

THE MUSTARD SEED BY THE SEA
A history of Sacred Heart Parish and its people

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(Other details needed from Publisher)

Cover; design by Kate and Maureen Mutimer. The design is based on the coloured glass windows which form the doors of the present Sacred Heart church.

For the parishioners of Sacred Heart, past and present.

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“The first parish priest was Fr. Gough and his favourite sermon was about the mustard seed.” (Memoirs of the late Joe Meade, son of Gypsy Village pioneer settlers)

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.” (Matthew 13:31-32)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I can think of no more fitting introduction to this book than the following homily delivered by Fr. Frank O'Loughlin at all Masses on the weekend of 22-23 February 2014, the eve of Sacred Heart parish's centenary celebrations. In his reflection, Fr O'Loughlin, the present parish priest of Sacred Heart, used the epistle of the day (1 Corinthians 3:16–23) to suggest that a parish is much more than just a church and a school. It is now, as it was in St Paul's day, the Church in action; a group of people, a family, in which God, through his son Jesus Christ, is a loving, working presence. It is this mysterious yet comforting truth, more than any of the human joys and sorrows, triumphs and disappointments recorded in these pages, that has made Sacred Heart parish what it is today.

*Kristin Allen
Sandringham, June 2014*

INTRODUCTION

Almost every week at Mass we have a reading from one of the letters of St Paul. He wrote these letters to local communities of Christians in various parts of the area around the Mediterranean. We might see these communities as rather like parishes. He wrote to them and called them “the church”; he wrote to the Church of Corinth or Ephesus or Philippi or Rome or wherever else.

In today’s section of his letter to the Christians of Corinth he calls them “God’s temple”. They are God’s temple. God lives outside temples but his presence is concentrated and recognized in a temple. But it is not a building but they – the group gathered together – which is God’s temple, where his presence is concentrated and recognized. So it is with us; we here are God’s temple. We have been so for a hundred years.

Paul also tells the people of Corinth that God’s spirit is among them and if he were writing to us here in Sandringham he would believe and he would tell us that God’s spirit lives amongst us. He would say this because that is true of any group of Christians gathered to hear God’s word and to celebrate the Eucharist.

The God, who is everywhere and dwells in the hearts of all who live, built himself a temple here in Sandringham by calling women and men into a new relationship with him in which they can and do know him more personally, more intimately. He has been doing this for over 100 years.

This week we have been an established Christian/Catholic community for a century here in lovely Sandringham. Anyone who knows of us cannot but know and hear the name of Christ. We and our forebears have been listening to the words of Christ and seeking to put them into action for 100 years and more, We and our forebears have been coming to this altar, and others that preceded it, in order to enter into communion with Christ for 100 years.

We ourselves, obviously enough, have not been here for that 100 years but others have handed the baton on to us through several generations. There were those who urged there be a parish here before there was, those who founded it, those who got it well established, those who led it to flourish, those of us now who continue to develop and sustain it.

In each generation there have been different challenges to confront, new graces to receive, new people to settle in and welcome, new things achieved.

There have been new priests to adjust to, new parishioners to make room for, new developments, new stages of school advancement to deal with.

Over so many years there have been many Presentation Sisters among us, teaching our children, consoling those in pastoral need, and often themselves struggling to survive. And now they are among us still, in prayer and in friendship.

In every generation there have parents loving and giving of themselves to each other for their children; there have been the elderly diminishing in their energy levels and knowing human limitations and being witness to Christ among us as they feel death draw close. In every generation there have been the children – our delight, our concern and our pride.

Often in all the complex simplicity of life we work on instinct, on what we feel to be right and good and Christ-like. This instinct is so often right because – as St Paul tells us – the spirit of God lives among us. So often – even unknowingly – the movement of God’s breath within us shapes what we do and say and think, ever in the midst of our human frailty.

My dear people, I honour you and I honour those who have gone before you. It is my honour to share the ups and downs of your lives.

No one can know this community or for that matter enter this Church without having raised up before them in words and images and people the reality of Jesus Christ. No one can go to our school without at least having the person of Jesus Christ enter their minds, their imagination and their horizon. The question of who He may be is put before them however they respond to that.

At the heart of all we do and say or live lies that Jesus in whose total humanness we find – utterly unexpectedly – God!

I say again as I have said so often before “Nothing can ever outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord”. You! We! belong to Him. He has claimed us as his own, to be his witnesses. In Him we can glimpse now, and will eventually fully enjoy, a wonder and a permanent joy that we did not think even possible for us human beings. Glory be to Him now and forever! Glory be to Him here in Sandringham and throughout the world.

I

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

In the beginning there was the sea. And a low, bushy shoreline broken at one end by a wall of ochreous cliffs. Inland, the bush was dark and so dense that the only light to penetrate the canopy fell on the narrow paths made by the indigenous inhabitants. Then came Europeans and within a generation not just the landscape had changed but the indigenous inhabitants had vanished, perhaps forever.¹ The value of what the Europeans brought is, and will continue to be, the subject of intense debate. However, for those of Christian inclination, the value of one thing the white intruders brought with them is beyond question: the good news of God's actual presence on Earth in the form of Jesus Christ and with that message the promise of eternal life.

In the 1840s, before the gold rush transformed it into a colonial powerhouse, Melbourne was still a fledgling town. However, although the population was small the faithful had begun to build schools and churches. One of these churches, really more slab hut than church, was St Patricks in Brighton, a tiny settlement on the fringe of the small city. St Patricks was the foundation of a network of churches and schools that were to be built over the next 70 years. From this rickety wooden structure and others like it, would emerge schools, colleges, convents and stone churches with soaring steeples.

These would be built mostly by the people of the diaspora from a small island 12,000 miles away. As the new colony was finding wealth, the Great Famine in Ireland was to claim a million lives and many of those who did not perish were to leave in search of a better life in America, Canada and Australia. The Irish emigrants to Australia, many of whom had never travelled much further than the next parish, gathered their families for a long and dangerous trip across the ocean to a country that was still in parts a penal colony. They came as both assisted and non-assisted migrants. The assisted migrants aided by the government, the non-assisted usually by family networks who somehow found the resources to send one of their number to a new life in a new land. On arrival, he or she would find work and lodging and then send home for others whom they in turn would assist on arrival. Thus a chain was begun by new arrivals who mostly had little but hunger in their stomachs and hearts. This was not just a hunger for food but also for justice, for the right to follow their faith, to educate their children and to own land. They left their homeland with its green fields and endless rain to arrive in cities that were in summer dry, dusty and windy and in winter cold with unmade roads made almost impenetrable by mud and slush. They arrived with small bundles of ragged belongings at their feet but in their hearts they held their faith. They would meet difficulties and obstacles and employment signs reading "Catholics need not apply". Nevertheless, they were not daunted. They were free to practise their faith and it was faith that would sustain them in this new land. It was their faith that built the schools

1 It is interesting to note that recent Commonwealth census returns show that Sandringham has one of the lowest indigenous population densities in all of Australia.

and churches (often in that order) that would educate their children. To raise the money to accomplish these things they resorted to a seemingly endless stream of events: balls and bazaars, feasts and fetes, cake stalls and jumble sales, gambling and dancing.

Those who prayed together stayed together and while they were busily building churches and schools, they were also building social networks. From these earliest gatherings they developed an intricate network of societies, clubs and sodalities whose interests ranged from devotion to the Blessed Sacrament to Saturday afternoon football matches. For the Irish-born Catholics this was, arguably, a predictable reaction to the shock of the new; to finding themselves a minority in a strongly Protestant society. The island from which they came was small and largely monocultural, Catholics mixed with Catholics and few others. This new land was bigger and there was, from the very beginning, a more pluralist society. It was important that the young did not become involved in that which might draw them away from the faith. Most importantly, Catholic children were to have an education and it would not be, in the words of Archbishop Goold, a “godless” one.

The early arrivals were closely followed by those who would help them realise their ideals: priests who would teach, celebrate Mass and administer the sacraments, and nuns and brothers who would teach their children. The immigrant nuns and brothers were often young themselves, sometimes having joined religious orders in order to escape grinding poverty. They would arrive bound by vows of poverty and obedience, in clothes ill-designed for the harsh Australian climate and would go wherever they were sent, be it to the desolate bush or to a slum in a fledgling city. They were to ensure that the children of the erstwhile landless immigrants would have opportunities in the new land. That they were successful is beyond doubt; within a generation many of the children of the Irish diaspora were to be among the lawmakers of the land.

The small slab hut in Brighton was just one of many across the land. Brighton was tiny but even so it was the centre point of a Catholic settlement on Point Nepean Road, the main thoroughfare between the Mornington Peninsula and Melbourne. Later, this church was to become St Finbars and the suburb to become East Brighton. However, for many years the slab hut would be the focal point of a faith community that included Brighton, Oakleigh, Dandenong and Mornington and covered an extensive district that lay between two parallel lines, one running from Bunyip in West Gippsland to Bayswater and the other from Powlett River in South Gippsland to Brighton. Many communities and parishes would grow from this slab hut and one of them would be Sacred Heart, Sandringham. That, however, would be some time in the future.

The first meeting to discuss a church at Brighton, one of the first two Catholic missions to be established outside inner Melbourne,² was held on 6 January 1848. The new See of Melbourne had been announced in 1847 but Melbourne’s first bishop, the Augustinian James Alipius Goold, did not arrive until eight months after the Brighton meeting. The Brighton Mission was eventually established in 1853, well before the arrival of the railway, and the church was built on the main road which linked the Mornington Peninsula to Melbourne. It was in the middle of a market garden area and along this road produce would be taken into the rapidly expanding city. According to the Catholic weekly “The Advocate” the site for the church was: “prettily situated on a hill in the midst of a picturesque country a little off the main road to Mordialloc and Cheltenham”.

2 The other mission was St Marys, Williamstown.

Initially the Mission was under the guidance of Dean Coffey, who visited monthly from St Francis church in Melbourne. Land sales were beginning to boom and although the construction of houses proceeded more slowly, the population was growing. According to "The Advocate", it was: "a very large district extending in one direction to South Gippsland, no particular locality with the exception of Brighton having a Catholic population of 100 souls". Indeed, the mission included the Quarantine Station at Point Nepean and when a Catholic was dying there, the priest needed to saddle his horse and ride to Point Nepean. It was then necessary for him stay there for some days until he himself was out of quarantine.

The railway finally came to North Brighton in 1859 and to Brighton Beach in 1861. Rail transport had been promised, and argued about for many years before it eventuated. Proximity to a rail line influenced land sales and subsequent population growth and the most spirited debates in the expanding colony from the 1850s to the end of the 1880s concerned the location of rail and tram routes. The transport companies were privately owned, often by the developers who owned the surrounding land. Thus not only did developers want transport near their own land but it was often in their interest to prevent rival developers having access to the new modes of transport. The location of public transport was also to be a defining factor in the establishment of parishes and parish boundaries well into the 20th century. It was to be of particular importance in Brighton for while the church was close to the main road, when the railway came it was about a mile and a quarter away from the station.

By 1863 the Rev P. Niall had become pastor in charge of the Brighton Mission. According to the Catholic Directory for 1863, services were held each Sunday at 11 am and at Western Port, Berwick and Dandenong once a month. Details were also given of the Mission's four schools at Brighton, Cranbourne, Eumemmering Creek and Oakleigh. Fr Niall had to return to Ireland in 1869 and he was replaced in 1870 by Fr J.P. O'Sullivan.

Because the population was growing, plans were developed in the late 1860s to replace the slab hut that had served as a church and, after 1855, as a church school. The foundation stone for the new church which was now to be called St Finbars, was laid by Bishop Goold in August 1871. Bishop Goold had been born in Cork, the patron of which is St Finbar. In a quaint note during the building of the new church "The Advocate" reminded its "corkonian" readers that: "St Finbars would be the first church in the colony to perpetuate the name of their glorious patron and the founder of their city". In the colony of Victoria in 1871 when to be a Catholic was to be Irish, this would have been an important message and there would be no hesitation among "Advocate" readers as to who a "corkonian" was.

The church was built relatively quickly and was blessed and opened by Bishop Goold in 1872. The parish priest was Rev J. Martin but not long after the blessing he went to Ireland on a "health trip" and died there at the age of 32. In Fr Martin's absence Fr Patrick McCarthy and then Fr Matthew Carey were the priests for the parish and in 1876 Fr Carey was named the parish priest for the Brighton Mission.

Fr Carey had arrived in Melbourne in July 1875 and he was to be parish priest of Brighton/Elsternwick for the next 23 years. From the moment he arrived in Brighton, the

energetic, popular and, one must think, almost indefatigable Fr Carey built churches and schools. In a time that was prosperous and in which the colony was rapidly progressing, Fr Carey was the right person for the task. The times attracted men of vision and builders, whether for church or state. This was an extraordinary time in Melbourne. Almost overnight, eight and nine-storey buildings were emerging, when previously the highest buildings in the city had been three or four-storey office blocks. The grand, domed Royal Exhibition Building in the Carlton Gardens was built for the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition and in its wake other fine buildings and imposing mansions sprang up around the city, along with lavishly decorated banks, hotels and coffee palaces.

Train lines were extending and it was along these lines that the population increased dramatically. As mentioned earlier, the line from Windsor to North Brighton was opened in 1859 followed in 1877 by the line from Oakleigh to Bunyip, with stations at Oakleigh, Dandenong, Berwick and Pakenham. Throughout this era and along these railway lines Fr Carey built churches. In 1878 he built St Josephs at Berwick, in 1882 the church at Pakenham, and in 1883 the Dandenong mission. In 1881 the Caulfield to Mordialloc train line was opened and in 1885 Fr Carey erected a temporary chapel at Mentone. Schools were constructed with many of the churches. In 1879 there were three schools in the Brighton Mission, one in Oakleigh with 63 students, one in Moorabbin with 56 and one in Brighton (St. Finbars) with 84 students, a total of 203 pupils.

St Finbars had been built on land originally donated by local landowner Mr J.B. Were, who was not a Catholic, and as he built Fr Carey gained support from non-Catholics as well as his own small and scattered flock. Years later, and only a couple of years after his own arrival in the colony, Archbishop Joseph Carr was to comment on this co-operation: "He was pleased to hear that Fr Carey had received the co-operation of a number of Protestants as well as that of his own flock. On a recent visit to Kyneton he found that the Protestants had assisted in supporting a Roman Catholic movement for the benefit of the church as nobly as [Catholics]. It was pleasing to know this and still more to him who had only recently left the old country where he was sorry to say that an unpleasant feeling seemed to prevail between Protestants and Catholics. Here in the colonies it was the reverse. Peace, harmony, and good fellowship reigned, and it was with the utmost pleasure that had found it so." The Archbishop was speaking in an area where the Catholic population was relatively small and shortly before the outbreak of the education debate which was to polarise Victoria's community.

In the middle of this frenetic activity, the building of a church and school at Elsternwick, which in the years to come would be called Gardenvale, took on special importance. "The Advocate" reported: "The Catholics of Elsternwick have long since perceived the disadvantage under which they labour: being far from a church although their priests live in their midst. Elsternwick being one of the most delightful and invigorating suburbs, many Catholics have taken permanent domiciles there, and their only regret is 'we have no church'." A presbytery had been built in Elsternwick in 1860 and "The Advocate" in only its second issue reported that a priest had been moved there. There was not, however, a church. In 1881 Fr Carey received permission for a diocese-wide appeal for new church at Elsternwick. In an era when churches and schools were being built everywhere, a diocesan appeal for a particular parish church was unusual. The site for the Elsternwick church was closer to a railway station than was St Finbars and consequently

the area had started to become heavily populated. In fact, by about 1881 “the district of Elsternwick had become the most populous part of the mission”. In November 1882 “The Advocate” reported that a temporary church which was also to be used as a school was to open in Elsternwick on 24 December. In the interim, the church was to be called St. Aloysius, but the interim was extremely short. On 24 December, Archbishop Goold when blessing the church named it St James. The mother church for the district was still St Finbars but Elsternwick, being close to both sea and public transport, was growing rapidly. By 1884 the congregation at St James had increased three-fold and the school which had opened in 1883 had an attendance of 160. Even after additions were blessed in 1884, St James was still attached to the Brighton Mission, of which Fr Carey was pastor. The expansion of the church at Elsternwick in 1884 was seen as a temporary measure before a more substantial brick or stone church could be built. This was Marvellous Melbourne after all and a wooden church would not have been seen as appropriate, especially considering the elaborate buildings being erected in the vicinity.

In the middle of the 1880s Archbishop Goold³ became increasingly unwell and in 1885 the Bishop of Galway, Bishop Joseph Carr, was nominated as the coadjutor bishop of Melbourne. However Archbishop Goold died in June 1886 and Bishop Carr did not arrive in Melbourne until June 1887. In 1892 the new stone church at Elsternwick was blessed and opened, the Brighton Mission ceased to exist and Fr Carey was now the parish priest at Elsternwick and St James had become the mother church of the district.

An article in the “Brighton Leader” in the late 1890s summarised Fr Carey’s work: “He spent £800 on the Brighton church, and built churches at Oakleigh, Sorrento, Berwick, and Flinders, besides repairing and extending many others. This was in 1882, and it may be mentioned that up to that date, besides building and repairing churches, he spent £1200 on maintenance of the Brighton Catholic school, paid off £20 due when he took charge for teachers’ salaries at Moorabbin school, and spent £1200 more on the same institution, while he paid £720 to teachers at the Oakleigh school. The Elsternwick chapel was built in 1888. From that time outward he constructed the present magnificent buildings, the church, convent, and school buildings. Fr Carey has succeeded in paying off £15,000 in thirteen years. This speaks volumes for the energy of the parish priest, than whom there is not a harder or more zealous worker for his Church in the Australasian colonies. In addition to this, he raised and expended on churches in his original large parish nearly £8000”.

The parish of Elsternwick included, along with various parts of Brighton, a small fishing hamlet originally known as Picnic Point and then as Gypsy Village. This settlement was just around the corner from Brighton, but somewhat hidden. Gypsy Village had been part of the enormous Brighton Mission but it was not part of the municipality of Brighton. Rather, it was the west riding of the Borough of Moorabbin. Notwithstanding this civic inconsistency, for the Catholics of Picnic Point the nearest church was St Finbars so it is probable that, even after the establishment of the Elsternwick parish, that is where they went to Mass.

Gypsy Village was bypassed by the boom of 1880 and the expansion of the railway. Fr Carey built close to railway lines and so he did not extend his vision southward. Early attempts had been made by Josiah Holloway to settle the area. He had bought a large parcel of land and sold lots between 1852 and 1854 even though little settlement took place at the

3 Bishop Goold became Archbishop Goold when Melbourne became a metropolitan see in March 1874.

time. Holloway's first sale of "Gypsy Village," the area bounded by what is now Bamfield and Bridge Streets, was advertised in April 1852. As had been the case in Brighton, the inducement that Holloway used to attract buyers in 1853 was that the railway was about to be built. Holloway did not have a financial interest in the railway but the prospect of a rail link may have been an important factor in explaining his capacity to unload so much land. By 1854 nearly all the lots in Gypsy Village had been sold.

Yet the rail line was not as imminent as Holloway had led people to believe and land sales did not necessarily mean settlement. Pressure to extend the railway to the beach came mostly from the landholders who were not residents. The market gardeners who, along with fishermen, comprised the majority of residents in the area favoured the building of roads so they could take their produce to market. Brighton may have expanded eastwards and southwards as the Point Nepean Road was developed and the railway to Brighton Beach finally arrived in 1861, but in 1860 most of the area was largely undeveloped.

By 1881 the population of Gypsy Village was 183 and in 1882 (when Fr Carey was holding a meeting about a new church in Elsternwick) an Anglican church, to be known as All Souls was blessed in the Village. There had, in fact, been an attempt in 1855 by the Denominational Schools Board to establish an Anglican school for the 25 families then in the area but it was short lived. Finally, in 1887, the railway line was extended to Gypsy Village and the Village was renamed Sandringham.

Initially the train line to Sandringham did not deliver all that had been promised. It was a single line from Brighton Beach after which passengers caught another train to the city. Furthermore there was only one train every 90 minutes, a situation that was hardly going to help Sandringham develop. Even the railway to Brighton in the 1870s was mostly geared to weekend and excursion services. The fares to Brighton were high and travelling on to Sandringham was more expensive still. After some years the train fares were lowered but they remained too high for commuter travel, especially to Sandringham which therefore remained more attractive for speculation than for actual building and for visitors rather than residents. Sandringham also suffered because it lacked the attractions that the more fashionable Brighton, with its earlier access to a railway station and thus more visitors, had been able to develop. As one history states: "To be a fashionable watering place, which the nineteenth century beach goer wanted, attractions such as a pier, baths, hotels and tearooms were required, as well as entertainment-bands playing, yachting regattas and the like. Brighton Beach quickly developed into such a watering place. Sandringham was slower to develop". Brighton also had the backing of Mr (later Sir) Thomas Bent, a member of the Victorian parliament and of both Moorabbin and Brighton councils. Bent was a large landholder with an interest in the railway and in many of the Brighton entertainments. It was not in his interest to promote Sandringham or to see it prosper over Brighton. Of all the beach entertainments, it was baths that were especially important. One could not just stroll down to the beach, discard one's outer clothing and swim in the sea; that was considered immodest. In fact, one could not swim other than almost fully dressed which meant that visitors intending to swim could go only where there were baths with changing rooms. Some baths were owned by those who had an interest in the railways. Eventually baths were built at Picnic Point in 1886, just before the train came through.

These lasted until about 1897 although in their first year they were almost destroyed by flood. They were partially rebuilt but were poorly maintained and ran into serious debt. So even the baths did not help the little seaside village develop.

While Sandringham could not boast the attractions of Brighton, especially for day visitors, the influx of holiday makers who wanted a longer break was important especially in the summer holidays. These people would rent houses, or parts of houses, and rest by the sea. To assist the visitors a hotel opened in Beaumaris in 1888 and in 1889 the Sandringham Coffee Palace was opened in Melrose St. However, by and large development was intermittent. One important visitor during these years would later become well known to Australian Catholics. In 1892 an unwell Sister of St Joseph recuperated for some weeks at a house named Ellesmere in Bridge Street, Sandringham. She was Mother Mary MacKillop.

Then came the depression of the 1890s. This depression tends to be forgotten in the light of the Great Depression of the 1930s. It was, however, cataclysmic and cast a deep shadow on the growth of Melbourne. The land boom collapsed, many banks and building societies ceased operation and by the middle of 1892 there were 21 financial companies in suspension. Little was built in the next few years although the indefatigable Fr Carey was consolidating his parish of Elsternwick. As the depression deepened development stagnated, the value of land plummeted, many people lost their jobs and those who still had jobs suffered severe pay cuts. Sandringham continued to languish and the Catholics of Sandringham, just like the majority of Melbourne residents, waited for better times.

In 1897, with the worst of the depression easing, Fr Carey began more building and accepted tenders for construction of a second church in Elsternwick, to be named St Josephs. Then in 1899 Fr Carey was moved to West Melbourne to be replaced at St James by Fr Michael Gough. It would be some time before the small Catholic community of Sandringham would have a church of its own and when it did it would be under the guidance of Elsternwick parish and Fr Gough.

A CHURCH AND A SCHOOL

The first parish priest was Fr Gough. The first altar boys were James Joseph (Joe) Meade and his cousin Francis Daly". (The late James Joseph (Joe) Meade, son of pioneer Sandringham settlers and long time parishioner of Sacred Heart.)

Fr Michael Gough was newly ordained when he arrived from Ireland in December 1870. He initially worked in the Wimmera and was then parish priest of Daylesford for 23 years until 1899 when he was transferred to Elsternwick where he was to be parish priest for the next 25 years. From Elsternwick he was to bring the Sacraments and the Mass to the people of Sandringham. Years later, speaking at Fr Gough's funeral, Archbishop Mannix was to say: "He was one of the most charitable of men. Never, by any word or suggestion, did he refer to anything that would tend to the detriment of anyone. He was a charitable man far beyond what others knew." He may not, however, have been a popular man. Archbishop Mannix again: "Fr Gough had not courted popularity, and he had the honour, respect, esteem and affection of priests and people. He died as he had lived, without any desire to display intellectual gifts."

For years Catholics in Sandringham went to St Finbars for Mass although after St James became the parish church they would go to Elsternwick for weddings and baptisms. By the early 1900s, as the number of Catholics either living in or visiting Sandringham increased, Fr Gough or a supply priest, would come from Elsternwick during the summer months to say Mass. Margaret Quin, an indefatigable local woman, would arrange everything in advance and Mass would be celebrated in people's homes. Once the summer holidaymakers had gone, Sandringham Catholics went back to Mass at St Finbars.

With the worst of the 1890s depression receding, people were beginning to build (and rebuild) their lives and Sandringham began to emerge as a thriving community. The influx of holiday visitors was growing annually. There was still a reliance on market gardening and fishing but the area was undergoing significant change and there was a growing permanent population. Realizing the advantages of permanent residency in an area that had access to both the beach and the improving public transport system, growing (but still not large) numbers opted to travel to the city each morning and come home to their beach village at night. They were a new breed in the community and they were to change the face of Sandringham, turning it away from its inland view and toward the sea. Sandringham was still the west riding of Moorabbin but it was starting to seek recognition in its own right. Federation and severance from the motherland may have been achieved but in Sandringham the pressure was for severance from the inland borough of Moorabbin. There were powerful interests resisting such a move including Thomas Bent who was vociferously opposed to the severance petitions.⁴ Of the growing

⁴ Thomas (Tommy) Bent was Minister for Railways in 1902-3 and Premier and Treasurer of Victoria from 1904-1909. He was knighted in 1908.

permanent population only about 20 families were Catholics. Despite this, in 1905, under Fr Gough's direction, it was decided to build a Catholic church in Sandringham.

The growing population in the area had begun to develop improved cultural, civic, educational and religious institutions both for themselves and for the annual visitors. By 1902 there was a new brick railway station in Sandringham and by 1909 a new footbridge and timber station in Hampton. The much discussed Sandringham to Mentone railway did not eventuate but an electric tramway was built along Bluff Road to Bayview Crescent, Black Rock. In 1910 a court of Petty Sessions was established and a branch of the State Savings Bank was opened. Cultural and sporting institutions thrived. In 1900 a riflemen's club was formed and by 1904 the brass band, which had been established a few years earlier, was performing regularly. In 1906 building of the bandstand rotunda on the Sandringham foreshore commenced, opening in January 1908. A bowling club was established in 1905, a Mechanics Institute in 1909, the Sandringham cycle club in 1907 and the Sandringham District Football Association in 1908. Several tennis clubs, a choral society in Hampton and a musical society in Sandringham were also active.

The new permanent settlers brought with them their families and consequently one of the early demands was for education. In the early part of the decade, the state schools in Hampton and Sandringham quickly became overcrowded with 400 to 500 students being listed on the school books. In 1909 land was purchased for a government school in Black Rock which opened in 1910.

Church activity was the cornerstone of many people's lives. Most citizens belonged to a church and attended regularly and the local newspaper not only listed the times of services each week but also reported on Sunday sermons and the social affairs of various church groups. Throughout the decade existing churches were expanding and new churches were being established. In 1903 the Sandringham Methodist church started meeting. In the same year, the Anglican All Souls church moved from its original position in Queens Square to Bay Rd. In 1906 the Anglicans of Hampton established the Holy Trinity parish, which originally met in the Hampton Hall. In 1907 the Congregational church was established in Black Rock, the Sandringham Presbyterian church was extended and the Church of Christ met for the first time.

For the Catholics of the area the nearest churches were at Brighton (St Finbars) or Mentone (St Patricks), both difficult to access by public transport. In March 1905 the "Brighton Southern Cross" gave notice of a meeting to be held at Miller's Sandringham Hotel for people interested in building a Catholic church in Sandringham. Land had already been purchased on the corner of Fernhill and Sandringham Roads and the paper stated: "the need for such a building should ensure a good attendance at the meeting." Whether there was a need for such a church in 1906 was debatable. As stated previously, there were only 20 to 30 Catholic families in the area from Hampton to Black Rock although in the summer peak period the numbers were greater. It would seem that it was the summer visitors who were being depended upon to assist with development of a church.

"The Advocate" reported that a number of people attended the meeting and work on the project began almost immediately. The architect of the new church was Mr R.H. Schreiber, the

contractor Mr A.E. Mueller and a Mr Mulhall was the clerk of works. According to the local paper, the new church was to seat 250 but in fact, it was actually built to seat 500. With a Catholic population at that time of only 20 or 30 families (even very large families), this seemed to be a bigger church than was necessary. Possibly Fr Gough was optimistic about support from the annual influx of holidaymakers. Perhaps, he just placed great store in the parable of the mustard seed. Or perhaps his Irish background allowed him to have clearer ideas than most about the outcome of Catholic birth rates. The extent of the support from the summer visitors is unclear although there were holidaymakers who would eventually make Sandringham their permanent home. By December 1905, the building was reported to be progressing well. At a time when most church buildings were timber and when new church communities often met in halls or temporary accommodation, Sandringham's new Catholic church was ambitious. It was large, 34 feet wide and 87 feet long, roofed in slate and was being built in one of the highest parts of the district although, at this stage, on the edge of the suburb. It was eventually to be an important landmark not just to those in the area but also to fishermen and sailors in adjoining Port Phillip Bay. The initial cost was projected to be £500. While the grand building attracted notice, it was the inner furnishings that generated most comment. "The Brighton Southern Cross" reported that: "The inner furnishings will be rich, and in keeping with the imposing exterior, a handsomely finished altar in five different Australian woods, and alone costing £50, setting off the highly polished joinery".

To assist in raising funds for the new church, the two nearest churches in the Elsternwick parish pitched in with "entertainments" at St Finbars and a bazaar at St James. Bazaars in the early part of the century were no slight affairs. Unlike the normal Saturday fete of our times, these bazaars usually ran for a whole week. Primarily they were, of course, fundraisers but they also provided an opportunity for communities to gather and to show outsiders the progress being made in the church community. To ensure they were well attended, invitations would be sent out to many people, including local members of Parliament. For small Catholic communities it was important that eminent people were invited. Dignitaries were not only a drawcard for the opening but also a way the community could show it had the support of the influential. While there is no record of the St James bazaar being attended by the local State member, Mr Bent, (who had recently become State Premier) one of the Federal Senators, Senator Dawson, was present. As always, there were numerous speeches; on this occasion, they were made by Mr W.J. Toohey, Dr J.H. McGeewhist and Fr Gough. The bazaar was opened by a Mrs Keogh, who also donated a cheque for £100,

The St James bazaar was well attended and according to "The Advocate": "the stalls were all loaded with an assortment of fancy work and useful as well as decorative articles for the household and at night there was a concert and other events." The Sandringham stall was run by Mrs Bertotto and Mrs (Margaret) Quin. At St Finbars, the stallholders again included Mrs Bertotto and Margaret Quin⁵ and again one of the speeches was given by Walter Toohey. The bazaars and the entertainments gave Sandringham's new church the financial start it needed. It was, however, the people behind them who were to be the foundation of the new church and guide it into the parish it was to become. They were to be its lifeblood. Mrs Bertotto was the wife of Angelo Bertotto, one of the original Italian fishermen of the area, and Margaret Quin and her husband Michael were to become known

5 With her husband Michael

as the parish pioneers. Walter Toohey was in many ways one of Sandringham's new breed. He was not a gardener, fisherman or developer but a solicitor who commuted daily between Sandringham and the city. He was to play an important role in both the church and in civic affairs. He was heavily involved in the Progress League and was at one stage chair of the amalgamated Coastal Progress Leagues. He was a strong supporter of the movement to establish Sandringham as an independent local government area, although in 1910 he formed a short-lived group that attempted to annex Sandringham to Brighton. At the St James bazaar the local newspaper reported that the St James stall "among a host of other attractions, included a very fine enlarged portrait of Mr Bent, beautifully mounted and framed. There has been quite a rush of the Premier's constituents to secure 1/- tickets." In the light of Thomas Bent's opposition to the Sandringham severance movement, we might wonder whether the newspaper's report was ironic. It is unlikely in any case, that Mr Toohey would have bought tickets.

On 18 March 1906, Archbishop Carr blessed and opened Sandringham's new church. As in all grand church events, there were many priests in attendance and among them, assisting Fr Gough, was Fr Matthew Carey, now of West Melbourne. There was a solemn High Mass at which the choir from St James sang Gounod's *Messe Solennelle*. In opening the church, Archbishop Carr made particular reference to the altar that had already received comment from the local press. The Archbishop did not, however, refer to the richness of the furnishing or the intricate nature of the altar's construction. Rather, he noted according to the local paper: "there was one feature of the edifice that he admired especially, and that was that every worshipper in it could be kept in full view of the altar. Catholic worship he reminded them centred in the altar, not in the pulpit or any other part of the church."

Perhaps this was the Archbishop's way of instructing the faithful. It might, however, have been meant as a put-down of Protestantism since it seems there had been opposition voiced by some person or persons during the opening of the church. Both the local paper and "The Advocate" made reference to the "acrimonious speech" and "uncharitable conduct" of a small number of adversaries. Who the adversaries were, who made the acrimonious speech and what comprised the uncharitable conduct were not recorded. The Archbishop said that it was not his practice to take notice of such attacks. However, whilst not taking any notice, Archbishop Carr spoke at length as to why these "attacks" should be ignored. "In regard to a reference made in the address of welcome he stated he would advise all Catholics to pursue that line of policy. The best answer to such hostility was found in works like this church. Whilst adversaries spent their time in impotent denunciation, let Catholics pursue the even tenor of their way"

This speech contrasts with Archbishop Carr's address at the 1890 bazaar at Elsternwick when he noted the cooperation of Protestants and Catholics in church building. While we do not know the nature of or the reason for the opposition at the blessing of the Sandringham church, we do know that sectarianism had become a reality in Victoria by 1905. The education debate was proving divisive and there was strong language on both sides.

The cost of the church was £1,737/4/1, a far cry from the £500 projected at the initial meeting. After Mass, Walter Toohey read and presented an address, which in keeping with the practice of the times was in scroll form and illuminated, to Archbishop Carr. The address

was signed by Angelo Bertotto, P.A. Mill, Hugh Sheridan, and Walter Toohey. Donations for the new church came from far and wide and “The Advocate” duly reported them. They show the generosity of the both the immediate community and those further afield.

Donations to the new church:

- *Stained glass window of the nativity from Mrs Gough and family of Seymour, [possibly a relation of the parish priest Fr Gough],*
- *Three pairs of vases from Mr Bertotto, Sandringham*
- *A Missal stand and gong from Mrs Toohey, ‘Espedair’ Beach Rd. Sandringham;*
- *A priest’s alb from Mrs Quinn [sic]*
- *A set of vestments from the Mentone convent.*
- *The altar carpet from the convent at Daylesford [where Fr Gough had earlier been Parish priest]*

At every turn in the records of this period, were the names of the parish pioneers; they donated money, they donated the things that would make Mass possible, they gave their time and they welcomed all to the church. They were to set the foundation for the parish that was to come. In 2005, as the parish prepared to mark the centenary of the church, parish priest Fr Frank O’Loughlin reflected on the blessing of the first church: “The opening of a church is a very important event because it means that from that moment there is a place for the local community to gather. So with the opening of a church here in Sandringham, a community began to take more definite shape in and around the church. From the day of the opening of the church, there was clear and strong development of the Catholic community both in numbers and in quality of commitment as was shown in the many and varied activities which soon arose along with a rich life of prayer centred on the Mass”.

One of the first major events to be held for the newly opened church was, predictably, a bazaar. It was opened on 28 December 1906 in Melrose St on vacant land cleared of scrub and tea tree for the purpose. The aim of the bazaar was to begin clearing the debt on the new church and it would be the first of countless bazaars, fetes, and markets to be held over the next century.

The opening of the church was, however, only the beginning of the journey. The next stage was to build a school to educate Sandringham’s younger Catholic generation. Years earlier Archbishop Goold had begun to build a network of Catholic schools throughout the colony, a work that Archbishop Carr had pursued with vigour. The report in the “The Advocate” when the Sandringham school was opened encapsulated the importance of education to the Catholic community: “While the church was available for the worship of the faithful and had been erected on one of the finest sites in the locality...better still there was this new parish school where the young received both religious and secular education.”

Catholic education had been important to Australian bishops since the early days of the young colony. Before Victoria’s election in 1872, the election of a parliament that was to introduce free, secular and compulsory education in the colony, Archbishop Goold had issued a pastoral admonition calling on Catholic laity and clergy to withhold their votes from those candidates who were “in favour of a scheme of godless compulsory education”. It was, however, his successor Archbishop Carr who was to oversee a dramatic increase in

the opening of Catholic schools and to voice the Catholic case in the increasingly bitter education debate. The Education Act had been framed for the purpose of training children in State schools without regard to religious differences. But Archbishop Carr argued that there could be no true education without a religious basis. "Banish faith from the schools in one generation, and you have banished God from the country in the next," he said and it was a position he was to hold throughout his episcopacy. It was a belief that his successor, Archbishop Mannix, was to proclaim with perhaps even greater vigour.

Archbishop Carr devoted so much energy to promoting the Catholic school system that the number of children receiving a Catholic education in Victoria rose from 10,000 at the time of his arrival to almost 50,000 when he died. Schools, however, needed teachers and for Dr Carr finding money to reimburse these teachers was a critical issue. Catholic families were struggling enough to feed their families, finance the building of schools and churches and to pay taxes; they could not also afford the salaries of teachers. Dr Carr resolved the problem by encouraging religious teaching orders to establish in Australia. They came in great numbers. According to "The Advocate" in 1887, there were 24 Christian Brothers and 192 nuns in the archdiocese. But by 1908 there were eight distinct teaching orders of nuns, 226 Catholic schools, 66 Christian Brothers and 1242 nuns. Despite this growth, there was always a need for more teachers and Archbishop Carr was not the only Australian bishop trying to staff a burgeoning school system. In the early part of the century, particularly in the years 1905-1910, the education debate and discussion regarding the value of Catholic education became heated in Australia. This was perhaps inevitable. Most of the Catholic clergy and laity were either Irish or of Irish heritage and to be Irish was to value education. To be Irish was to know what it was to be deprived of the opportunity for education. To be Irish was to know about hedgerow schools and the lengths to which people would go to receive schooling.

In 1907 there was some decline in enrolment numbers in Victorian state schools. "The Advocate" was quick to suggest a reason for this decline: "The newspapers have investigated : Did the falling off indicate some growing dislike of the State schools, some growing popularity of the denominational schools, or was it that the increased prosperity allowed people to send their children to the public and private school. Evidently it is the growth in the Catholic sector". That the growth of the Catholic sector contributed to the decline in the State sector was hardly surprising. There was, however an unanswered question: what was the reason for the growth in the Catholic sector? Increasing prosperity along with more Catholic schools being available were possible factors. Most likely, however, it was the Bishops' insistence that the children of Catholics must be educated in Catholic schools. This insistence was rarely mentioned. What was reiterated endlessly were the sacrifices made by Catholic parents who supported the State system through their taxes yet educated their own children at their own expense. The 1907 article in "The Advocate" noted that: "Instead of being rent asunder, the Catholics were solidified under grinding wrong. The average annual cost per child in the State schools was £4 15s. There were 15,000 in the Victorian Catholic schools, 11,000 of them being in the Archdiocese. Yet the scandal went on, and has ever since, the Catholics paying both for the State schools and their own."

Against this background, it might seem surprising that there was, as yet, no Catholic school in Sandringham. By the end of the 1890s, it was common to construct schools first and churches next. The stone church at St James was delayed for some years so that the church school could be extended. In the parishes of Hampton and Black Rock some 15 years later, the schools were built first. For years in parishes throughout Melbourne, children and teachers cleared their classrooms on Friday afternoons and readied them for Sunday morning Mass. It was not until 1910, however, that the Roman Catholic Trust purchased five blocks of land on the south-west corner of Abbot (then Smith) St. and Collingwood St., Sandringham, for a school. Sacred Heart church had obviously been built with the annual influx of holidaymakers in mind and while it was a large church, the arrival of a significant permanent population may not have been foreseen. Certainly, there was not enough room on the original church grounds to accommodate a school. The newly acquired allotments in the Trafalgar Estate were near the church but not on the grounds. Why a decision was made to buy land at some distance from the existing church is unclear. Perhaps Fr Gough had not planned for a school and then was not able to buy a nearer site or perhaps he faced some opposition to further purchases. One might even wonder whether there had been some lingering hostility to the church. Whatever was the case, by 1910 the original 20 families had increased to about 200 and the local state schools, which were attended by a number of Catholic children, such as Joe Meade, were becoming overcrowded. Consequently, a school was deemed necessary.

The first Sacred Heart school was not built quickly. It was nearly 18 months after the land was purchased before the school was opened in May 1912. Even then it was nowhere near finished. In its report on the opening, "The Sandringham Southern Cross" reported: "The school, which is of modern design, is built in Queen Anne style consisting of a main room 50 x 32 feet and 19 feet high, and a cloakroom 14 feet x 12 feet. At present, only one-fourth of the premises have been completed." The report was generous. Despite its "Queen Anne style", in reality the new school consisted of only one incomplete large room and cloakroom, and was according to the newspaper; "erected on the outskirts of Sandringham in fine open heath country."

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the blessing of the school was quite an occasion. Those present included Mr Agar Wynne MHR, Mr McBryde MLC, Fr Gough, the Mayor and Mayoress of Brighton and Mr J Gavin Duffy MP. Sandringham may still have been in the west riding of Moorabbin but it was always the Mayor of Brighton invited to these events. Sandringham residents saw themselves aligned with the suburban, seaside Brighton rather than the more rural Moorabbin. "The Advocate" reported the event in detail. "At the back of the platform had been hung a beautiful painting of Our Blessed Lady, a Flag had been run across the main entrance; and the whole of the surroundings were redolent of the spirit of the function—the triumph of the cause of Catholic education—a further outpost being erected to safeguard the faith of Catholic children in this flourishing and progressive seaside town. The Irish Pipers band was in attendance, and played selections before and after the ceremony." The Vicar General of the Archdiocese, Mgr. Phelan, told the gathering that more classrooms would be added as the number of pupils increased, and that: "The Catholic people did not wish

to be backward in providing liberally for secular education whilst securing for their children that higher education which would fit them to become dwellers in heaven. The Catholic Church insisted that a religious atmosphere should pervade the school—that religious and secular knowledge go hand in hand.” Fr Gough told the gathering that the cost of the building as it stood was £560; an acre of land had been purchased for £250 and furnishing the school would cost about £100, thus making a total £900. In 1912 there were 50 students at the school, increasing to 80 in 1913. It is unclear whether the original school building was ever completed. Certainly there are no records of any further opening ceremonies and it may be that little more was done until the school moved to the church grounds in 1920.

To establish a school, even a partially built school, was one thing but a school needed teachers and paid teachers, were out to the question. For Sandringham, the obvious place to turn was the Presentation Convent at Elsternwick (Gardenvale). By the first decade of the 20th century, there was a well-established primary school and convent at Gardenvale and it was on the Sandringham train line. It was, therefore, the Presentation nuns who would come to teach at Sandringham. Sister Bonaventure and Sister Vincent were the first teachers, travelling daily from Gardenvale by train. By then the train services had improved although the line was not yet electrified. Sr Bonaventure and Sr Vincent were to establish a pattern that was to be continued by the Presentation nuns for many years.

At the school opening the highlight occurred when Fr Gough mentioned that not long after the school at Mentone had been established and a convent for the nuns had been built, Mentone had been made a parish. Clearly, he was suggesting that in the not too distant future Sacred Heart, Sandringham, would also become a parish in its own right. Fr Gough’s comment was met with much applause and cheering. It may, however, have been somewhat premature for there was still much to be done in the church, the school was not complete, there was no convent for the nuns nor any discussion about one and, most importantly, there was no residence for a priest.

While Sandringham was at something of a crossroads, the Archdiocese of Melbourne was also about to undergo change. In July 1912, not long after the school opening, a new coadjutor bishop for the archdiocese was announced. Dr Daniel Mannix, formerly president of Maynooth College in Ireland, arrived in Melbourne just after Easter in 1913. He was to play an enormous part in the lives of Victorian Catholics for the next 50 years.

A CONTENTIOUS WAR

January 1914. Local citizens and the holidaymakers, who were still important to the Sandringham economy, gathered to welcome the New Year but the world was standing on the edge of war. Seaside Sandringham was still part of Moorabbin but it was poised to become a borough in its own right. Firstly though, before the international conflict and before the municipal severance, there was a severance of another kind. In this instance it was an amicable separation. The Catholic parish of Sandringham was publicly proclaimed initially, curiously, in the local paper “The Sandringham Southern Cross” on 28 February 1914. The parish priest was to be Father William Mangan.

Proclamations of parishes are difficult to find in official church records. “The Advocate” would report new churches and schools regularly but the announcement of a new parish seemed less important. Appointments of priests were noted in a column towards the back of “The Advocate”. When a church was assigned a parish priest where there had not previously been one, alert readers could deduce that a parish would be established. What factors were behind the establishment of the Sandringham parish are not documented. There was a church and a school (although it was probably uncompleted); the nuns continued to travel from Gardenvale daily and there was, as yet, no permanent residence for a priest. Nevertheless, the dispatch of Fr Mangan to Sandringham was recorded in “The Advocate” of 28 February 1914, the same day as the “Southern Cross” story, but since most Melbourne Catholics would not see “The Advocate” until the following Sunday it seems fair to credit Sandringham’s local journal with a scoop on this occasion.

If it had been decided that the new parish of Sacred Heart should have a new type of pastor (although there is no evidence that such a thought crossed any episcopal mind) then the authorities could not have done better than appoint William Mangan. He was born in Moonee Ponds, educated at Xavier College in Kew, had been in the second intake at the new seminary at Manly, New South Wales, and was one of the first 50 priests ordained from there. He was ordained in February 1902 and served as assistant priest in Mansfield, Clifton Hill and Williamstown before being posted to Sandringham. In an Irish Catholic society, he was different: an Australian-born and Australian-educated priest; a priest of Irish origins but not Irish who, at that stage, had not travelled outside Australia. He was also a priest who valued learning and education but who lacked the edge of bitterness that first-hand experience of the Irish struggles had given many other priests of his time. And he held strong opinions that were sometimes firmly expressed.

The recollections of present day parishioner Jim Andrews provide a glimpse of the new PP’s style: “One of the reasons Fr Mangan was held in such affection in our family

was because when World War I broke out there was this anti-German feeling. My grandfather was German and my aunties were not only verbally attacked but physically attacked [at the parish school]. Mum [who had already left school] had to go down and escort them home. Fr Mangan took up the case. He threatened to close the school if things didn't stop. It was shocking. Their name was Kasch and they were called Huns and people threw stones at them and my grandmother used to go down in the horse and jinker to collect them. Father Mangan stopped it. He said the behaviour was disgraceful and he would not tolerate it."

It is possible that Fr William Mangan was sent to a small Catholic community such as Sandringham to keep him out of trouble or, at least, at some distance from the centre of ecclesiastical power.

In 1913, a year before arriving in Sandringham, Fr Mangan had been appointed editor of the Catholic paper; "The Tribune", a position he was to hold for 11 years. "The Tribune" had a smaller circulation than its Catholic contemporary "The Advocate"⁶ and was, in the words of its last editor, regarded as a paper for the "rather less sophisticated Catholic reader" rather than "The Advocate" which inclined more towards publishing articles for the more intellectual reader." On several occasions William Mangan, as editor of "The Tribune", came into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities, in particular with Dr Mannix. At Fr Mangan's funeral Archbishop Simonds noted that; "There were times when his audacity as a writer led him into troubled waters, but he never shirked from what he saw as his clear duty and he unflinchingly adhered to what he regarded as inviolable principles." He had strongly held beliefs but also a quickness of wit and an Australian turn of phrase. Late in his life he told Archbishop Simonds that "he had had a long and a good innings; often the wicket was sticky, but he had never been clean bowled." It was not the analogy that would have been used by many of the archdiocese's Irish priests.

Fr Mangan was erudite and well-read with a keen interest in music, having had experience as a tenor singer. Former parishioner Kath Leech (nee Burke), who grew up in the parish, recalls: "I remember someone saying to my mother: 'Well you might go to the presbytery but you will never get in, not with all those books'. Apparently, he had books everywhere from the ground to the top of the ceiling. It was chock-a-block with books." Encouraged by the parish priest of Clifton Hill, Father John McCarthy⁷, Fr Mangan undertook studies at the University of Melbourne and in 1911 he became the first priest of Australian birth to graduate from an Australian university, securing a Master of Arts degree with honours in logic and philosophy. He was to have a continuing involvement with the university as honorary secretary of the Newman Society and later as one of founders behind the establishment of Newman College. At Sacred Heart, Fr Mangan was to build a proper school, provide accommodation for the nuns, and develop two new parishes and parish schools. Fr Mangan was a man for all people, admired among the local community as well as among his own parishioners and always with a strong interest in the children of his parish. Kath Leech remembers the interest he would take in the school concerts: "He was really very fond of the children and he would come over to the school and we would have Penny Concerts for the missions. He would come over and it was really very sweet of him because he must have

6 "The Tribune" was established in 1900

7 Father John McCarthy was later to be appointed the Bishop of Bendigo

been bored to snores. I used to sing a song ‘I’m Mummy’s little maiden and I’m only five years old’ and he would clap and it was really so awful. But Father showed great love to the children.”

The blessing of a presbytery, according to Archbishop Carr, resembled the birth of a child as it inspired joy and hope in the minds of parishioners. If there was to be inspiration for the parishioners of Sandringham, however, a presbytery needed to be found for the new priest. The procurement of accommodation was not without difficulty. The logical choice had been land next to the church. Unfortunately, possibly because of some tension and even lingering resentment to the Catholic presence in Sandringham, previous attempts by Fr Gough to buy such land had been unsuccessful. Finally Fr Mangan purchased a 10- roomed house next to the church which was blessed by Archbishop Carr on his first visit to the parish on 12 May 1914. In welcoming the Archbishop to the blessing of the presbytery, parishioner Matthew Maguire stated: “Prior to the division of the parish, repeated attempts had been made, but in vain, to secure the blocks of land next to the church for the purposes of a presbytery. These having failed, our newly appointed pastor, Fr. Mangan, with praiseworthy promptitude, secured the adjoining house, after having ascertained proof of its suitability for a presbytery.” Fr Mangan’s genial personality and his ability to understand people, so instrumental in purchasing the house, would be needed again when he would buy land for the new school. The purchase of an existing house was cheaper and quicker than sourcing land and then building and according to Matthew Maguire “the price paid was exceedingly moderate (£1100)”. The welcoming address to the Archbishop at the presbytery blessing was read by the honorary secretary of the church committee, Matthew Maguire, and signed by Matthew Maguire and Walter Toohey. Walter Toohey proposed the vote of thanks to the Archbishop which was seconded by John Gavan Duffy a prominent Catholic layman and a former member of State Parliament⁸

Donations for the new presbytery

- *Mr Bertotto, £7 10s. for sanctuary lamp*
- *Mrs Tolra, £5 for baptism register*
- *Mr Hubbard, £10 for ciborium*
- *Mr Hubbard jun, £2 15s. for lunette case*
- *The Misses Tobin, gift of candelabra*
- *Mrs Calder, gift of valuable pictures for the presbytery*
- *The mother superior of Abbotsford convent, a valuable gift of house linen for the presbytery.*

The debt of the new parish was £2369 12s. 5d. On separation, Elsternwick had charged Sandringham £1560 10s. 8d. for assets and, as mentioned earlier, the presbytery had cost £1100. Despite all the building in 1906, much of Sacred Heart church was unfinished and was to remain unfinished for some time. According to late parishioner Joe Meade’s brief memoirs, it was not until Sacred Heart had become a parish that the pulpit, the stations of the cross, the glass doors and holy water fonts were donated. Unlike donations given during the building of the church, the names of the donors of these later additions were not recorded. It is known, however, that the

8 The Advocate reports that Charles Gavan Duffy seconded the speech but this is an error. By this time former State premier Charles Gavan Duffy was retired and living in France. John Gavan Duffy was his son.

Ryan family donated the beautiful marble holy water fonts, which, luckily, were saved from destruction by long-serving parishioner Frank Burke when the old church was demolished 70 years later.. The choir loft and many of the stained glass windows were yet to come.

In July 1914 came the war. In the early months it did not seem to impinge greatly at the local level or on the work of the Catholic parish of Sandringham. In January 1915 there was, as usual, the annual bazaar which on this occasion, was opened by Fr Mangan's great friend and mentor Dean McCarthy. In 1915, January was when many Melbourne people went to Sandringham for their holidays and these annual bazaars depended on the support of the summer visitors. The parish depended on income derived from this annual event. In the tradition of bazaars of the time, this was not a trifling one-afternoon affair. It was opened on the Wednesday night in the Sandringham Hall and continued at the hall until Friday when it was transferred to the presbytery grounds. On Saturday afternoon and evening there was a big attendance after which the bazaar continued for another eight days. Fr Mangan had electric light connected to the grounds and, in what was surely a novelty for the times, had a merry-go-round installed for the children. There was an array of stalls – including strangely enough a fortune-telling booth – details of which were all dutifully recorded in "The Advocate".

Bazaar 1915

New Year gifts (Mesdames Toohy and Quin); the Hampton stall (Mesdames Duggan and McLaughlin); sweets (Misses Stewart and Hehir); refreshments Misses Foley [evidently there were 3 Miss Foleys]; parish stall (Mesdames McCarty and Cahill) and flowers (Mrs. Kelly); fortune telling (Mrs Plunkett).

At the school, enrolment numbers were fluctuating: 50 students in 1912, 80 in 1914, down to 60 in 1915 and then up again to 84 by 1918. Establishment of the parish and purchase of the presbytery meant that there was now a significant debt. This, combined with fluctuating student numbers and the general uncertainty caused by the war, possibly also meant that there was some reluctance to engage in more building. In 1915 Mother Vincent Clarke had succeeded Mother Teresa McCarthy as headmistress and superior of the convent and she remained at the school until 1918.

The Gallipoli landing changed much and by mid-1915 the war was impinging on people's lives at a local level. A series of articles headlined "FIGHT OR WORK?" was indicative of the more patriotic line being undertaken by the local newspaper. These articles purported to outline the arguments for and against enlisting, as opposed to remaining in work. The main thrust, however, concerned what one might say to one's grandchildren in years to come if one did not take the patriotic line and enlist. Catholics were caught between this viewpoint and the increasing opposition to the war being voiced by their co-adjutor Archbishop. In Victoria, Catholic bishops of the regional dioceses might have been important in their own areas but on the matter of the war Archbishop Mannix spoke for all. Dr Mannix had no time for war, in particular this war which he famously labelled "an ordinary trade war". He regarded World War I as a conflict that did not, and should not, concern the small, geographically isolated and independent nation of Australia.

While “The Advocate” reported, word for word, every one of the Archbishop’s speeches against the war, “The Tribune”, edited by Fr Mangan, took a different stance. Rather than railing against the war “The Tribune” was concerned about the turmoil the war was creating. As early as March 1915, before the Gallipoli landing, there was a long article in “The Tribune” which discussed the turmoil and turned the Archbishop’s phrase “an ordinary trade war” into “the horrors of the terrible trade of war”. The article read in part: “In this happy land of Australia, sea-divided from the scene of conflict, nothing but the echoes of the turmoil reach us, and it is necessary to give full rein to the imagination to realise that the greatest powers of Christendom are fast locked in deadly strife, and that the world is overshadowed by black chaos of wrath and enmity, piteous suffering, and fierce battle fury. Though not realising to the fullest extent in this far-off land the horrors of the terrible trade of war, Australia has nevertheless contributed, and is still contributing, her quota to the appeals that have been made both in men and money.”

More importantly “The Tribune” was concerned with the participants in the war, in particular the plight of the 2,000 Catholic men who were among the 10,000 troops training at the Broadmeadows camp. “What are the Catholics doing for the well-being of those 2,000 young soldiers? The great majority are doing nothing. Those who have relatives or friends among them are individually doing their little bit but the great majority of Catholics cannot lay the flattering unction to their souls that they have lifted a finger to help the Catholic soldiers in camp. In the beginning a tent was erected ... at one end of which, on the earthen floor, an altar has been raised and fifteen forms provided. These comprise the whole equipment for the Catholic men in camp. The tent itself has stood the onslaught of ravaging north winds of summer.... and consequently is in such a dirty condition as to be totally unfit for sacred functions.” Not surprisingly, there was some tension between the editor of “The Tribune” and the fiery Archbishop.

The war itself was divisive but it was the issue of conscription which was really to split the young nation. Archbishop Mannix’s vehement opposition to conscription drew much support for him but there were many in the community who strongly supported the issue. The secular press was anxious to ensure Australia remained part of the empire and was supportive of the war and consequentially conscription. By the time the second conscription referendum was being debated, Dr Mannix’s relationship with the press, especially with the Melbourne daily “The Argus”, was bitter. In a speech to more than 20,000 people at the Exhibition Building just before the second vote, he claimed: “There are two sides to the conscription issue, and the opposed and contending parties should be allowed every opportunity of putting their views before the voters, with whom the decision rests. The daily papers of Australia have shut down upon the anti-conscriptionists, and there is no opening in their columns for those who want the answer on December 20th to be an emphatic NO. On the other hand, the papers give plenty of space to any sort of silly twaddle on the other side”. If the press was closed to the No side, so were many public venues. Said “The Advocate”: “The other (the negative) side had also been refused the use of public halls, the people had been denied the use of their own halls, and this was a disgrace to those who were responsible for it. If conscription was a thing worth putting to the people at all, it should be put fairly”.

While he may not have been popular with the popular press, Archbishop Mannix

was a prophet to many of his people many of whom were Irish and held bitter memories of British persecution in their home land. The account of his arrival at a meeting at the Exhibition Building, held, in theory, in aid of St Josephs parish, Northcote, is telling: "At 9.30 his Grace, the Archbishop of Melbourne (the Most Rev. Dr Mannix), arrived amidst a scene of remarkable enthusiasm. The great gathering rose en masse and the great building resounded with tumultuous cheers, accompanied with the waving of hats and handkerchiefs. His Grace stood for some time bowing his acknowledgments."

For ordinary Catholics, such as those in Sandringham, this must have been a difficult time. As the war ground on, each edition of the local paper named members of the local football club or the newly established Sandringham Club who had recently enlisted. It also reported the many activities of the local rifle club. Yet, at every opening of every fete, church or school, Melbourne's Catholic coadjutor Archbishop railed against both the war and conscription. Dr Mannix repeatedly said that he did not court popularity, but the more he said this the more popular he became with the Catholic population. As the popularity of Dr Mannix grew among the mainly Irish (or Irish background) Catholics, the more vitriolic became his relationship with the secular press and the deeper became the division in society. At one level this came seen as a division between the Catholic and non-Catholic populations. At another level it may well have been a division between those of Irish background, many of whom held an entrenched bitterness to the British, and those who were of English background and who, despite Australia's position as a newly independent nation, held a strong allegiance to the empire. Meanwhile many Catholics still felt that it was their duty to enlist, even if the full support of their church was not forthcoming.

The tension this must have caused in communities was encapsulated in an article in "The Advocate" in 1917. Whilst not directly relevant to Sandringham, it is indicative of the tensions under which many Catholics in small communities must have lived. "The small community of Catholics of Riddell has been stirred up of late by local jingoes, who asserted that the Catholics in the district, because they did not indulge to any extent in patriotic flag-flapping, were not doing their share in the Great War. The local correspondent of the Melbourne daily papers wrote during the week: "It is doubtful whether any school in the Commonwealth with so small a number of scholars has so large a roll of honour as St. Ambrose's Roman Catholic School at Riddell. The attendance at present is about 12, and rarely ever exceeded a score, yet there are 16 names on the roll of honour. Of these names, five have been killed and three wounded, and one has been reported missing. In fact it has since been discovered that there is another name to add to the list, and there may be others from the township whose names have not been ascertained. The record from Riddell is remarkably good, when the percentage of Catholics in the district is considered; and there are other townships in the State where, if figures were obtained, arguments would be got to confound a certain class of jingoes whose only claim to patriotism is flag-flapping and the singing of the National Anthem, more or less out of tune. The total number of Catholics who have volunteered in the Commonwealth, something like 70,000 out of a grand total of about 300,000 enlistments, show that the Catholics of Australia are doing their share in the Great War."

The Catholics in Sandringham were possibly caught like Catholics everywhere between conflicting loyalties. However, Fr Mangan recognised that a parish did not exist in isolation from the broader, and more secular, community, nor could it be built by

one priest alone. Despite tensions that may have been developing in other communities this was not a community in which the Catholics existed separately and Fr Mangan effortlessly walked amongst all members of the society and so did his friends. Perhaps one of Fr Mangan's greatest strengths was his ability to gather around him a group of people on whom he could rely for wise counsel. This group were mostly people with civic responsibilities in the broader community, highly respected individuals outside as well as inside the church community. Many of them were also members, as was Fr William Mangan, of the newly established Sandringham Club, a males-only club that was to be an important institution for the men of Sandringham. These confidantes of Fr Mangan included Walter Toohey, the solicitor, Angelo Bertotto, one of the original fishermen of the area and well-known local identity, Matthew Maguire, the deputy secretary of the Department of Defence, Eric Soffa, the local newsagent and Justice of the Peace, and, of course, the "parish pioneers" Michael and Margaret Quin.⁹ They were people with links to different sections of the community and with the diverse skills and abilities important in a growing parish.

While, in the words of the Archbishop, Australia had no business in the war, Sandringham parish was to have such business. In August 1917 Fr Mangan was appointed as a military chaplain to the AIF. The circumstances behind the appointment are still a matter of conjecture. One school of thought holds that since he opposed Dr Mannix's stance on conscription, the Archbishop packed him off as a military chaplain. However "The Tribune" carried a different account: "For a long time Father Mangan had been actuated with a desire to be a chaplain to the A.I.F and his wish had at last been realised. He had been one of the first to offer his services but for a variety of reasons he had been compelled to wait." Why Fr Mangan had been "compelled to wait" is not known but one must wonder whether one reason might have been the friction with Daniel Mannix.

If Fr Mangan was in conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities, he was strongly supported in his own parish and suburb. He was farewelled by "The Tribune" staff and also by the parish. Even the local paper reported Fr Mangan's parish farewell at which he was presented with a chalice from the scholars, a crucifix from the lady parishioners and a ciborium from all the parishioners. Today, this ciborium is looked after by the sisters at the convent.

The Rev T.D. Bride from Clifton Hill was acting parish priest while Fr Mangan was away at the war. Fr Bride had big shoes to fill and a debt to manage. By 1918 the parish debt was £2700 and "The Advocate" commented that Fr Bride's legacy from Fr Mangan was the annual parish bazaar. According to "The Advocate" the bazaar took place on: "an ideal evening for an outdoor function, and all went as merry as a marriage bell. The grounds had been artistically prepared for the auspicious occasion. Bunting added to the gaiety of the scene, and a powerful electric light installation gave abundant light". Fr Bride obviously felt the burden of the debt. In opening the fete, he commented that he wanted people to spend freely because while the debt: "might not seem very big to some of them, it was quite big enough for him. He would be greatly pleased if the fete enabled him to substantially liquidate that debt". His plea was partly answered; by May, 1918 the debt had been reduced by £610.

9 After the war this group would also include Dr J.J. O'Neill

Fr Mangan returned in June 1918. The parish was delighted to see him and a committee chaired by Walter Toohey organised a reception at which there were musical items by Misses Cudden, O'Neill, Arnold, M Ralph, Landy, L Gaze and Joyce. However, Fr Mangan's stay was brief and the local paper reported he would return to France that week. Whether Fr Mangan had thought his period of leave might be longer is another matter of conjecture. There is a story that may be apocryphal that Fr Mangan had wanted a period of home rest but he was told by the Archbishop that he needed to return to Europe with his ship. The Archbishop is alleged to have said: "If the ship goes down I could not live with myself if Fr Mangan is not on it."

During the war Fr Mangan had encouraged soldiers to spend some of their leave on pilgrimage in Lourdes. Towards the end of the conflict Fr Mangan had received permission to lead such a pilgrimage of soldiers but an increase in hostilities put the plan in abeyance. However, not long after peace was declared on the 11 November 1918 permission was granted for Fr Mangan to take a group comprising two officers and 20 men to Lourdes¹⁰. Consequently in January 1919: "Armed only with prayer books and hymnals, Fr Mangan led his soldier-pilgrims to the large Calvary on the heights overlooking the rock of Massabielle, from which they intended to begin the Stations of the Cross. Passing the Basilica, they met chaplains and soldiers from the American, Canadian and British armies, a French officer accompanied by two ladies and a party of American YMCA 'sightseers'. They joined the military group winding its way, as though drawn by a common impulse to the great Calvary, going bareheaded from station to station, singing "with lusty voices" the Litany of the Passion. At Lourdes, troops from many nations fraternised in a union of Catholic soldiers giving thanks for their salvation during the recent storm." Fr Mangan reported on the pilgrimage for "The Tribune" and later published a book on the event. Pilgrimages of Australian servicemen, and later servicewomen, to Lourdes were to continue for the next 70 years. They were initiated and inspired by Fr Mangan who returned to Australia in July 1919.

10 These were obviously a group who had not yet returned home after peace had been declared

PEACE OF A SORT

The soldiers returned from the war to resume life in a changed world. One of these was Fr Mangan who took up the reins once more in Sacred Heart parish. In January 1920, Archbishop Mannix made what was possibly his first visit to the parish when he opened a garden fete and welcomed Fr Mangan back in a speech indicating that the decision to join the army was William Mangan's own idea and not that of his Archbishop. "I am very glad that Fr Mangan is back from the war safe and sound with you again", Dr Mannix told parishioners. "He was long anxious to join the Australian boys at the front, and he did excellent work while he was abroad with them." With the welcome over, Dr Mannix made passing reference to the concerns of returning soldiers, a frequent theme in the secular press. But the Archbishop's main concern was with education. He stated: "Whatever may be said of justice to the soldiers, it looks hopeless enough at the moment to look for justice to Fr Mangan, or any other Australian priest who has charge of a Catholic school. The Catholic clergy has to try and put up schools at their own expense and at the expense of their people and that while [they] and [their] people are helping build and maintain the State schools".

After the war it would be the education issue that took first place in Dr Mannix's public statements. Irish Catholics had come to Australia from British-ruled Ireland where education had been inaccessible to many and Dr Mannix gave voice to the lingering sense of oppression and victimisation of the now Australian-Irish community against governments which, he argued, forced Catholics to pay double for their children's education. The implacable opposition of Australia's Catholic bishops to an education that was strictly secular meant that many Catholic parents had to make considerable sacrifices to send their children to Catholic schools. The burden for Catholics was substantial but their support for their Archbishop was unwavering. Wherever he went the Archbishop drew huge crowds and, according to "The Advocate", applause and cheers. Heckling and dissension, if they existed, were never reported. The hostility of the secular press towards Dr Mannix, however, had not eased with the cessation of the war but hostility was not a one-way street. "The Advocate" reported: "The Archbishop said that those papers misrepresented him and were anxious to get rid of him because, as they alleged, he stirred up strife.

The justice or injustice of Dr Mannix's views aside, the strength of his views on matters such as conscription and state aid and the lacerating nature of his advocacy made the archbishop a polarizing figure in Australian society. Those who opposed his opinions and who were alarmed by his readiness to dabble in politics regarded him as a disloyal and dangerous influence. But the more his opponents – and especially the press – derided him, the more popular Mannix became amongst the Catholic population. Certainly, the

archbishop gave his people a sense of pride and self-belief in an environment where anti-Catholic prejudice was not uncommon. But whether or not the injection of Irish anger into the Australian scene was counter-productive will long be argued. Catholic communities, mostly working class and burdened by the need to finance their own schools and churches, already existed in some isolation from the broader community in Australia. To a degree they were self-sufficient; they organised their own churches, schools and hospitals, their own tennis and football clubs, their own dances and social activities, in some cases their own job networks. Was Daniel Mannix simply defending his outnumbered flock? Or did his combative tongue actually make existing difficulties worse? Fifty years after the old man's death, these questions still provoke heated response.

Sacred Heart did have its own tennis club, dances and social activities but Fr Mangan was part of the broader society as well as being parish priest and consequently he provided a role model to his parishioners. His personal popularity and his military chaplaincy during the war gave him a high profile in the local community and he belonged to institutions that were not solely for Catholics. Membership of the Sandringham Men's Club alone ensured that influential people in the community rubbed shoulders with each other. In Sandringham, the divide between the, still small, Catholic community and others was not so noticeable as it was in other places.

Not long after his return the energetic Fr Mangan began to give some thought to the school and in 1920 preparations for the building of a new school began. In March 1920 the old school and land were sold for £1,150. Fr Mangan did not appear to have any of the difficulties faced by Fr Gough in buying land near the church and he purchased a block, measuring 80 feet by 140 feet, between the presbytery and the church for £7 a square foot. It was on this site that the new school was built. The foundation stone was laid in May 1920 by Archbishop Mannix just before he went overseas. On this occasion Fr Mangan warmly welcomed Dr Mannix to the parish and was at pains to assure the Archbishop, that despite his vitriolic relationship with the secular press, he was in Sandringham, appreciated by non-Catholics as well as Catholics. As reported, Fr Mangan said: "Not only Catholics, but non-Catholics, wished his Grace a prosperous voyage and safe return. (Applause.) That day one of the many thousands of non-Catholics who now realised that the Archbishop was one of the truest of Australians—(applause)—called and asked him [Fr Mangan] to accept the greeting to the Archbishop, and place it as a background to the platform. (Applause.) It read: "We wish you a safe and happy voyage and a quick return." (Applause.)"

This was to be an important trip for the Archbishop. He was to be refused permission to land in Ireland to visit his aging mother and spent most of his time in England. Even there he was not allowed visit dioceses where there were large numbers of Irish and where it was predicted he might incite trouble. All this was some time in the future, however, and in Sandringham his speech concerned not only education but also the importance of a fair day's work for a fair day's pay and the problem of profiteering. In the post-war period of prosperity, these were important issues for working Catholics. *Rerum Novarum*, the encyclical letter of Pope Leo XIII on the rights of workers, had been published 30 years earlier, in 1891, and it was to be a seminal letter for Catholics. The encyclical and his experience as parish priest of West Melbourne deeply affected Dr Mannix. Historian Dr Val Noone comments that in West Melbourne "for the only time

in his adult life, Mannix was living in an overwhelmingly working-class suburb, home to many railway workers, watersiders, carters, factory workers and women in domestic service and factory jobs, and families whose sons and husbands were dying at a fast rate in a distant war. His church was located between the Victoria Markets and the railway yards.” Given this background, Dr Mannix might have had something useful to say but readers of “The Sandringham News” were never to learn if this was so because the paper’s report was baffling: “Dr Mannix said that he fully believed the future of the Catholic Church and Australia depended on the Catholic schools .He knew of course how people were suffering from profiteering. If Australia was to prosper as God had intended that it should, there must be rearrangement on all sides. The question of profit and the duty of the capitalist would have to be reviewed on right lines and the working man does an honest day’s work for and honest day’s pay [sic]. The children of the state schools saluted the Union Jack on Australia Day why not put up the Union Jack [sic]”. Sometimes Dr Mannix’s disdain for the press was understandable.

The new school was completed in 1921 while Archbishop Mannix was still overseas so it was Fr Mangan’s old friend and former parish priest, Bishop McCarthy, by 1921 the bishop of Sandhurst, who blessed the school. The enrolment had jumped from 95 to 132 and according to “The Advocate” it was: “A fine brick school, with a seating capacity for 300 children and capable of accommodating 800 people when used as a hall, on a site adjacent to the church [it had] cost about £3000. The design is very pleasing.” There was much made about the modern nature of the building and Bishop McCarthy noted that it would be a great advantage for a child to spend some 35 hours a week in such a well-lighted and well-ventilated building. Mr Walter Toohey was, as usual, the chairman and guests included both the parish priest of Elsternwick, Fr Gough, and its former parish priest, the legendary Dean Carey. Dr J. J. O’Neill, who seconded the welcome, said the occasion: “was the greatest event in the history of the parish. Their pastor was to be complimented on looking so far ahead and for providing the parish with a school which should meet requirements for some time to come. It was now up to the people to do their best to liquidate the debt as quickly as possible.” Dr O’Neill was almost prophetic as indeed the school and hall would last, with few alterations, until the 1970s. As on any grand occasion, there was a collection, to help alleviate the debt. Although there had been heavy expenditure on the church, school grounds and presbytery, the parish was now, according to Fr Mangan, free of all debt. This was, of course, with the exception of the cost of the new school which was approximately £3000. Fr Mangan, however, did not seem to worry unduly about debt which always seemed to be paid off.

Mother Bonaventure Harrington was headmistress of the new school and superior of the convent. She had come to Sandringham after the war in 1919 and left at the end of 1921 but there seems to be no mention made of her during the blessing. To judge from the reports, much time and breath was spent welcoming visiting clergy, extolling the value of a Catholic education and expressing concern for the sacrifices made by parents but what did not rate mention were those who actually taught the children. In the words of Dr Mannix on another occasion: “the Sisters did not come into the public view.” It was a different era, the school was part of the parish, they were not separate

entities and there was no Catholic Education Office. The parish priest had ultimate authority over parish and the school.

Mother Bonaventure was replaced in 1922 by Mother Bernadette Kearney who was headmistress and superior until 1923. In 1924 Mother Xavier Brennan was appointed headmistress and superior of the convent and she remained until 1929. During this period, when school leaving age was 14 for most students, the State elementary course which led to the Merit Certificate was introduced at the school. Passing the Merit Certificate examination at the end of Grade VIII was important because it was the passport to a job or, for the fortunate few, further education at a college or convent.

That the parish was growing rapidly was evidenced at the Confirmation ceremony at the end of 1921, when the Archbishop confirmed 100 children and a number of adults. On occasions such as this the work of the nuns was appreciated. In his homily Dr Mannix said that: "the examination of the children by Fr Mangan gave very satisfactory results, reflecting much credit on the boys and girls and their teachers." Confirmation was not the time for speeches about education, rather Dr Mannix's concern was centred on the children and their spiritual lives: "His Grace pointed out the means of persevering in the graces received by a worthy reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation, [were] prayer, especially in time of temptation; assisting at Mass on Sundays and holidays of obligation, and reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist". In accordance with the practice of the time there were only two sponsors at Confirmation; Margaret Quin for the girls and Eric Soffa for the boys. They would be sponsors at a number of Confirmations at Sandringham throughout the decade.

In 1922 the assets of the parish were valued at £10,000 and the parish debt was £2700. In January there was another bazaar for the school and the Archbishop was back to open it. The school had been built to accommodate 300 children but in 1922, although there were about 250 Catholic families in the area, there were only 150 children enrolled in the school. In opening the bazaar, the Archbishop thanked Fr Mangan but stated that credit was also due to Fr Gough who laid the foundations of the present prosperity, secured the splendid site, and built the church. This was an intriguing statement because the only part of the site Fr Gough had been able to secure was the church. The rest had all been achieved without difficulty by Fr Mangan.

Catholic institutions in Melbourne were developing quickly. A number of secondary colleges and convents were well established and successfully preparing students for Leaving and Matriculation examinations. In 1918 both Newman and St Marys Colleges were established primarily to cater for the need of country students who were beginning to enter Melbourne University. By 1922 planning for the seminary at Werribee was under way. Fr Mangan had been the first president of the Newman Society and was connected with the establishment of the college. In his speech at the opening of the Sandringham fete in 1922, parishioner Matthew Maguire made reference to Newman College. But in comments that seemed somewhat dismissive, the Archbishop noted that: "He was satisfied that, as the years went by Catholic people would realise more and more that they had done the right and the wise thing in supporting the University College: [but] he was. even more keenly interested in establishment and endowment of the new college for the education of Victorian priests." It was, however, Fr Mangan's

Sacred Heart School, Sandringham.

CHILDREN'S

∞ Annual Concert ∞

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15th, 1924.

At 8 p.m.

- - Programme. - -

1. Pianoforte Solo "In Merry Society." Misses McCay, Hamment and Hirst.
2. Song "The Leprechaun." Junior Boys.
3. Euthymic Exercises Senior Girls.
4. Recitation "Too Generous." Master Desmond, Lenay, Griffiths.
5. Chorus "Off for the Holidays." Boys.
6. Song and Dance "See me dance the Polka." Dancing Class.
7. Recitation "What because of Them." Master F. Maguire and Miss P. Ashworth.
8. Dialogue "Lodgings for Single Ladies." Master R. Long and Miss K. Daly.
9. Dance "The Follies." Dancing Class.
10. Physical Culture.
11. Violin Solo "A Rustic Dance." Miss E. Hammond.

INTERVAL.

Operetta in 2 Acts.

... PRINCESS LUCILLA ...

King	Miss LeBoef.
Queen	Miss D. LePage.
Princess Lucilla	Miss A. Murray.
Zingara	Miss I. Bleazby.
Bluebell	Miss M. McCay.

Attendants, Fairies, etc.

Violin Solo Miss B. O'Connor.

Great expectations. The programme for the 1924 Sacred Heart school concert promised pianoforte and violin recitals followed by a two-act operetta.

final comment at the opening of this fete that sparked great interest: “[he] looked forward to the time when a church would be built at Hampton and at Black Rock”.

By 1924, planning for two new church-schools at St Marys, Hampton, and St Josephs, Black Rock, had begun. In both Sandringham and Hampton the population was increasing and with it the need for more schools. In 1924 the population of Hampton was more than 7000 and in Sandringham more than 8000. Hampton had a higher elementary school, later to be a high school, and a state school with an enrolment of 1000 students. There was an obvious need for more primary education places. In September 1924, “The Sandringham News” noted that plans had been passed for the erection of a new concrete church and school in Holyrood St, Hampton. The new church was to be built on a section of the Santa Margarita estate.

The Santa Margarita estate, a property originally owned by a famous Prussian priest Fr George Henry Backhaus, is an intriguing episode in the history not just of Catholics in Sandringham and Hampton but also of those in Bendigo¹¹. According to historian Mal Nolan, who has written extensively on the life of Fr Backhaus, the Prussian priest arrived in Australia in 1846 and after work in Sydney and Adelaide spent many years on the goldfields around Bendigo where he established St Kilian’s church. He was appointed vicar general of the new diocese of Sandhurst (Bendigo) in 1871 and in 1881 retired to live his final days on land he had bought in Hampton. This was the Santa Margarita estate which was bounded north-south by South Rd. and Holyrood St and east-west by The Avenue and Margarita St. The names of the streets in the estate point to the Backhaus connection: Margarita¹², Bendigo, Mc Carthy¹³, St Kilian¹⁴ and Backhaus. In 1882, only days before his death, Fr Backhaus insisted on returning to Bendigo to live out his final days. He died a wealthy man with extensive land holdings and a large amount of money in the bank. Settlement of his will and estate were extremely complicated. The Santa Margarita estate was not part of the will; instead it was transferred by Fr Backhaus to the bishops of Sandhurst, Ballarat and Melbourne on September 6, 1882, the day before his death, for the sum of 10 shillings. The property was to be held in trust by the bishops for the benefit of sick and retired priests. The trust was dissolved in 1909 and the ownership of the land was passed to Archbishop Carr who then transferred it to the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Sometime later this transfer was brought before the Supreme Court because it was considered to be an act that was designed to evade death duties. The court determined that while the transfer was valid, it was subject to probate duty. The land was leased as a dairy farm until it was divided into 109 building blocks and sold in 1921.

What happened to the £33,000 from the sale of the 109 blocks is a matter of much conjecture. There is no doubt that it was meant to be put aside for a priest’s retirement fund. There was strong suspicion, however, that it had gone toward payment for the new seminary at Werribee which had cost £78,000 and which had been bought on behalf of the three

11 Diocese of Sandhurst

12 The name of the mother of Fr Backhaus

13 Fr McCarthy was bishop of Sandhurst (Bendigo) however he had also been Fr Mangan’s first parish priest and he was a good friend of Fr Mangan.

14 Backhaus, a German missionary to predominantly Irish people, decided to dedicate the church he established in Bendigo to St Kilian, an early Irish missionary to Germany and one of the patron saints of Paderborn the birthplace of Fr Backhaus.

Victorian dioceses in 1922. Many years later, well after he had left Sandringham, Fr Mangan was to come into serious conflict with Dr Mannix over this money. By then the Infirm Priests Sustenance Society was almost bankrupt and Fr Mangan demanded to know what had become of the money from the sale of the Backhaus estate. Dr Mannix was furious and subjected Fr Mangan to a withering attack in front of 200 priests.

The site for the new Hampton church was fenced by a massive bluestone and iron railing fence which was of interesting historical value as it had originally surrounded Moorabbin House in Were St, Brighton Beach, at one time the seaside residence of Archbishop Goold. The foundation stone for the new church, was laid on 2 November 1924. As usual, it was a big celebration. The Mayor was present as were Dr J.J. O’Neil, Messrs M. Maguire, W. Harris, P. J. Duggan, Oliver, Soffa, Bertotto and Quin. Mr Maguire’s son Frank, a man who was also to play an important part at Sacred Heart Sandringham, was one of the altar boys at the Mass. As usual the Archbishop spoke at length about education. There was, however, another curious reference - to banks. The Archbishop was almost eulogistic in his praise of the banks and the support they gave to the building of Catholic schools and churches “But, if credit must be given where it was due, Catholics should acknowledge a deep debt of gratitude to the banks that were always ready to advance the money for the building of Catholic institutions. The banks felt that the security of the Catholic Church was beyond question, and they advanced the money required without hesitation. The banks were quite safe in their dealings with the Catholic Church; but, nevertheless, he desired to acknowledge with gratitude the consideration which the banks had always shown for the growing needs of the Catholic people”.

The total cost of the Hampton building was £8000 and the debt of the parish¹⁵ was increasing greatly. In January there was yet another bazaar. “The Sandringham News” reported that: “attendance has been encouraging, and excellent business has resulted. The stalls are tastefully displayed, and the scene is bright and pleasing”. There was the usual group of stalls run by the wives and/or daughters of many of the men who were organising the events.

Bazaar 1925

Fancy stall (Mrs T. Quinn [sic], assisted by Mesdames C. Ralph, McKay, Oliver and Mathieson, and Miss O’Callaghan); Children’s Stall (Mesdames Le Boeuf, and O’Brien); a Sweets Stall (Misses Berger and Oliver); and a Sandringham Stall (Mrs M. Quin, Misses Lillis, Spence and Tuck, assisted by Mesdames Newlands and Feiss, Misses Maguire, Newlands, Weight and Bertotto).

Fetes, garden parties and bazaars would be important fund-raising functions for the Catholics of Sandringham, as to Catholic communities everywhere, right into the new millennium. The 1920s, however, were the time of a phenomenon that has long since disappeared: the Queen Carnival. It was a time of peace and relative prosperity and Queen Carnivals were grand affairs. There would be four or five queens, each named after a suburb (Queen of Hampton, Queen of Black Rock, etc), a season (Spring, Autumn), or an entity (Queen of Hearts, Queen of Children). The queens and their supporters would hold euchre parties, dances and concerts to raise money for the event. Bazaars were still held but in this period their purpose was often to support the queens for the Queen Carnival. The final event would be a ball for which each queen would dress in a ball gown and would have an

15 St Marys was still in the parish of Sandringham

accompanying retinue. At the ball, the winning queen, (the one who had raised the most money), would be announced amid much pageantry.

A report of the 1925 Queen Carnival from the local newspaper gives a graphic account of Queen carnivals. It is a long report but illustrates both in its detail and its length the importance of such events in the community.

“A new record in Sandringham for spectacular display was made in the town hall on Monday evening when three queens, with their retinues, attended and the coronation of the Queen of Hampton took place. The important ceremony saw the conclusion of the Queen carnival, held to augment the funds for building the new St Marys church in Holyrood St, Hampton.

“The town hall was packed and the building fairly shook when the final voting was announced, so intense was the interest and enthusiasm. As each queen slowly advanced through the crowded hall, with heralds, trainbearers, and maids of honour, a great burst of cheering and applause marked the progress of the procession to the dais where the enthronement took place.

“A musical programme as regal as the occasion preceded the coronation ceremonies. Miss Cormack’s orchestra played the overture with verve and precision. Miss Winnie Poole’s recitals were of a high standard.

“Whilst the pageant was dominated by femininity, an important position was held by the Lord High Chancellor, in black with a white ruffle and wig. He made the announcements as Master of Ceremonies, assisted by trumpeter and page and was more or less interfered [sic] with by the Court Jester, a hard working individual who made light of the occasion, seriously and most energetically.

“The Queen of Hampton was Miss Grange, the Queen of Children Miss Kathleen Le Boeuf and the Queen of Sandringham Miss Lillis. The Chancellor declared Miss Grange to be the Queen of Queens as elected by the people of the parish and formally introduced her to the audience.

“Miss Grange was formally enrobed in the red and ermine coronation robes by her maids of honour and kneeling, was crowned by Dr Mannix, and took her place and sceptre on the throne provided. The successful queen wore white crepe de chine embroidered with silver and her attendants wore georgette of different colours with silver combs. The Queen of Children and her attendants wore old gold and the Queen of Sandringham wore white satin with a purple robe and train and the same colour scheme was adopted by her attendants.”

The Quins were central to the organisation of the Queen Carnivals as they were to all the bazaars and fetes during this period. Sometime after the 1925 carnival, there was a gathering of 120 people at which Fr Mangan particularly thanked the Quins for all their work

In January 1925 “The Sandringham News” reported that the new church school at Hampton, to be known as St Marys, was near completion. It was to have accommodation for 200 children and 400 worshippers. Des Keary¹⁶, in his short memoir, recalls that the first Mass at St Marys was on Christmas Day 1924 but it was blessed and officially opened by the Bishop of Goulburn on 22 January 1925¹⁷. The church at Hampton had cost £4234

16 Father of current parishioner Dominic Keary and who, with a number of siblings, was among the first enrolments at St Mary’s.

17 The Archbishop was unavailable. He was taking a break from duties because of the recent death of his mother.

and, of this amount, £1517/5 had been paid off, leaving a debt of £2716/5/. The school opened in 1925 and, as with the school at Sandringham, the Presentation nuns travelled daily from Gardenvale to Hampton.

St Marys became a separate parish in 1926 but first there was quite some debate about the boundaries. Fr Dan Coakley, the first parish priest of Hampton, wanted, in the ever colourful words of Fr Mangan: “a ridiculous boundary up to Bridge St where it has never even entered into people’s heads to think of going to Hampton to church.” The boundary issue was settled as being Linacre Rd to Sargood St to David St and along David St to the east. Fr Mangan was even a little perturbed about the Linacre Rd boundary as he stated there were a number of Catholics from Linacre Rd whom he would have to encourage to attend St Marys. The issue of boundaries was, of course, about maximising revenue. Fr Coakley wanted a broader boundary because he needed to pay off debt. After its severance from Sandringham, the parish of Hampton had a debt of £1172/15/6 which, in addition to the cost of the new church, meant a total debt of £3889. In addition to this, Fr Coakley had bought a house for the presbytery and he complained that the weekly collections rarely raised more than £7 which did not even meet the interest payments.

The separation of St. Marys from the parish of Sandringham coincided with the 20th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone for the Sacred Heart church. To mark this anniversary, Archbishop Mannix blessed a set of Australian-made stained glass windows for the church. One of the windows was dedicated to the honour of Margaret and Michael Quin for their 20 years of care for the church, particularly their care of the sanctuary and sacristy. Margaret Quin had been, amongst her multitudinous roles, the sacristan for the church since it was blessed in 1906 and would continue to be so for many more years. To celebrate the anniversary and the blessing of the windows, a function was held at the Quin’s home and a presentation made to Fr Mangan. At this function Mr Quin spoke in eulogistic terms of Fr Mangan’s untiring zeal and ready sympathy in all parish work and a Mr Mathieson also spoke of Fr Mangan’s kindness to all.

While the church was built quite quickly at Hampton, things progressed very slowly at Black Rock. The original impetus to build a church at Black Rock had come from within the Mentone parish. On 16 July 1924 a meeting to discuss establishment of a church was held at “Mrs Long’s Tea Rooms”. At this meeting Fr O’Sullivan, the parish priest at Mentone, stated that he had bought land at a cost of £1075/15/7 and that there would be a working bee, to build fencing, and then a carnival. But further development proceeded slowly. Unlike the boundaries for the new church at Hampton, which had been entirely within what had become the City of Sandringham, the boundaries of Black Rock parish lay partly in Sandringham and partly within the City of Mentone. During summer, when there were numerous holiday makers, Mass was celebrated at the home of Mr and Mrs Murphy but for the rest of the year most Black Rock residents came to Sandringham.

There was much dispute about the fate of the Black Rock church¹⁸. In September 1926 one of the administrators from the Cathedral, Fr Lonergan, wrote to Mentone’s parish priest Fr O’Sullivan saying that the Archbishop wanted to know the approximate Roman Catholic population of Black Rock, the number of Roman Catholic children at state schools in Black Rock, the current Mass arrangements at Black Rock, the immediate prospects of construction of either school or church or both, and whether

18 This information is based on material from the archives at the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission.

Black Rock should be worked from Mentone or Sandringham. In his reply, Fr O'Sullivan stated that the total Roman Catholic population was 121. Of this group; there were 74 adults of whom "54 are practical Catholics and 20 never attend Mass and probably would not attend if the church were at their door" Of the 47 children, 17 were under school age and 30 were at school. Of the 30 at school 15 were at Sacred Heart, one was at Christian Brothers, St Kilda, and 14 were at Black Rock State school. Of the 14 children at Black Rock state school Fr O'Sullivan stated: "9 of these were too young to travel to Sacred Heart, 3 were attending Sacred Heart but they had to be withdrawn for bad conduct because they were unmanageable for the sisters, and the parents of the other 2 are worthless Catholics". Fr O'Sullivan was, at this stage, firmly of the opinion that Black Rock should be under the parish of Sandringham. "As the numbers are so small at Black Rock and we are fully loaded with debt in the Mentone parish, I cannot see any immediate prospect of building at Black Rock. Even if we had a church we could not give them Mass on Sundays as we must have 2 Masses at Mentone and one each at Mordialloc and Chelsea. Nearly all the people from Black Rock who go to Mass at all go to Sandringham." Mentone parish was also responsible for a benevolent asylum which was, according to Fr O'Sullivan, an extra strain on resources. It was certainly easier for most people from Black Rock to get to Sandringham than Mentone; a tram left Black Rock at 9.40 on Sundays and arrived at Sandringham in time for 10 am Mass. Fr O'Sullivan had tried to make arrangements with a bus proprietor for 11 am Mass but it was poorly patronised and finally cancelled.

In the middle of the discussion about Black Rock, there were further celebrations in Sandringham. On New Year's Day 1927, a Holy Day of Obligation which ensured the presence of most parishioners, Fr Mangan celebrated his silver jubilee. The local newspaper commented: "Rev Fr Mangan of Sandringham celebrated the Silver Jubilee of his ordination. An offering from the parishioners in aid of the parish debt amounted to £500; this was presented to Fr Mangan after Mass by Messers W. J. Toohey, E. Soffa and M. Quin". A donation of £500 in 1927 was a sizeable sum and showed the popularity of Fr Mangan. It was also a significant contribution towards the parish debt.

The extent of the parish however, was still a matter of debate. It would seem that Fr O'Sullivan's views had changed and he now wanted to keep Black Rock (perhaps the "worthless" Catholics had moved). In March 1927 a letter from Fr Lonergan asked Fr Mangan what he was intending to do about Black Rock. In part, Fr Mangan's reply to this letter read: "Should your inquiry mean that there may be a disposition not to interrupt Fr O'Sullivan in his once coveted possession of Black Rock I am able to say that so far no public statement has been made; in fact Fr O'Sullivan seemed unaware that he had definitely parted with this end of the parish when I told him of your letter yesterday." In a less acerbic tone Fr Mangan did state that at the time of the receipt of Fr Lonergan's letter he was waiting for a financial statement and a meeting with the people before doing anything about the new church.

A month later there was an even more concerned letter from Fr Mangan to Fr Lonergan, a letter which illustrates the liveliness of Fr Mangan's personality. "Re Black Rock, the situation between Fr O'Sullivan and myself seems to be approaching the stage of comedy. If you don't step in at headquarters and do something I should not be surprised if on the

Mentone side it takes the shape of a Tragedy. Tonight Fr O'Sullivan informed me that he was informed at St Patrick's that Black Rock had not been handed over to me, and this within the last few days. I informed him that I had received a note asking actually what steps I had taken re a church. Fr O'Sullivan tells me that he has plans prepared. I informed him that I had an interview with His Grace re buying additional land and had done so with his consent. Fr O'Sullivan tells me he has not relinquished jurisdiction over sick calls, marriages, etc, to say nothing of the dues now fast rolling in. I have been collecting some, doing baptisms, visiting, etc. I would be glad to hear something official. I haven't the slightest wish in the matter myself. If I am asked to build the church I will do it. I have tried to persuade Fr O'Sullivan he is foolish to lose such a promising part of his parish. I have discovered the official population of Black Rock municipality is; 4900 permanent, 10,000 summer time. I have already about 78 names, as much as Hampton." After this it would seem Fr O'Sullivan seemed content that Black Rock be administered from Sandringham although there would be, as ever, some further debate about parish boundaries.

Once all this was settled Fr Mangan began to build the church at Black Rock but that was also to encounter some problems. It had been only three years since Dr Mannix had said "The banks felt that the security of the Catholic Church was beyond question" but no sooner had Fr Mangan taken responsibility for the new Black Rock church than the bank suddenly refused a loan for the building. It is not known why the loan was refused but fortunately Black Rock parishioners Mr and Mrs Owen Clinton stepped forward and lent £1,000 so that work could proceed. Once the loan from the Clintons was in place, the banks reversed their earlier ruling and approved a loan. The money to the Clintons needed to be repaid in 1928, however, because Mr Clinton became unwell. Fr Mangan took immediate steps to ensure the loan was repaid and the money securely reinvested by Mrs Clinton. Towards the end of 1927 building at Black Rock was under way with a promise that there would be Mass on Christmas Day. St. Josephs was formally opened on 22 April 1928.

Black Rock now had a church/school but it was to have some issues finding a priest to say Mass at the church and there weren't any teachers for the school. Historian Kathleen Kane notes: "Because of the success of the Presentation schools at Sandringham and Hampton, Mother Gertrude at Star of the Sea found herself the recipient of eager letters from the parishioners at Black Rock for similar facilities." But Black Rock did not have the advantage of direct public transport from Gardenvale. If the nuns were to come from Gardenvale, they would need to catch a train to Sandringham, a tram to Black Rock, and then walk to the school. Even with the faster electric trains that had begun running, with much fanfare, on the Sandringham line in 1919, it would be a long trip to undertake twice daily. Kathleen Kane again: "Mother Gertrude was practical and she considered the distance from Star of the Sea to Sandringham quite sufficient; to go to Black Rock the sisters would have had to change into the railway tram... Mother Gertrude refused the requests until a convent could be established in the district."

HARD TIMES

Mother Gertrude could not resist the pressure for long because Fr Mangan solved the problem of teachers by establishing a convent. In 1929 he purchased a guesthouse on the corner of Fernhill and Sandringham Roads for £1950, thus ensuring a residence for the nuns at Sandringham, Hampton and Black Rock. After the “considerable” sum of £830 had been spent on the convent for fencing, repairs, alterations and furnishings the nuns moved into the convent for the start of the 1929 school year. On 21 February 1929 Mother Xavier, the superior of the convent and the headmistress of Sacred Heart School, wrote to the Council of Public Education to report that the Presentation Sisters from the convent in Sandringham had opened St Josephs School at Black Rock with 56 day pupils from infants to Grade VIII. The first principal at St Josephs Black Rock was Mother Teresita Morris who was there for two years.

It was with much pomp and ceremony that the Sandringham convent was officially opened in May 1929. Archbishop Mannix blessed the convent at the event which was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress of Sandringham and the Attorney General, the Honourable Ian MacFarlane and Mrs MacFarlane. It was a grand affair. There were photos in “The Advocate” (at a time when photos were still used sparingly), there was much bunting and many speeches.

The opening of a convent, for those teaching in the schools and with the Attorney General present, was judged by the ecclesiastical authorities, to be an excellent occasion on which to have a discussion on education. According to Fr Martin from Mentone, there were four State schools in Sandringham, which had cost £40,000 to build and to which Catholic people had, through their taxes, contributed £8000. Fr Martin noted that 3000 children attended these four schools and the cost was £21,000 annually, Catholics paying £4000 of this. But the invited guests wanted to steer away from the vexed question of education funding. The Attorney General said: “the cause was a worthy one and he was glad to assist in any way he could. He was interested in the figures given by Fr Martin, and in the learned address given by his Grace the Archbishop, but education was not controlled by him in his Ministerial capacity. The vexed question of the Education Act was not likely to be considered by the present parliament and he did not wish to be drawn at that stage into expressing any opinion. Later if the question should come up he would take a definite attitude”.

The Attorney General was more interested in discussing the work of the sisters. He was warm in his praise of the nuns who were: “doing a noble and self-sacrificing work.” Dr Mannix also spoke eloquently on the work of the nuns even though he was critical of other groups. He stated that: “Unlike some women, they did not wish to get into the pulpit, but were content to devote their lives to educational, hospital, and orphanage work.”

Nevertheless the Archbishop was adamant that: “The Sisters were not forgotten by the Catholic people, who had responded generously to the appeal in aid of the convent fund”. It might have been that the nuns were not forgotten but if they were present on the day, and one must suppose they were, they were not seated on the dais. And, if we are to judge from “The Advocate” report, it seems they were not officially welcomed.

The work of the nuns was certainly “noble and self-sacrificing” but both Dr Mannix and Fr Martin glossed over the fact that the nuns were not receiving any recompense at all for their work in schools. According to Fr Martin, it was because Catholics were double-taxed that they could not give adequate remuneration for the teachers in Catholic schools. Nevertheless the Church “tried to provide comfortable homes for the Sisters and Brothers.” He was not the only one that day to claim that the nuns’ new home was spacious and comfortable. Just 3 years later, however, there were 10 sisters in the Sandringham community and extra accommodation was so urgently needed that five extra rooms and a veranda were added on to the convent by parishioners. Whether the convent was comfortable was also debatable. Many present day parishioners remember it as anything but comfortable. The roof had so many leaks that when it rained buckets were deployed everywhere. There were no separate bedrooms so most of the nuns slept on the covered veranda, their beds separated only by thin curtains and there was no heating. Although the convent was in poor condition and there may not have been much in the convent cupboards, the nuns were often required to entertain invited guests after important gatherings at the church. One parishioner (now deceased) in writing her memories, recalls the carpet from her family lounge room being pulled up and the good china and silver being borrowed and taken to the convent on a number of occasions.

The original community of nuns comprised the superior Mother Xavier Brennan, and Sisters Imelda Hogan, Columba Roulent, Teresita Morris, Alberta Kearney, Kevin Trehy and Paul Gallivan who was the music teacher. On 15 March, the first Mass at the convent was celebrated on an improvised altar. But tragedy was to strike because the next day Irish-born Sr Alberta who was only 22 years old became ill and died on the Feast of St Joseph, four days later. Not long after the convent blessing Fr Mangan went overseas again and in his absence Fr James Clifford looked after the parish. Kathleen Kane notes: “Fr Clifford, as acting parish priest, gave the Presentation Sisters much help and encouragement in the difficult days. Mr McPhillips presented an altar, parishioners stocked the pantry; Dr Garnet Leary¹⁹ gave a statue of Our Lady to the Community Room in memory of Sr Alberta” What is meant by the term “difficult days” is unclear. It would appear that while the nuns had accommodation of a sort not much thought had been given to how they would live or what they would eat. In the early days, the main meal of the day for the nuns was at midday. In Sandringham this was probably prepared by one of the lay nuns. In Hampton, however, Sr Brenda Keary (the sister of Des Keary) has clear memories of school parents being rostered to prepare a weekday meal and a mother arriving each day with lunch for the nuns.

Meanwhile Fr Mangan’s overseas trip was as the Catholic chaplain of a pilgrimage of both Catholics and non-Catholics to the war graves of World War I organised by the Imperial War Graves Commission. Fr Mangan had a commitment to both serving

19 Dr Thomas Garnet Leary was probably the best known doctor in the district. He was extremely generous and involved in numerous community activities. He financed the band rotunda on the Sandringham foreshore and donated to many causes. He was not a Catholic.

and past soldiers and in particular, he encouraged people to pray for dead soldiers and their families. It was a commitment which had led him into conflict with the Catholic hierarchy some years before. In 1924, Dr O'Farrell, the Bishop of Bathurst in NSW, had criticised the basis of Anzac Day ceremonies and in characteristic form Fr Mangan had not remained silent. He criticised Dr O'Farrell in the Catholic press for being theologically unsound. Catholics, he wrote, had a special motive for observing Anzac Day because they believed in praying for the dead whereas other denominations did not. The next year, among the reports of Anzac Day church services, "The Sandringham News", which was not given to reporting on sermons from the Catholic church, reported: "The Rev Fr Mangan, M.A., a Roman Catholic padre at the front, speaking at Sacred Heart, said they had a special reason for keeping Anzac Day in as much as they were bound by the principles of their faith to a commemoration and prayers of intercession for the dead."

The pilgrimage included a visit to Jerusalem about which Fr Mangan was later to reflect: "There on the slopes of Mount Olivet and facing the very scenes of the death and agony of Our Lord, were the graves of dead soldiers from Australia. The scene as the pilgrims stood around in deepest reverence was one of the most affecting character. Quite close at hand were Calvary and Gethsemane, and not far away Jerusalem and other sacred spots." Fr Mangan wanted to celebrate Mass at Gallipoli but in 1929 ceremonies in Turkey commemorating the Gallipoli landing, popular as they are today, were almost unimaginable and the long distances to the various cemeteries made this impossible. He did, however, offer Mass for the dead as the ship on which the pilgrimage was travelling reached the Dardanelles, the captain slowing the ship as it passed the scenes of the Gallipoli fighting.²⁰ When he returned, Fr Mangan paid tribute to "the magnificent work" of the War Graves Commission in its efforts to bury the dead in France, Flanders and Gallipoli, which he regarded as a stupendous work with vast and numerous cemeteries.

Fr Mangan's return was celebrated. There was a reception to welcome him and to farewell Fr Clifford, with musical items and speeches led by Mr Toohey who expressed the pleasure of the people at the good work done by their parting guest. Similarly, Mr Maguire said: "they were indebted to Fr Clifford for his zeal. They were deeply attached to their old pastor, Fr Mangan, and, were delighted to see him back again and in the best of health and spirits". Yet by the time Fr Mangan arrived home in February 1930, the world had changed dramatically. The catastrophic stock market crash of 1929 had far-reaching consequences and Sandringham was not immune. Fortunately, as Fr Mangan took up the reins of the parish again, much of the initial building had been completed although the additions to the convent were still to be made. As always there was the issue of debt although, even as the depression deepened, it was not unmanageable. However, the balls, bazaars and queen ceremonies seemed to disappear almost overnight.

It was a terrible time for everyone. Sandringham may have fared a little better than other places, especially the inner suburbs, because there were still many market gardeners who were more self-sufficient and were able to manage a little better than others. At that time, present-day parishioner Jim Andrews lived on the other side of

²⁰ The narrow strait in northwestern Turkey connecting the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara.

Catholic Gazette

SACRED HEART PARISH, SANDRINGHAM, AND ST. JOSEPH'S, BLACK ROCK.

VOL. I.

JULY, 1930.

No. 2.

CHURCH NOTICES

SUNDAY MASSES.—Sacred Heart, Sandringham, 7.30 and 10; St. Joseph's, Black Rock, 9.

WEEK DAY MASSES.—Sacred Heart Church, 7 a.m. (Saturdays excepted).

CONFESSIONS.—Sacred Heart Church, 7.30 p.m., Saturday.

Confessions will also be heard at any time in the Church by appointment or after evening devotions or daily Mass.

Children's confessions Thursday before First Friday at 11 a.m.

Adults' confessions on Thursday before First Friday at 7.30 p.m.

BAPTISMS and MARRIAGES by appointment at any time suitable.

HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION.

Feast of Assumption of B.V.M., Friday, August 15. Masses: Sacred Heart Church, 7 and 9. Black Rock as announced on the previous Sunday.

CHURCH COLLECTORS.

The following gentlemen will oblige if they would act as Collectors in the Church during the quarter (July, August, September):—

7.30 Mass: Mr. Macuire, Mr. Soffa, Mr. Tuck, Mr. W. Kelly. Additional: Mr. C. Burke and Mr. J. J. Monde.

10 o'clock Mass: Mr. Skehan, Mr. Duschler, Mr. McPhillips, Mr. J. Murphy. Additional: Mr. Mass and Mr. H. Desmond.

BENEDICTION SERVICE: Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock.
Mr. Troubridge and Mr. Shannon.

Mr. M. Quinn, who has so faithfully taken charge of collections for so many years, wishes, owing to temporary ill-health, to be relieved for the present. In his place Mr. Skehan will act as secretary for the collectors. If any collector is unable to attend at any Mass appointed he will oblige if he would inform the secretary so that the additional collector for that Mass may be notified.

WOMEN'S SACRED HEART SODALITY.—Holy Communion First Sunday of month.

MEN'S SACRED HEART SODALITY.—Holy Communion Second Sunday of month.

CHILDREN OF MARY.—Holy Communion Third Sunday in month.

CHILDREN OF MARY'S MEETING, Fourth Sunday in month.

C.Y.M.S. meets every Monday night.

H.A.C.B.S. Meets every alternate Thursday. (Sec., Mr. A. Duschler, McLaughlin avenue.)

ALTAR SOCIETY meets on last Sunday of month. (Secretary, Miss Lyhane.)

BUILDING UNION COLLECTORS call on parishioners on second Sunday of the month. (Collectors: Messrs. Tuck, Duschler, Skehan, Desmond and Ryan.)

W. B. MANGAN, P.P.: M.A.
Phone: X6159.

Patronise our Advertisers—They support us

Busy schedule. The cover of the parish magazine in 1930 lists many devotions, practices and societies that are no longer part of Australian parish life.

Melbourne but his grandparents lived in Sandringham. His description of life in the depression is illustrative. "In the depression we had one aunt in permanent employment, Auntie Dutch, she was the only one in the whole family with employment. My Dad was unemployed for 2 ½ years. Once a month Aunty Dutch would send my mother a postal note for 2/6 which covered the fares down here (to Sandringham). That would be a Sunday excursion fare and there would be change from that. My Mum and Dad and I would come down and we would get a decent feed. There were always vegetables. There were rabbits. My grandmother always had a cow, its name was Shiela. The cow changed but the name never did. There was always plenty of milk, butter and eggs."

As the Depression deepened Fr Mangan resumed his interest in journalism with the publication of a parish periodical entitled: "The Catholic Gazette; Sacred Heart Parish, Sandringham and St Josephs Black Rock"²¹. The hope was that "The Gazette" would help improve the financial organisation and resources of the parish. Five hundred copies of "The Gazette" were printed monthly and distributed free to every household. It is unclear how many editions of "The Gazette" were produced but only two copies survive. One of these details the ordinary life of the parish in 1930. Sunday Masses at Sacred Heart were at 7.30 am and 10 am and at St Josephs 9 am. Masses were early because those receiving communion had to fast from midnight. Weekday Masses, except on Saturday, were at 7am at Sacred Heart. These masses were also early because morning Mass was well attended and workers needed to get to work. For most parishioners regular, and by today's standards frequent, Confession was considered normal. In an age when most people did not have cars and were often at home on Saturday night, Confession was held at Sacred Heart at 7.30 pm on Saturdays. The First Friday of the month was an important devotion and "The Gazette" listed children's Confession, on the Thursday before First Friday at 11am and adult Confession on the same evening at 7.30pm. Mass times for the all-important sodalities were also listed. The women's Sacred Heart Sodality was on the first Sunday of the month, the men's Holy Name Sodality on the second Sunday and Children of Mary, the fourth Sunday. Other than the sodalities there were three main church groups: the Catholic Young Men's Society (CYMS), which met every Monday night, the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society (HACBS) which met every alternate Thursday and the Altar Society which met on the last Sunday of the month. The church collectors for each quarter were nominated, much like the counters for each week are listed in the present day weekly bulletin. There were even collectors at Benediction which was held on Sundays at 4pm.

The financial pressure on families, especially large families, in the middle of the Great Depression must have been substantial. The Building Union collectors (Messers Tuck, Duscher, Skehan, Desmond and Ryan) called on parishioners on the second Sunday each month and Building Union donation lists were then published in "The Gazette". "In the Building Union lists we have endeavoured to give the names of all adults as recorded in the latest electoral registers," "The Gazette" explained helpfully. "Even where no contribution appears next to a name we feel sure it will come eventually. Even a sixpence a month will be gratefully acknowledged in the Gazette." Then followed a list of streets, with those who contributed and how much they had given. There was also a Convent Fund with a list of subscribers and the amounts given. These were so-called

21 Hereafter referred to as "The Gazette".

“voluntary” contributions to the convent debt by parents whose children attended the school. There was also a Black Rock Building Union.

It is obvious from “The Gazette” that problems for St Josephs were not solved and it seems that Fr Mangan was having difficulty getting a priest to say Mass each week. Edition No. 2 of “The Gazette” stated: “Owing to the exceptional circumstances of the district and the difficulty of the parish priest in meeting the congregation every Sunday, Father Mangan has invited the following ladies and gentlemen to assist him on a permanent church committee. Vice Presidents Mr J Allan, Mr O Clinton, and Mr Hancock snr; Church Secretaries Mr Stirling and Mr Taylor; Committee Mrs Stirling, Mrs Clinton, Mrs Hancock, Mrs Lally, Misses Newlands, McTeigue, Allen and Cullinane, Messrs Thompson, Holton, Neylan”.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the difficulties in obtaining a regular supply priest Fr Mangan was keen that Black Rock be made a separate parish. In January 1931 he wrote to the Archbishop²² suggesting this. By this stage the permanent population was 10,000. In January there was a congregation of 400 and the collection raised was £8-£9. In winter, however, the congregation fell to about 100 and the collection was about £2. Fr Mangan suggested that the new parish consist of the municipality of Black Rock and Beaumaris and that portion of Cheltenham and Highett which at that stage belonged to Sandringham. In his letter, he noted: “There are large state schools of 400-500 children at Black Rock and Cheltenham. I suggest the whole might be placed under the care of an energetic priest, young and active who will work from the church school at Black Rock as a pivot. It is idle to say this big population is intensely Protestant. They are poor people in part, with hundreds of families hidden in the large areas of ti-tree scrub.”

Even in the middle of the Depression the fund-raising continued, albeit not on the earlier scale and mainly in the form of house parties and euchre nights rather than balls and Queen Carnivals. In 1932, a Mr Moss, of Royal Avenue, held a house party at which a record sum for the parish was raised. At a small party held at the presbytery to show the parish's appreciation of his efforts and to encourage others to do the same, Fr Mangan referred to Mr Moss as: “one of Father's best workers”. As thanks for his work Mr Moss was presented with a pair of inscribed silver vases. The reason for this unusual gesture was that Mr Moss was not a Catholic and yet, even in these difficult times had supported Fr Mangan and the Catholic Church. The significance of the event is perhaps underscored by the prominence it was given in “The Advocate”.

As the Depression continued, the best most people could do was to survive and send their children to school. There was, however, some more building at the church in 1935 with the construction of the choir gallery. This addition had been donated by the Misses Lyhane in the memory of their late sister, Teresa, who had died in 1934. Little is known about Teresa Lyhane, except that she had been president of the Sacred Heart Sodality and secretary of the Altar Society. At all Masses on the Sunday after she died, Fr Mangan paid a tribute to her memory, saying she represented the highest type of Catholic parishioner. According to the eulogy at her funeral, Miss Lyhane was distinguished by her devotion to the Church and the “Holy Faith”. Archbishop Mannix blessed and opened the new choir gallery in January in 1935 and the church was finally complete.

In January 1936, just as life was becoming a little easier and before the tumult of another war, news came of the death of King George V. It was headline news. Dr Mannix sent a note

22 This information is based on material from the archives of the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission.

of condolence to all Catholic churches and memorial services were held in all churches in Sandringham, including a Mass at Sacred Heart. The death of a monarch was significant and also of significance was the reporting of the Sacred Heart service in the local newspaper. The next week, however, came news of even greater importance for Sacred Heart: Fr Mangan was to be transferred to the parish of Balaclava.

It was indeed, a sad day when Fr Mangan left Sandringham. It was also a day when the parish that Fr Mangan had built gathered together. Even "The Sandringham News" noted that: "Fr Mangan has been in Sandringham longer than any other pastor in the city. A bright and cheery personality endeared him to his congregation and secured him a welcome among the denominational pastors of the city, and he will be long remembered by the citizens of Sandringham for his straightforward and tolerant outlook in local affairs and a helping hand in the cause of charity".

The parish farewell was held in a crowded school hall and included a musical programme as well as speeches. Mr Soffa presided. The dual purpose of the evening was both to welcome the new parish priest, Fr Duffy and farewell Fr Mangan. Mr Claude Balcombe of the Hibernian Society welcomed Fr Duffy but it was the farewell which was the main point of the evening. From these farewell speeches emerged a picture of the parish as it was in 1936. Mr Maguire spoke on behalf of the sodalities and Tennis Club saying it was: "hard to believe Fr Mangan was there as a guest and they should have to bid him a regretful farewell." Mr Hehir spoke on behalf of the parishioners and said: "it was an old Catholic custom to express appreciation of the services of a priest on his removal to another parish. The response had been generous and it looked as if the people had discovered that goods lost were valued most". "Fr Mangan might have his faults - all priests have, we all have - and we might have differed with Fr Mangan (no one more so than myself) but we agreed to differ and we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that no priest could have been more attentive to his duties than Fr Mangan". Mr Hehir then intimated that it was important that the new parish priest, Fr Duffy, did what the parish wanted. Mr Hehir's speech seemed to cause some unrest and Fr Gorry, from Black Rock, said he thought Mr Hehir had created an uneasy atmosphere. However, Fr Mangan was not at all perturbed. He responded: "I am delighted to find the parish has an orator in Mr Hehir. He is a welcome nugget of gold and I never suspected it. I remember two little boys serving on the altar they are now distinguished Jesuits, sons of Mr Hehir, but they are nothing like the old man." On being presented with a wireless console and a case of pipes, Fr Mangan was overcome. He said: "I do not deserve all the credit; I was only a feeble instrument. Your friendship and generous support in many arduous undertakings I shall never forget. Now I am like the old Cerberus towed to rest. Fr Duffy is coming to a parish, the inhabitants of which are the best of the Catholic people around Melbourne." He was especially grateful to his fellow priests for attending, also Mr Maguire, Dr Morton, Mr Moss²³ and others on the platform.²⁴ It was, however, Fr Mangan's tributes to his close confidantes that showed what an important role these men and women played in the development of the parish. He praised Margaret and Michael Quin, noting that Mrs Quin: "was still doing the work she had been doing for 25 years before I came to the parish, helping with everything" He acknowledged the support of Matthew Maguire and Eric Soffa: "Mr Maguire

23 Mr Moss was the non-Catholic who had been such a support to Fr Mangan especially during the depth of the Depression.

24 The group did not include Walter Toohey who had died by 1936.

was honoured by the King on two occasions with the Imperial Service Order and the Order of the British Empire but none was more thoroughly deserved than as a Catholic among the highest. His help to me in the parish I will never forget. Then there is Mr Soffa, we know him as deputy chairman of the local bench. I have been sentenced to eternal banishment but he is like Peter Pan – never seems to grow old. His service consists of one long series of kindly acts and generous help.”

The new parish priest, Fr Gavan Duffy, was the son of a former Chief Justice of Australia and brother of Mr Justice Charles Duffy who was a Supreme Court judge. His early education had been at Xavier and later in Paris and at university in Freiburg in Germany. Decades later Archbishop Knox described him as a refined and gentle soul, with an embracing charity. For some reason, however, Fr Duffy stayed only until June 1936. The reasons for the brevity of his stay are not known. There was certainly nothing in “The Advocate” by way of explanation but that was not uncommon; the movement of priests rarely rated more than a line or two in a small paragraph on appointments. Neither was there any mention of Fr Duffy’s departure in the local newspaper. Fr Duffy was replaced in the middle of 1936 by Fr Leo Hartnett.



The ciborium given by the parish to Fr William Mangan when he went as chaplain to Australian troops in World War I.

The first Sacred Heart church on the corner of Sandringham and Fernhill Roads. Built in 1906, the church preceded the establishment of a parish in Sandringham by eight years.





Clockwise from left.



Unsuitable habits. Presentation nun Sister Kostka O'Keefe in the habit of the Presentation Order during the 1930s. With its heavy fabric, long skirt, starched wimple and elaborate collar piece, the habit must have been uncomfortable during Australian summers.

White veils for the girls, white socks for the boys. Sacred Heart school's 1934 First Communicants prepare to tuck in to their much anticipated First Communion breakfast.

Going, going, gone! The tower of the old Sacred Heart church crashes to the ground during demolition work in late 1970s.

The foundation stone of the old church and the plaque commemorating the blessing of the new church.





To market, to market ... or perhaps to dinner. A Sandringham visitor assists in transporting a pig during a Sacred Heart YCW expedition to Papua-New Guinea in the 1970s. The helpful visitor is believed to be either Judy Eade (nee Egan) or Margaret Monaghan (nee Purcell). The name of the pig is also uncertain.



Members of the parish pilgrimage to Europe look for a suitable lunch spot in Sienna during the parish pilgrimage of 2003.



The Memorial Garden at the back of Sacred Heart church. Established in 2000, this is a place of rest where parishioners can come to remember their loved ones. Plaques on the wall commemorate the dead.

INTO ANOTHER WAR

Fr Hartnett was to be at Sandringham for the next 26 years, through a polio epidemic, a world war and the post-war expansion of the parish. Sandringham was growing and with it the number of Catholics. Sacred Heart was becoming a much bigger and more self-contained parish. Fr Hartnett was to oversee the building of a more substantial convent and a new school and the development of a kindergarten. Devotional life from the late 1930s to the 1960s centred on the Mass, Confession, Benediction and participation in the sodalities while parish life centred on the school, balls, fetes and sport. For the Catholics of Sandringham all focus was on the new parish priest. Former parishioner John Buck has memories of his Sandringham boyhood: “Fr Hartnett was the parish priest and a sterner man I had not encountered. I often recall Fr Hartnett turning from the altar to tell someone, anyone, to ‘Shut the door’. His pause and glare at late comers to Mass was a tonic for future punctuality.”

Fr Hartnett was ordained to the priesthood in 1920 and then served in the parishes of Mansfield, Yarraville and Altona as assistant priest. He had been an assistant priest at Mentone when Fr Mangan was embroiled in discussions over Black Rock and from there he was appointed parish priest of Wonthaggi in 1929. Fr Hartnett was a big man with a booming voice and an imposing presence. He was very much a priest of the times. Peter Morris, a current parishioner who was a boy during Fr Hartnett’s time recalls: “If there were children misbehaving at Mass he would stop and ask who that child belonged to.” He also had a car which perhaps said something about his personality. A present day Sandringham resident who was a small girl during Fr Hartnett’s early years in the parish recalls: “Father Hartnett drove around in a very big car and his car had the first personalised number plates I had ever seen: LH000.” All that makes him sound like a fearsome character but Fr Hartnett was much loved by many of his parishioners. Kath Leech remembers: “Fr Hartnett was my favourite. He was a lovely man. Bill [her husband] became a Catholic and Fr Hartnett instructed him every Sunday morning.” At his funeral Fr Hartnett was remembered as a determined person, a man of prayer and of deep personal faith. It was stated that he was a priest who: “represented the Church well and dutifully at all civic and other social functions and was esteemed by officials of the community.” This may well have been true but Fr Hartnett had a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards some civic occasions, such as Anzac Day, and this was to cause some adverse comment in the community.

On Anzac Day 1937 a cenotaph commemorating those who had died in World War I was dedicated in Sandringham. Only a few weeks before the dedication, Dr Mannix had opened a fete at St Josephs. The fete was also attended by the Mayor of Sandringham, Councillor Barnes, who endeared himself to the Archbishop with his

praise of Catholic schools and of Catholic people for the sacrifices they made to give religious education to their children. "The News" reported that: "No previous mayor of Sandringham has won so much public commendation from Archbishop Mannix on the occasion of visits to this city as that bestowed on Cr Barnes." "The News" then included in its copy the report from "The Advocate." Councillor Barnes stated that "as mayor of Sandringham he had arranged an Anzac Day commemoration at which all denominations could attend. With the co-operation of Fr Hartnett and the members of the council he had succeeded in drawing up a programme that would meet with general approval." Archbishop Mannix responded: "From time to time the method of celebration had been a source of irritation to the Catholic people. The mayor recognised that a different procedure was necessary. He congratulated the mayor and all associated with him in arranging a celebration in which all could participate."

What happened to upset this early attempt at ecumenism is unclear but it seems that the agreement between the Mayor and Fr Hartnett was short-lived. Just two weeks after the fete and only a few days before Anzac Day, the metropolitan paper, "The Argus" reported that a controversy had arisen in Sandringham. According to "The Argus" Councillor Barnes had sought the co-operation of the Ministers Fraternal and Fr Hartnett but "objection was taken to the inclusion of a prayer to be offered by the Mayor, and Father Hartnett intimated that if the prayer is included in the service Roman Catholics will be unable to take part." This was the end of the matter. The cenotaph was dedicated but there was no mention of Fr Hartnett's presence or, was there any mention of the controversy in the local paper.

A word often used to describe Fr Hartnett was stern and it was a time that needed a priest of "stern stuff". Fr Hartnett arrived at the end of the Great Depression when life was still difficult for most Australians. The parish debt was large and Fr Hartnett was forever concerned with collections and the seasonal dues. He had a reputation for being "careful" with money. On one occasion, it is said, Fr Hartnett went to a party and rang the hostess next day saying he had lost a £5 note and asking whether she had found it. There are priests today who were students when Fr Hartnett was alive and who still refer to him as "Breadline". Allegedly, this was because he did not always pay his curates, claiming that he was "on the breadline". Parishes were responsible for the upkeep of curates and, if there was a convent, of nuns teaching in the parish. It was up to the parish priest to pay them. There was only one curate while Fr Hartnett was at Sacred Heart but there was a convent and the sisters were also meant to receive a stipend. Whether the nuns at Sacred Heart received this stipend is not known but there are reports that the only parish money the Sandringham nuns received was a proportion of the takings from the parish fete and the money from the end of year concert.

The parish income consisted of the (single) collection at Sunday Mass and the Christmas and Easter dues but there were also other funds including the Building Union and the Convent Fund. From time to time at Sunday Mass, Fr Hartnett would demand "a silent collection". Parishioner Margaret O'Toole (nee McTeigue) remembers that a shoe box would be used for these collections. There was to be nothing other than a note to be given, no "tray bits" (threepences) as Fr Hartnett liked to say. No sixpences, shillings or florins either. The smallest note in circulation was 10 shillings and in 1940,

before equal pay for women and when £7 was the average male weekly wage for clerical workers (less for manual workers), 10 shillings was a lot of money. Each season, Fr Hartnett would read the given dues aloud at Sunday Mass. The list would be read in descending order, from those who had the donated most to those who had donated least. The next week the printed list (and amounts) would be handed out. Next to the names of those who given nothing would be a row of dots. Names of those contributing to various appeals, such as the Direct Appeal in 1957, were also published (with the amount given) in the parish magazine.

An early development, under the guidance of Fr Hartnett, was the establishment in 1936 of a conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The records for the first year of the conference are lost but it is known that the first president was James G. Meere and the secretary was probably Joe O’Kelly, who was to be the secretary of the Sandringham conference for the next 50 years. The earliest extant records are for 1940 and these show that there were 10 active members; the president was Mr T Dea, the vice presidents were F. Burke and J. McCarthy, and the probation officer was Mr Curthoys (who was also the local station master and a vital member of the parish). During that year 100 articles of clothing, four blankets and two pairs of boots were given to needy people and there were visits to an old men’s home in Cheltenham, probationary work and prison visits.

In 1937, Fr Hartnett’s second year in the parish, the world-wide polio epidemic hit Sandringham. The fear such an epidemic brought to communities in the 1930s is probably unimaginable now that polio has been eradicated. At the height of the epidemic Sr Bernadette Keaney, the school headmistress, closed Sacred Heart school for nine weeks²⁵. By the time the school reopened, the annual visit of the school inspector was looming. The inspector’s visit was always much anticipated as it was imperative to prove that the secular education provided in the Catholic school was as good as, if not better than, that provided by the state. Consequently, a nine-week closure was a serious setback and once the children were back at school, all activities, other than academic studies, ceased. When the inspectors arrived they were impressed that, despite the closure, all the classes were where they should be.

The dreaded inspector visits are remembered by many. “The state inspectors came to check on whether the education standards were high enough and to check whether the Catholic system was as good as the state system. We did fractions differently from the state. They did division differently. They worked on improper fractions and they brought everything to improper fractions and to one common denominator. Whereas the Catholic system got rid of the whole numbers first then you worked on the fractions. I did it quite well. The nun who was teaching us asked me to demonstrate it to the inspectors and they were quite impressed. I think they had not seen that before,” (parishioner Peter Morris)

In 1937 a new parish magazine, “The Credo” was introduced. The last magazine “The Gazette” had apparently ceased publication either just before or just after Fr Mangan left the parish. There are few copies of “The Credo” left but like “The Gazette” it published financial information pertaining to the Christmas and Easter dues and other contributions. It also published articles about the faith and about the associations and sodalities.

²⁵ Sr Brenda Keary who was a student at St Marys at this time remembers that St Marys was also closed and it is presumed that St Josephs suffered the same fate.

On the 1st of September 1939 the world was again thrown into a world war. "At school we all had to wear a rubber (eraser) hanging around our necks, and when the air raid sirens went off, put it between our teeth, leave the classroom and lie under the huge pine tree beside the school. I don't know when the other children went to the air raid shelter as I was one of the children who lived not far away and had to ride my bike home. I think this was all practice." (Sybil Kennedy nee Collings). In her history of Sacred Heart parish, Gay Monahan describes the parish during the war. "During World War II air raid shelters were built by some of the parishioners in the convent grounds. People banded together and knitted for the soldiers. Food parcels were organised and despatched. The children at the school practised drills in the school grounds. Frank Burke²⁶ [at that time an enlisted soldier] remembers Mother Bernadette sending him a prayer book which he kept in his left-hand pocket for the duration of the war." There were air raid shelters in a number of places. Parishioner Joan Grimmer (nee Derrick) remembers one in her back yard and the one in the convent was well known.

Once again Archbishop Mannix was sceptical about the war. His main concerns, as always, were Ireland and Australia and he did not consider Australia to be in any danger. In a speech reported in "The Advocate" he said: "It is almost impossible for anybody to talk at present without talking about the war. I am a man of peace and I feel out of place in talking about war. I am more concerned, if possible, about what is going to be the fate of Australia and of the world after the war. The war, of course, has to be won, and it will be won, I do hope and believe. I have been optimistic enough to think that in this great turmoil, two places would be saved from actual invasion. One of these is Ireland, and the other is Australia'. I am still of the same opinion, that the leader of the Irish people did the right thing.[Ireland had recently declared neutrality.] The only thing for them in the circumstances in trying to preserve their country from the horrors and ravages of this dreadful war. The contribution they could make to it would be negligible in any case. I am glad that, so far at any rate, Ireland has been spared. And then we come to Australia. I deplore very much, the articles appearing in the press sometimes, and what is said in other places, leading to the belief that we are in absolute and imminent danger of actual invasion. I am optimistic, again, enough to hope that the Pacific is big enough for all nations to work out their own destiny without having war in Australia. I am not at all sure that we are not sometimes guilty of provocation when we talk of some of our neighbours in the Pacific as if they are ready to pounce on Australia at any moment. I hope that they are not. I, of course, am quite as anxious as anyone else that we in Australia should be prepared for anybody who comes, no matter from what quarter."

There seemed to be in the Archbishop's speech an assumption that war was being peddled and that there was no necessity for alarm. But this was a very different war from the geographically distant World War I when it was assumed by many that the sons of the empire had to assist. This was a war that was physically much closer than the last and, from the beginning, affecting daily life. It was also a different society. Australia was less close to the Empire than it had been (although many still called Britain 'home') and while most Catholics were of Irish background fewer were Irish-born. In Sandringham, as in suburbs and towns everywhere, many men, Catholic and

26 Frank Burke had grown up in the parish and in later years was to be the caretaker and sacristan.

non Catholic alike, went to fight. There was much greater community involvement in this war and this included involvement of the Catholic community.

The following short piece, from a 1940 edition of "The Credo", exhorted parishioners to keep up the letters and prayers for those who were serving overseas.

"Your letters will cheer the men. Your prayers will obtain strength for them – strength to be "good boys" and good soldiers.

A dying soldier will benefit by your prayers.

A wounded soldier will gain patience and fortitude.

A well soldier, or sailor, or airman will obtain strength to resist evil.

Your prayers are very powerful. Make good use of them."

The years 1939 to 1945 not only brought war but also the loss of many of those who had built and developed parish and civic life in Sandringham. In 1939, one of "the parish pioneers" Michael Quin, died in Moira Hospital, in Sandringham. The other "pioneer", his wife Margaret Quin, died at home in 1942. From the time the church was built, there was not a fete, bazaar, queen carnival or ball for which Margaret Quin, also the church sacristan, was not a major organizer and the Quin home had been the place for many parish parties, particularly for gatherings after the balls. Even "The Advocate", which usually commented only on deaths of priests and some nuns, wrote at length of the death of Margaret Quin: "She was a Catholic leader of the truest type. The name of Catholic Action was unknown to many when, over thirty years ago, she and her late husband fostered the infant parish of Sandringham, then attended from St. James, Brighton. Even the grounds, the trees and shrubs, the exterior and interior tidiness of the church and altar, the financial needs, the comfort and convenience of the visiting, and later of the resident, priests were her ever-increasing concern. All who knew the deceased lady will agree that she was a worker of the greatest value. In the Sacred Heart Sodality, in the Altar Society, she was the leader and organiser. In civic affairs, the local city council placed charitable appeals and benevolent relief in her capable and trusted hands. She was a lady of the highest intelligence and character as well as of the most profound faith and piety. In civic circles her influence was recognised as being for the good of the community, and to the credit of the Church she represented".

In 1940, another parish stalwart, Dr J.J. O'Neill, died. Dr O'Neill had practised medicine in Sandringham since 1913. His influence in both church and civic events had been significant. He was a captain with the Australian Medical Corps in World War I and had been a foundation member and first president of the Sandringham Returned Soldiers Association. Dr O'Neill was instrumental in the erection of the Memorial Hall in Waltham St for which he was a trustee until the time of his death. He had been a Justice of the Peace and had served on many church committees.

Then in March 1945, towards the end of the war, Eric Soffa died. In his farewell speech on leaving Sandringham, Fr Mangan had thanked Eric Soffa for his countless gifts of generous service and kindly acts. It is for these kindly acts that Eric Soffa is remembered, even today, by those who were at school at the time. Kath Leech remembers: "Mr Soffa was an amazing man. He was the newsagent. He used to take us kids out. He would hire a truck and all us kids would pile in and we wouldn't go far but we would have a picnic and we thought it was wonderful." Sr Rose Derrick, sister of parishioner Joan Grimmer, remembers

going on school picnics and Mr Soffa standing by the bus and giving all the children bags of lollies to take on the picnic. Born in New Zealand of an English mother and German father in 1869, Eric Soffa came to Australia in 1887 as an 18 year-old. He lived with his wife and daughter Ida (later Ida Cuddigan) in a house opposite the church which was demolished in 2013 for the rebuilding of Fernhill hostel. It seems that Eric Soffa was not baptised a Catholic but converted. His name consistently appears in reported church gatherings and he was a great supporter of Fr Mangan. He was the local newsagent, a Justice of the Peace (J.P.) and deputy chair of the local bench. There were many reports in the local paper on Mr Soffa's dispensation of justice. At a Sandringham Council meeting after his death, it was stated that Eric Soffa was to the fore in practically every movement for the benefit of the district or its citizens, and had taken the keenest interest in fostering civic pride. One councillor said that during the Depression Mr Soffa had shouldered the whole unemployment problem for the council. He had devoted his time so consistently to unemployment matters that many were under the impression he was a paid member of council staff.

With the loss of these parish leaders came the loss also of many of the connections they had developed with the broader community. As the suburb grew so too did the Catholic population and with that growth it was more able to cater for the social and religious needs of its own. For many Catholics in Sandringham, much of everyday life revolved around the church. One of the remaining editions of "The Credo", dated April 1945, gives a detailed picture of life for Catholics in Sandringham towards the end of the war. There were changes to subscriptions for the Holy Name Sodality, a note about Easter offerings and instructions about the novena for April (in honour of St Joseph, patron of the Universal Church). There were notes about the coming fete, a report on a parish wedding, and an outline of church rules for receiving communion over Easter. Generally "The Credo" took a more instructional line than its forerunner "The Gazette". There was an article on respect for the dead, instructing boys "to raise their hats [for a passing funeral]...and girls to stand for a moment and also offer a prayer for the dead". The same article stated that cremation was a pagan practice. Another short piece instructed people not to ridicule the religion of others. This piece ended with the instruction "At present there is great warfare against the True Faith. Learn all you can about your Holy Faith, so that you will be able to explain it to others."

The significant events in church life were Confirmations, funerals and weddings. Weddings were especially memorable. Margaret O'Toole (nee McTeigue) was bridesmaid for her uncle Frank (son of Matthew Maguire) just before the end of the war. Hers is a graphic account of a Catholic wedding in the parish during the wartime austerity: "I was bridesmaid for my uncle Frank at his wedding (Gwladys Ashworth and Frank Maguire) on St Patrick's Day 1945, and I was really, really excited. I was about 9 or 10. I had the most beautiful dress. It was war time and the bridesmaid's dress had been made out of material from one of my mother's old gowns and was cut down. It was my first long frock and it was beautiful. It had bows, and my ballet slippers were covered with the same material and there were matching bows on my shoes. I had the most beautiful bouquet of flowers. I had never had a bouquet ever and I thought it was marvellous. After the wedding we went over to the convent, that grey horrible building²⁷, to see the nuns. Then my aunt gave the nuns her bouquet for the altar. I was

27 The old convent.

horrified. Well, I was not going to give anyone my bouquet so I hid it behind my back and I could not get out of there quickly enough. No-one was going to get my flowers. I had never had anything like that in my life." A bride who had been a Child of Mary would walk down the aisle wearing a special blue silk or satin cloak over her wedding dress. The Children of Mary, all in their blue cloaks, would form a guard of honour for the bride. As the bride arrived at the altar, the president of the Children of Mary would remove the blue cloak because, in the words of parishioner Margaret Cartwright: "I wasn't a Child of Mary, anymore; I was nearly a woman!"

Weddings were great celebrations but they could also be occasions of great stress. Marriages where both partners were Catholic were celebrated with Nuptial Mass, usually at 9am on a Saturday. The Mass would be early because if one was to receive communion one had to fast from midnight. Even the bride could not eat breakfast, "Not even a sip of water, that would be a sin" (Margaret Cartwright). However, if one party was not a Catholic the ceremony would be simpler and usually carried out not in front of the altar but in the sacristy. Often non-Catholics would not attend the Catholic church just as Catholics were often cautioned about attending any ceremonies in a non-Catholic church. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the wedding party would go to the convent for morning tea. The nuns, of course, would be delighted to see their past students, and there would be great rejoicing. Most of the brides, and many of the grooms, had attended school at Sacred Heart and were connected to the sisters. The nuns would not attend the weddings of any of their past students, Nuptial Mass or not. Sister Rose Derrick was not allowed go to the Mass (let alone the wedding breakfast) of her sister Joan. At the conclusion of morning tea, as commented above, the bride would then give her bouquet to the nuns to be put on the altar for Mass the next day.

Parish life was not just about church celebrations. There was, as there always had been, time to celebrate and socialise. Even in the middle of the war years the annual fetes were eagerly awaited and are still remembered. Long gone were the years when Sandringham was a seaside holiday destination with fetes held in the high visitor season of January. By the 1940s the fetes were held in May or June. It might be supposed that the weather would, at times, have been inclement but there was no mention of this in reports in "The Advocate". These were not the bazaars of the earlier decades when politicians would be invited. The Mayor was usually present although not in 1943, when his absence was described as unavoidable. Nor were these fetes week-long events, although they did go well into the night, often concluding with a dance. The fetes remained home-grown affairs, with an emphasis on what could be made or cooked or scoured from cupboards for the jumble stall. The sums raised by fetes were regularly reported in "The Advocate". The 1943 fete set a record for Sandringham said "The Advocate": "Preceded by a number of card afternoons and house parties, conducted by the stallholders, the one-day fete yielded the extraordinary sum of £730, exceeding last year's result, £507."

Fetes were for the whole parish, men, women and children, old and young. But for the adults, especially the young adults, there were balls and still the occasional Queen Carnival. In 1939, just before the war and as the country was climbing out of the Depression, there seemed to be a sense of optimism and in the Memorial Hall in Sandringham despite

inclement weather, 200 guests attended the Sacred Heart parish ball. “The Advocate” report was glowing: “The function was an extraordinary success, and reflects great credit on the ball committee, working under the presidency of Mr M. Maguire, Mrs H. Shirley and Mr A. McVeigh, as joint hon. secretaries, and the vice-president (Mr J. O’Connor), were untiring in their efforts to make the ball successful. Guests were received by the president and Mrs Maguire. During the evening there was an exhibition of modern ballroom dancing by Mr John Robertson, of Hampton, and partner.”

1939 Ball

The debutantes and their partners were Miss B. Octigan (Mr F. MacDonald), Miss M. Stevens (Mr A. Octigan), Miss E. Williams (Mr J. Chapman), Miss M. Doig (Mr J. Gillan), Miss M. Abel (Mr L. Hatherley), Miss E. Gordon (Mr F. Duscher), Miss M. Gordon (Mr J. Bertotto), Miss Ethel Burke (Mr P. Corcoran), Miss Evelyn Burke (Mr C. Fossett), Miss R. Borelli (Mr E. Jacobe), Miss J. Kershaw (Mr R. Kershaw), and Miss G. Hattam (Mr M. Smith).

In 1940 another Queen Carnival, which featured four queens, was held in the Memorial Hall. Sister Marie O’Kelly, the daughter of Joe O’Kelly remembers being part of one queen’s retinue. The balls continued despite the war and that of 1944 seemed to surpass all expectations. “The Advocate” report was gushing: “This ball will be long remembered as being the most successful in the history of the Parish. Last year great things were accomplished, but this year the success was even greater. Thirty cars brought patrons from near and distant suburbs. Les Ford’s Melody Band did justice to the occasion, and received appreciative applause from the dancers. The supper, always a feature of the parish ball, was again supplied by the ladies’ supper committee in superb style. The net result was £138/17/-, an all-time record”.

Ball 1944

President,; Mr George Cams, secretaries; Messrs. J. Meade and H. J. Curthoys. Ticket committee; Mesdames F. Reed and W. Henderson, Misses Kath. Burke, C. Child. D. and E. Kenny and J. Neale. The supper committee; Mesdames P. Leonard, W. Burke, W. Sullivan, Tolra. Curthoys, Drew, Connell, Wishart, Hewitt and Hagart.

After the 1944 triumph there seemed to be a lull for about five years because there is no record of another ball until 1949 when one was held in September. But there were other fund raisers in operation, not all of them strictly legal. One of these, which was particularly popular around the time of the war, was a highest and lowest football competition. Parishioners would buy an envelope inside which were printed the names of two VFL teams. If one team kicked the highest score and the other team the lowest in that Saturday’s round of matches, the holder of that ticket won a modest cash prize. Because it was technically a gambling game, it was not strictly legal but that did not concern most participants. Jim Andrews remembers: “I used to sell over a hundred envelopes a week at the firm where I worked. I would also sell after church on Sunday. I think the envelopes were 6d each, and you won 5 quid. We had a parishioner who was a magistrate and after Mass this morning I said: ‘Oh Mr O’Connor would you like to buy a ticket?’ He looked at me sourly and said: ‘I

could have you in court over this.’ Let’s face it I should have got a kick in the bum for being cheeky. He had to uphold the law.”

For children, in particular, life revolved around the parish. They went to church on Sunday and Monday to Friday they attended the parish school. At Sacred Heart school Mother Bernadette left in 1939 and between 1940 and 1945 Mother Cecilia Sullivan was headmistress and superior of the convent. There are many memories of the school during the 1940s. Late parishioner Sybil Kennedy recalled: “My memories of school are different from today’s era. No camps, no combined school sports and only a little rounders (with a pot stick) and girls’ basketball (now called netball). The boys did play football against other schools on the Sandringham Football Ground. The school money (fee) was one shilling and six pence each week. I really did enjoy the set of the Victorian school readers and [the monthly] School Papers, the Monday tuck shop where it was sixpence for a pie and threepence for a drink. Climbing all the trees along Sandringham Road was fun and being in the choir upstairs in the old church singing for a wedding.

“Our special treat near the end of the year was a picnic at Ferntree Gully National Park. We could climb to the lookout at the top of the slippery muddy track (now called the Kokoda Trail of 1,000 Steps). We all enjoyed the raspberry cordial the nuns provided for us. All of these memories were during the war years of the 1940s, when those of our fathers who were not away in the Army, Navy or Air Force, dug air raid shelters for us in the convent garden. As we grew out of our uniforms they could not be replaced because of the material shortage and ration coupons. As I grew older we then had Sunday night dances at the school. This was where my husband and I met when we were 16.”

The war ended on 15 August 1945, a day that many Australians of a certain age still remember vividly. Peter Morris is one: “I remember the end of the war. It was the Feast of the Assumption,²⁸ we [his sister and himself] both had the day off and Mum took us into town to see a film or something. We were on our way home and the train pulled into Richmond station and someone was running up and down yelling ‘The war’s over, The war’s over, The war’s over’. So we got off the train and caught the next train back into the city to meet Dad, because he worked in the city. I remember the whole of Flinders St was just a mass of people absolutely packed. You couldn’t have driven a car through. The trams were stopped. Not a tram in sight, it was just people all yelling and cheering and hugging and kissing each other. It was just marvellous, I will never forget it.”

28 The Feast of the Assumption was a Holy Day of Obligation and a holiday for Catholic schools

CHOCOLATES, BRIDE DOLLS AND BOTTLES OF WINE

With the end of the war came a return to a more normal life. One of the early issues was the air raid shelter in the nuns' garden which kept flooding. Peter Morris remembers the first attempt to fix this: "I'm in Grade 6 and Sister came and said, 'I want a group of boys to come and drain the air raid shelter'. It (the shelter) was just a simple thing and it was always filled with water and mosquitoes. Sister got a hose and filled it with water from the tap and put it in the trench. She told us to take the other end of the hose down the hill, hoping to make a siphon. But, of course, Grade 6 boys didn't understand the concept of a siphon and by the time we got down there and put the hose down, nothing happened. So then we started with buckets. But as soon as we tipped the bucket out, the water ran back in and by the end of the day we were absolutely sodden. I'm certain our mothers didn't believe us, that we helped the nuns drain the air raid shelter. Anyway I think the nuns realised it was too much for Grade 6 boys and they got some men to do it."

Ask many people what they remember about the church in the early post-war years and they will answer: "Mr Crehan leading the Holy Name Society." The men of the sodality would half-fill the old church: "right up to the confessionals with the black and white shield emblems at the end of each pew", recalls one respondent, and Michael Crehan's huge voice would lead the men singing "We Stand for God". The Sacred Heart Sodality was just as important for the women of the parish. Margaret O'Toole, remembers staying with her grandparents. "I was at boarding school and I used to come and stay with my grandparents [the Maguires]. My grandmother was in the Sacred Heart Sodality. They all had their own seats. Miss Bertotto, a little lady who often wore violet, sat on the end and then there was Grandma and I don't know who sat next to her. But it was difficult, because there was no room for me and I had to squeeze in past Miss Bertotto. I have a feeling that Miss Bertotto was in charge of taking up an offering. I think that was why she was on the end." Miss Bertotto was Nina (christened Archangelina) Bertotto, one of the daughters of Angelo Bertotto, who lived in Sandringham until her death in 1955.

Everyone was encouraged to be involved in the life of the church. The girls and younger women of the parish joined the Children of Mary while the young boys had an opportunity to become altar boys. These were always in demand since there were three Masses on Sundays and between four and six altar boys were rostered at each Mass. They were also required for daily Mass and Benediction on Sunday afternoons. The most sought after jobs for altar boys were funerals and weddings, for which they would be paid. Some former altar boys remember the time well; waiting in the cold until Fr Hartnett opened the church for 7 am Mass, or the day one of the high windows of the

church blew in and Fr. Hartnett, who normally preached a lengthy sermon, finishing Mass in 15 minutes. They remember also Fr Hartnett's wrath, which was often intense and sometimes deserved. Current parishioner Gerard Ryan remembers one altar boy becoming over-enthusiastic with the thurible. This was not of itself remarkable since it was the job of altar boys to swing the thurible energetically at Benediction. On this occasion, however, the altar boy swung so enthusiastically that an ember flew into the cupboard where the altar boys' vestments were kept. When wisps of smoke began emanating from the cupboard consternation ensued among the altar boys who rushed from the altar to look for the offending ember. Eventually it was tracked down and extinguished. But Fr Hartnett was not happy, especially when he discovered that eight of the surplices had sustained burn holes.

The high feast days in the church's life were particularly important. Parishioner Joan Derrick (nee Grimmer) remembers: "I always loved Easter in the old church. We used to have petals, rose petals, which you would throw on Holy Thursday in a little procession. The children would have these special baskets, and they would put them away from year to year, and they had rose petals in them and you would throw them down as the priest came into Mass." Sister Therese Ryan also has an early memory of Easter: "One of my earliest memories was that we would strew flowers and we would kiss the petals before strewing the . . . and I remember the little baskets had beautiful great long handles and were so pretty. It was a privilege to be a petal strewer."

While the big feast days were important it was the everyday church events that glued the parish community to the church. It was crucial that children were inculcated in the practice of their religion early so attendance at Mass was important as was Confession. Every month the children from the school would file into church for confession, sitting in the pews until it was their turn to confess their sins: "I do remember one girl who never wanted to go and she would say: 'you go next' and then she would move one more child down the line. I don't know if she had to go in the end." (Sr Gail Ryan). Nothing interfered with Sunday Benediction and Fr Hartnett was known to order the tennis players off the parish court so that they would attend.

Recreational life, in particular sport, for many Catholics centred on the parish, perhaps more so than it had in earlier times when the parish was much smaller. The parish tennis courts were used frequently and were the hub of much social activity. Football was a Young Christian Workers (YCW) activity and was a focal point for many of the young men of the parish. In the late 1950s basketball (now known as netball) was introduced for the girls.

It was always important to keep the young of the parish strongly attached to their church community. Sport was one way to achieve this. Membership of the YCW was another. Membership of the YCW was only for young men but a number of Sandringham girls were involved in the girls' equivalent, the National Catholic Girls Movement (NCGM). For a period there was also a boys' club which was, for some, an alternative to the Boy Scouts. The boys' club would meet at the school and Gerard Ryan recalls: "It was terrific. We met at the school and we would have boxing led by Mr Godfrey who lived in Hightett Road. Tony Ongarello, a boxer, taught us boxing and we would clear up the school and play games. I got hurt one night because we only had so many [boxing] gloves." Some of the parish boys

did join the Boy Scouts but for many it was not encouraged because the scouts were not a Catholic organisation. As time went on parents became less concerned about this issue. One former parishioner remembered that her oldest brother had not been allowed to join the scouts but a younger brother was.

The one aspect of recreational life that did not centre on the church was the weekly visit to the Roxy²⁹. The Roxy was an important institution in Sandringham and Peter Morris is not the only one to recall the weekly Friday night visits: "We had a permanent weekly booking. Of course if the film was not suitable or you didn't want to see it, you just contacted the theatre and said that you would not need the tickets this week, and they would sell them to someone else." The managers of the Roxy apparently thought the theatre was important to the Catholic community because they ran large advertisements in "The Credo".

Never far below the surface, however, were concerns about the parish debt and finances. A stern notice in "The Credo" in 1957 reminding parishioners there was an obligation in justice for all those in receipt of an income to make a contribution to the Christmas dues underscored this concern. The seasonal dues "were the priest's income and the priest was as entitled to this as a worker was to his wage." Parents of younger people in receipt of an income were exhorted to ensure their working children paid their dues. Whether the nuns were also entitled to an income was not mentioned. In addition to the weekly collection and the dues, there was, as mentioned earlier, also a Building Union fund and a "voluntary" Convent Fund and, of course, the school fees. These were dutifully brought to school every Monday by the eldest child in each family. The envelopes were collected and two of the older children would take the money over to Fr Hartnett. The financial pressure on families was substantial.

After the war the school population had exploded, classes were large and the buildings were groaning: "There were so many young children starting school that the classes were enormous and composite. We were using a wooden building which started almost behind the original church and went along Fernhill Road in front of the parish lounge. It comprised a long hall used as a lunch room, three class rooms with folding partitions and a stage at the southern end. (John Buck) The long school hall was divided into classrooms with a platform at one end which had a cellar underneath. "The cellar used to have water in it. We used to play under there. We really weren't allowed down there but we were down there one day and when Mother Rupert came in [to the upstairs classroom] she knew we were there. She said loudly that she was going to lock up the school in 10 minutes. That was our cue to go home." (Sr Gail Ryan). In the playground a favoured play spot was the big cyprus hedge. Girls and boys were not allowed to play with each other and like many playgrounds of the time it was divided into two spaces, one for the boys and a smaller area for the girls. John Buck remembers life in the playground: "In those days the playground was divided (where the rows of bricks split the present car park). The girls skipped and played hopscotch on the south section whilst the rougher games were at the northern end. The first presbytery was separated from the playground by a paling and cyclone wire fence." Debbie Erikson (daughter of Sybil Kennedy) has an interesting recollection of the playground. Certainly she remembers the division but she also remembers the gender inequity of that division.

29 The Roxy was the Sandringham picture theatre at the foot of Bay Rd. It has been replaced by more erudite institutions such as the electoral office and the National Bank teller machine.

“The boys had the larger of the playgrounds where they engaged in active games while the girls’ playground was also for the small children in the preparatory and first grades.” At playtime the children would receive (although not necessarily drink) the milk that arrived each morning and often sat in the sun till lunch time. “We were also given free milk in small bottles. Sometimes it became rank if left in crates in the sun. Sometimes someone had some flavouring to add. The silver tops were great to wrap over a penny and rub with a pencil to make them look like two bob.” (John Buck) In summer, however, there were often special treats. “On very hot days, we had an afternoon break as well as a morning one. The Grade 8 girls would go to the convent where the nuns had made ice blocks. These were sold for one penny and the proceeds went to the missions. Of course, you had to be in quickly as they got appreciably smaller in the hot playground.” (John Buck)

Mother Hilda Coventry was the headmistress from 1946 to 1948 and then Mother Rupert Virgona from 1949 until 1955, a relatively long time for a headmistress to stay at the school. Mother Rupert left at the end of 1955 and was replaced by Mother Celestine O’Connell who was succeeded in 1959 by Mother Claude Dunne who remained until 1961. Through the 1950s as earlier, most of the teachers at Sacred Heart were nuns. “At this stage there was Sr Attracta³⁰, a vital woman, Sr Denise, who taught music, and there were Sisters Koskta and Francis and two lay teachers, Miss Ryan and Sister Raymond’s sister, Miss Taylor a beautiful, lovely, kind person.” (Sr Rose Derrick). Parishioner Val Kingwell would often play the piano for school events and there was occasionally a lay Physical Education teacher and sometimes young women who had recently left school were utilized as trainee teachers. There was always a demand for more nuns but the situation of Catholic primary schools being largely staffed by religious was beginning to change. In late 1954 Fr Hartnett wrote to the Vicar General, Monsignor Fox, asking for more nuns but the reply stated that the Archbishop was trying to arrange for a more even distribution of religious teachers in the schools and that some new parishes did not have any religious [teachers] at all. Monsignor Fox requested that Grades 1 and 2 at Sacred Heart, which had 82 children, be taught by a nun and explained that although it was not possible to send more nuns, a student teacher would be sent to the school. As with all lay teachers, they had to be paid although the lay teachers in Catholic schools did not receive a salary anywhere near that of their colleagues in the State system. Their payment was the responsibility of the parish priest and ultimately the parish. The superior of the convent was always an experienced teacher, although many of the nuns who came to teach were quite young and just beginning their teaching careers. One sister who lived in Sandringham in the early 1950s remembers her first year teaching. “I was teaching at St Marys Hampton [and living at Sandringham convent] and I taught Grades 2 and 3. There were 97 in the class. In those days you did a year’s teacher training under Mother Peter at O’Neill College and then you would come out and do your second year training on the job. At the end of the second year the inspector would come, you would do your lessons and they would give you a critique. Then they would go back and write a report and you would pass or not.” The pressure on young, newly trained nuns must have been enormous.

John Buck remembers school as a happy time, “I loved the John and Betty readers and the great fun drawing with chalk and making plasticine animals . Memories of the

³⁰ Sr Attracta lived at the convent for many years. She also taught at Black Rock and Hampton.

classes each year do grow dim, but of those I can recall, no ball point pens and only chalk, crayons and pencils up to Grade 2. Grade 3 was the year we learnt to write. I remember the exercise books ruled in blue and red. We headed each page 'AMDG' (All for the love and glory of God). That phrase was also on each class blackboard and not a bad mantra for today. We also had bigger desks and ink wells and wooden pens with nibs and blotting paper. Writing was given great emphasis and you made sure you got it perfect. At the end of term the boys got the job of sanding the accidental ink spills off the classroom floor. In Grade 4 we were told we would learn the hardest of all sums, long division. We also learnt how to spell correctly and how to form sentences. We went over and over the 'positive', 'comparative' and 'superlative' and subject, verb and predicate. To this day these lessons are invaluable. Repetition was employed as a learning tool. How about those maths times tables? We could all of course recite the catechism and many prayers were learnt which today we rarely see except in parents' old missals. In Grade 5, Mother Celestine used to teach us long multiplication by giving sums such as 24×23 . First to answer could go home. Some children left at 3.30 and others were still there at 4 o'clock"

With such large classes discipline was important. "Who could ever forget Mother Rose and her threats? She carried a fair bit of weight and the boys could easily avoid her swinging strap. She would spot an indiscretion in the playground and punishment was always either to pick up papers or sweep the hall. The latter could be great fun with the big wide brooms stretched in a line with five or six boys hurtling down the hall. Woe betides anyone who inadvertently entered the hall during this activity" (John Buck). Mother Rose Feeney had come to the school about 1936 and was to remain for more than 30 years. She became legendary at Sacred Heart. Kath Leech recalls: "I remember Mother Rose, she was very quick with the bamboo cane. There was a fair bit of whacking. I went home with very red hands a lot of times. I used to get in trouble for talking." The Ryans also remember Mother Rose teaching Latin, which was compulsory for the older students, and the wonderful way she taught about the Mass by using a model altar.

There were eight grades at the school until the 1960s. Grade 8 was the Merit year and at the end of the year students would sit the examination for the important Merit Certificate. In the early days the exam for the Certificate was not held at Sacred Heart and any Catholic children wanting to sit the exam went to the State school for the day. "You had to go to the State School for your Merit exam and it was not nice because the State school kids were horrors. They surrounded the Catholic kids ...not a happy time at all really. The teacher didn't help us at all even when the kids were throwing things at us." (Kath Leech). In fact the relationship between the children at the Catholic school and the State school remained uneasy until well into the 1960s .

Scholarship schools were established in the 1950s. At the end of Grade 7 there was an examination for what was known as the Diocesan scholarship. Girls who passed this examination would go to Holy Redeemer, a school run by the Presentation nuns in Ripponlea, and boys would go to the Christian Brothers-run school in East St Kilda. During Grade 8 these students would be prepared for the Junior Commonwealth examination held at the end of the year. Students who won Commonwealth

scholarships would then go on to Star of the Sea or CBC St Kilda. “Mother Louis used to run Holy Redeemer which was the scholarship school. If you wanted to go on with education the way, for most of us, was through scholarships.” (Angela Boston, sister of present day parishioner Gabrielle Smith).

School however, was not just about academic endeavour. There was sport and there was the annual concert. John Buck remembers: “We did look forward to sports days. These usually coincided with the feast of the Sacred Heart or May Day, celebrating Our Lady. The girls danced around a ribbon bedecked maypole whilst the boys built pyramids.” The annual concert in front of large numbers of friends and relatives was a highlight of the school year. In the early days the concerts were at the school as Sybil Kennedy remembered: “Every year we had a wonderful concert or musical in which all grades participated. This was performed in the old school, the classroom’s dividing doors were all opened except Grades 1 and 2 (one room) where the children waited if they were not performing on the stage (which was the Grades 7 and 8 room).” Sister Josephine O’Kelly recalls in the period after the war: “There used to be a concert in the old Memorial Hall, or Memo Hall. I remember in Marie’s (Sister Josephine’s sister) last year they were doing a minuet and they got me to be Cupid. I wasn’t at school. I was dressed in gold satin and I had to stand on a column as a statue.” (Sister Josephine O’Kelly) “The Advocate” in 1949 reported that: “Instrumental, vocal and dancing items were features and the physical culture exercises were done with snap and precision.” Peter Morris uses slightly different language in his recollection of the reported physical culture exercises: “They used to have these stupid pyramids. All the big strong boys were at the bottom and then they would build them up and up and then I would have to go on the top because I was skinny.”

At the end of the 1949 concert, Fr Hartnett congratulated the Sisters and the visiting teachers and thanked the parents. In addition, he said, he “was grateful to Mrs Kingwell, the accompanist, who gave much of her time to the school”. Val Kingwell, in fact, gave much of her time to the parish. In addition to being one of the church organists, she helped run fetes and balls, held euchre parties and was a great cook. The fundraisers at Val Kingwell’s, which always included marvellous suppers and concluded with sing-alongs around the piano, were memorable. The money raised at the concerts would normally go to the convent as one older nun remembered: “We used to have school concerts so we had something to eat over the Christmas break.”

The concert programmes from as far back as the 1920s attest to a high standard of music performance by the students. “Every convent had a music teacher”, recalls one respondent. “That is where you got your bread and butter from.” As Sr Rose Derrick recounts: “They worked so hard. They started teaching music at 8.30 in the morning; they would be teaching after school and teaching at 6 at night. In today’s language some parents “aspired” to be able to afford private music lessons for their children, and the cost of music lessons could be quite a burden. “The Credo” of 1957 reported on the University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music results as obtained by The Sandringham Convent School of Music. The results were impressive and included credits and distinctions.

The nuns usually taught piano but even those who learnt other instruments (such as the violin) from private teachers would go to the convent for theory lessons. Music was

taught both at the convent and in the schools. The nuns would often walk (they often could not afford the tram or train fare) to the adjoining schools to teach music and, as they were not allowed to travel alone, would frequently take a child with them. Kath Leech remembers: "One sister who was a music teacher had to go to Black Rock school [St Josephs] once a week for singing lessons. The nuns weren't allowed travel alone and I was quite young but she asked me and then we had to walk to Black Rock."

For the students, the experiences of learning music were not always edifying but then neither were all the students. One respondent tells of the nun who would grab his fingers and bang them on the piano keys. But he does admit: "Maybe it was because I didn't practice. So I decided that I would learn an easier instrument and I decided on the banjo. I thought I wouldn't get my fingers hurt with the banjo. But I didn't practise that either and the nun (the same nun) would get my fingers and run them up and down the steel strings. That really hurt." One must sympathise with some of the students but also with poor nuns, dependent on the fees but at the cost of listening to a steady stream of discordant students who rarely, if ever, practised. The success of their students in the conservatorium examinations must have been a relief.

The existing school building at Sacred Heart was becoming less and less adequate. There had been few alterations since the school was built in 1920 and the post-war baby boom meant the local population was expanding rapidly. All the school enrolments in the district were growing. At St Marys, Hampton, attendance had tripled from 120 pupils to 383 in 10 years. In 1951 at Sandringham, there were 330 pupils and plans were made for additions to the school. The old school buildings were to remain but five new classrooms were to be constructed at a cost of £14,000. In 1952 the Coadjutor Archbishop, Most Rev. J. D. Simonds, opened what became known as "the new school", telling parishioners that Fr Hartnett was "courageous" in taking on the debt. It was a large sum of money, there was no State support for Catholic schools and there was no parish system for school contributions. Catholic schools depended on school fees and these were a considerable burden especially on those (and there were many) who had large families.

It was not surprising therefore, that at the blessing the Archbishop appealed, as the church had been doing for years, for some Government assistance for Catholic education. Dr Simonds pleaded: "Of course, the voice of prejudice will be loudly heard, proclaiming that any attempt to place the secular instruction provided in all schools on the same level of tax disbursement is in reality providing a subsidy for religion. Surely, if it is a question of public money, we have our right to our share, for we are of the taxpaying public. We are asking for nothing more than a just share of the taxes which we pay for education. We should not be asked to pay a double burden of taxation." These were sentiments little changed from those expressed at the opening of the original school and at the blessing of the convent even if the language was somewhat more moderate.

Construction of the new classrooms was followed by some much needed maintenance to the old school, carried out by the parents presumably at minimal expense. After the war parents had become more active in the maintenance and upkeep of the school and the first auxiliary had been inaugurated in 1946. By 1952 the school auxiliary had divided into a Mothers' Club and a Fathers' Club. It was to become a

joint Parents Association in the 1980s. In the only extant report of any maintenance to the original (1920) school building, "The Credo" in 1957 reported that: "The parish infant's school compares with the best in the Archdiocese." The "infant school" referred to the preparatory class ("Bubs") to Grade 2 classes which were still held in the original school building. The interior of the old building had been painted, new blackboards, pinboards, cupboards, new blinds and teaching aids had been installed and the floors had been sanded and sealed.

Money for the school was raised in a number of ways most notably through the annual fete which after the war, continued to be a focal point of parish life. The centrepiece of most parish fetes was the spinning wheel with, in this period, its array of shining modern electrical devices such as toasters and kettles waiting to be won. Sister Gail Ryan recalls: "I remember at one of the big fetes there was a wheel and Dad won. You could have anything you wanted and there were toasters and there were electrical things and really lovely prizes. Dad chose a huge box of chocolates. We [there were 7 children in the family] were very happy. Every night we were all allowed to have one chocolate each. It was such a treat. He had a bit of a sweet tooth but I think Mum was a bit cross." Parishioner Tonia Morris still has the bride doll her grandmother gave her after winning it on the spinning wheel but poor young Phyllis (Sr Rose) Derrick still remembers what an embarrassment it was to walk home with the bottle of wine she had won.

The profits raised by the fetes were important to both the parish and the convent because the nuns would receive a certain percentage— but not all— of the profits. In 1945 just as the war was ending, "The Credo" announced that the fete that year would be for the new convent. It was stated that: "Helping to build a convent for the sisters in Sandringham is helping to repay in some measure the debt we owe the nuns for their years of noble sacrifice." The sisters, continued the writer, were in urgent need of a home worthy of their vocation and it would come as soon as circumstances permitted. Circumstances, however, did not permit for some time because it was nine years later, in 1954, that the new convent was eventually opened and even then it was not completely finished. Students at the school, usually older students, were often required to assist the sisters in the convent, usually to weed the garden. Behind the convent there was vacant land and it was an adventure to be called over by the nuns for a morning weeding the oxalis. All the more so as the property then flanked a tennis court and many tennis balls (white in those days) were found for later use playing cricket (John Buck). Sometimes if the nuns had to go out for the day (usually to meetings at another convent) girls who had left school would be asked to mind the convent. The memories from those who helped on these occasions are of the dilapidated state of the convent, the holes in the floors and the roof, and the atmosphere of general poverty. While the nuns waited for the new convent they continued to live in the old one and manage within their limited income, much of which came from the fete profits. In 1946, the fete result was interesting but open to interpretation. "The Advocate" reported: "Blessed with good weather, the Sandringham parish fete drew large crowds of parishioners and friends to the school hall on the afternoon and night of Saturday, June 15. The stalls were delightfully decorated and made attractive with an abundance of good things that appealed to the eye and the pocket. The four stalls—parish, school, produce and

sweets—yielded a rich harvest, the net total being £604.” What “The Advocate” did not mention was that this profit was less than the funds raised three years earlier in 1943. In 1947 things were little better and although there was the usual enthusiastic article in “The Advocate” the publicised amount raised was only £532.

FETE 1947

The Parish Stall: Mrs P. Leonard, Mrs F. Reed and Mrs M. McGrath and committee. School Stall: Mrs W. Kingwell, Mrs F. Murphy and the committee of the School Auxiliary. Produce Stall: Miss N. Flanagan, Mrs McBeth, Mrs Morris, and helpers. Refreshment Stall: Mrs P. Sullivan and the executive of the Holy Name Society. Sweet Stall: Miss S. Healy, Miss Kath Rourke and the Children of Mary, with Mr F. Reade and the CYMS.”

It may even be that these were not the exact amounts raised. According to one parishioner, the convent was in urgent need of repairs. Ideally the best solution would have been to give the nuns a larger percentage of the profits so that the convent could be repaired. Fr Hartnett, however, did not see the repairs as important and therefore would not have agreed to any proposition that would have given the nuns a greater share of the profit. Consequently some of the men organising the fete understated the actual profit and thus the nuns received enough for their immediate needs. It is reported by the parishioner that Fr Hartnett was unhappy with the reported proceeds of the fete until the men told him “It had been a tough year for everyone.” In 1949 the reported results were much better as it was stated that the fete and over £700 was raised.

1949 Fete

The following people conducted stalls during the fete: Parish stall, Mrs P. Leonard, Mrs Allen, Mrs McGrath, Mrs F. Reed, Mr P. Hume and assistants; School stall, Mrs Gerratty, Mrs Kingwell, Mr R. Beatty, and the committee of the School Auxiliary; Produce stall, Mrs P. Sullivan, Mr W. Kelly, and the committee of the Holy Name Society; Sweets stall, Miss S. Healy, Mr F. Read, and committee of the Children of Mary and the CYMS”.

At first, Fr Hartnett was not convinced that a new convent was even necessary. While he was very proud of the building on its completion, he had initially opposed its construction on the grounds that its size and cost were excessive. One sister remembers: “It depended on who he [Fr Hartnett] was talking to or which company he was in, but face to face, he wasn’t always the easiest to get on with. I was very young so I wasn’t involved but it was the superior Mother Rupert or Mother Celestine who coped it. Especially at the time they were going to build the convent and it was going to be over his dead body. He wasn’t interested.”

While the new convent was being built in 1953-54, the nuns lived in two houses, one in Sandringham Road and the other in Fernhill Road (with the present convent land in the middle). It is presumed that the house in Sandringham Road was rented by the nuns during the building but the house in Fernhill Road, in the late 1940s, had been sold cheaply to the Church by a parish family at the urging of Fr Hartnett. During the construction of the new convent, the nuns’ living quarters, kitchen, chapel and

study area and an attic (where four nuns slept) were in the Sandringham Road house while the other 10 nuns were in the Fernhill Road house. A newly professed nun who came to Sandringham while the convent was being built recalls: "We were squashed into little rooms. We used to have to take it in turns to get up first. I would get up first Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and she (the other nun) would get up first Tuesday and Thursday. There was just a curtain and if you tried to get dressed there was no room. I had just been professed and I arrived with my suitcase and said 'Where will I unpack?' One of the other nuns said 'Oh, I will get you something' and she arrived back with three apple boxes."

In "The Advocate" the new convent, which cost £25,000, was described as: a new two storey cream brick convent with spacious verandas, well designed and with accommodation for 17 Sisters". The architects were Messrs. O'Connor and Brophy, and the builder was Mr W. D. Henderson. At the blessing Fr Hartnett, despite his earlier protestations, was enthusiastic. He disclosed that it had been decided, after discussions between himself and the Mother-General of the Presentation Sisters, that, if Archbishop Mannix approved, the Sandringham parish would give £4000 towards the new convent. The land, which was valued at £4000, was also given to the nuns and according to Fr Hartnett this represented a donation of £8000, although in a letter to Monsignor Fox he stated that it was about £7600.

Fr Hartnett's explanation might have involved a touch of accountancy sleight of hand. The new convent was on the same site as the old guesthouse and according to Fr Hartnett's calculations this was worth £2000. Fr Hartnett also suggested to Monsignor Fox that the nuns be given the house that was next to the convent which Fr Hartnett had purchased. Fr Hartnett claimed that this was also worth £2000 although he had only paid £1860. This totals nearly £4000 but the money for the house came from the Convent Fund to which parents with children at the school had subscribed for a number of years and was not really from the parish as such. At the blessing, the convent was not quite finished. According to Fr Hartnett, when it was finished: "There would be no better convent to be found in Australia, and it was an ornament to Sandringham. It had accommodation for 17 Sisters." When the convent was opened there was a community of 14.

Archbishop Mannix blessed the convent and, at this stage he did admit that life for the nuns must have been difficult. He commented: "I am very glad that it fell to Father Hartnett to encourage the Mother General and the Presentation Sisters to embark on the heavy enterprise of erecting this new convent." In fact it may be that Fr Hartnett was the one who needed encouragement. One doubts the Presentation sisters needed much encouragement to live in something better than the old guesthouse. What the sisters needed was the money to pay for the development. It was a huge commitment to build a brick convent on the proceeds of music lessons and the part proceeds of the annual fete. None of the nuns were actually part of the audience at the blessing; instead the nuns who lived in the convent at the time report viewing the events from the top storey of the new building.

The school, was not the only parish work in which the Presentation Sisters were involved. After the new convent had been completed and the nuns had moved out of

the house in Fernhill Road, they established a kindergarten in the now vacant house. Nagle Kindergarten, named after the founder of the Presentation order, Nano Nagle, was established in 1956. The directress was employed by the sisters and the kindergarten was to have a significant role in both the church and broader community in the years to come.

The 1950s saw the build-up of Communism in Europe, the construction of the Berlin Wall and the worsening of conflict in South East Asia. At home it was a time of considerable argument and dissension which culminated in the political split between the Australian Labor Party and the Democratic Labor Party. This affected Catholic communities throughout Australia but particularly in Victoria. It caused deep division at the time, within some parishes and even families. One parishioner remembers the time well. "It was a dreadful time. In Sandringham we were pretty civilised apart from one incident. In other areas it was terrible; people had paint thrown over their verandas. It was as bad as a civil war. As far as anything from the pulpit went, the evidence was that Fr Hartnett was very circumspect. The worst thing that happened was that the parish turned on one person who stayed with the ALP. He was a fantastic worker for the parish. What made it worse was that he was a convert and converts make good Catholics. He was active in the parish, a great organiser, and he was pushed right out. My cousin and I, we said to the person concerned, this isn't right. They ostracised him. He was dropped from the ball committee and all those things although he and his wife were the heart and soul of it."

Paul O'Kelly, a parishioner during that era, does have one particular, rather peculiar memory. He recalls: "I don't remember the priest talking politics from the pulpit or anything like that. But I remember that outside the old church in Sandringham Rd. there was a message painted in huge letters on the roadway. The message read: LIBS LAST GOD WILL PROVIDE IF PUT LIBS LAST. It was there for years. The letters were about two feet high in white paint." Putting the opposite point of view to the roadway graffiti-ist was long-standing parishioner Bill Cameron who cheerfully and fearlessly sold the DLP-aligned publication "News Weekly" outside church after Mass every Sunday. Also politically fearless was another parishioner Denys Jackson, better known to a generation of Melbourne Catholics as D.G.M. Jackson, whose currents affairs commentary was a feature of the "Catholic Hour" radio programme on Sunday nights. One former parishioner still remembers Denys Jackson's 'measured progress' along Fernhill Road towards Mass each Sunday, his wife "plodding along about 10 yards behind."

Yet other parishioners were politically active. One was Frank James, the son in law of well-known parish identity and the local stationmaster Tom Curthoys, who entered the political fray when he stood as the ALP (Anti-Communist) candidate for the seat of Sandringham in the 1955 State election. To the surprise of some, he did not poll well. Former parishioner Jim McGrath jnr., then a youth, remembers the outcome: "He got flogged. I was surprised because many of the planning sessions, involving Frank, Bill Cameron, Bill Sage and Dad (Jim McGrath, snr.), happened in our kitchen." For the record, only one ALP (Anti-Communist) candidate won in 1955. He was the member for Richmond, the youngest Minister (for Electrical Undertakings) and possibly the

youngest MLA. His name was Frank Scully. Years later, well after he left Parliament, Frank and his wife Moira moved to Sandringham and became active and well-liked parishioners of Sacred Heart.

If the parish priest had political preferences is not known but if he did, he kept them to himself. One present day parishioner says he has been told that the only comment Fr Hartnett made from the pulpit during this politically fraught time was that he did not care who people voted for but demanded that they take their sloganeering elsewhere. In November 1961 there was a dinner for Fr Hartnett to mark his 25 years as parish priest of Sandringham. During the dinner, Mr E.J. Trait made a presentation to Fr Hartnett on behalf of all parishioners.. Then, just three months later in January 1962, Fr Hartnett was moved to East St Kilda. Fr Hartnett died in 1970 and, according to Gay Monahan's history, left \$15,000 to Sacred Heart parish in his will. In nearly 60 years since it was established as a parish, there had been at Sacred Heart, with the exception of Fr Duffy's brief period, only three parish priests. But in the next 20 years the parish was to have no fewer than four parish priests, 10 curates and a parish associate.

FERMENT AND DISSENT

Under the surface of Australia's stable, conservative government there were developing by the 1960s, stresses and tensions. The children of the post-war baby boom were growing up or coming of age in a comparatively prosperous society with opportunities that had not been available to their parents. The post-war immigration surge brought to Australia new arrivals from many countries and challenges to what had been a largely monocultural, monolingual society. On the world stage it was a time of enormous social and political change, both beneficial and threatening: the Vietnam War, student demonstrations, pop music, drugs, broader educational opportunities and equal pay.

The winds of change were not confined to secular society. In Melbourne in November 1963, Dr Daniel Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne for 46 years and one of Australia's most influential and controversial churchmen, died just short of his 100th birthday. The new Archbishop of Melbourne was the coadjutor, Justin D. Simonds but he occupied the episcopal chair for only four years until he died in 1967 and was replaced by Archbishop (later Cardinal) James Knox. Against this background, the Second Vatican Council was deliberating in Rome. This historic congregation of the world's Catholic bishops was to consider issues of significance to the Church and the changes the council triggered were to alter greatly the life of the Church and its people. The course of the Council itself was not without drama; only eight months after it began in October 1962 its instigator, Pope John XXIII, died and Pope Paul VI was installed as his successor.

In early 1962 in Sandringham, Fr Hartnett's replacement was Fr Patrick O'Connor, a quiet, but some remember, jovial Irishman with a thick (some would say impenetrable) brogue. Curiously, he was the first Irish priest to serve in Sandringham. There were to be three curates with Fr O'Connor. The first of these, in fact the first curate ever in the parish, was Fr Tom O'Keefe who had arrived towards the end of Fr Hartnett's time and stayed until 1965. Fr O'Keefe was energetically involved in the boys' football, although uninterested in any youth movements for the girls. On occasions he would take the boys out of school for football practice, leaving the girls behind in the classroom, not an uncommon occurrence at the time. He took a special interest in the youth of the parish, arranging weekends away and support for many young men. In a time when the voice of youth was beginning to be important, he was the first priest of the parish to involve himself in their particular needs. Fr Frank McLaughlin was curate from 1965 until the end of 1967 when he was replaced by Fr Greg Handley. Fr Handley, however, was very unwell and stayed only a short time.

Gay Monahan wrote that: "Fr O'Connor was a man of simple faith with great devotion to his breviary and the Rosary." He was also keen on the horses and one student at the time remembers playing in the school ground and hearing the presbytery radio broadcasting

the horse races. Parishioner Jim Andrews tells a story about Fr O'Connor's fondness for the horses: "He used to have the radio on and his hearing aid wasn't a hearing aid at all. It was the ear piece for his radio." There is one occasion that Jim Andrews retells. "Fr O'Connor's friend was a trainer at Kilmore and had a horse running at Geelong but it just so happened that the race was to be run in the middle of a wedding. The problem was that Fr O'Connor wasn't to put money on the horse until he heard the odds. So Father had to listen to a radio to get the odds and if they were favourable he could place a bet. In the middle of the wedding he got the signal so he pretended to have a seizure and went out of the church and put his bets on." No one knows if the horse won.

It was the Irishman Fr O'Connor who in 1967, long before the introduction of the now customary Anzac Day walk from the church to the war memorial on the foreshore, ensured that at the 11 am Mass on November 11 there would be a special military parade with the front pews in the church being reserved for returned soldiers. He was a pastoral priest with a great concern for his flock³¹. One parishioner wrote: "I spent about three weeks in our local hospital where there are about eighty to one hundred patients. Father O'Connor brought Holy Communion and frequently visited the patients (sometimes daily). The nursing sisters say that of all the ministers of religion in Sandringham he is the only one who visits regularly. He is also chaplain of the cemetery and spends many hours there in all weathers, sometimes several times each day. Both the hospital and the cemetery serve the district which includes about 5 other parishes yet he is the only priest on call." He was also generous. Jim Andrews, the father of seven recalls: "Fr O'Connor baptised our seventh child and I took the donation to the presbytery. He just said to me, 'Jim I am sure your seven children need that more than I do' and he gave the envelope back to me."

Like many older parish priests of the time, however, Fr O'Connor had some difficulty adapting to the unfolding new worlds, both secular and ecclesiastical. In particular there were tensions with the Mothers' Club as there had been in Fr Hartnett's time. Fr Hartnett had sometimes over-ruled the presidents of the Mothers' Club over money, on one occasion refusing to allow them to buy a vacuum cleaner, even though they had raised the money. "They have brooms," he is alleged to have said. In the same vein Fr O'Connor refused permission in 1968 for a phone to be installed at the school. In an emergency it was difficult to contact the school and the school could not easily contact parents. The Mothers' Club had raised the money for a phone, line rental and calls but Fr O'Connor did not think it was necessary and so there was no phone. There is also one story that Fr O'Connor went to install the new committee but no one volunteered to take on any of the positions of responsibility. Finally he just picked one of the mothers and said: "Right, you'll be president". That seemed to be the end of the matter. One respondent remembers: "He wasn't an unpleasant man but he was very much a product of his time; the sort of priest who had been ordained by the family to be a priest. It was the great age of the entitled priest: I am the representative of God; do not touch. He wasn't dictatorial; he just did it his way."

Mother Jude Donovan was the new principal and superior of the convent in 1962 and she was to stay until 1964 when Mother Lois Henwood arrived. Angela Boston was a teacher at Sacred Heart during this time and her description of the life of a lay teacher

31 The information relating to Fr O'Connor throughout this chapter was obtained from letters made available by the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission.

in a Catholic school in the mid 1960s is a graphic account of the times: “1965 was my first year at Sacred Heart. There were three other lay teachers, the most outstanding of whom was Elsie Carlton. She taught me more about teaching than anyone. She took me aside the first day back and got a calendar and marked every holiday. She said ‘That cuts the year down to size, now we can get on with planning.’ There was Sue Youle and Coral Knowles, the rest were nuns. There was Mother Louis, Mother David and Mother Rose. I had Prep, just down below the stage. The stage was the lay teachers’ staffroom. We had an urn and the Grade 6 girls would come up and make our tea (and if you have ever had morning tea made by a Grade 6 girl you can drink anything). The nuns did their best to make it easy for us. They did not get much leeway but they did their best. Even finding a place for the lay teachers to get together wasn’t easy. Mother Lois blocked off the stage, which was the only spot to get some privacy. The nuns would go over to the convent but the rules were such we couldn’t go to the convent. I think we supplied our own tea and coffee. It was good fun.

With my first class, I was really lucky; I think it had 35 students but my next classes were nearly double that. It wasn’t unusual; you just did it. The milk would be delivered, I would send two kids to get the milk crates out of the sun and then they had to drink their milk. I didn’t mind if some of them threw it out!

A budget, I remember this clearly. The budget for all equipment for Prep was something like \$25 or \$30 a year. That was to get those coloured paper squares, and glue, and powder paints which you had to mix up. When the teachers’ chalk got to about 2 inches and they couldn’t write with it, it would all be sent down to the Prep room. The only boxes of new chalk were for me; the kids always got the little bits. And you went down the roll to find whose father was a printer because you would ask him for off-cuts. The big joy came in when computers were just starting; there was always some father who would bring in big packs of paper with the sprockets down the side. The paper was the same size as the blackboards the kids wrote on. We could only afford 3 reams of butcher’s paper a year. You learnt to manage. The kids weren’t deprived. You just learnt to juggle things.

They [the Preps] learnt every word in ‘John and Betty’ singly and then in sentences and then they got their Readers. You actually handed them their Readers in the first week because that is what they came to school for. They came to school to learn to read so how would a 5 year-old feel if they came to school and did not get a Reader? So we got them Readers and taught them all the words. So after lunch, while they were all doing art you would call them all up one by one and hear the reading and they would drone on and on.

We did, however, have television. It was on a trolley, it could only have come from parent money. I booked it for Playschool every morning at 9 am. You had to know what the end product was; what you wanted them to be able to do by the end of the year. For me it was for them to read, to be able to write simple sentences that they could string together in a simple story, and to count. We did all that in the morning and in the afternoon we did fun things.

We had school inspectors, both a Catholic inspector and a State inspector (that was Mr Stredder). Fr Keaney was the Catholic inspector. He was very rigorous and ensured

that you were maintaining a standard of teaching. The diocese was putting a lot of money into training teachers.”

Mother Lois was at Sacred Heart until the end of 1967. It was during this time that lay teachers began to be employed in greater numbers and the archdiocese began putting substantial resources into the training of primary teachers. The school, and indeed Catholic education, was beginning to go through a transition. It was a transition with which Fr O'Connor struggled. A respondent recalls: “I don't think he liked lay teachers coming into the school to teach; he thought that was the work of the religious. He was a man of his time. I don't think he would have voted for the Catholic Teachers' Colleges. He couldn't see why teachers should be paid; he thought they should be working for the church.” There were in fact a number of Thursdays when he would go fishing, thus not paying staff till the next day or the next week. Sometimes the superior of the convent would pay the lay staff and then try to get the money back from Fr O'Connor.

Between 1968 and 1970 Sister Marie Therese Jones was school principal and superior of the convent. She was an amazing and, some report, formidable woman who demanded commitment both in the classroom and on the sports field. She was according to parishioner Noelle Fagan: “A wonderful woman; she was very forward-thinking, very practical and a very hard worker.” The school needed a hard worker.

There were not only imminent changes at the school but also at the kindergarten. At the end of 1964 the Presentation Sisters decided to close Nagle kindergarten. The directress had announced her retirement and the Presentation sisters decided that the kindergarten should cease operation. The few child care centres or kindergartens in the area in the 1960s were, like schools everywhere, bulging at the seams. When the sisters announced the closure of Nagle, it seemed unlikely that the children would be able to find places in other kindergartens so the Nagle pre-school association was formed with the aim of establishing a government-subsidised pre-school centre. The Presentation Sisters then agreed to the premises being rented for use as a pre-school centre for an annual rent of £312. A provisional committee of management was elected of which parishioner Jeanette O'Neill was the secretary. In order to qualify for a subsidy, the conditions developed by the Health Department had to be satisfied. These conditions included alterations and improvements to the building, the purchase of additional equipment, and employment of a qualified pre-school teacher. The government subsidy, when it was granted, paid the salary of the teacher, Mrs Salvitti, but the salary of the assistant, Mrs Clarkson, had to be raised by the committee. A number of functions were held at the O'Neill house to raise money for the improvement of the building and the employment of the assistant teacher.

The arrangement with the Presentation nuns lasted for about five years but the future of the kindergarten was still under discussion. As kindergartens became the norm, there were more regulations introduced and the house in which Nagle was situated needed renovations if it was to remain as a kindergarten. The City of Sandringham Pre-school Association was involved in the ongoing discussion and a letter from the association in 1969 endorsed the building of a new kindergarten on the Fernhill Road site. In part the letter read: “This association will be happy to see the efforts of the Nagle pre-school Committee toward a building of their own, fulfilled on the site they have occupied

for so long.[sic]" Despite the backing from the Pre-school Association for the Fernhill Road site, suddenly other plans were made. In the sixth annual report of the Nagle committee of management, in June 1970, the president, Ian Jones, announced that the Sandringham Council had made available a site on the corner of Victory Street and Sandringham Road and that planning for a new kindergarten was progressing steadily. What caused the plans to change is not clear. What is clear is that the kindergarten was not moved in order for an aged person's hostel to be built as the planning for that development did not begin until 1973. By 1971 the letterhead for the kindergarten read: "Nagle Pre-school Association Government subsidized Non-Denominational".

The post-war baby boom meant there was an urgent need for new classrooms at the school. The classrooms built in 1952 catered only for some of the growing demands and although these were often referred to as "the new school" the original school buildings were still in use for the "infant"³² school. These classrooms were, to put it mildly, in a bad way. The parents did their best to help and one summer spent much of the holiday period building cupboards and carrying out general maintenance. According to one account, Fr O'Connor was annoyed because the parents had not asked his permission before they started the project. Considering his reluctance to carry out maintenance on the school, it is doubtful whether he would have given permission if it had been requested.

Angela Boston recalls the condition of the school: "There were gaps in the floor and it wasn't unusual to see a little furry head poking up. The boys loved it. The toilets were cleaned by the nuns, because there were no cleaners.

"There was a whole lot of muck on the roof. I remember once there had been heavy rain. During the day Sister³³ David quite uncharacteristically took her class outside. It was most unlike her because she was very methodical and she stuck to the timetable absolutely. Anyway she took the class out of the classroom and while the class was outside, the roof of her classroom fell in. It was a section of the roof and it was right where the kids would have normally been doing reading. It would have been a disaster if the class had been inside. Poor Sister David, I don't think she ever recovered."

The incident of the falling roof in 1965 began a period of increasing friction between Fr O'Connor and parishioners, in particular the school parents³⁴. A number of parishioners asked for a meeting with Fr O'Connor, presumably sometime after the roof fell in, to discuss issues concerning the school, in particular the finances, maintenance and classroom space³⁵. There is no record of the meeting and it is doubtful if there ever was a record but it is said that Fr O'Connor came with a few figures scribbled on the back of a matchbox. The Catholic Education Office was then involved in the discussions and later in 1965 issued a report that the school rooms in the old hall were less than satisfactory. In August 1965 a letter from the Vicar General, Monsignor Clarke, noted the report and asked Father O'Connor for a reply. There is no evidence that a reply was sent. At the end of 1966 a group of men from the Fathers' Association then met Monsignor Clarke to discuss the state of the school buildings. The fathers had two concerns; the first was the need for new classrooms and the second was the condition of the old school which according to one letter, was: "structurally unsound, by no means

32 Preparatory, grades 1, 2 and 3.

33 This may have been Mother David.

34 Letters from the archives at the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission.

35 Personal communication with a parishioner

waterproof, and infested by rats". Later correspondence with the archdiocese indicates that the delegation came away from the meeting with the understanding that steps would be taken to effect improvements at the school.

However Fr O'Connor moved slowly. He was clearly reluctant to do anything or even to discuss issues with the parents. It was the latter that caused the most unrest in the parish. Early in 1967 both Archbishop Knox and Bishop Fox visited the parish and finally in May 1967, Fr O'Connor wrote to Bishop Fox asking for permission to borrow \$25,000 for the purchase of land to build the new classrooms. Plans were developed but it is not known who was involved although clearly the parents were not. Nor was it known exactly what the new plans included. That there would be two new classrooms seemed clear but whether there would be renovations to the toilet block and 1920 building was not known.

Nearly 12 months later, in March 1968 (well after the school year had begun), a representative of the diocesan building authority wrote to Fr O'Connor notifying him that the plans had been approved and costing the extensions at \$14,000. It was stated in this letter that the Archbishop had expected the classrooms to have been opened for the beginning of the 1968 school year. There was apparently no reply to this letter either and no further work because in April another letter was sent asking Fr O'Connor to reply to the letter of March. It was now nearly three years since the roof had collapsed and little had been done. In April 1968 there was further correspondence from the Fathers' Association to the Cathedral asking: "If the new classrooms were to be built. If they were, when it would happen, whether there would be adequate toilet facilities for lay staff, if the tuck shop would be vermin-proof and whether [student] drinking and toilet facilities would be improved to at least a minimum standard." The reply to this letter from the Archbishop's secretary, Monsignor Murray, is telling. Despite the correspondence from the Cathedral to Fr O'Connor in March, Monsignor Murray wrote that he was "puzzled" by the letter from the parents: "Surely it is known that His Grace with Bishop Fox visited the school in September last year (1967), consequent on the deputation to the Vicar General, Monsignor Clarke, and also some letters he had received from parishioners. An undertaking was given on this occasion that new classrooms were to be constructed for the commencement of the new school year in 1968 and parishioners were to be involved."

By 1968 life in the parish had become particularly difficult for Fr O'Connor because the assistant, Fr Handley, was very ill and unable to do anything. Throughout all this, however, Fr O'Connor continued to carry out all his pastoral work. According to one parishioner's letter to the Archbishop: "His only helper is Fr Handley, who is, as you must well know, so very ill and unable to do anything. Fr O'Connor never neglects any of his spiritual duties, which for him must be often so difficult – early morning Mass, Benediction, Confession. Many people criticize him yet I have never heard him say one unkind word." However, disquiet in the parish continued to grow and the Archbishop received more letters from parents at the school. Of particular concern was Fr O'Connor's secretive nature. There were claims that no one could talk to him and that all questions regarding the new building were rebuffed with answers ranging from "silence to angry outbursts". The parents were still unclear as to the extent of the new

work and whether the old school building and the toilet block would be repaired. An incident in the winter of 1968 was particularly concerning and the cause of more letters to the Archbishop. In July 1968, one parent wrote: "I was on tuckshop and went to the yard prior to lunch and was horrified to see Mother Marie Therese and her Grade 6 boys endeavouring to clean a blocked drain which was flooding an entrance to the junior class rooms. Mother was shovelling away dirt while the boys were using their hands and any containers available trying to clear the stagnant muck from the blocked drains. Surely our society has progressed beyond having to see nuns doing such dirty work. After all they are there to teach our children not to be plumber's labourers." This incident was a catalyst and by late that month the Fathers' Association was eager to have a meeting with the Archbishop. The Vicar General contacted the Association in the middle of August and said that "the building plans now had been approved but the Department of Health approval had been delayed for some weeks. It too had been given and so building could go ahead." At first this seemed to appease the Association but they repeated their request and on 9 September 1968 a group from the Fathers' Association went to see the Archbishop. Whether this had anything to do with what happened next is not clear from the diocesan records but less than a month later Fr O'Connor was gone and by 1 October 1968 Fr John A Kelly was the new parish priest of Sandringham.

Very little was said when Fr O'Connor left. One week he was there and the next he was gone. To this day many people are unsure why he left. One parishioner who was very fond of Fr O'Connor reflected: "I always thought that the reason people didn't like him was because he spoke very slowly. There was sometime a very long pause between his words. I once counted up to twenty between words. We suspected that people thought he wasn't upmarket enough for Sacred Heart."

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING

Fr (later Bishop) John A. Kelly, the hasty replacement for Fr O'Connor, was to stay only three years but they were to be three very important years in the life of Sacred Heart. At his requiem years later it was stated: "He (Fr Kelly) was a passionate man, with convictions strongly held. At times he found it hard to show emotion., He was a scholarly man, well read in theology [and] able to present a forceful oratory. He was perhaps the last of the Irish orator-bishops, who used their charisma of preaching to lead and form the Catholic people". He was a man of booming eloquence, formidable erudition and driving energy or, as one parishioner commented: "He was a bit of a maverick." To others, he was just what the parish needed: a learned, articulate pastor with a whirlwind approach to getting things done.

By the late 1960s some of the early changes introduced by the Vatican Council were beginning to take effect. These were significant to Catholics everywhere and heralded changes in all aspects of parish life. Fr Kelly was to implement many of these changes in Sandringham. After the years of atrophy in the parish, many of these innovations were welcome. But Fr Kelly often acted autocratically and with little consultation. He was a larger than life character and could be dismissive of those who opposed him.

The most visible of the initial changes introduced by the Vatican Council were to the liturgy, the first for hundreds of years. The new Mass rite, with the Mass in English rather than Latin and with the priest facing the people, was introduced in November 1969. Some people found this enormous change liberating while others found it confronting. None of the changes resulting from Vatican II operated in isolation from each other. The new Mass rite, for example, in which the priest faced the people, meant that the altar had to be turned around. But even that simple change would cause heartache. At Sacred Heart there was no consultation with parishioners about the fate of the old altar. It appears that the beautiful "handsomely finished altar in five different Australian woods, and alone costing £50" was thrown out. As one parishioner recalls: "The first findings of the Vatican Council were emerging and he [Fr Kelly] just moved in and wrecked the original altar of the church. Whatever came of the bits and pieces? We don't know."

The statues in the church suffered a similar fate. One day the statues were there, the next day they were not. "He got rid of all the statues; he just laughed, said they were old hat. He made a lot of change without consultation and much of it; [the things removed] had been donated. One old guy, he used to come to Mass every morning and he always had a pair of rosary beads. He was very religious and a bit hard of hearing and always spoke a bit loudly. He came in after the statues were removed and just stood there and said, 'Is this a bloody Protestant church?' and then walked out." [A parishioner)]. Fr

Kelly liked a plain unadorned church. He would not even let brides, no matter how many times they asked, have flowers on the altar for their weddings.

It was, despite Fr Kelly's sometimes cavalier attitude to opposition, the beginning of the end of the era when what the priest said was accepted by his people as the word of God. Illustrative of the changing attitudes of the time were the reactions to an incident that actually occurred well after he had left Sandringham. Fr Kelly, by this time a bishop had an encounter with the law. He was fined for drink driving, an offence that was plastered over the newspapers of the time. Some people were scandalised that a priest should drive while over the blood alcohol limit. Others of an older school of thought were of the opinion that a priest should have been treated more circumspectly. One parishioner recounted one opinion: "A friend of mine, a lapsed Catholic, put on a performance. He didn't know what the world was coming to for a member of the police force to stop a priest, let alone a bishop, to breathalyse him. It would not have happened in the good old days. He was outraged. How else was a man to get home?"

The changes to the liturgy and the ousting of statues were only a start. In 1970 came greater participation by the laity with the introduction of lay readers and an offertory procession during Sunday Mass. There were also changes in responses (which now came from the congregation rather than the altar boys) and more congregational hymn singing, which gave the musical Fr Kelly great delight. He was a trained tenor soloist, had been the archdiocesan cantor for many years and had trained and conducted many children's and young people's parish choirs. Consequently Fr Kelly introduced a youth choir in Sandringham. He is remembered as being a perfectionist and sometimes a little short-tempered but he did take the choir to a recording studio to "cut" a record of Christmas songs. This was a highlight for those involved, although, strangely, the event was not reported in the parish magazine nor was there any mention of the record in the Sunday bulletins.

The greater emphasis on lay involvement meant that, in general, people were more ready to participate in the liturgy. Home Masses, unheard of in the recent past, now became possible and Fr Kelly introduced these in 1969 with the intent of "uniting" the parish. The first of the home Masses was at the home of Mr Joe Meade, which was appropriate since when Joe Meade was a boy, before there was a church, home Masses had been (at least during summer) a necessity in Sandringham. Many of the "innovations" were, in fact, an attempt to reclaim very old practices, but for many brought up in the 1930s and 40s they were not easy to accept. A former parishioner recalls how his father – a defiantly old school Catholic – reacted to the introduction of the sign of peace during Mass, an innovation his father regarded as "happy, clappy religion". When his neighbour in the pew extended a hand towards him on the first sign of peace Sunday, the old school parishioner ignored it. When the neighbour persisted, the old chap continued to stare straight ahead but dismissed his neighbor's offer by whispering from the corner of his mouth: "Bugger off!"

Evening and home Masses were made possible by changes in the rules for fasting before communion. Until the 1950s it was not possible to receive communion unless one had fasted from midnight. This was changed to a three-hour fast and then, after Vatican II, the fasting period was reduced to one hour. The Sunday evening Mass

was introduced at Sacred Heart in February 1969. By this time weekly Sunday Benediction had ceased although a weekly Perpetual Adoration hour each Wednesday was introduced in 1972. While participation in some of the traditional liturgies was decreasing there was greater interest in different forms of prayer. Several small scripture study and prayer groups (in particular a charismatic prayer group) were established and strongly supported during this time.

Father Kelly was certainly to use his “forceful oratory” during his homilies, many of which had a strong historical content and most of which were delivered as he strolled up and down the centre aisle of the church. As a strong communicator, and someone who believed in the power of the written word³⁶, it is not surprising that Fr Kelly introduced regular Sunday bulletins³⁷ and a new periodical. “The Credo” had ceased publication much earlier, probably after Fr Hartnett left the parish. In March 1969 Fr Kelly published the first edition of a new parish magazine, “Ardor”, which was to play an important role in disseminating information on activities in the parish, in particular those of the parish council that was soon to be established. As with earlier parish magazines, only a few editions of “Ardor” remain. Initially it was professionally printed and published monthly. The last known copy is March 1974 and for the year or so prior to its cessation, “Ardor” was published less frequently and roneoed in the parish office.

Considering the situation in the parish prior to his arrival, it was not surprising that one of Fr Kelly’s first concerns was the school building programme. By late November 1968 he had new plans in place. In addition to the two classrooms these plans included; a staff room for lay teachers, an office for the school principal, additional shelter for the children, the refitting and renovation of the school toilet block, and some renovation of existing classrooms. The new plans for the school building meant an extra cost of \$13,300 thus bringing the total of the project to \$28,500.

The building was not the only change facing the school. Right through this period the Catholic Education Office was becoming more involved in the administration of schools and schools were becoming more accountable to the CEO rather than just the parish priest. Of course the parish priest remained the employer but school were now beginning to receive some government funding and for this they needed to be accountable. The body that ensured such accountability was the CEO. As part of this Catholic schools needed to become in some ways less distinct from other schools in the community. From 1969 the school year for Catholic schools was to be the same as in State schools. Holy days of Obligation were no longer holidays for children in Catholic schools and children in Catholic schools and children in government schools would all have the day off on Public Holidays. On major feast days the Catholic school children probably still went to church for Mass but as a class group. One of the first feast days to be affected under the new dispensation was Ascension Thursday in May 1969. In good Catholic tradition, the Sacred Heart mothers decided that if the children had to attend school they might as well have a fete. Well, not really a fete but a Mother’s Day stall.

By the late 1960s education was becoming more demanding. No longer was it enough to seat large numbers of children at long desks, with inkwells that needed to be cleaned each day. No longer did the inspector’s visits rule the school year. No longer was it enough to teach “the three Rs” plus a bit of physical education. Education was

³⁶ Fr Kelly was, in later years, to become a frequent letter writer to the daily newspapers.

³⁷ Parish bulletins were introduced in 1970.

changing; there was a greater emphasis on a broader range of subjects and on catering for the needs of individuals. There was also an increasing involvement of parents not just with maintenance and fund raising but also with the governance of the school. Of significance, therefore, was the introduction of a parish school board in 1969. Mother Marie Therese, who had arrived just before Fr O'Connor left, was to be responsible for a number of major changes. One of these was the introduction of parent-teacher interviews which allowed, for the first time, parents and teachers to discuss the academic achievement of their children in a structured environment. There were also many innovations in the curriculum. Sewing had already been taught for some time and in the 1960s the Grade 7 girls would go to O'Neill College one morning a week to do a cooking class. For many that was a great treat; a train ride to Gardenvale and a morning cooking then back to school after lunch. After this ceased, parishioner Joan Rigoni would teach cooking at the school. She remembers the time well: "There was a period when there was a great interest in Italian cooking. Some of my children were at the school and for a period I gave lessons at the school to the children. One mother who was herself a good cook said that she now relaxed when visitors came because her daughter made pizza and a delicious no bake cheesecake from my lessons." A concern for Mother Marie Therese was that the literacy level of some students in the senior classes was not adequate for their forthcoming secondary education. So, with the assistance of Noelle Fagan, she established the school's first library. This was set up in Mother Marie Therese's office with a \$100 donation from the Mothers Club given to Noelle Fagan, a trained librarian, to buy books. For a day and a half every week for three years Noelle went to the school and ran the library for students in Grades 5 and 6. After Mother Marie Therese was moved, Noelle took a position at Sandringham municipal library where she worked for over 20 years and where she was to see the legacy of Mother Marie Therese's program. Noelle recalls: "It was such a delight when the children I had worked with would come in when they went on to secondary school, Some of them would come in right until they were married and some even brought their own children in."

Mother Marie Therese did not confine her energy to the academic concerns of the school. She was also seminal in the development of girls' sport. Debbie Erikson gives a delightful description not just of the development of girls' sport but also of the enthusiasm of Mother Marie Therese who did not let her cumbersome habit get in the way of her work. Debbie recalls: "Parish netball³⁸ received an injection of enthusiasm in the mid-1960s with the arrival Mother Marie Therese. The 1960s were the heyday of the woman's liberation movement and the Presentation Sisters had long been advocates for girls having equality. The boys played football matches against neighbouring schools; it seemed only fair that the girls should have opportunities for physical activity and to be participants rather than spectators. Mother Marie Therese's initiative for interschool netball matches was greeted excitedly by the Grade Five and Six girls. However, Mother Marie Therese abhorred mediocrity so training sessions were organised and the girls were in awe of a principal who was not adverse to hitching up her long skirt and tucking in the ends of her veil in order to demonstrate a manoeuvre. And while Mother Marie Therese was confined to a cumbersome habit, she saw no reason why the netball teams should be hampered by an out-dated sports uniform. So

38 During this time netball was known as girls basketball

a new sports tunic was designed and when the Sacred Heart girls arrived for their matches they looked the part.

“On Friday afternoons buses ferried the football and netball teams to surrounding parish schools. The home side supplied the facilities and the important oranges, cut into quarters, and offered graciously to the opposing team at half-time. Post-match dissection of the games occurred at the dinner tables of many families and most likely around the convent dining table which must also have been the place where the respective principals worked out the draw for next week’s matches, tallied percentages of the winning and losing teams, positioned the teams on the ladder and probably celebrated their teams’ successes or defended their lack of success. A photograph of the grand final team from 1967 includes a proud Mother Marie Therese posing with the victors.”

The significant increase in parish debt, which was a consequence of the school building programme, necessitated a form of reliable income which would allow the parish to plan for the future. In 1968 the finances of the church still relied on a single weekly offering and various one-off appeals. Fr Kelly had announced that the Christmas and Easter dues lists (which are part of the priest’s stipend) were no longer to be read out in public, which must have been a relief for many. But the single weekly church collection did not provide an income stream sufficient or reliable enough to service the new debt or any debt that might be incurred in the future. Accordingly, a sacrificial offering campaign, the first in the parish, was held in 1969. This was a well-run campaign with area captains in charge of visiting, an explanatory brochure posted to all parishioners, and a talk at all Masses on one Sunday in June. In the second week of the campaign the amount received was \$638 but this soon levelled (although a parish newsletter preferred the term dwindled) to about \$400 a week. To administer this steadier income stream, a parish finance committee was established in June 1971. Fr Kelly had left by this time but the members of the new committee were the parish priest Fr Scarborough, Bert Moss, Esmond Merrick, Frank Callaghan, Col Corboy, Frank Scully and Jack Savage.

It was not just the finances of the church that were of importance in the parish. The Sacred Heart Parish Credit Co-operative initiated by Fr Kelly and first opened in 1971 arranged loans for those in need in the parish. It was a sign of the times. There was now more money in the community and some people had a little extra which they could afford to invest in the co-operative which would then lend to help those in need, often the young or the elderly, with lower interest loans. This was not a care or concern group as such, but it was a group that cared for those in the parish. Like other groups established at the time, the Credit Co-operative did what it could to help those who needed a helping hand. Initially the membership was restricted to parishioners but it became a community based organization in 1978³⁹. The co-operative’s office, staffed by volunteers, was open every Sunday morning at the church. “Over \$1.5 million was loaned to the community – mainly parishioners – over the years. Better than bank interest rates assisted members with deposits and loans which were used for such needs as debt consolidation and purchases of a myriad of products which especially helped young families and newlyweds. A generation of young parishioners bought their first car with a co-operative loan. As borrowers were usually known to the Loans

39 Fr Kelly initiated the Credit Co-operative but he had left the parish by the time it first opened for business.

Committee, bad debts were rare and loans could be granted with confidence on the ability to repay. The co-operative became a popular spot for members to meet after Mass to chat on local events of the week as they made their transactions in a friendly atmosphere.” [parishioner Howard Wright] Eventually, Government regulations and financial restraints made it extremely difficult for a small volunteer organization to continue and the co-operative amalgamated with the Herald Credit Union in 1994.

Credit Co-operative Volunteers

The following parishioners with a belief in the co-operative spirit, acting as volunteers, were instrumental in the running of the co-operative for more than a quarter of a century: Jim McGrath jnr. (inaugural president); Howard Wright (president - 21 years); Steve Excell (inaugural secretary); Jim McGrath snr. (secretary); Reg Bourke (secretary); Peter Meade (secretary); Marie Wright (secretary); Cath Power (secretary); David Falkland, Noel Gregory, Jack Savage, Mel Rudd, Bill Cameron, Frank Scully, Jos Hatherley, Lou Colangelo, Jim Andrews, Frank Meade, Bill Berreen, Peter Longshaw, Mick Holden, Michael Scully and Julie Quirk, have all been directors of the Sandringham Co-Operative and Anna Collins, Roger Smith and Adrian Power acted as collectors

Howard Wright

One of the first communications from the Cathedral to Fr Kelly on his appointment to Sandringham was a letter in October 1968 announcing that the unwell Fr Handley was being moved immediately. There was to be no immediate replacement but the letter indicated that a new assistant might be appointed in the New Year. Fr Kelly did not have to wait quite that long because in November another letter confirmed that a new assistant had been appointed and would arrive in the parish on 14 December. This was a newly ordained priest and the letter stated: “As this is the first appointment it is important that he [the priest] be placed under the care of a wise and zealous parish priest who will guide, encourage and train him in the pastoral activities of his priesthood.” That curate was Fr Ernie Smith. In fact for a while Sacred Heart had two assistant priests because Fr John Abrahams was also appointed in 1970 but was to stay a very short time. It was Fr Ernie who was to be a force in the parish.

Towards the end of the 1960s while the Vietnam War ground on and student groups around the world were agitating for a new world order, there was also a sense of optimism and hope. This was symbolised, above all, by the July 1969 walk on the moon. In Sandringham, the post-war population was growing up and beginning to leave school. They had better prospects than most of their parents had. They had not left school with a Merit Certificate but most had gone on to one of the many secondary schools in the area. They were better educated and had more opportunities. They were also more mobile than their parents had been. Parishioner Margaret Cartwright remembers her father having one of the first cars in the parish but by the late 1960s many young people owned cars and could move around easily. The new assistant Fr Smith, known to everyone as Fr Ernie, was to lead and mentor the youth while he was at Sacred Heart.

Fr Ernie’s first work was with the football team. There had been a YCW football team in the parish before he arrived but it was doing badly. Fr Ernie set out to resurrect the team’s fortunes. Not one to coach from the sidelines in anything he did, he played with the team. In fact, he directed the tactics of the team from his position in the back pocket. Finally, the team’s fortunes were reversed although this restoration not entirely angst-free. According to

his own team mates, Fr Ernie was “a mongrel player, a really mongrel player.” One respondent who played football with him (and whose own brother is also a priest) said: “I didn’t know priests swore until I played football with Ernie Smith. I soon learnt otherwise.” He was, of course, a natural target for players in opposing teams who relished the thought of “legitimately” being allowed to “thump” a priest. Many parishioners still remember Fr Ernie saying Mass on Sunday morning bandaged and bruised, and possibly with a broken nose, from the Saturday afternoon game.

While the football team catered for the needs of the sports-minded, there was a need in the parish for a broader youth group. Ernie Smith had been State secretary of the YCW before entering the seminary and when he came to Sandringham one of his primary objectives was to establish a YCW in the parish. Early in 1969 he called a meeting to form a male YCW group and shortly after that a girls YCW group, which was to replace the parish branch of the National Catholic Girls Movement (NGCM), was developed. Not long after their establishment, the boys’ and girls’ YCW amalgamated. Once the YCW had been formed the focus turned to the older students in the parish who were on the cusp of leaving school. Julie Quirk, the youngest of a family of eight who all attended Sacred Heart, recalls this: “Father Ernie came up to our house. He always called in at dinner time. He said, ‘Julie, just the person I want to see’. I said, ‘Why?’ He said ‘I want to start up the YCS.’ I said, ‘What’s that?’ He said, ‘Young Christian Students.’ I said, ‘You know I am in my last year at school.’ He said, ‘Yeah, perfect. I want you to get a couple of the girls together.’ I got the girls together, Ruthie Gadsden and Veronica Meade were there and I said something and they voted me president.”

The YCW and YCS lasted only a few years but their impact on the lives of individuals and the life of the parish was incalculable. Both groups would meet each week and there were many other activities within the parish with which they assisted. Julie Quirk again: “There was a mission at some stage and the YCS girls would babysit the children in the kindergarten. The priest, I think he was a Marist, he would yell and scream and he didn’t want children yelling and screaming while he was yelling and screaming so the parents left the children with us over at the kindergarten.”

The YCW girls would help at parish dinners and the very popular progressive dinners, washing dishes when the adults went on to the next house. There were numerous social events; dancing classes and dances in the school hall with all the walls painted black and the youth would all go to the parish dinner dances and balls. While these social events were important and assisted in building a strong group, there was a very serious side to the YCW. An article in the December 1969 edition of *Ardor* illustrated this point: “The biggest thing for the youth groups at the present moment is to raise money to help send two of our girls to Papua (sic) for a month at Christmas with the Y.C.W. work group. They are Maxine Comer, president, and Jenny Merrick. There are altogether 14 Y.C.W. girls going to five different mission stations. There will be interesting stories when they return. They will have experienced at first hand the missionary life and will have made many friends among the native people.” This was just a first step. The overseas work of the two YCW members was important but when they returned there developed within the YCW a wish to embark on some missionary work as a parish group rather than as a part of other groups. By chance, Fr Ernie had a friend in Papua New Guinea, an Italian Franciscan named Fr Eugene, whom Fr Ernie had known since his days working with the YCW. Fr Eugene needed a new primary school built on his mission of Sissano in the Western Sepik region of New Guinea⁴⁰.

40 An area near Wewak

It was decided that the Sandringham YCW group would travel to PNG to build the school. The trip would require much organisation and fundraising. The YCW embarked on all the usual fundraising activities, babysitting, film nights and the like, but Fr Ernie also had ideas for fundraising, some of which were a little unusual. Some of those involved recounted one such story.

“We all went up to the Gadsden’s; they lived near the cemetery in Reserve Road. They were very generous people, lovely people and they had a big barn-like building. There were a lot of us and people going in and out all day. Fr Ernie got these chooks from the seminary, maybe a hundred, and I remember Fr Ernie lining the boys up and showing them how to wring the chooks necks. Then the girls had to pluck them. He taught us to get your finger and scoop the lungs and heart out. (Even now, 40 years later, every time I cook a chicken, I put my fingers down the gullet and check to see if the lungs and heart are still there.) Sometimes they still had eggs in them. I will never forget the smell. Ruth Gadsden and I were retching. Then we sold the ‘chickens’ at Mass on Sunday. Ernie said we could all have roast chicken for dinner but they were awful; Mum had to boil them forever. They were only good for soup or stock. But we raised money for New Guinea. (Marie Savage nee Kershaw, Terry Monaghan, Margaret Monaghan and Julie Quirk)

For the 11 young people involved it was a life-changing experience. Initially, however, not all the parents of the participants were happy. Said one of the volunteers: “I was the youngest of the group and I said to Dad, ‘I am going up to New Guinea, with Ernie Smith,’ and Dad said, ‘You’re not going,’ and I said, ‘I am’ I was only 18. He said, ‘I’ve been to New Guinea [in the war] and you’re not going’ and it went on and on. I was saving about 20 cents a week because I [had just left school and] was on a very small salary and when it was time to have the injections we went to Dr Wright-Smith in Hampton. We had cholera and typhoid, [injections], we had everything. My arm was so sore; it was throbbing and red as a tomato, and I was throwing up. Dad came into my room and said, ‘That’s one of the reasons I don’t want you to go to New Guinea but if you can put up with all this you have my blessing.’”

The preparation required was enormous. The group had to raise their airfares and money for the medical and educational supplies they were to take. One letter, still in existence, from Fr Eugene to Fr Ernie gives a picture of the times and the scale of the undertaking.

Dear Father,

The felicitous news of the Sandringham Band-wagon’s arrival is the talk of Sissano, where the people are normally dormant and hard to excite (you wouldn’t believe it would you?)

Well I must say you are a marvellous organizer. I am sure that everything will run smoothly at least till Wewak. Do prepare yourself with a wagonful of patience! You’ll find yourself in New Guinea where time’s no gold and where there is always another day.... But because you’re so pressed for time I’ll give a reward if you can go through it all without swearing!!!! See to start with you’ll be in Wewak on Boxing Day 5.00 p.m.; a Saturday. Maybe our-little planes will come to rescue you on Sunday, maybe not. We count to have you here on Monday, and you’ll all be exhausted and needing a day or two to settle in.

We’ll do our very best to have everything ready but don’t scream if you find something missing in the line of tools, particularly. By the way, we’re terribly short of tools of all kinds. When I read your letter one of sisters prompted –‘ask for a barrow!’”

Well no, it's-too bulky for one thing. We'll provide one from Aitape as well as a couple of hammers, saws etc.

Now tell your girls to lift their faces and hearts, there will be accommodation for the 6 of them at the convent. More difficulty in locating the boys but the Gov't. school teacher (Terry Trainar from Melbourne - Essendon) most willingly offered to give them his own house (he'll be gone on leave, unfortunately) Terry's house is only 10 mins walk from the station and I'm sure the-boys won't mind it.

I don't think food will be a real problem unless they can't do without bacon or steak every day. There will be eggs aplenty and chooks and fish, I hope. But you'll miss vegetables I'm afraid apart from canned stuff or native greens. As for sweets I'm sure the Sisters will provide some treats. And now some warnings:

1. The place is plagued with sandflies. Provide some repellent. Very few mosquitoes, but antimalarial are quite necessary all the same.

2. The people, the youth particularly, are very friendly, but European 'way' on boy-to-girl relationships look rather excessive and often ill or misinterpreted. Tell your boys and girls not to act too friendly, whilst natives are around. That means all the time because they will be terribly curious.

All standard IV, V, VI boys and girls understand simple English There are half a dozen native Teachers, plus a number of High School pupils, Teacher College Trainees, one University student and one seminarian The latter stays with me normally. Therefore there won't be really a language problem.

As regards the work – you'll be the manager and all. Some local lads will happily help you but none above you to command or direct.

For getting around on weekends, apart from walking we have a tractor (and trailer) some Hondas, motorbikes and pushbikes.

In conclusion, I will say that this is going to be a mighty experience for us all, an enjoyable one despite certain shortcomings and hardships.

One thing is certain we have no red carpets to spread out for you but our hearts will be right open to give you a most Sincere WELCOME.[sic]

The group arrived in the village of Sissano, on Boxing Day 1970. Margaret Monahan recalls: "We came in from Wewak in a barge on a canal that had been built by the Germans and arriving I felt like it was a scene from the "The African Queen". The day before we arrived a little boy had been swimming in the Sepik river and he had been eaten by a crocodile. Then the villagers had gone out and caught the crocodile and, just as we arrived, they were disembowelling it and the child was being taken out. And that was our welcome to Sissano."

The living conditions at the mission were very different to what the group were used to. The boys did stay in the teacher's house but Fr Eugene had not warned them about one little issue. "We used to walk along with torches and there were death adders. If you were bitten by one you had a minute to live. So we had to be careful and stop if we saw one." (Terry Monahan). The sand-flies were a terrible problem and some of the group suffered badly from ulcerations caused by bites. The seminarian referred to by Fr Eugene is well remembered as being anti-white. He held no rancour towards the group but much towards the ways of "white" people. The trip to New Guinea was just five years before PNG

independence and already there was already a group of young, educated men who were anxious for that day to come. The Sissano seminarian was one of these.

There were, of course, many stories but one is still vividly remembered by the entire group. "We got a call during the night. Fr Eugene tried to get the women to come to the hospital to have their babies but many would prefer to squat in the mangroves and have the baby or they would have them on the beach. We got a call one night and the woman had delivered the baby but the afterbirth had not come out and Terry drove the tractor and we hitched the tray truck and it was really dark. We only had hurricane lights to guide us and we found this woman and baby and the woman hopped on the tray truck and we took her to the hospital. But when we got there Sister said she was no longer dilated and there wasn't any anaesthetic and Sister had to just grope in and get all the afterbirth out. This native girl was just amazing and they could not do anything for her. The next morning she was flown to Wewak but they got her before it turned sceptic"

Meanwhile, back in First World Sandringham, the parish was growing, the school was growing and the young were growing up. One parishioner recalls being impressed by the friendly atmosphere: "We came to the parish at the end of 1968. We signed up for the house and then we had to enrol our son in the school. In those days the children were all enrolled on a Sunday afternoon at 4:30. Father Kelly presided, you didn't see the principal. We liked the parish from the very beginning. The day of enrolment was also the day of the parish picnic. It had been at the Flannery's. After the picnic all the parents came down to the school to enrol their children. They had had a very enjoyable afternoon [maybe helped by a couple of alcoholic beverages] There was such a wonderful atmosphere I knew this was going to a great parish for us." (parishioner Marie Wright). The parish picnic was actually a big fund raiser for the convent. These were held at various houses particularly the Flannery's, Joe and Moira Savage's, and the Merrick's. There might have been a better convent by now but in the early 1960s life for the nuns had not greatly improved and they were reliant on the money raised at these picnics. They were even grateful when the school tuck shop provided them with lunch. Mothers running the tuck shop were aware of the situation and would ensure that the nuns' rolls were always extra well filled with meat and salad.

The welcoming atmosphere in the parish was largely maintained by the Mothers Club. It was the mothers at the school who would welcome new parents to the school and parish. Parishioner Sue Agostino recalls her early involvement with the parish. "I took our first-born child along to the Prep classroom at Sacred Heart, feeling sad and apprehensive at leaving her. She was shy and the teacher welcomed her warmly, but said it was best for me not to stay. I turned, taking my 3 ½ year-old boy by the hand and pushed my eight month-old in the pram over the dusty driveway past the old presbytery. I was pregnant with my fourth child and that combined with hot February morning and my anxiety, I felt quite unwell. Someone spoke to me from behind: 'Are you a new mum?' She had a lovely smile and introduced herself. We chatted for some minutes and I began to feel better. She invited me to a morning tea to be held in the old meeting room the following Friday morning. I arrived into a room filled with noisy chatter, laughter and children playing. There were homemade cakes and scones. Everyone was friendly and I felt very much at ease. Those first few years were tiring for me as I was busy with four children under six, and not very well, but there

was always someone offering assistance. A mother of eight whose youngest child had just started school walked from one side of the playground to the other when she saw me struggling with two children on my hips. I could not understand why she would want to carry one of my babies after having carried so many of her own.”

At every stage of the parish life there have been individuals who were the pivot of parish activities, during this period there are many names that are continually repeated. Pat Hawkins was enormously important in any organisation of any ball, dinner party or gathering. She was a powerhouse with admirable skills in administering all the details involved in such events. Marie Wright in particular remembers the “Orange Ball” which was organised by Pat Hawkins and Bill Bereen as being a particularly memorable event. Curiously, no one remembers why it was called the “Orange Ball”. The Gadsdens, the same who offered their house for the chook event, were another important family. Vin Gadsden was a right hand man to Fr Kelly, indeed it was Vin who Fr Kelly blamed for throwing out the church statues, (at Fr Kelly’s direction, in fact, although that detail was conveniently omitted).

The wish to reach out to others was evident in every part of parish life. Fr Ernie was not only involved with but he had the ability to touch all people, old and young alike. One parishioner, who was a mother with young children at the time, recalls: “You know, I thought he was a complete larrikin and then he gave a one-day retreat to the mothers and what he said just touched us all. It was a complete revelation. He just had the most wonderful ability to understand people whoever they were” The elderly and sick were a particular concern to Fr Ernie but also to many in the parish. In July 1971 there was a notice in the bulletin announcing a “Ladies’ Committee Meeting for all ladies interested in hospital visitation, home assistance for sick parishioners, welcoming new parishioners and any other form of assistance.” The meeting decided to establish fortnightly visits to all patients in the seven private hospitals in the area. From this small beginning, Jenny Hall with a number of committed women developed an important group within the parish. Over the next few years the Concern Group, as it came to be known, was to work in particular with the frail and elderly and those suffering illness. One of its most important works was the monthly gathering for the older parishioners. These were organised initially by Pat Combe and Laurina Andrews and after Pat became too ill to continue, by Phyllis McCarthy. The St Vincent de Paul Society was also concerned with those in need, especially any poor and disadvantaged families in the Sandringham and Hampton area. The Society was still an organisation for men only, whereas the Concern Group was comprised of women. There was a need for both groups and they worked together for some time. In 1960 there were nine active members in the Sandringham St Vincent de Paul conference. Jack Linard became president not long after this and held that post for nearly 30 years. During 1960 the conference distributed 12 articles of clothing and footwear, three pieces of furniture, five hundredweight (cwt.) of fuel and helped 32 families. There were also parochial duties, hospital visitations and monthly visits to Ozanam house. The St Vincent de Paul conference was also responsible for the distribution of Catholic literature in the parish and each week sold about 12 dozen copies of “The Advocate” and “The Tribune” and managed a rack of Catholic literature. By 1967 there were 11 active members of the conference and along with the visits to hospitals, jails and institutions, they made 22 visits to the poor in their own homes and helped 62 families.

These raw figures do not give a real picture of the work of the society. Sandringham was not struggling in the sense of the inner suburbs but neither was it a wealthy area and its work took it into areas such as East Hampton and Highett where need was often more urgent. Joe O’Kelly was secretary of the Sandringham conference for nearly 50 years (as well as being on the first parish council and a trustee of the Cheltenham cemetery), his daughter Monica O’Kelly recalls: “I remember one year at Christmas time Dad was hospitalised because he had been so busy with the food parcels [to needy families] and he was just exhausted ” During this period the St Vincent de Paul (Vinnie’s) store in Hampton St, Hampton was established. It was to become a very successful enterprise due, in no small part, to the support from the women of the parish who volunteered to work there week after week.

In the 1950s the hub of parish life had been the sodalities, the group of parish collectors and the various committees established to run the annual balls and fetes. There had since the late 1940s been a school auxiliary, but there were few other church groups. It would appear that all the sodalities, Sacred Heart, Children of Mary and Holy Name, had disappeared by the late 1960s but in their place new parish groups and activities developed. Towards the end of 1969, Fr Kelly called two special meetings, one for all the men and one for all the “ladies” interested in the life and affairs of the parish. These were followed by a general meeting in October 1969 and at this meeting it was decided to establish a Parish Council. Even if its fortunes were to wax and wane in subsequent years, the first Parish Council was a milestone in the life of the parish.

Parish Councils were a new concept for Catholic parishes. One early information sheet explained that it was the wish of the Church as expressed by the Vatican Council that lay people could become more involved in parish life. The preparation for the introduction of the parish council was taken very seriously and there were numerous notices in the Sunday Bulletins, various information sheets and in the “Ardor” magazine.

Purposes of the council.

“In general its purpose may be outlined as follows:-

“1. To act as a body representative of the parishioners in advising and assisting the Parish Priest in development and administration of the Parish.

“2. To provide frequent and regular conversation among the People of the Parish and Priests, and Religious.

“3. To engage in the continuing apostolic formation of people in the Parish.

“4. To discuss and discern the real needs - both spiritual and temporal - in the Parish, in the Community and Archdiocese, likewise to discover the resources available to meet these needs.

“5. To set working priorities and recommend actions on the needs of the Church and of human society.

“6. To encourage communications, and mutual assistance also to co-ordinate and prevent conflicts in the practical working out of the programmes of the various organisations and working bodies in parish life.”

The election process for the first council was formal and was managed by a former employee of the Australian Electoral Commission. Twenty two parishioners stood for the 12 positions and 412 parishioners voted. The first councillors were; Margaret

Cameron, Peta Cameron, James Carolan, Vincent Gadsden, Patricia Hawking, Maree Kershaw, Charles McTeigue, Terence Monahan (jnr), Joseph O’Kelly, Jeanette O’Neill and Timothy Patton (jnr). One of the aims had been to obtain a cross-section group from the parish’s population and the composition of the first council indicates that this was achieved. Joe O’Kelly (St Vincent de Paul, and Cemetery trustee), Jeanette O’Neil (Nagle kindergarten and later Fernhill), Margaret Cameron (Mothers Club), Patricia Hawking (parish organiser of all social events) and Dr Charles McTeigue (son of long-time Sandringham and then Black Rock parishioners and son in law of Matthew Maguire) were all long time active parishioners while Peta Cameron, James Carolan, Maree Kershaw, Terence Monahan, jnr, and Timothy Patton, jnr were all young. That there were so many young people on the council indicates how strong youth activities in the parish were at that time.

Archbishop Justin Simonds formally installed the parish council on 23 February 1970 and the first meeting followed. It was unusual for an archbishop to open a parish council but Fr Kelly had made a personal request in a letter to Archbishop Simonds. In it, Fr Kelly acknowledged that there were protocols for requesting the presence of the Archbishop at a parish event but he thought Sandringham was a special case “especially in light of the recent parish events”. Presumably this was a reference to the dissension in the parish prior to Fr Kelly’s arrival.

In the edition of “Ardor” which followed the first meeting there was a long article on the council’s structure. There were to be six sub committees: (I) Worship, apostolate and adult education, (II) Inter-church and civic matters, (III) Parish planning and maintenance, (IV) Youth groups (including the Royal Children’s Hospital appeal), (V) Social committee, and (VI) Education board. There were to be more elections for the council over the coming years. The election of November 1973 resulted in the appointment of new members Alan Fagan, Des Murphy and Richard Savage. The “Ardor” of 1974 reported that the president was Joe Savage.

The early enthusiasm for the parish council seems to have abated fairly quickly and there is no record of elections after 1978. “Ardor” was important in publicising the work of the council but it ceased publication in 1974 so the work of the council became less well known. There were reports at the time of some dissension within the council, in particular concerning the issue of the new church. As the decade progressed, fewer activities seemed to emanate from the council while more parish activities were organised by other groups. In 1977 the president was Frank Doran but by this time the council’s difficulties had become widely known and a parish meeting regarding its future was held. Details of this meeting have been lost but those present were in favour of the council continuing. The council did continue and there was an election in 1978 but the early enthusiasm had faded and the council limped along for the next few years. Pat Combe was the president in 1978 but after that the council quietly disappeared.

Some of the proclamations of Vatican II required changes that were not always completely understood. It was one thing to establish parish councils because it was the wish of Vatican II, but another thing for many, especially some parish priests, to accept that lay people should become actively involved in the running of a parish. These were changes which in retrospect can be seen as requiring re-education for everyone

involved. Not all parish priests were able to cope with the new ideas and not all laity fully understood their ramifications. Fr Kelly's early adoption of the parish council idea suggests that he was attempting a more collaborative partnership with his parishioners. Often, however, he would act autocratically, brooking no opposition. One member of an early parish council was underwhelmed by Fr Kelly's dismissive style. "Most council meetings would get under way in his absence," she recalls. "Then after we had spent an hour or more discussing various topics, Fr Kelly would turn up, sometimes – but not always – ask what we had decided, then announce what he was going to do anyway. His way was always the only way." Whether this uneasy relationship between the parish priest and the fledgling council was due solely to Fr Kelly's assertive personality or whether friction was inevitable given the level of authority invested in all parish priests by the Church is an interesting point. It is sometimes said that a parish priest is Pope in his own parish, a view that would seem to make parish councils largely redundant. But even now, three decades after Fr Kelly's time, the place of parish councils in Catholic life remains a work in progress.

The many innovations and changes introduced by Fr Kelly were, however, mere harbingers for what was to be his main legacy to the parish. The Sunday bulletin of 11 November 1970 announced a general parish meeting to "place before parishioners a proposed plan for parish extensions". As it turned out the plan was not for an extension to anything. Rather, what was proposed was a whole new church. This was Fr Kelly's big vision and the language in the bulletin notice, "that the plans would be put before the parishioners" rather than discussed by the parishioners, is telling. Few documents about the establishment of the church can now be found but it seems there was little consultation. Any opposition that was voiced was summarily dismissed. Not everyone at the parish meeting was in favour of the building but Fr Kelly countenanced no dissension. According to one respondent, he told parishioners that if the parish did not use its resources "the money would just go to the poor parishes." Some parishioners thought that was exactly what should happen but their views did not prevail. This was an issue that was to divide the parish council but there are no minutes of any of the meetings and so the debates were unreported.

Among parishioners there was heated discussion regarding the proposal for the new church and the fate of the old one. Many felt deep attachment to the old building, regarding it not only as the scene of significant personal and family moments but also as a Sandringham landmark. Others took a more practical view; they believed the old church was beyond repair. In this group was one family who had experienced the old church in one of its darker and damper moments. This happened on a Sunday afternoon in 1971 when Fr Ernie Smith baptised their son in the old church. A cloudburst occurred during the ceremony and the building could not keep the deluge at bay. Water poured in through the roof and under the east door from the adjoining schoolyard. While Fr Ernie, parents and godparents and baby huddled under umbrellas around the font, the congregation stayed clear of the flood by standing on the kneelers in each pew. Afterwards, Fr Ernie, ever the organiser, issued all males present with mops, brooms and buckets to swab out the church. There was also a problem with birds nesting in the roof of the church. Margaret O'Toole tells a marvellous story about her

mother wearing a brand new, very stylish, brown velvet pillbox hat to church (everyone wore hats to church in those days). Unfortunately, due to bird activity in the roof that Sunday, that was the first and only time her mother wore that hat.

The above evidence notwithstanding, there seems to be no documentation to support claims that the old church was unsound or unsafe. According to some, there had been maintenance on the school grounds which included new asphalt. This asphalt had lifted the level of the playground thus the old church was at a lower level than the playground. The result of this was the risk of inundation when there was heavy rain such as occurred in the above mentioned incident. There had been some ongoing maintenance on the old church and it had been painted not long before the decision to build a new church was made. There were groups who wanted the old church extended but in the end it was, in the words of some, “the group who wanted the new church who won the day.” When the new church was approaching completion discussion quickened as to what was to be done with the old church. There is no documentation on this matter either, but it does seem the intention was to restore the old church as a hall.

The parish council, Sunday bulletins, a parish magazine, a credit union, new school buildings and a new church were all either established or at the planning stage during Fr Kelly’s period as parish priest. His time in Sandringham was, however, relatively brief and ended in 1971 (as did the appointment of Fr Abrahams). Fr Kelly was made an auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese and moved to Mentone. It was up to the next parish priest to continue some of Fr Kelly’s projects but even as this was happening John A. Kelly did not fade entirely from his former parishioners’ view. Particularly memorable to some of them, especially those who read the metropolitan daily “The Age”, was Bishop (as he was by then) Kelly’s joust with “The Age” Saturday columnist and inveterate Catholic-baiter Phillip Adams. After one especially virulent Adams column appeared in “The Age”, Bishop Kelly submitted a reply defending the Church and comprehensively demolishing Adams on grounds of fact and logic. To its credit, “The Age” published Bishop Kelly’s literary missile in full.

A CARING PARISH

John Scarborough was born in 1915 and raised in Carlton. He was ordained in 1943 and had been parish priest of Ringwood and Brunswick before coming to Sandringham in 1971. An article in the parish magazine "Horizons" three decades after he left Sacred Heart remembered him admiringly: "Fr John Scarborough could hardly have been a greater contrast to Bishop Kelly. He was tall, lean and craggy- featured, with a manner to which the Cure of Ars might have related: quietly spoken, gentle, self-effacing, endlessly understanding, and tirelessly consultative. His role, it seemed, was to be a servant as much as a leader." He was, it seems, something of a poet too, although this talent was kept hidden during his time in Sandringham. -[The poem "The Least of my Brothers" was written by Fr John Scarborough not long before he died and published in "The Madonna" magazine. It came to light during an interview with a parishioner who has kept it for many years. – Author]

Fr Scarborough was above all a pastoral parish priest. As was said at his funeral: "Fr Scarborough was all things to all people, rich and poor. He supported lonely people tirelessly, the same compassion extended to instructing converts for baptism and confirmation. He led the people God entrusted to him, nourished them with God's word and strengthened them with the sacraments. The Mass as sacrifice and sacrament was the centre of Fr Scarborough's life, not one nor the other but both, as you cannot have one without the other ." On his arrival at Sacred Heart, however, his immediate concern was of a practical nature and that was to continue the projects initiated by Fr Kelly. The biggest of these was construction of the church and presbytery, opposition to which still lingered. The dissension about the church was now such that Fr Scarborough felt it necessary to call another parish meeting at which it was decided, finally, that the building would go ahead. Mr J. Saraty was the architect and the building contract was won by L.P.K Projects whose managing director was a parishioner, Leo Kelly. The building took some time and there were claims that administrative delays meant that the building did not proceed as quickly as planned. There were also problems with plans for the presbytery, the size of which was reduced.

In the middle of this work, there were more changes to parish personnel. A year after Fr Scarborough's arrival, Fr Ernie Smith was replaced by a very different assistant priest in Fr Peter Priestly. Unlike the football playing Ernie Smith, Fr Priestly was famous for his hobby which was snake-keeping, an unfounded rumour being that Fr Priestly kept his snakes under the church. Fr Priestly was moved in 1975 and Fr Val Maglica, a newly ordained priest, came to Sacred Heart. A quiet, mild-mannered man, Fr Val was interested in steam trains rather than snakes and was also very musical, working with the choir to improve the church music. It is said that he found it difficult to wake up for the weekday 7 am Mass "and

Jack Morris [father of Peter and Tonia] would have to go and wake him up to say Mass” (a parishioner). In 1977 at the request of Fr Scarborough and the parish council, and while Fr Maglica was assistant priest, Sister Patricia Madigan was appointed as a parish associate. Sister Patricia lived at the Sandringham convent and her full-time employment was to assist the priests in their pastoral work.

Parishioner Gerry Harper summed up the coming and going of a number of these assistants in verse. A few lines from his ode convey the idea:

*We've had curates in plenty down here by the sea
And they've been as different as different can be,
One that we had, and for whom some still yearn,
Was wonderful Smith by the grand name of Ern.
How about Peter Priestly and his horrible snakes,
They gave Father Scarb a bad case of the shakes.
And then Val Maglica, you all knew him well,
The Altar boys called him the 'late' Father Val.*

“The Singing Priest”, Fr Paul Gurry, replaced Fr Maglica in 1978. If Fr Maglica had been quiet, Paul Gurry was boisterous. Like Fr Maglica, he was very interested in music and popular music in particular. Indeed he loved anything from a stage musical. He had a great singing voice and although his stay in the parish was short he would be well-remembered for the parish productions of “Trial by Jury” which he encouraged and in which he performed. Fittingly, when Fr Gurry was accorded the traditional parish farewell at the end of his term in 1979, he was given a musical send-off with appropriate lyrics by parish minstrel Gerry Harper.

*We welcomed a new man, a Gurry named Paul.
He soon had us singing like never before,
You could hear us quite clearly from down near the shore
With Val⁴¹ at the organ and choir in full voice,
We had to sing with 'em, we'd no other choice.
He bought us new hymn books, we made the church ring,
Singing hymns that once only “Proddies” would sing.*

Although he was immersed in the practicality of building a new church Fr Scarborough’s main aim while he was at Sandringham was to build a more caring community. Much of his pastoral work in the parish stemmed from an event in the Archdiocese which was to have a lasting effect on him and on the parish. In February 1973, while Sandringham’s new church was still being built, Melbourne hosted the 40th. International Eucharistic Congress, the theme of which was “Love One Another”. The fostering of a family spirit and an attitude of care within the parish in keeping with this theme became a major concern for Fr Scarborough. Not long after the conclusion of the Congress, he called a meeting for all parishioners who had attended the Congress seminar on “A Caring Christian Community”. This was followed by a series of home meetings to discuss his ideas to build a stronger, more caring community. A caring community was also a more involved faith community. As Fr Scarborough developed his ideas in the parish there were changes occurring in the Church which would also allow the laity to become more involved in the liturgy. Until 1973 it had seemed an

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immutable law that the only person allowed to touch the host was the priest. Nuns or brothers were not allowed and for a lay person it was almost a sin. Then in 1973 a Sunday bulletin announced: "Fr Scarborough conducted a ceremony designating special ministers for distributing the Eucharist. The special ministers were Sr. Maureen Cullen, Sr. Francis, Sr. Josephine Hoare, Genevieve Jeffery, Josephine Kennedy, John Morris, Frank Maguire, Jack Linard and Joe Savage." The laity were now becoming more deeply involved in both liturgy and pastoral work.

Fr Scarborough's home meetings resulted in the formation of a sub-committee of the parish council to be known as the Caring Christian Coordination committee. In November 1973 the committee published a 16- page report on the care needs of the parish. The report is no longer available but it was summarised in a long article in "Ardor" of 1973.

"The committee (now widely known as the 5 C's) was set up after the meetings by the parish pastoral council and placed under the chairmanship of Des Fraser. He and his assistants – Jenny Hall, Val Kingwell, Phyllis McCarthy, Jeanette O'Neill, Des Hill, Frank Maguire, John Monahan and Barry Thornton – were given the task of investigating all aspects of the human condition in which the parish, as a Christian Caring Community should find itself involved."

"Probably one of the most attractive proposals [arising from the investigation] is that the parish take advantage of the Aged Persons Hostels Act 1972. This would enable us to provide accommodation for about 30 pensioners at negligible initial expense and an annual outlay of \$4,000."

The 5C's report also drew attention to the lack of facilities in existing parish buildings for young people once they had left school. It also suggested the possibility of providing some form of emergency accommodation so that the parish could help a family in need."

Many of the recommendations of the Caring Christian Coordination committee report were to be established over the next few years, in particular the provision of facilities for youth and construction of an aged care hostel. The Caring Christian Community Coordination Committee, or 5C's (which included the former Concern Group) was to be a force for good in the parish. It worked closely with other churches in the area and with St Vincent de Paul, the YCW and other existing Sacred Heart groups.

St Vincent de Paul was still a men's-only organisation but in September 1973 women from the 5 C's group began on behalf of the St Vincent de Paul conference to visit some older women in the parish. The 5 C's committee then followed this initial work with a letter, in December 1973, to the Co-ordinating Committee of the St Vincent de Paul Society enquiring whether the 5Cs committee could help the Sandringham conference on a permanent basis. The response from the co-ordinating committee instructed the 5Cs committee to contact the conference president or secretary and any help could then be coordinated through the Sandringham conference. As this was what the 5Cs committee had been doing for some time the response from the central office of the society was hardly helpful. Then a new rule of the St Vincent de Paul Society was published in May 1975 (the first major revision since 1835) which among other things allowed women to become members. According to the minutes of the Sandringham

conference the feasibility of forming a women's conference in the parish was not discussed until nearly 18 months later in October 1976. At this meeting it was decided not to proceed with the admission of women members until enquiries had ascertained the availability of enough women to make up a conference and the effect that inclusion of women in St V de P activities would have on Concern groups already working in the parish. Whether the conference was actually reluctant to admit women, or just displaying extreme caution we shall never know. Either way, it seemed that the poet Wordsworth was right when he observed that "the mills of God grind slowly."

Of all the things for which Fr Scarborough will be remembered, that with the widest impact will be the Fernhill Hostel for the aged. As mentioned earlier, the hostel grew out of parish response to the Eucharistic Congress, Fr Scarborough's own wish to provide a more caring society, and the 5 C's report. Frank Maguire worked closely with Fr Scarborough and was instrumental in the procurement of funds for the project. He also served as president of the Fernhill committee of management for many years and his wife, Gwladys, was also on the committee until her death. The first meeting of the committee was held on 12 December 1973 with Father Scarborough as president and the tidy sum of \$5 in its bank account. Also present at the first meeting were Frank Maguire, Jeanette O'Neill, Es Merrick, Helen Stuchberry and Des Hill. while Marie Murphy and Jack Linard were co-opted as additional members the following year. The committee was authorised to apply for a capital grant and to plan, build and operate a 46-bed hostel for frail, elderly people with links to Sandringham. Support from the wider community in Sandringham was sought and received from other churches and service groups and then from Sandringham Council which donated \$65,000. This helped to make up the shortfall between the \$618,000 capital grant from Government and the total cost of over \$800,000.

The site, which was where the Nagle Kindergarten had once stood, was purchased from the Presentation Sisters for \$40,000. The source of the funds to purchase the land is not clear but it was probably provided by Fr Scarborough from parish accumulated funds. In any event, Frank Maguire so convinced the nuns of the worthiness of the Fernhill cause that they agreed to loan the \$40,000 back to the management committee until they were able to pay it back. The entitlement of 46 beds was received from surplus grant rights of the Little Sisters of the Poor and Nazareth House.⁴²

Building commenced in June 1976 and the first residents moved in in July 1977. Fernhill was officially opened in November 1977 by Senator Margaret Guilfoyle, the Federal Minister for Social Security, and blessed by Archbishop Little. The actual development of Fernhill was one thing but the work of many benefactors and volunteers enabled it to thrive. "Every year for over 30 years the All Souls Opportunity Shop gave Fernhill a generous donation and in the early years fund raising was assisted by the local Lions and Apex Clubs. All manner of social fund-raisers were organised, ranging from an art show run in conjunction with Apex, to a tennis tournament with such notable players as politicians Don Chipp and Bob Hawke, and a concert at Sandringham Technical School starring the singer Smacka Fitzgibbon and pianist Eddie Zavod."

The Vatican Council's encouragement of inter-church dialogue was a major directional change and inspired Catholics to think beyond their own church. Gone

⁴² Source: Mary O'Connor, daughter of Frank and Gwladys Maguire.

were the days when Catholics were advised against, or even forbidden, attendance at weddings or funerals in non-Catholic churches. Sacred Heart parish was to become deeply involved with the Sandringham Interchurch Council which had grown from the Ministers Fraternal, a group of ministers from the Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican churches in Sandringham. Fr Kelly had been enthusiastic about the council and joined when he came to the parish in 1968. However it was Fr Scarborough who gave the interaction with Interchurch Council momentum when during the Eucharistic Congress, he organised an ecumenical service at Sacred Heart. All the ministers, wives and congregations of the local churches and the Mayor and Mayoress of Sandringham were invited to this service which was probably the first major ecumenical service to be held at Sacred Heart. By 1973 the 5Cs concern group had linked with similar groups in other Sandringham churches. Through the Interchurch Council, the group worked with Sandringham Memorial Hospital, Meals on Wheels, the Citizen's Advice Bureau and Southern Family Life. In particular, the Interchurch Council developed an active planning for early retirement group, which lasted for a number of years and was regularly advertised in the Sunday Mass bulletin.

It was in education that members of the parish were to not only interact with those from the other local churches but also reach out to the broader community. There were by now more Catholic children in Government primary schools and there was a need for catechists to teach these children the basis of their faith and to prepare them for the sacraments. The post-war babies were getting older and their parents, mothers in particular, had more time to become involved. In 1969 catechist classes had begun at Sandringham and Sandringham East primary schools. Parishioners involved in this work included Kath Maher, Margaret Cameron and Norma Murray. Others such as Pam Stayner, Veronica Meade and Patricia O'Callaghan prepared the children for First Confession and First Communion. Later in the 1970s there were Friday evening catechetics classes for Government school secondary students, when the students would have an hour of religious topics followed by a social. Fewer than 70 years after the blessing of Sacred Heart school, when parishioners were told that they could not in conscience send their children to government schools, parishioners were volunteering to spread the faith in those schools. The work in government schools also brought catechists in contact with those from the other churches who were doing the same work.

At the end of 1973 the Presentation nuns withdrew from Black Rock and Hampton schools and Mother Berchmans, who had replaced Mother Marie Therese, was moved from Sacred Heart. Sacred Heart was now the only school in the immediate area in which there were still teaching nuns. In 1974 the new principal and superior of the convent, Sister Maureen Cullen, was interviewed for "Ardor". This was one of the first major public inputs from one of the nuns about the school (or for that matter the parish). The interview also illustrates the wider deployment of the nuns in this changing period: "As the Presentation nuns are no longer at Hampton or Black Rock, the convent is now being used to house nuns doing various works in the community. Sr. Maureen told "Ardor". [The] sisters at the convent [included], two retired nuns, one housekeeper, one each at Sacred Heart and St Finbars and one co-ordinating catechetics for schools with lay principals."

When she first came to the school, Sister Maureen was teaching nearly full-time with only one day off for administrative duties. By the late 1970s administrative duties in schools

were becoming more demanding and onerous. Parishioner Margaret Whelan recalls life as a teacher during this period and the changes over the years: "I started here in 1976 as the emergency teacher. Sister Maureen was in charge of the school. In the next year she was going to go into the office full-time and she came down to Prep and asked if I would go into Grade 6 the next year. Betty Pain was there and we shared the class".

Not only were there changes in the administrative demands of running a school but there continued to be changes in the curriculum and a need for more space. Once the new church and presbytery were completed in 1974, the school began to use the old presbytery for these purposes and by 1977 the old presbytery was completely used by the school.

In the social life of the parish, there was little distinction between what was organised by the school and what was organised by the parish. The mothers may have run the dinner dance but it was regarded as a parish event. The parish may have held a ball (and there were many in this period), but the school parents would be running it. One parishioner recalls: "We ran some great functions: tennis lunches, games nights, a fun run, bush dances in the old church hall, dinner in the garden of the old presbytery, flea markets, cake stalls, card lunches, dinner dances for which we prepared food for days in people's homes, washing lettuces in bathtubs and then cooking and serving a four course magnificent meal to 450 guests whilst looking very glamorous and dancing the night away. I look back now and wonder how we did it."

Another major task of the Mothers' Club was to prepare the annual First Communion breakfast. After Mass all the first communicants would go to the school hall, or in later years to the old church, for breakfast. It was indeed a special time. The girls would wear white frocks and veils and the boys their suits. The mothers would have prepared a party breakfast (always including jelly) and which would be remembered by all first communicants for years thereafter. The other well remembered work of the Mothers Club was the school tuckshop. Laurina Andrews worked at the tuckshop and continued to run it after her youngest left primary school. She recalls: "When I first started doing tuckshop it was in the old school. There used to be a little space we turned into a kitchen. We used to pick up the pies at one of the bakers in Bay Rd and when they shut we went to McQueens in Hampton St. We got pies and sausage rolls. And we used to buy rolls and make them up. The cakes for the children were what we made ourselves; it could be honey joys or whatever. We just used to take a plate."

Within the parish during this period an explosion of activities occurred, catering for the different interests of parishioners. In 1974 a parish library organised by Melissa Halloran, who by this time was the school librarian, was established and opened each Sunday after Mass. The library was developed as a means of enhancing the knowledge of Christianity within the parish. For those with artistic talents there was a play-reading group, an adult choir and a chorale group. In December 1974 the choir and chorale led the congregation in Christmas carols while the play-reading group read the Christmas story from the scriptures. In 1976 a parish social committee was established. It arranged family entertainments, dinner dances, Irish dancing classes, ballroom dancing and Italian cooking classes (run by parishioner Joan Rigoni). In 1971 Fr Scarborough re-established the tennis club which had been important in the life of the parish in earlier years.

Youth groups, however, seemed to struggle. Fr Scarborough was busy and the assistant priests during this period had other concerns so the leadership of earlier years was absent. This is not to say there was no concern about the parish's younger people. In fact the 5C's committee had pointed out that the youth needed somewhere to meet. That was certainly important but not as important as having a driving force dedicated to working with the youth. By the end of 1973 the YCS had disappeared and the YCW no longer met (although the YCW football team lasted a little longer). In 1974 a new youth group called Ikthus was established and with the approaching completion of the new church and presbytery the problem of a place to meet was solved. The youth would be offered a room at what was soon to be the old presbytery. Initially, there was both a senior and junior Ikthus group. In the March 1974 "Ardor" there is a report on the inaugural meeting which conveyed the general reaction. "Most members are overawed at the possibility of obtaining rooms in the present presbytery for the club's use. This would give us a regular meeting place always available for our sole use, a place to relax, to study, to play a few records. Committees will be set up but we will make sure that they are not left to do the bulk of the work as was the case with YCW and YCS groups."

Ikthus committees:

Senior committee: Des Clancy president, Maree Cochrane secretary, Kevin Duscher treasurer; Frank Meade liaison; with Anne Fraser and Rod Quigley.

Junior committee: Michael Scully, Maryanne Spottiswood, Stephen Savage, Donna Corboy, Patricia O'Neill and Joanne Leeden.

Despite these good intentions, Ikthus did not seem to last long because it was already being "revived" in May 1976 and in 1978 there was a new junior YCS for students in Forms 1 to 3.

Although youth groups struggled there was always sport to provide an on-going link between the parish and many of its younger people. Debbie Erikson remembers how the success of the school netball teams expanded to become a broader parish activity. "The fun and camaraderie of parish netball was missed when the girls moved on to secondary schools. The Victorian Catholic Netball Association organised a winter competition held on Saturday afternoon and it was decided to enter teams from Scared Heart. Colin Corboy, a father of three girls, volunteered to coach one team. Like Mother Marie Therese, he too had a competitive edge and the team was subjected to gruelling training sessions. The rules of netball were rewritten at this time and new tactics such as zoning and two-handed shooting for goal made the game faster and more enjoyable as a spectator sport. Weekend netball became a family affair as teams needed to be transported to the venues and not all families owned a car. Car-pooling was the only option and this strengthened the bond between families. Families with a number of daughters developed a long association with the sport; the Egan, Duscher, O'Shannessey, Corboy, Hawking, Meade, Savage and Kennedy families were among those who either played or supported the game each Saturday over a number of years."

Throughout this time the building of the new church continued. In the November 1973 "Ardor" Fr Scarborough wrote: "Very soon we will be using our new buildings and see the

fulfilment of plans approved by the parish council in Bishop Kelly's time more than 3 years ago. The background to the council's thinking at that time was the need for a parish hall which would be a focal point for social life for all sections of the parish and provide an asset for their children in many ways. It was thought that the most economical and most effective way of providing such a centre was to use the old church as a hall and to build a new church which would remove many of the disadvantages of the old church." In retrospect it might be asked why, if what the parish needed most was a hall, it had been decided to build a new church. It is likely that the idea to renovate the old church was developed after the building of the new church had begun. The last Mass in the old church was on Saturday 8 June 1974 at 8.00 a.m. and the first mass in the new church was celebrated on the same day. The church was officially opened by Bishop Kelly on 21 July 1974. The blessing was a great success and was attended by more than 500 people. In a move that was both ecumenical and neighbourly, the Presbyterian Church lent seats and the women from St Agnes, Highett, served supper. At the blessing, Fr Crennan, the parish priest of Immaculate Heart, East Hampton, donated \$100 to the building fund on behalf of his parish. East Hampton had become a separate parish in 1958 and although it was an offshoot of St Marys, Hampton, much of the area covered by Immaculate Heart had previously been in the Sandringham parish. The amount of the donation was not relevant; what was important was that it was a gesture to the mother church. In conjunction with the blessing, there was celebration of the parish diamond jubilee year and a "Back to Sandringham" Day.

By the 1970s the world seemed a smaller place. Wars in South East Asia made it clear how close many of the world's underdeveloped nations were to Australia's shores. People had more leisure, travel was more affordable and consequently Australians were travelling more. Vatican II had rethought the role of evangelisation, and religious missionaries, who might once have expected to stay in a mission country all their lives, were returning home and sharing their stories. More lay missionaries were working in Third World countries for two and three years before returning with their stories. All this contributed to a much greater consciousness of the outside world, the needs of underdeveloped nations and the role of Catholics in responding to these needs. There was more time to look beyond the immediate and to consider the plight of the poor at home and in other countries. In the parish, outreach was no longer just to the local community and other churches but to people beyond our shores. By the late 1960s there were regular church collections for disaster relief campaigns, for overseas famine relief and for natural disasters such as floods, cyclones and volcanic eruptions. Typical of this era was the establishment of an India Aid group which assisted with a rural development project in Bihar, India. This group was established in 1968 and within six years had raised \$2,000. The Co-workers of Mother Theresa was another active group. Norma Murray was part of this group with Bay Shacklock, Frank Burke, Pauline Burke, Eugenie Croker and Pat Combe. The group would visit the sick in hospitals and nursing homes weekly. Norma Murray recalls: "We did a lot of work for them. They did not allow you to collect money but we collected lots of things for those in other countries. At one stage we collected first communion dresses for children in New Guinea."

The St Vincent de Paul conference also took an interest in developing countries. By early 1970 the Sandringham conference been twinned with a parish in Indonesia to which it would send money regularly. In the mid 1970s, after the Indonesian invasion of

East Timor when Indonesian-Australian relations were tense, there was often trouble with correspondence and money getting through to Indonesia. Language was also a problem at both ends. At one conference meeting in Sandringham, conference members asked whether any of the brothers (they were still all brothers at this stage) could write in Dutch. Christine Carolan, a parishioner with an excellent knowledge of Indonesian language and culture, addressed the conference about the issues and how they could be avoided or minimised. Despite the difficulties, the work of the Sacred Heart conference with its Indonesian twin was extensive. The conference supported a number of Indonesian students who otherwise would not have been able to attend school, sent money for the building of a new church and classrooms, provided books and stationery for a Catholic school and set up a sewing school with sewing machines and material.

In what might be considered a work bridging their overseas and local commitments and also in involving broader parish participation in its endeavours, the Sandringham conference was instrumental in settling South East Asian refugee families in what was known as "the Leonard House". The Leonards were a parish family who had lived next to the old presbytery. Their house in Sandringham Rd had been bought by the parish in 1973 and then rented out. The St Vincent de Paul conference organised for this house to become a temporary home for refugees from South East Asia. After some initial difficulties with the sponsorship, the first refugee family arrived in February 1979 and they were followed by several more families over the next few years. The conference organised settlement, ensured there was adequate furniture, helped with government assistance and arranged for parishioners to tutor the children. One parishioner recalls: "I remember going to the house one night a week to tutor the children who were at school. I think there were young ones but the St Vincent de Paul particularly wanted the ones in secondary school to be helped. I think that there were three or four of us and we each went a different night. Sometimes they asked to be taught specific grammar but usually I just helped them with their homework."

In 1973 a long period of conservative government ended in Australia and while there was peace there was also anxiety. For many, change seemed to be non-stop and these changes, especially those in the Church, were difficult to handle. In Sandringham from the beginning of the 1960s to the end of the 1970s there had been a succession of parish priests, curates, and school principals. Then at the end of 1978, on the cusp of a new decade, both Fr Scarborough and Fr Gurry were moved. As was customary, they were accorded a parish farewell. And as was also customary, the parish poet laureate Gerry Harper was commissioned to commemorate the occasion in verse. A couple of verses of his (very long) ode to the departing priests will give readers an idea of the farewell:

*The sick will miss you Father J.,
They always were your special care.
You shared their sufferings every day,
With a love that's all too rare.
So Father John is going,
It's a sad day for us all.
And it's not helped by knowing
That we're losing Father Paul.*



1914-1936 Fr William Mangan

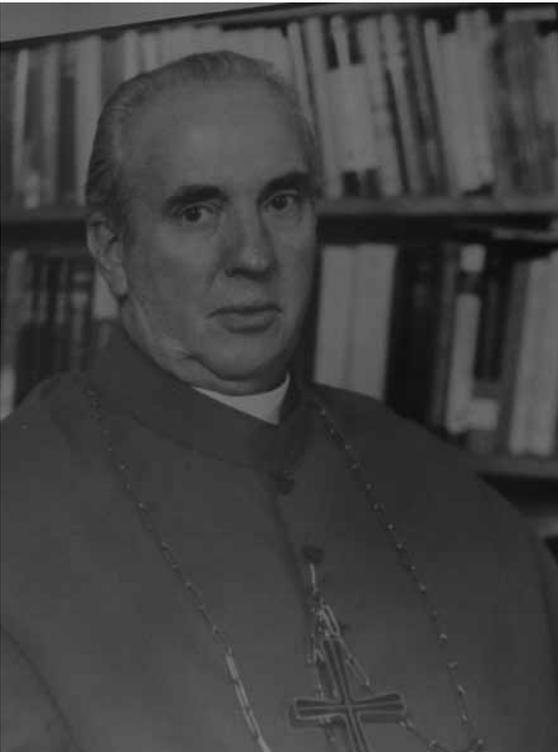


1936-1962 Fr Leo Hartnett

1962-1968 Fr Patrick O'Connor

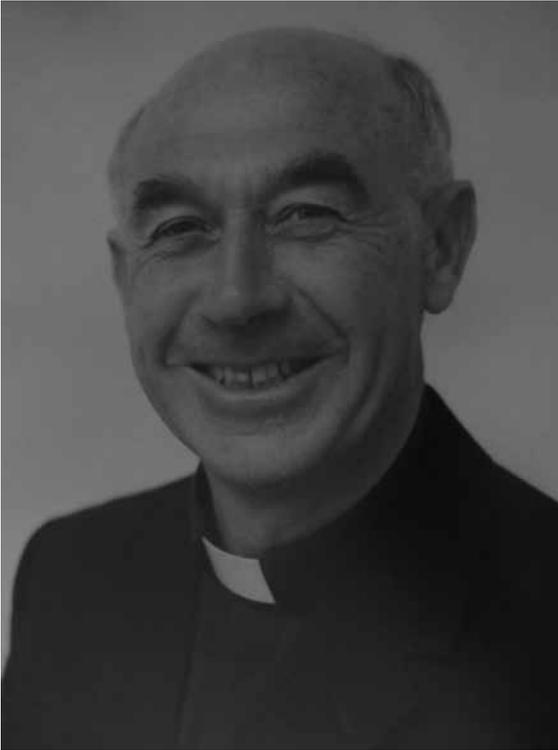


1968-1971 Fr John A Kelly





1971-1979 Fr John Scarborough



1979-1996 Fr Jim Coakley



1996- Fr Frank O'loughlin

GUIDED DEMOCRACY COMES TO SANDRINGHAM

The 1980s was a turbulent decade. On the world stage Thatcher, Reagan and Gorbachev were the big names. At home we admired --- or didn't --- Malcolm Fraser at first and then Bob Hawke. Pope John Paul II survived an assassination attempt. Azaria Chamberlain disappeared. Apple Macs appeared on desks, the Rolling Stones and Michael Jackson on TV screens. A mystery disease, dubbed AIDS, was reported. Ash Wednesday brought death and destruction to Victoria. Then, in the last year of the decade, came astonishing news: the Berlin Wall crumbled almost overnight.

In peaceful Sandringham change was steady, if less dramatic. The proportion of older people in the community continued to rise, leading to growth in the number of hostels and nursing homes. The decline in the number of vocations to the religious life, and a surge in the number of priests being laicised, began to affect staffing levels in Catholic parishes, including our own. And in Sacred Heart School the increasing complexity of educational needs brought with it a whole new set of staffing and financial problems.

For the parish perhaps the most momentous event of the 1980s occurred just before the decade began, with the appointment in 1979 of a new parish priest and a new assistant priest. The new PP was Fr Jim Coakley, who had the build of a handy centre half forward and the ideas and energy of a managing director. And appearances were not deceptive. According to one account, his latent football potential was apparent one afternoon when he was watching an AFL match at the MCG. When the ball sailed into the crowd at one point, the Reverend Coakley jumped to his feet and took a mark of which "Buddy" Franklin would have been proud. In her parish history Gay Monahan wrote: "Jim Coakley arrived in Sandringham as parish priest and very quickly adapted to parish life. He enjoyed living close to the beach and was an enthusiastic swimmer and jogger. Father Jim was always a practical man. He had the ability to see what was needed in the parish and to quickly and methodically organise the achievement of his vision. During his time in the parish many improvements were made to the church, school and grounds." The parish bard, of course, had his own way of saying things:

And so to Father Coakley from North Altona across the bay
 He wasn't sure of us at all, coincidental, would you say?
 He had his way of doing things and sometimes trod on toes,
 For a P.P. not uncommon, that's the way it usually goes.
 Funny how a priest's last parish always seems to be the best;
 "The folks at Saint "Whatever" were..." – well, you can guess the rest.
 Then slowly, but so surely, we found the best in him
 We know he cannot see it but there's gold in Father Jim.

Fr Coakley was an excellent manager. In the 20 or so years from 1980 to the end of the 1990s, the parish saw numerous missions, the creation of many groups, much

building (and demolition), several sacrificial giving campaigns, many celebrations and, after seven decades of devoted service to Sacred Heart School, a farewell from the school to the Presentation nuns.

The year 1979 saw first, the departure to Ferntree Gully of Sister Patricia who had been the parish associate for two years, and then the arrival of the new assistant priest, Father Neville McKie. He was, of course, dubbed “Father Nev” almost at once by most parishioners (and somewhat less reverently as “the Rev Nev” by others). A late vocation, having been a motor mechanic before entering the seminary, he soon became known for his carefully prepared but very lengthy sermons, his companion dog “Deefer” (as in Deefer Dog) and for his noisy and well-worn Bongo panel van. The parish poet summarised him well.

*We'd never heard of him before, and he'd less of us
We said, "Just take him easy, remember now – no fuss".
Just give him time to settle in, we'll test his bark and bite
But Neville really barked and bit at everything in sight.
We sat thru' all his sermons, often looking at the clock,
But came to realize his words were founded on the rock.
And slowly, but so surely, we found him not so bad;
We took to him, he took to us; both he and we were glad.
His strong point was theology, sometimes it fell on us like fog
The one who understood it all, perhaps, was "Deefer", Neville's dog.
There were times he'd wander from the point and really have us beat,
We'd get twenty minutes gravy, and perhaps five minutes meat.
But the meat he gave was meat indeed, perhaps too strong for some
As he pressed home his strongest thoughts on "The Kingdom Come".*

Fr Nev was proud of his “working man” background and the chalice he used at Mass was created from metal obtained by melting down the spanners he had used in his previous calling. Fr Nev was certainly a polarizing character; some admired his bluff good nature and his dogged determination to clarify some theological or moral point in his homilies but what some saw as strengths provoked only thoughtful frowns from other parishioners. One parishioner recalls: “His sermons were very long, they were incredibly long but he was always quite proud of the fact that Mass was never longer than an hour. He would often say that people might complain about the length of the sermon but we were only there for the hour. Of course he achieved that by cutting out lots of other parts of the Mass!” Father Nev was appointed to another parish in 1982. His farewell was attended by ministers of the other Sandringham churches with whom he had worked closely.

Fr Nev was replaced at Sacred Heart by Father Damien West. Younger than his predecessor, Father West was also of different disposition, being quiet and friendly and with a keen interest in books and writing. This was appropriate since he was a close relative, a nephew, according to the memory of some parishioners, of the famous Australian novelist (and frequent commentator on Catholic matters in the media) Morris West. Fr West was heavily involved with the charismatic prayer group and introduced a men's group to the parish but he too was shifted after only two years and it would seem that the men's group did not last long after his departure.

The new curate, arriving in 1984, was to Fathers McKie and West as chalk is to cheese. In the words of the parish poet:

*He promised himself very early on, hard yakka he'd never shirk,
But then took a public service job, instead of going to work!
Then, when his Mother went to God, one hundred years against her name,
He thought of his vocation – thought he'd try the priestly game.*

Fr Joe Finn had been an accountant in the Public Service for many years and although he had long harboured an inclination to enter the priesthood he also felt an obligation to care for his widowed mother. When she died at the age of 100 he felt free to enter the seminary although by then he was well into his 60s. Fortune, or the Holy Spirit, was on his side because by then the seminary at Kensington, NSW, was accepting mature age applicants for a shortened study and training course. After his ordination Fr Joe was appointed to Sandringham where his white hair and gentle manner quickly won parishioners' affection. He took delight in describing himself as "the oldest curate in Australia" but, defying his age, he stayed at Sacred Heart for 10 years, thus earning for himself the additional distinction of being the parish's longest serving assistant priest.

Perhaps reflecting a growing concern about changing attitudes to participation in church life by Australia's Catholics, the 1980s was a decade when statistics were taken and studied more carefully by Church authorities. As in most parishes, the Sandringham figures from that time are telling. In 1979 (the year Fathers Coakley and McKie arrived) the Catholic population of the parish was 2,200 and the average Sunday Mass attendance was 1050. During 1979 there were 39 baptisms, 77 confirmations, 18 marriages, 1,800 sick calls, and 369 funerals. Nine years later, in 1988, the average Sunday Mass count had slipped to 945 and by 1995 average Sunday attendance had fallen even further, to 690. There continued to be four Masses celebrated each weekend but by then there was no longer an assistant priest and the statistics indicated that there was a need for only three Masses each weekend. In September 1995 the Sunday evening Mass, which had been popular especially with the younger people in the parish, was discontinued although why this Mass was chosen (instead of one of the Saturday evening or Sunday morning Masses) is unclear. For some years, the celebrant for the Sunday evening Mass had been Fr Peter Howard, a former parishioner and a lecturer at Clayton and later at Monash University. It may have been that reliance on a supply priest, especially one with so many other commitments, was too difficult. Following the change, weekend Mass times were 6pm Saturday and 9am and 11am Sunday, times that remain to this day. Mass attendance figures alone do not give a full picture of parish life. They do not indicate numbers for sick calls made, communions distributed by lay ministers, funerals conducted, or outreach work carried out by parish organisations in the 90s. The figures do, however, provide a snapshot of parish life on a Sunday and are in line with the Australia-wide reality then emerging: the parish church was no longer the centre of weekend life for many Catholics.

Despite this, parish life at Sacred Heart remained busy. There were regular gatherings for the elderly and although the 5Cs had disappeared, a Concern group was active. The school continued to grow and, as mentioned earlier, the demands of education were becoming increasingly complex. After the last election of 1978, there is no further

mention in available records of a parish council, its members or its work. There were instead various small groups operating independently within the parish. Why the parish council of that time withered away is not clear. Perhaps it simply atrophied or perhaps the new PP considered a parish council a complication he could do without. There can be no question, however, that Father Coakley intended to put parish organisation on a rational footing. Towards the end of his first year in Sandringham he called a meeting of parish group leaders at which it was decided that from the beginning of 1980 there would be five sub-committees: Finance, Maintenance, School, Liturgy, and Social Action. These would co-ordinate the work of all other parish groups, each one of which would be affiliated with one of the five sub-committees. Each sub-committee would present an annual report and balance sheet to a parish general meeting to be held each February. In the event, the first parish meeting was held in April 1980 and discussion centred not on the group reports but on yet another building programme for the parish. All this was very much in Fr Coakley's business-like style; lay participation was well and good in theory but "guided democracy" could often get things done more efficiently.

By 1980 the infrastructure needs of the school were again significant. There was a fairly new church and Fernhill had been a massive project but little had been done at the school, in the school grounds or to the old church building for some years. There had been no updating of the school since the 1968 project. The increase in enrolments and the impact of a changing curriculum, which included library time and art and craft and changing administrative needs, meant that the school and the grounds were now inadequate. The old presbytery was being used for school purposes but it was still essentially a house and thus not a satisfactory long-term solution. Between 1980 and 1982, Sister Lois Young was school principal and superior of the convent. It was to be a period of much building in the school.

In January 1980 the parish debt was \$190,000 but it was about to increase substantially. In October that year, plan No.7 of the building programme appeared on the church notice board with an estimated cost of \$270,000. The aim was to build, restore and update as much of the parish building as possible, including church, school, toilets, youth room and grounds. The new building work would provide a multi-purpose room, canteen, art room, special teaching area, administrative area and library. Once the building was complete, the art and craft facilities and the library and tuck shop, all of which had been housed in the old presbytery, could be moved. This meant that the old presbytery would become empty and could be demolished to expand the playground.

The scale of this project and the consequent increase in debt made it necessary to bolster parish finances so Fr. Coakley called a meeting of parishioners with a view to obtaining more funding for the church and school. John Buck recalls: "By calling it "Sacrificial Giving" the aim was to pay at least the price of a packet of cigarettes weekly. Imagine using that as a basis today, but in those days smoking was not regarded as being quite so dangerous or socially unacceptable. Subsequent campaigns have been held on a regular basis to remind people that inflation doesn't stop still, but the first campaign was initially unpopular as it had to change people's way of thinking regarding how the school and parish were financed." The need to boost giving on a regular weekly basis had two reasons: firstly, the school numbers were increasing and secondly, and conversely, the numbers attending Sunday Mass were in

decline. Fr. Coakley gave parents of school children the option of joining Sacrificial Giving (which was tax deductible) or paying a levy on school fees to cover increasing teacher and ongoing costs. He was bemused by the fact that some parents were paying high fees at private schools, but ignoring contributions to help at parish level. In John Buck's words: "About this, he was not afraid to express his opinion and although most agreed with his sentiments, there was a pretty fair ground swell from a vocal minority. This was going to make any campaign difficult."

The campaign was launched in May 1981. The diocesan fund-raising organisation directed the campaign although the president and vice-president, John Buck and Con Talarico, and the spokesperson, Dick Tarlinton, were from the parish as were the group of 55 men and women under their leadership. The committee arranged visits to all Catholics on the census lists although the census was a little out of date and somewhat optimistic. This campaign proved a success and sufficient money was promised to enable the school to expand.

At the conclusion of the campaign the dual envelope system was introduced. There was to be only one collection each Sunday and parishioners were to put their money into a double-sided envelope, one side for the presbytery expenses and the other for Sacrificial Giving money. The new system was not a entirely successful. Even by October of that year it was reported that a "surprising" number of people were leaving the presbytery side of the envelope empty. Despite this the double envelopes were maintained for some years.

Early in 1981 a parish building committee meeting decided to accept the Federal Government building grant of \$120,000 and proceed with the building and refurbishment plan. Also available was a Schools Provident Fund loan of \$250,000 which was to be paid off by parishioners through the Sacrificial Giving system. By this stage the estimated cost had increased to \$340,000. By June the project was expanded to include a fence along Bay Road and a presbytery guest room at an extra cost of \$19,000. When the new church was built a number of parishioners had argued that the priest needed guest accommodation but this had been considered too expensive and the original plans for the new presbytery were made smaller. This omission was to be rectified in the new building programme. In June 1981 the tender of H.C.F. Constructions was accepted. A finance committee to oversee the building project was established at the August 1981 meeting of the School Board. The committee comprised Fr Coakley, Sister Lois (principal), John Monahan, John Buck, John McArdle, Adrian Power and Tom Scott.

The 1980s were very different to earlier years when archbishops opened buildings while parliamentarians were subjected to their speeches. No longer did archbishops rail against the government, lamenting that Catholic parents paid twice for their children's education. The new school/ancillary complex was officially opened by the Federal Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Mr Ian McPhee, on Sunday 8 August 1982 and blessed by Archbishop Little. The complex according to the report in the local paper had now cost \$400,000. Of this, nearly one quarter had been provided by Australia's taxpayers and it was notable that by this time government support for private schools had become bipartisan. While the school additions were being built,

the local paper reported that Mr Robert Fordham, deputy leader of the Victorian ALP and Shadow Minister for Education, had visited Sacred Heart and assured school staff and parents that, should a Labor government be elected, funding for denominational schools would be maintained.

Meanwhile, in contrast to all the new building, the condition of the old church continued to deteriorate. By 1981 any idea of converting it into a properly equipped hall seemed to have been forgotten. The old building was still used occasionally for fetes and market days or the monthly gatherings for the elderly. Former teacher Margaret Whelan remembers taking her class there to cool off on very hot days and while fires raged around Victoria on Ash Wednesday 1983, the solid brick old church provided cool relief. It had been nearly 10 years since the new church was built and little maintenance had been carried out on the old church,, perhaps because the school's new multi-purpose room had become a "de facto" parish hall.. The multi-purpose room was officially part of the school, having been built for school purposes with targeted government money. It was used extensively by the school but outside school hours it was also used for parent gatherings and parish social events. In fact, the first major social event in the room was Fr Coakley's Silver Jubilee celebration and over time it became known as the "Parish Hall". The school's new tuck shop area adjoined the multi-purpose room and although this was small (and controversially without a dishwashing machine) it could be used for catering at parish social events.

While there was no longer an overriding parish council, many groups continued to work within the parish. One of the major outreaches was to the elderly. A number of nursing homes and hostels were operating in the area and while many of the residents were from Sandringham, often their families had moved away leaving the older residents with little support. Some Council support was available for older people who chose to stay in their own homes but many of them were housebound and needed extra assistance from the community. The outreach within the parish encompassed both the spiritual and social needs of this group. Of great importance was provision of Communion to the sick in their own homes or in hostels. Archbishop Little had first authorised Communion to the sick in their own homes on Sundays in 1979 but the ministry was to be exercised only by religious sisters and brothers. In 1980 the ministry was extended to lay people. The first ministers to the sick in Sandringham included Sister Fabian, Elsie Carlton, Jack Linard, Frank Maguire, Pat Combe, and Joe Savage. Originally the intention was that the sick would receive Communion after the televised "Mass for You at Home" on Channel 10. The ministry flourished, by 1992 there were 23 ministers taking Communion to 38 people in nine nursing homes in the area and to another 10 people in private homes and a Sunday bulletin in 1994 listed 31 special ministers. The parish Concern group continued to organise monthly social gatherings for the elderly. Transport for this service was becoming problematic as many people could not easily leave their accommodation, even when transport was arranged. Finally, although the monthly socials finished at the end of 1996, the monthly card parties which had been running for many years continued in the parish hall.

It was not just the elderly who were a growing group within the parish. Throughout the decade a steady trickle of young families moved into the parish and a number of

spiritual and social programmes were developed to engage them. Children's Liturgy of the word, an opportunity for children to hear and respond to the word of God at their own level, was introduced in June 1980. Children would come to Mass with their parents and then after the "Gloria" the children and their liturgy leader would adjourn to the parish hall to have the Gospel explained at their own level. The birthday card programme was another initiative. Every child in the parish received a birthday card each year until their 8th birthday. For more than 16 years, Ian and Carmel Humphries ran this initiative and sent out hundreds of cards to the children of the parish.

For mothers with young children there was yet another initiative, this one more social in nature, "Bubbles and Booties". This was an informal monthly gathering where mothers with young children had time to catch-up, draw breath and re-energise their batteries. It was begun on the initiative of parishioner Gabrielle Smith who had lived in Asia and the US between 1978 and 1985 when her husband Jim was relocated there. Gabrielle understood the difficulties of raising children without family support and after returning she put a notice in a parish bulletin inviting mothers and small children to Mass and lunch in the parish lounge. It was the beginning of an important group from which many other parish initiatives were developed.

By the mid- 1980s so numerous were the parish societies and groups, and so diverse their interests, that the parish felt it appropriate to publish a directory. This small booklet contained basic information such as Mass and Reconciliation times but also listed titles, brief descriptions and contact details for those groups and individuals working within the parish. While not quite running from A to Z, the directory did cover most eventualities between birth (the parish Birthday Club) and death (the parish trustee on the Cheltenham Public Cemetery Trust). A total of 59 pastoral, devotional, social, educational, charitable, civic and sporting groups were listed.

Engaging the older youth of the parish during this period continued to prove to be a problem. The parish directory of 1984 advised that the youth group met intermittently and listed the contact as just the presbytery. The YCW had disbanded by 1973 and by the 1980s pathways for youth were more complex and diverse than they had been in the past. Most young people were continuing school until Year 12 and while some went from school into the work force or trades, many now went on to tertiary education. Young people had become more mobile and many combined study with work or were travelling and spending considerable time away from home. All of this left little time for parish activities. Often a youth group would blaze into life at Sacred Heart but fade away when the instigators moved or obtained work and there was no one to replace them. In general too, young people were leaving home earlier, to live independently, and getting married later. Unlike earlier decades, they were not staying at home and in the parish until they started their own families.

Nevertheless some youth activities were successful for a short time. These included folk Masses, a combined churches youth group, Youthink (a group for those aged 12-15 years organised by Fr West), Friends in Sacred Heart (FISH) organised by Andrew Wallace, and for a brief period a very successful Antioch group. There was some interest in reviving the YCW but that ran into difficulties. As always, some parish parents were keen to provide assistance if required. One parent recalls: "Towards the end of the 80s some of the parents

got together and talked about forming a new youth group since the previous one had folded. Sadly, it took the loss of one of our much loved and respected young men to push us from apathy to action. We called a meeting and approximately 70 young people attended. The majority expressed a wish for a youth group which would include monthly meetings, social activities, guest speakers, sport and community services.

The group met on Sundays after the evening Mass when it was often standing room only for those who arrived late. The group flourished and participated in a wide range of activities which included visiting the disabled children at Moira Hospital and the elderly in local nursing homes, door knocking for Red Cross and Moira Hospital, holding social functions such as discos, parties, film nights, tennis days, surfing trips and games nights and inviting guest speakers. Once there was no evening Mass the meetings continued for a while but the focal point was missing. In 1990 the first VCE Mass was held.

While youth activities as such fluctuated, sport continued to be an important part of the parish fabric. The YCW football team had disbanded but there was still a football team for some time and there were netball and (later) basketball teams, all of which had their origins at Sacred Heart. Perhaps the two major sporting groups were the Sandy Saints basketball and Sacred Heart netball teams. The Kennedy family continued to be heavily involved with netball as Debbie Erikson recalls: "Towards the end of the 1970s, Donna Kennedy was persuaded by her younger sister Kristen to coach a junior netball team in a Saturday netball competition now that the primary school inter-parish matches had all but disappeared. The new Sacred Heart teams sported a yellow top with a pleated black skirt and competed on Saturday afternoons. When Donna stepped down, her mother, Sybil Kennedy volunteered to oversee organisation and the Sacred Heart netball squad at one stage could boast of having 10 teams. The teams included the daughters of well-known Sacred Heart names such as Power, Smyth, Bowditch and Sinclair. Sybil Kennedy gained great satisfaction from her involvement and her contribution was widely appreciated".

Then there was basketball. Jim McDonald was part of the founding group of the Sandy Saints, a basketball club that had its origins in the parish. The Sandy Saints began in 1979 when Sandringham's local club, the Sabres, ran a holiday workshop for Under 11 boys. "The aim of the Sandy Saints club was to provide boys with exposure to basic basketball skills at an early age and to foster sportsmanship and teamwork in the local community. This seems to have worked well in that over the years many of the players became coaches and team secretaries to junior teams." Jim McDonald wrote. At first there were only boys' teams but it did not take long before girls' teams began and in 1989, under the auspices of parishioner Rick Thomas, the Saints began entering teams in a "senior men's" competition. Jim McDonald again: "This gave our teenagers somewhere to play after the age of 18 years and has been a great bond for our children. The club has been excellent for bonding Sacred Heart parishioners to the club and to their local childhood friends, regardless of what secondary school they attended. An unexpected windfall has been that many of the fathers who have coached the teams have enjoyed basketball enough to take up playing at a mature age."

The spiritual needs of the parish were of particular concern from when Fr Coakley first came to the parish.. Soon after his arrival, a "parish renewal" was organised which was to be

the first of many retreats and missions over the next 17 years. While these depended largely on outside input from a range of religious groups many parishioners were involved with their organisation. The renewal in 1979 was led by two Passionist priests and, unlike the missions that preceded it, it included 10 Masses in people's homes. In the next year, Sister Fabian, one of the nuns at the convent, led a directed home retreat. In 1985 there was a Lenten Renewal in Faith, which commenced with a parish dinner for more than 450 parishioners at Star of the Sea hall in Gardenvale. Every parishioner had received an invitation from Elsie Carlton who was the principal organiser of this renewal. The dinner was followed by a mission led by a team of Vincentian priests and then by renewal exercises. There were also renewal exercises for Italian parishioners, led by Fr Savino Bernardi and Sister Cesarina Paulini. Of all these programmes, it was probably "Renew" in 1987 that had the most impact in the parish. This was a formation programme instituted by Archbishop Little for the whole archdiocese. Renew, which stretched from 1987 to 1989, comprised five seasons, each with its own theme, and involved small groups meeting weekly in people's homes and a parish event at the end of each season. Renew was to enable people in the parish to form links and build a stronger parish over the three years. There were to be two other programmes in this period: a Dominican-led mission entitled "Spirituality for the 1990s and Beyond" and after in 1992 another archdiocesan programme; "Many Paths – One Journey".

There is a saying that "the person who sings prays twice". Sacred Heart certainly sang lustily and the church organists had always played an important role, not only in the liturgy but in the wider life of the parish. In June 1995 the parish had almost enough organists to form an orchestra: Elsie Carlton, Liz Dieter, Judy Poole, Chris Smyth, Gillian Thomas, Kitty Walsh and Brian Naulty. By December that year they had been joined by Sheila Goss, Justin Lachal and Joan Rawlings but by then the list no longer included Kitty Walsh (sister in law of Michael Crehan, who died in October that year). Kitty had been an integral part of parish music for over 40 years, playing not just at Sunday Mass but also for weddings, funerals, musicals and other important events. Elsie Carlton, as well as being a church organist, was also busy in other aspects of parish activity. As mentioned above, she had led the Renewal in Faith programme in 1985, had taught in the school for many years and, after retirement worked in the school library. Her contribution to both the parish and the wider Sandringham community was recognised in 1987 when she was named Sandringham's Citizen of the Year.

In the middle of all this activity there continued to be "bricks and mortar" type building. A new project was commenced in 1983 which involved a corridor, a new toilet block, a covered way and renovation of several older classrooms. The projected cost was \$156,400, of which the Commonwealth Schools Commission would pay \$93,400 and the parish \$ 63,000. To enable this project to be undertaken the parish needed to boost weekly income so a new planned giving campaign was begun. This was under the direction of a Uniting Church agency, the Stewardship Promotion Agency, although the campaign chairman, Adrian Power, and team leaders Pat Combe, Fred Murphy, Bill Dunne, Dick Tarlinton, Tony Vautin, Brian Halloran and Rick Thomas were all parishioners. Such campaigns did not come cheaply; the cost of the agency's input was \$5,490 and cost of the parish dinner to mark the end of the campaign was \$4,319. Bill Dunne was appointed continuation chairman.

With renovations and changes completed in the school, a bulletin in March 1984 announced that there would be a renovation of the “new church”. By November 1984 plans were well advanced, as a bulletin notice made clear: “Sacred Heart rose window[sic]; Jack Turner, who transferred our stained glass windows from the old church, has just removed the Sacred Heart window (rose window) and the other pieces. Gerard Smith, of Smith and Tracey Architects, is preparing a schematic plan for the church incorporating the rose window. Also [planned are] a reconciliation room, improved ventilation and lighting, highlighting of the tabernacle, providing a statue niche for Marian devotion, overhead projector screen and rearrangement of seating to provide a central aisle.” There were also plans for new doors, a notice board, an extended entry canopy, a new store room, a new organ and a statue of the Sacred Heart. These were major changes to a building which was then only 10 years old and to finance them the parish needed to find a substantial amount of money. The need to improve lighting and ventilation perhaps indicated that there were defects in the original plans for the church. That a central aisle was now being discussed also suggested that the new style “inclusive” churches – in which the congregation was to be more grouped around the altar – were not problem-free. Although much had changed liturgically since Vatican II, the importance of a central aisle had not. At the time it was claimed that visiting clergy had been critical of the lack of a central aisle since it did not allow for the appropriate procession of the celebrant to and from the altar. There was also a more worldly consideration; that relatively few weddings took place at Sacred Heart, some said, was partly because of the tradition that on her special day “the bride deserves a central aisle”.

Thinking had certainly changed about “Confession”. In the decade since the new church was being planned there had been some discussion about the nature and place of the sacrament of Penance in Catholic life. It even had a new name; it was now to go by the gentler title of Reconciliation. This title, suggestive of a discussion on how we had fallen short of God’s plan, and of divine mercy and forgiveness, was to replace the slightly ominous term “Confession”. That in many minds had come to mean simply listing your sins. Thus the need for a more appropriate setting in a Reconciliation room in the upgraded church. The new room, however, was not sufficient to turn around a long-term trend. Attendance at Confession throughout the Catholic world had been falling steeply for years and a new name and setting did little to halt the decline in Sandringham. On the other hand, communal penance services, introduced later and now held each year before Easter and Christmas, usually draw larger numbers.

But all these things were only part of the changes planned. One sentence of the November 1984 bulletin notice read: “Ground plan of work to be carried out includes the demolition of the old church.” This extract from the Sunday bulletin of the day details the work that was to be carried out:

Even now, three decades later, discussion still surfaces occasionally about whether parishioners’ preferences were sufficiently considered when the fate of the old church was being decided. Adrian Power, who was involved at the time, recalls: “Fr Coakley’s modus operandi was to run a major proposal through a committee and then call a meeting of parishioners. As I vividly recall, at one meeting he did not get his way. I do not remember any parish meeting about the demolition but I don’t recall any surprise on my part when the demolition was announced. This possibly means that the proposal was at least taken to the (parish) finance committee. I also don’t recall any overt dissent

(although Jim Smith tells me there was some resentment about it). The new church, combined with 80 years of neglect of the old church, meant that without a large injection of funds the old church was doomed.”

Plans for the demolition must have even then been well advanced because the bulletin of the following Sunday stated that the parish had been advised to accept the tender of Stan Guilfoyle for the demolition. More detailed plans for the refurbishment of the church were to follow in June 1985.

The old church was demolished between November 1984 and April 1985. Its landmark tower was toppled during the school holidays by a large crane parked near the intersection of Fernhill and Sandringham Roads. The job was done quickly and efficiently but the psychological or emotional effects of the demolition on some parishioners were to be longer-term. There is still in the parish some lingering resentment to the event. In the opinion of some there was too little discussion about the demolition and too little done to maintain the old church. Writing 25 years later in the parish magazine “Horizons”, parish priest, Fr Frank O’Loughlin remarked on the affection which some present day parishioners still retained for the “old church”. “People held the original Church of the Sacred Heart in great esteem. Many people still speak of it with great affection and at times with regret at its passing. Churches do become deeply significant to us: we celebrate the Eucharist in them, we have memories of the marriages, the baptisms, the funerals and the like that have been celebrated in them. They are places of prayer for us. They become part of our lives and their quiet presence in our lives is etched into our memories”

The ground works which followed the demolition included the excavation and regrading of the asphalt area, drainage and asphaltting of the basketball and netball courts, refurbishment of the youth room for school use, new fencing, refurbishment of toilets and landscaping. In the middle of these works an unusual request appeared in a parish bulletin: “Two Holy Water Fonts from the old Church can be collected by family or friends of the donors - one inscribed ‘In memory William Michael Ryan’ and the other ‘donated by J & R Shannon’. The fonts had been donated to the church when the parish had been declared in 1914. They were no longer needed so like many features of the old church they were discarded. Sometime later the bulletin reported, almost in passing, that: “A couple of pieces of wrought iron from the demolished Sandringham Road presbytery have been used to decorate the entrance to the presbytery on Fernhill Road”. While the fonts and other things were discarded, there were a number of the features of the old church that were kept. Years later Fr O’Loughlin noted: “We have some precious things in our present church which were in the first church. The tabernacle was the tabernacle from the old main altar in the first church. The baptismal font in which many past and present parishioners were baptized came from the old church. The stained glass windows came from the old church and especially notable among them is the round Sacred Heart window which is set in the back wall of the present church. There is some very fine stained glass in these windows.”

The statue of the Sacred Heart which was noted as part of the renovations had been donated by the Josephite nuns and a benefactor had paid for its installation (on a plinth at the corner of Bay and Fernhill Roads). The bulletin recorded: “Phil Hallett removed and transported it [the statue] and regilded the Foundation Stone from the old

Church. Shane Noonan built the bluestone pillar and placed the statue. Frank Burke cleaned and painted the statue". Sadly, the statue became a target for vandals and , after being removed, repaired and replaced several times, a decision was made to remove it altogether. Today the plinth stands empty, awaiting a generous donor and an inspired, vandal-proof design idea. One design idea dating from Fr Coakley's tenure has stood the test of time. This is the parish logo, the segmented heart design that appears on the parish letterhead and most parish literature. Jim Coakley believed that a logo would make parish communications more readily identifiable and cast around for months for a suitable design. Eventually he tossed the idea to parishioner John Monahan whose brother was a principal in a large advertising agency. John's brother got the agency's design department on the job and the result was as we see today: a logo that is neat, pleasing and instantly identifiable.

In 1987 the flowering gum at 26 Sandringham Road (the address of the first presbytery) was removed. It was riddled with white ant and rot and deemed to be a playground hazard. The removal of the tree meant the last vestige of the original parish school had disappeared.

The building (and demolition) programmes did not come cheaply. In June 1986 there was another sacrificial giving campaign, this time not run by an outside body. The campaign itself was successful but by November it was noted that in the preceding four months \$11, 826 less than the amount pledged had been contributed. Given the large amount that had been borrowed, this must have been gravely concerning.

CELEBRATIONS, FAREWELLS AND ...MONEY

Parish life was not – whatever it seemed like at times – just about building projects, sacrificial giving campaigns and missions. Sacred Heart had always liked to celebrate and the tenth anniversary of the ordination of Fr Joe Finn in July 1986 was a splendid opportunity for a celebration. The affection with which Fr Joe was held was evident in preparations for the event. Fr Joe was a man who walked with everyone. He worked tirelessly with the elderly, especially with those in the nursing homes and hostels, but he was also a frequent visitor to the school. One parent recalls that when her first child had just started school she asked him about school life: “I asked if they said prayers or talked to God at school. ‘Well’, he responded, ‘God came to see us today’. He meant of course Fr Joe.” The committee organizing Fr Joe’s celebration spared no effort; over a week there was a sausage sizzle and video movie, a children’s Mass, a parish Mass and supper and a concelebrated Mass and dinner for the clergy. The clergy Mass was concelebrated by 40 priests, with a homily given by Bishop Eric Perkins, and, as always, a highlight of the week was the ode to Fr Joe composed by resident parish bard Gerry Harper. Gerry’s poem was almost as long as “Paradise Lost” but a few of its lines convey its playful spirit:

So Father Joe has always been a man of many parts;
 A man of god, a friend to all, and close to many hearts.
 Well, what else can we wish for him these very special days?
 Perhaps another hole-in-one. He’s had two! (Or so he says).
 Maybe a Magpie Premiership – that would really fill his cup.
 I wonder if he’d be satisfied if they again were runners-up.

There were more celebrations for Australian Catholics in November 1986 with the visit to Australia of Pope John Paul II. Gerry Harper worked at the office organising the papal visit and he was influential, along with parish organiser Peter O’Callaghan, in ensuring that a large contingent of Sacred Heart parishioners went to the Papal Mass at Flemington racecourse. For months prior to the Pope’s arrival, all Sunday bulletins had carried some reminder or news of the visit.

Throughout the history of Catholic parishes in Australia, celebrations and social activity have been closely intertwined with fundraising. Nowhere is this more evident than in the work of parents committees, mothers’ clubs in particular. “The 70s and 80s were wonderful years,” a parishioner recalls. “The Sacred Heart Mothers’ Club was a very important part of the school fabric and created a happy and supportive environment. The Presentation Sisters, especially Maureen, Lois and Judith, encouraged parental input. We held meetings during the day, co-ordinating programs and functions alongside the school and parish. Our most important role was in being there,

supporting each other as parents in friendship, and whilst achieving this we worked together to help the school. We rallied together to support families when they lost a member and in some small way helped them through their grief.” Joan Rigoni, another mother, remembers the funds-raising efforts for which she, Pauline Bourke and others baked, iced and creamed sponges all day. The street stalls must have been successful. “The customers used to stand around the stall waiting for our deliveries to arrive,” Joan says. The Mothers’ Club also ran the school tuckshop and uniform shop, raised money towards new buildings, and helped set up the library and art room. Mothers helped with reading programs, made costumes for the children’s concerts, leased out crockery and cutlery to parishioners and friends and kept the books in a profitable situation so that a donation could be handed to the parish priest at the end of each term.

What made this period different, however, was that a new sort of involvement was demanded of parents, particularly the mothers. While they continued to have lunches, social gatherings and cake stalls, they were now also concerned to make their views known on political and curriculum matters. Whereas previously it had been bishops who hassled governments over state aid, now mothers became eager to voice their views. “We lobbied governments over the removal of funding for private schools,” Sue Agostino says. “This would have meant the closure of many Catholic primary schools. We debated issues over the years and wrote letters to governments and Church leaders.” Similarly, the mothers were also asked to become directly involved in curriculum content. Sue Agostino again: “When the State Government suggested that schools teach sex education at the primary level, Sister Judith Bellesini, principal at that time, asked some of the parents to help her decide how to go about this controversial and difficult subject. Many of us were not happy about the programs being introduced, yet it seemed important to give the children a good sound knowledge of loving relationships. As a result, the school set up a program on sex education involving the teaching of loving, caring relationships and an explanation of male and female bodies.”

More women than ever before were at work outside the home during the day and this meant a different structure of parental groups was needed. So from the separate Mothers and Fathers Clubs, a new group dubbed the Parents Association evolved. Its task was to look after fund-raising and school maintenance but since there was something lacking for those mothers still at home the Mothers Club continued for a short time in its accustomed manner. The new arrangement must have been successful because in 1991 the Parents Association raised more than \$13,000 for the school.

Evolution was also occurring inside the classroom. When Sister Lois Young arrived as principal in 1980 she began teaching half-time but administrative duties had now become so demanding that a principal could not teach and run a school at the same time. Sister Lois also oversaw the massive building project that ran between 1980 and 1982. She was to make significant changes to the school and started graduation nights for the Grade 6 children. In March 1981 Fr Coakley called a meeting of the school parents at which it was decided to set up an education board. It was not the first education board for the parish as one operated from 1969 to about 1974. The steering committee of the new board comprised Jim McDonald, Jim McGrath, David Halmarick, Sister Lois, Chris Smyth, Christine Naulty and Bill Bourke. Sister Lois left

at the end of 1982 and was replaced the following year by Sister Judith Bellesini who was to become much loved during her five years in Sandringham.

Unsurprisingly, in retrospect, the days of the Presentation nuns at Sacred Heart school were numbered. At the beginning of 1987, Sister Margaret Carroll, congregation leader of the Presentation order, advised Fr Coakley that the order had decided to withdraw from Sacred Heart from the beginning of 1989. Sister Judith was to be the last Presentation principal at Sacred Heart and in mid-1988 it was announced that Miss Anne O'Brien would become the new principal.

Fittingly, the teaching nuns were honoured by a parish send-off. In an article in "The Advocate" published before the event, Gay Monahan outlined plans for the occasion: "On Sunday 20 November, in [Australia's] Bi-centennial Year, Sacred Heart parish, Sandringham, is having a double celebration. We are anticipating the 75th anniversary of the parish, and we are paying tribute to the Presentation Sisters. They have taught in the parish school for 77 years. Archbishop Little is celebrating Mass at noon. He will [also] unveil a plaque acknowledging the great contribution the Presentation Order has made to the parish.

Gay Monahan also noted: "In 1906, when Sacred Heart was still a part of the Elsternwick parish, the Redemptorist Fathers had given a "Renew" mission in the parish. It seemed fitting therefore that the current parish priest, Fr Coakley, should invite the Redemptorists to give a retreat to mark the 75th anniversary of the parish. The mission/retreat was held in the week prior to the anniversary Mass and at the picnic lunch in the school grounds a time capsule was placed behind a plaque commemorating the Presentation Sisters' work (with instructions that the capsule was to be opened at the parish centenary celebrations in 2014)⁴³. Gay Monahan's booklet (which was on sale at the picnic for \$5) has been a fruitful source of information for this centenary history. The anniversary was a huge success and this was in large part due to the late Gay Monahan, a human dynamo who had many roles in the parish: organiser and caterer for many events, arranger of flowers for the church and president of the Mothers Club. Of course the nuns' send-off, like any parish event, would not have been complete without a Gerry Harper epic. One verse – one of many – gives the flavour:

*Theology, biology, geography, biography were some of the subjects taught,
Singing and sewing and three-Rs, and various kinds of sport.
Nuns who knew nothing about football teaching young lads how to kick
Was something of a miracle, perhaps a heavenly trick.
Showing girls how to throw a basketball and budding Bradmans how to bat,
Golf was way beyond them, the yard wasn't big enough for that.*

The convent was also to go through a new stage. In 1978 the Presentation novitiate had been set up at Sandringham convent and early in the 1980s Sister Susan Richardson was appointed novice mistress. After this, however, there was no mention of the novitiate and by 1988 the novitiate was no longer at Sandringham and there were no nuns teaching at the school. The Presentation Sisters remained living in the convent, however, and were still active in the parish. After she left the school, Sister Judith went to East Brighton and in

⁴³ This duly occurred at the centenary dinner on 28 February 2014. The capsule was opened and the contents were snapped up by parishioners involved in the events of 25 years earlier. This result was unintended as many of the items in the time capsule were ear-marked for preservation in the parish archives.

1989 the new superior of the convent was Sister Margaret Bullock. Sister Margaret was joined in 1989 by Sister Rose Derrick and Sister Martha Merckel. Sister Rose was not new to Sandringham. She had attended Sacred Heart school and at one stage had lived in the convent while teaching at East Hampton. Sister Martha, a humble and hardworking sister, was to live at Sandringham only two years. In April 1991 she died early one morning at the foot of the sanctuary in the convent chapel.

The parish continued to be responsible for the religious education of Catholic children in government schools. Throughout the 1980s there were constant calls for catechists at government schools but increasingly the need was not so much for weekly classes but for catechists to prepare children for the sacraments. The parish was also starting to prepare for Confirmation children who had spent their early years at Sacred Heart but who had gone on to other schools before the end of Grade 6. In the beginning Margaret Whelan did much of the preparation and later Therese McKenna took over with the State school children as well as this group.

The never-ending building work came at a high cost and above the gaiety of the 75th anniversary celebrations there hovered a dark cloud; the parish, but particularly the school, was facing a financial crisis. The recent school building work had been partly financed by a combination of government funding and loan money from the Catholic Schools Provident Fund. But this had not covered all the building costs and the Provident Fund had to be repaid through the Sacrificial Giving programme. The work had been undertaken on the basis of the Sacrificial Giving forecasts but by June 1988 the amount actually given was well below what had been promised. According to the bulletin notices, it was the school, not the parish, which was in debt and in July 1988 a meeting was called to discuss the problem. The 39 people who attended were thereafter referred to as the "39 Men Finance Team". (We do not have their names but it seems that all of those at the meeting were men.) This team invited those with children at the school and all parishioners to a meeting in the parish lounge which in turn led to another planned giving campaign in 1989. This was run by a professional body known as Planned Giving Counsellors of Australia but it had four subcommittees appointed under parishioners Bill Dunne, Jim Smith, Gay Monahan and Joan Dunne to do the hard work.

Thereafter, school and parish finances were on a somewhat steadier base, at least for a while. Some intriguing statistics emerged in 1991, however, when it was disclosed that more than half of the parish's income was provided by only 23 per cent of its parishioners. Moreover, while the average amount given per week was \$7, more than half of those contributing gave less than half of this amount. This was a situation inviting reflection. On one hand, it was hardly surprising that those with more resources should give more and thus be over-represented on the parish income sheet. On the other hand, it prompted an obvious question: had the frequent school and church building programmes of the past decade stretched the financial resources of some parishioners to the point of default? Whatever was the case, the finance team pushed on and in 1992 another Sacrificial Giving campaign was launched. The pamphlet outlining the campaign survives but whether or not it was run by professionals seems to have been forgotten.

In his introduction to the campaign Fr Coakley wrote: “Our parish is blessed with a spirit of generosity. We see it around us in our church and school. But beyond this we have always met our diocesan commitments and have taken pride in our helping hand to the needy of the wider community. We have recognised our Christian belief in the concept of charitable giving. Now it is time again to review our capacity to give and to make our individual commitment for the coming three years. In summarising the work over the three years prior to 1992, Fr Coakley noted that: In the three years prior to the 1992 campaign the parish had reduced the parish/school debt by \$60,000 annually, contributed \$1000 to the school building fund, continued to meet diocesan commitments, and increased support to the needy both locally and overseas. The plans for the future were also outlined. They were to: Keep abreast of the needs of the poor and underprivileged, continue to meet parish administration and maintenance costs, continue to reduce debt by \$60,000 per annum, and to provide programmes to further strengthen faith development of adults and youth within the parish.

Despite the concern about parish finances, there were still infrastructure needs in the school and Fr Coakley was soon to undertake yet more demolition and building. At the end of 1993 the Registered Schools Board, Victoria, had commented on the limited size and lack of privacy in the administration area of the school. Consequently, plans were drawn up to improve these areas. The project included more extensions to the “youth room” and it also reignited discussions about improvements to the playground and tennis court.

Establishment of the tennis court and changes to the playground, however, could not happen without the demolition of the Leonard house at 28 Sandringham Rd. A meeting in April 1992 resolved, according to the Sunday bulletin, that No.28 should be used for education purposes, as originally intended at the time of purchase in 1973. No record can be found, however, that documents the intention behind the 1973 transaction. At the April 1992 meeting, concern was expressed that refugee families were not looking after the Leonard house well and that this affected the value of the property. There was thus substantial opposition to continuing to provide a home for refugees and the decision was subsequently made to use the property for school purposes. It was, however, a long time before anything was to be done.

The tussle over the fate of this property was so prolonged that it came to be dubbed “the saga of 28 Sandringham Road”. Plans were drawn up for the ground work after the 1992 meeting but there was opposition from some neighbours and the Sandringham Council. Consequently, the project stalled. In 1994 the building of the school administration area commenced but the plans for the school grounds were still in abeyance. The Council was then approached with a plan to demolish the house and to use the land as a tennis court. Apparently the town planning officers had recommended the application but again it was opposed by some of the neighbours and early in 1995 the application was dismissed by the Council. New plans were then drawn up which were approved by the Council and by December 1995 the house was demolished. Meanwhile, there were more financial problems throughout this triennium. In June 1995 the parish sacrificial giving was \$14,828 behind what had been promised.

While the physical footprint of the parish was expanding, there were increasing concerns throughout the Archdiocese that the human resources to staff parishes were

declining. Before the first church was built in Sandringham in 1906, the Catholics of the area had a priest but no church in which that priest could say Mass. By 1990 the situation had reversed. There was now a fine church but the concern now was whether there would be any priests to say Mass in it. The future of the Church, in particular the parish structure, had been discussed in the archdiocese since 1980 when an archdiocesan booklet entitled "The Church - Looking Forward" had been published. In 1988 the archdiocese was subdivided into deaneries and Sandringham was placed in the deanery of Mentone. Fr Frank Martin, parish priest of Cheltenham, was appointed the co-ordinator of the deanery. There was an historical paradox in this arrangement. The early Catholic church in Sandringham had been part of the Elsternwick parish although the suburb had been part of Moorabbin. Then Sandringham removed itself, in civic terms, from Moorabbin when it became independent. But by 1990 everything had changed again. Sandringham was to become part of the new Bayside municipality and Sandringham parish was to again come under Moorabbin's wing as part of the Moorabbin-Mentone deanery.

At much the same time, the Catholic Research Office for Pastoral Planning (CROPP) formed a Future of Parishes Committee and produced a discussion paper for meetings to be held in parishes throughout Melbourne. There were 32 people at the meeting at Sacred Heart. Although the deanery movement was underway by 1991 and CROPP had distributed an early discussion paper in 1990, it was not until 1993 that discussion about the future of parishes really got underway in a programme entitled "Tomorrow's Church". In Sandringham 12 groups responded to the programme and in August 1993 a parish response was presented at a special deanery meeting. In 1994 one of the bulletins from the Archdiocese regarding "Tomorrow's Church" called for pastoral councils to be vitally involved with parish priests in overall pastoral leadership. This was difficult in Sandringham where there was no longer a parish council. Much energy was spent in developing a vision of "Tomorrow's Church" and many parishioners were involved in the meetings. The parish response was not kept in document form and it is therefore now not known what the final response was. So, despite all the time, thought and energy involved, the discussions seemed to have had no lasting effect.

While CROPP was developing models for the future, there was another renewal programme in the parish, this time a Family Mission. Conducted by Passionist priests in 1990, this mission was a little different from those in the 1980s. While on one level a renewal, it also included talks on the Passionist Family Group movement and the importance of ensuring that people within the parish were connected. The aims of the Family Groups were to encourage people to know other members of the parish, to support each other in joy and sorrow and so to build the Christian community as had happened in the early Church. Perhaps not coincidentally, these aims were in line with much that had been discussed in consultations about the future model for parishes. These clearly struck a chord because over the next few years the movement flourished in the parish. In April 1990 Pat and Brenda Amos accepted the role of co-ordinating couple and another 12 couples became Family Group leaders. By that August there were eight groups comprising more than 80 parishioners, plus children. Family Group leader Carmel Hill described how the groups operated: "Groups were encouraged to

have a social function each month, sometimes with children and other times with just adults. The emphasis was on low cost enjoyment and allowing everyone to feel a part of the 'family'. Group functions might be dinners at home, restaurant nights, film nights, bowling, morning or afternoon teas, picnics, jazz nights, games days, BBQs, wine and cheese nights, fish and chips on the beach, wine bottling or breakfast in the park."

The development of the family groups was apposite in Sandringham at the time because there was, after Fr Joe Finn's departure in 1992, no assistant priest for some time. This situation was changed with the appointment in 1993 of Fr Tony Ireland who was to be the last assistant priest in the parish. In addition to his parish duties he also taught moral theology at Catholic Theological College, Clayton. Fr Ireland was ordained in 1987 and had been assistant at St. Patrick's, Mentone, before going to Rome to study. Since 1980 there had been numerous missions, renewals and formation programmes in the parish. Most of these programmes had little follow-up. With Fr Tony, however, the parish had a priest who lived in the parish and who ran the formation programmes himself.

His first programme was in November 1993 when he ran an Advent prayer and bible study entitled; "Where is the Infant King of the Jews?" This looked at the infancy stories of Jesus in the New Testament. The following Easter he ran a four-week programme on "The Good Friday Gospel". Fr Tony was an asset to the parish, someone who knew the people and focussed his formation programme to their specific needs. He had great understanding of issues and subject matter and was gifted with an interesting and interactive style of lecturing well suited to adult learning. The first adult Catechumenate programme in the parish was also initiated by Fr Tony. Another outcome of Vatican II, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults had been a part of the early Church's life and was restored by Pope Paul VI. The first meeting of the Sacred Heart Catechumenate was held in October 1994 after which Fr Coakley formally admitted five people as catechumens. They were baptised during the Easter Vigil in 1995. In July 1995 Fr Ireland was appointed administrator of St. Jude's parish, Langwarrin.

After this, much greater reliance fell on the laity to fulfil duties formerly carried out by a priest. For many years Phyllis McCarthy fulfilled the role of parish associate. She was not only gentle and gracious but also indefatigable in taking communion to the sick and in organising Masses in the many hostels and nursing homes in the area. Another stalwart was Frank Burke who acted as sacristan and officiated at communion services during the week and at burials. Frank was a great character. A bachelor with a gruff, working man personality, he lived at the back of the 28 Sandringham Road house until it was demolished after which he went to Fernhill hostel. Frank was responsible for opening and closing the church and car park each morning and night and for many years trained the parish altar boys and, in later years, the altar girls. (Interestingly, it has been reported that Fr Scarborough had introduced altar girls to the parish but was rebuked by authorities at the Cathedral for this radical move.)

By the 1990s the numbers of boys and girls wanting to "go on the altar" was declining. Despite the decline, any recruits that could be found had to be trained and Frank Burke was firm about his training conditions and requirements. One parishioner remembers the discussion that took place when her son started altar boy training. In

a broad sense it was a conversation which illuminated the difficulties in attempting to ensure a commitment to the parish community in world which was becoming increasingly secular. "My son wanted to be an altar boy so I asked Fr Coakley. The rule was that if you wanted to be an altar boy you had to go to 9.30 Mass every Saturday morning and Frank Burke would teach you. But that time on a Saturday morning was hard for young boys because they all had sport. One of my friends had a boy a year older and she suggested that I ask Fr Coakley if my son could go to Mass each day for one week during the school holidays. Fr Coakley agreed to this so I turned up with my son on the first Monday of the holidays. Fr Ireland was saying Mass and he was fine with the arrangement but when I told Frank what was happening he was quite cross. 'They have to come on Saturday mornings if they want to be trained,' Frank said. I explained that Saturday mornings were difficult because of sport commitments. 'Well,' said Frank, 'they have to choose between church and sport. In my day we all came to Mass.' I said Father had agreed to the arrangement. 'Which Father?' retorted Frank. I told him it was Fr Coakley and he said that if the parish priest (and by inference not the assistant) had agreed, he could not do anything about it." Belying his brusque manner Frank had a generous heart; when he died he left \$20,000 to the parish. While parishioners were increasingly involved in the running of the parish there was a need for priests to relieve Fr Coakley during his holidays. While Fr Coakley holidayed elsewhere, a number of priests were only too happy to holiday in Sandringham. One of these was Fr Paul Gardiner, a Jesuit who had been born and raised in Sandringham. Fr Gardiner was, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Vatican postulator for the beatification of Mother Mary MacKillop. Pope John Paul II was the celebrant at the beatification ceremony at Randwick racecourse in January 1995 and Fr Gardiner and his sisters, Mrs Margaret Maloney and Sr Claire Gardiner IBVM, received communion from the Pope.

Fr Gardiner was not the only relief priest during the summer. Some of the others were colourful and interesting characters, none more so than Fr. Jim Smith. He was English but had migrated to Australia after serving in the Far East in World War II. He had trained as a teacher and had taught at East Brunswick where he became friends with (later Sandringham) parishioner Kath Maher. He had then trained as a priest and returned to the UK. After his retirement he would act as a supply priest in the USA and Scotland and Sandringham. He was a jovial character and became renowned in the parish for his booming voice, his quirky humour and, especially, for his short sermons. On one sweltering January summer, he read the gospel, then after taking one look at his sweating congregation, boomed "I have mercy on the multitude" and promptly resumed Mass. On other occasions if a child in the congregation happened to cry during his homily he would seize the opportunity by saying "Ah! My voice is causing the angels to be upset", at which point he would return to the altar.

During the early 1990s parish membership of Fernhill Hostel for the Aged Inc. declined, as did parishioner presence on the management committee. In 1995 Fr Coakley became alarmed when he discovered that moves were afoot to change the Fernhill constitution to remove the formal link between the parish and the hostel. Fr Coakley thereupon sought the assistance of prominent parishioners and encouraged others to become members of the Fernhill Association. As a result the annual general meeting held at Fernhill, that normally

attracted about 20 members, could not cope with the influx of about 100 people. So the meeting was transferred to the church where Jim Smith was elected vice-president, and Maree Wright as treasurer while Joan Kirkham continued as secretary. Sacred Heart parishioners elected as committee members were Des Hill, Gerald Purcell, Peter Arbon and John Monahan so that the connection between the hostel and the parish was to remain secure..

By 1991 women had become members of the St Vincent de Paul Sandringham conference although doubt exists as to exactly when this bold step was at last taken. A clue, however, is contained in a notice in a November 1991 bulletin seeking new members “especially ladies, 16 years and over”. The financial downturn of 1992 and 1993 put heavy demands on the resources of the society but the Christmas stall that year raised over \$8000. In 1996 conference members made 575 visits and assisted 1241 people. The approximate value of this assistance was \$32,400⁴⁴. The conference also supported its twinned parish in Indonesia with a monthly donation and would continue to do so into the new century.

One change in the society’s practice in this period was the introduction of supermarket food vouchers for people needing assistance. This signalled the end of an era when the financial assistance given by the local conference came directly back into the local community. No longer did Tony Lopes (a parishioner and the local greengrocer) give a couple of apples to a family struggling with sickness or Adrian Ford (the local butcher) throw in a handful of mince to the family with an out-of-work father or were the Vinnies Christmas hampers filled by Bissett Brothers grocery in Bay Road. Vouchers, redeemable for any household items except cigarettes and liquor, were now bought by the Society from the supermarket chains and distributed to those in need. The conference also began to assist with the payment of bills and yet another initiative was the introduction of a “bread run”. Once a week one of the local bakeries would give the conference its unsold bread which was then distributed to those in need. The Vinnies centre in Hampton Street continued to be supported by volunteers from the parish as it had been since its opening. In 1994 parishioner Jack Linard, who had been president of the Sandringham conference for about 30 years, was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community, particularly the aged, through the St Vincent de Paul Society.

The Sunday bulletin of 30 June 1996 was the last to carry Fr Coakley’s name as parish priest. By then the constitution of Fernhill had been changed, numerous building projects had been finished and Fr Coakley evidently decided it was time to go. He said Mass on the Sunday, had a party on Sunday night and left on the Monday. Fr Gerard Smith took over for July and during his time a Presentation Book in which parishioners could leave messages was prepared for Fr Coakley. There was, however, no official farewell. Fr Terry Bergin was the acting parish priest for the next few months and then in October 1996 the next parish priest was appointed. This was Fr Frank O’Loughlin.

⁴⁴ The breakdown of this figure was food \$18,400 , furniture & clothes, \$3,000, bread (donated) \$11,700.

CHRIST BE OUR LIGHT

Historians should not write, indeed cannot write with any detachment, about the present day. To write history one needs to stand back, to consider events from many viewpoints, to reflect and to make judgements. One cannot do that if one is living in the middle of events as they evolve. It can, however, be sometimes useful to chronicle events as they are occurring; who knows this might prove useful to future historians. This chapter therefore makes no claims to be a history. At best, it is a snapshot of a parish family that after 100 years is, by the grace of God, still gathering together in prayer and seeking to live by the Gospel's values.

Kristin Allen

Was the world speeding up? Or did it just seem that way as the 20th century rushed towards conclusion? At home in Victoria in 1998, our self-assured Premier Jeff Kennett bit the electoral dust. This was a major surprise. To our near-north, East Timor voted for independence. There was no surprise there; not after the departing Indonesian military had trashed the place in an extraordinary display of international pique. Computers and the internet continued their beanstalk growth. A spectre dubbed Y2K threatened the world's computer-controlled clocks but then fizzled out. And Sydney staged the "best ever" Olympics.

In Rome, Pope John Paul II died after 26 peripatetic years. His was one of the longest reigns in Church history. His successor, Pope Benedict XVI, was promptly elected, after one of the shortest conclaves in Church history. For the new pontiff, election could hardly have come at a more worrying time. Clerical numbers were plummeting; vocations, especially in the developed world, were scarce. For better or for worse, community attitudes towards people of faith, and especially towards senior clerics, became not just critical but in many cases aggressive. Whispers of scandalous behaviour by some clerics, at first dismissed by most Catholics as inconceivable, had grown into thunderclaps of accusation. Hundreds, it emerged, had been harmed by those who had been trusted to protect them. Certainly, the world no longer marched to a Christian drumbeat but many Christians wondered whether the inflexibility or unworldliness of some Church leaders had contributed to Christianity's fall from grace.

But we get ahead of ourselves. Back in comfortable, distant, suburban Sandringham, these problems seemed, well, distant. Even when news came through that our former pastor had married, it caused scarcely a ripple. We wished him and his wife grace and peace; they would always be welcomed in Sandringham. And as befitted a community of faith, every event in a parish now under new management brought with it notes of renewal and hope. And why not? By late 1996 the parish had a new pastor, an erudite man with lengthy teaching experience. He would drive the parish forward, but perhaps towards different

goals. He would bring stability and reassurance after two decades of building and financial strain. This was Fr Frank O'Loughlin, whose (greatly abbreviated) CV might read as follows: born 1945; educated in West Footscray and Yarraville before St. Josephs, North Melbourne; entered Corpus Christi Seminary, Werribee, on his 17th birthday and completed his studies in Rome; ordained by Cardinal Knox at Maidstone in 1969.

First up, the youthful Fr Frank was appointed to North Fawkner until in 1972 he returned to Rome to study for a doctorate of theology at Urban University. After that he went to Ireland for a year of liturgical studies. One predictable result of all this travel was that well before he arrived in Bayside, Sandringham's new PP was fluent in Italian (although he asserts that he learnt more Italian in North Faulkner than he ever did in Rome). Another result of his time overseas and his extensive study of history led to a memorable parish experience when Fr Frank led a group of parishioners overseas. In November 2003 a group of 31 people, mainly parishioners, undertook an expedition that was entitled – with disarming frankness – a “Pilgrimage to the Restaurants of Paris, Tuscany and Rome”. The tour was inspired by Father Frank as an outcome of his intensive study of the subject matter over many years and his laudable ambition to share his hard-won knowledge and experience in this field! In fact, the tour was preceded by talks by experts on what to expect on the trip, especially relating to works of art. According to one of the “pilgrims” Michelle Noonan: “What followed was a remarkable journey through France and Italy which resulted in an experience that none of the participants will ever forget. Fr Frank’s knowledge of the history of those parts of Europe was extraordinary and led to the creation of a remarkable itinerary. His theological understanding of the formation of the Church and Christian faith made the trip all the more memorable. The highlight for most was Mass in the Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome, celebrated by Fr Frank and attended by the tour group.” But there were many other highlights including an unexpected performance by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in the Basilica of St Paul’s Outside the Walls in Rome and an explanation of the history of the early Church at Ravenna and its 6th Century baptistery, Fr Frank explaining the meanings in the stained glass windows and art works in many churches, but especially those in Chartres Cathedral in France, while other highlights included a trip to Chiesa di San Miniato basilica with its magnificent views over Florence, and an audience with Pope John Paul II, who acknowledged “the “pilgrims from Sacred Heart , Melbourne, Australia”. In the words of Michelle Noonan: “There was little else which could have been achieved in a tour which lasted just on a month. A great and lasting culinary and historic inspiration by Fr Frank.”

The new millennium was to bring new challenges and pressures in both civic and religious life. In 1994, in a widespread shake-up of councils throughout Victoria, the City of Bayside was proclaimed. The new city comprised the former cities of Brighton and Sandringham and parts of Mordialloc and Moorabbin. Around this time also discussions were being held about the composition of Australia’s Catholic parishes. Towards the end of 1997 the Melbourne Archdiocese conducted a consultation with parishioners about the deployment of priests. As part of the consultation parishioners were invited to indicate their preferences if in future their parish did not possess a resident priest. In early 1998 the Mentone deanery called a meeting to consider options

for future parishes. Two lay people and the parish priest were to represent each parish in the deanery. In September 1998 a final report on the consultation process and an archbishop's statement were issued. Several parishes in the Bayside area were to be amalgamated but Sandringham was not listed for regrouping.

Against this background of reorganisation, Fr Frank called an assembly to consider the pastoral situation of the parish and to ascertain the desires and needs of parishioners. The assembly, held in October 1997 and attended by about 90 people, formulated a list of concerns. Interestingly, most of these were to do with the youth of the parish. The priorities were as follows: (I) improved parish co-ordination; (II) developing liturgies to encourage young people; (III) investigating opportunities for service to the youth; (IV) Catholic education (which according to the assembly notes, should empower young people to take on service and have their say); and (V) investigation of the social and spiritual needs of 20-30 year olds. That the assembly's focus was so strongly on the youth was surprising since the demographic of the parish largely comprised families with fairly young children at one end and, at the other, older people living in their own homes or in hostels and nursing homes. The emphasis on youth was possibly due to the concern of many older parishioners who were becoming less able to continue the parish work in which they had been involved for many years. Between the two major age groups, of course, the parish also contained a sizeable number of children and adolescents but many of these were in Catholic schools and involved in school programmes of faith formation and social justice. Secondary schools in particular were taking outreach and service programmes seriously and many young people now found themselves involved in these rather than in parish programmes.

The parish assembly was followed by several further meetings which eventually led to the formation of a pastoral council that was to be pastoral in its focus rather than administrative or financial. In September nominations were called for the council and Sister Bernadette Keating conducted the election in November. The first council comprised Romina Cobal, Liz Hume, Peter O'Callaghan, Michael Russell, Ron Storey and Peta Wassell.

In an age when the broader community was increasingly non-Christian, parishes needed to find ways to reach out to their own parishioners and to non-parishioners. Accordingly, formation remained a major thrust for the parish, leading to the establishment of formation groups and programmes as well as an ongoing informal programme. The first steps in this new direction were in parish liturgy and music. A note in a 1997 Sunday bulletin set out some aims. "Over the next two years our PP would like us to develop the musical dimension of the parish liturgy. Ideally, we should aim to: (I) develop a broader repertoire of hymns; (II) seek and develop local talent; and (III) establish a group of singers as song leaders."

In 1998 a liturgy group with a long-term focus was established, consisting of Marita Curry (the initial music co-ordinator), Phyllis McCarthy, Heather McGrath, Jackie Sexton, Pia Sim, Barry Thornton, Peta Wassell and Fr Frank. Marita Curry was a student at Catholic Theological College and Monash University and her enthusiasm and fine voice had an immediate and positive effect on the congregation's participation in the liturgy. Marita was succeeded by a duo, Matthew Vallis and Sally Neaves, who

kept the congregation in good voice for several years after Marita had moved on. Matt and Sally grew to be widely admired, as people and musicians, and evidently Sacred Heart's affection for them was reciprocated. Although neither Sally nor Matt lived in the parish, Sacred Heart was their choice of church when they were married, by Fr Frank, in 2003. Many parishioners attended their wedding. When Matt and Sally left to travel abroad, Michelle Batour became the musical co-ordinator. A fine organist with a splendid voice and an outgoing personality, Michelle's work was, and continues to be, particularly appreciated during the ceremonies of Holy Week and at Christmas time.

Lay participation in other areas was extensive. A liturgy group, which was established sometime before Fr Frank came to the parish, wrote the prayers of the faithful and read during Masses each week, while others staffed the parish library, the piety stall or served coffee and cake for the monthly after-Mass "Cuppa" get-togethers. Then there was the weekly parish bulletin, distributed by the church collectors after Mass. Predominantly a collection of short notices concerning parish events, plus those times, dates, names and phone numbers that might be useful, it also includes from time to time Fr Frank's contribution, "100 Words of Faith". This might be a short piece on the liturgical season, a comment on a reading for the week, or an observation on a current event. (Fr Brendan Reed, a friend and former classmate of Fr Frank's who often filled in for him during holidays, raised a laugh at the end of Mass one Sunday when, waving the bulletin over his head, he pointed out that "The 100 Words" were rarely 100 words. "I counted them them carefully this week", he said, "and there are 110!")

Formation was to be important for all members of the community and not long after his appointment Fr Frank established a Formation in Faith programme for the parish. In addition to this the catechumenate programme for those wishing to become Catholics was re-established in 1997. The programme proved successful to the extent that some years later a number of parishioners requested a similar programme to improve their knowledge of Christ's life and message, and of Catholicism. This led to a Catechumenate for Catholics programme, a series of talks that aimed to provide just such an improved understanding.

Families with young children were another group to receive special focus. As mentioned earlier, for many years Carmel Humphreys had sent birthday cards to every child in the parish until their 8th birthday. This was replaced in 1997 by Godstart, a programme developed by the Diocesan Council for the Family to help parents talk to their children about God and prayer. Godstart, which was co-ordinated by Margaret Whelan, also revolved around a child's birthday and each year there would be a card, a small book and a letter sent to the parents to assist them in opening discussion with their children about God. In 2013 the parish also introduced a baptism companion programme whereby parents with new babies are welcomed into the church in the weeks before the child's baptism. The welcome is held on the first Sunday of the month, the same Sunday when there is a cup of tea available to the congregation after Mass. In a similar vein, a faith education programme for mothers with young children was established in 2012.

Parish priests at Sacred Heart have a record of establishing magazines and publications as a form of both outreach and formation. Accordingly, a new parish magazine, "Horizons", appeared in December 1999. Its predecessor, "Ardor", had disappeared about 1974 but Fr

Frank hoped that a new magazine would provide a contact point for all those associated with the parish, including those who did not attend church regularly and others who had moved to other areas. It might also spread information and news, give and stimulate a sense of belonging to the parish and provide some education in the faith. "Horizons" is put together by a small group of parishioners and is published twice yearly, in June and December.

At Sacred Heart, social justice and care for the poor and deprived, always important in the Christian tradition, began to take on new dimensions with the formation in 1999 of a Social Justice Group. The group was chaired by Mary Stewart who had been manager of Adult Migrant Education Services, and as part of her role had co-ordinated the education programme for Kosovo refugees during the Serbian conflict. The Social Justice Group decided that it would focus on practical help to the people of East Timor and initiated what has become a sustained relationship with the parish of Remexio in rural East Timor. Mary Stewart, in an article for the parish magazine "Horizons", described the plight of the war-ravaged country: "Across Timor Lestè (East Timor) 50% of the population of nearly 1,000,000 are living on less than \$1A per day. Extended families of up to 40 people are existing on the wage of one worker. Literacy levels are very low, particularly among women. Often only one child in a family attends school because the other children are needed to work the vegetable patch and carry the vegetables to market – often a long walk over mountains beginning at 4 a.m. Children who do go to school may walk for several hours to get there and fainting from hunger is common.

In Dili, widows (mostly widowed due to the independence uprising) with several children are starving. In the city they do not have the possibility of growing vegetables, work is scarce and their health precarious. Family violence is common and young children are often left alone while their single parent works or tries to find work and food. Food is scarce and this year the rains came early and destroyed the newly planted crops. To survive the people are eating the grain they should save for sowing next year. "

By the end of 2005 the Sacred Heart community had sent a cumulative total of \$22,318 to Remexio. This money was used to pay teachers in the village's primary and secondary schools, to provide meals one day a week for the school children, to provide desks and basic educational supplies for the schools, to build a water tank and to provide part of the funding for a teachers' room in a new senior high school.

Another example of the Social Justice Group's practical aid is worth relating. Because of the living conditions in East Timor worm re-infestation in the human population is common. Also, pregnant women and TB sufferers need multi-vitamin tablets to supplement their meagre diet. But worm tablets and multi-vitamins could not be obtained in East Timor at one point and needed to be brought in from Australia. So Margaret Cartwright from the Social Justice Group contacted Alpha Pharmaceuticals in NSW who generously donated worm tablets while other group members arranged shipments of multi-vitamin supplements.

As always, the St Vincent de Paul conference continued to be concerned with aid and social justice in the local community. By 2005 the Sandringham conference was the busiest in the Bayside region. As already mentioned, food vouchers redeemable at local supermarkets were the chief form of help although clothing, furniture and help in paying bills were also available. This was financed chiefly through the Society's network

of opportunity shops and the “Vinnie’s” store in Hampton is one of the busiest in the network. Volunteers from conferences in the Bayside region, including Sacred Heart, staff the shop and each month the Hampton shop contributes more than \$30,000 on average to St Vincent de Paul funds. The Winter Appeal once known as “The Poor Man’s Mass” on the feast of the Sacred Heart in June is another important source of funds and material goods for the Sandringham conference. At this Mass cash for food, clothing and blankets is collected for those who are enduring a bleak winter.

In Advent 1999, the parish introduced the “Jesse Tree”, a new and colourful opportunity for the parish to join the St Vincent de Paul Society in helping those in need to celebrate Christmas. On the first Sunday of Advent a Christmas tree was erected on the church sanctuary. The tree was decorated with tags, each tag representing a disadvantaged person or family whom members of St Vincent de Paul conference had assisted during the year. The tags suggested an appropriate gift for each individual or family and parishioners were invited to take a tag and return the nominated present to the base of the tree. By the Sunday before Christmas all the tags had gone but underneath the now bare tree was a pile of presents and donations. By Christmas Eve the presents had been distributed and the tree was re-decorated in more traditional fashion in preparation for the vigil Mass. In the first year of the Jesse tree more than 100 Christmas gifts and \$450 in cash donations were received. And at other times of the year, the origin of some donations underlined how valued the Society’s work is by the wider Sandringham community: \$500 from the All Souls’ Opportunity Shop, \$389 from Sandringham East Primary School, and \$50 from Sandringham Inter -Church Council.

Help for those needing care was also important in the school community which developed a sophisticated programme for families in the school community experiencing stress. The birth of children, the death of a partner, sickness, and the loss of employment are all experiences that can greatly affect families. On such occasions the school outreach group would assist, perhaps with casseroles, a bread delivery, childcare or other forms of support. Child care, particularly outside school hours, had become an important problem for many parents by the first years of the new century. In Sandringham many parents were professionals who wanted to continue working. For other families, increasingly expensive real estate meant that both parents had to work to maintain mortgages. In 1997, not long after he had arrived in Sandringham, Fr Frank authorised the establishment of after-school care for children at Sacred Heart school. This was a relief to many who were eager for such a programme to commence. For a short period in the mid-1990s, the Commonwealth Government had offered special grants to fund before and after-school care programmes. However, it had not been possible to apply for a grant and by 1997 the scheme had ceased and the school and parents had to support the programme from their own resources.

Other major changes at Sacred Heart school were also occurring during this time. The school principal, Pauline Audley (who had replaced the first lay principal Ann O’Brien), gained a position in the Catholic Education Office at the end of 1998 which left the school with an acting principal, Adrian Lacy, for the first two terms of 1999. Mark Williams was appointed principal in the middle of 1999 and stayed at Sacred Heart until he became principal at a larger school. The new principal was Erin McDonald.

The global financial crisis which hit the world in late 2008 led the Federal Government to offer stimulus packages to encourage the building of education infrastructure. The package

offered to Sacred Heart allowed the construction of a large school hall. This was much larger than the existing school/parish hall and meant that the parish now had two multi-function spaces. The new hall included a fully equipped kitchen making it easier to cater for large functions. One of the problems with the smaller school/parish hall was that its compact kitchen space, while adequate as a school tuck shop, could not cater for large school and parish functions. Some of the problems associated with the old “kitchen” had been eased with Fr Frank’s approval of a dish-washing machine, but use of the smaller hall’s kitchen area as a tuckshop did not last for long as, the weekly tuckshop was outsourced sometime in the late 1990s.

The new Sacred Heart church was built because the old church had problems. As detailed in earlier chapters, Fr Coakley carried through many changes in the 1990s but by 2005 there was need for yet more work. The causes of the need were partly physical (for example the church roof had corroded badly), partly liturgical (Vatican II had led to a chain of new thinking on church layout) and partly aesthetic (the old church was now considered deficient in light as well as in colour). A group of parishioners was formed to discuss possibilities and as part of their research, a dozen or so churches around Melbourne were visited by the group in a search for ideas. Parish meetings in 2004 and early 2005 discussed many of these ideas and put forward plans for changes.

Chris Cooke, a parishioner and construction project manager, volunteered to manage the project for the church. Changes to the exterior of the church were major. They included a modified entrance and driveway, new front steps, a small tower surmounted by a cross, floodlighting, and a light colour render to cover the, by now outmoded, brown brickwork. A set of beautifully coloured stained glass front doors and adjacent windows, designed to convey the mystery and wonder of the Eucharist, was installed at the front of the church. Internally, a number of practical issues needed to be resolved. The carpet was worn out and there was a need for new sound and overhead projection systems. The foyer was remodelled and refurnished to be more useful for gatherings and social occasions like ‘cuppas’ after Mass. One section of the old sacristy became the location for the piety stall (which by now was selling East Timor coffee) and the parish library.

Most importantly there were major renovations at the front of the church, especially around the altar. In an article in “Horizons” Fr Frank explained the thinking behind the changes: “The altar was made more square, reducing somewhat its rectangular shape. The rationale for this is that a square gathers people around its four equal sides whereas a long rectangle tends to divide those gathered into those on one side and those on the other as for example, counters do. Thus it enables us to gather more effectively around the table of the Lord.

“The shape of the sanctuary changed because of the re-location of the altar: it became much more spacious. The shape of the front of the sanctuary is no longer straight but flowing. There is a central semi-circle which provides the immediate space for the altar. Around the altar we planned to have three standing candles to mark the altar as the central point of the Church: to mark it as the symbolic heart of the Church and to emphasize the sacredness of the Eucharist that we celebrate there.

“On the other small “promontory” on the sanctuary stands the lectern. This is the next element of importance in our celebration of the Mass. As the introduction to the

Missal says “The dignity of the Word of God requires that the Church have a place that is suitable for the proclamation of the Word and toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns during the Liturgy of the Word”.

“On the right hand side of the sanctuary (looking towards it) in a slightly separated area stands the baptismal font which comes from the first [Sandringham] church. There is a new bowl for the baptismal water within it. There is also a new silver-plated eight-sided cover. Baptismal fonts have been traditionally eight-sided. It is a reference to the seven-day cycle of time: baptisms and the number eight become associated because in Baptism we go beyond the cycle of time symbolized in the ever-recurring seven days into the resurrection which breaks that repeating cycle.”

But the focal point of the refurbishment was the crucifix. The Building, Art and Maintenance Committee, consisting of Fr Frank, John Noonan, Gabrielle and Jim Smith, J Maureen Mutimer and Patrick Reilly, commissioned a new crucifix to be hung above and behind the altar. Three or four artists were asked for submissions based on a brief which sought, in the words of Maureen Mutimer: “a more organic sculpture, representing a Jesus who is returning to his father. While still representing a tortured, suffering figure, Jesus is also ascending into the arms of his father, so there is also an uplifting sense to the emotion of the figure. It was also important that there was a harmony with the sculpture and the newly refurbished interior of the church.” Pauline Clayton, a well known Melbourne sculptor, was chosen to create the crucifix and as Maureen Mutimer explains: “We then used the look of the crucifix as inspiration for the design of the handles on the front doors of the church, to further connect the exterior with the interior.”

As the parish looked ahead to the future it was necessary that Fernhill hostel, its flagship of aged care, did the same. Aged care had changed substantially for the better since Fernhill was built in the 1970s. People were now entering hostels at an older age which meant that they were often in frailer condition. Fernhill was a low care residence but increasingly some residents were in need of high care only shortly after admission. Such residents then needed to be moved to high care facilities, places in which were increasingly difficult to find. In 2000 it became mandatory to receive accreditation from the Aged Care Accreditation and Assessment Agency. This involved passing detailed assessments, ranging from the care and needs of residents to the safety rating of the building. Fernhill was the first hostel in the Bayside area to achieve this accreditation but as the building approached its thirtieth birthday, it was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain compliance with ever-rising government expectations.

For this reason, the board of management led by Jim Smith and Declan Ryan sought expressions of interest from the likes of Catholic Homes for the Elderly and Mercy Health. Catholic Homes for the Elderly were too busy with their own projects, but Mercy Health were keen to increase their presence in the aged care sector. In 2006 Jim and Declan, with the support of Fr Frank, negotiated a sale and land transfer agreement with Mercy that was approved by the Fernhill board. Then, to the consternation of the board and the annoyance of Mercy Health, the archdiocesan authorities refused to countenance the deal on the basis that the sale price was lower than their property valuations had suggested. (The archdiocese, through the Roman Catholic Property Trust, held the property in trust for the parish.) To get the deal over the line, Fr Frank,

using the authority available to a parish priest under Canon Law, agreed to sell the land at the higher price nominated by the archdiocese but to recompense the future Mercy Fernhill by refunding the extra cost over the next five years. For the parish this was a win-win situation in that it received an injection of \$900,000 in capital funds plus the prospect of a rebuilt and enhanced Fernhill hostel..

Years before all this took place, with the possibility of future expansion in mind, the Fernhill board had purchased the adjoining house at 22 Fernhill Road (formerly owned by Mrs Cuddigan, nee Soffa). Now with the Mercy Health deal in place, several other changes took place at Fernhill. Sandy May retired as director of nursing and Karen Perston was appointed to that position until the hostel closed in early 2012. In 2010 Mercy Health applied for a planning permit to redevelop the Fernhill Road site and in October 2011 Bayside Council granted a permit for a three-storey, 87-bed facility. In late 2012 the planning regulations changed and Mercy was then granted permission to build a four-storey facility. Mercy Place Fernhill will take its first residents in 2015.

When in the 1970s the idea of an aged care hostel began to take shape, any thought that it might one day benefit the parish financially would have seemed fanciful. Yet, thanks to the charitable inspiration of one parish priest, and the managerial acumen of his successor, Fernhill was eventually to prove financially helpful to the parish. Although, as detailed earlier, much work had been done in and around the church in the 1990s and 2000s, little had been heard about the cost of this work. This was decidedly different from earlier decades but by this time circumstances had changed. While the parish could not be described as particularly wealthy in the monetary sense, it had built up from the 1970s through to the 2000s accumulated funds ranging between \$200,000 and \$300,000. Essentially, these came from occasional parishioner bequests and were regarded as more of a nest egg than as something to be used on some substantial project. Thus the necessity to borrow. But then came a succession of small and medium-sized improvement and renovation projects which made proceeds from the Fernhill land sale seem providential. In order these projects (and their approximate costs) were:

- 1997: The transfer of the parish office from what was once one of the three private suites that made up the presbytery living quarters to the meeting rooms near the front door. Cost: \$6,000.
- 2005 – 2006: Church refurbishment at a cost of \$200,000, using a Catholic Development Fund loan of \$120,000 plus \$80,000 from accumulated funds.
- 2007 – 2008: The parish office and meeting room (the former guest suite) were both refurbished at a cost of \$50,000, financed from accumulated funds.
- 2010: The church facade project and roof replacement was carried out at a cost of \$409,000, also financed from accumulated funds. The previous church loan was also paid out at this time.

The school debt now stands at more than \$1 million and is repayable over 15 years. This requires about \$60,000 per year to service. The Thanksgiving Campaign contributions to the school building fund have averaged about \$50,000 per year to assist in service of the loans. It is worth noting that over the past 20 years or so, the parish has provided more than \$1 million to the school for the repayment of school loans.

So much for the temporal welfare of Sacred Heart but what of its spiritual measurements as the parish clock ticks past 100 years? These are much harder – perhaps impossible – to take since each parishioner is unique and some day will be judged individually, not as part of a parish. In any case, to paraphrase Pope Francis, who are we to judge? It will not surprise then that while there is very little information available that might invite judgement on the religious state of the parish, there is a surprising amount known about Australia's current religious affiliations and habits. Much of this must apply to Sandringham since in many respects Sacred Heart is a typical Australian suburban parish. As an example, the 2011 Census disclosed that 2790 people, or 25.4 per cent of those living within the Sacred Heart parish boundaries identified themselves as Catholic. This was almost identical to the national figure of 25.3 per cent. (But Sacred Heart had a lower proportion of migrants than the nation as a whole: 21.4 per cent as against 23.6 per cent.)

Of more interest, and surely more concerning, were the findings of the survey undertaken in 2006 on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. This compared the relevant 2006 Census figures with the returns from the weekend Mass attendance count conducted in selected parishes across Australia during May that year. The survey revealed that only 13.8 per cent of Australia's Catholics attended Sunday (or Saturday evening) Mass that month and this was a marked decline on the 2001 Mass attendance figure of 15.3 per cent. Even more thought-provoking was the difference between age groups: another survey had showed that regular Mass attendance among people over 70 years of age was now 35 per cent but only 6 or 7 per cent for Catholics in their 20s. Since one might expect that the figures for Sandringham would not differ that much from the Australian average, it seems that the concerns expressed at the 1998 parish assembly about the drift away from the Church by today's younger Catholics was well merited.

As noted earlier, the parish has always found time to celebrate. Priests coming, priests going. Nuns coming, nuns going. New buildings going up. Old buildings coming down. Whatever the reason, Sacred Heart people rarely needed encouragement to get together, to mark important events, to honour achievement, to make new friends, or to just have fun. One writer in the parish magazine put it thus: "We celebrate life, death, longevity, Public Service Medals and other notable achievements. We honour our longest serving and our newest parishioners. We farewell pilgrims and welcome travellers. In fact, we celebrate everything. We have friends both old and new around us. Our parish priest entertains us enormously, often more with his real life ventures (e.g. reading books at the cricket, locking himself out of the presbytery) than with the three jokes he painstakingly searches for throughout the year [to tell at the annual parish dinner]."

In February 1999 the following small notice appeared in the Sunday bulletin: "The Parish Council is proposing a parish social evening on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, Friday 11th June. Anyone interested in being part of a working group to organise this event please contact Peta Wassell, the parish priest or the parish office." Thus began the Parish Dinner which has since grown to become one of the most popular annual events in parish life. Whether anyone actually replied to the first bulletin notice has long been forgotten but 11 years later, Peta Wassell was still running the Parish Dinner. Of particular importance was the music provided by, in the words of one parishioner: "the wonderful Bernadette O'Neill as M.C. and her husband Anthony, one of Australia's

top guitarists. They have sung and played their way into our hearts every year, which has made our Parish Dinner feel so homely. Those who don scarves, bow ties, costumes and best singing voices [to make up the Parish Dinner choir] have truly experienced firsthand the enormous generosity of this marvellous couple.”

A church can be a building and a symbol. The first Sacred Heart church, on the rise overlooking Port Philip Bay was a visible symbol to all that here a faith community gathered. From within that church a parish developed and, like the mustard seed of Christ’s parable, it grew into a sizeable community that gathered regularly in prayer and worked in concert and with system to help those in need. The majority of that early Catholic community, unlike the pluralist community of today, were of first or second generation Irish stock, most of them battling to get ahead but determined to educate their children in the faith, although in 1906, a school was eight years in the future. And when the school was eventually developed, it was administered by the parish priest and the children taught by nuns. Then there was a bigger and better school now one with its own administration and social life where the parish priest is still the employer but which is accountable to the Catholic Education Office. And then a better church and an aged care hostel. And then a better aged care hostel. The mustard seed was growing into a respectable tree and nurturing the tree was the faith and work of several generations of pastors and parishioners. To them must go thanks for the countless hours spent organizing building programmes, fetes, bazaars, balls, raffles. and working bees, all to raise funds for our own parish purposes and for others less fortunate than us.

At the end of the 19th. century Sandringham was a seaside village of market gardeners and fishermen, at the end of a train line on which the trains rain regularly but not often. Then it clung to Melbourne’s bayside fringe, little more than a favoured spot for holiday makers. Now it is a coveted suburb with fine public facilities and easy access to the city. In 1906 there was a church on almost every Sandringham corner, each with its committed Sunday congregation. Today most, but not all, the churches are still there but their congregations are smaller. Indeed they are much, much smaller. In the early days of the twentieth century “The Advocate” boasted that the pews of the protestant churches were empty while the Catholics continued to build their faith. No longer is this true. Indeed, it has been a tumultuous century and perhaps, seen more change than most centennial periods. Two major depressions, two world wars and one in South East Asia, a meeting of bishops that was to throw wide open long accepted church practices, a technological revolution and an upheaval in modes of transport, all this alone would have ensured change could be the only constant in the last century. These tumults changed much and with these changes emerged an increasingly secular society. Increasingly fewer and fewer Christians of all denominations were attending church as more diversions were offered in society and not only were there now choices but people were in the position where they could make more decisions about their lives. Increasingly life became busier and more demanding due partly to greater mobility and then the increasing speed of communication. Work lives became busier, technology freed many women from the drudgery of housework and consequently more married women entered the work force. With both parents working time had to be found for children and children’s activities which themselves became far more structured and organised. Weekends became a time of rest but not always worship. Increasingly society became more secular so to be a “practising Catholic” indeed a “practising Christian”,

whatever those labels may mean, became less common and less acceptable. In addition, what cannot be denied in addition to all the above is that many Catholics, and those who once identified as Catholics, have been, over the last decade, left confused and hurt. The upheaval caused by scandal and, even more importantly the covering up and denial of wrong doing cannot be underestimated and has led to many walking from that to which they were once deeply committed.

But to dwell on all that would be to ignore the joys that Sacred Heart parish has given and has received in the course of its maiden century. Consider the miracle of Christ's presence among us, the strength and peace flowing from the sacraments He gave us. Hear the joyful hub-bub from the school playground. Give thanks for the friendships, some formed in Sacred Heart classrooms yet lasting a lifetime. Think of the cheerful welcome for newcomers to the parish. Look at the hesitancy and hope on the faces of Catechumens at the Easter Vigil Mass. Listen to the shouts of young basketballers and netballers (and their parents) as the kids strive for fleeting stardom. Count the gifts for the poor and lonely as they pile up under the Jesse Tree. Ponder the inner thoughts of parents as their child is baptised in our beautiful church. Tally the value, in cash and in comfort, of aid donated by parishioners for those in need at home and in East Timor. Hear the voices raised at "Folk Sunday" Masses. To see, the hear, to experience all this inclines one to trust that the hopes of Sacred Heart's tiny band of Catholic pioneers were not in vain.

All this is not to say that today's Sacred Heart parish is perfect. Of course it is not. Like any human institution it is subject to intermittent stress and strain, to argument and dissent among those who kneel in its pews. Its people are not saints or martyrs. But they are good, charitable, thoughtful and conscious of how fortunate they are.

Today's Sacred Heart parish and its people still strive, despite inevitable human lapses, to live by the Gospel's values. The success of their efforts, and those of their pastors, suggests that even in distant, leafy suburbia St Paul's famous observation holds true: that only three things last – faith, hope and love.

That love exists can be seen in the stories above.

There is also faith and hope.

In the year 2000 Paul and Joan Noone moved with their family of six children from Dublin to Melbourne and settled in Sandringham. It was a big move and a huge leap of faith. Six years after their arrival Joan wrote the following: "I found myself drawn into the fabric of Sacred Heart. The children made their friends and the circles started to become concentric, sport, school, church. The faces at Mass became more familiar, names started to stick. For Paul, the privilege of coaching Jack's [their son's] footy team gave him a direct entry point to form friendships with other parents. But Father Frank's uncanny knack for connecting with his parishioners and connecting his parishioners to each other made the passage a simple one. Looking around the school hall the night of his recent significant birthday celebration, children sitting on the floor, everyone delighted to be there, I experienced a strong emotion. That wonderful sense of belonging we all need to feel whole."

May Christ continue to light our way.

EARLY MEMORIES OF SACRED HEART PARISH SCHOOL, SANDRINGHAM

The following memoir was written by a long time parishioner just before the celebrations for the centenary of the church in 2006. The author died, at an advanced age, not long after the piece was written. The author specifically requested that this was to be an anonymous piece and those wishes have been respected. The author's name is with the original handwritten article.

In 1916, the school built of brick, was on the southwest corner of Abbott St, (then known as Smith Street) and Collingwood St, Sandringham.

It was a hall, divided into two sections, by blackboards, on casters and one on the wall.

Sister Bonaventure taught babies, as called then, to Grade 4 in one section.

Sister Vincent taught Grades 5 to 8 in the other section.

Off the entrance porch was the nuns' room. Three small houses were built (on the school land) and when sold, I understand – rumour has it, the Baptist Church bought it, for the bricks to build their church in Essex Street.

There was vacant land adjoining the school ground to Victory St not owned by the church,. It was used by the school's boys as a playground and Sister Vincent coached the boys in their games, including cricket. She was very popular with the school boys.

The school concert (taught by the nuns) also fancy dress ball held annually, was held in what was known as the Town Hall in Abbott St. A nice supper, 'sit down' I think, was prepared by the parishioners.

On arriving at school one morning we were greeted by a large blue-tongued lizard sleeping in the porch. It moved quickly and so did we.

Until the new school was finished, schooling was held in the rear of the Church.

A Redemptorist Mission, two weeks, terminating on the Feast of the Sacred Heart in June; 6am and 9am Masses daily; 7pm sermon; packed church – a most inspiring, roof-raising singing of 'Faith of Our Fathers' finished the service.

Every year Mr Soffa was Father Christmas to the children. He also took the children to St Patrick's day celebrations on the Melbourne Cricket Ground each year.

From the Church we moved into the new school, built hall-like, with nuns' room on outer wall, another small room, opposite end of the school with 'tea facilities' for parish events. Folding doors divided the 'hall' into three classrooms. When opened it formed a hall for parties, fetes, dances, school balls and concerts. The hall had a stage, entered by steps from hall. Underneath was a cellar, dressing for stage events, entry only from school grounds.

For the merit certificate, we had to sit with the local state school children at their school.

I understand the parish bought the old weatherboard family home for a convent. As time went on, Fr Hartnett described it 'as kept together by prayer and cobwebs'. Eventually the Presentation Order bought it and then built present convent.

We also had a strong tennis club, two courts used as playgrounds also.

A strong YCW, their own hall in school grounds; also for their gatherings they used the old church. Eventually these facilities were demolished and our young people had to find social and sporting recreation away from parish influence – very sad.

From time to time, over various years, we had an adult parishioner choir.

The statue of St Theresa was given by Eileen Daly, in memory of her brother Joe who was at Sacred Heart with me. Joe became a teacher, was hit in the head by a cricket ball in the school playground (where he was teaching) and killed.

The O'Mallanes gave Fr Hartnett the Lady of Fatima statue – it was nice too. Their daughter Loyola became a Sacred Coeur nun. She was at school with me. We went to a Saturday dancing class together. They had a boy Kelvin too.

Inspectors came to the school every year: Mr Driscoll – School work; Fr Lonergan – Christian Doctrine. Bleazley's lounge room carpet was on the lunch room floor – their tea was poured from Maguire's silver tea service.

Probably, an annual Fete, held all day Saturday. The stalls were wooden frames, covered with parishioners' sheets. It started early, finishing with adults and children dancing to Mr Meade's concertina. We were a real family in those days.

First Communion dressed in white, with veils. Boys – white shirts, navy pants, assembled at the school to be crocodile-marched, by the nuns, to the church for 7am Mass returning to the school for breakfast together prepared by the parents. A day to remember!

For Holy Thursday Mass, communicants, with white dresses and veils, preceded the procession, spreading rose petals down the aisle.

The nuns came to 10am Mass, from Gardenvale, every Sunday for a school choir.

Two school picnics were Bay trips – Portarlinton and also Queenscliffe on the 'Edina' and 'Hygea' from Port Melbourne.

The Choir Loft was donated by the Misses Lehanes (sic) who lived on the corner of Abbott and Station Streets where the Health Centre is now. I think all the other statues were in the church when we came to Sandringham.

Fr Kelly, when he came here, rid the church of brass vases and statues. Joan O'Shannessy has one – she told me – and I think the Smyths have one. I feel they would be the ones already mentioned – that would be the three large old ones.

The first church was already built when we came to Sandringham in April 1916 – I was just six. I understand Fr Mangan, then in uniform, was the first resident priest.

MEMORIES AND REFERENCES

I came to Sacred Heart after living in the city. The people here were very welcoming and I greatly appreciated their friendship. It was great starting to meet people at church and then at the local shops and just being able to say Hi and have a chat. Since then I have joined the Social Justice group at the parish. The people I met there are some of the most hardworking and generous people I have ever met. I enjoy attending Mass every week. It really is a community.

– Raelene West (*Parishioner*)

I was the team manager of the Sacred Heart football team in the 1960s. We allowed the players to take home their new football jumpers – to encourage responsibility – knowing that their mothers would do the washing. However, one player was boarding at a guesthouse. He turned up at my front door on the Monday after the first game distressed. He stated that he could not fit into his new jumper. He held his jumper up; it was very small and would barely fit a six-year-old. I asked: “What happened?” He replied: “You said to wash it so I boiled it.” I bought him a new jumper.

– Gerry Ryan (*Parishioner*)

We moved from Albert Park in 1992, went to Mass and in the newsletter I saw a notice for “Bubbles and Bootees”. I said to myself: “That sounds alright, I will go there”. What an introduction to Sacred Heart that was! Champagne at 10 in the morning (and I didn’t have any). Peta Wassell and Rina Stefani were doing a rendition of Sister Act. What an impression that made. I said to myself, “I think we will like it here”. And 21 years later we are still here.

– Dierdre McCarthy (*Parishioner*)

I remember going to the convent for piano lessons with one of the nuns. My sister and I would practise carefully when Sister was in the room. Sometimes we were left to our own devices and then the chewy would come out. We loved Sr Rupert and we were all amazed when we went on camp in Grade 6 and we saw the nuns in their bathers. My job in Grade 6 was to answer the phones and sometimes we went down the street to do the banking. That was a real treat.

–Catherine McDonald (*nee Moran*) (*Parishioner*)

I came to Sandringham parish in 1961. My children all went to Sacred Heart school. When we came, we first were looking for the church as that was what we wanted for our faith.

– Carmela Battista (*Parishioner*)

My son started school in 1974. One day I did not put his drink bottle in his bag so at lunch-time he came home for it. When his teacher (Mrs Finlay) began counting the children, she found he was missing so she rang home. I was at the health centre (with the three other children) so he answered the phone and explained he had come home to get his drink bottle. Mrs Finlay came and picked him up.

– Nella Carrozza (*Parishioner*)

There was a working bee at the school one Sunday morning. The work group was there early but then the car park filled up for Sunday Mass and the exit became blocked. We had some beefy blokes in the work group so they all got together and lifted the offending cars out of the way. It was the funniest thing I have ever seen. There would have been many puzzled parishioners after Mass.

–Sue Seletto (*Parishioner*)

One year we had a lamington drive organized by Sue Seletto. There was coconut from one end of the multipurpose room to the other, plus ANTS!!!!

(*anon*)

Dad (Frank Maguire) began preparing the ashes for Ash Wednesday sometime in the late 1960s or early 70s. In those days there was an incinerator at the school for burning rubbish. One day he saw the parish priest taking burnt rubbish out of the incinerator. It turned out the burnt rubbish – which included partially burnt food scraps amongst other things – was to be used for the Ash Wednesday Masses. Dad was an industrial chemist and he was horrified at the thought of people having this on their foreheads. So he offered to prepare the ashes properly. He did it every year until a few years before he died. I took over then and he taught me how to prepare them. Sometimes he would go down to the school and talk to the children about how the ashes were prepared.

–Mary O'Connor (*Parishioner*)

I did demonstrations of Italian cooking at luncheons in some of the more “interesting” types of homes. They were good fundraisers. We also had a very good hardworking group amongst the fathers from school.”

– Joan Rigoni

The Mothers Club were fantastic. Norma Murray was a wonderful president. She visited each mother when children started school. She did the same thing with any new arrivals in her neighbourhood and got everybody mixing. We had great barbeques at houses with large gardens and afterwards there would be the most thorough clean-up.

–Joan Rigoni (*Parishioner*)