Dear Parents & Families,

Welcome to the start of the 2017 School Year. It has been an extremely smooth start to the year with all students, including our new Preps, settling in very well today.

We welcome our new students Maya Jovevski, Maksim Joveski, Tavleen Bal and Molly Johnstone, and hope they enjoy a happy and productive time whilst at OLW. We also welcome Mrs. Lucy Van Ballegooy who has taken over the role of Physical Education teacher. Lucy has written a little blurb about herself that is included in today’s newsletter.

SCHOOL APP

Our OLW School App information is attached to the newsletter. Parents can download the App to their iPhone, iPad, android, Mac or PC. Once you have downloaded ‘Tiqbiz’ and selected OLW from the Primary School section, just select the tabs appropriate to your child’s class. During the year we will send out notifications keeping you connected to what’s happening at OLW so please check and update your child’s 2017 class level.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Our School Captains and Vice Captains for 2017 were announced at the End of Year Mass last year. Kaleb Kozul and Jesse Wagner are our School Captains, and George Matsas and Isabella Paonessa are our Vice Captains. We congratulate them on their selection and wish them well in these important positions. In the next few weeks we will be calling for our senior students to nominate for the roles of House Captain and Vice-Captain, FIRE Carriers and SRC, and we hope to have these appointments made by the end of February.

SCHOOL SWIMMING PROGRAM

Our school swimming program commenced today for Years 3 – 6 and continues each Monday during Term 1 with a make-up session on Thursday March 23 due to the Labour Day Holiday.

SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

Our whole school assembly takes place each MONDAY AFTERNOON at 3.10pm. This will enable parents to attend the Assembly prior to collecting their child. At Assembly we gather in Prayer which is led by the School Captains, and this is then followed by the presentation of Student Awards and general reminders. Everyone is most welcome to attend.

BEGINNING OF YEAR MASS

Our Beginning of Year Mass will be held this Friday, February 10, at 10.00am. Everyone is most welcome to join us in celebrating the start the school year.

BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL CARE

If your child is attending the Before and/or After School Care Program please notify the school Office as soon as possible. We also keep a list of students who attend the Program, showing on what days of the week they attend. This reduces confusion and enables us to know where each child is after school.

We understand that in some cases there is casual use of the program, however we still need to have information from parents about the use of the program. Please return the form in this newsletter as soon as possible. If any families wish to access this Program, Enrolment Forms for OSC are available online. Details are attached.

CONTACT & EMERGENCY DETAILS

If there is a change of address, mobile number, home phone number, work number, etc during the year please notify the office, as soon as possible so that our records can be updated in case of emergency.

Enjoy the start of a new and exciting school year!

Kevin Burke
OLW SCHOOL PRAYER
MARY OUR MOTHER,
YOU ARE THE MOTHER OF GOD,
THE MOTHER OF JESUS,
YOU CARED FOR HIM,
YOU REACH OUT AND CARE FOR US.
AS OUR MOTHER YOU ARE
A SPECIAL PERSON IN OUR LIVES.
HELP US TO WORK AND PLAY
HAPPILY TOGETHER.
SHOW US THE WAY
AND LEAD US TO JESUS
OUR LADY OF THE WAY PRAY FOR US

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS
Our Beginning of Year School Mass will be held on Friday, February 10th at 10.00am in the Parish Church. All families are most welcome to come and join in this celebration to mark the beginning of the school year.
Students from Year 1 – 6 will also be attending the Ash Wednesday Mass on Wednesday, March 1st at 10.00am. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Season of Lent and is a very important time in the Church year. All families are most welcome to join us in celebrating this Mass also.

SPORTING SCHOOLS PROGRAM
Extra-Curricular Sporting Schools Program for Term 1 will be on Tuesdays, starting February 14 and will run for 7 weeks ending Tuesday, March 28th. Time 3.45 to 4.45 p.m. for students in Years 1-6. Our sport this Term is Hockey.
Please complete the attached Permission and Medical Form for your child to participate and return the form to the office as soon as possible.

PHYS ED LESSONS
Physical Education lessons will be held on WEDNESDAY this year. Students are asked to wear their sports uniform and runners each WEDNESDAY.

OLW BUCKET SYSTEM
(INFORMATION SENT / RECEIVED FROM / FOR ALL PARENTS)
At OLW, every classroom has OLW bucket. The bucket system is used for transferring all money, messages, notes to the office or teachers, etc, that your child brings to school on specific days. At the beginning of the day the classroom bucket is sent to the office for the correspondence, messages, money, etc to be dealt with. Before the final school bell the buckets are collected from the office and all receipts, replies, newsletters, etc are taken back to the classrooms. We feel this is a great starting point for children to learn about responsibilities, and less interruption at the office.
Please encourage children to place all messages, etc into OLW classroom buckets.

LATE ARRIVALS / EARLY LEAVERS SIGN – INFORMATION FOR PARENTS
We ask all parents to sign this book if your child has arrived late at school, leaving during school hours for appointments or leaving school early. This book is kept at the front office.
Thank you.

MEDICATION REGISTER BOOK:
At Our Lady of the Way, we are required by law to have a medication register book. When your child requires medication, we require a parent / guardian to fill out this book on what medication your child requires and when the medication is required. This must be completed every day your child requires medication.
If your child is sick and you cannot sign the register book your child will need to remain at home.

SCHOOL PHOTOS
Our Lady of the Way school photo day will be on TUESDAY, MARCH 14
More details will follow.
2017 FAMILY SCHOOL FEES  
2017 FAMILY SCHOOL FEE will be:  
$1350.00 per family.  
The breakdown of the Fee is:-  
FAMILY FEE $1200.00  
REFURBISHMENT $100.00  
WORKING BEE $50.00  
(Please note that $50.00 will still be refunded if families attend at least one Working Bee during the year.)  

STUDENT LEVY FEE  
In 2017 the Student Levy per child will be $380.00  
The Levy cost covers programs such as the swimming program, excursions, incursions, Phys Ed equipment and Art materials etc.  
As always, families are able to pay by direct deposit, credit card, eftpos, cash or cheque. Families who wish to set up a payment plan are most welcome to contact the school office to organise this with Anna. Our banking details are listed below for those who wish to set up their own internet banking. Please include your eldest child’s full name as the reference.  
School Banking Details:  
Bank: National Australia Bank Ltd  
BSB: 083 347  
Account No: 691378781  
Also Enclosed is a Direct Debit Request Form. – An Authorised Form to pay school fees electronically.  

If you have any concerns with the school fees or payments, please let the office know so that an appointment can be arranged with the principal.  

CSEF - CAMPS, SPORTS AND EXCURSIONS FUND  
CSEF will be provided by the Victorian Government to assist eligible families to cover the costs of school trips, camps and sporting activities.  
If you hold a valid means-tested concession card you may be eligible for CSEF. The allowance is paid to the school to use towards expenses relating to camps, excursions or sporting activities for the benefit of your child.  
The annual CSEF amount per student is $125 for primary school students.  
Please complete the attached application form and return to the office with your concession card no later than February 29th.  

PARENTS & FRIENDS ASSOCIATION NEWS  
We have some great things planned for 2017. This year we have updated our February 5c challenge to a Silver Coin Challenge. The decision to change to the Silver Coin Challenge was due to feedback from parents as part of our fundraising review at the end of last year.  

FEBRUARY SILVER COIN CHALLENGE  
To start the year off we will be running our Silver Coin Classroom fundraising challenge in the month of February. Bring to school all the 5, 10 and 20 cent pieces you have been saving or collecting.  
The class who raises the most money will receive the perpetual trophy and a free hot chip lunch. Who will be the winning classroom this year?  

ICY POLES  
Icy poles will be sold during lunchtime on MONDAYS AND THURSDAYS for Term 1 commencing this Thursday. The cost of an icy pole is 50 cents.  

SCHOOL LUNCHES  
The Red Door shop will supply and deliver lunches to the school. Families will need to go to the shop and order their child’s lunch for the day.  

BE SUNSMART – WEAR A HAT!  
The School Hat must be worn during Term 1 and in Term 4. Children who do not have a school hat are asked to sit under the verandah at recess and Lunchtime. (i.e. No Hat, No Play)
BEFORE / AFTER CARE REPLY SLIP:
Please return this reply slip before Monday, February 13.

Yes, my child / children will use the after school care / before school care on:

PLEASE TICK (✓)

MONDAY  A.M.......  P.M.......  
TUESDAY   A.M.......  P.M.......  
WEDNESDAY A.M.......  P.M.......  
THURSDAY  A.M.......  P.M.......  
FRIDAY    A.M.......  P.M.......  

FAMILY SURNAME: ............................
CHIKD/REN: .................................
SIGNATURE: .................................

OLW 2017 SCHOOL CALENDAR

**FEBRUARY**

MON 6    SWIMMING
FRI 10   BEGINNING OF SCHOOL
         YEAR MASS 10.00 AM
         EXCEL MUSIC
         PRESENTATION

MON 13   SWIMMING
TUE 14   SPORTING SCHOOLS
         PROGRAM BEGINS
WED 15   PARENT HELPER
         REFRESHER TRAINING
FRI 17   MUSIC LESSONS BEGIN

MON 20   SWIMMING
TUE 21   SPORTING SCHOOLS
         PROGRAM
MON 27   SWIMMING
TUE 28   SPORTING SCHOOLS
         PROGRAM

**MARCH**

WED 1    ASH WEDNESDAY
MON 6    SWIMMING
WED 8    DISTRICT ATHLETICS
         NEW HELPER TRAINING
MON 13   LABOUR DAY HOLIDAY
TUE 14   SCHOOL PHOTO DAY
WED 15   FIRE CARRIER DAY
MON 20   SWIMMING
WED 22   NEW HELPER TRAINING
THUR 23  SWIMMING
SUM 26   FIRST EUCHARIST
         COMMITMENT MASS

LITERACY NEWS

**PARENT HELPER REFRESHER TRAINING**

All currently trained parent helpers who wish to assist in our Literacy Sessions in 2015 are required to attend a Refresher training session on Wednesday February 15 from 9.00 – 10.30am.

**NEW PARENT HELPER TRAINING**

New Parent Helper Training commences on Wednesday March 8 and continues on Wednesday March 22 from 9.00 – 10.30am. Any parents who would like to attend in the classroom need to attend the two sessions.

If Parents are unable to attend the Refresher or New Parent Training sessions in Term 1, a second round of sessions will be repeated early in term 2 on dates to be advised. Please complete the response form attached to today’s newsletter if you wish to be a Parent Helper in 2017.

Allison Luff (Literacy Leader)

**PARENT HELPER TRAINING RESPONSE FORM**

**Refresher Training:**

I _________________________ will be attending the Parent Helper Refresher Training on Wednesday February 15.

Eldest child’s name ________________

Eldest child’s grade ________________

Contact No: ______________________

**New Parent Helpers:**

I _________________________ will be attending the New Parent Helper Program on Wednesday March 8 & March 22.

Eldest child’s name ________________

Eldest child’s grade ________________

Contact No: ______________________
Welcome back!

I hope all Our Lady of the Way staff, students and parents had a safe, enjoyable and active summer break!!

My name is Mrs Van Ballegoooy and I have the honor and privilege to be your Physical Education teacher for 2017!

I am looking forward to a fantastic year, meeting so many new faces and enjoying many sporting experiences and opportunities!

I can't wait to being Physical Education classes and to meet you all!

Footwear, Hats and Sunnies

Just a reminder for students to wear protective and supportive shoes for Physical Education/sport and their hat. Please try to Slip Slop Slap especially on Phys Ed and sporting days!

Sporting opportunities in 2017

There are many sporting opportunities in 2015 including a variety of house events such as cross- country, athletics, district events, and many more!

There are several leadership positions available to Year Six students including house captain positions, which will be announced shortly.

All the best for a fabulous 2017!

Mrs Lucy Van Ballegoooy
Physical Education
CSEF ELIGIBILITY

Below is the criteria used to determine a student's eligibility for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF).

Criteria 1 - Eligibility
To be eligible* for the fund, a parent or legal guardian of a student attending a registered Government or non-government Victorian primary or secondary school must:
• on the first day of Term one, or;
• on the first day of Term two;
  a) Be an eligible beneficiary within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 2004, that is, be a holder of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or be an eligible Centrelink Health Care Card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) holder, OR
  b) Be a temporary foster parent, and;
  c) Submit an application to the school by the due date.

* A special consideration eligibility category also exists. For more information, see: www.education.vic.gov.au/csef

Parents who receive a Carer Allowance on behalf of a child, or any other benefit or allowance not income tested by Centrelink, are not eligible for the CSEF unless they also comply with one of (a) or (b) above.

Criteria 2 - Be of school age and attend school in Victoria
School is compulsory for all Victorian children aged between six and 17 years of age inclusive.

For the purposes of CSEF, students may be eligible for assistance if they attend a Victorian registered primary or secondary school. Typically, these students are aged between five and 18 years inclusive.

CSEF is not payable to students attending pre-school, kindergarten, home schooled, or TAFE.

Eligibility Date

For concession card holders CSEF eligibility will be subject to the parent/legal guardian’s concession card being successfully validated with Centrelink on the first day of either term one (30 January 2017) or term two (18 April 2017).

PAYMENT AMOUNTS

CSEF payment amount

The CSEF is an annual payment to the school to be used towards camps, sports and/or excursion expenses for the benefit of the eligible student.

• Primary school student rate: $125 per year.
• Secondary school student rate: $225 per year.

The CSEF is paid directly to your child’s school and will be allocated by the school towards camps, sports and/or excursion costs for your child.

For ungraded students, the rate payable is determined by the student’s date of birth. For more information, see: www.education.vic.gov.au/csef

Year 7 government school students who are CSEF recipients are also eligible for a uniform voucher. Secondary schools are required to make applications on behalf of parents so please register your interest at the school.

HOW TO COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FORM

NOTE: ALL SECTIONS MUST BE COMPLETED BY PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN

1. Complete the PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN DETAILS section.
   Make sure that the Surname, First Name, and Customer Reference Number (CRN) details match those on your concession card. You will also need to provide your concession card to the school.
   If you are claiming as a Foster Parent or a Veteran Affairs Pensioner, you will need to provide a copy of documentation confirming your status as a temporary Foster Parent or provide your Veterans Affairs Pensioner Gold card to the school.

2. Complete the STUDENT/S DETAILS section for students at this school.

3. Sign and date the form and return it to the school office as soon as possible. The CSEF program for 2017 closes on 30 June, 2017.

CSEF payments cannot be claimed retrospectively for prior years.

Queries relating to CSEF eligibility and payments should be directed to the school.
CAMPSS SPORTS AND EXCURSIONS FUND (CSEF) APPLICATION FORM

School Name

School REF ID

Parent/legal guardian details

Surname

First name

Address

Town/suburb State Postcode

Contact number

Centrelink pensioner concession OR Health care card number (CRN)

Foster parent* OR Veterans affairs pensioner

*Foster Parents must provide a copy of the temporary care order letter from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Student details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child's surname</th>
<th>Child's first name</th>
<th>Student ID</th>
<th>Date of birth (DD/MM/YY)</th>
<th>Year level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I authorise the Department of Education and Training (DET) to use Centrelink Confirmation eServices to perform an enquiry of my Centrelink customer details and concession card status in order to enable the business to determine if I qualify for a concession, rebate or service. I also authorise the Australian Government Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide the results of that enquiry to DET.

I understand that:

- DHS will use information I have provided to DET to confirm my eligibility for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund and will disclose to DET personal information including my name, address, payment and concession card type and status.
- This consent, once signed, remains valid while my child is enrolled at a registered Victorian school unless I withdraw it by contacting the school.
- I can obtain proof of my circumstances/details from DHS and provide it to DET so that my eligibility for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund can be determined.
- If I withdraw my consent or do not provide proof of my circumstances/details, I may not be eligible for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund provided by DET.
- Information regarding my eligibility for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund may be disclosed to the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and for State Schools Relief for the purpose of evaluating concession card services or confirming eligibility for assistance.

You are able to request access to the personal information that we hold about you, and to request that any errors be corrected, by contacting your child’s school.

Signature of applicant ________________________ Date __/__/____

VICTORIA State Government
Sporting Schools 2016 Permission and Medical Form.

This information is intended to assist the school in case of any medical emergency with your child. All information is held in confidence.

Child’s name: .................................................................
Date of Birth: .............................................................. School year: ................................
Parent’s/Guardian’s Full Name: .............................................
Address: ............................................................................ Post Code: ............................
Emergency telephone: (School hours) ............................. Contact name: .............................
Name and address of family doctor: ......................................
Medicare Number: ..............................................................
Medical/Hospital Insurance Fund: ........................................ Contribution Number: ............... 

Please tick if your child suffers from any of the following:
☐ Diabetes ☐ Blackouts ☐ Fits of any type
☐ Dizzy spells ☐ Migraine ☐ Heart condition
☐ Travel sickness ☐ Asthma
☐ Other: ...........................................................................

Allergies to:
Penicillin: ................................................................ Other drugs: ..................................................
Any foods: ................................................................ Other: ......................................................

What special care is recommended? ..................................................

Tablets and medicines
Is your child presently taking tablets and/or medicine? YES/NO
If YES, please state name of medication, dosage, etc.
All medication must be handed to the teacher in charge prior to leaving. All containers must be labelled with your child’s name, the dosage to be taken and when it should be taken. If it is necessary or appropriate for your child to carry their own medication (for example asthma puffers and insulin for diabetes) it must be with the knowledge and approval of both the teacher in charge and yourself.

I ........................................................................................................ have read the attached outline of the Sporting Schools Program to be held during Term 1 2016, and give permission for my child .......................................................... to participate in this activity.

In the event of any illness or accident to ....................................... I authorise the obtaining, on my behalf such medical assistance as he/she may reasonably require. I accept all operative, blood transfusion and/or anaesthetic risks involved and the responsibility for payment of all expenses incurred.

Name: ............................................................. Name: ............................................................
Signature: ............................................................. Signature: ...................................................
Date: ............................................................. Date: .............................................................
We’re using an app to communicate with you.

We are now using an app to send instant messages, newsletters and notices. The tiqbiz app will help our school keep parents fully informed and up-to-date with newsletters, notices, news and events. It’s easy to use and also has the benefit of helping reduce our paper consumption by printing less.

The first step is to download tiqbiz to your phone, tablet, computer... or all of them.

Search for: tiqbiz

iPad & iPhone  Android Device  PC & MAC

Important: Click ‘allow’ notifications when asked. This is to allow your school to send you important alert notices.

Once installed, follow the steps on the next page to tick on our school.

Find and tick our school

Log-in
Open tiqbiz and register/log-in.

Find our school
Click the ‘Find’ icon and type our school name into the search bar. You will now see our school boxes.

Tick on
Click on the grey tick beside our school box and any other boxes that apply to you. When the tick turns green, you’re connected.

Inbox
Click on the Inbox icon. This is where you will receive our instant messages, newsletters, notices and calendar events.

Technical Support 9am-5pm Mon-Fri (AEST)
VIC  (03) 9800 1489  SA  (08) 8121 5651
NSW  (02) 8091 6826  WA  (08) 9467 5780
QLD  (07) 5641 4565  Email team@tiqbiz.com

www.tiqbiz.com
PAYING SCHOOL FEES ELECTRONICALLY

How does it work?
Direct Debiting allows the Catholic Development Fund (CDF), on behalf of your School, to debit periodically from your account an agreed amount to cover your School Fees and Levies.

Benefits to You
CDF believes that this will assist families with the difficult task of budgeting for annual school fees and charges. One less major bill to worry about and it is free. It can save you time, money and hassles. No more problems with cheques left in school bags or the worry of sending cash.

Benefits to School
Transmission occurs automatically and is secure as no cash changes hands. The process of counting and banking funds will be greatly reduced, assisting school administration. CDF guarantees complete confidentiality on behalf of your School.

How to Apply
• Complete the attached Authorisation form (Part “A”) and Direct Debit Request form.
• Sign both forms and return to the School office.
• The School will complete Part “B” and forward all completed forms to CDF (allow 14 days for CDF processing).

Variations
If you wish to alter the amount being transferred or cancel the authority, just advise your school.

Normal bank charges may apply, eg. dishonour fees if you have insufficient funds in your bank account.

(You will need to contact your bank or financial institution to establish if your account is suitable for direct debiting to occur. Credit card accounts and Passbook accounts are not suitable for direct debiting with CDF.)

December 2012

AUTHORISATION FORM

☐ New Authority  ☐ Amendment (please ✔ appropriate box)

Part "A" (Parent to complete)  Date / / 

We authorise the Catholic Development Fund to arrange for debiting the account, as described in the Direct Debit Request form with the sum of $ (minimum transaction amount $20.00).

☐ weekly  ☐ fortnightly  ☐ monthly  ☐ quarterly

(please ✔ preferred option)

commencing / / (allow 14 days)

until / / 

Sign here

Sign here

(For joint accounts, both signatures are required)

Part "B" (School to complete)  Date / / 

The above amount to be credited to:
School CDF Account No.

School CDF Account Name

BIF No. ……………………. (Debtor Number)

Parent’s Name

DIRECT DEBIT REQUEST

Request and Authority to debit the account named below to pay the Catholic Development Fund

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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<td>Address</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial institution Name</td>
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<td>Address</td>
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<td>Inn. Bank name</td>
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BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL CARE

ENROLMENT:

The enrolment process is now available through the OLW school website at:


Families can download the My Family Lounge app from the itunes store or google play store and book their children in using the MyLounge app.

The link for the website is:
Parish of Our Lady of the Way Kingsbury
Presbytery: 13 Green Ave, Kingsbury, 3083

Parish Priest: Fr Terry Bergin Tel: 9462 1221 School Tel: 9460 6684
Email: terrybergin1@bigpond.com

Parish Website: OLW Kingsbury

Mass Timetable
Saturday – Vigil Mass: 6.00PM
Sunday: 8.00AM and 10.00AM
Weekdays: 10.00AM
Sacrament of Reconciliation: Saturday from 5.15 to 5.45PM
Rosary Monday to Saturday: 9.30AM
Divine Mercy Chaplet: After Mass Daily
Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Friday from 9.00 to 9.30AM

Baptisms and Marriages by appointment: Please ring 9462 1221

Entrance Antiphon: O come, let us worship God and bow low before the God who made us, for he is the Lord our God.

Communion Antiphon: Let them thank the Lord for his mercy, his wonders for the children of men, for he satisfies the thirsty soul, and the hungry he fills with good things.

Readers for Sunday Mass
5th Feb 6pm J Wild 8am N Brown 10am A Walsh
12th Feb 6pm J Glover 8am B Bowlen 10am J Hubber

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
5th Feb 6pm M Martin 10am I Lowe
12th Feb 6pm L Gangi 10am N Buchan

OLW Church Cleaning Roster
11th Feb B Bowden M Magnacca P Matthews
25th Feb Professional Cleaners

OLW Sacristy Linen Laundering Roster
5th Feb Joy Conway
12th Feb Judy McColl

1st Feb Church Account $1319.50
Presbytery Account $825.00

For further information contact Community Liaison Officer Mrs Dianna Alonso 9433 0228.
Christmas bowl: By Fr Bart King of Carnarvon.

There were more than usual in the chapel of the psychiatric hospital that morning, for Christmas seems to ring bells, even for those who are a little divorced from reality at least for most of them. Peggy came, all four feet eleven of her, pushing Stan’s wheelchair as usual while he carried her stick. Bruce came too, with the flowers he had broken off the gardeners carefully tended rose bushes. “These are for God” he said, “because he made them”. And in came Suzie, “C C Can I d do the r r reading?” Some sat silently with head down, lost in their own depression, most were even more jovial than usual and there were many hugs and kissing shared.

Nurses had been good enough to remind some of their people that it was Christmas day, and escorted people who were not allowed out of locked wards without supervision.

Just as we settled everybody down enough to begin mass, in shuffled “Bottles” with a present, wrapped in what looked like some of last year’s Christmas paper.

“Bottles” had been a champion boxer in his younger days, but too many hits to the head and too much emptying of the bottles, from which he derived his nickname, had damaged his brain and now he was in the grip of cancer. “This is for you Father,” he said. “I made it myself in the pottery class.” Knowing that such a kindness deserved an instant response, I hurriedly unwrapped the parcel and beheld the least beautiful work of art the occupational therapy department had ever produced.

With his shaky fingers “Bottles” had endeavoured to shape a circular bowl, but there were many more than one side to this circle.

Overall it could be said that the bowl was brown but a number of splotches of other colours had somehow found their way into the clay and the surface. Both inside and out featured more bumps than a very cold goose. Most eye catching was a jagged crack that ran down one side and almost to the centre in the bottom of the dish. “Thank you very much” I said. “What do you want me to use this for?” “I thought you might use it for Jesus at mass” was the earnest reply. For a moment, I thought of all the black cassock people in Rome who wrote Canon Law and remembered that they said all vessels used at mass must be precious.

“Do you think that Jesus should come into a bowl with a crack in it?” I was stupid enough to ask.

“Bottles” swayed from side to side and said, “He comes to us Father, and we are all a bit cracked.” Immediately, I decided that I had never seen a more “precious” bowl in my life.

“Bottles” and his bowl had taught me what Christmas was all about.

“Bottles” died three months later on Good Friday. When I buried him I buried his precious bowl with him and I often wonder, if I were to open the grave now, would the bowl be still rough, ugly and “a bit cracked?”