

# Villanova College



Augustine the Teacher – Villanova University

## Coorparoo

Striving for excellence in boys' education as an Augustinian community one in mind and heart on the way towards God.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM 2016

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## OUR STORY

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Villanova College is an independent Catholic school for boys from Year Five to Year Twelve conducted by the Order of St Augustine. The Augustinians are a religious community of priests and brothers who have been involved in Education for over 600 years, conducting schools and universities in nearly every part of the world.

Love of learning and understanding are part of the tradition of the Order. Another key element of the Augustinian tradition is mutual support offered within a Christian community. The reason for the school's existence is the education of members of the Catholic community in the context of their Christian faith.

## COLLEGE HISTORY

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Villanova College is an independent Catholic school for boys under the care of the Augustinian Order. The College is presently situated at Coorparoo in the grounds of Langlands, the original house in the area built by Reuben Nicklin in 1884.

Six young Irish Augustinian priests, led by Father Ben O'Donnell, established the College at Whinstanes in the suburb of Hamilton in 1948. They had been welcomed to Brisbane by Archbishop Duhig who had a vision for a College which offered a classical, academic education. Father O'Donnell was a quiet, friendly man and he and his companions – all with university degrees - were young and full of energy. They quickly established personal links with many members of the local Catholic community which rallied to support them. This close cooperation of staff with the parents of students and friends of the College has been a mark of the College ever since. In 1954, due to the lack of prospects for growth at Whinstanes, the school was transferred to Coorparoo where it has flourished. The emphasis throughout the growth of the College has been on a balanced education, encouraging the academic, sporting, spiritual and social dimensions.

In 2011, Mr Dennis Harvey took over as the first lay principal. He led a building program that fulfilled the vision of “three schools, one college” so that there are designated learning spaces which suit the different stages of development within our students. Mr Harvey also ensured that the infrastructure was put in place for the College to embrace twenty-first century technologies. Mr Mark Stower took the

helm in 2015 and under his leadership the College is embarking on a new Master Plan based on an Educational Brief. Other priorities under Mr Stower have included extensive investment in staff formation and professional development.

“

Test your own integrity  
like a judge in that interior court.

Sermon 13, 7

”

*St Augustine*

## OUR MISSION AND IDENTITY

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Our Mission Statement proclaims our identity and purpose. It avows that

*Villanova College is a Catholic school for boys where education is the formation of the whole person within a faith community. Our staff, parents and students both past and present contribute their gifts and talents towards the development of young men of Gospel values who seek the common good. Our community promotes life-long learning through continually challenging itself in the restless search for Truth.*

In seeking the best ways to put our mission statement into effect we are guided by the following Operating Principles.

In following the path of Augustine:

- We embrace the living Tradition of the Catholic Church, enriching the mission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane with our Augustinian charism and organisational independence.
- We witness to the Gospel vision of life, centred on Christ, and challenge those values of contemporary Australian society which erode the dignity of the human person
- We value and seek humility and interiority as paths for each individual to form, nurture and restore right relationships with themselves, with others and with their God.
- We assist our students to realise the fullness of their potential, as they strive to integrate the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of life and culture, in ways most appropriate to their particular stage of development.





We are a Christian school in the Catholic tradition, which means that we see ourselves as part of a continuous and living tradition stretching back beyond St Mary Mackillop to St Thomas of Villanova, to Saints Augustine and Monica, to the first followers of Jesus Christ. We are animated today by the leadership of Pope Francis who urges all Christians to go out to the margins with Christ's personal message of hope and mercy. In particular, he urges Catholic schools to swim against the tide in bringing a real source of hope to young people, pointing them towards a fulfilling life of dignity, freedom and service, a life in which the knowledge and skills acquired at school are put to work in leaving this "beautiful planet" better than when we found it.

We are part of the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane and, in keeping with all other Catholic schools in the Archdiocese, we are dedicated to ensuring that students who enter our gates all have access to a high quality and rigorous Religious Education curriculum. In order for students to make a valuable contribution to a wider dialogue, they need to be able to understand and speak about the tradition and identity which is their gift and their foundation. We are also committed to making sure that each student experiences a faith and community dimension to their educational journey, hence our emphasis on the Religious Life of the College. We are in the humble position of being the secondary school of choice for very many parents who have already committed their sons to Catholic schooling and sacraments. We also offer the experience of learning within a Catholic faith community for the few families who enter our community from different faith traditions. All staff are expected to support the religious life of the College and indeed it is a requirement – as with all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese - that each staff member undertake five hours of professional development each year which are linked to the support of the College's mission and identity.



### The features of an Augustinian School

As with all Christian schools, the aim for us in understanding, expressing and promoting the Augustinian charism is to point towards Jesus Christ as the true teacher within the campus. The particular way in which an Augustinian school like Villanova does this is through:

- A strong emphasis on *the formation of community* as the best possible environment for learning and teaching. In this respect, the work of the College relies upon rich partnerships between students, teachers, parents and past students. Augustine has some particular insights which work in building community, for example that the approach to conflict resolution must be restorative: we separate the person from the behaviour, hating the sin and loving the sinner. Secondly, the community provides a voice to test the individual's inner convictions against, since the "truth is not yours nor mine, but ours." The Augustinian community is therefore led in a consultative way. Thirdly, the notion expressed in our Vision Statement that we strive to be "one in heart and mind on the way to God" succinctly expresses Augustine's conviction that we are a pilgrim community helping each other *on the way* to God and striving for the unity that characterised the members of the very first Christian churches (Cf Acts 4: 32-34). As is the aim of all Christian schools, the community's strength is

made visible in times of challenge and crisis as there is a deep-lying capacity for authentic and more than verbal communication.

- In an Augustinian learning community, we share in *the search for truth*. This truth is the basis for a deep-lying respect for students since we are all effectively learning “in the school of God where we are all fellow students.” The truth is capable of human discovery, and this is an underlying assumption of our curriculum. Moreover, it is a liberating truth which can be searched out in both mind and heart; through both faith and reason. In this way, the College challenges a narrow league table philosophy which excludes some students. By contrast, each student is a capable learner, full of potential, and his or her growth in faith will yield a growth in understanding, just as much as understanding assists in the strengthening of faith. In the context of a multicultural society, Augustine was extremely forward-looking to see that the truth lies both in “the book of the world” – that is beyond the Church – and also inside it. For this reason, a climate of dialogue is supported at Villanova College. Augustine’s own restless search for truth – with his many false steps and his passionate friendships – provides a wonderful model for young people today of how a Catholic learning community starts with honest recognition of our many faults and failings, our need for God’s help (grace) and our restless desire to aim for a truly satisfying destination in all our pursuits. *Please click the following link if you wish to learn more about Augustine’s life:*  
<http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/professionalreading>
- Most famously, Augustine writes that, “You are closer to me than I am to myself.” Villanova College benefits every day from hugely respectful relationships between students and staff. The foundation for such relationships is that Christ dwells within each learner on the campus as the Inner Teacher. Parents do not, in Augustine’s view, send their children to school to find out what the teacher thinks, but in order to test what they hear against the voice of the Inner Teacher. To draw the attention of young people to a “still, small voice” which liberates each and every one of us is no small task in a world that is busy and full of communication: “Longing for things outside themselves,” Augustine writes, “people become exiles from themselves.” Each day, the College ekes out sacred time and sacred space, for example in the discipline of daily prayer in pastoral classes. It is extremely important that all staff assist in creating permission for our students to listen to the voice of the “true teacher” who is “the teacher within” (Fr Michael Morahan osa – our last Augustinian rector).

A much wider discussion of the climate of Augustinian schools, by former Prior Provincial Robert Prevost osa, can be found here:

[http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/ld.php?content\\_id=19189265](http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/ld.php?content_id=19189265)

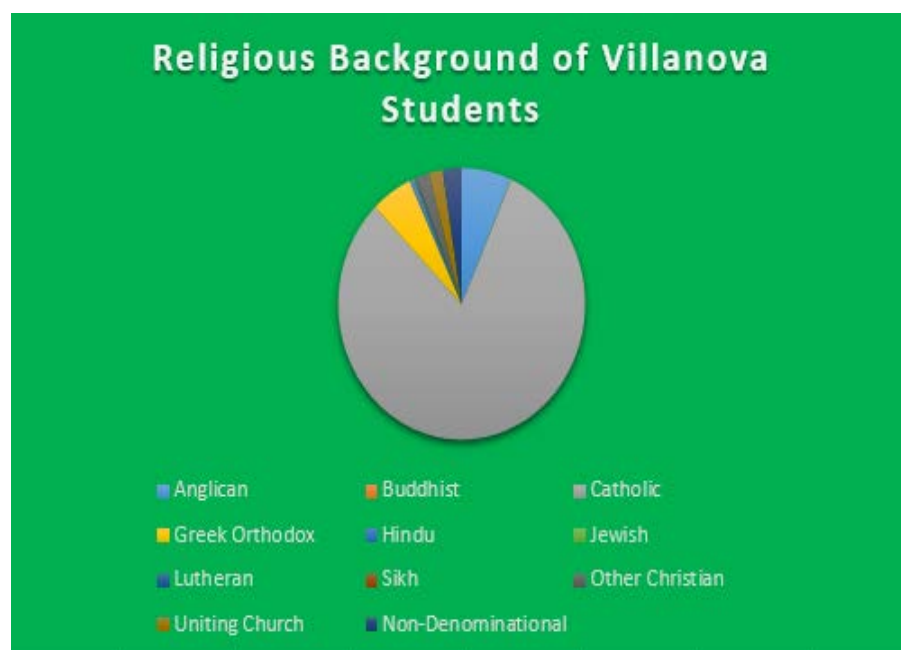
## OUR STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY

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Teaching and learning in Religious Education at Villanova College is responsive to the needs and religious backgrounds of students and to contemporary contexts for learning in the Religion classroom.

### Demographics

The community of Villanova College is made up mainly of Catholic families, with a few families from different faith backgrounds, as seen below.



Every effort is made at Villanova College to ensure that all who seek to share and celebrate our Catholic Christian heritage (parent, students, staff) feel welcome and respected in their own faith journeys, both through participation in our religion classes and in our liturgies. (Exact composition of year groups by faith is at this link: <http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/religiouslife/student-religious-background-2016> )



Middle School teachers  
planning with Religion CAL  
and CRP Leader

At each year level at Villanova College, teachers engage in collaborative planning to develop a year level plan that responds to the diverse needs of all students. Members of the Learning Enrichment Team are consulted in refining plans for each year. The nature of the planning and review process differs to suit the three stages of development identified in our Three Schools, One College model.

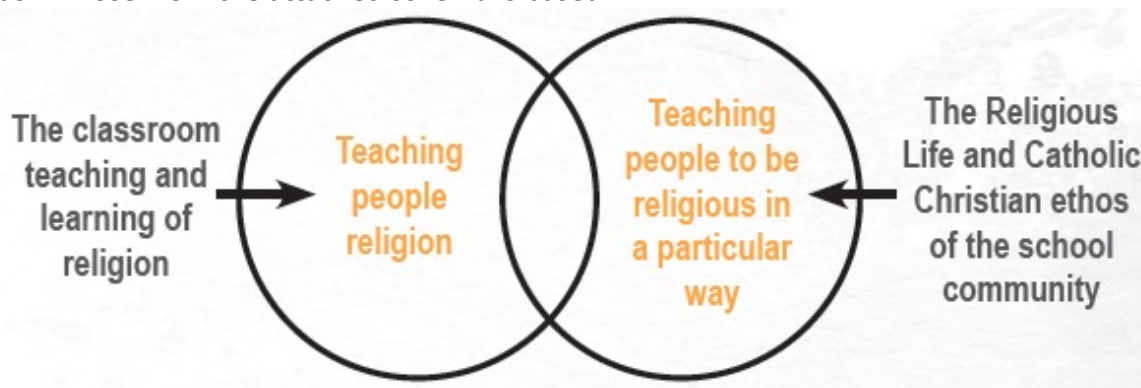


## Our Vision for Religious Education

Our *Vision for Religious Education* emphasises the complementarity of two distinct dimensions of Religious Education and the College's aspirations for students in terms of their religious literacy and faith formation. In that sense the Vision begins with "the end in mind."

*In keeping with the vision for the schools of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, we aspire to educate and develop young men of Gospel values, whose literacy in the Catholic tradition and whose formation within a faith community enable them to promote the common good.*

The classroom learning and teaching of religion at Villanova College continues to be characterised by a reconceptualist approach, operating from an educational rather than from a catechetical framework. The most prominent proponent of the Reconceptualist approach has been Gabriel Moran, upon whose work the attached schema is based.



More information on Brisbane Catholic Education's vision for Religious Education can be found [here](#).

## School Administrative Priorities for Religious Education

There are a number of administrative priorities that are addressed at Villanova College to ensure the delivery of a high quality Religious Education curriculum from Year 5 to Year 12.

## Time Allocation for the Teaching of Religion

A minimum of 2.5 hours per week of religion teaching is provided in Junior, Middle and Senior Schools from Years 5-12. This equates to at least 92.5 hours per year, based on 37 available teaching weeks per year. The classroom time is enriched by a wide range of opportunities for all students to engage in the Religious life of the College, for example in preparing for major liturgies and in Ministry programs.

However, pastoral development and other religious or pastoral practices are not included in the 92.5 hours' provision.

### **RE Curriculum:**

The Villanova College RE Curriculum appropriately follows the Brisbane Catholic Education Curriculum authorised in 2013. An overview can be viewed at this link:

<http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/religiouslife/curriculum-overview>

### **Senior Secondary Courses in Religion**

All students currently undertake Study of Religion (Queensland Studies Authority board subject) in Years 11 and 12. We will introduce Religion and Ethics in 2017.

### **Accreditation to Teach Religion at Villanova College**

All teachers of religion at Villanova College are required to be accredited to teach religion. This includes teachers of religion in the senior secondary years engaged in Study of Religion and “core” teachers in Years 5 - 8.

### **Accreditation of RE Teachers**

#### *Introduction and Content*

Given that Accredited Teachers are to teach RE, then it is incumbent on the College to provide a process whereby teachers can gain a formal qualification to teach RE. This is a significant investment with substantial financial costs involved. Four units of approved qualifications are needed to be granted Accreditation to teach RE.

#### Level 1 REAP



Conducted by Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE), 4 times per year.  
Cost approx.\$500, paid for by the College.  
Requires attendance and completion of assignments.  
Amounts to one unit of accreditation.

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#### Level 2 Grad. Cert. RE

Conducted by Australian Catholic University (ACU), comprising 4 units at approximately \$1,750 per unit.  
Can be completed online: involves webinars and assignments.  
Can be completed part time.  
Staff have a maximum of 2 years to complete the course once commenced.

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### Costs

- Villanova College to pay for Religious Education Accreditation Program (REAP).
- If staff elect to study a Graduate Certificate of RE at ACU, Villanova will pay the tuition costs.

Staff will need to provide evidence of completed units (transcript) prior to next payment of the subsequent semester. Any teacher struggling with assignments is welcome to seek assistance from the relevant RE Coordinator or the Vice Principal of Ministry, Mission and Evangelisation.

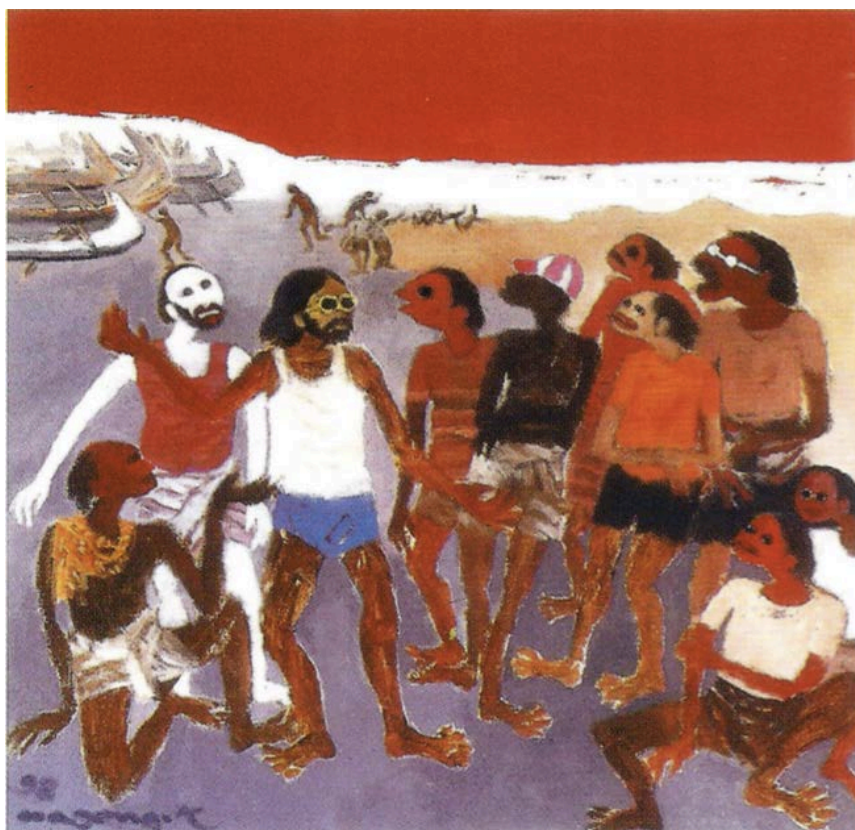
### Maintenance of Accreditation

As part of their professional learning, all staff are required to maintain their accreditation status by engaging in the required number of hours (25 and 25 every five years) to maintain accreditation to Teach and to Teach RE in a Catholic school. The school provides some opportunities on Professional Learning days each year and teachers are expected to find other opportunities in their own time to complete the requirements. A “one stop shop” of opportunities is made available through the Library portal at:

<http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/religiouslife/professionaldevelopmentandformation>

### Powerful Whole School Approaches to Learning at Villanova College

The most powerful thing that Catholic schools say about learning and teaching is that Jesus Christ is the Teacher within the school gates and in the community activities of the school. St Augustine provides acute insights as to how Jesus Christ is truly the teacher in an Augustinian school, and some of these form the basis of our signature approaches to learning and teaching.



(Bagong Kussudiardjia, *Christ and the Fishermen*)

### Creating the best relationships between staff and students:

One of Augustine's fundamental insights about learning and teaching is that "Teachers offer themselves for imitation: this is the essence of what people call teaching." (*De musica* 1,6). For this reason, Villanova invests a great deal in creating the best climate to ensure that teacher-student relationships are and continue to be the driving force for student success. In this regard, all teachers and students draw from the **Restorative Practices** and **Social and Emotional Learning** frameworks which create the best possible learning community at Villanova College. Further reading on Restorative Practices, in which area Villanova enjoys considerable renown, can be found here: <https://www.vnc.qld.edu.au/student-life/pastoral-care/rp-villanova/>

The quality of teacher-student relationships is also served by understanding the exact starting point of each learner: "Let us feed our pupils with the right food so that time will come when they will be able to provide their own food." (*Epist. 11, 4*). Understanding the learning context of students occurs through baseline testing and also surveys of Social and Emotional well-being. The insights of Brisbane Catholic Education regarding the relevant contexts of our learners in Religious Education classes can be accessed at this link: <http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/c.php?g=418085&p=3864965>



## Creating a community of learners:

Augustine sees that a community striving to be “one in heart and mind on the journey to God” – as were the first Christian communities (Acts 4: 32-4) – is the best learning environment. Our most powerful pedagogy in this regard is our **Collaborative and Reflective Practices (CRP)**, in which groups of teachers have time set aside to film lessons based on improving in agreed areas and are taken off timetable to analyse this content. Teachers are warmly encouraged to join these “pods.” In turn the pods have asked for a shared language to improve the quality of our professional conversations and the language of Marzano’s *The Art and Science of Teaching* has been adopted as a result. For more discussion of CRP, please follow this link: <http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/religiouslife/community-reflective-practices-journal>

Villanova College has completed an educational brief which will inform a Master Plan. Fielding Nair, worldwide leaders in classroom design, have been commissioned to work with our teachers, in the first instance to set up trials for different classroom designs. This process will involve linking the “what” of classroom design to the “how” of our pedagogies and ultimately to the “why” of our Augustinian gateway values.

## Listening to the Inner Teacher:

All staff assist in making sure that time and space can be given to prayer and reflection at the start and end of each school day. All staff assist in modelling active participation in liturgies.

## Our Beliefs about learners and learning in the Religion Classroom

### ***Our Goal for Learning***

*Empowering learners of all ages to understand, shape and enrich our changing world, by living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the spirit of St Augustine.*

### ***Our Beliefs***

#### ***Learners***

- Each person is created in the image and likeness of God, “*where your faith is, where your hope and your love are, there God has his image,*”
- Every person is a lifelong learner,
- Every learner is in some respect, like all others, like some others, like no other.

#### ***Learning***

- The person of Jesus gives meaning to life and learning,
- every person can achieve success in learning,
- Learning is an interior process, “*the true Teacher speaks from within*”

- Learning is the active process of searching for and constructing meaning, *“Let knowledge be used as a kind of scaffolding to help build the edifice of love and understanding.”*
- Ideally, within a community of fellow learners, *“The truth is neither mine nor yours, so that it can be yours and mine.”*
- Opportunities for learning encompass the richly diverse aspects of all life experience,
- Learning is directed towards knowing Truth, which is God “one in mind and heart on the way towards God”

### ***Learning Community***

- The educational mission of our Augustinian Catholic school gives witness to the gospel and the integration of faith, life and culture,
- The core business of our learning community is focused on learning,
- At the heart of our learning community is the relationship between the teacher and the student, *“teachers and students must have their dwelling in one another”*
- Our learning community is future focused, flexibly structured and outcome orientated. *“Let our searching be such that we may be sure of finding, and let our finding be such that we may go on searching.”*

The Student Council’s most recent expression of student rights and responsibilities can be found here: <http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/c.php?g=418085&p=3821318>

## **THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE COLLEGE**

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The way that students and staff engage with the religious life of the College forms a significant dimension of the education for both heart and mind offered at Villanova. Boys are shaped in their journey through Villanova by the sacramental and prayer life of the College, by being educated about Augustine and prominent Augustinians – Thomas of Villanova especially - as well as by a rich array of community service opportunities and events. Christ is the Teacher at Villanova: the students are invited and challenged to make live contact with the Gospel, with the Inner Teacher, and by touching and seeing the dignity of people who are at the margins of our city.



### Sacramental and prayer life:

There is a whole College Mass each term, moving from the Mass of the Holy Spirit to open the school year, through to the Celebration of feasts such as those of St Thomas of Villanova, St Augustine and All Saints. The Graduation ceremony also incorporates a Mass for all graduands and their families. The other liturgies where the whole college comes together are: Ash Wednesday, the Lenten Liturgy, the ANZAC service and the Advent Liturgy. Committed teams of students enhance participation by working as Eucharistic ministers and as a liturgical music group. New groups of Eucharistic ministers, including both staff and students, are trained each year.



College Chapel in the Year of Mercy

The students are also served by the creation of sacred space and time through having a Mass each Semester with their pastoral group, through the rhythm of daily prayer to start and end the day, and through the provision of sacramental spaces and signs around the campus, like the precinct signs which also point to the spiritual dimension of the journey through school.





Also of sacramental importance is the flourishing role of the Arts at the College. Musicians, artists and drama students are frequently commissioned to prepare and present works which grapple with the great questions of life, or works that inspire a sense of wonder and beauty in the students and staff. Every year, in Exhibition Show week, Villanova plays host to a wonderful celebration of music and community in the Queensland Schools and Colleges Catholic Music Festival.

In terms of formation for both the individual and the community, each year group enjoys at least one day of reflection, or retreat, at Villanova Park each year. The annual camps for each year level also include liturgy and reflection, and the Year 12 camp takes the form of a two-day retreat.

### **Charism:**

The three Gateway values, of interiority, community and search for truth, act as pointers to the distinctive Augustinian way of living the Gospel. The school motto, *vincit veritas* (truth conquers – and the victory of truth is love), the crest of the heart aflame and the book, and the Vision Statement (exhorting that we be “one in heart and one mind on the way to God”) are likewise used as touchstones for community growth. The learning about our Augustinian heritage that occurs in the classroom and through liturgy is supported in the fabric and structure of the campus. Each classroom is furnished with an image of an Augustinian saint or bishop, and different areas of the campus are enlivened by artworks of the Augustinian heroes and stories, such as the frieze, under Goold Hall, depicting the arrival of Archbishop Goold in Australia, in 1839. Significant opportunities also exist for all staff to learn more about and be formed in the Augustinian Charism, for example through twilight workshops and the newly reinstated Italian pilgrimage. To access such opportunities, click here:

<http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/religiouslife/professionaldevelopmentandformation>

### **Formation for staff:**

Formation is the process whereby the “who” of education is developed as well as the what and the how. The hallmarks of the College are the strength of the community and the depth of the respect in staff-student relationships. These hard-won traits are invested in through a significant portion of the College’s professional and personal development budget. A wide range of formation opportunities are available to staff, respecting the individual starting points of each staff member. Within our Catholic context, many of these opportunities draw their pattern and efficacy from the ways in which people of faith have been nourished by the church over the last 2,000 years, for example by going away to a beautiful place to reflect, to pray and to listen to each other. Such opportunities to spend time away together allow compassionate communication to replace busyness, thus renewing “the courage to teach.”

### Ministry and community service:

There are a number of well-established Ministry groups whose influence leavens the whole campus. The Young Christian Students find ways to make the campus a welcoming and friendly place for all boys, for example by playing handball with the Year 5s. The St Vincent de Paul group ensures that we reach out to the local community, for example in the provision of Lent and Advent hampers to families at risk. The Young Augustinian Youth Ministry group (Middle School) organise on-campus events such as the Mothers' Day stall as well as visiting the local primary school and elderly residents' homes. AFAS (Australian Filipino Augustinian Solidarity) galvanises support across the College to serve three sister schools in the central Philippines whom we have been visiting biennially since 1992. The annual Mission Day, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May (Feast of St Rita), has evolved as a special day away from the usual timetable to stir college-wide awareness of the needs of the world, especially with regard to our sister schools in the Philippines.



There are a number of other significant events each year that raise the awareness of the community regarding how we can impact on the world beyond our gates. For example, the Ministry Calendar in 2016 features a talent quest organised with Loreto College to raise funds for the *St Vincent de Paul* Winter Appeal; a homelessness conferences and sleep-out organised in tandem with *The Big Issue*; sponsored walks with and for *Rosies*, *Livin* and *mates4mates*; and the sixth *FairGo* footy event at Villanova Park, in which sport is used as a means to hold out the hand of friendship to those least advantaged in our community. Meanwhile we are in the first year of a "light on the hill" project with two students of refugee background adding to the

richness of our community. All staff are welcome to be involved in any aspect of the Ministry program and the aims and guiding principles of the program can be found at this link –

<http://icentre.vnc.qld.edu.au/religiouslife/ministeriescommunityservices>



Fair Go Footy at Villanova Park

## Summary

With the help of the particular Augustinian history and journey, boys, staff and families are encouraged in their journey to the humble, richly forgiving and generous God made visible every day in Jesus Christ. All community members are daily encouraged to “take up and read” the Gospel, and to turn it into a living reality, through service, within and beyond the College gates. The serving community is fed by that same Gospel. This community pilgrimage dimension of College life is not seen as “added value,” but central to the holistic education envisaged by the Augustinian founders.