August 10
Mary's canonisation
Julia Gillard’s attendance at a recent Mary MacKillop fundraising dinner in Sydney and her $1.5 million contribution to the celebrations proves how significant the impending canonisation of Australia’s first saint is to both Catholics and the broader Australian community.

As noted by Ms Gillard in her speech, “It is a deeply significant time for the five million Australians of Catholic faith. It is also a deeply significant time for those of us who may not share the Catholic faith, but still deeply respect the great contribution of the church and of Australian Catholics to the social fabric of our nation”.

For many Catholics, Mary MacKillop’s elevation to sainthood is long overdue. She battled indifference and, at times, hostility from her superiors as she devoted her energy to assist the poor and support the work being undertaken by the Order that would become known as the Sisters of Joseph. For many years she herself endured poverty and loneliness, undertaking arduous journeys throughout the colonies, and as far away as Rome and the Vatican, in her desire to fulfil her mission to better serve God and the most needy in society.

In her speech, Ms Gillard makes special mention of Mary MacKillop’s desire to better educate disadvantaged children by providing schools that “benefited entire local communities, reflecting the principle of subsidiarity at the core of Catholic social teaching — the principle that says that when we empower individuals and strengthen local communities, we build a stronger society”.

The concept of subsidiarity remains a cornerstone of Catholic education today and is one of the defining features of our faith-based school system.

Mary MacKillop’s challenging journey through life, one that was sustained and enriched by her enduring and unwavering religious beliefs, provides an inspiring example of what can be achieved by one person to make the world a better place.

October will be a very special month for the Catholic Church and for Catholic schools, especially here in Victoria where Mary MacKillop spent her early years in Fitzroy and in SA, where she established her first school in Penola.

On 17 October, while Rome will be swamped with thousands of Australians, Melbourne will also be abuzz, with a number of events (see story opposite) planned to celebrate the day. Understanding the importance of the event, the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) decided to offer one student from each Catholic secondary school the opportunity to travel to Rome to participate in the canonisation ceremonies.

October will also be notable for another reason. It will be an important planning and study month for senior students as they prepare for their end-of-year examinations. I would like to wish all students the best as they prepare for their exams and I pray their hard work is rewarded.
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A bout 55 Catholic school students from the Archdiocese of Melbourne will be amongst the tens of thousands to witness the canonisation Mass of Australia’s first saint, Mary MacKillop, at St Peter’s Basilica on 17 October.

There was tremendous interest when Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese were asked to nominate a student to attend the ceremony. Pope Benedict XVI announced in February that Mary MacKillop, whose mission to educate the poor and underprivileged led to the foundation of the Sisters of St Joseph, would become Australia’s first saint.

One student who will be travelling to Rome is Jonathon, 16, from Whitefriars College, Donvale.

The Year 10 student says the trip will provide great opportunities for him personally. “All Year 10 and 11 students were invited to write letters of interest to the principal. Eleven students were then selected for an interview and I was fortunate to be among them,” he says.

“We were interviewed by the principal and deputy principal and I was selected to go. I’ve never been overseas before so it will open my eyes to the world. Mary MacKillop’s life-long passion to help the less fortunate is quite inspiring.”

In addition to the Vatican ceremony, Melbourne will be the venue for some major events on 17 October. The Sisters of St Joseph and the Archdiocese have organised a festival in and around Fitzroy where Mary MacKillop was born in 1842.

A procession will start at the site of her birthplace in Brunswick Street and finish at the Royal Exhibition Building, where the opening of Australia’s first federal parliament was held in 1901. A festival will be organised in the Carlton Gardens to herald her sainthood and a prayer service will be held in the early evening, followed by a live cross to Rome of the canonisation Mass.

Rebecca from Marian College, Sunshine West, will also witness the canonisation in Rome. “It will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience and I’m very excited to be representing my school. “Mary MacKillop was very brave in what she did and was a good role model for women, not just in her lifetime but for women today as well. She didn’t let anyone put her down,” says Rebecca.

On their return from Rome, students will have the opportunity to share their experiences with their respective school communities. The itinerary will include the canonisation Mass at St Peter’s Basilica, a visit to the Sistine Chapel and the Colosseum and a day trip to Assisi. The group, including 10 teachers, will leave Melbourne on 14 October and return on 23 October.
The paper trail that leads to Scotland

Kristy Lee, a teacher at St Ambrose Primary School, Woodend, has won the primary category of the Herald Sun Teacher Ambassador Program (TAP). Kristy will travel to Glasgow during the September school holidays for the Scottish Learning Festival. The following is an edited version of her submission, detailing the classroom activities she uses with newspapers to engage her students.

Each morning two news reporters are chosen off a rotating roster. They come into the classroom, pick-up a copy of the day’s newspaper and choose an article of interest. They read, comprehend and provide a 30 second summary of this article to myself and their peers.

Our ‘Harness a Headline’ activity is always a favourite and I am constantly surprised by the witty, intelligent and captivating headlines the children invent to match the article or picture I present to them. The ‘Picture Prediction’ task also provides some well-thought out ideas and links to other events or slogans. In this activity I cut out slogans, pictures, cartoons or symbols and place them on the page. The children are asked to think of three things each picture may relate to. Sometimes they don’t pick the exact context but they certainly excel in naming other contexts or reasons why this picture appears in the newspaper.

In the ‘From Another Perspective’ activity, the children are given an article to read and given a section of the community to represent in their response. They have to put their personal opinions and biases aside and represent the perspective of the group of people or person they have been asked to represent. It’s a task I find challenging as an adult learner!

In the ‘Visualisation’ task, a partner reads an article and the artist has to re-tell the article by illustrating the main points in a series of numbered boxes. They then pass this onto another student who tries to guess the article and information presented from the illustrated representation.
Three of the seven finalists who competed in the July final were Catholic school students. The other Catholic finalists were Michael from St Bede’s College, Mentone and Estelle, Aquinas College, Ringwood.

Luke’s speech was titled ‘Man on Mars’ and his impromptu speech was on the topic, ‘It’s Time’.

Students spoke on such topics as the environment, refugee’s rights, feminism and technology. They had to give a six-minute prepared speech followed by a three-minute impromptu talk.

Luke says he hasn’t always been a natural speaker. “It (speaking) didn’t really come naturally. It’s something that has improved in the last two or three years through debating and public speaking.

“It’s important to stay calm, especially for the impromptu speech. I have a little structure in my head where I think of issues that relate to me and then broaden them … make them national and global issues.”

Each state and territory organises its own competition, with winners competing in the national final in late August. Luke says he will have a few days before the national final to get to know the other finalists. “It should be a fun experience. I’m looking forward to it,” says Luke.

The Awards, organised in Victoria by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), are a public speaking competition for students aged from 15 to 18. They provide an opportunity for students to build self-confidence and extend their skills in oral communication, speech writing and research.

The results of the national final in Perth will be reported in the November issue of Catholic Education Today.
The Director of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Stephen Elder, said all governments needed to heed the call for fair funding for the Catholic sector. “If government funding for Catholic schools does not keep pace with government school costs, Catholic schools will be forced to raise fees, close schools or cut some programs. “The bottom line is that Catholic schools can’t afford to have their funding frozen or taken away. We are asking for justice and fairness, that’s all.”

With the Federal election decided, attention now turns to the state election scheduled for November.

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There are 488 Catholic schools in Victoria, educating 191,000 students, said Mr Elder. That equates to almost two in five students in Victoria being educated at a Catholic school.

All schools deserve to be adequately funded, including Catholic schools. The following charts and graphs explain the situation in terms of what Catholic schools receive in comparison to government schools.
A 150th to remember

It became famous for its music festivals in the 1970s. But in 2010, Sunbury in Melbourne’s north-west is celebrating another famous milestone. Our Lady of Mount Carmel School is celebrating a momentous 150th anniversary.

Principal Paul Hogan says the parish and the school communities have enjoyed a bush dance and trivia night so far this year and a senior’s week morning tea and parish ball will be held in October.

The first European settlement at Sunbury occurred in 1836 and 24-years later 32 students began their schooling at Our Lady of Mt Carmel. The school opened soon after the railway from Melbourne was built.

By 1864 enrolments at the school had doubled. The original building was made of bluestone and timber while the nearby church was designed by William Wardell, the famous English Gothic architect. It was modelled on his earlier church, St Mary’s at Chislehurst near London.

Our Lady of Mt Carmel Church was opened and blessed by Archbishop Goold in 1875.

While 2010 is the official 150th, the major celebrations, says Mr Hogan, involving the school and parish will be held on 26 and 27 February in 2011.

Catholic schools embraced the Student Wellbeing Drama Festival in June for the third year running, with schools in Geelong involved for the first time.

Forty-one Catholic schools and 1200 students participated, with each school performing for 10 minutes. Themes included positive school relationships, resilience, positive decision making and positive school behaviour and community partnerships.

The Director of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Stephen Elder, said the festival’s themes were relevant to all young people in our schools. “Students, through their plays, had the opportunity to express their feelings about the need for positive relationships and general wellbeing, and issues that are important to them.

“Congratulations to the teachers and students of the participating schools on their wonderful performances.”

The festival was organised by the Student Wellbeing Unit at the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM). It had a number of aims: to empower school communities to focus on student wellbeing; to promote school participation in the Arts; to use drama as a way to explore issues relevant to students' lives; and to support student wellbeing initiatives across the whole school.

Performances were held at the Geelong Performing Arts Centre, the Clocktower Centre, Moonee Ponds, and Whitehorse Centre, Nunawading.
A BER...tiful achievement

The Building the Education Revolution (BER) project has been an overwhelming success in Catholic schools with new halls, sports stadiums, classrooms and libraries springing up across Victoria.

One of the Catholic primary schools to benefit from the additional funding is St Luke’s Primary School, Wantirna. The school was able to access $2.5 m which was used to build a new sports stadium with art and music rooms and new senior learning areas. The funding also contributed to a refurbished library and Year 5/6 classrooms.

The hall was ready for use at the start of Term 3, says principal Louise Mackay, with the children clearly enjoying their new inside playing area.

Ms Mackay says the funding was well received by the school community, and teaching staff, parents and students are all thrilled with the result.

The Director of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Stephen Elder, congratulated Catholic primary school communities on their achievements with the Building the Education Revolution (BER).

“The great teaching and learning facilities that have been added to Catholic primary schools throughout Victoria are a demonstration of the professionalism and commitment of Catholic primary school principals, with the support of parents and parish priests,” Mr Elder said.

The BER had been a great collaborative effort between Catholic schools and the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM), said Mr Elder.

Image top
St Luke’s students outside the new multi purpose hall.

Image above
Preps Andrew, Olvia, Mia and Ben inside the new stadium.
The plight of the Cambodian people over the past 40 years is well documented. Only weeks after a group of Catholic school students returned to Melbourne from Cambodia, the chief jailer, Comrade Duch, who served under the murderous Pol Pot, was sentenced to 19 years imprisonment for his part in the deaths of thousands of Cambodians.

Four students from Salesian College, Sunbury, travelled to Cambodia earlier this year where they spent three days assisting labourers to erect a new house for a local family.

The trip was part of their Year 12 VCAL studies where they had to complete a unit in their Personal Development program that required ‘planning and organising a complex project in a cultural setting’.

The school’s VCAL coordinator, Father Peter Monaghan, says the students participated in a program in Cambodia run by a social justice group, Partnering Against Poverty Association (PAPA).

“They (the students) were required to apply strategies to improve their organisational skills and communication, demonstrate leadership skills and team work in a group context and develop decision-making skills,” says Father Peter.

“They chose Cambodia because they had researched the country’s recent history and found out that because of the devastating rule of the Khmer Rouge, villagers still lived in very poor conditions. The program enabled them to make a difference to the lives of one of these village families forever.”

The students, Grant, Jarryd, Trent and Reece spent five months raising $30,000 for the project, which involved construction of a new house and the installation of solar panels for electricity and a new water supply for the home.

Father Peter, who also travelled to Siem Reap, says the students had the opportunity to immerse themselves in village life and observe the Cambodian culture first-hand.

“They shared meals with the families and played with the children,” says Father Peter. “A highlight was a village gathering on the last evening when the villagers prepared a thanksgiving meal for the students and provided cultural music and dancing. The students participated very enthusiastically.”

Since returning to Melbourne, the students’ interest in the Cambodian village has not waned. They have paid for cows, pigs, ducks and chickens and actively encouraged other people to sponsor a village family.

My art work

The May issue of Catholic Education Today incorrectly attributed a painting exhibited during Catholic Education Week to a student at another Catholic school. My from St Augustine’s Primary School, Yarraville painted ‘The Life of a Girl’s Scream’ which was on show at the Visual Arts Exhibition, East Melbourne. Congratulations to My on her wonderful painting.

VCE achievers

Two Catholic secondary school students were among a group of 28 top performing students to be recognised in this year’s Premier’s VCE Awards. Lucy from Sacred Heart College, Geelong and Elias of St Kevin’s College Toorak were Top All-Round High Achievers, receiving study scores of 46 or higher (out of 50) in at least five VCE subjects in 2008 and 2009. Forty other Catholic students were among 295 students from all education sectors to receive VCE Awards in July.
Parent seminars

Twilight seminars are scheduled for September and October for parents and Catholic school boards. The seminar for board members on 9 September is titled, *Embracing our Catholic Identity*, which is a forum for parents and school board members who want to learn more about how they can support and nurture the Catholic ethos in their school. The Parent Engagement seminar on 7 October aims to assist families and school communities to explore and develop relationships to enhance student learning outcomes. Both seminars are at the Treacy Conference Centre, Parkville and run from 6 pm until 9 pm. Further details from Patricia Palman on 9267 0228 or at schoolboards@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au

A rival to Chadstone

It may not be as big as the Chadstone shopping complex but the new $8 million trade training centre at Catholic Regional College (CRC), Sydenham, is still very impressive. The Commonwealth funded centre opened in May with on the job training available for budding chefs, bakers, sign writers, picture framers and those interested in hospitality. Principal Brendan Watson says it’s an exciting time for the college. “No other facility in Australia mixes such a vast array of training with work placements. Our students are benefiting from a multimillion dollar complex by learning to be entrepreneurs while achieving their VCE.” The centre also includes Quatrefoils restaurant, with seating for 100 people and the Crate Theatre.

Dame Nellie comeback

Dame Nellie Melba made yet another appearance. So to did Archbishop Daniel Mannix. The Sacred Music Choral Concert at Hamer Hall in May was a celebration of music in the Catholic secondary school sector. The Archbishop of Melbourne, Denis Hart and the Director of Catholic Education, Stephen Elder, both attended the event, which played to a full house. Archbishop Mannix, played by Daniel from Marcellin College was the Masters of Ceremonies on the night, with a cameo from Dame Nellie, Mount Lilydale College’s Elise.

Image left
CRC student Rebecca
in the restaurant’s kitchen.
Photo courtesy Catholic
Regional College Sydenham.

Image above
Daniel in the Sacred
Music Concert.
Photo courtesy Derek Edwards.