Next week we move into a significant liturgical season of our Church. A time of prayer and reflection; 40 days of preparation for the great feast of Easter. The eve of Lent is **Shrove Tuesday**—a traditional time for pancakes!

**Ash Wednesday** marks the first day of Lent and on this day Christians are marked with ash in the sign of the cross as they gather for Eucharist and prayer. Project Compassion boxes will be sent home with children for the **Lenten period** as a reminder that we are called to give of ourselves for the sake of others.

**Parent Volunteers** are needed to help home groups with **pancake cooking** (& eating) on Tuesday. If you are available and would like to help please see your child’s home group teacher tomorrow (Friday). About 4 parents per home group would be great. No pre-schoolers for this activity as we will be working with the hot frypans. Also, if your child has an **allergy** to any ingredient in pancakes please contact your child’s home group teacher.

**Yr 3-6** students will be going to the parish Eucharist at 11.30 at St James (in the play plaza) on Ash Wednesday. They will be travelling by bus from St Francis. Permission notes have been sent home today. Please return the signed slips by Monday 20th February.

**Yr 1-2** students will celebrate a liturgy at St Francis at 3.00pm. Ash will be brought from the parish Eucharist to use during the liturgy.

Parents are welcome at either of the celebrations.

**Beginning of the School Year Mass**
This was a beautiful celebration with a large number of parents, grandparents & toddlers joining the students and staff. Fr Jude lead us in our commitment to building a strong community of faith: a community who welcomes, encourages, listens and respects.

Our prayers were for those who were gathered in our learning spaces and for all our community members.

**EMA and School Start Bonus**
Health Care Card holders are eligible to claim a benefit to support education costs for children. Prep students are entitled to a further benefit. The forms need to be collected from Margaret at the front office and returned by **Friday 17th February at the latest**.

**Parent Teacher Meetings**
Thursday 23rd Feb 3.00—8.30pm.
You are strongly encouraged to meet with your child(ren)’s teacher(s) for 10 minutes to further inform staff of your child’s strengths, needs, and response to school to date. This will provide staff with extra information to guide their programming for the children.
Make me a channel of your peace;

Where there is darkness, let me bring light.

Traffic Management
Most people are finding the parking and drive through arrangements working well. Just a few more reminders:
* Do not turn right into the school from Fairview Pde. Left turns only into school grounds from this street.
* Do not travel more than 15kms when turning into or moving within the school grounds.
* Wait in the drop off / pick up area until the cars in front have moved. Do not form a second line.
* If you are parking in the Manna Gum Dve car park please do not arrive after 3.30. Two way traffic through this drive way is dangerous.
* Gate through to Thomas Carr College will be open again from Monday. Apologies for the inconvenience over the last couple of days. The gate from TCC into Manna Gum Dve is available for pedestrians until Friday.

Time of Arrival & Pick Up
The best time to arrive in the morning is between 8.40 – 8.45am. This allows children time to greet staff & friends and for them to prepare for the day. Children should not arrive earlier than 8.30 unless they are booked in to OSHC. 8.30 is when supervision begins in the school grounds. Doors into the learning spaces will be open at 8.40am.

Please only use the foyer door if you need to speak with Margaret. If a student is arriving at school after 9.00am for any reason they need to come in through the foyer and be signed in. An occasional late arrival is understood. However, we need to track any patterns of lateness and work towards regular punctuality for all students.

Children should not be leaving school early, unless there is a necessary appointment that cannot be arranged out of school hours. In this latter case, parents come to the office to sign the early dismissal book.

Sports Uniform
Children should wear their sports uniform on Tuesdays. Every other day, summer uniform should be worn.

Uniform Shop
The Uniform shop is open every Tuesday, from 8am—10am. They are set up in Learning Space 1 (Opposite the 1/2 Learning space).

Parish Fundraiser
Each year St James parish has a major raffle to raise funds for the parish (and schools). Families are asked to support the raffle by taking a book of tickets to sell. These have been sent home today with a letter from the parish.

School Photos
Friday March 9: Hopefully every child will be in attendance on this day. Information about the packages available for purchase will be sent home the week prior to the photographer’s visit. Prices range from $22—$42. A brochure is displayed in the foyer showing the range of packages available. Families will also be able to order a family photo.

Prep 2013
An information meeting will be held on Wed 14th March @ 7.30pm followed by an open morning on Fri 16th March.
More information next week.

**Building Program**
The extra pathways have made a great difference to moving in and out of our learning spaces. Our gates are now electronic. Manna Gum Dve gates are open from 6.45am—6.15pm; while the Fairview Pde Dve gates are open for an hour at the beginning and end of the day: 8.00—9.00am and 3.00—4.00pm. If you are exiting into Fairview Pde at any other time, the gates will open automatically—just approach the gates slowly.

We have moved a bit closer to our synthetic grass—with drainage and levelling works complete. Work on our second area of synthetic grass has also begun.

**Education Tax Refund**
The Australian Government’s Education Tax Refund provides parents with much-needed help for education expenses, with refunds of up to $409 per primary school student available at tax time in 2012 if they are eligible for Family Tax Benefit Part A.

On top of the regular items, such as computers, home internet connections, textbooks and stationery, new changes mean that parents will now also be able to claim school-approved uniforms, including hats, footwear and sports uniforms purchased.

If you are eligible please keep your receipts in a safe place to ensure you can claim your ETR.

For further information about Education Tax Refund and what expenses can be claimed, parents can visit www.educationtaxrefund.gov.au

Jan Keogh
Principal