

## **The Parish of Meredith.**

The Catholic Parish of Meredith proclaimed as a Parish in 1875 now called St. Joseph Catholic Community consists of 7 Mass centres.

Meredith is the Parish Church and the other 4 original churches are Lethbridge, Anakie and Elaine. However previous churches now closed are Steiglitz, Lal Lal, Darriwil and Teesdale. In 1998 Bannockburn and Inverleigh joined the Parish of Meredith from the previous Parish of Winchelsea and then in 2004 Winchelsea itself joined the parish of Meredith making up the present 7 Mass centres.

Each of these communities has its own unique characteristics which of course poses a challenge to its Parish Priest Father John Haines who lives at Meredith, its Parish Visitor Sister Virginia Mahony RSC who lives at Winchelsea and its very active Parish team which consists of two representatives of the Mass centres which have weekend masses. Each weekend Father John celebrates five Sabbath Masses- Anakie, Meredith, Bannockburn, Winchelsea and Inverleigh. Lethbridge has Mass every Friday morning and Elaine has Mass every fortnight on a Saturday morning. The other centres also have a weekday Mass.

Our largest congregation is in the booming town of Bannockburn with large numbers of sacramental candidates and lots of young families. The town of Winchelsea is also growing as is the congregation and with a hospital and aged care facilities in the town there is a pastoral challenge to cater adequately for everyone. We are very grateful for the pastoral presence of Sister Virginia in the area.

The Parish Team works hard to develop a sense of parish and community amongst the parishioners of this geographically large Parish. A Parish calendar is developed during the months of November and December which plans for the events of the coming year. These events are planned to cater for all age groups and also to allow for faith formation and education.

Some of the events are: Parish Outdoor Mass and Family Twilight Picnic, Pancake weekend where pancakes are served after all 5 Masses(lucky Father John), Parish Auction and Fair, Family Woolshed dance, Seniors Healing Mass and casserole Luncheon, youth masses in all centres and a whole Parish Youth Mass, a Parish Bus Trip, Parish reflection Days at Queenscliff, Melbourne Cup Day Garden party, and a huge Parish Thank You Mass and Barbeque for all Parish helpers. Two new events this year were a Mother and Daughter Night on the Friday night closest to Mothers' Day held at Geelong's Eastern Beach and a Father and Son night on the Friday before Father's Day with dads and sons going out for a meal together in Geelong.

We are all thrilled that Meredith now has a Young Vinnies group meeting and working to assist those in need of help in the area. This group of 8 young teenagers meets monthly in the Meredith parish centre under the spiritual guidance of Father John, has a meal together and then plans activities where they can assist those in need of help. So far they have helped a young mother with painting, provided meals for her, assisted after the Anakie bushfires, held several cake stalls to raise funds and are planning to take children on a picnic in the school holidays and raise funds to assist young aboriginals at a school in Balgo near Hall's Creek in the Kimberley. They have also assisted at World day of Prayer, at our Seniors Luncheon and had a children's activity tent at our Parish auction. Winchelsea is in the process of forming a Young Vinnies group also.

Another exciting project that the Parish is involved in is the Meredith Community Village- the building of independent living units for elderly people on land owned by the Parish at Meredith. This is a community project auspiced by the parish.

Life in the country whilst it may be peaceful is far from quiet with lots of activities and projects happening constantly. All of this is combined of course with meaningful liturgies planned by our talented parishioners.

But of course none of this would occur without the enthusiasm and dedication of Father John who travels the vast distances, is always available to visit our sick and elderly and encourages us to build community and live the Gospel message of Jesus. He does all this without a housekeeper and without a secretary- it is no wonder he looks forward so eagerly to his holidays.

Visitors are warmly welcomed at any of our Masses- take a drive in the country one Sunday morning- we'd love to see you. Mass times are on our website: [www.parishofmeredith.org.au](http://www.parishofmeredith.org.au)