Next week is Ash Wednesday. As we begin our Lenten journey, we pray for the humility to walk back into the open arms of God. Jesus teaches us to give, pray, and fast in private, and in this way show that we are followers of Jesus.

Give. How can I give joyfully, and not reluctantly or out of self-righteousness? Can I look into the eyes of my sister or brother living in poverty, seeking to understand their hopes and struggles, and give generously to bring healing?

Pray. How can I create space to pray to God? Can I close the door on the world, away from the hustle and bustle, to rekindle my relationship with God? Can I make time every day to do this, trusting that God’s grace will bring light to my life and to those around me?

Fast. How can I give up some of the things I normally indulge in to create more space for God? Can I give up chocolate or wine, complaining or arguing; and instead try to grow in love, peace and kindness for my neighbours near and far?

Loving God, we pray that we may grow closer to your son, our Lord Jesus, and share our love with our sisters and brothers who are most vulnerable. Amen.

Dear Parents, Carers, Staff, Students and Friends,

What a great second week of learning we have experienced! I continue to be impressed with the attitude students are exhibiting towards the development of a positive classroom and individual culture. Staff have also continued to come to school with smiles on their faces and very carefully planned learning opportunities for their students. Already they are celebrating success and growth with students! Please remember that I am always more than happy to assist with any queries, concerns, ideas or just to be a listening ear. You are always welcome to contact me by phone at school or call in for a chat. If you would like to use e-mail to make a suitable time that would be great, otherwise ring the front office to check my diary. The door is always open!

Thanks for a great week!
God bless you! ☺
Jo-Anne

**IMPORTANT DATES**

**FEBRUARY**
- Wed 14th Ash Wednesday Mass @ 10.00
- Mon 19th – Wed 21st Life Ed Van
- Mon 19th Hockey Clinic - Grades 1 – 4
- Wed 21st Emergency Drill - evacuation
- Fri 9th Parent Information Night @ 6.30pm

**MARCH**
- Fri 2nd Athletics Day @ Pedrina Park
- Mon 5th & Tues 6th Learning Conversations
- Fri 9th Division Swimming
- Thurs 15th District aths
- Fri 16th Learning Walk 9.30 – 11.00 PSGs
- Thurs 29th Holy Week Liturgy @ 11.30
- Last day of term 1
- Early finish at 2.15pm
Advance notice:

- Fri 11th May  Mother’s Day High Tea
- Mon 21st May  Pupil free day
- Wed 23rd May  Open Morning
- Mon 4th June  Step into Prep
- Fri 27th July  Grandparents’ Day
- Fri 31st August  Fathers & Footy Day

School Mass
Thank you for your support of our Mass to celebrate the start of the school year last Sunday. It was wonderful to gather in our Church with families, staff and fellow parishioners and share this occasion. Thanks to those students, staff and parents who assisted with our celebration and to Fr Paddy for leading us so prayerfully.

Ash Wednesday
Ash Wednesday – marks the beginning of our Lenten journey. Lent is the time in the Church which lasts for 40 days and helps us to prepare for Easter. It offers us all a very special opportunity to grow in our relationship with God and to deepen our commitment to a way of life, rooted in our baptism. In our busy world, Lent provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon our patterns, to pray more deeply, experience sorrow for what we’ve done and failed to do, and to be generous to those in need.

On Wednesday 14th February staff and students will attend Ash Wednesday mass at the Church at 10.00am. Preps and their parents/carers are welcome to come along on their rest day.

Student attendance
It is now a legal requirement for schools to contact parents if students are absent from school without an explanation – ‘on the day of the absence, as soon as is practical’. As a result, our office staff will be required to contact you at 9.30am if your child is absent from school and you have not let us know already. Please contact the school by phone (leave a message if required), e-mail office@smhamilton.catholic.edu.au or submit an absent note via the Skoolbag app before 9.00am on the day of absence or beforehand if known. Staff will begin calling from Monday 12th February to allow you to get used to the new process.

Gr 6 Leaders
Yesterday I was able to spend time with our Grade 6 students as they presented their leadership speeches to their peers and teachers. I was most impressed with the way these young people spoke with confidence about how they will serve our school community as leaders during 2018. We often have discussions around the concept that everyone is a leader and has a responsibility to be a positive role model and example to others.

Following these presentations, students in Grade 5 & 6 and all members of staff voted for leadership positions. Student leaders were announced at our assembly this afternoon and will be listed in next week’s newsletter.

Learning Conversations
Our Learning Conversations (Parent/Teacher Interviews) are scheduled for Monday 5th and Tuesday 6th March.

Timetables will be available at the front office from next Monday 12th February for you to indicate your preferred times for conversations with your child’s classroom teacher. If you can’t make it in to school to put your name down please ring the office on 55519000 or send an e-mail to office@smhamilton.catholic.edu.au

Thanks for helping us make the Learning Conversations’ timetable more streamlined. We value this time with parents and carers, and wish to make them accessible to all families.

Please note that if you haven’t had a chance to nominate your preferred time by Monday 19th February we will slot you into the remaining time slots.
- This is an opportunity to have a discussion between parents, teachers and students relating to your child’s learning so far this year. It will also be a time to share learning directions and the results of Literacy and Numeracy testing conducted so far.
- Please bring your son/daughter along to their appointment time so he or she can be involved in the conversation.
- Fifteen minutes has been set aside for your conversation. If you wish to take some of this time for a chat without your child present please indicate this to the teacher at the start of your time.
- It is vital that you are punctual to these meetings to ensure that we can run the afternoons as smoothly as possible.

Information Night
Parents are invited to attend our Parent Information Night on Wednesday 21st February.
- A parent session for all families will begin at 6.30pm. This session will relate to our work with essential learnings for students and outline the process our teachers follow to determine appropriate learning activities for each student.
- Classroom sessions will be held in the classrooms and presented to parents twice on the night – 7.00pm and 7.30pm. Teachers will present information on content to be taught during the year, housekeeping news about their classroom and things you need to be aware of as your children journey through the school year.
- This allows families with more than one child to attend two classes. Apologies to those with more than two students. Any information provided as handouts on the night will be available for you.

Working with Children Check
All parents/carers/visitors wishing to participate in any school activity will be required to have a current Working with Children Check.

WWC Check applications can be made online at www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au and are free for volunteers. Please include St Mary’s Primary School Hamilton as one of the places where you volunteer.
Please present your WWC card at the front office to be entered into our register.

A few reminders!
Please be aware of the following information regarding bell times and supervision. It is important that you support us in our daily routine so that we can ensure the safety of all students.

8.45  Organisation time
8.55 – 11.00  Learning time
11.00 – 11.20  Play time
11.20 – 11.30  Eating time

It is important that all students have a sufficient and healthy snack at this time. This food should sustain children and give their brain energy for the next period of learning. The challenge is not to send food that is high in sugar and preservatives as these do not provide our brain and body with the correct nourishment for optimal learning.

11.30 – 1.30  Learning time
1.30 – 1.40  Eating time

Students will have another eating time which may be a smaller version of their main lunch meal for the day. Again it is important that students do not have food that is high in sugar and preservatives.

1.40 – 2.20  Play time
2.20 – 3.15  Learning time
3.15  Dismissal bell

- Supervision is provided by members of staff for students from 8.30am until 3.30pm.
- Students should not arrive at school before 8.30am.
- At least two teachers are on duty at recess and lunch times.
- No child is to leave school before the dismissal bell unless permission has been granted. In these circumstances the student/s need to be signed out in the register at the Office.
- As we have children who have nut allergies please do not include nuts/peanut butter/Nutella in lunchboxes. Please encourage children to wash hands before and after eating. Food is not to be shared.

Parish News

**MASS TIMES – 2017**

- **Hamilton:**
  - Saturday 6pm
  - Sunday 10.30am
- **Dunkeld:**
  - Sunday 8.30am
- **Glenthompson:**
  - Sunday 8.30am
- **Penshurst:**
  - Sunday 8.30am
- **Macarthur:**
  - Sunday 8.30am

*St Mary’s Parish Sacramental Program for 2018* will begin with Reconciliation to be celebrated the evenings of the 21st, 22nd and 23rd March, the week before Holy Week. Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation will take place between Sunday the 25th Feb and Sunday 23rd March. Each Sunday at the 10:30am Mass, the children will look at the Gospels appropriate to Reconciliation, during Children’s Liturgy of the Word. To register your child/ren for the Sacramental Program you will need to complete a registration form. These are available at St Mary’s Parish House or at St Mary’s School also on the Parish website.

**Assembly**

Assemblies are held every second Friday in our Learning Street @ 2.40pm.

Our next assembly will be Friday 23rd February. All welcome!

**Canteen Roster**

- 14/02/2018  Cass Young (No meat due to Ash Wednesday)
- 21/02/2018  Volunteer needed
- 28/02/2018  Volunteer needed

- Can you help with our Canteen Roster?
- Please note that if there are no parent volunteers there will be no lunch orders available on that day.
- If you are interested in finding out what is involved, please contact the office.

**Monivae College Open Day dates 2018**

Open Day Sessions:-
- 20th February
- 1st March and
- 18th March.

**Spend the Day at Monivae**
- 20th March.

**Family Fee Assistance**

The Education Maintenance Allowance is no longer funded by the Government. However, the Ballarat Diocese has maintained their commitment to continue the Family Fee Assistance Scheme. The scheme offers a tuition fee concession to families who hold a current Centrelink or Veteran Affairs concession card. Please note that students who are holders of Health Care Cards are not eligible. Families who qualify for the scheme will pay $520 per annum for primary school tuition fees. The discounted fee covers tuition and capital fees only. It does not cover additional charges such as camps, student fees, and excursions. Please find enclosed a brochure which outlines the details of the scheme. An application form needs to be completed and are available at the office. These forms must be received by Friday 23rd February, 2018. If during the year your circumstances change and you become eligible for Centrelink, please come and discuss this with Helen.

Although a family may be eligible to receive a fee discount, families may choose not to apply for the fee discount and pay the full school fee.

**PASTORAL CARE**

Hello everyone and Welcome to 2018, I hope you had a wonderful Christmas break with your family.

My name is Lisa Gonnet I am your child/ren School Pastoral Care worker, my role is to support your child, family and the school community. I work alongside the teaching and wellbeing staff to support where necessary, this may include family separation, grief and loss, social issues including bullying and friendship issues, resilience, anxiety, self-esteem and...
parenting. I work one on one or run groups as needed. Outside referrals to other relevant agencies can be made, for example to psychologists or counsellors. To access this program either you or your child’s school can complete a referral and a consent form. This year I am thinking of running parent mindfulness sessions, which will be held during school times, probably 2:45 to 3:15. If you are interested please make contact with me on the number below, dependant on the response will depend on the viability. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to make contact, please note that all meetings with yourself and/or child is confidential. My phone number is 0400 994 032. My work day is: 8.30 to 4.30 and is as follows:

Mondays St. Joseph’s, Penshurst
Tuesdays St. Patrick’s, Koroi
Thursdays St. Joseph’s, Coleraine
Fridays St. Mary’s, Hamilton.

Have a wonderful week. Kind regards
Lisa Gonnet

Concert 2018 - By Request!

Following the resounding success of Broadway and Beyond (2016). St Mary’s will again present a concert this year. The contents of our concert will be dictated by our school community. We would love it if you could contribute two songs from your school days that would be appropriate to be used in our school concert. If time and talent allow, your song or songs could be chosen and performed in our upcoming concert. Keep in mind that we need songs for Prep to Year Six, so think hard; think variety.

Don’t miss out. Make sure your request is submitted soon. Do this anyway that you can. Write it on a piece of paper and send it to school with your child, mail it, send it via pigeon or you could even fill out an online form that would make the job much quicker and more streamline. Click the link below or enter the address:

https://goo.gl/forms/IQqIpOe1RP41Kq53

Get those requests in, so that we can get this show on the road!

John Healy

ICYPOLES

This term we are selling icy poles every Tuesday for $1.00 each. We are raising money for Dr. Charlie Teo who is a paediatric neurosurgeon. He does brain surgery on people – mainly kids – who have brain cancer. Brain cancer kills more people under the age of forty than any other disease in the world. We will be selling them at second lunch near the 5/6 tables. Last year we raised $325.60 for a local group which helps children’s Mental Health Awareness. We also raised $374.55 for the local Hamilton wildlife shelter.

Grace and Caitlin

THE SPORT CATCH UP

Prep PMP program – Weekly Tuesday 12.30-1.30pm
We would love to have some parent helpers to support our modified PMP program with the Preps this term. If you could support the Preps on Tuesdays from 12.30-1.30pm, please let Miss Couchman or Mrs Wolfe know.

Saturday Netball – NOTES IN BY MONDAY

Thank you to the parents who responded to last week’s newsletter notice about Saturday Netball. At this stage we only have around 5 children interested. As this isn’t enough to fill a St Mary’s school team, I will pass on the names of the interested children to the association to see if they can join another school’s team. I will be in contact with the interested parents on Monday.

Hockey Clinic Grade One to Four – Monday 19th February

The Grade 1-4 students can look forward to a hockey clinic being held at school on Monday 19th February. Grade 3/4S students will participate in the clinic from 9-10am and Grade 3/4HW will be from 10-11am. Then Grade 1/2W students will participate from 11.30am-12.30pm and Grade 1/2GC will be from 12.30-1.30pm. If your child/children are in these classes please ensure sports uniform is worn on this day.

School Athletics Grade One to Six – Friday 2nd March

Thank you to all those parents who have returned a Helper Slip to school.

There is still time to return the slip or email Miss Couchman (ecouchman@smhamilton.catholic.edu.au) if you haven’t done so yet. If you are able to attend and cheer on your child/children please fill in the slip. Also if you are willing to assist for the 7am set-up, be on recording, be based at a specific event or the running track throughout the day please indicate this also. We are looking forward to a brilliant day which brings our school community together!

The Athletics Day note, program and helper guide will be coming home next week, so please keep your eyes peeled for it. District Athletics will follow on Thursday 15th March.

Division Swimming - Wednesday 7th March

Division Swimming is being held on Wednesday 7th March at AquaZone in Warrnambool. I will be in contact with the students who have qualified for this event from our school swimming carnival next week.

Cricket

Cricket Victoria will be running a T20 Blast program in Hamilton. The program will commence at Kennedy Street Oval on Wednesday 14th of February at 4:00 – 5:30pm and finish on the 14th of March.

The T20 Blast program is a fun and safe program that is catered for the needs of children between the ages of 7 – 12 years old. The cost of the program is $50 and the children will receive a pack that consists of a bat, hat and a ball.

The parents are able to register their children online by following the link www.playcricket.com.au. For more information you can contact Tony Caccaviello on 0466027474.

We are thoroughly looking forward to a wonderful year of sport at St Mary’s. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any sport related queries or news at ecouchman@smhamilton.catholic.edu.au

Thank you in advance for your terrific support this year!

Miss Couchman