WE live in troubled times as Catholics. Anyone who has been following the reports on the Royal Commission Hearings in recent weeks, and the subsequent letters and opinion pieces in various media outlets, will have been subjected to some harrowing stories. It is hard to imagine that men and women, who committed their lives to the service of the Church and the people of God, could have got it so wrong. In this I am referring to both the perpetrators and those who appeared to protect and support them. Whilst there is no way to defend the indefensible, and the abuse in any form of the young and the vulnerable is indefensible, we view the actions and reactions of those in authority all those years ago with eyes that have been opened and educated in our modern world. We must continue to be vigilant in all areas of society, not just within the Church and schools but within families, sporting groups, clubs and organizations. Young people come under the care of those whose standing and authority give them power. It is at times like this that we need to reflect on the Martyrs of good works and nuns who have formed so many of us to be the faith-filled and faithful people that we are. I was privileged to have the opportunity to speak recently at the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Ordination of one of the finest priests of the Sale diocese, Fr Peter Slater. I was asked by some of those present for a copy of the address and thought this would be an opportunity to share it for those who were unable to be there to celebrate with Fr Peter.

I first met Fr Peter in October 2011 when he chaired the interview panel which recommended to Bishop Prowse my appointment as Director of Catholic Education for the Sale Diocese. As a result I have long thought him to be a man of great wisdom and discernment! Since then I have worked with Fr Peter in his roles as Vicar General, Diocesan Administrator and member of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria. I have come to know and respect Fr Peter in all of those roles and I have great affection for him.

Today we celebrate two significant concepts – Vocation and Commitment. Fr Peter’s 40 year journey to the priesthood was partly with his listening to the call, that voice of God in his heart that led to the decision to embark on the journey of priesthood... We celebrate with him, not just that choice but the many choices Fr Peter has made in order to honour that commitment made 40 years ago. It is this commitment from which we and countless others in this diocese and beyond, have drawn care, solidarity, prayerful support, knowledge and wisdom. In the relatively short time I have known and worked with Fr Peter I have witnessed and personally experienced all of those values and principles.

Friedrich von Huegel, a lay theologian whose work helped to usher in the era of modern theology and scripture study, wrote – “The greatest thing of all is caring”. In my experience of Fr Peter it would seem that this basic tenet is at the cornerstone of his commitment. Those of us who know and have worked with him experience this commitment to caring on a regular basis. Some of us have been fortunate enough to have been by his side when that commitment to care came at great personal cost.

Joan Chittister, the Benedictine nun, asks this question, “How do you know when you are really committed to something?” She answers her own question with these words, “Easy! When what happens to it still affects you are committed to it, whatever the discomfort of it all!”. By this yardstick alone, Fr Peter lives his commitment on a daily basis. At CEOSale we have been fortunate to have Fr Peter celebrate Eucharist with us on many occasions. His homilies at those times are thoughtful, scholarly and grounded. Fr Peter’s commitment to finding ways to grow, to learn and to study is inspirational.

Mae West, that rather outrageous actress of the 1920s, made this comment, “Too much of a good thing is wonderful!” Commitment and dedication, in that context, means the ability to go overboard for something. We need to be unbalanced about something in this life in order to really live. It takes effort to keep the passion of commitment burning.

Perhaps the best gift we can give to Fr Peter today is to commit ourselves to rekindle the passion in one commitment that might have waned in our own lives – a promise, a personal relationship, a cause, the spreading of the Gospel.

Take just one action today in honour of this good priest to try and rekindle that flame of enthusiasm and passion. Fr Peter, thank you for being the inspiration, the carer, the fine priest and person you have been and continue to be for us all.

Maria Kirkwood
Director
Catholic Education
Office Diocese of Sale

The idea of offering a differentiated learning program sounds commendable, but is it actually possible? How far should the learning program go?

Concerned with the need to improve Numeracy scores in NAPLAN, Lavalla Catholic College introduced a program which acknowledged a key element of the Marist charism: to know the students – surely the aim of a differentiated learning program. This meant knowing the talents and skills, deficiencies and weaknesses in Mathematics of every student and creating an effective learning plan for all.

In 2014 the Maths Pathway program was integrated in the Year 7 Mathematics course, with the intention of progressively introducing the program over the next 4 years.

Maths Pathway replaces traditional text books and is used in conjunction with lessons which offer a hands on approach. It is an internet based program which diagnoses the level of achievement in Maths of each student and sets work accordingly. Students watch video explanations of ideas which allows progress through the modules. Work is tested every two weeks and the students are provided feedback and move onto the next cycle of work. The feedback corrects students mistakes and provides them with an understanding of the level of Mathematics to achieve growth.

The program has generally been well received by the students who appreciate the recognition of their efforts. Parents too understand the premise behind the program, knowing that more complex ideas are difficult to learn if the fundamentals have not been mastered. Furthermore, Maths Pathways also require changes to Mathematics teaching to deliver the program. Accordingly, ongoing development is required to appreciate the paradigm shift from delivering a predefined course of work to responding to intensive feedback from regular tests and building each student’s capacity with areas not mastered. The role of the teacher in the classroom is subtly changing and the students are becoming resilient learners.

Maria Kirkwood
Director
Catholic Education
Office Diocese of Sale
Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Classes

At the beginning of Term Two, after months of planning and preparation, Grade Three and Four students at St John the Baptist Primary School have started an educational program to grow, harvest, prepare and share healthy food. The teaching and learning is supported by the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation which aims to provide pleasurable food education to primary school aged children across Australia.

The students participate in one kitchen class and one garden class per week. In addition, the syllabus is fully integrated into the curriculum and offers countless opportunities to reinforce literacy, numeracy, science, cultural studies and environmental sustainability. Training by the Stephanie Alexander Foundation has also been provided to some of our teachers to educate them in the philosophy of the Kitchen Garden Program.

We have been extremely grateful for the donations of both time and goods by parents and local businesses as without these, such a project would not go ahead.

Not only is the Kitchen Garden Program proving to be a great learning experience for students and teachers, it has also been a fantastic opportunity for parents to get involved in the school community.

We are very pleased with the progress made so far and it has been extremely enjoyable watching students experience hands-on tasks in both the garden and kitchen. The students have taken an active interest in all aspects of the program and have especially been making an effort to taste new foods. Grade Three and Four teacher, Meaghan Cook, said many students claimed it was ‘the best day ever’ on the first day of classes. Meaghan added, “By implementing the program into our teaching, it has opened up a range of new experiences where the children can develop life skills through practical, hands-on activities. We have found that the program gives these children a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning.”

Although we are only in the early stages of the program, we look forward to what lay ahead for our students as we give them a real-life connection to their learning and promote healthy lifestyle choices for the community.

OVER the past six weeks, Grade Prep, One and Two students have been learning about citrus fruits with their Grade Five and Six Buddies. The first week the seniors showed the juniors how to make pure lemon juice using the good old glass lemon squeezer. Some of the juniors had an opportunity to juice some lemons and to try some. The faces of the younger students were a good guide as to what they thought about this pure juice!

The following week the Buddies studied a watercolour painting of lemons and a lime in a bowl. The juniors then constructed their own version of this still life. Instead of painting, they drew and then cut out the fruits from paper and arranged them in the 2D paper bowl.

The week after that the buddies made yellow orange and green play doh. An example of five fruits was an orange, a grapefruit, a lime, a lemon and a mandarin. Paper bowls, oranges, yellow and green play doh were handed out. All Grade Preps, Ones and Twos made five balls of play doh defining the fruit. Expect a huge rise in the sale of citrus fruit!!

St John the Baptist Primary School Koo Wee Rup

Citrus Fruit with Buddies at Lumen Christi Churchill

Students from the junior grades learnt about citrus fruits with help from their Buddies

St John the Baptist Primary School Koo Wee Rup

Citrus Fruit with Buddies at Lumen Christi Churchill
To showcase their knowledge, the Grade Three and Four students held a learning assembly where some of the students invited family and friends to share their experiences of war and being members of the armed forces in both peacekeeping and war. Family members brought in lots of medals, photos and documentation of their families’ experiences to share at the assembly. The children then spent time filling out information grids about themselves that Grade Three and Four teacher, Sue Hill, is taking to the Victorian School in Villers-Bretonneux when she visits later this month.

School Principal, Cathy Blackford said, “At St Michael’s we are always trying to improve the communication between the home and the school; Learning Assemblies are one way of doing this. These assemblies are a vital and exciting way of informing parents about the learning that is happening within the classroom. It shows the parents contemporary teaching and learning practices which promote opportunities for children, as individuals, to learn within a structure that is flexible.

Today’s assembly was a time for the parents, grandparents and the children to share their knowledge of ANZAC day and the different wars Australians have been part of. The children spoke of what they had learned and the adults shared their own experiences and memorabilia from the various wars. It was an extremely informative and exciting session.”

ST Ita’s recently celebrated Grandparents and Special Friends day as part of their annual Catholic Education week celebrations and what a turnout we had. This special day has rapidly become one of the main events on the ST Ita’s calendar. Grandparents and Special Friends Day showcases the importance of these special people in the student’s lives.

The day’s celebrations began in the classroom where the children had the opportunity to showcase their learning and share in a range of modern numeracy and literacy activities. After the open classroom session the children accompanied their Grandparents or Special Friends to the classroom for a Mass that was planned by our student liturgy team and school Religious Education Leader, Mrs. Winterton. During the Mass the Liturgy team took up a collection for the St Vinnies Winter appeal and raised just over $1000. At the end of the Mass, ST Ita’s principal Andrew Oster delivered a presentation on the importance of Grandparents and Special Friends. His key message was, ‘what children need more of are the essentials that grandparent provide in abundance: unconditional, love, kindness, patience, humour, comfort and lessons in life.’

After the Mass the Grandparents and Special Friends were then treated to a variety of different musical performances by our Grade Prep, One and Two students and our school choir who presented pieces from the musical Les Miserables. One of the highlights this year was the unveiling of the St Itas Ukulele Orchestra who performed that wonderful classic, Pick a Bale of Cotton. This was a real show stopper and received a powerful round of applause.

When the concert finished the Grandparents and Special Friends had the opportunity for a photo after the concert and the chance to say goodbye. Then they were treated to a beautiful morning tea which was organised by the ST Ita’s Parents and Friends association.

Grandparents and Special Friends Day is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the important role these wonderful people play in our children’s lives. When children are given the opportunity to spend quality time with these special people, their lives are enriched through the very special bond that has been formed.

Nothing demonstrates the above more beautifully than Grandpa Kevin’s proud comment when talking about his granddaughter on the day, “My granddaughter has taught me that true love means watching Dora the Explorer cartoons with her whilst my Tigers are playing football on another channel.”
Energy from the Sun at St Thomas’ Sale

RECENTLY, Ian Southall visited St Thomas’ in Sale and brought his renewable energy trailer to teach the students from Grades Three to Six about how we can save energy and help protect our planet. We learnt that it takes eight minutes and 17 seconds for light and heat energy from the sun to reach the earth which is amazing considering the sun is over 100,000,000 km away!

We also learnt how solar panels work and saw them power various objects including an x-box! Ian told us that that best light bulbs to use in our houses are LED bulbs which use a lot less energy and last for up to 50,000 hours! We have recently replaced all of our bulbs in the school with LED lights.

Personalised Learning at St Brendan’s Lakes Entrance

AT St Brendan’s Lakes Entrance we firmly believe that we are all made in the image of God. Therefore it is extremely important to staff members and parents alike that we work together to help every student reach their potential. Our approach is multifaceted including strong leadership, good communication, focused teaching, personalised learning and continued professional development. All decisions are made in the best interests of our students.

At the beginning of 2015, teachers were required to complete Mathematics Assessment Interviews on every student. Results were collated and analysed. It was decided that the first major focus for this year would be Mathematics, specifically to improve addition and subtraction.

External professional learning was undertaken by school leaders, the Extend-