

Award for three Ballarat Diocese Principals

Last Friday, 21 March, the Victorian Association of Catholic Primary School Principals (VACPSP) held their second President's Ball at the Melbourne Town Hall and three Ballarat Diocese Principals were among the award winners.

Leanne Eastman , St Brendan's Coragulac, Michael Mahoney, St Mary's Colac and Jack Lenaghan, Sacred Heart Colac were presented with the award for: **Excellence in Faith and Mission in a Victorian Catholic Primary School.**

The three schools have a long and rich tradition of collaborating in the areas of faith and mission as they continue to explore what it is to be a contemporary Catholic Dialogue School in both their individual school contexts and in partnership with one another and their parishes. The Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) stance of the Ballarat Diocese continues to inform and guide this process.

Jack Lenaghan responded on behalf of the three schools. In a very entertaining speech Jack broke the elements of the award down as he had done for a friend not familiar with what 'Excellence in Faith and Mission' might mean! All three principals acknowledged the staff at their schools who are all collectively recognized in such an award. The Colac/Coragulac schools have forged a unique relationship with their chaplain Fr Michael O'Toole over many years. In May 2024 Fr Michael celebrated his Golden Jubilee with mass at St Mary's Colac followed by a rock star reception on the courts at St Mary's where all students and staff of the three schools had gathered to congratulate him. The three schools have long worked together with Fr Michael on liturgical, sacramental and faith formation programs for staff, students and families.

Another highlight mentioned by Jack in his speech was the visit of Dr Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann in 2022, facilitated by former Sacred Heart REL, and now Principal at St Mary's Warracknabeal, Julie Leonard who had worked with Dr Miriam Rose at Daly River. Julie was present on Friday as was Jane Daffy, former Deputy Principal at Sacred Heart who has been a guiding hand in all aspects of school life over a number of years. Jack, Michael and Leanne acknowledged their deep appreciation for the support of their partners, Roz, Marg and Paul, who whole heartedly joined in the evening's celebrations.

In the first week of term two St Brendan's, St Mary's and Sacred Staff will gather for a staff day to continue exploring how educators in Catholic schools today bear witness to the tradition and honour the questions that their students and families bring to their schools. In other words, how do we bring the Diocesan vision of *'fullness of life for all'* alive in 2025?

Sincere thanks to Michael Gray and the team at the VACPSP for the evening that celebrates the commitment of principals and staff across the state. It was a great pleasure to be present for the awards in my role representing DOBCEL having worked with St Brendan's, St Mary's and Sacred Heart since July 2022 in Catholic Identity and Religious Education.

**Article written by Justin McInerney*