Prayer
Loving God, may we use Advent so that we can better celebrate your presence among us at Christmas. As we show our love for others, may we remember that we are spreading your grace – at Christmas and throughout the coming year. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

From the Principal
O Come, Thou key of David, come,
And open wide our heav’nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high.
And close the path to misery.

O Come, Desire of Nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind.
Bid the strife and quarrels cease.
Fill all the world with heaven’s peace.

Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Deputy Principal
Leadership & Learning
This year has been one where as a school we have learned to trust what we know. We knew change was needed in our learning and teaching program, we knew we had the expertise to manage and implement change successfully, we knew that genuine listening was needed in addressing areas for improvement and we knew that trusting in our process and strategic approach would lead us to growth.

What resulted was the implementation in 2015 of a completely new look structure to our day along with a new timetable and significant changes to our curriculum offerings. Students and staff alike adapted very quickly to the new structures and their feedback was very positive in relation to the question of rigor and challenge in meeting their learning needs and aspirations. Senior students also indicated that the supervised study period was having a positive effect on their learning.

Reflecting back now, we are inspired by how well everyone in our community has adapted to the changes. A recent study found that humans at any age are not terribly good at predicting their capacity to change in the future; even in the face of significant change they had previously undergone.
Our experience in 2015 reinforces for us the importance of not underestimating our capacity, and that of anyone else, to change and improve.

In the second half of this year, our teachers have developed a shared understanding of what good teaching looks like and the purpose and nature of assessment. These understandings will bring significant changes in teaching and assessment practices from 2016. A growth mindset, as I’ve written about previously, is crucial to the successful implementation of these changes. Learning from our experience, I have every confidence in the capacity of staff and students alike to cope and in fact thrive in the face of these changes. So I invite you to not fall into the pattern of behaviour the study revealed by underestimating our capacity to change and improve. Let’s act with faith in our capacity to learn!

The insert in this Newsletter details the outcome of the Learning and Teaching Program undertaken earlier this year.

I wish all students, staff and families a blessed and safe Christmas and New Year.

Phillip Tascone
Deputy Principal Leadership & Learning

Head of School

Years 7-9

Year 7-9 End of Year

The Year 7-9 Final week included a range of different activities; from exam feedback to social justice orientation the students were very busy right up until the last day. One of the fun activities the students were involved in was the inaugural House Chant Battle. This required the Year 9 students to come up with three chants to promote House spirit. They had 40 minutes to devise the chants and then an hour to teach the Year 7 and 8 students. The final product was a wonderful display of student leadership, creativity and teamwork. Each house displayed great energy and commitment and produced very catchy chants that we are sure to see again at 2016 House events. Well done to all students, especially the Year 9s, for their direction and enthusiasm.

The final day for students included Year Level Assemblies where each Homeroom gave a short performance. Most were songs or dances, and all had been choreographed and organised by the students. These assemblies also gave the students the opportunity to publicly thank their Homeroom Teachers and Year Level Team Leaders for all they have done throughout the year. The day concluded with a whole school assembly and finally Mass. It was wonderful to have nearly 80 parents join us for the final mass. As always the Vocal ensemble, led by Ms Kayla Sims, sent us on our way to a rousing rendition of Rudolf, the Red Nose Reindeer, complete with actions and sound effects. In all it was a fantastic week and a fitting end to a busy and productive year.

Year 7 2016 Orientation Day

Friday, 28 November saw 140 fresh-faced Grade 6 students and their parents attend Orientation Day. This program includes an assembly for parents and students to hear from a range of people about all things Ave. The students then headed off to participate in classes in Maths, English, Science and Food Technology. The students were accompanied by the Peer Support Leaders, who also ran a transition session with the girls. It was a wonderful day and we very much look forward to these students joining us in 2016.

Christmas Blessing

As this is the final Newsletter for the year, I will take the opportunity to wish all families, especially those at Year 7-9, a peace-filled and restful Christmas and holiday. It has been another busy year and the students have much to be proud of, but now is the time for rest and reflection. Thank you to staff, students and parents for all they have contributed to the Ave Maria community this year. I would also like to thank Mr Michael Horne, Head of School Years 10-12, for all he has done in the role as Head of School over the past four years and wish him every happiness and success as he embarks on his new adventure at Salesian College, Sunbury. Have a wonderful holiday and see you all in 2016.

Ms Jo Hammer
Head of School Years 7-9

Learning Leader

End of Year Programs

There were a number of highlights in the last week for students, the recent Year 7-9 Academic Awards Assembly acknowledged a number of students with Excellence, Endeavour and C.A.M.P.L.E. (Creating and Maintaining a Positive Learning Environment) Awards. A fantastic forum to celebrate the successes of our students in their Semester Two studies. Other awards presented were for Dante Alighieri, Language Perfect, the Swinburne Junior Secondary Poetry Competition, the Mathematics Talent Quest and the Junior Secondary Debating Program.

Year 7 and 8 students received examination feedback and also participated in an Aquatics program. The focus for Year 7 was life-saving, stroke correction and water polo; Year 8 students participated in a self-preservation and rescue program in which learning competencies included CPR, recognising dangerous aquatic situations and self-preservation techniques. They were also introduced to the 2016 Independent Research and Investigative Study (IRIS) program in which they will learn the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of research and investigating an issue or topic of their choosing.

At Year 9, students gained their Level 3 First Aid Certificate and participated in personal development activities facilitated...

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**Term Dates 2016**

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Term 1</td>
<td>Monday, 1 February - Thursday, 24 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>Monday, 11 April - Friday, 24 June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term 3</td>
<td>Monday, 11 July - Friday, 16 September</td>
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<td>Term 4</td>
<td>Monday, 3 October - Friday, 2 December</td>
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**Year Level Commencement Dates**

- Years 7 and 12, and Year 11 Peer Support Leaders: Friday, 29 January 2016 2.20pm finish
- All students: Monday, 1 February 2016
by guest speakers, with a focus on financial and digital literacy, mindfulness, team building and problem solving skills.

Invited by Melbourne Water, our Year 10 2016 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) students took a look behind the boards outside the College on Vida Street.

Representatives talked to our students about the many jobs and responsibilities in their industry as well as the myriad of career options from construction engineering to design and public relations required to carry out the job. A unique opportunity for our students to see behind the scenes the meticulous planning that goes on.

My thanks goes to all the teachers and Ms Jo Hammer, Head of School Years 7-9 for their organisation and creativity in putting together such an amazing range of activities for the End of Year Program that not only entertained but stimulated, engaged and challenged our students’ skill set and thinking.

To finish, a very Merry and Safe Christmas to all our families and we look forward to seeing everyone back, fresh and ready to learn in 2016!

Debra Coyne
Learning Leader

Faith and Religious Education

It has been a year where a great deal has happened: College and Year Level Masses, as well as Masses to celebrate the contribution of older family members and friends in the lives of our Year 7 and 8 students.

There was our first Parent-Daughter Spirituality Night – more of that in 2016! There was awareness and fundraising at each Year Level together with Mission Action Day, the Timor-Leste Benefit Ball and all of the great work done for St Maria Mazzarello school in Venilale which culminated in our first Immersion Trip by students and staff. Thank you, too, to those who have recently contributed stationery. We can attest that it will be greatly appreciated! There has been our weekly visits to the Refugee Homework Club. Next year we will help with a local St Vincent de Paul Soup Van.

This year also saw a very successful Year 12 Retreat and Faith Formation Days for each Year Level. A significant number of staff participated in the Franciscan Schools Australia Conference in Melbourne.

This year was the first occasion when the staff from Ave Maria College and Our Lady of the Nativity came together, to explore more of the story of St Clare. In these and many other ways, we give thanks for God’s grace evident in our College community.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

Luke portrays the birth of Jesus Christ as someone who is an outsider. Luke depicts God’s saving action beginning with the last, the lost, the least. Mary is not among family as would have been the custom. They are travellers but can’t even stay inside the Inn. Like the parables, this scene challenges all of the reader’s pre-conceptions of power.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, of God’s saving action among us, the story prompts us to reflect upon where we will see God at work today. As we give thanks for God’s love for us, reflected in our family and friends, how do we see the last, the lost and the least? An annoyance? A drain on taxpayers’ funds? Or the centre of God’s saving action in the world? Rather than worrying about what I will get at Christmas, what gift am I being called to give?

Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed Christmas and a restorative break.

Patrick Jurd
Director of Faith and Religious Education
**Student Counsellor**

The Slow Movement

As parents, we are role models to our children in ways that we may not even realise. One of those ways is our use of technology. Stop and ask yourself for a moment: how much time do I spend on my phone? Do I often ask my kids to wait while I finish sending a message or reading an article online? Do I prioritise face to face contact with the people in my life, over Facebook contact? Do I savour the real-life moments with my kids, or do I interrupt the living moments with wanting to capture it on camera and post it on Instagram?

The thing with technology is, for all of its wonderful contributions to the progressions of our society and our world, it also adds to the busyness of life. It has contributed immensely to the epidemic of anxiety that we see in our communities and in our schools. I notice this among the Ave Maria College students who come to see me. We have lost the capacity to be patient, to be bored, to not know when someone is arriving, or not know the answer to a question. It is all there at our fingertips. One girl recently told me she panics if her phone is not within arm’s reach. She described her phone as being like a body part. This was shocking to me to learn that some students never even switch off their phone. They never have time away from their phone. But it is justified, because their parents never switch off their phones either!

Like the slow-food movement of recent years, so too is the slow movement infiltrating other areas of our life, as people recognise the need to slow down, connect and be mindful, rather than being so caught up in a social media world that is not reality, and can never make you truly happy.

Mrs Patricia Hunter (Pat), is a familiar and friendly face of the Community. Lately I have watched and admired Pat as she slowly walks the grounds with her leather trolley, always remembering staff (and probably students too) by their first name. She stops at the fish pond at the front of Clydebank, and talks to the fish as she feeds them, one of her daily jobs at the College. She sits patiently and quietly reading the paper in the staffroom, while the hustle and bustle goes on all around her. I recently chatted to her about family, her children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren. We talked about her shared history with Ave Maria College, and the religious Nuns who she worked for prior, and her family’s connection to the Ramsay family who lived at Clydebank before that. Essentially she has been a part of College history for over 80 years! My conversation with Pat and the ability to connect with an elder, gave me more than any Facebook post or Instagram photo ever could. With Pat, there is no need to hurry, and I think she is someone we can all learn from!

Connection is something teenage girls crave most; connection with both their peers and their parents. Social media is a poor substitute. So as the Christmas season gets underway, make the effort to engage in the slow movement, switch off your phones, plan activities you can do together, eat together, decorate the Christmas tree together, sing Christmas Carols together, and feel it nourish your spirit. I wish you a safe and joyful Christmas.

Ceci Tankey

**Student Counsellor**

**Pathways News**

Calling in Life

Every child is asked the question “what do you want to be when you grow up?” This is a typical example of a limiting approach taken to career decision-making. When I was asked this question I remember thinking, “that’s easy, I know exactly what I want to be” and said “God.” I was put in my place and told that was impossible. So I moved my attention to becoming a ballerina. However, reading Bunty comics and jumping off the kitchen table landing on my toes does not a ballerina make? Then when I really had to make a decision my mother decided for me. “You, my daughter, are going to be a shorthand typist.”

Fast forward to 2015 and this question “what do you want to be when you grow up?” is asked of students again and again. When subject selection comes round it is the question that must be answered. When filling out the VTAC preferences it is being asked again.

Every decision is a career decision and we should focus far more on the ongoing decision-making that we do every day rather than the big life changing decisions. Young people can change their ideas in an instant and sometimes are not as rational as we would like them to be.

“Good careers guidance and hence good career decision-making is made up of several elements. As a careers advisor I help students focus down their ideas, help them to use information sources, clarify where they need to be both realistic and ambitious, make them aware of the careers, courses and training opportunities that they never realised existed and put into action tactics to help them achieve a way forward.

Helen Aliaga

**Pathways Coordinator**