Let your Mercy be on us
As we place our trust in you

This is the Year of Mercy in the Catholic church throughout the world. Pope Francis opened the Jubilee Doors of St Peters basilica in Rome as a sign that all are welcome and as an invitation for the church to go beyond it’s own doors and be present amongst all people.

Before the children started this year, we gathered as a staff and reflected on what it means for us, here at Mother of God school to be a catholic school. We invited Sr Brigid Arthur to open up a conversation about our catholic identity. Brigid shared with us the story of the Good Samaritan and reflected on the radical nature of the stopping to offer a helping hand to someone in need.

On Tuesday last week, some of our Yr 6 students met up with Sr Brigid again in at St Patricks cathedral where she was again asking the question of us as a catholic community and as a nation with a conscience; ‘How do we welcome the most vulnerable?’ I have included Bishop Vincent Long’s homily from Tuesday mass, please take some time to read it and reflect on his message.

You might notice yellow ribbons on our school gates in Blance St, they are signs from our SLC that all are welcome in this place.

Bishop Vincent Long’s Homily

Let us also be open to the revelation of God’s mercy and to the goodness of others, as we celebrate the Year of Mercy. As Pope Francis says in his message: “The Year of Mercy is a journey of this kind, a journey which is summoned by the love that God shows us and which is open to all.”

We are all called to this journey of mercy where we are not afraid to show mercy to others. May we be open to the mercy that God offers us and may we use the Year of Mercy as an opportunity to be merciful to others.

Bishop Vincent Long
Year 4 spent the day on The Pelican

As part of our first term Science unit our Year 4s spent the day on board The Pelican, a 65 foot catamaran, purpose built for education. We set sail from Gem Dock in Williamstown and headed out into the Bay.

After our safety briefing we explored why the oceans are important to our everyday lives with Wayne, who is a ranger with Marine Parks Victoria and what we can do to keep the oceans healthy.

Harry, our on-board marine scientist enthralled the kids with his knowledge and passion for the sea and all that lives in it. He had an amazing collection of shells, eggs, and various sea life from our Port Phillip Bay, that the kids could touch.

The kids all agreed that being out on the sea was a better place to learn about the sea than in the classroom. Some of the things the kids said included: “You see it in real life and in a class you just talk about it.” “On a boat you can see where the animals come from.” “In school you learn about the community, on the boat we learnt about the ocean and it’s creatures.” Well nearly all the kids agreed, one said “The boat is too bumpy, the classroom is always calm!”

We are very grateful to Garry, the captain of The Pelican and his crew, Andy and Raph. Also grateful to Natalie who has worked on developing the education partnership with the Pelican over many years. We were also generously supported by Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) and thanks to Denis Torphy and Shelley Waldon from CEM.

Thanks too to Greg from MOGS for making this amazing experience happen for our kids. He’s happy as he got to go on The Pelican 4 times in 3 weeks!
SOCIAL JUSTICE MASS AT ST PATRICK’S CATHEDRAL
You may be aware of the recent High Court decision to send children back to Naru detention centre and the groundswell of support for these children to stay in the community. On Thursday, some of our Yr 6 students joined many other catholic schools at St Patricks Cathedral to show solidarity with those young children. I have included Bishop Long’s homily that he shared with those present in Cathedral on Thursday.

Bishop Vincent Long’s homily, 16 February 2016, St Patrick’s Cathedral
“Pray To Let Them Stay – Solidarity with Asylum Seekers”

My friends, There has been a growing reawakening in the conscience of our nation to the plight of asylum seekers. Ever since the Christian churches offered sanctuary to those facing deportation to Nauru in the wake of the High Court ruling, a rising chorus of voices has been heard throughout Australia. They come from the streets as well as the offices, the young as well as the old, religious as well political leaders. They all say in unison: let them stay because we can do better than sending asylum seekers, including babies born in Australia, back into harm’s way. Here in this sanctuary today, our voices join theirs in affirming that: It is time for us to ensure that no child is subject to an unsafe and harmful environment and that no-one is returned to where they may face physical, psychological and sexual violence and harm.

It is time for us to deal decently and compassionately with asylum seekers while still preventing people smuggling, saving lives at sea and maintaining the integrity of Australia’s borders.

It is time for us as a responsible world citizen, a wealthy and resourceful nation to develop the asylum policies that enshrine the best of our traditions rather than the worst of our natures.

Many of us here are in fact beneficiaries of the Australia that dared to welcome the unwelcomed. As a former refugee, I remember with pride and gratitude the Australia that rose to the challenge in the wake of the boat people crisis in the 70s and 80s. It accepted an unprecedented number of Asian refugees for the first time in its history. Even though there have been challenges in their resettlement and integration, however, the Australia that embraced them exemplified the best of the Australian spirit. It dared to afford the privilege of opportunity to the underprivileged and a fair go to the underdog. It lived up to its call and destiny as a civilised, free, diverse and richly blessed migrant nation.

Migrants and refugees are beneficiaries of Australia. But they in turn also enrich this nation. Australia is what it is today because of their love of freedom and fundamental human values. Australia is what it is today because of their determination and drive for a better future. We honour the legacy of this great nation not by excessive protectionism, isolation and defence of our privilege at all costs. Rather, we make it greater by our concern and care for asylum seekers in the spirit of “a fair go”, compassion and solidarity that has marked the history of our country from its humble beginnings.

Friends, We stand united with one another, with men and women of good will in working for the coming of the Kingdom. We stand united with Pope Francis who has given us a strong leadership on the care of asylum seekers and refugees. His words and gestures at Lampedusa in particular inspire us to speak and act in favour of God’s poor for whose cause we will be judged. “As you did it to the least of these, you did it unto me”(Matthew25:40). These words of Jesus teach us to see the face of the Incarnate God in our asylum seeking brothers and sisters. It is our duty, as Pope Francis says, to replace indifference with compassion, ignorance with respect, and suspicion with love.
Christianity is not a religion of fear, non-involvement, indifference, complacency and mediocrity. Rather, it is radically incarnational, which made possible a triumph of love over hatred, life over death and good over evil. It is Jesus Christ who accomplished that triumph by his life, death and resurrection. It is he who came that others might have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). It is he who showed us the ultimate example of a missionary journey towards the other, a self-emptying process that brought him close to us through the form of a servant (Phil 2:10). Therefore, it is fundamental to Christian discipleship re-enact the missionary journey of Christ and to enable others to have the fullness of life and to share God’s triumph of love.

As Christians, we cannot remain content with status quo, especially when that status quo is less than what God wants for us as individuals and as a community. Australia is a wonderful country but where it is in terms of its treatment of asylum seekers should galvanise us into action. We cannot be his disciples if we ignore the plight of the marginalised and the vulnerable. We cannot be salt and leaven if we allow our Christian conscience to be desensitized by the inequality, injustice and inhumanity in our society and in the world.

With the men and women of goodwill, let us build a better Australia and a better world. May our endeavour to replace the culture of fear and indifference with that of encounter and acceptance be brought to fulfillment in accordance with God’s vision of the fullness of life for all humanity.

Bishop Vincent Long

Beginning of Year Family Get Together
Starting at 5.30pm on Monday February 29.

Help us celebrate the start of the new year with a shared meal.
You are invited to bring some food to share with others.
Drinks supplied by school.

We are over 100 students for the first time in more than 20 years.
That’s a long time to make a century!!!!

So we are holding the first MOGS Big Bash Cricket Match
Adults vs Kis
Starting at 6pm under lights!
**Important School News**

**SPECIAL LUNCH NEXT FRIDAY**
Family and friends of Abbey Solo, our beautiful angel who passed away last year, are establishing a foundation in her name. What better place to start to raise funds than here, Abbey's school community. There will be a special hot lunch next Friday. You are invited to place a lunch order and raise some funds. A separate note for lunch order will go home on Friday. All proceeds will go to Abbey's foundation. More details of Abbey's foundation will be coming in the next months.

**MOGS EASTER RAFFLE**
Our Parent Support Team are busy organising this years Easter raffle. Each year we ask for donations from MOGS families and friends to make up the prizes. You are able to leave your donations at the front office with Lourdes. Let's fill her office with bunnies and chocolate!!!!!

**HOME VISITS – THANK YOU**
A very big thank you to families and staff here at MOGS for embracing our Home Visit program. These are amazing opportunities to strengthen school and family partnerships. I know that the conversations held over the last few weeks will be so valuable as the year progresses. We know that it is not possible for all to meet us in the family home, and for those families, I am grateful for your presence at school last night. To all the staff here at MOGS, I appreciate your time and commitment to this terrific part of school life here at MOGS.

**BLUEARTH AT MOGS**
Bluearth is a national health promotion organization that works with school communities across the country. They work to improve young people's wellbeing through a more active lifestyle. Bluearth will be working with all the children (Prep – Yr 6) throughout the year, commencing on Wednesday, March 2. We are very grateful to the Barr Foundation, whose generous funding has allowed the program to come to our school. You can find more about Bluearth at [www.bluearth.com](http://www.bluearth.com).

**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RAMIREZ FAMILY**
A big congratulations to the Ramirez family (Sebastian in Prep, Nicolas in Yr 1 and Isabela in Yr6) on receiving their Australian Citizenship last week in a ceremony at Victoria University.

**MOGS PLAYGROUP**
Our Playgroup has started. Come and join us! Every Friday morning between 9:30 – 11am we come together in the Family Room for lots of fun and creativity for the kids. It’s also a terrific way for parents to meet each other. So if you have young ones (doesn’t matter how young) drop by and be a part of it. You are also welcome to stay on after you have dropped your child in class, have a cuppa and read the paper while you wait for playgroup.

**MOGS SCHOOL EVENTS CALENDAR**
We have developed a MOG School events Calendar to promote all the special events and important dates for families. It can be viewed on the school website [www.mogardeer.catholic.edu.au/newsandevents](http://www.mogardeer.catholic.edu.au/newsandevents). It is also now a feature on the MOGS Skoolbag App. In this app you will receive notifications when new events and dates are posted.
**SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES**

Our assemblies are held every second Friday from 2.30pm - 3.10 in the multipurpose room. It’s a great way to see some of the amazing things that the children are doing in their classrooms. You are all very welcome to join us whenever you can. Our next assembly

**PARKING BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL**

We would ask that you do not park in the staff car park before or after school when dropping off, or picking up your children. This includes pulling into the school driveway. You would understand that all children’s safety is our prime concern. We would also ask that you do not park on the northern side of Blanche street. This is illegal and you risk a council fine if you park there.

**CAMPS, SPORTS AND EXCURSION FUND**

The Camp, Sports and Excursion Fund (CSEF) is provided by the State Government in assist eligible families with costs of school camp, sports and excursion programs. To be eligible, families must have a current Centrelink Health Card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) or be a temporary foster parent. Eligible families will have an amount of $125 paid directly to school and credited against individual accounts. You must complete the attached application form and return it to school before February 29. The information sheet and application form are attached to this newsletter for your convenience.

*A copy of the application form is attached to this newsletter*

**MOTHER OF GOD SCHOOL ARDEER OFFICIAL FACEBOOK**

Our school Facebook page is a closed group for family and friends of MOGS. It is a great way to share the many great occasions as well as the everyday events of school. If you wish to join the group please search for us and send a ‘request to join’. We currently have 89 members.

**MOGS SKOOLBAG APP**

A new version of the Skoolbag App is now available there is also dedicated iPad version in the iPad App Store! You must accept notifications so that you can be alerted to new messages from school. If you have an earlier version of Skoolbag installed on your devices, you will see this new version as an app update, and should install it as an update. You may already have automatic updates switched on, in which case the app will update itself. It is important that your users install the latest update. Please note also that this Android update requires at least version 4 OS software on Android devices to run.
Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) Application Form

School Name

School REF ID

Parent/legal guardian details

Surname

First name

Address

Town/suburb

State

Postcode

Contact number

Centrelink pensioner concession OR Health care card number (CRN)

- [ ] Yes

- [ ] No

OR

Foster parent* OR Veterans affairs pensioner

*Foster Parents must provide a copy of the temporary care order letter from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Student details

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I authorise the Department of Education and Training (DET) to use Centrelink Confirmation eServices to perform an enquiry of my Centrelink customer details and concession card status in order to enable the business to determine if I qualify for a concession, rebate or service. I also authorise the Australian Government Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide the results of that enquiry to DET.

I understand that:

- DHS will use information I have provided to DET to confirm my eligibility for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund and will disclose to DET personal information including my name, address, payment and concession card type and status.

- this consent, once signed, remains valid while my child is enrolled at a registered Victorian school unless I withdraw it by contacting the school.

- I can obtain proof of my circumstances/details from DHS and provide it to DET so that my eligibility for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund can be determined.

- if I withdraw my consent or do not alternatively provide proof of my circumstances/details, I may not be eligible for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund provided by DET.

- information regarding my eligibility for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund may be disclosed to the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and/or State Schools Relief for the purpose of evaluating concession card services or confirming eligibility for assistance.

You are able to request access to the personal information that we hold about you, and to request that any errors be corrected, by contacting your child’s school.

Signature of applicant

Date
CSEF eligibility

Below is the criteria used to determine a student's eligibility for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF).

Criteria 1 – Eligibility
To be eligible* for the fund, a parent or legal guardian of a student attending a registered Government or non-government Victorian primary or secondary school must:
• on the first day of Term one, or;
• on the first day of Term two;
  a) Be an eligible beneficiary within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 2004, that is, be a holder of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or be an eligible Centrelink Health Care Card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) holder, OR
  b) Be a temporary foster parent, and;
  c) Submit an application to the school by the due date.
  * A special consideration eligibility category also exists. For more information, see: www.education.vic.gov.au/csef

Parents who receive a Carer Allowance on behalf of a child, or any other benefit or allowance not income tested by Centrelink, are not eligible for the CSEF unless they also comply with one of (a) or (b) above.

Criteria 2 - Be of school age and attend school in Victoria
School is compulsory for all Victorian children aged between six and 17 years of age inclusive.
For the purposes of CSEF, students may be eligible for assistance if they attend a Victorian registered primary or secondary school. Typically, these students are aged between five and 18 years inclusive.
CSEF is not payable to students attending pre-school, kindergarten, home schooled, or TAFE.

Eligibility Date
For concession card holders CSEF eligibility will be subject to the parent/legal guardian’s concession card being successfully validated with Centrelink on the first day of either term one (27 January 2016) or term two (11 April 2016).

Closing Date
Parents are encouraged to lodge the application form by 29 February 2016, so that payments can be made from March 2016. However schools can accept parent applications up until 03 June 2016.

Payment amounts

CSEF payment amount
The CSEF is an annual payment to the school to be used towards camps, sports and/or excursion expenses for the benefit of the eligible student.
• Primary school student rate: $125 per year.
• Secondary school student rate: $225 per year.

The CSEF is paid directly to your child’s school and will be allocated by the school towards camps, sports and/or excursion costs for your child.

For ungraded students, the rate payable is determined by the student’s date of birth. For more information, see: www.education.vic.gov.au/csef

Year 7 government school students who are CSEF recipients are also eligible for a uniform voucher. Secondary schools are required to make applications on behalf of parents so please register your interest at the school.

How to complete the application form

1. Complete the PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN DETAILS section.
   Make sure that the Surname, First Name, and Customer Reference Number (CRN) details match those on your concession card. You will also need to provide your concession card to the school.
   If you are claiming as a Foster Parent or a Veteran Affairs Pensioner, you will need to provide a copy of documentation confirming your status as a temporary Foster Parent or provide your Veterans Affairs Pensioner Gold card to the school.
2. Complete the STUDENT/S DETAILS section for students at this school.
3. Sign and date the form and return it to the school office.

CSEF payments cannot be claimed retrospectively for prior years.

Queries relating to CSEF eligibility and payments should be directed to the school.
Brimbank Council Spiritual Exchange Tours
Places of Worship Bus Tours - March 2016

As part of Cultural Diversity Week 2016, the Brimbank Maribyrnong Interfaith Network invites you to join us on the following tours. This is an opportunity to witness the religious and cultural diversity of the western region of Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Places of Worship Bus Tour – Western Region of Melbourne
Friday 4 March 2016
Times: 9am – 4.00pm
Sunshine Mosque, Sunshine
Sikh Temple, Hoppers Crossing
Quang Minh Buddhist Temple, Braybrook

Places of Worship Bus Tour – Trentham
Friday 18 March 2016
Times: 9am – 4.00pm
Visit two places of worship based in Trentham, Victoria
Enjoy a guided spiritual bush walk in the Wombat Forest

Light lunch and refreshments provided

- Please wear comfortable shoes and modest clothing covering thighs and shoulders. You may be asked to remove your shoes or cover your head to enter some areas of worship.
- This is a no cost community event but registration is essential. Limited spaces.
- All welcome to attend.

Register online above or call 9688 0342

For more information please see http://www.bmin.org.au