



Melbourne Archdiocese  
Catholic Schools



# OUR LADY'S SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

6 March 2026

[olsunshine.catholic.edu.au](http://olsunshine.catholic.edu.au)

**Parish Priest:** Fr. Peter-Damien McKinley  
**Principal:** Mrs Caroline Madigan  
**Parish Mass Times:**  
English: Saturday 9.00am, 5.30pm, Sunday 9:00am, 10.30am & 5:30pm  
Vietnamese: Saturday 7.00pm, Sunday 12.30pm, Friday 7.30pm  
Chin Hakha/Burmese: 2.30pm  
Tongan: Every 1st Sunday 3.00pm  
**School Phone:** 9312 2230  
**School website:** [www.olsunshine.catholic.edu.au](http://www.olsunshine.catholic.edu.au)

*Our Lady's is a Child Safe School*



## Christ beside me: Walking in the footsteps of St Patrick

### DATES FOR THE DIARY

**Mon 9 Mar** Labour Day Public Holiday  
**Wed 11 Mar** NAPLAN begins for Yrs 3&5  
**Tues 17 Mar** P&F AGM  
**Wed 18-Fri 20 Mar** Yrs 5/6 Camp  
**Tues 24 Mar** 6.30 Reconciliation Parent Night  
**Wed 25 Mar** 5.00pm Foundation Family Picnic  
**Thur 2 Apr** End of Term 1 at 1.00pm  
**Mon 20 Apr** *Closure Day - Professional Development for Staff (Literacy). No School for the children*  
**Tues 21 Apr** Start of Term 2  
**Wed 22 Apr** 7.00pm Student Well-being Parent Info Session

### **2026 Professional Development Days for staff**

**Term 2**  
Mon 20 April - Literacy Focus  
Fri 5 June - Report Writing (Semester 1)  
**Term 4**  
Mon 2 November - Report Writing Semester 2  
Friday 27 November - 2027 Planning

### **1:00pm finish days at the end of each term**

Term 1 - Thur 2 April  
Term 2 - Fri 26 June  
Term 3 - Fri 18 September  
Term 4 - Tues 15 December (last day of the 2026 school year for students).

Term 2 - Three Way Conversations (First Semester Reports)  
Wed 24 and Thur 25 June

### **SACRAMENT DATES FOR 2026**

*Year 3 Reconciliation*  
Wednesday 29 April at 6.00pm  
*Year 4 Eucharist*  
Sunday 17 May at 10.30am  
*Year 6 Confirmation*  
Friday 31 July at 7.00pm

### School Newsletter – Celebrating Our Learning Together

Dear Parents, Carers and Members of our School Community,  
Over the past few weeks, our school community has been busy with some exciting learning initiatives, and I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank our dedicated staff for the energy, commitment and care they continue to bring to their work each day. Their willingness to embrace new ideas and continually reflect on their practice ensures that our students receive the very best learning opportunities.

**Reminder No school on Monday March 9, it is a Public Holiday.**



### **UFLI Foundations:**

A special thank you goes to our Foundation–Year 2 teachers who have been working hard to introduce a new literacy approach called **UFLI Foundations – Australian Edition**. This program supports students as they learn the important building blocks of reading.

UFLI Foundations teaches reading in a clear and structured way. Students learn how letters and sounds work together and practise these skills step-by-step so they can read words with growing confidence. The program is carefully sequenced so that children build their knowledge gradually, giving them plenty of opportunities to practise and strengthen their reading skills.



While the program is used as part of everyday classroom learning in the early years, it is also a helpful approach for supporting students who may need extra help with reading.

We are excited about the positive impact this program is already having and are grateful to our teachers for the time and care they have invested in implementing it so thoughtfully.

The school is committed to ensuring all students have access to high-quality

### *Prayer for our Student Leaders*



We lift up our young student leaders, asking that You bless them with wisdom, integrity, and a compassionate heart. Guide them to serve their peers with humility and to foster a school environment that is inclusive and kind.

Grant them the strength to stand firm in their convictions, the courage to innovate, and the perseverance to keep going when they feel overwhelmed.

Help them to be role models who make positive impacts on their school and community.

Protect them from burnout, and fill them with energy and joy. May their leadership be marked by service, and may they grow into the leaders they are destined to be. Amen

reading materials that support our literacy programs while also offering a wide range of genres to foster a love of reading. To support this, we have invested in the purchase of new reading materials for 2026. Ensuring our school is well resourced to support student learning will always remain a priority. Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support of our wonderful school community. Together, we continue to nurture a love of learning in our students.

### Cyber Safety will be explicitly taught in the school:

We are also excited to announce that our school has been accepted to participate in the **Cyber Safe Classroom** program for all students from Foundation to Year 6. This program has been fully endorsed and financially supported by our governing body, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (**MACS**), we are grateful for the opportunity to be selected to participate in this initiative.



This program is designed to help students grow and thrive in the digital world. It focuses on supporting children to develop safe, responsible and positive behaviours when using technology and engaging online. Building these skills is an important part of supporting students' wellbeing and helping them navigate the digital spaces that are such a regular part of their lives.

Teachers will receive professional learning and will then deliver the program modules to students during class time. Some specific and explicit learning will also take place during our Digital Design and Technology (DDT) lessons, led by Mr Buttigieg.

There will also be an opportunity for parents and carers to learn more about the program at a later date. This session will provide helpful insights and practical strategies to support your child's safe use of technology at home. Further details about the evening will be shared soon.

### Road Works Update (Station Street)

Late on Wednesday evening, we were contacted by the supervisor overseeing the current road works affecting Station Place. After careful discussion, and with student safety as our highest priority, we requested consideration and support from the road crew during school pick-up and drop-off times.

We are pleased to share that the crew has agreed, where possible, to open the road at the beginning and end of the school day to assist families with access.

Electronic message boards (VMS boards) have been placed at the top of Station Road to provide up-to-date information regarding road access.

Please note that when Station Street is open, it will operate as a **one-way street heading towards Victoria Street**. We kindly ask all drivers to follow the signage, avoid making U-turns, and drive slowly in the area. Thank you for your cooperation and for helping us keep our children safe.



## School Leaders for 2026:

It is with great pleasure that we announce our **School Leaders for 2026**.

All senior students who expressed interest in taking on a leadership role have worked thoughtfully through the process of reflecting on why they would like to be leaders, the qualities they possess to fulfil the role, and the responsibilities that come with leadership.

Each student prepared and presented a speech to the leadership team. We were incredibly impressed by the way students confidently and thoughtfully articulated their ideas, their strengths, and their hopes for contributing positively to our school if given the opportunity to lead.

Every leadership position carries a level of responsibility and expectation. The students clearly demonstrated their understanding that these roles call them to lead by example and to uphold the values of our school of **Justice, Peace, Respect, Service, Courage and Compassion**, while modelling the expectations outlined in our Student Code of Conduct.

We congratulate all students who put themselves forward for leadership and thank them for their courage and commitment to our school community. We wish our 2026 leaders every success and offer them our school blessing as they carry out their roles in a faith-filled and positive way.



## Congratulations to...

### School Leaders

School Leaders are students who represent the whole student body and work closely with the principals. They help write and present speeches at assemblies and special events, welcome visitors, and model positive behaviour for the whole school. This role is perfect for students who are confident, responsible, and proud to represent their school.



**Anthony, Olive, Bonnie, Andreas**

### Sport House Leaders

Sport House Leaders support Ms Jo by helping set up and pack away equipment for PE lessons and events. They assist with major events like Athletics Day and interschool sports, and they help organise fun lunchtime competitions. This role suits students who enjoy sport, teamwork, and encouraging others to participate.



**(Green) Vincent, Samantha (Red) Sylvee, Evie, (Blue) Laura, Davyd (Yellow) Makeui, Joanne**

### Faith Leaders

Faith Leaders work with Mrs Cuni to support the spiritual life of the school. They help plan and lead social justice initiatives such as charity drives, assist with Masses and liturgies, and may read the Gospel at assemblies. This role is ideal for students who are compassionate, respectful, and passionate about helping others.



**David, Mila, Ethan, Catherine M, Sophia, Ben**

### DDT Leaders

DDT Leaders work with Mr Buttigieg to support technology at school events. They help create slideshows for assemblies and special occasions, set up digital equipment for Masses and events, and assist with signing in parents at school functions. This role is great for students who enjoy technology, problem-solving, and helping things run smoothly.



**Dylan, Oliver, Ava, Lincoln, Louis, Ella**

Warm regards,

*Caroline Madigan*

**Mrs Caroline Madigan**

**Principal**

[principal@olsunshine.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@olsunshine.catholic.edu.au)



# Kaboom Percussion Incursion





SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

# BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHL  
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ  
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

## Message of the Holy Father Leo XIV for Lent 2026, 13.02.2026

The following is the text of the Message of the Holy Father Leo XIV for Lent 2026, on the theme:  
“*Listening and Fasting: Lent as a Time of Conversion*”:

### Message of the Holy Father

#### *Listening and Fasting:*

#### *Lent as a Time of Conversion*

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

#### *Listening*

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through *listening*. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry” (*Ex 3:7*). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen *as he does*. We must recognize that “the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church.”<sup>[1]</sup>

#### *Fasting*

If Lent is a time for listening, *fasting* is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we “hunger” for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our “appetites,” keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbor.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the tension between the present moment and the future fulfilment that characterizes this custody of the heart. He observes that: "In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This reaching out in desire expands the soul and increases its capacity."<sup>[2]</sup> Understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because "those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly."<sup>[3]</sup> As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since "austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic."<sup>[4]</sup>

In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

#### *Together*

Finally, Lent emphasizes the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the covenant with God (cf. 9:1-3).

Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one's conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires — both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity's thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.

*From the Vatican, 5 February 2026, Memorial of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr*

LEO PP. XIV

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[1] Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (4 October 2025), 9.

[2] Augustine *The Usefulness of Fasting*, 1, 1.

[3] Benedict XVI, *Catechesis* (9 March 2011).

[4] Paul VI, *Catechesis* (8 February 1978).

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## Second Week of Lent (Week beginning Monday 2 March)

This Lent, we are proud to support Caritas Australia's Project Compassion and to stand in solidarity with school communities across the world who have their education disrupted by the daily struggle for clean, safe water.

This week, we're introduced to **Sisilia**, a 13-year-old girl from Tanzania. Sisilia supported her mother by walking long distances three times a day to fetch water. The water was unsafe, causing frequent illness, and the long walks left Sisilia exhausted and struggling to focus on her studies.

Thanks to Project Compassion and the support of schools like ours, Sisilia's school and village now have safe clean water taps. This means it takes Sisilia just two minutes to collect water, giving her more time to learn so she can fulfil her dreams of one day becoming a pilot.

*"I'd like to fly to different countries and pass through the sky." – said Sisilia. "Also, I want to help my family live a better life. If I can study without spending so much time fetching water, I know I can achieve my dream."*

Watch Sisilia's story [HERE](#) to learn more about how our school's support of Project Compassion helps to create ripples of change that are felt by our fellow students, teachers and parents across the world.



**Will you stand with students like Sisilia this Lent?**

**Please donate today.**

You can support Project Compassion 2026 through the donation boxes or by scanning the QR code to donate online. You can also donate: **Online at: [projectcompassion.org.au](https://projectcompassion.org.au) By phone at: 1800 024 413**

Thank you for standing with us, as we *Unite Against Poverty this Lent.*

**FREE EVENT**  
EVERYONE WELCOME

Sat 21st MARCH

COMMUNITY BIKE HUB

PROUDLY PRESENTS

# BIKE FEST

west gate neighbourhood fund

Come join us Sat 21st March from 10 am

FREE BIKE CHECKS GIVEAWAYS

Games KIDS BIKE CIRCUIT BIKE PACKER TALKS

BIKE N' BLEND

Located: Corner of Argyle St and Barkly St, West Footscray [Outside our shop]

**extend** BEFORE • AFTER SCHOOL CARE

## BOOK FOR THE REMAINDER OF TERM 1 WITH EXTEND!

**BELONGING BEING BECOMING**

It has been amazing to see all of the fun activities the children have been getting up to in our services for our Term 1 Theme, **BELONGING, BEING, BECOMING**.

<p>The children contributed to a community service board by sharing the different languages they speak by expressing how they say "hello" in their language.</p> <p>MULTILINGUAL "HELLO" POSTER</p>	<p>Children collected natural materials and used magnifying glasses to investigate their findings. They were thrilled to discover a tiny bug hiding in the leaves, inspiring them to create a small bug farm to care for it.</p> <p>SENSORY BIN</p>	<p>It has been wonderful to see the children engage in the All About Us activity, discovering each other's interests and hobbies. We've also been delighted by the effort and creativity shown in their work!</p> <p>ALL ABOUT US</p>
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**extend** BEFORE • AFTER SCHOOL CARE

**BOOK FOR THE REMAINDER OF TERM 1 TODAY**  
**SCAN THE QR CODE TO ENROL & BOOK NOW!**



Melbourne Archdiocese  
Catholic Schools



# OUR LADY'S SCHOOL SUNSHINE 2027 FOUNDATION ENROLMENT

## OPEN NOW

Our Lady's is a Catholic Primary School  
serving the Parish of Our Lady's  
Sunshine



32 Station Place Sunshine 3020  
[www.olsunshine.catholic.edu.au](http://www.olsunshine.catholic.edu.au)

## ENROLMENT FORMS AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE



**Tours Available**  
Bookings essential  
Tues 5 May 9.30am  
Wed 13 May 9.30am  
Mon 18 May 4.00pm  
Tues 21 July 9.30am

PLEASE  
BOOK A  
TOUR VIA  
OUR  
WEBSITE



9312 2230



[www.olsunshine.catholic.edu.au](http://www.olsunshine.catholic.edu.au)



[enquiries@olsunshine.catholic.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@olsunshine.catholic.edu.au)





OLS P+F

# ANNUAL EASTER RAFFLE

**RAFFLE DRAWN THU 2 APR**  
**TICKETS \$1 EACH VIA QKR**  
Available to purchase now til 10am Wed 1 Apr

Donations needed for raffle prizes!  
Easter themed books, arts, crafts, toys & chocolate  
can be dropped off to the office by Mon 30 March.

## Child Safe Standard 1

**"Establish culturally safe environments in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children, young people and students are respected and value"**

As Catholic educators, we have a moral, mission-driven and legal responsibility to uphold and actively promote the wellbeing and safety of every student entrusted in our care. Our commitment to the protection of students is enabled in nurturing, respectful and safe communities where the uniqueness and sacred dignity of every young person are celebrated, and they can flourish in their learning and development.

This newsletter series provides an overview of what the Child Safe Standards are, how they are designed to help keep children and young people safe and what school governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) are doing to prioritise and achieve this.

### Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Child Safe Standards are a set of 11 minimum requirements that all organisations working with children must meet. These standards are designed to:

- Prevent child abuse and harm
- Make child safety a shared responsibility
- Support the wellbeing of all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with disabilities
- Promote the participation and empowerment of children and young people

These standards apply to all school staff, volunteers, contractors, and anyone working with children in schools.

### Our Commitment

Our commitment to the protection of students is enabled in nurturing, respectful and safe communities where the uniqueness and sacred dignity of every young person are celebrated, and they can flourish in their learning and development.

This vision is driven by the Gospel message of love, justice and abundance, beautifully reflected in the words of John:

**"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full"**

(Jn 10:10)

**Note:** The term 'Aboriginal' includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is important to be respectful of how individual children, students, their families and community refer to themselves and use appropriate language when referring to individuals or communities.

## Spotlight on Child Safe Standard 1

### Creating a Culturally Safe Environment for Aboriginal Children

Child Safe Standard 1 relates to children and young people feeling culturally safe, respected, and valued.

#### What does this look like in a school environment?

- **Celebrating culture:** We include and celebrate Aboriginal culture in our classrooms/events e.g. NAIDOC Week, researching stories to share, inviting guest speakers.
- **Taking a stance:** We lead by example against racism and swiftly respond if it is observed.
- **Working together:** We contact and engage with Aboriginal families and communities to make sure our school is welcoming and inclusive. We ask families what they need to feel supported at our school.
- **Ongoing development:** Our staff receive training and knowledge to better understand and support cultural safety.



#### How Parents, Carers and Guardians can get involved!

Here's how you can support:

- **Familiarise** yourself with the school's child safety policies and understand how they support student wellbeing.
- **Provide feedback** when you notice something that may impact a child's safety or wellbeing.
- **Support** your child when they express their views and that their opinions are valued and heard.
- **Join in** on school activities, parent committees or forums that promote child safety and wellbeing.

#### Want to know more?

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about how we're supporting child safety, please get in touch.

More information on the Child Safe Standards can be found via the [Commission for Children and Young People \(CCYP\) website](#).

Check out these additional resources below to learn more!

- [Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation](#)
- [Koori Heritage Trust](#)
- [Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria](#)
- [AIATSIS: Map of Indigenous Australia](#)
- [Yoorrook Justice Commission](#)





## JOIN THE SUNSHINE FOOTBALL NETBALL CLUB IN 2026

**AT KINDERSMITH RESERVE ON  
WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAYS**

Junior Ages For 2026  
U8's 01/01/18 - 30/04/19  
U10's 01/01/16 - 31/12/17 (born in 2017 & 2016)  
U12's 01/01/14 - 31/12/15 (born in 2015 & 2014)

All Coach's are proud parents of current and former  
Our Ladys Children

For More Info visit our Website  
<https://www.sunshinekangaroos.com.au>  
or contact us at  
[juniors@sunshinekangaroos.com.au](mailto:juniors@sunshinekangaroos.com.au)

### AUSKICK FREE COME & TRY

Whether you're a seasoned player or trying it for the first time, now's the perfect time to get involved! Have fun, challenge yourself, and enjoy the thrill of the game.

SCAN HERE 

**PENNELL RESERVE, BRAYBROOK**  
SATURDAY 14TH MARCH, 10AM

[VISIT PLAY.AFL](https://play.afl.com.au)

## **Western Bulldogs School Holiday Program – Registrations Open!**

Looking for a fun and active way to keep the kids moving these school holidays? The Western Bulldogs School Holiday Program is packed with exciting games, footy skill sessions, and teamwork activities designed to help kids build confidence, make new friends, and enjoy the game.

Open to boys and girls aged 4–12, the program welcomes all abilities and experience levels - whether your child is new to footy or already loves the game.



**Location: Mission Whitten Oval, Footscray**



**Dates: Friday 10 & 17 April, 9am-3pm**

**Give your child a memorable school holiday experience with the Bulldogs!**



**Register here:**

**[https://play.afl/club-finder-map?formats=holiday\\_programs&orgId=0ca3ed80-4d11-40bf-b4c4-4b9b740f8a14](https://play.afl/club-finder-map?formats=holiday_programs&orgId=0ca3ed80-4d11-40bf-b4c4-4b9b740f8a14)**

# Resilience is Relational

*By Dr Justin Coulson*

What if everything you thought you knew about resilience was... wrong? Or at least incomplete?

Resilience, to many, means when the going gets tough, the tough get going. If you're resilient, you go solo with that individual grittiness, push through the pain, and get it done. It's perseverance. It's getting up when you get knocked down. It's drinking some concrete and hardening up.

Perhaps this is true - sometimes. But experience and research point profoundly towards a different story: Resilience is relational.

What does this mean?

My personal trainer recently asked me to do a plank and push through two minutes of this horrible exercise. By 60 seconds, I wanted to stop. I was shaking. I felt uncomfortable. It hurt. But then I heard his voice: "Nice! You're halfway there. Only 60 seconds to go. You've got this."

I steadied myself and pulled it together. By 90 seconds I was pretty sure I was done. Everything hurt. Then his voice: "You're doing well. Super strong. Just 30 seconds left."

With 15 seconds to go I wanted to give up. I was making strange noises, gasping for air, and trying to tell him I hated him (but I couldn't form the words). "So close now. You're doing it. Let me count you down... 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1."

I collapsed. He high-fived the air because I couldn't lift my arm. And then I realised: while I was the one who did the exercise, he was the one who helped me show resilience. I would have quit at the halfway point without him. Resilience is relational.

## The Research Backs This Up

Emmy Werner's groundbreaking Kauai Longitudinal Study followed 698 children born in 1955 for over 40 years. About 30% of these kids faced serious adversity - poverty, family discord, parental mental illness, perinatal complications, unemployment, drug-and-alcohol abuse. Two-thirds of these children struggled, just as you might predict. But one-third thrived despite the odds.

What made the difference? Werner identified three clusters of protective factors, but relationships were woven through all of them:

- A close bond with at least one stable, caring adult (often a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or teacher—someone who believed in them)
- Support from teachers, neighbors, youth leaders, or mentors
- Connection to community groups or faith communities

It wasn't their toughness or independence that saved them. It was... connection.

## What This Means for Parents

That plank story isn't a parenting story. But the application is all about parenting. When your child can't do a maths problem, write an essay, read a tricky word, tie a shoelace, clean up a messy room, or figure out that difficult stanza in the song she's learning, telling them to "toughen up" and figure it out themselves is precisely the opposite of what we ought to do.

Instead, remember resilience is relational. You are more likely to push through hard things when someone is there to support you. This doesn't mean doing it for them. My trainer didn't hold my plank position for me. But his presence, his voice, his belief in me kept me going.

When your child is struggling:

- Move closer, not further away
- Be their voice when theirs is shaking
- Offer encouragement: "You're doing it. Keep going."
- Break it down: "Just this next bit. You can do this next bit."
- Remind them you believe in them

I know that some of you are thinking "I sit with my child and try to support them through their spelling or their cleaning up (or whatever it is) and they don't make progress. They just wail and complain and tell me they can't."

That's life sometimes. Here's what I know though. Once those emotions have calmed down, your support will bring them back for another bite at the cherry. They'll keep going when they've got someone in their corner. Be that strength when they don't have their own.

## The Takeaway

Real resilience isn't forged in isolation. It's built through connection. So the next time your child faces something hard, don't step back. Step closer. Be their personal trainer. Count them down. High-five the air when they can't lift their arm. That's how resilience is built. Together.

One caveat: this only works when the struggle is worthwhile. Suffering through busywork "because it's on the curriculum" isn't resilience, it's just suffering. Your kids don't have to be resilient about *everything*. Be aware of what matters and what doesn't. But when the challenge matters? That's when you matter too.



Dr Justin Coulson is a dad to 6 daughters and grandfather to 1 granddaughter. Justin travels all around the country, speaking at schools to students, educators and parents about wellbeing and relationships. He is also the parenting expert and co-host of Channel Nine's Parental Guidance, and he and his wife host Australia's #1 podcast for parents and family: The Happy Families Podcast. Justin has written 10 books about families and parenting - with the latest about raising boys out this year! For further details visit [happyfamilies.com.au](http://happyfamilies.com.au).

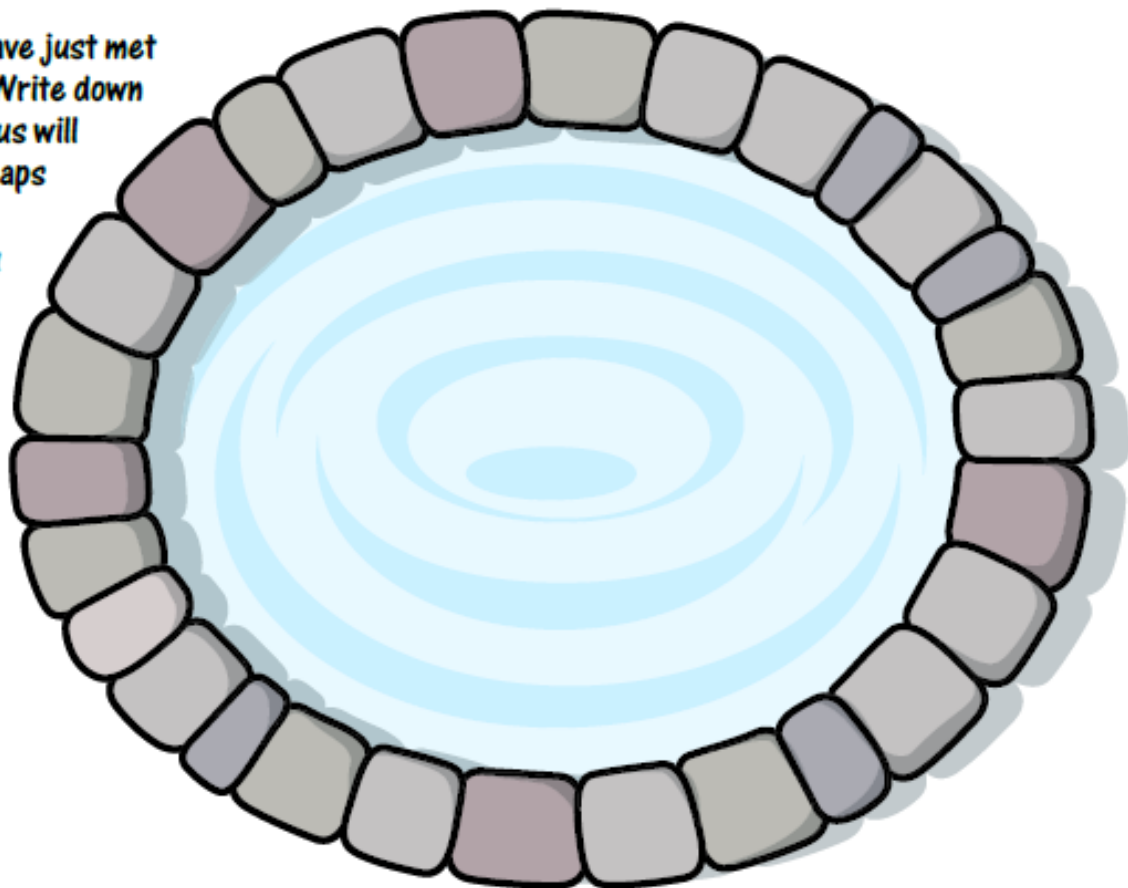


# I offer you life-giving water

3rd Sunday of Lent, Year A



Imagine that you have just met Jesus at the well. Write down what you think Jesus will ask of you, or perhaps share with him something that you are really in need of in your life right now.



## Gospel Jn 4:5-15.19-26.39-42

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?' - Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied:

'If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.'

'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered 'and the well is deep: how could you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' Jesus replied:

'Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again: but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life.'

'Sir,' said the woman, 'give me some of that water, so that I may

never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water. I see you are a prophet, sir. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said:

'Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour will come - in fact it is here already - when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants.

God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.'

The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah - that is, Christ - is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.' 'I who am speaking to you,' said Jesus 'I am he.'

Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony, so, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and when he spoke to them many more came to believe; and they said to the woman, 'Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the saviour of the world.'