

Parish Priest Report

We must be doing something right. How prophetic the words of our Principal, Mrs Barbara Gomez. Our school community has much to celebrate and much to be proud of. I too am proud of all within our school community - our Principal, Mrs Barbara Gomez, teachers and staff, our volunteers, parents and especially the children. We welcome new teachers - Amelia, Irene, Belinda, Adele - this year. Also with us for a number of years now - Anthony, Computer Tutor, Isobel (Bella) and Kylie, our Garden gurus. All of them partner each other in educating and nurturing our children in preparing and equipping them facing a world of change and great opportunity.

I see the unfolding vision for the School as one that takes a holistic approach to education of the child, ie. the whole child. I think St Pius X does that very well. Teaching and learning is very important but the days when the three Rs - reading, writing and arithmetic - are sufficient, they are not enough. Our children are taught to be self-learners and enquirers. There is much more to learn - social skills where they develop the tools to communicate with others and to develop empathy for the other, to relate well and get on with people. They are given responsibility, e.g. caring for the chickens, feeding, giving them water, collecting the eggs, allowing them to roam outside the coops and then locking them away at the end of the day. Many of the children have given the chickens names. Also recording the progress of the newer chickens and entering them in the Royal Show. Our chickens won! Also activities in social justice and supporting missions of various kinds.

One project children participated in was the creation of a mural depicting the Indigenous people who fought side by side with the Australian soldier throughout the theatres of war during this and the last century. The mural commissioned by Repatriation Hospital and Returned Service people. With Simon the resident artist at the Repatriation Hospital who designed the mural enlisted the help of our children to filling in the design with mosaic tiles. This was undertaken at the school. Our children learned some practical skills but also the period of history when indigenous people had few rights, one being citizenship. It shows that our school community has a collective conscience where we look at people, community and world and seeing how things are - the good and not so good things - and how they can be.

We are a Catholic school and I believe we see Catholic Identity not as a concept but as a reality that is lived out by the school community. There are certainly challenges for us as a school community given our numbers but we are committed to our core activity of education, teaching and learning bound by our Catholic ethos. The challenges facing us must be tackled by all stakeholders - children, parents, teachers, staff and parishioners. The last couple of years we have been exploring Early Learning, e.g. Montessori and Play Groups.

In order to continue the fine work and attract more families need help in marketing ourselves. That is the responsibility of all of us. Please tell others about our wonderful school and the programs it offers. I am as is Mrs Gomez, teachers and School Board, interested in any ideas

you might have in helping us to move from strength to strength. Our school is catholic unreservedly so in tradition and practice. As priest of this community - school, parish, Heidelberg West I am dedicated to your wellbeing. I would like to see more of our families be involved not just in school activity but parish and church also. Christmas and Easter are times when worshipping activity is at its peak. I would encourage all to make an effort to join in our worshipping activity more regularly during the year. Bring yourselves and your children to our weekend church celebrations. I always found growing up that going to church made me appreciate other people, a sense of the other and something bigger than all of us. Grownups and children all need a sense of the divine as well as the human.

We also need your support in practical ways. One way is to help us look after the grounds of the school and parish. We have had working bees in the past. We need to have them more regularly to Garden - weeding, mowing, planting, pruning. We have a lovely property but it is too much for a few to look after. Please help.

With Mrs Barbara Gomez and our accountant we continue to raise issues with the Office of Catholic Education Melbourne concerning the future of the school. We are an important and vital presence within the wider community. We are dedicated to the ongoing care, safety and education of our children and with your ongoing help and participation we will continue to do so.

Thank you for your trust and your hard work over the past 12 months and to our future together. With every blessing.

Fr. Wayne Edwards