



Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

MEDIA RELEASE

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SANDHURST DIOCESE LAUNCHED SEASON OF CREATION WITH MASS and PICNIC IN THE WHIPSTICK FOREST

Galahs flew in to perch on surrounding Kamarooka Mallee, and wildflowers rustled with the breeze – as if they knew the Gospel Reading was about them – at Sandhurst’s Mass and Picnic to Launch of the [Season of Creation](#) in the Whipstick Forest, Bendigo on 1 September.

Sandhurst gathered as a Diocese committed to the [Laudato Si’ Action Platform](#) and to encouraging all parishes and schools to take up the Catholic Earthcare journey towards Pope Francis’ seven goals. The congregation of two hundred parishioners, and students and teachers from nine Sandhurst schools, were embraced by a big blue sky; a forest of Mallee, Box-Ironbark and flowering wattle; and the warmth of each other’s goodwill. Mass was celebrated by Bishop Shane Mackinlay and with other diocesan priests concelebrating.

In his Welcome to Country, Djaara man, Troy Firebrace, spoke of the knowledge of Country which Aboriginal people carry in their heart. “We stand here today, with Djaara, we stand here today with Country, and we move towards a brighter future to ensure that our younger generations have a prosperous future, a future that is bright, humble, and importantly connected with Country and Creation.”

Kerry Stone, from the Sandhurst Care for Creation Team, welcomed people to Mass and proclaimed the theme for the Season of Creation this year:

“Let Justice and Peace Flow. The prophet Amos cries out, ‘but let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!’ We are called to join the river of justice and peace to take up climate and ecological justice and to speak out for communities most impacted by climate injustice.”

In his Homily, Bishop Shane reflected on the Gospel (*Matthew 6:25-34*), “Our report card on most of Jesus’ commands, would probably read, ‘Tries hard, could do better’”, he said. “However, there is one of Jesus’ commands that we do exceptionally well on. Jesus says, at the end of today’s Gospel – ‘Don’t worry about tomorrow, tomorrow will take care of itself’ ... We are over performers in not worrying about tomorrow, in kicking the can down the road,” - a comment which brought amused recognition from the crowd!

Bishop Shane expanded:

“So what Jesus is saying in that text – where he is responding to people about the times when we are so concerned about our own needs, that we forget about everything around us. He says, “Remember, the world is bigger than just you, look at the birds in the sky, look at the flowers in the fields. God cares for all of these things. All of these things are part of God’s good creation and cared for as part of God’s good creation. Don’t centre your concerns just on yourself, or your immediate needs. Don’t get so obsessed with your own needs for tomorrow. Think more broadly about the way that God cares for each of us, but also for the whole of creation. Our needs, our cares, fit in that much bigger picture.”

Referencing Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’* Bishop Shane related the Gospel reading to integral ecology, “As we’re increasingly aware, if we don’t care for the needs of all the life of God’s creation, we won’t be able to meet the individual needs that we have, or the needs that our community has, or that any of those have.”

Bishop Shane recommended that people read Pope Francis’ [Message for the 2023 World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation](#). “Pope Francis invites us to join that river of justice and peace which is needed in our world, by transforming our hearts, transforming our lifestyles, and transforming our public policies ... We need to think about the whole of creation as God’s precious and sacred gift to us, something to be cherished, entrusted to us to care for by God and to be cherished, Not as an object to be exploited.”

The galahs above squawked as if to say “Hear, hear!”

Bishop Shane elaborated on the three ways we need to transform, recognising that the challenges ahead can feel overwhelming.

“While we can be tempted to say, all this is too much, this is too hard, he (Pope Francis) reminds us that the mightiest of rivers, starts up in the high country with tiny trickles of water that couldn’t wash away any obstacles, they couldn’t create any new river beds, but eventually those trickles come together in creeks, streams, tributaries and eventually into the rivers that are so overwhelming for us in the power that they bring.

It’s the same with the river of justice and peace that the theme for this year’s Season of Creation speaks of. That river of justice and peace, that we need to be so powerful, it will flow powerfully only if each of us is committed to an action that produces our own trickles, that feed into that bigger river. And if we encourage others around us to do the same.”

At the Procession of Gifts, children from brought forward ‘the river (of blue fabric)’ ahead of the gifts of bread and wine while school choirs led the singing of Andrew Chinn’s ‘I Am The River’.

Mass concluded with an enthusiastic rendition of ‘Laudato Si – The Song’ (from the Archdiocese of Mumbai) followed by a ‘sausage sizzle picnic’. All students present received a memento of the day, a beeswax lunch-wrap, while the adults received [Catholic Earthcare’s](#) 34 Actions for the 34 Days of the Season of Creation. Socialising in the sunshine with a sausage in hand was a fitting end to a truly ecologically spiritual celebration.

Kerry Stone, is Sandhurst’s Caritas Australia & Social Justice Coordinator and also Caritas Earthcare Parish/Organisation National Coordinator. <https://www.caritas.org.au/catholic-earthcare>

Rev. Dr Brian Boyle EV , Administrator of Sacred Heart Cathedral is available for futher comment.

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Further resources and references:

