Dear Families,

December, the month of hope, expectations, waiting, joy and family has arrived. Each year more and more demands are placed on families in terms of sharing their time. Before other priorities take hold, take a minute to reflect on what you see as valuable Christmas traditions to pass on to your children. Some family traditions I have heard have included visiting the Myer windows, looking at the Christmas lights along the Boulevard in Ivanhoe, making shortbread, going to Carols by Candlelight, leaving a sack out for Santa, leaving snacks for Santa and the reindeer, cutting the Christmas cake after coming home from Mass on Christmas Eve and waiting for all the family to wake up on Christmas morning before opening presents left under the Christmas tree.

It’s not the grand expensive times that children appreciate, it’s the ones that involve time and activity with their parents and siblings. As a family, discussions could be had about giving time to visit elderly relatives and neighbours and sharing ideas about reasons for gift giving and types of gifts that show that you appreciate the gift of another person.

We look to the Gift of Jesus at Christmas as we pray “Come Lord Jesus, come and be born in our hearts.” Within the family, we look at the qualities of Jesus and acknowledge behaviours in each other, e.g. I see Jesus care for others in you when you ask if there is any way you can help with dinner preparations.

May the joy, peace and love of Christmas be born again and again as we prepare for our BEST Christmas ever. Hopefully every family will find time to create and sustain special traditions.

Reports

Our school has been trialling a new report format. The design for this report, given to the service provider by Catholic Education Melbourne, is based around student outcomes at the year level standard. Students are being marked against the year level standard according to what the teachers have seen the child make, do or say as a means of assessment against the standard. Catholic Education Melbourne has been specific in its briefing statement that “The scale employed for English, Mathematics and Science must be an age-expected scale indicating if a child is well above, above, at, below, or well below standard expected at time of reporting.”

These guidelines ensure that Victorian and Commonwealth Government requirements are met by Catholic schools.

I am sure you will appreciate seeing how your child has performed. The report will also be a great reference for parents to identify specific areas for improvement.

Parents are reminded to continue to support their child to develop daily reading habits for Reading and Mental Computation skills.

Ding Dong the Bells are going to Chime....

We have two, soon to be stunning brides preparing for their special day. Kiara’s (3C class teacher) Wedding on Sunday 13th December and Emma’s (Prep D class teacher) Wedding on Saturday 30th January.

We wish both Kiara and Emma the happiest of days. We know they will have an extra special glow.
**Hampers**

Special thank you for all your generous gifts for the Christmas hampers. These hampers are shared with Vinnies and Banyule Housing Support Group. Both these organisations have written to thank the school for the hampers. They have long lists of needy families. These hampers spread the joy of Christmas with those less fortunate than us in our community.

**Our New Principal**

Last week, Father Michael announced that Mr Dane Malone will be taking over the Principal position at St Martin’s from the start of the 2016 school year. Dane is currently Principal of St Francis of Assisi in Mill Park. He is held in high regard by all members of his school community and like me, is bracing himself for his departure.

Dane leaves St Francis in great condition in all aspects of schooling. He has worked with St Francis community to ensure the 1100 students have been given a safe, nurturing, challenging and aesthetically appealing learning and teaching environment.

Dane’s first official role at St Martin’s is to attend a planning meeting with Father Michael and the St Martin’s Master Planning Group to discuss outcomes for the Parish Master Plan and School Junior Building project.

**Staffing**

Mrs Callea is finishing up at St Martin’s at the end of the school year. From the beginning of the 2016 school year, Mrs Callea will continue her teaching career at St Charles Borromeo in Templestowe. During her time at St Martin’s, Mrs Callea has taught Prep, Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6. She has also been involved in the school leadership team as the Mathematics Leader.

As well as being held in high regard for her excellent teaching, she creatively and capably coordinated dance routines for the whole school for our concerts at Dallas Brooks Hall.

We all appreciated her generous, professional, creative spirit and high standards she set for all students and take this opportunity to thank Mrs Callea for her outstanding contributions to St Martin’s school community.

**School Concert Band**

The band committee is losing two of its valuable members, Sarah and Peter at the end of this year because their children will be going to secondary school. They are a big loss to the committee as they have been very dedicated and hardworking members, ensuring the success of the band program.

To enable the band program to continue and grow, volunteers are needed to join the friendly team. Help is needed with the recruitment and administration of the band, which usually meets once a Term.

Sarah is very passionate about the success of the band and has been very generous with her time. She has very kindly offered to stay on to "assist / mentor" the 2016 band program transition which is the bulk of the administrative workload.

Your assistance would be much appreciated to ensure that we can continue to provide your children with this great musical opportunity.
**Carols**

Families need to get their folding chairs ready for the whole school Christmas Carols on Thursday 10th December at 7pm on bottom yard. Grandparents and St Martin’s parishioners are most welcome to join us. Special thanks to Miss West, music teacher for teaching the students. Christmas wouldn’t be Christmas without Christmas carols. Prior to introducing the school Christmas carols evening a couple of years ago, it was discovered that students did not know any Christmas carols, now “pa rum pum pum pum” fill the school airways.

**Impact of World Events on Children**

In light of recent tragic events overseas, the Catholic Education team in Melbourne has forwarded valuable link for parents to support their child/children at this difficult time.

Valuable resource for parents in regard to ways to support children after traumatic events:


Looking forward to wonderful celebrations next week, Year 6 Graduation on Tuesday, whole school picnic on Wednesday and Carols night on Thursday.

*Regards*  
*Trish Stewart*  
*Principal*