BBQ cooked by Sean (a Canadian) under an Aussie hat! Grace and Joel assisted and many enjoyed a sausage with onion and bread after the 10.30 Mass on January 25th. About 50 people then stayed and enjoyed the fun and games. A special picnic day with parish family together, meeting up with old friends and getting to know new parishioners. Fr Vinh and Fr Geo circulated to all tables and there was lively conversation and much laughter.



The setting was one of relaxed lunch with thanks to all the helpers who carried over the chairs and tables from the hall and those who put up the canopies for shade, Marguerite and Elizabeth who added the tablecloths, and served the tea and coffee. Everyone bought food to share and Pauline Griffiths even bought her renowned jelly cakes. Louise's Fillipino savoury rolls were lovely and spicy and shared generously with all.



Parish Picnic fun and games

Paul set off the heats of the egg and spoon race.

It was all DETERMINATION, CONCENTRATION AND A STEADY HAND & EGG ON THE SPOON!!



Look at Fr Vinh go.....but Grace and Xavier are in the lead!

Some asked if they can bring Blue Tak next year !!!!



Fr Vinh on one team and Fr Geo on the other; some pulling uphill and others had the downhill advantage. After two heats of the tug of war and before any muscle strain or tissue damage to the contestants, Michelle declared a dead heat!



Patrick Ryan at the rear as anchor man and Paul at the front there was no stopping the uphill fight to win!

LENTEN TALKS

Each week for three weeks Associate Professor Joel Hodge has given us great insights on the Gospel of St. John. Over 60 people attended the first and the same number the second talk. Many commented on how it has helped them understand more fully the gospel and Christ's life journey on earth and his passion and death and how that relates to our journey and ultimately our own death and what awaits us with the Lord.

Joel has a great gift and shares his talents with us willingly giving his time freely and enriching our Lenten journey.

Thank you Joel.



Term 1

School Community

At St John's Primary School Heidelberg, our Eyrie theme of *Remembering* encourages us to reflect on who we are, where we have come from, and the story of our community. With 343 students across 15 classes, we are a diverse school with many cultures and nationalities, making our community rich and vibrant.

We are an inclusive school where every student is valued and supported. At St John's, we aim to inspire a love of learning through engaging activities that encourage curiosity, creativity and teamwork. By remembering the importance of kindness and respect, we help our students grow as confident, caring and active members of our Parish school and wider community.

As we begin the year, we gathered for our Beginning of Year Mass with Fr Geo. This special celebration reminded our students that we are part of a faith-filled tradition, called to remember the Gospel values of love, compassion and service in our daily lives.

WELCOME TO PREP FAMILIES



We warmly welcomed our new Prep families into our community, and Fr Geo offered them a special blessing, giving thanks for the year ahead. It was a beautiful moment of connection and hope, reminding us all that Christ walks with us in everything we do. As we journey through the year together, we hold onto this spirit of remembering — remembering our faith, our shared story, and our commitment to being inclusive.



This Lent, our school community is invited to be part of something truly meaningful. Once again, we are called to stand hand in hand with thousands of others across the country and Unite Against Poverty by supporting Caritas Australia's Project Compassion. Through prayer, fundraising and action, we are reminded that Lent is a time of reflection, sacrifice and outreach — a time to remember those in our world who are most vulnerable and to respond with generous hearts.

Term 1



Our Year 6 leaders are demonstrating the importance of service by selling icy poles each Friday to raise funds for Project Compassion. Their leadership is a wonderful example of faith in action and a reminder to all students that even small acts can make a big difference.

On Monday, 2 March, St John's Parish School Heidelberg proudly celebrated our Better Buddies Friendship Day for 2026. As a school community, we reflected on our theme of *Remembering* — remembering that every child's journey is stronger when they feel known, valued and supported. By pairing our younger students with older buddies, we continue to build a caring and inclusive culture that reflects the heart of our school.



Throughout the day, students took part in fun activities in mixed year-level groups, building new friendships and creating shared memories. Our Year 6 students showed wonderful leadership as they guided and supported their Prep buddies. The day concluded with a whole-school Teddy Bears Picnic on the basketball court, where students brought along their favourite teddy bears. It was a joyful celebration filled with laughter and connection — a special reminder that the memories we create together help shape the strong and nurturing community we are so proud of at St John's.

Student Representative Council

This term at St John's, we were proud to announce our newly elected **Student Representative Council (SRC)** students for 2026. These students have been chosen by their peers to represent their classes and to be the voice of our student body.

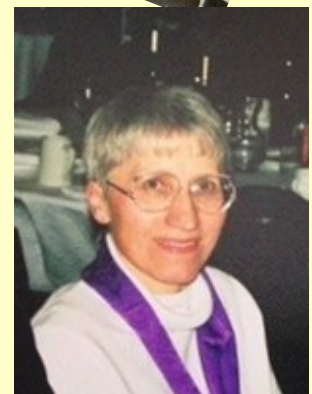
At our whole school assembly this month, we were reminded of the importance of truly listening to 'student voice'. When we take the time to listen, we honour the experiences, ideas and perspectives of our students. The SRC plays a vital role in this process — gathering feedback, sharing suggestions and helping to shape initiatives that strengthen our school. By remembering that every voice matters, we



continue to build a culture of respect, collaboration and shared leadership, ensuring that all students feel heard, valued and empowered.

REMEMBERING

25 YEARS AGO THE 150TH BALL



The Heidelberg Town Hall (as it was called then) was the scene for St. John's Sesquicentenary Ball some 25 years ago, the 150th Celebrations of our parish. It was a night of celebration, dancing and friendship. **Can you put some names to faces??.....** from top Mary & Simon Gysberts, with Pauline Griffiths, Kate & Michael Matthai, Liz Sier, Jo & Pauline Manovella, Pam Smith, Michelle Penson, Anna Bortolin, Maria Bortolin.

This year you can be part of the 175th Anniversary celebrations of our parish

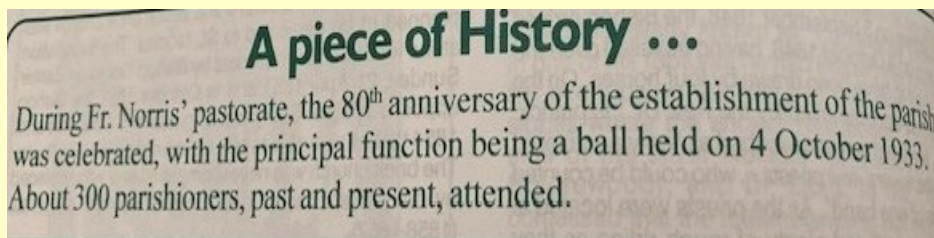
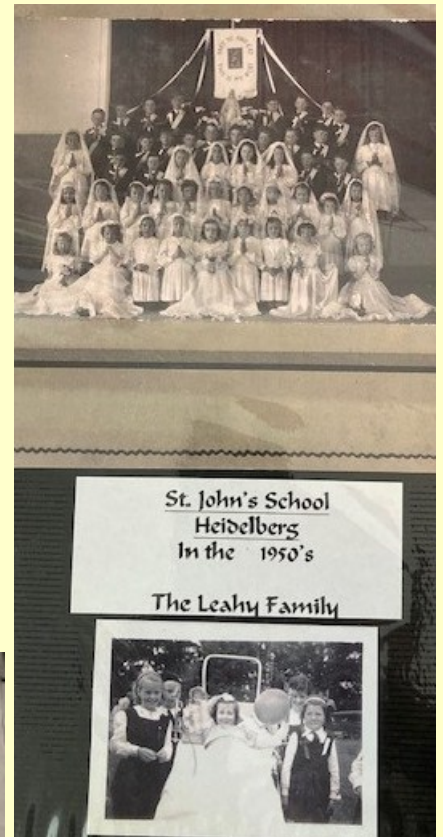
175TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER

FRIDAY 29TH MAY 2026 7PM—10.30PM

See the advertisement and booking details page 10 for more details.



First Communion Class in the early 50's —can you find Sue Greenham above? To the left the Leahy family photo album gratefully shared their photos with us.



Remember Rejoice Renew

A PIECE OF HISTORY

DID YOU KNOW?

"Statistical returns of the Mission of Warringal in the year ending May 31st, 1858 . . .

Weatherboard chapel	50' x 50'
Average attendance	200
Monthly communicants	60
Catholic school, average attendance	42
Since January 1858, 6 Marriages and 54 Baptisms	

Stations attended at Christmas and Easter — Upper Plenty, Lower Plenty, Eltham, Yan Yean, Wittlesea and Caledonia. About 20 at each station."

p. 20 St. John's on the Hill
E. Vaughan, 1982

A PIECE OF HISTORY Families of the past

Miss Eileen Kiely lived as a teenager in the early 1900's in the Parish of St John's.

"My parents first came from Dungarvan in Ireland with two-year old Patrick, they left Edward, their other baby with Grandmother Kiely. He did not come to Australia until he was nine. Well, they lived on a farm at Chelsworth . . . When we moved to a farm near Gower St, Preston, we were still in St John's Parish. The whole family always walked to Mass at Heidelberg every Sunday. There were other small farms in the district: Leahy's, Walshe's, Gough's, Sullivan's, McMahon's. No cars then, they all walked to Mass. Up near Waterdale Rd, we would meet up with the Goughs, Hartys and Farrells . . ."

p. 42. St John's on the Hill
Eileen Vaughan 1982

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.

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at

175TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER

FRIDAY 29TH MAY 2026 7PM—10.30PM

THE CENTRE IVANHOE IN THE GREAT HALL

275 Upper Heidelberg Rd Ivanhoe

DRESS - GALA DINNER WORTHY

Tickets \$150 per person (three course meal & drinks)

Bookings—Try Bookings QR code
or ring Parish House Tues—Fri 9.30-2.30
Any queries ring Michelle 0499891101 or
Wendy 0423153310 (school parent)



FR VINH NGUYEN—ST. JOHN'S PARISH PRIEST

Remembering: A Grace for Our Parish Journey

This year our parish family celebrates a remarkable milestone: **175 years of faith, prayer, and community at St John's Catholic Parish Heidelberg**. Such an anniversary invites us to pause and remember. Remembering is more than recalling events from the past; it is recognising the faithful presence of God who has walked with our parish through every generation.

When we look back over these 175 years, we remember the many people who built and sustained this community: the priests who served, the religious who nurtured faith, the families who filled the pews, and the volunteers who quietly gave their time and love. Some laid the foundations of this parish long before us. Others carried the mission forward through times of growth, challenge, and change. Because of their faith, we are here today.

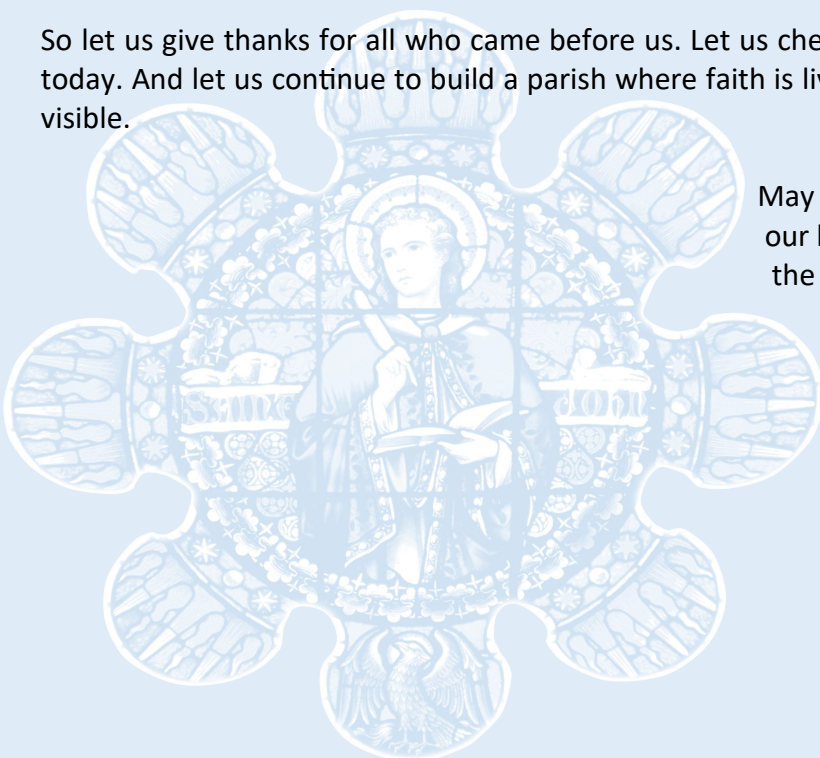
The season of Lent, which we are now journeying through, is also a time of remembering. In Lent we remember God's mercy, revealed fully in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We remember who we are as God's people and renew our commitment to live the Gospel more faithfully.

As we walk together from Lent toward Easter, our parish anniversary becomes not only a celebration of the past but also a call for the present. The faith that sustained our parish for 175 years is now entrusted to us. We are the ones called to keep the light of faith burning for future generations.

So let us give thanks for all who came before us. Let us cherish the gift of our parish community today. And let us continue to build a parish where faith is lived, hope is shared, and love is made visible.

May this season of remembering renew our hearts as we journey together toward the joy of Easter.

*Fr Vinh Nguyen
Parish Priest*



The Eyrie

OUR TEAM

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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*

**Stations of the Cross 6th, 13th, 20th
& 27th March 7pm**

LENTEN TALKS ON

**THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN WITH
ASSOC. PROFESSOR JOEL HODGE**

7PM TUESDAY 3RD, 10TH & 18TH MARCH

29TH March Palm Sunday

**THURSDAY 2ND APRIL—HOLY THURSDAY
GOOD FRIDAY 3RD APRIL 11AM
STATIONS OF THE CROSS
3PM THE LORD'S PASSION**

**SATURDAY 4TH APRIL—EASTER VIGIL
MASS 7.30PM**

**SUNDAY 5TH APRIL—EASTER SUNDAY
MASSES 8.30 & 10.30AM & 5pm**

**SUNDAY 3RD MAY 10.30AM
175TH ANNIVERSARY MASS
MOST REVEREND PETER
COMENSOLI
ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE**

THURSDAY 14TH ASCENSION OF THE LORD

**SUNDAY 17TH - FIRST EUCHARIST
SUNDAY 24TH MAY—PENTECOST SUNDAY**

**FRIDAY 29TH MAY
175TH ANNIVERSARY
GALA DINNER**

**We hope you will join in all the 175th 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