Dear Parents

Happy New Year! Sunday marked the beginning of Advent, a new year begins in the Church’s liturgical calendar. It seems to come at the most inappropriate time. Most elements in society are in shut down mode: HSC is over and the end of the term looms. Workers are looking forward to their Christmas holidays and there is a general urgency around the buying of gifts, food for Christmas lunch and the like. From its inception the season of Advent has been presented as a period of reflection and preparation for Christmas. All of the above can leave us with precious little time for reflection not only on the true meaning of Advent but also of the Christmas mystery.

Sunday’s liturgy challenges us to live an “Advent Way of Life”: to wait joyfully and hopefully for the coming of our saviour. The challenge is to see and ACT: advent is not just waiting but living an active type of discipline. How? Paul’s letter in the second reading asks us to

“...make progress in the kind of life we were meant to live ..... to be generous in increasing our love and to be blameless in the sight of God”.

Now there is a new years resolution!

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Congratulations to Astrid Turner, who received the Victor Chang Award for Science at a ceremony at Camden Civic Centre last Wednesday evening. Astrid is the first student from St Benedict’s to be recognised for excellence in Science results and Scientific Endeavour at a senior secondary level. A part of Astrid’s award involves working at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute in Sydney.

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Some of our most able Mathematics students attended a Gifted and Talented Mathematics workshop last Thursday with Miss Do. Students who have chosen to study Extension Mathematics in Year 11 2016 were presented with information about STEM careers and courses at the University of Wollongong. Emily Winters, Patrick Stafford, Kody Fletcher and Jackson Lewis were then able to participate in a range of problem solving activities, working in small groups with their peers from the other Diocesan schools. Thanks to Miss Do for providing this opportunity.

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One of the most important life skills any Australian child (or adult) can have is the capacity and ability to save the life of another. On Friday, as part of the PDHPE programme, Year 8 students participated in CPR training as well as Basic First Aid at Picton Swimming Pool. In addition, the students were put through the Swim to Survive programme, an essential skill for every Australian child who ever attends a beach or pool. The credentials achieved are a worthy addition to any student’s CV. Congratulations to Year 8 and to Mrs Isbister and the PDHPE staff who organised the day.

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<td>Year 7 FAQ Evening (new parents)</td>
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Year 6 students from all over the Macarthur recently braved the 41 degree temperatures to attend our Orientation Day. In 2016 we add another 180 students from 27 Primary Schools. Mr Turton and the 2016 Year 7 tutors organised a variety of induction activities and we welcomed our new Year 7 Coordinator, Mrs Rachel Newell, who was able to be with the students for the day. Mrs Newell has a long experience as a Stage 4 (Years 7 &8) Coordinator and also has many years working with Years 7 & 8 Boarders at St Gregory’s College. Our P&F Hospitality Committee, reinforced by several of our Year 6 parents, manned the BBQ and fed over 250 people at lunch, a magnificent effort in those conditions. Bravo to Catherine Smith, Yola Mifsud, Kellie Hanser, Leanne Greaves, Danny Rodriguez, Gavin Brimble and Clare-Ann Taylor.

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Our Creative and Performing Arts Showcase Evening is on Wednesday Night from 6pm to 8pm. I hope as many parents and grandparents as possible can attend to support the great work the students are doing across the visual and performing arts! It promises to be a great evening. Why not bring a picnic blanket and be entertained away from the hustle and bustle of Christmas plans?

Michael Hanratty
Principal

**Year 9 need a senior uniform!!**

Senior uniforms must be ordered within the next 2 weeks to ensure that stock arrives before the start of the school year.

We have repeated the Uniform Shop flyer with this Newsletter for those who have not yet made an appointment for a fitting.

**Are you moving? ………………**

If any students are leaving St Benedict’s at the end of the year, could you please notify the College office.

This will allow us time to prepare any paperwork that is required. It will also enable us to notify those families presently on the Waiting List that there is a vacancy.

**Finance Office Closed**

The College Finance Office will be closed from

Wednesday 16 December to Friday 18 December.

The Administration Office will be open until 12 noon on Friday 18 December.

**Health Alert**

We have been advised that a student has shingles. Please note that shingles is only contagious for those who have not had Chicken Pox or not been immunised against Chicken Pox.

**Parent/Teacher Interviews**

Tuesday 15 December

Parents wishing to meet with teachers are to ring the College office. The teacher will contact you to negotiate a suitable time between 9am and 3pm.

**Beach Day**

Monday 14 December

Notes and payment due by Friday 4 December

**CAPA Showcase Night**

Join us for a night of creativity! Our students have been working very hard in CAPA this year and are showcasing some of their amazing talent in Art, Music and Drama. Come along with your friends and family to see amazing art works and to watch a selection of music and drama performances.

When:  Wednesday 2nd December
Where:  TAS Courtyard
What to bring:  Picnic blanket and snacks
Dress:  Casual

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**URGENT**

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And now the second part of the series begun last week, “Behaviours Parents Need to Stop” (In High School Years)

11. Confusing helping for responsibility: We all love it when our children help at home, but this shouldn’t be confused with taking responsibility. A child who gets himself up in the morning is learning to take responsibility. If you want a child to be responsible give him real responsibility.

12. Not listening: There is something inherent in most parents that makes us help children when they are in need or get stuck. We want to talk and help them solve their problems so they become unstuck. Listen first and then decide if you need to speak.

13. Taking yourself too seriously: There is a lot of gravitas placed on parents’ behaviours and on modelling that can weigh us down and take the joy out of the job. Take time to enjoy the little things.

14. Parenting the individual: Small family parenting is almost always an individual endeavour. It’s worth remembering that sibling relationships (if children have siblings) can be just as influential as the parent-child relationship. It will almost certainly outlast the parent-child relationship. Lead the group, manage the child.

15. Refusal to express regret: Sometimes parents can work themselves into a tight corner after they’ve said something out of anger or desperation. One parent I know cancelled Christmas out of desperation, and refused to admit she was wrong. Sometimes you need to acknowledge your mistakes and start over again.

16. Failing to use communication processes: Okay so you are about to talk to your children about sexuality and relationships. What process do you use? Where will you hold that conversation? Establish communication processes and communication places well in advance of when you really need them.

17. Neglecting your own well-being: Many families operate under a child-first mentality, which places a lot of pressure and stress on parents. We happily drive kids to their leisure activities at the expense of our own. Carve out some time for your own interests and leisure pursuits.

18. Giving feedback at the wrong time: Timing is everything when we give kids feedback. If you give negative feedback immediately after an event or action, you risk discouraging them. Use 'just in time prompts' to remind them how to do something. Pick your timing when you give feedback.

19. Clinging to the past: The ghosts from the past are strong indeed causing us to put some of our problems onto our children. The problems we may have experienced growing up won’t necessarily be shared by our children. Retune your parenting antennae to your children’s lives.

20. Believing everything your children say: As loving parents we want to trust our children and believe everything they tell us. Children are faulty observers and frequently only see one side of an issue. Help children process what happens to them and see issues from every side.

Congratulations to Astrid Turner on receiving the Victor Chang Award for Science.

Congratulations to Luisa Rochetto on her inclusion in the U/13 NSW Futsal team.
The time draws near for our staff and students attending the Australian Catholic Youth Festival. This huge event starts this Thursday and runs through to Sunday. It is held in Adelaide – the city of Churches – and will provide members of the St Benedict’s community with life long memories and develop a greater understanding of our faith and the impact it can have on individuals and the wider community. As a college community we wish Ms Francisusc, Taylor McGovern, Ebony Billett, Lachlan Haidle, Liberty Chiswick and Emily Winters the best at this event.

Recently Chaltu Etana was provided with the opportunity to attend a Diocesan Social Justice Day. The day provided students with an insight into the circumstances of people around the world and the horrors that they may face in their country. Students also listened to personal testimony about the experiences of being a refugee and the terrors that people face not just in their own country, but in travelling as a refugee in seeking asylum. I include a reflection from Chaltu about the day here:

**For those who’ve come across the seas - Social Justice Statement 2015-16.**

On 20th of November I attended the secondary social justice day at Mount Carmel Catholic College. The day was aimed at engaging students from a range of schools in the Wollongong Diocese and create awareness on the topic of ‘refuges and asylum seekers’. The Australian Catholic Bishops’ Social justice statement for 2015-16 challenges students and all Australians to think again about our national response to asylum seekers, especially those who come to Australian by sea. It invites us to recognise the desperation that has driven people to seek refuge far from their homes. Throughout the day we had two speakers that had first hand experience on what it means to be a refugee and asylum seeker through the many hardships they had faced. The first speaker was Father Joseph Nguyen, assistant priest at St Paula’s Camden and he told us his horrific experience when he escaped his war torn town to come to Australia. We were also lucky enough to hear from Phil Glendenning, director of Edmund Rice Centre, who spoke so passionately of his work in freeing our brothers and sisters who are either in detention centers or who are being sent back to their war torn country. It reminds me of this quote that was given to us on the day - “Every boat we intercept, every child we detain, is a reminder that we can be part of the problem or part of the solution” Bishop, Vincent Long Van Nguyen.

**Advent**

The liturgical season of the church has changed from normal time to Advent. This is the time of preparation for Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Those with an astute eye would have noticed the change in colour of the priest’s vestment from green to purple. Advent is a period of preparation, and extends over the four Sundays before Christmas. The word *Advent* comes from the Latin *advenio*, “to come to,” and refers to the coming of Christ. As we prepare, we are reminded of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us and the teachings He gives us by which to live our lives.

Many people celebrate Advent by lighting the candles of an Advent wreath each day, accompanied by a prayer. One candle for Week 1, two candles for Week 2, and so on. The wreath comprises three purple candles and one rose-coloured, for the joyful Third Week of Advent. They are set in a circle of evergreen leaves, symbolising God’s endless life and love. A fifth candle, a white ‘Christ’ candle, may be placed in the centre to be lit at Christmas. The gradual lighting of the candles represents the increasing light of Christ as his coming draws near.
Social Action

One of the areas that we are currently reminding students of Jesus’ teachings is in our Social Action program. We are currently fundraising for SVDP and their Christmas Appeal and Catholic Mission and their Socktober campaign. It was pleasing to see two impressive fundraisers happen recently. Firstly, Year 7 held a ‘Tower of Gold’ competition – seeing which homeroom could build the largest tower of gold coins during homeroom. 7.3 was successful with this, and raised over $50 in the process. In the end, Year 7 raised over $180 in a 15 minute window – well done. Year 10 also ran a very successful lolly store. Ms Brady and her eager team of Year 10 volunteers organised a great lunchtime fundraiser and were able to raise close to $200. Congratulations to these two groups and good luck to the others over the coming weeks.

Year of Mercy

The year of Mercy commences on 8 December. This is a celebration of our faith and a reminder to us all of the importance of mercy in our lives, and of being merciful to others. I included here is part of Pope Francis’ announcement of the Jubilee of Mercy:

‘I have decided to announce an Extraordinary Jubilee which has, at its centre, the mercy of God. It will be a Holy Year of Mercy. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (cf. Lk 6:36). And this especially applies to confessors! So much mercy!

This Holy Year will commence on the next Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and will conclude on Sunday, 20 November 2016, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe and living face of the Father’s mercy.’

Source: http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en.html

The Jubilee of Mercy will begin when Pope Francis opens the Holy Door of St Peter’s Basilica on 8 December 2015, which is the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, and concludes when he closes that same door on 20 November 2016.

Curriculum

On the curriculum side, the Year 8 students are studying a unit called ‘Alive in Christ’. This unit picks up on some of the key teachings and values of Jesus and looks at how these can be applied in contemporary life. It looks at how Jesus changed the lives of those around him and how we can use these as a model for Christian living. The unit is providing our Year 8’s with an opportunity to reflect on their own situations and the challenges of living in a world where sometimes the messages that they receive in society are counter cultural to that of the Church.

David Costin
Director of Mission and Vision

We wish all members of the St Benedict’s community every Joy and Blessing for the Christmas season
It’s Time to book your appointment for the fitting of your child’s senior high school uniform. Fittings will be taking place during November and December. Stock will be available for purchase at the time of the fitting.

Book Fitting Appointment

ONLINE
VISIT: RANIER.COM.AU
Click on ‘Your Uniform Shop’
School password: stb2570
Student ID from the school

PHONE
02 4647 8942
Mrs Kara Delauney
If there’s no answer, please leave a message and your call will be returned on the next trading day.

EMAIL
stbenedictl@ranier.com.au

Shop Location
5/6 Porrende St, Narellan
(Behind Narellan Bunnings)

Normal Trading Days (During School Terms)
Tuesday 9.00am – 1:00pm & Thursday 2:00pm – 6.00pm
1st & 3rd Saturday of the month - 9.00am – 1.00pm

Payment
Cash / Eftpos / Visa / Mastercard (1.5% credit card surcharge applies)