

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Dear Families,

This week saw us acknowledge and celebrate all the cultures that make up our school community and also celebrate our faith in some significant ways.

Today (Friday) was **Harmony Day**. This is always a fantastic celebration of all the cultures we have that make up our school community and allows us to **learn from each other through the sharing of our backgrounds, traditions and stories**. I would like to **thank Ms Fernandez for her leadership and coordination of this event and for the staff and children for entering into the spirit of the occasion**. Appreciating and valuing all our cultures is something we do every day, however specific days can really enhance our understanding and awareness of all that we have here at St Gerard's.

Also today, we had 8 of our **Year 6 Leaders attend a special mass at St Patrick's Cathedral** with Mrs Zelic and myself. This is a significant event which is part of **Catholic Education Week** and it was wonderful to be able to attend as all schools from the Archdiocese of Melbourne are invited. I would like to thank our Year 6 Leaders for the way they represented us all.

We acknowledged the **Feast of St Patrick** with everyone encouraged to wear 'a touch of green' on Tuesday. Melbourne has a special connection with this saint as our Cathedral is named after him and we acknowledge the large number of Irish Catholics that established the early church in Australia.

On Thursday we had the last gathering for the term with the **Parish Legion of Mary** which saw a number of our children join this group to **pray the Rosary together**. This is another way to strengthen our link with the parish and live out our faith. I would like to thank the children that attended these gatherings and Ms Adrien and Mrs J for accompanying them. There will be more opportunities in Term 2 for children to take part in this special initiative.

Last night (Thursday) some of our **Year 3 children celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time**. This is a significant step in a person's faith journey and the first sacrament we as a school community get to share with these children and their families, which is such a privilege. I would like to **thank Fr Shanthaiah for his ongoing support of our children and the school, Mrs O'Brien and Mrs Stack for their leadership and coordination of this sacrament and Ms Sonno, Mrs Wilson, Mrs Theodore and Ms Leonardi for their work with the children in the classroom and at their Reflection Day**. The children were congratulated by the school at Assembly today (Friday), shared their reflections and received their certificates.

Yesterday (Thursday) we had our latest **Ride / Walk to School Day** to recognise **National Ride to School Day**. It is encouraging to see so many families support these days as well as walking and riding to school on a regular basis. The **fruit that was donated by Woolworths, Dandenong Junction was greatly appreciated by children (and families)**.

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Cont'd

We had our last official **Open Day for this term on Tuesday**. If you know families who will be looking for a school in 2027, we would appreciate you letting them know that **enrolments for 2027 are open**. Similarly, **if you have a child who will be starting school in 2027 please contact us so that we can ensure a place for them as existing families are our first category for enrolments**.

Lastly, in staffing news, **Mr Ben Cooke will be returning home to the UK**. Ben has worked with our children as an LSO (Learning Support Officer) primarily in the Year 1/2 area and **has made a significant impact on the learning of our children**. He was also instrumental in making our new garden area look so good. While we are sad to see Ben go, we thank him for his contribution to our school community and wish him all the very best for the future. Ben will finish at St Gerard's next Friday and we pray his travels are safe as he heads home.

God bless.

Paul Cowan



Religious

Key Dates

Sacraments 2026

First Communion:

- Sunday, 14th June, 2026, First Communion, 10:30am

Confirmation:

- Saturday, 16th May, 2026 Confirmation, 5:30pm

Other Important Dates for Religion

31st March

The Passion

The Passion – Costume Ideas

For Children: Year Prep – 4
Year 5/6: Wear All Black

To help reflect on the events of Holy Week, we will be holding a special school event on **Tuesday, 31st March at 2:00pm**. All children will be involved, either as part of the crowd, re-enacting the events of Holy Week, or singing.

We ask that:

- **Children in Foundation – Year 4** come to school dressed in clothing from the **time of Jesus**.
- **Year 5/6 students** wear **all black**.

We also ask that all children bring a gold coin donation on this day to support Project Compassion.

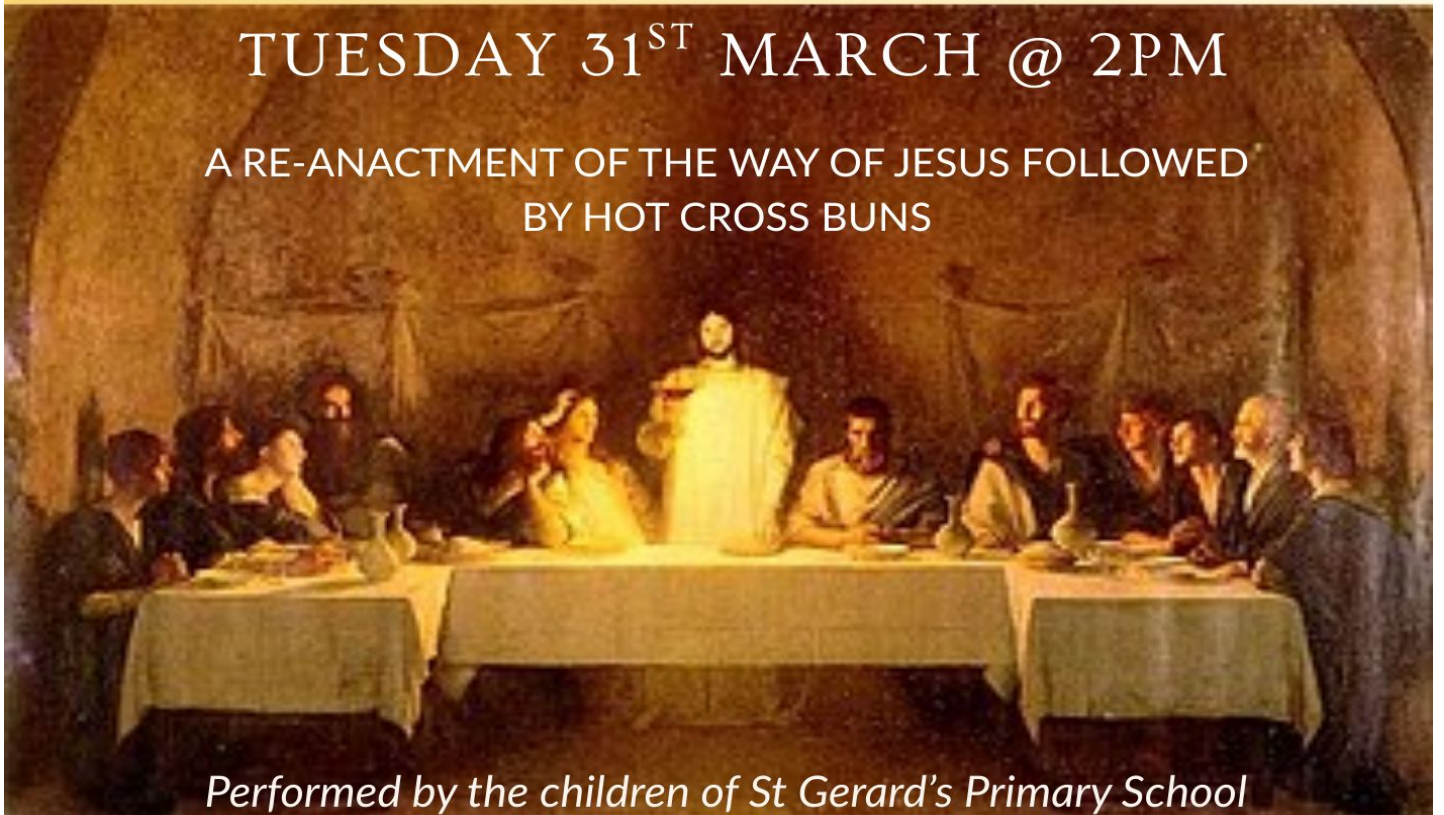
Religious

YOU'RE CORDIALLY INVITED TO

THE PASSION PRESENTATION

TUESDAY 31ST MARCH @ 2PM

A RE-ANACTMENT OF THE WAY OF JESUS FOLLOWED
BY HOT CROSS BUNS



Performed by the children of St Gerard's Primary School

71 Gladstone Rd, Dandenong North 3175

Religious News

Fourth Week of Lent

(Week beginning Monday 16 March)

This Lent, our school community has answered the call to Unite Against Poverty as part of Caritas Australia's Project Compassion. We are proud to join thousands of others across Australia to create real, lasting change for people like **Manaini**.

Manaini is a mother of six and a grandmother of two living in rural Fiji. Life has always been a struggle - holding back tears, she shared: "The thing I worry about the most is my children's education. The requirements that need to be met are hard for me to try and achieve with my daily income".

Thanks to the generosity of schools like ours, Manaini joined training offered by Caritas Australia's local partner, FRIEND. Through the program, she learnt food processing skills to transform leftovers from crops into flour, improving her family's nutrition and increasing her weekly income to support her children's education. "The project totally changed the life of my family and even the community," Manaini said.

Watch Manaini's story [HERE](#) to see how the actions of our school community today can create a lasting legacy of impact and change that will be felt for generations to come.

There is still time for you to be a part of that legacy - **will you join us and stand with people like Manaini 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

By phone at: 1800 024 413

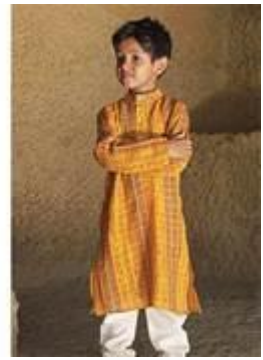
Thank you for standing with us, as we Unite Against Poverty this Lent.

Religious News

Costume Ideas:

- Traditional Indian, Sri Lankan, or Arabic clothing that could resemble attire from the time of Jesus.
- Tea towels on the head, secured with a headband or scarf.
- Old sheets tied with a rope or belt around the waist.
- Scarves wrapped around the head.

Thank you for helping your child participate in this meaningful event!



Altar Servers

Altar Server practice resumed on Wednesday 29 January and will continue every Thursday evening at 5:30 pm at St Gerard's Church. To be eligible to serve, children must have received their First Communion.

This is a wonderful opportunity for young members of our parish to take part in the liturgy and learn the responsibilities of altar service.

For further information about practice times or eligibility, please contact the parish office on **9792 4422**.



Religious News

An Invitation to Bring Mary Home

We invite families to take the Our Lady statue into their home for a week as a special way to deepen family prayer time. Each family will receive a brochure with simple instructions for praying the Rosary, as well as a set of rosary beads. If you would like to take the Our Lady statue home, please let Mrs Stack know.



Lunchtime Rosary

The Legion of Mary Group is teaming up with the school to lead Rosary prayer sessions during lunch breaks. These will take place during the first lunch on Tuesdays in Weeks 4 and 8 of each term.

The Passion

We warmly invite you to join us for one of the most significant events in our school year, The Passion. This special Holy Week presentation is a much-loved tradition at our school, where every child participates in retelling the story of Jesus' final days.

Through *The Passion*, we journey with Jesus to the cross and reflect on the emotions of Holy Week, from joy to sorrow, as we prepare our hearts for Easter.

Please join us on Tuesday 31st March at 2:00pm in the school hall. We understand this may require time away from work, and we truly appreciate your support in being part of this important community event.

We look forward to sharing this meaningful experience with you.

Wellbeing

It was wonderful to see so many families join in the National Ride to School Day on Thursday, 19th March. Did you know that more than 350,000 students across Australia were expected to participate in this fantastic national initiative?

A big thank you to Woolworths Dandenong Junction for generously donating apples, bananas, and plums to our families. Their support helps us promote the importance of staying active and eating healthy.

We also extend a sincere thank you to all the families who participated in Ride to School Day. Your enthusiasm and involvement made the day a great success.

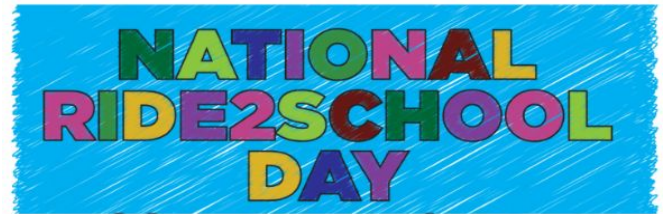
Congratulations to 1/2S, who had the highest number of students walking, scooting, and riding to school what an amazing effort!

Well done to:

1st place- 1/2S with 81% riding, scooting or walking

2nd place- 5/6T with 70% riding, scooting or walking

3rd place- 3/4ST with 64% riding, scooting or walking



Travel Stats



7%



51%



40%



1%

Wellbeing

NATIONAL RIDE2SCHOOL DAY



Harmony Day

On Friday, 20th March, St Gerard's School celebrated Harmony Day with a vibrant display of cultural diversity and unity. The day began with a Paraliturgy, followed by a colourful parade where students proudly represented their countries. It was a fantastic sight to see so many nationalities celebrated across our school community.

Before first lunch, students enjoyed class picnics, sharing and discussing traditional foods from their respective cultures. The day was filled with engaging, hands-on activities that allowed students to explore global traditions. They tried Chinese calligraphy, rolled and cooked parathas from India and Sri Lanka, made sushi rolls inspired by Vietnamese cuisine, and created paper chains to reflect the meaning of Harmony Day. Students also learned the ever-popular game of cricket, participated in dances from around the world, created native flower paintings, and enjoyed a hands on experience making gnocchi.

A huge thank you to our dedicated staff who made this event possible, giving students the opportunity to experience the richness of different cultures in a fun and meaningful way. Harmony Day was a true celebration of the 39 cultures that make up our school community.

We are proud of our diverse and inclusive environment, and it was wonderful to see our students embracing and celebrating cultural diversity.



Harmony Day



Harmony Day



Wellbeing



How does exercise affect mental health and wellbeing?

Physical activity promotes many aspects of child and adolescent development, including social and emotional skills, as well as physical development of motor skills.

It also supports mental wellbeing. We know that high levels of inactivity can lead to a greater risk of both physical and mental health problems.

Physical activity:

- can increase levels of serotonin and endorphins; the neurotransmitters involved in regulating and improving mood
- promotes sleep – which also helps regulate moods, increase energy levels and improve memory and learning
- increases the connections between the brain neurons, which improves memory and learning capacity
- pumps blood to the brain to boost mood, concentration and alertness
- promotes relaxation by reducing skeletal muscle tension
- provides children and young people with an outlet for excess energy and frustration, which relieves tension
- provides an opportunity for children and young to socialise and meet new people, reducing loneliness and isolation
- improves motor and cognitive skills, which boosts self-esteem
- distracts children and young people from negative thoughts.

These benefits also serve to improve classroom behaviour and promote a more positive learning environment.

Reading before School



READ WITH ME!



Just 10~15 Minutes a Day Makes a Lifelong Difference



Why Reading Together Matters



Builds Strong Brains

- Improves concentration and memory
- Develops imagination and creativity
- Strengthens thinking skills



Grows Literacy Skills

- Expands vocabulary
- Improves spelling and writing
- Builds fluency and comprehension
- Increases confidence



Strengthens Relationships

- Creates special one-on-one time
- Encourages meaningful conversations
- Helps children feel supported and valued



Broadens Understanding

- Develops empathy
- Introduces new ideas and cultures
- Helps children understand the world



How You Can Help at Home

- ✓ Set a regular reading time each day
- ✓ Take turns reading aloud
- ✓ Ask questions about the story
- ✓ Praise effort, not just accuracy
- ✓ Make reading enjoyable
- ✓ Let your child see you reading too



Remember

- You don't need to be a teacher to make a difference.
- Your time, encouragement and interest matter most.

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."



Reading before School

READING BEFORE SCHOOL RAFFLE WINNERS



Winners with their prizes!



Reading before School



Thank You to Our Reading Before School Families

A sincere thank you to the families who attend our Reading Before School program. Your diligence and commitment to making time to read with your children each Wednesday morning is truly appreciated.

By sharing these moments together, you are helping to foster a love of reading, strengthen literacy skills, and show your children that reading is valued and important. Your support makes a meaningful difference in their learning.

Thank you for being such wonderful partners in your child's education.



Library News



LIBRARY NEWSLETTER



Week 8, March 2026

Exploring New Worlds at the Library, Together!

Come join us at the library, where there's more than just reading books! Engage in our library club and explore a world of knowledge, creativity, and community. Whether it's through interactive sessions, engaging discussions, or collaborative projects, there's something for everyone to enjoy and learn.

LIBRARY CLUB UPDATES

This week at Library Club, I would first like to congratulate the winners of Week 7's Ready, Set...Sketch game: Bommy, Michael, Sophia and Naomi. They worked extremely well as a team to both sketch and guess, showing great cooperation and encouragement towards one another.

This week, students also participated in a Puzzle Race Competition.

Congratulations to Ephrata, Grace, Ameya and Sanaya who came first despite having a 30-second starting delay. Well done also to Naomi, Azalea and Sophia who were able to complete their puzzle after being given an extra 5 minutes. All teams worked beautifully together, demonstrating persistence, teamwork and positive attitudes throughout the challenge.

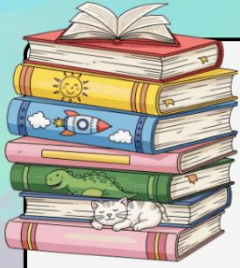
Miss Adrien will be checking for any overdue books every two weeks until the end of term. This week will also be the final week of borrowing. From now on, students are asked to bring a separate library bag (book bag) on their allocated library day when borrowing books. This helps keep food and drinks away from library books, supports students in building responsibility for returning books on time, and helps prevent damage so everyone can continue to enjoy them. Thank you for your ongoing support in caring for our school library resources.



Miss Stephanie Adrien



Library News



LIBRARY CLUB



Week 8, March 2026

Congratulations to Ameya, Ephrata, Andrea, Sanaya, Grace, Hudson, Matej, Elaine, Izabella, Anthony and Bommy who have each received their Gold Pass after successfully completing three



training sessions.



Miss Stephanie Adrien



Important Dates



Term 1, 2026 Dates

March

- 23rd Whole School Meditation in PAC at 8.45am
- 25th Before School Reading in the library from 8:30am
- 26th Before School Skipping in the Courtyard from 8:30am
- 27th Whole School Assembly in PAC at 2.40pm
- 30th Whole School Meditation in PAC at 8.45am

April

- 1st End of Term 1 at 3.30pm

Important Notes

Medical Plans And Asthma Plans

This is a friendly reminder to provide the school with updated medical and asthma plans for 2024. If your child has asthma or requires other medications, please ensure that Ventolin, a spacer, and any necessary medications are supplied on the first day back to the school office.

All medications will be stored in individually labeled bags in the school office for safekeeping.

Any families who hold a current Health Care Card are asked to please provide a copy to the school office.

This will ensure you receive the MACS Concession on your school fees.

Please note, this must be a valid Centrelink Health Care Card. Private health insurance cards or Medicare cards are not eligible.



ST GERARD'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

SERVICE CONTACT:
0402 192 685 (Marina) | sg@ylv.com.au

SERVICE HOURS

COST

Before School Care
6:45AM – 8:45AM

\$30/\$35
PERMANENT/CASUAL

After School Care
3:30PM – 6:30PM

\$35/\$40
PERMANENT/CASUAL

Pupil-Free Day
7:00AM – 6:00PM

\$83

fees effective 02 Mar 2026

ylv.com.au

Please call Marina for further information: 0402 192 685

Important Information



Happy Birthday to all who have celebrated and will celebrate their birthdays, this week including this weekend and January.

- HARPER Yr 1



COMMUNITY NOTICE

- *Every Day Counts* - Primary School Attendance Information
- Springvale Indoor Sports - Indoor Soccer
- Mazenod College - Open Day Information



Chicken Eggs For Sale

- St Gerard's would like to offer families the opportunity to purchase delicious organic eggs laid by our resident flock of chickens.
- You can purchase these eggs from the school office at a cost of **\$8** per dozen.
- All proceeds from the sale of the eggs will go towards purchasing food for our feathered friends.
- Please message [Nicole Fernandez](#) via Seesaw if you would like to purchase some eggs.