



The John Berne School  
Hope Always

# Newsletter

## Dear parents, caregivers, and friends of Berne

The feast of Christmas was not introduced into the Church's calendar until some time in the fourth century. Understandably, the prime focus of the early Christian community was on Easter, the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus from the grave. Ever since Christmas found a place in the calendar its profile has grown and, in the popular mind, now overshadows Easter in importance. However, in recent decades it has been stolen from Christians by the secular world of marketing and retail sales.

Back in the fourth century, Christians borrowed much of the symbolism of Christmas from ancient cosmology. As the ancients observed the changes in the earth's seasons and weather patterns and watched the movements of the sun they began to wonder, as the days became shorter and colder, if darkness would eventually blot out the sun's warmth and light. They thought of the progression into winter as a contest between light and darkness. However, they also noted that after what we call the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere, the days were slowly becoming longer.

This transition from darkness to light was celebrated with a festival towards the end of December. It was a celebration of the triumph of the sun over darkness. The Christian community capitalised on this festival, replacing "sun" with "son", referring directly to the coming of Jesus, the Son of God into the world. Desolation, gloom, despair and sin would be overcome by Jesus, the Light of the World. This triumph they called Christmas and established Advent as a season of preparation for the time when darkness would be dispelled by the arrival of Jesus.

Advent is a time for Christians to ready themselves to live in the light. It confronts us with a very direct question: What darkness are we aware of in our own personal lives and in the world to which we belong? Do we want to overcome or reverse that darkness? As we embark on a new year in the Church's calendar we are challenged to look at our lives and our surrounds of family, community, work,

relationships and confront what needs to be changed. Only then will we be living with integrity and authenticity. And that's all about our readiness to let Jesus and all he represents into our lives. If we are prepared to do that, we, too, will play a part in rolling back the darkness of things like prejudice, fear, corruption and loneliness.

May your Christmas and New Year roll back any darkness and bring in the light with much warmth and nourishment to your families.

It is timely to thank all of you for your support over these last four years. I believe much has been achieved and it could not have happened without your involvement and support. May what is in place be built upon to provide the students with the best nourishment possible. The support you have given me I trust will be carried forward in support of my successor.

Blessings,

Br Mark Paul fms  
Principal



Wishing everyone a holy and reinvigorating Christmas

## Issue 8 2017

### Upcoming Events

#### 1 February

Students' first day Term 1

#### 12 February

Parents, carers and staff information meeting

#### 14 February

Ash Wednesday

#### 28 February–2 March

Years 7 and 8 activities and excursions

#### 5–9 March

Year 10 work experience

#### 7–9 March

Year 9 camp

#### 19–23 March

Year 9 work experience

#### 21–23 March

Year 10 camp

#### 13 April

Students' last day Term 1

### In This Issue

Principal's Address  
Thank you to our 2017 Volunteers  
New Vegetable Garden  
Years 9 and 10 Work Experience  
West's Tigers Visit  
Belvoir Theatre Performance  
Opening and Blessing  
Year 10 Graduation 2017  
Reflection from Pope Francis  
Welcome Mr Richard Sidorko  
Farewell to Sue Manns  
Excursion to La Perouse  
Photography Exhibition  
Parents' Corner

## Thank you to our 2017 Volunteers

This year we have been blessed with the presence of our committed volunteers: John Cowen, Patricia Robinson, Rob O'Callaghan, Wendy Ballesty and Louise Watts.

They have helped in a variety of ways such as: one on one support of individual students, preparation for Graduation, helping us pack before we moved back to our new site, cooking breakfast with our students and scripting a Graduation speech.



Many thanks to Rob for his generosity in ensuring our students start the day off well

We also thank Gretchen Riordan and Suzanne Davies who also gave their time to the school community during the year and Alistair Gormly and Louise Carey who were completing community engagement placements for their university requirements.

We truly appreciate all our volunteers and value their support of all staff and students and we look forward to their return next year.

— Nicole Arathoon, Curriculum Coordinator

## New Vegetable Garden

Lettuce take a minute to be thankful for our new state of the art classrooms, cutting edge technology in our fully refurbished school. This extensive project has been topped off perfectly with three large, purpose built garden beds for the school community to enjoy.



The new garden beds bursting with life after only a few weeks' growth

Students have been involved in researching what seasonable vegetables would be best suited for the warmer months. They also assisted in selecting the particular varieties they wanted to grow, with an emphasis on

flavoursome, colourful and edible varieties.

Our close friends at Worm Ticklers ([www.wormticklers.com](http://www.wormticklers.com)) provided us with a huge range of organic, chemical free, seasonal seedlings, companion plants and edible flowers.

Having well established seedlings, in ready to plant biodegradable pots, made the job students had with planting and subsequent upkeep and maintenance much easier. We are already enjoying the fruits of our labour and look forward to many more harvests in 2018.

— David Riddington, Teacher

## Years 9 and 10 Work Experience

During Weeks 6 and 7 of Term 4, Year 9 and 10 students were out on work experience placements. This was the final work experience for Year 10 and their last chance to try out a work environment that interests them, before transitioning to somewhere new for 2018.



It's not hard work if you love it. Zane helping out at the veterinary clinic

Students worked in vets, motorbike mechanics, supermarkets and in nursing homes to name but a few. Many students received glowing reviews from their employers. We look forward to facilitating many more work experience placements for our students in the new year.

— Kristina Allan, Teacher

## West's Tigers Visit

Monday 27 November, saw the completion of the West's Tigers' program for the year. It finished on a high with students in Years 7, 8 and 9 being invited to Concord Oval to watch the West's Tigers' first grade squad train, meet some of

the players and then participate in the inaugural "Lomandra Berne Cup".

Lomandra is a state school in Campbelltown, similar to Berne, whose students also participated in the program. Students from both schools participated in a game of touch football refereed by ex Marist student and West's Tigers' player, Shaun Spence.



Berne fought hard in their narrow loss to Lomandra. Well done to all, there's always next year!

The level of sportsmanship and teamwork from students was pleasing to see and despite narrowly losing by a try, the boys took the loss in their stride and are already talking about preparations for next year.

Again, our sincere thanks to Cass Ewans from the West's Tigers who came to Berne each week and organised the game, as well as Shaun Spence for refereeing and coming up with the idea of the Lomandra Berne Cup. Thank you!

— Melissa Painter, Teacher

## Belvoir Theatre Performance

Year 10 students take part in the Belvoir's Youth Express program each year. The program gives students unique access to a professional theatre company which develops their communication and coping skills.



Eryn, Peter, Jaidyn and Mikey each have their own strategy to deal with pre-performance nerves  
Photo: Patrick Boland

The most recent Year 10 group included Eryn, Michael, Mikey, Jaidyn and Peter. These students participated in a 16 week series of drama workshops where they developed their own ideas into a script. This then culminated into a series of monologues called "Who's afraid...?". This was performed at the Belvoir St Theatre in front of a full house.

Despite significant nerves about remembering lines, performing in front of an audience and wearing costumes, all the students were remarkable. Each student showed such growth throughout the program and at its conclusion reflected on all the skills they had learnt and confidence that they had developed.

— *Phoebe Mitsak, Counsellor*

## Opening and Blessing

The official opening and blessing of The John Berne School took place on Thursday 9th November 2017. The afternoon ceremony was led by Bishop Terry Brady the Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney. The event was supported by many and I would like to thank our special guests and supporters, in particular Dr Michael Bezzina Director of Teaching and Learning Sydney Catholic Schools, Br Peter Carroll Provincial, Dr Frank Malloy National Director Marist Schools, Mr John Robinson Regional Director Marist Schools and Fr Sam Lynch Parish Administrator for Summer Hill and Lewisham Parishes.



Bishop Terry helped by Joel during the blessing of the buildings

The opening and blessing is a significant event in the life of The John Berne School and has ensured the school is continuing to offer students a quality education. The building project has seen the development of eight new learning spaces, three counsellors offices, the LaValla Room, staff study, staff lounge, front office and landscaped gardens.



On behalf of all the staff and families at Berne, thank you to all who made this possible

I would like to thank the supporting Marist Brothers, Federal Government and Sydney Catholic Schools for funding the building project and Br Mark for ensuring the project was completed in order for future students

and staff have state of the art facilities.

— *James Le Huray, Assistant Principal*

## Year 10 Graduation 2017

Year 10 Graduation was held on 24th November. The evening commenced with a Mass held by Fr Erick Niyiragira, who delivered a very moving homily focusing on gratitude. Following the Mass, students, their families and other supporters of Berne then gathered in the newly constructed LaValla Room for a light dinner. This was followed by the presentations in which students were recognised for their achievements.



Mr Patrick O'Reilly presenting Eryn with the Champagnat Award

I would once again like to congratulate all the Year 10 students on making it to the end despite the many humps and bumps in the road. Finally, congratulations to all the major prize winners on the night who were recognised for their contributions to the school community and for their efforts in engaging with the program.



Mr Patrick O'Reilly presenting Will with the Jean-Baptiste Berne Award

Champagnat Award presented for character, stability, and good example: Eryn.

Jean-Baptiste Berne Award presented for personal improvement: William.

Br Michael Flanagan Award presented for courage and perseverance in adversity: Jaidyn.

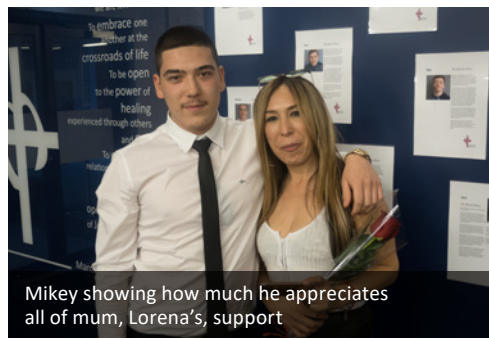
Geoffrey George Award presented for service to the school community: Zane.

Dave Hordern Award presented for excellence in work experience: Costa.

Graeme Ellis Award presented for

outstanding participation in a co-curricular activity: Christian.

Liza Adams Award presented for application or achievement in Mathematics: Jack.



Mikey showing how much he appreciates all of mum, Lorena's, support

Jenny Keys award presented for application or achievement in English: William.



Year 10 2017 being applauded as they leave the presentations

Reuben F Scarf Award presented for consistent effort and desire to improve: Max.

Thank you again to all of the Berne community: our supporters, staff, parents, and students for making this evening possible.

— *Tanja Dunne, Year 10 Coordinator*

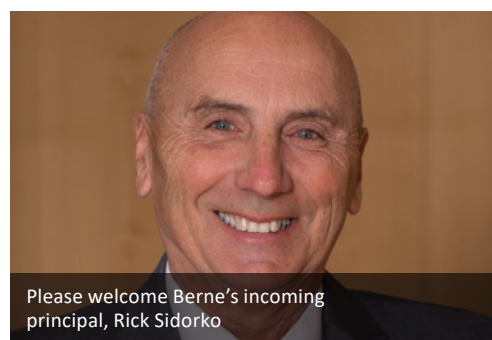
## Reflection from Pope Francis

Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn't lock itself into darkness, that doesn't dwell on the past, does not simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow. Hope is the door that opens onto the future. Hope is a humble, hidden seed of life that, with time, will develop into a large tree.... A tiny flicker of light that feeds on hope is enough to shatter the shield of darkness. A single individual is enough for hope to exist, and that individual can be you. And then there will be another "you," and another "you," and it turns into an "us." And so, does hope begin when we have an "us?" No. Hope began with one "you." When there is an "us," there begins a revolution.

## Welcome Mr Richard Sidorko

Mr Richard Sidorko, or Rick as is his preference, is currently Head of Marist College Canberra, a role he has performed with such distinction as to make it a lighthouse Catholic school nationally.

Rick has also been Principal of Saint Joseph's College Tweed Heads, Mount Saint Patrick's College Murwillumbah, Head of International Academy (Secondary) Kuwait, and Assistant Principal at Saint Joseph's College Hunters Hill, and Trinity Catholic College Lismore. Rick also worked at Marist College Ashgrove as Head of Boarding and the Religious Education Coordinator, Saint Joseph's High School Tenaru as a Curriculum Head, and at Marcellin College, Enoggera as a Year Coordinator.



Please welcome Berne's incoming principal, Rick Sidorko

Rick has always been a teacher noted for his clarity of purpose, humility, and trust in God. Please make Rick welcome.

— Br Mark Paul, Principal

## Farewell to Sue Manns

Sue has only been with us a short time but has made quite an impact on the teaching and learning at Berne. Her passion and drive will be missed. We wish her well in setting in place the care plan for her ageing parents. Thanks!

— Br Mark Paul, Principal

## Thank you Club Ashfield

The Berne community would like to thank Club Ashfield for their generous donation towards our Outdoor Education Program. This support is very much appreciated.



## Excursion to La Perouse

At the end of Term 3 the school visited La Perouse for an excursion that explored cultural and historical aspects of the area. After trying some bush foods such as wattle seed and finger lime the students and staff were welcomed to country by Uncle Timmy Ella who painted our faces with ochre.



The whole school learns about our local history

Uncle Timmy taught us about the history of the La Perouse area before and since the arrival of Europeans and especially about what life was like from the 1930s onwards when indigenous people and migrants settled in the area. We were also taught much about indigenous customs, bushcraft and medicine.

— Michael Muranty, Teacher

## Photography Exhibition

"My Sydney", Berne's Photographer in Residence exhibition, opened to the oohs and aahs of family, friends, members of the public, and fellow students of our talented shutterbugs by Petersham RSL Club's Director, John Freeman.



Wilson explains to Phoebe how he created the perspectives in the photograph

These images, taken, enhanced and displayed by Eric, Daniel, Wilson, Will and Christian, moved us all. All agreed the program was a success, and must continue next year. The boys would like to thank Conor Ashleigh and the Petersham RSL Club for helping them show surprising aspects of their personalities through their art.

— Grant Lee, Teacher

# PARENTS' CORNER

## Literacy in the holidays

Many of the students at The John Berne School need to improve their literacy skills. Every effort is made throughout the school year to bring each student's basic skills up so they are literate for life. The upcoming holiday period is a perfect opportunity to consolidate and practise literacy skills within the home environment.

The following points are a few suggestions that may support you to achieve this:

- Model the value of literacy to your child by regularly taking time yourself to read and write.
- Allow your child choice in what they read to support reading engagement and motivation.
- Involve your child in incidental literacy opportunities such as writing the shopping list, writing christmas cards, reading recipes.

Have a family game night with board games to reinforce speaking and listening skills, spelling and reading skills. Some examples include: Scrabble, Balderdash, and Taboo.

Use audiobooks to support your child in reading books beyond their current reading level, to model what good reading sounds like and enhance comprehension skills.

Contact your local library and sign up to 'Borrowbox' to access free of charge e-books, audiobooks, e-magazines e-films and e-comics.

Enjoy the holiday period, and keep reading!

— The Literacy Team  
Kelly Wafer and Br Chris Hogan

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