



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY  
OF AUSTRALIA

# Queensland farewells and a New Beginning...

## Keep in touch

Special Edition / October 2016

## Mt St Michael's Convent

50 Amarina Avenue, Ashgrove

July 29, 2016

*"... we go out planting,  
carrying the seeds,  
they come home rejoicing,  
carrying their sheaves."*

In January 1920, the newly-elected Superior General of the Sisters of Charity, Mother M Berchmans Daly wrote to Archbishop James Duhig, the Archbishop of Brisbane, about the possibility of procuring a house in the mountains which would be suitable as 'a resting place' where four of her Sisters could recuperate after illness and perhaps as a place of refreshment for those Sisters who needed a break from the demands of nursing or teaching in one of the institutions conducted by the Sisters of Charity in Sydney and Melbourne. This written request resulted in the foundation of St Vincent's Hospital at Toowoomba on the Darling Downs in 1922.

In November 1924, Archbishop Duhig wrote to Mother M Canice Bruton requesting that she send a community of Sisters of Charity to commence a school in the suburb of Ashgrove on the western outskirts of the city of Brisbane. The invitation was accompanied by the deeds of a large Victorian-styled timber House, *Grantully*, situated in the suburb of Ashgrove, which had been purchased by the Archbishop from Thomas Joseph Moore for a Convent: *Grantully* was the former home of John Stewart and his family. John Stewart was the eldest son of Alexander Stewart, a pioneer of district. The property with its two acres of cultivated gardens had been part of the Stewart Sugar Cane farm.

On May 24 1925, Mother M Edmund Daniel, accompanied by Sr M Agnes Fitzgerald, Sr Damien Grealy, Sr M Albertus Costello and a Domestic Sister, Sr M Finbarr Sullivan, arrived in Brisbane and a fortnight later, having taken up residence in *Grantully*, the new Convent was canonically erected, opened and blessed. On June 25, 1925, the first Mass in the Convent was celebrated. In the same month St Finbarr's Primary School with an enrolment of 40 pupils including many boys, commenced in two rooms opening on to the back verandah.

In 1927 the new Church School on Waterworks Road was opened and *Grantully* became available as a Secondary School.

In 1941, the name was changed from *Grantully* College to Mt St Michael's. This was the beginning of what was to become a vibrant religious and social presence for not only the parishioners of Ashgrove but also for the surrounding areas of St John's Wood and The Gap. In July 1998, the Sisters moved out of *Grantully* and relocated to 50 Amarina Avenue, Ashgrove.

[Continued page 02](#)

*In 1941, the name was changed from Grantully College to Mt St Michael's. This was the beginning of what was to become a vibrant religious and social presence...*



**St Vincent's Hospital**  
Scott Street, Toowoomba

**Mt St Michael's Convent**  
50 Amarina Avenue, Ashgrove

**St Finbarr's Parish**  
Ashgrove

**Mount Olivet Convent**  
411 Main Street, Kangaroo Point

# Mt St Michael's Convent

50 Amarina Avenue, Ashgrove

from page 01

On Friday July 29 2016, 19 Sisters gathered at Ashgrove to canonically decommission the Convent in Amarina Avenue and to say farewell to a much loved place where we had ministered, impelled by the love of Christ, for 91 years. Sisters Clare Nolan (Congregational Leader) and two members of the Leadership Team – Suzette Clark, Mt St Michael's College Board Member, and much loved recent Mt St Michael's Staff Member, Cate O'Brien plus Sisters Patricia Scully (Melbourne), Elizabeth Dodds (Sydney), Patricia Heenan, Judith Clark (Concord West), Margaret Mines, Anne Turner (Hobart), Mathilde Harnischfeger, Jeannie Johnston, Christine Henry, Dorothy Bayliss (Berala NSW), Karan Varker (Southport), Regina Millard (Essendon), Deirdre Hickey (The Terraces, Darlinghurst), Margaret Fitzgerald (Paddington, NSW) and Dr Tessa Ho, (Trustee Mary Aikenhead Ministries) arrived at Mt St Michael's College for the special presentation and *Thank you to the Sisters of Charity* prepared by Alison Terrey (Principal of Mt St Michael's), the College Staff and Students as a feature of their annual Mary Aikenhead Day Celebrations which this year coincided with Education Week.

Sisters Carmel Coyle and Maureen Parker later joined the group for Mass which was celebrated by Father Peter Brannelly in the Sophia Centre. Grant Cole, the College Business Manager, met the Sisters on arrival and took them on a guided tour of the College and its new facilities, in particular the recently opened Arts Precinct which fronts on to Amarina Avenue and retains its original Ashgrove Gable characteristics, thus blending in with the residential aspect of the famous Ashgrove Avenues. Dr Tessa Ho together with Alison Terrey had opened this wonderful centre for the Arts (Visual) on 26 February 2016.

The College students and Staff gathered in the Auditorium of the Sophia Centre for the special ritual ceremony to give thanks for 91 years of the presence of the Sisters of Charity in Ashgrove. Alison Terrey, who had recently returned from 3 months Sabbatical in Ireland exploring, studying, pondering and absorbing the spirit and charism of Mary Aikenhead, opened the proceedings with a short reflection on her recent experience in Ireland.



Top left and right: Sisters tour the Arts Precinct; Students interpret in mime, dance and mirrored triangles  
Bottom left and right: Sr Clare Nolan addresses the assembly; Sr Matilda and Grant Cole, College Business Manager

*The College students and Staff gathered in the Auditorium of the Sophia Centre for the special ritual ceremony to give thanks for 91 years of the presence of the Sisters of Charity in Ashgrove.*

Ms Ros Collier, Deputy Principal (Curriculum) who had participated in the April 2016 MAMs Pilgrimage to Ireland, shared her experience of being on Pilgrimage as opposed to just visiting those places in Ireland which are significant to Sisters of Charity. Sister Clare then addressed the assembly and shared with them her own personal experience of being educated by the Sisters of Charity at Mt St Michael's and later returning to Ashgrove to live at *Grantully* when she was appointed the Queensland Regional Superior in late 1984. Clare recalled many of those Queensland Sisters during in her time in Queensland who were either ex-Students of Mt St Michael's or on the Staff, taught at St Finbarr's, St Peter Chanel or Mater Dei; those who had nursed at St Vincent's, Toowoomba, or had attended St Mary's Primary School at Kingaroy: Srs Bernadette Shand, M Thecla Bertolotti, Mathilde Harnischfeger, Patricia Heenan, Mary Maguire, Judith Clark, Anne Crowley, Patricia and Carmel Coyle,

Marie Haren, Margaret Sapsford, Maureen Parker, Maria Carmel Cullen, Tarcisius 'Tarcie' Donovan, Anne Taylor, Christine Henry, Leonie Wittmack, Veronica Brady, Margaret and Cate O'Brien. Clare then presented Alison Terrey with a Cheque on behalf of the Sisters of Charity to be used in establishing Bursaries to enable girls who, due to personal/family circumstances, would find it difficult to experience the quality of education offered at Mt St Michael's.



Alison Terrey, Principal



Top left and right: Sr Clare and Dr Tess Ho, TMAM; Srs Margaret Mines and Patricia Scully  
Bottom: Sr Clare addressing the Assembly



Sr Anne Turner and Dr Tessa Ho



College Captain presents Sr Anne Turner a special gift

These reflections were followed by a wonderful informative PowerPoint presentation which covered 91 years of planting and watering the seeds sown by the Queensland Sisters of Charity in Education, Pastoral Work as well as in Health. Mt St Michael's is very fortunate in not only having its own extensive Archives but also access to the Congregational Archives at Kangaroo Point as well as the Congregational Archives in Sydney. The two College Captains then stepped forward to give a special gift to each of the Sisters who were present – a single pale pink rose plus a specially hand crafted glass fused plate which had been made in the Arts Precinct by Ms Pettina Bateman, College Arts Staff Member. Each celebratory glass fused plate is unique. The design incorporates the colour tones of the Mary Aikenhead Ministries logo with a hand-drawn cross etched into the base.

A short Morning Tea preceded the Annual Mary Aikenhead Mass celebrated by the Jubilee Parish Priest, Father Peter Brannelly. In the Entrance Procession besides the Crucifix, the Book of the Gospels and three Candles with the Congregational, Mary Aikenhead Ministries and Mt St Michael's Crests, a school hat was carried in. The Liturgical drama presented as a response to the Liturgy of the Word incorporated the challenge put before the delegates to the Mary Aikenhead Ministries Education Conference which was hosted by Mt St Michael's College several weeks previously, was brilliant.

The Arts Director, Ms Linda Statham, and her talented students interpreted in mime, dance and with the use of mirrored triangles forming a series of pentagons, the thought provoking challenge of the MAMs Education Conference "WE can't do exactly WHAT Mary Aikenhead did but we can do it HOW she did it".

Brilliantly interpreted! As St Paul in his first letter to Corinthians wrote –

*"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building." 1 Cor 3: 6, 9.*



Farewell ritual Mt St Michael's Convent

Mary Aikenhead Ministries has been established to ensure that the dream and vision of Mary Aikenhead for the poor and needy continues. It is the gift that the Sisters of Charity give to the Church to guarantee that the mission continues. The charism is in very safe hands at Mt St Michael's Ashgrove.

Continued page 04



Sisters gather outside Convent

# Mt St Michael's Convent

50 Amarina Avenue, Ashgrove

from page 03

The leadership displayed is strong and trustworthy of its mandate. The seeds that have been planted and watered for 91 years at Ashgrove, will be continue to be planted and watered in the sure conviction that God will give the increase.

After Mass a historical photo shoot for the Archives took place: the 2016 Year 12 Class with those Sisters who were present.

After Lunch the Sisters walked across to the Amarina Convent for the Ritual of Decommissioning and Farewell. The Amarina Convent was established in July 1998. An exchange of the two properties had taken place between the College and the Congregation. In 1999 *Grantully* was renovated and opened as an administration building for Mt St Michael's College. Most of the Sisters who attended the Mt St Michael's celebrations had lived in *Grantully*. Sr Suzette planned and led the Liturgical Celebration of Farewell.

The ceremony was held in the enclosed Community sunroom at the back of the Convent which overlooked the small garden. The focal point was the table that had a lighted Candle, representing Christ, our Light who was the inspiration and foundation of all that has happened in this home over the past 18 years. The blue Rosary Beads and the open Bible represented the times of prayer and contemplation which sustained the life of this home. The colourful Flowers were symbolic of the richness of life that each Sister brought to the community that was created in this home and the keys not only gave entry to this home but also provided security for this house and those who lived within its walls.

"You are living stones that God is building into a spiritual house." After the Scripture Readings, the sharing of stories followed. There was a mixture of memories shared, some of life at *Grantully* and many of life lived within Amarina Avenue; the laughter and tears, hopes and disappointments, times of celebration and times of sadness were shared. Sr Margaret Mines was the last Sister to reside at Amarina Avenue.

Margaret was a compassionate active Pastoral presence in the Ashgrove parish. Margaret grew up in Ashgrove and attended Mt St Michael's College. Those Sisters who shared Community Life at Amarina Avenue joined Margaret in the ritual action of letting go and sending forth. Srs Elizabeth Dodds, Christine Henry and Cate O'Brien were also given a balloon to let go in the hope that the wind that is the Spirit would take it into its care as it rose and disappeared into the future.

*"We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."*

Top left: Sr Patricia Heenan  
Middle: Farewell ritual Mt St Michael's convent  
Top right: The Sisters who attended Mt St Michael's College Mass  
Bottom: Historical photo with 2016 Year 12 students and Sisters after the Mass



# Mt Olivet Convent

411 Main Street, Kangaroo Point

July 30, 2016

On the wall of the main corridor outside the Giovanni Chapel on Level 3 of St Vincent's Private Hospital, Brisbane, hangs a large framed sepia crayon portrait of Four Women who shared a dream: Sr M Agnes Fitzgerald rsc, Dr Lilian Violet Cooper (Queensland's first Woman Surgeon), Mary Josephine Bedford and Mother M Giovanni Ackman rsc. The shared dream was for a Hospital for the Incurably Sick Poor situated on the property 'Old St Mary's' 411 Main Street, Kangaroo Point, overlooking a Reach of the Brisbane River. Mary Josephine Bedford's dream was for this hospital to be in memory of her great friend, Dr Lilian Violet Cooper. Sr M Agnes Fitzgerald rsc, inspired by a dream which foretold the founding of a hospice for the dying in Brisbane, for 25 years urged her community of Sisters of Charity to take up the project. Dr Lilian Cooper pioneered the specialist care of women and children in Queensland and saw clearly the need for the specialist care of the dying. Mother M Giovanni Ackman rsc, believed that such a project was possible and was visionary in her planning and indefatigable in her fundraising.

In December 1951 Mother Alphonsus Doherty, Superior General, received a message that Miss Mary Josephine Bedford from Brisbane wished to meet with her to discuss the founding of a hospital in Brisbane for the incurably sick poor on her property known as 'Old St Mary's.' The hospital was to be in memory of her lifelong friend, Dr Lilian Cooper. Mary Bedford was adamant that her property was not to be used for Units or any such purpose by the high end of town because of its situation overlooking the Brisbane River; she wanted it kept for sick people, especially the poor, the bedridden or incurably ill so that they could have that beautiful view. By 27 February, 1952 the documents of Memorandum of Transfer combined with Charge and Declaration of Trust were ready to be signed by both parties, and were duly completed in March 1952. Under the terms, Mary Bedford retained the right to live at 'Old St Mary's' and to keep ownership of the contents of the house.



Top: Srs Jan O'Grady, Carmel Coyle, Anne Turner and Nola Riley, Mt Olivet Convent ritual

Left: Srs Patricia Coyle and Dorothy Bayliss

Mother M Giovanni Ackman, then Rectress of St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, was appointed to Brisbane to be in charge of the planning of the Hospital. On 20 March 1953, Mother M Giovanni flew to Brisbane to finalise the transfer of the property into the Sisters of Charity's possession. It was also decided that a short street next to 'Old St Mary's' (running from Main Street towards the river) should also be purchased. The short street was purchased for 30 pounds. In order to raise funds for the new hospital, a property owned by the Sisters of Charity at Enoggera was sold.

Mary Bedford suggested to Mother M Giovanni that the block of flats next door to the hospital owned by two sisters, Misses Stewart, be purchased for use as a Nurses' home. These flats were eventually purchased in 1956 for 16 thousand pounds. In June 1954 Mother M Alphonsus assured Mary Bedford that her house, 'Old St Mary's', would be used by the Sisters once the hospital was completed. On 24 October 1954, the foundation stone of Mt Olivet Hospital was laid by Archbishop James Duhig. On 24 June 1955 Mother M Giovanni, then Rectress of Notre Dame Convent, Coorparoo, informed the new Superior General, Mother M St Agnes Skewes, that all matters concerning Mount Olivet Hospital were fully signed and sealed with the Commonwealth Bank loaning the Congregation 175,000 pounds to build the hospital.

Mary Bedford was present at the laying of the foundation stone of Mt Olivet Hospital but sadly, she did not live to see the hospital completed. Towards the end of 1955 she became very ill and on 22 December 1955, aged over 90 years, she died in the Mater Private Hospital. Her Funeral service was held at St Mary's Anglican Church, Kangaroo Point, on Christmas Eve and was attended by the Sisters of Charity.

After the death of Mary Bedford, a detailed inspection of 'Old St Mary's' revealed substantial white-ant infestation and rotten floorboards, so Mother M Giovanni recommended to Mother M St Agnes Skewes and Council that no money be spent on it.

On 7 July 1956 the decision was taken to demolish 'Old St Mary's', to build a new convent and to negotiate the purchase of the flats next door.

During the time that hospital was under construction, the Sisters appointed to Mt Olivet were living at Mt St Michael's Convent, Ashgrove, and then in 1955 when Mother M Giovanni was appointed the Rectress of Notre Dame, Coorparoo, they moved across the river to Coorparoo. At the end of 1955 Mother M Giovanni requested to be relieved of the duties of Rectress as the work on the new hospital required most of her time and attention.

[Continued page 06](#)

# Mt Olivet Convent

411 Main Street, Kangaroo Point

from page 05

When the negotiations to purchase the block of flats next to the site of the hospital were successfully completed in 1956, Mother M Giovanni and the Sisters appointed to assist her with the hospital moved into these flats. Mother M Giovanni Ackman was appointed the Rectress of Mount Olivet from 8 September 1957; her companions were Srs M Aurelius Power and M Gerard Majella Purcell. Mount Olivet Hospital was officially opened on 8 September, 1957. A temporary convent area within the hospital on level 2 was made available whilst the new brick convent overlooking the river was built. It is not recorded exactly when the Sisters moved into the new Convent in 1958. Sr M Gerard Majella Purcell planted a Poinciana tree to commemorate the move into the new Convent. This beautiful tree outside the Dining Room is still standing and has given much joy to all for the past 58 years. In a letter to Mother M St Agnes Skewes dated 30 March 1958, Mother M Giovanni reported that the Convent had been paid for.

On 22 September 1958, the General Council decided to purchase the house owned by the Russell family next to the Hospital for use as a Nurses' home. The rent from the 10 flats would pay for the property. The Russell property is not to be confused with Bedford House, the Spanish styled Art Deco building that was built by Mary Bedford in the late 1920's so that the sick poor from the country would have a place to stay free of charge whilst attending Medical appointments in the city of Brisbane.

*...the Sisters gathered once more to reminisce, to reflect and to decommission a much loved Convent that was the heart of the Queensland Sisters.*

Bedford House was demolished late last year by St Vincent's Care Australia to make way for planned future development of the site. Over the years several Sisters have called Bedford House 'home' and while Mount Olivet Convent was being refurbished in the mid-1990s, a number of the Community moved into the five Units that comprised Bedford House and lived there for 18 months.

Having farewelled and decommissioned the Amarina Avenue Convent at Ashgrove the day before, the Sisters gathered once more to reminisce, to reflect and to decommission a much loved Convent that was the heart of the Queensland Sisters. It was the place where they gathered to celebrate, to pray, to give thanks and to mourn, to discuss changes and to be informed about the way forward for health and aged care at Mt Olivet and about the future direction of the Congregation. It was the place where Sisters travelling to and from Brisbane were always welcome, the place where Sisters came to be refreshed and/or to recuperate as they recovered from illness or needed a break from the demands of ministry. The beautiful view of Brisbane and its river from the Convent was unrivalled.

Srs Jan O'Grady (Bondi NSW), Patricia Coyle (Aspley Queensland) and Anna Maria Parleviet (Deepdene, Victoria) together with the three Sisters who are residents of Marycrest, Nola Riley, Maria Carmel Cullen and Kathleen Munce, joined those Sisters who had participated in the Ashgrove farewell, and who now were assembled in the former Dining Room of the Convent for the second Rite of Farewell to be celebrated this weekend. Ms Cheryle Royle, CEO St Vincent's Private Hospital, Michael Hart, Director of Mission, and his wife, Jodie, and Guy Malghem, Support Services Manager and his wife, Vivienne, together with Dr Tessa Ho and Father James Donohue, Hospital Chaplain accepted the invitation to attend the Prayer and Ritual of Farewell.

Sr Clare Nolan welcomed everyone and expressed her hope that the new Mt Olivet Convent within the Marycrest complex would carry on the tradition of being a place of warmth and hospitality for those who come to Brisbane.

Left to right: Srs Patricia Heenan and Maureen Parker; Ms Cheryle Royle, CEO St Vincent's Private Hospital; Sisters gather for farewell ritual





Sr Suzette Clark leads the ritual

She reminded everyone that Mt Olivet Hospital and Convent were built by the generous support of the people of Brisbane. The Sisters of Charity will continue to be forever grateful for the love and unflinching support that the people of Queensland have given to Mt Olivet Hospital over the past 63 years. Clare, in reference to the new Convent which was to be blessed later that morning, called to mind the passage from St John's Gospel where Jesus is very firm with Peter about his future if he was really serious about loving Jesus and feeding his lambs and sheep.

Jesus said to Peter:

*“Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.”*

John 21: 18.

Clare, as a student of Mt St Michael's College, Ashgrove and a member of the College Choir which had sung at the official opening of the Hospital on 8 September 1957, has been in a position to see Mt Olivet Hospital grow and develop into an establishment that continues to read the signs of the time as it strives to meet the on-going needs of the people of South-East Queensland. The Sisters of Charity love Mt Olivet Campus and its caring staff.



Srs Judith Clark, Nola Riley Dorothy Bayliss and Regina Millard

Sister's parents and relatives have died there and many of our Queensland-based Sisters have died there. Mt Olivet is truly holy ground for the Queensland Sisters.

Ms Cheryle Royle, the CEO of St Vincent's Private Hospital Brisbane, in response to Clare's address expressed her gratitude for the lease of the Convent which has allowed the Hospital to move forward in its expansion of services offered to the people of Brisbane and SE Queensland. The Hospital can now increase by 21 the number of beds set aside for Palliative Care. The former Executive Offices that were in what is referred to as The Link between the Hospital and Marycrest, can now be turned into extra Specialist Consulting Rooms. St Vincent's Private Hospital is the leading hospital for Pain Management in SE Queensland.

The former Convent will house not only the Executive Offices but also the Pastoral Care and Mission Offices and, at long last, Nursing Education will have a permanent home on the ground floor of the Convent. The former Community /TV Room plus the glassed in walkway is now the Education Centre. The Dining Room and Chapel will be developed as a new Meeting Room for the Board of the Hospital and also as a place where Functions can be held. The patio will be extended to the fence line of the property so that all can continue to enjoy the spectacular view that was ours for the past 58 years. Cheryle Royle shared with the Sisters the plan to remember those persons who have played a significant role in the development of Mt Olivet Hospital.

Several Sisters had expressed a deep concern that Lynch House which was named after the first Medical Officer at Mt Olivet, Dr Albert Lynch, had been demolished to make way for a Car Park and nothing had replaced this memorial to a Doctor who had generously served Mt Olivet Hospital for a number of years. The plan is for the various Floors, Wards and Departments within the Hospital to be named after those persons who have made a significant contribution to the development of Mt Olivet Hospital. Dr Albert Lynch is one of the names put forward.



Srs Kathleen Munce and Regina Millard

Cheryle Royle assured the Sisters that the only remnant of the original legacy of Mary Bedford, the stone wall known as Mary Bedford's Corner, the place where she sat and prayed each morning, will be conserved and protected for generations to come. It is being restored by Conservation experts and will be protected by a glass wall and surrounded by a garden. There will be steps leading down towards it so that people can enjoy the view that Mary Bedford loved so much.

[Continued page 08](#)

# Mt Olivet Convent

411 Main Street, Kangaroo Point

from page 07



Srs Maureen Parker and Patricia Coyle

Cherlye then invited the Sisters to consider the new name for the former Convent. Originally the Hospital Executive had considered naming it 'Mt Olivet House' but this was no longer possible when the Congregational Leadership Team had decided to retain the name 'Mt Olivet' for the new Convent situated within Marycrest complex. 'Mary Bedford House' was another option up for consideration. The Sisters unanimously agreed that their former home should be called 'Mary Aikenhead House'. The Executive Team had intended that the Tower Block in the Hospital be named the 'Mary Aikenhead Block', so now this feature of the Hospital will be named after the person whose generous gift made all this possible, Mary Bedford.

The Ritual of Farewell then continued with the Opening Prayer, the presenting of the symbols – the Candle, the Rosary Beads and Bible, the Flowers and the Keys to the House; the Scripture Readings were followed by the sharing of Sisters stories and memories of life within the walls of Mt Olivet Convent. Patricia Coyle was one of those Sisters who accompanied Mother M Giovanni on her daily fund-raising activities in the city. Mother M Giovanni had no sense of direction and was forever getting lost. The Teaching Sisters soon learned that it was to their advantage to say that they had a Doctor's appointment whenever asked how they planned to spend their day. Margaret Mines father, Cecil Mines, was a Chartered Account who worked for General Electric and had an Office in the city. He was the initial Finance Manager for Mother M Giovanni and organised the collection of the daily money cans instead of having them stored under the beds of those Ashgrove Mothers who stood on the street corners collecting the small change of passers-by.

Clare related the story of the two Sisters who found themselves saved by a Tree stump when reversing at speed out of the Convent Car Park and ended up dangling precariously over the edge of river bank.

Mathilde Harnischfeger and Patricia Heenan led those Sisters who had resided in community at Mt Olivet Convent, on to the patio to release the balloons they had been given as a symbol of letting this place go. Everyone then adjourned to the ground floor level of Marycrest for the Blessing of the new Mt Olivet Convent.

Last October when Clare was on Visitation to the Sophia Community as the Mt Olivet Community was then known, she shared with the Sisters the floor plan of a new Convent which was to be part of the Marycrest Complex.

Due to the fact that only two Sisters resided within a Convent that was designed for 15 Sisters, it was more practical to have these Sisters moved to a smaller place of residence where they could receive the care and supervision that they now required with minimum anxiety and stress associated with relocation of Elderly persons. St Vincent's Health Australia made the generous offer of a section within Marycrest Aged Care Complex in return for the lease of the Convent. Eleven rooms on the Ground Floor of Marycrest, Main Street end of the building were handed over to be refurbished into a suitable Convent for the Sisters. John Leahy, Chief Executive Officer, Aged Care Division, St Vincent's Health Australia, and Darren Katsoolis, Property and Infrastructure Manager, St Vincent's Care Services, liaised with the Congregation Leader and Council as well as with the Congregational Bursar, Sr Colleen Mills and Ms Tania Gorey, Property Manager from the Congregational Office, to ensure that the new Convent would meet all expectations. It was agreed that while Srs Patricia Heenan and Mathilde Harnischfeger would come under the care of the Marycrest Team and be their responsibility, it was essential that other Sisters staying at the new Convent did not have to fulfil the requirements of those residing within an Aged Care facility. The new Convent will continue to be a place of welcome and hospitality for all Sisters who come to Brisbane.

The new Convent complex has five bedrooms, three of which are set aside for visitors, a TV/Community Room, a large Dining Room with Kitchenette and Laundry attached and a lovely Prayer room. There are two entrances, one via the Marycrest Foyer, the other directly from the main Driveway leading to the front of the Hospital. Sr Margaret Valentine was given the onerous task of packing up the old Convent and furnishing the new Convent. Sr Kathleen Doohan came up to help with the adjustment process. Mathilde and Patricia moved into their new home at the end of April.

Sr Clare assisted by Mathilde and Patricia blessed the new Convent. Due to the fact that new Convent is a refurbished corridor within Marycrest, movement was restricted so the Sisters and the Hospital Executive plus John Leahy and his wife and Darren Katsoolis and his wife stood and watched as Clare, Mathilde and Patricia moved from room to room praying the Prayers of Blessing with the everyone joining in singing the Refrain of the Mary Haugen song, *All are Welcome*. The final blessing encapsulated the continuing wish for the new Mt Olivet Convent.



Srs Nola Riley and Judith Clark

*May our door be always open to those in need. May our friends who come to us in times of trouble and sorrow, find our door open to them and their needs.*

*May the holy light of God's presence in our home and be a blessing to all who shall live here and for everyone who comes to this door.*

The new Convent may be a smaller version of the former Convent but it will continue to be a place of hospitality where all are welcome. At the conclusion of this ceremony everyone adjourned to the Board Room for light refreshments.



# St Finbarr's Parish, Ashgrove

## Sisters of Charity Farewell Liturgy

July 31, 2016

*“Jesus, you show us how  
to love and serve the poor  
With the Sisters of Charity who  
led the way for us to see  
Christ in everything and  
everyone we meet.”*

Was it just coincidence that the first Primary School conducted by the Sisters of Charity in Queensland shared the same patron saint as that of the first Sister of Charity who died and was buried in Queensland – Sr M Finbarr Sullivan, a Domestic Sister who died shortly after the Sisters took up residence at *Grantully*?

Sr M Finbarr was born in Ireland on 12 April, 1863 and entered the Congregation on 22 March, 1897. She was professed on 3 July, 1899 as a Domestic Sister. Or was there some truth in the story that the Primary School which opened in two rooms on the verandah of *Grantully* was named in memory of this gentle Sister who spent her entire Religious Life working in the kitchen?

Her last appointment was to the Community at Ashgrove. It would seem to be pure coincidence as, according to the records, St Finbarr's Parish was dedicated by Archbishop Duhig on 19 January 1919 and the first Mass celebrated on 26 January, 1919. Betheden, the former home of Mr WJ Trouten, a well-known pharmacist, was purchased by the Archbishop and used as a temporary Church until the official opening of the timber church at 202 Waterworks Road in 1921. Until then the Parish was serviced by priests from the Cathedral. Father Lalor was appointed the first Parish Priest. The Church doubled as a Presbytery until the purchase of *Grantully* in 1924. Fr Lalor lived in *Grantully* until the Presbytery was completed, blessed and opened on 3 May 1925, three weeks before the arrival of the Sisters of Charity in Ashgrove on 24 May 1925.



Farewell Liturgy at St Finbarr's Parish – at the conclusion of Mass Sisters gathered on the sanctuary for a blessing song

The Sisters were welcomed to the Parish at the 9.00 am Mass on 31 May, 1925 and after Mass began teaching Catechism on the Church verandahs. The following day, 1 June 1925, St Finbarr's Primary School commenced in two airy rooms on the back verandah of the Convent with a first day attendance of 28 pupils. By the end of the week the number had increased to 40 pupils. By 1 September, 1925 there were 115 pupils, so conditions at the Convent were becoming very cramped and there was an urgent need for increased school accommodation. When the Church School of St Finbarr's officially opened on 16 August, 1927, 175 students were enrolled. In the early days Mr Mallard used to drive a buggy and collect the children who lived on the western outskirts of the Parish and bring them to school. In 1927, when the school moved into new classrooms beneath the timber Church, Mr Tom Quain drove the Sisters to school in his car and then he would mount his motor bike and would race into the GPO where he worked. Sr M Tarcisius Donovan used to relate the story about the black car that was used in the mid 1940's to take the Sisters to school – it was a former Funeral Hearse with tinted windows. Very often on their way to school, they would see men stop and remove their hats as the car passed by. Someone commented to one of the parents about the large number of funerals from St Finbarr's Church.

A Parish Convent is able to create lasting bonds between the Sisters, parishioners and parents of the children taught at the school and those whose children took part in the Catechism lessons after Mass on a Sunday or during the week after school. Being an Apostolic Religious Congregation meant that the Sisters of Charity were not trammelled by rules and practices regarding Enclosure. They were founded to meet and minister to the poor where they lived. From the very beginning of the Congregation the Sisters of Charity were known as the 'walking Sisters' – they walked everywhere to bring the love and compassion of Christ to those in need. The long established practice of 'going on the mission' of a Saturday afternoon after Recreation enabled the School Sisters to visit the home of every child in the school.

St Finbarr's was a poor Parish. The Sisters walked the streets of Ashgrove except on those occasions when it was more practical to catch a tram or a bus in order to reach their destination. They visited the families, they visited the sick and elderly in their homes, they were there in times of need and in times of sorrow and in those times when hardship was making life difficult for parents to make ends meet.

[Continued page 10](#)

# St Finbarr's Parish, Ashgrove

## Sisters of Charity Farewell Liturgy

from page 09

Stories abound of the great work done by the Sisters from St Finbarr's School and from Mt St Michael's Convent:

Srs M Tarcisius Donovan, M Lucius Martin, M Brigidine Dray, M Berenice Sweeney, M St Laurence Young, M Fabre O'Brien, M Martin Mahoney, M Gervase (Eileen Kean), M Fidelis Lalor, Patricia Coyle, M Bernadette Shand, M Thecla Bertolotti, Mother M St Paul, Mary Cooke, Maureen Fetherstone, Anne Crowley, Patricia Lynch-these are just some of the names recalled.

St Finbarr's parish was a unique parish built on deep faith and was family centred. Many vocations to the Sisters of Charity came from the families of this parish, such as the Heenan, Parker, Clarke, Mines, Crowley, Coyle, Maguire, Sapsford, Nabbs and Nolan families. It was St Finbarr's families that formed the nucleus of the fund-raisers for Mount Olivet Hospital in the mid-1950's and early 1960's.



Top right: Sr Judith Clark proclaims the Reading  
Top left and bottom left: Sr Patricia Heenan, with school student, carrying the Banner in the procession; Sr Patricia Heenan



Sr Clare with Mrs Lola Johnson

The Sisters withdrew from St Finbarr's School in 1981 but the rich traditions and the charism of the Sisters of Charity continue to underpin the values and goals of the school which started 91 years ago on the verandah of *Grantully*. The withdrawal from the Parish school and from the governance of Mt St Michael's College did not mean the end of the work and mission of the Sisters of Charity in Ashgrove; it merely enabled the pastoral aspect of our mission and charism to flourish in other ways, to be given a different expression detached from that of education. From the very beginning in 1925 the Sisters were indispensable, busy Parish workers, training Altar servers, preparing children from State Schools for the Sacraments, leading the Sodalities (Children of Mary, Sacred Heart) as well as doing Parish visitation. The Sisters were integral to the spiritual and social life of the Parish.

*St Finbarr's parish was a unique parish built on deep faith and was family centred.*

This rich and vibrant pastoral presence was carried on in the 1980's until the present day by Sisters Margaret Nabbs, Margaret O'Brien, M Thecla Bertolotti, Anne Crowley, Carmel Coyle, Cate O'Brien and Margaret Mines. From 1987-1990, Sister Denise Hannebery conducted the Journey Scripture Programme in the Parish. Sister Margaret Mines was the last Sister of Charity to be a pastoral presence in the parish of Ashgrove and it was Margaret's transfer to Enoggera in May 2016 that marked the end of the residential presence of the Sisters of Charity in Ashgrove.

On Sunday, 31 July 2016 the parish of St Finbarr's farewellled Sr Margaret Mines and the Sisters of Charity with gratitude for the vision, sacrifices and generosity of the Sisters for the past 91 years and for the pivotal role they had played in the life of the local community through their educational and pastoral ministries. Srs Clare Nolan, Cate O'Brien, Suzette Clark, Patricia Heenan, Judith Clark, Deirdre Hickey, Regina Millard, Patricia Scully, Anne Turner, Jeannie Johnston, Mathilde Harnischfeger, Dorothy Bayliss, Anna Maria Parlevliet, Margaret Fitzgerald and Dr Tessa Ho (Trustee Mary Aikenhead Ministries) joined Sr Margaret Mines for the last of the three farewells that had taken place this weekend.



A slide from the presentation *I Love You Lord*



Sr Margaret Mines leads the Offertory Procession



Sr Clare thanking the parishioners



Prayers of the Faithful: Fr Brannelly, PP with children

Father Brannelly PP and St Finbarr's School Principal, Anne Hall, welcomed Sr Clare and the Sisters to the Farewell Mass. The Church was packed with Parishioners and Families of some of the Sisters present at the 8.30 am Mass which was also the Parish Family Mass. Sr Clare's sister, Anne Ingliss and her family, sat in the very same seat that their mother, Mrs Christina Nolan, sat in every time she went to Mass. As the hymn, *Christ, Be Our Light* filled the Church, Sister Patricia Heenan, former Parishioner and ex-student of St Finbarr's School, took part in the Opening Procession as one of two persons carrying the Crest of the Sisters of Charity which was placed on the Sanctuary. Sr Patricia's Family is very active in the Parish.

The first reading from Isaiah was a paraphrase of our motto:

*The Lord says, 'Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives. Isaiah 58:7*

The Cantor for the Responsorial Psalm was a Year 6 student. Sr Judith Clark, another former Parishioner and ex-student of St Finbarr's, read the Second Reading, Galatians 5: 13-15. The Prayer of the Faithful included two petitions – For the Sisters of Charity... Help them and us to continue to grow in faith, love and the service of others. and For all at St Finbarr's... may we truly value and appreciate the Sisters of Charity who have offered us their leadership, support and love.

Sr Margaret Mines, also a former Parishioner, ex-student of St Finbarr's as well as a former Principal of the School, and members of the Mines family brought up the Gifts in the Procession of the Gifts. After Communion, there was a PowerPoint presentation – *I Love You, Lord* – depicting the Sisters of Charity's involvement in St Finbarr's parish over the past 91 years.



Sisters on the sanctuary for the blessing

At the conclusion of the PowerPoint, Sr Clare spoke to the parishioners and thanked them for their continuous support of the Sisters, for the support they had given to the School Principals over the years, for the warm welcome they had extended to the Sisters as each one arrived to take up their ministry in Ashgrove, for their support of the Sisters in the living out of our charism of service to the poor and for welcoming the Sisters to share in today's celebration of the Eucharist.

Drawing on her own personal experience, Clare recalled the warmth of the welcome the parish had extended to her mother who, as a young widow with 7 children to rear on her own, arrived at 44 Betheden Terrace. Not only was her faith nourished by the opportunity to attend daily Mass but her social life was helped by the friendship offered her by those parishioners who were her neighbours and became her friends. The next generation of Nolans continue to make St Finbarr's parish their spiritual home.



At the end of Mass Anne Hall, Principal and Mr Frank Long, Parish Council presented Sr Clare with a framed collage of St Finbarr's

Clare concluded by pointing out that the Sisters pray every day for our benefactors and this includes the parishioners of St Finbarr's. Clare also thanked those Parish Priests who, over the years, had valued our presence amongst their people.

Anne Hall, St Finbarr's School Principal and Mr Frank Long, member of the Parish Pastoral Council, presented Clare with a framed photo-collage of St Finbarr's, thanking the Sisters for their witness, faith and vision to the people of Ashgrove for 91 years.

The Sisters were then called on to the sanctuary for a special blessing. The Reading chosen was from the Book of Wisdom, a blessing for those whose life now takes them on a different journey to a different place:

*"At all times bless the Lord God, asking God to make all your paths straight and to grant success to all your endeavours and plans".*

Continued page 12

# St Finbarr's Parish, Ashgrove

## Sisters of Charity Farewell Liturgy

from page 11



Top left and bottom left: Sr Clare with Parishioners at morning tea, after the Mass; Sr Clare with Fr Brannelly and Principal, Anne Hall

Middle: Morning tea with Parishioners

Top right and bottom right: Srs Suzette Clark and Cate O'Brien viewing the display; the Sisters arriving at St Finbarr's Parish Church

The congregation then raised their hands in blessing as the Children's Choir circled the Sisters and sang the Irish Blessing. The Mass concluded with the Closing Blessing and Dismissal and the singing of St Finbarr's School Song – *In Faith, In Love, In Charity*.

*'May you always walk in God's ways, serving God's people, and come to the reward promised to those who have been 'good and faithful servants.'*

Before leaving the Sanctuary, Fr Peter Brannelly announced that 300 Hot Cinnamon Donuts were waiting to be consumed. The Parish had put on a special Morning Tea for the Sisters. Ex-students not only from Mt St Michael's College and St Finbarr's Primary School but also several from Grantully College, including two who were in the first Senior Class to graduate from Grantully College, were amongst the group of Parishioners on the lawn. One lady proudly wore her Grantully College Badge. For many people it was a

chance to catch up with those Sisters they had not seen for over 30 years and for some Sisters it was chance to reconnect with former colleagues and reminisce on days gone by.

Even the 'Mater Nurses' managed a mini-reunion. The School had mounted an historical display on the external wall of the Church. Catherine Wallis, St Finbarr's School Administration Team, explained that they had used the photographs that were in the Exhibition that had been organised by Sr Christine Henry as part of the Brisbane 175 Years Celebration, 31 May 2014.

This special Queensland Weekend of Farewells was a weekend filled with many graces and blessings as well as a weekend that concealed heart-ache and a sense of loss for special places filled with precious memories, places that now have been entrusted to the care of others. Detachment from material goods is one of the tenets of our Ignatian Spiritual heritage. The challenge is to embrace it wholeheartedly with a generous spirit and to pray for those who will follow in our footsteps that they will continue the mission and the charism of the Sisters of Charity.



Sr Deirdre Hickey with Parishioners outside the church

We have planted the seed, watered plant and God gave the growth. Now the time has come for others to continue planting the seed, watering the plant, knowing that it is God alone who gives the growth.

*"For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building."*

1 Cor. 3:9b

by Sr Jeannie Johnston



**Keep in touch** is a quarterly newsletter for Sisters of Charity, their families, friends and supporters.

**Published by the Congregational Office of the Sisters of Charity of Australia**

Level 7, 35 Grafton Street, Bondi Junction, NSW 2022 Telephone 02 9367 1222 Fax 02 9367 1223  
Email james.griffiths@rscoffice.com www.sistersofcharity.org.au

**Privacy statement** The Sisters of Charity have a privacy policy statement detailing how personal information is managed, pursuant to the Privacy Act 1988 and the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000. People receiving this newsletter via mail will have their names on our database. This list is not used for any other purpose and will not be given to any other organisation. If you would like your name removed from this list, please contact the Congregational Office.