

## ***A History of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish 1958 - 2008***



***“This Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is dedicated to the memory of the men and women of Australia who gave their lives in the service of their country.  
May they enjoy the peace of Christ forever”***

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| <b>30<sup>th</sup> Jan 1958</b>  | <b>Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish established.</b>                                                                              |
| <b>20<sup>th</sup> May 1973</b>  | <b>Immaculate Heart of Mary Church blessed and opened by Cardinal James Knox, Archbishop of Melbourne.</b>                       |
| <b>29<sup>th</sup> July 1984</b> | <b>Consecration of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church by the Most Reverend T. Francis Little, DD, KBE, Archbishop of Melbourne.</b> |

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## ***Preface***

### ***Immaculate Heart of Mary***

When Fr Dan Daly of Hampton dedicated our parish to the Immaculate Heart of Mary he endowed us with a perpetual reminder of our purpose: to imitate the simplicity, humility and purity of our Mother Mary.

To prepare her for her role as the Mother of Jesus, God created Mary free from all stain of sin from the moment of her conception. Hers is a unique holiness that comes wholly from Christ. It was because her heart was pure that Mary said “Yes” to God whilst aware of the personal suffering that would follow, and by this she changed the course of human history. Her “Yes” brought Christ into the world to destroy the power of evil by his death and resurrection.

As the Mother of the Church, Mary calls us to follow the example of her *fiat* by also abandoning our own will to say “Yes” to the Will of God so that Christ can also be born in our hearts. Only then can we be truly one in Him and love one another as He has loved us. However, unlike Mary, we carry the stain of original sin. This is why, every Friday in the Divine Office, the Church pleads with the psalmist, “*A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast spirit within me*”.

On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1984, Pope John Paul II consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as requested at Fatima. In the midst of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of our parish, dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary 50 years ago, let us consecrate our own hearts to imitate her humility. Only a humble heart can be pure and remember that it belongs neither to itself, nor to the world, but God.



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## ***Early History of Bayside Area***

Before European settlement, a substantial number of Bunurong aborigines moved about the coastal dunes of the Bayside region where there was a plentiful supply of food and fresh water. When Melbourne was first settled in 1835, only a few squatters had ventured south to run cattle in the inaccessible bushland. However, during the 1840s, following the large selection of land made by Dendy in Brighton, more settlers came and the market gardens characteristic of the region until the 1950s were established. As early as the 1850's, Bayside was already a popular destination for holiday makers and the wealthier citizens began to build both permanent and holiday homes here, a trend that continued to grow. When Victoria became a separate state in 1851, land sales increased in the area. Otherwise, development was slow until the railways were built. The railways gave impetus to the land boom of the 1880s and population growth in the region increased rapidly as a consequence.

It would be more than seventy years before there was any significant growth in the East Hampton area. Brighton was the oldest settlement in the region. The first Catholic church in Melbourne's south, St Finbar's (originally, St Patrick's), was opened in East Brighton in 1848, eight years after the first Mass was celebrated in Melbourne on the spot that is now the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins Street. Sandringham, with 14 houses in "Gypsy Village" in 1884, built its first Catholic church in 1906, while Hampton grew after the First World War when the Soldier Settlement Board opened new subdivisions, as a result of which St Mary's parish was born in 1925. East Hampton was part of the rural fringe until the Castlefield Estate development surged following World War II. Even by the time that our parish was being planned in 1956, there were enough paddocks and market gardens to give this area a semi-rural aspect.

### ***Post World War II Development***

The period between 1945 and 1955 was one of intense building activity by the Housing Commission of Victoria. By 1950, over 1,400 houses were built in parts of Brighton, Sandringham and Moorabbin and this was followed in the 1950s by the development of the Highett and East Hampton areas for ex-servicemen. The Castlefield Estate, which included a major part of the area that is now our parish, was the largest such development in the southern suburbs of Melbourne. It is the subject of a Bayside Heritage Study because the architecture and planning involved was remarkably thorough and is of considerable historical interest, especially as few such dwellings remain, and fewer still are in their original condition. This project, designed to meet the critical post-war housing shortage, also heralded a trend towards suburban expansion and redevelopment which continues to increase, even in the high-density environment of our time. A regrettable consequence, according to Heritage studies, is the disappearance of the many large, established gardens which had once graced the area.

### ***History of the Church in East Hampton***

Listening to the memories of those parishioners who had come to the area shortly after World War II, it is hard to envisage the generous, open spaces where they lived without regretting the passing of that era. Unpretentious, single-storey houses, often Housing Commission, were set on quarter-acre blocks, sometimes separated by market gardens or facing paddocks on which cattle grazed, "in the quagmire", according to one parishioner.

The collected memories of our original parishioners would make instructive reading. For example, Joan Mealing and Mary Martin speak not only of having known all their neighbours, but of the existence of "a real community" where there was mutual concern, where people helped one another, and where children freely played together in the streets and paddocks. Each evening, at dusk, mothers would go out to call the children in to meals. In this picture of life here in the fifties, the modern spectres of alienation and "time constraints" are missing. People were living in the intimacy of a village and our older parishioners remember that life with fondness, despite real hardships and what, by modern standards, could be regarded as poverty.

Some of our founding parishioners still live in the original houses built by the Housing Commission. Mary Martin recalls that after she and her husband, Len, were married in January, 1947, they lived in Camp Pell in Royal Park with many other Returned Servicemen and their families, waiting for a house to become available. As houses were built, they were allocated to families by drawing a ballot. Mr and Mrs Martin's names were drawn in the first ballot and in 1948 they came to David Street<sup>1</sup>, the first to receive a house in this area. Here they raised a family, and here Mary Martin still lives. The high regard which she and Joan Mealing express for their homes echoes the opinions of the Heritage studies that praise these houses for their solid, well-designed construction.

The Martins were early arrivals in the area, benefiting from the first wave of Housing Commission development. Records indicate that in the early forties there were only about a dozen houses here. By the mid-fifties, some 3,000 houses had been built. The rapid population increase included a significant proportion of Catholic families who had to travel considerable distances to attend Mass on Sundays. Daily, the children faced the same distances in order to attend Catholic schools. Depending on the parish boundaries within which they lived, this entailed walking to either St Mary's in Hampton, or Sacred Heart in Sandringham.

Joan Mealing remembers walking across paddocks from her home in Teddington Street to St Mary's in Hampton, and pushing a pram whilst taking her children to school. Similarly, Mary Martin recalls the years that she walked her children to the Sacred Heart School in Sandringham when Bluff Road was still a mud track which the men of the area periodically cleared of thorn bushes. People walked everywhere, often great distances, because there were no buses available and few people had a car. It was an age when people still accepted difficulties as a part of life and had not yet developed the modern dependence on comfort and convenience. They were heirs to a venerable Australian tradition.

The Church in Australia had had a long experience of the "tyranny of distance".<sup>2</sup> The few parishes established in Melbourne during the nineteenth century covered vast areas from which missions were established to serve districts lying even further afield. Such was the case with St Finbar's which had been home to the pastor of the Mission of Brighton. This mission covered all the territory south of the Yarra from Emerald Hill to the Mornington Peninsula and east into Gippsland. The Bayside area itself was part of a large parish based at St James' Gardenvale until Sandringham became a parish in 1914. More parishes became established after the First World War, but it was not until after the Second World War population boom that the current system of local parishes became the norm. Yet the Church had flourished, thanks to the labours of the missionary priests who had defied distance and hardships to minister to their people.

In the same spirit, the people of East Hampton were not deterred by distance when sending their children to Catholic schools. They would have continued to do so if further progress had not intervened. The growth in Housing Commission development, which reached a peak in 1954, led to a population increase which neighbouring parish schools were struggling to accommodate. To resolve the difficulty, school extensions had been considered but the costs were deemed to be prohibitive. Doubts were also expressed about whether such measures could be ultimately effective. As always, when there is a problem, God provides a solution by inspiring one of His servants.

Between 1955 and 1956, the late Fr Dan Daly from St Mary's parish in Hampton stepped into the breach with a plan of action. It was due to his initiative and determined efforts that the school and then, the parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary came into being. For this generative contribution, we honour Fr Daly as the grandfather of this parish.

Marshalling the forces of his Legion of Mary, Fr Daly sent them to canvass the area now occupied by our parish to determine whether the Catholic population here warranted a school and parish of their own. Fr John Barker, assistant priest of Hampton, was sent to confirm their findings. The results of this survey

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<sup>1</sup> The southern end of David Street was zoned as Sandringham in 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Blainey, Geoffrey. *The Tyranny of Distance – How Distance Shaped Australia's History*. rev.ed. Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 2001

showed that there were almost 200 Catholic families living in East Hampton, a fact that prompted Fr Daly to call a meeting of the neighbouring parish priests. There was a majority decision in favour of establishing a new parish, the boundaries of which were defined by the areas given up by the parishes of Sandringham, Hampton and Highett. The Bentleigh parish had given the triangle bounded by South Road, Nepean Highway, and Cummins Road, but this was claimed by another parish until Fr Crennan came to reclaim it.

After obtaining the approval of the Cathedral authorities, and with the support of most of his neighbours, Fr Daly embarked on the next phase, which was to acquire land for the new parish. With the assistance of the Minister of Housing, Mr Tom Hayes, the site of the present parish was purchased. It was a central site of some four and a half acres bounded by Raynes Park Road, Bluff Road, and Fewster Road and cost four thousand pounds. There, on the corner of Raynes Park Road and Bluff Road, the school was built, at an initial cost of twenty-one thousand pounds. In this entire endeavour, Fr Daly was helped by the assistant priests of St Mary's, Fr Brian Burke and Fr John Barker.

On the property there was a house which the Vicar General at the time, Monsignor Laurie Moran, bought and donated to the parish. It had belonged to a policeman who, unrestrained by the building regulations which are now in place, had built a haphazard structure without foundations. The water, apart from the sewer, flowed under the house and onto the adjacent parkland. This situation was not remedied until 1979 but, as Fr Crennan observes, "not before the house had become a menace to its residents".

The new parish was about to be born with an even heavier encumbrance. By the time that the East Hampton Church-School was ready to be opened, the parish debt totalled over fifty thousand pounds. Fr Daly and the parish of St Mary's came to our aid by organising the necessary loan and taking on its repayment until our parish was established. Fr Crennan justly calls this "no mean feat" and Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish is mindful of the debt of gratitude that we owe Fr Daly and his parishioners.

### ***Opening of the School***

With the school built and all practical matters arranged, the people here were now ready for the historic moment which would usher in a new era for the Catholic community of East Hampton. The opening of a Church-School is how most of the parishes of Melbourne had had their beginning, so the parishioners of 1957 eagerly anticipated the ceremony which was to open their own Church-School.

The solemn moment inaugurating parish life in East Hampton occurred on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1957, with the great Archbishop Mannix, a vigorous 93 year old at the time, opening and blessing the new School of Immaculate Heart of Mary. It was both a joyful and memorable occasion and for all of us now it remains as a memorial of the origins of our parish and of the Archbishop who was a giant on the landscape of Melbourne's history.

### ***Official Establishment of the Parish***

A few months later, on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1958, the new parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary was officially established with Fr Fred Nolan being appointed as our first parish priest. The people here had already built a community of neighbours. Now they had a parish priest whose task, like that of the Apostles, was to build a Church, the Body of Christ in East Hampton. Fr Nolan embraced this responsibility and began his pastoral work methodically and with zeal.

Supported by the Catholic Women's League, the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Legion of Mary (mainly based in Hampton at the time), and having organised the teams which were to knock on every door, Fr Nolan set about conducting a census of the new parish. On the basis of the information thus obtained, Fr Nolan developed his program. He scheduled three Masses for each Sunday morning, Confessions on Saturday evenings, and Holy Communion for the sick who were confined to their homes. This program ensured that each member of the new parish body had access to the Sacraments and to the Word of God.



For the next 15 years, Mass would be celebrated in the first three rooms of the school. These rooms, in Fr Crennan's words, "became the church on weekends", and with this in mind, the men of the parish had built school furniture that could be converted to church pews. Pat Kelly recalls that on each Friday evening he and the other men would convert the school into a church, and on Sunday evenings they would reverse the process. Sister Frances, who had come to the school in 1971, remembers that it was then also part of the children's Friday afternoon routine to help prepare the classrooms to serve as the parish church. This situation, demanding though it was, became a normal routine for the parishes of that period. In our parish it lasted until the church was built in 1973 and had been performed willingly and cheerfully week after week.

It is important to stress that this work of the faithful is not a piece of historical trivia but a tremendous testament to faith. The men, giving freely of their time and strength to prepare a church of wood and stone, were also building up the body of Christ in this area. Similarly, the women, in their faith groups, fundraising, helping the parish priest and raising their families, were equally donating themselves to the same cause. All of them, and their dedicated priests, living their lives of work and worship, were the Church, and the living presence of Christ for the world. Fifty years later, the Church in East Hampton is their legacy to the present generation of parishioners. United within this parish, we can continue to pray together as a Church because, as St John Chrysostom said, "You cannot pray at home as at church.....where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests"<sup>3</sup>

### **Fr Nolan**

As the parish priest, Fr Nolan extended the school to its present seven rooms. To achieve this, he and his parishioners conducted many fund-raising activities which were often mentioned in the *Advocate*. In the recollections of those who knew him, Fr Nolan is most fondly remembered for being a compassionate pastor towards young and old alike and for introducing sporting and social activities to engage the youth of the parish. Fr Crennan testifies that this won Fr Nolan their support as he was also "a very gentle pastor" with them. His view is supported by parishioners such as Mary Martin and Joan Mealing who describe him as "a wonderful sportsman who took the boys for sport". They expressed great sadness about the decline in Fr Nolan's health which eventually deteriorated to the point where he became a chronic invalid.

Fr Nolan's failing health was caused by rheumatoid arthritis and exacerbated by the continual damp of the old presbytery. Church authorities, in the hope of giving Fr Nolan an opportunity to recover, decided to transfer him to Glenroy and for the parish priest there, Fr R. Poulsen, to replace him as parish priest at Immaculate Heart of Mary in April, 1965. Neither priest was happy with this arrangement, with the result that Fr Nolan was re-appointed as parish priest of Immaculate Heart of Mary in July of the same year. Records of new fund-raising activities suggest that Fr Nolan had resumed his zealous efforts on behalf of this parish.



*School Sports Day with Fr Nolan*

Sadly, Fr Nolan's activities were interrupted by the continued decline in his health. In 1968 the authorities sent him to Fr Tricarico, who was noted for his care of sick priests,<sup>4</sup> but after his return to East Hampton, a severe recurrence of his illness led to Fr Nolan being hospitalised for six months. During this period, Fr

<sup>3</sup> "Catechism of the Catholic Church", St Pauls/Libreria Editrice Vaticana, official edition for Australia and New Zealand, 1994. p.526

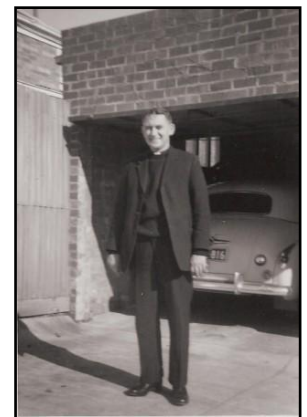
<sup>4</sup> According to Fr Crennan, Fr Tricarico continued to look after Fr Nolan until "his dying days at the Little Sisters of the Poor at Northcote in 1991".

Brian McCormack was appointed as administrator of the parish. Although Fr Nolan returned here after his discharge from hospital, it was clear that he could no longer continue unaided and in January 1969 Fr F Guerin was appointed to assist him. Finally, on 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1969, Fr Victor Crennan, who was appointed as Administrator of both Hampton and East Hampton, was also appointed as Priest in Charge of the parish here while Fr Nolan remained as Parish Priest in Residence. Fr Nolan remained in this position for approximately another two years before bowing to the inevitable and retiring.

### *Fr Crennan's Appointment as Parish Priest*

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 1972, having already been in charge of this parish since August, 1969, Fr Victor Crennan was appointed Parish Priest of Immaculate Heart of Mary, East Hampton. It was a confirmation of the devotion and commitment to this parish which was to endure beyond the 36 years that he spent here. Appointed as Pastor Emeritus<sup>5</sup> upon his retirement, Fr Crennan continues to not only take an interest in the parish but is in frequent contact with many parishioners. His prodigious memory, his sometimes astringent wit and the inimitable flavour of his recollections have not only supplied important information to his listeners and entertained them, but have also edified them because, above all, Fr Crennan is a man of faith. Many a person who has been rebuked by Fr Crennan will remember the occasion as a turning point, re-orientating a fallible human perspective to the divine. At the same time, he has guided the weak with gentleness. A good pastor, he has served his people with the truth and grounded his parish in this truth, obedient to the Magisterium of the Church and impervious to the fashions which, sadly, have weakened the faith in some parts of the Church.

Fr Crennan's appointment to the parish came with a heavy load of responsibilities. His first duty was to make financial provision for Fr Nolan and it is clear that he discharged this gladly and with affection. Fr Nolan, our first Parish Priest, had served this parish well and had earned the care which the Church has for all its servants. Beyond this, Fr Crennan had been sent to this parish by Archbishop Knox with the specific brief of building a church here. However, before he could embark on this project, he had to deal with the difficult problem of financing the school building debt and the school wages. Despite the generosity of its parishioners, the parish was unable to cover this debt and it was a period when government assistance to private schools was not available. Fr Crennan, seeking a solution, applied to the Schools Provident Fund where Kevin Keeney came to the rescue with a plan. At this point, Fr Crennan discovered an unexpected debt of \$10,000 on the presbytery, which had been a free gift to the parish but to which extensions had been made during a time when Fr Nolan was away. With the Archdiocese unable to help, Fr Crennan once again appealed to Mr Keeney who not only guided the payment of the parish debt, but also the financing for building the church. The older parishioners give admiring testimony to Fr Crennan's gifts as a financial manager and state bluntly that "the parish was broke at the time when Fr Crennan came".



*Fr Crennan on his first day in the parish*

As he grappled with the parlous state of parish finances, Fr Crennan was strongly supported by parishioners who played a substantial role in contributing to the reduction of the parish debt. In 1970, whilst Fr Crennan was still Administrator, the Mothers' Club, led by Margaret Herbstreit and Dulcie Jopling, used the successful strategy of another parish to run their own highly successful fete. An impressive \$21,000 was raised at this fete. Whilst this amount was never equalled, the parish fete became an annual event until all school and parish debts were paid. The Mothers' Club was not alone in making a significant contribution to parish finances. The Catholic Women's League also continued to be a loyal and active source of support. As well as assisting their parish priest, the CWL introduced morning teas after Mass, with other community-building functions and fund-raising activities. Together with the Altar Society, the CWL also raised money for the building of the church. The contribution of those who managed the planned giving campaign should also be mentioned. According to Mr Des Keary, the introduction of the Wells System of pledged giving, with its weekly envelopes, "made all the difference" to parish finances during Fr Nolan's time and was also highly praised by Fr Crennan for facilitating debt management in the parish.

<sup>5</sup> **Emeritus:** retired and retaining one's title of honour. (*The Latin root indicates that this is something earned.*)

In harmony with the tradition of community solidarity in this parish, Fr Crennan's first building project was accomplished by voluntary labour. Because of this, the cost of erecting the outside toilet system and the conversion of the old toilet space into a library was minimal.

### ***Building the Parish Church***

With school maintenance and financial management procedures under a modicum of control, Fr Crennan had to address the overwhelming task of building the parish church. It would involve taking out another loan which, in a poor parish consisting mostly of working people, required both courage and ingenuity. Not surprisingly, there was considerable trepidation when the project came under discussion. Fr Crennan recalls that during a meeting of parishioners, Len Martin "finished a long and tedious debate about building or not building a church" with the exclamation, "Let us build the thing!" and that "all agreed to do so on the spot". Mr Martin's abrupt intervention not only ended an interminable discussion but became the catalyst which gave everyone the courage to accept the financial risk involved in building a church, thus placing their trust in the providence of God.



*First Mass in the tent on the church site*

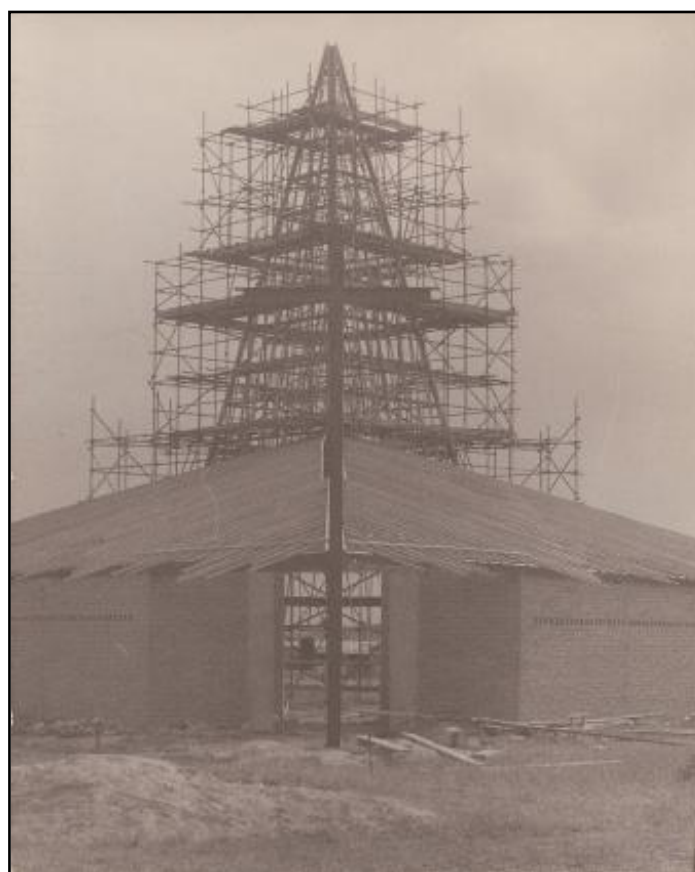
The act of faith in deciding to build a church was quickly rewarded, confirming both the unity of the Church and the providence of God. Not only the parishioners themselves, but friends and associates living outside of the parish, came forward with generous donations of time, money and gifts for the new church. The entire history of our parish is vivid testimony to the Universal Church fulfilling the prayer of Jesus, "May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it is you who sent me."<sup>6</sup> Beginning with Fr Daly of St Mary's, Hampton, whose initiative led to the creation of this parish, through the generosity of all the faithful outside our parish boundaries, and now in the present parish community, we have seen that we are part of the one, Universal Church. By coming together to erect a church building, the people of this parish were fulfilling an even greater purpose: they were building a Church to be the visible sign of Christ in East Hampton. This is the mission of the Church and it is still our mission today.

The first step towards building a church was to find an architect who, in Fr Crennan's words, would design "a modest building for a modest cost". Ivan Andersen's plan, modelled on a new church at Nar Nar Goon, was accepted by the parish committee. After the Cathedral Building Authority gave its approval, work began in late 1972.

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<sup>6</sup> John 17:21 (The New Jerusalem Bible)





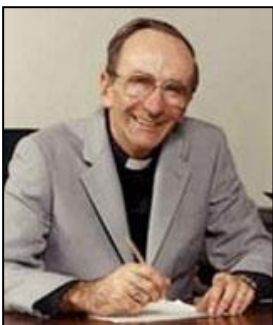
*The Church in progress*

### ***The Church is Opened and Consecrated***

In May, 1973, the church was completed at a final cost of about \$100,000. Less than a year after his official appointment as Parish Priest, Fr Crennan had fulfilled the brief given to him by Cardinal Knox and it was Cardinal Knox who, on 20<sup>th</sup> May of the same year, blessed and opened the new church amidst the rejoicing of the parishioners. They had patiently waited and worked for fifteen years since the establishment of their parish and this event was both the concrete fruit that their labours had produced and a visible sign of their Church community. The occasion was made especially moving for Fr Crennan by the presence of his mother. That the entire community of Immaculate Heart of Mary was deeply affected by having a church is also witnessed by Sister Frances, who writes, “When the new church was completed we led conducted tours with teachers and children admiring the architecture. It was a joy to take classes to Mass.”



*Cardinal Knox talks to a parishioner at the Blessing and Opening of the Church in 1973*



On 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1976, the Altar was consecrated by Archbishop Little. Eight years later, on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1984, Archbishop Little also presided over the Consecration of the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This was the seal which confirmed our permanence as a parish and would have been especially significant for those who had been working towards this goal since 1958. The early years of the parish may have been characterised by the hard labour of building and the burden of massive debts, but they were also the years crowned with the most remarkable achievements and the most memorable ceremonies.

### ***A Period of Expansion and Consolidation***

The eight-year interval before the consecration of the church was far from idle. The outstanding school and parish debts were being paid, the church loan was finalised and the present parish hall was bought from the Salvation Army. By 1979, it was possible to attend to the living conditions of the parish priest, so the old presbytery was demolished and the new presbytery built adjacent to the church. Meanwhile, the parish also made, and paid for, extensions and improvements to the school, something which a change in government policy towards private schools had made easier.

The period of consolidation that followed resulted in the building of the tennis courts and club house. Club members provided the labour for the club house, which was designed by Ron Gleeson and built by Peter Nicholson, and also carried out all the maintenance themselves, using a roster system. A generous loan from the parish enabled the project to begin, whilst energetic fund-raising by tennis club members, including running a regular and successful Bingo game in the Municipality of Moorabbin, eventually covered all the costs.

### ***The “Good Life”***

The intensity of effort and activity during the years when the parish was being established, as well as the dedication and self-sacrifice of Fr Crennan and his parishioners, might lead one to suppose that these were dour times, entirely devoted to solemn labour. Such an assumption would be a sad mistake. Working together in a common cause gave rise to much camaraderie among the groups of men and women who were involved and led to lasting bonds of friendship. Nor would a grim demeanour have survived Fr Crennan’s sociable personality and gift for humour.

Fr Crennan’s witty and convivial nature was renowned throughout the Catholic community. He was noted for his hospitality, and, most particularly, for the sumptuous “fish feasts” at which he entertained his fellow priests. The parishioners who sometimes attended had to barbecue their own meat if fish did not appeal to them. Bishop Peter Elliott told us the story of these feasts during his visit to the parish on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2008 to inaugurate our Golden Jubilee celebrations. He had attended these banquets himself with Bishop Kelly, whose secretary he was between 1979 and 1984. Bishop Kelly, as well as being responsible for the southern region of the diocese, was parish priest of Mentone, and a regular guest at Fr Crennan’s table. The banquets that Fr Crennan provided were a spectacular homage to gastronomy, with the fish being *flown in fresh from Mackay, Queensland* by a friend of his. Liberal libations and a spirit of bonhomie accompanied these festivities. Such grand largesse could not go unremarked and Bishop Kelly provided the appropriate response by dubbing Fr Crennan “Sir Victor”. The name stuck. From then on, Fr Crennan was “Sir Victor” to his peers and his legendary status was confirmed.

### ***The Second Vatican Council: Effect on the Church***

A parish history would not be complete without a reference to the effect of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) on the life of the Church and, therefore, on the life of this parish. Post World War II, the whole world was experiencing upheavals of change which accelerated during the sixties and affected every aspect of individual and societal living. Within the Church, there were dissenters who wanted the Church’s teaching to reflect modern attitudes. In response to the crisis of faith that was occurring, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, through which the riches of the Church could be rediscovered and brought to her people.

To most people, it seemed that there was a “rebellion against the Church’s teaching authority”<sup>7</sup> in the aftermath of the Council. In fact, the rebellion had begun much earlier and was later fuelled by the rebels claiming Council authority for their misrepresentations. This led to confusion and anxiety for many people in the Church, and to a plunge into error for those who followed the false claims of the rebels. As a consequence of this, there was “a steady decline in the numbers of priests and practising Catholics ever since”.<sup>8</sup> The problem was not in the Council, as Philip Trower explains in his book, *Turmoil and Truth*<sup>9</sup>, but in a “swelling undercurrent of dissent prior to the Council” by radicals who pursued their own agenda in defiance of the authority of the Church. In fact, Trower affirms that Vatican II was essentially the work of the Holy Spirit with authentic fruits. Its work was necessary for the survival of the Church and so that “the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the Church”<sup>10</sup>, in fulfillment of her mission to go out and preach the good news to all.

<sup>7</sup> *Turmoil and Truth*” by Philip Trower (Ignatius Press/Family Publications, 2003) quoted in a review by Tim Cannon in *AD 2000*, Vol.21 No.6 July 2008.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

<sup>10</sup> Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents. Edited by Austin Flannery, O.P., New Rev. ed., Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1992. p.1

Vatican II also sought to lead the faithful beyond undue reliance on rules and towards a mature faith. Many of the faithful, including our parishioners, have been justly distressed by the renegade actions of those who sought to subvert the Church's teachings to their own secular or modernist goals. By the time these aberrations had reached their peak, this parish was fortunate to have Fr Crennan at the helm. With his steady hand at the rudder, our parish remained faithful to the authentic teachings of the Church and avoided the excesses and misinterpretations which continue to afflict some parts of it. All this was achieved during the busy days of building the physical parish. We are, therefore, not only blessed in inheriting a parish with established structures but, more importantly, one that is established in the truth of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

### ***A War Memorial Church and the Vietnam Narthex***



Each parish has its own distinctive character reflecting a peoples' history and concerns. The dedication of our church, as well as Fr Crennan's final building project, the Narthex, demonstrates that the response of people to their personal and collective history can shape the trajectory of their lives. Our original parishioners, whether they came to Hampton as children after World War I, or came to this parish as a consequence of the re-settlement projects after World War II, carried with them the memories of war. The displacement, losses and sufferings that it had caused were a vivid reality for them. Their hope was in God as they rebuilt their lives in their new homes but they also remembered those who did not return from war. While they gave themselves wholeheartedly to the building of their church, they thought not only of their own needs but were mindful of the souls of the departed and the welfare of future generations. Fr Crennan, as a man who had grown up during the Second World War and was attuned to its consequences, was in accord with his parishioners when he obtained the permission of Archbishop Knox "to build the church as a memorial to those who had served and died for our country"<sup>11</sup>. Thus, our church is a War Memorial church. This was a dedication that ran delightfully counter to the political correctness of the time which noisily abjured all war memorials and would only condone "peace memorials". Ideological fashions come and go, but this parish was blessed in having a priest who could ignore them because he was serving the eternal truth.

In the same spirit, the Vietnam Narthex was also built to commemorate those who served, suffered and died as a result of war, in this instance, the Vietnam War. In this, as in the dedication of the church itself, the purpose was not to glorify war but to honour those who had suffered, to acknowledge the sorrow caused by war, and to provide a place for peaceful prayer and reflection in a room which, being opposite the main altar of the church, invites the heart and mind to turn to the Prince of Peace. The Narthex was blessed on Australia Day, 1997, by Monsignor Gerald Cudmore, the first Catholic Army Chaplain to serve in Vietnam, together with Mons. Frank Lyons and Mons. John White. Colonel Colin Campbell conducted the dedication ceremony. The Narthex features a roll of honour and a replica of the Vietnam Medal.

### ***A Small Parish, a Steadfast Faith***

Fr Crennan's most important building project was always spiritual and he nourished the faith of his parishioners primarily by the example of his own faith. His homilies were clear and instructive, always carrying the weight of his trust and certainty in the love of "our good God" and his devotion to Our Lady. Most powerful of all was the joy that Fr Crennan expressed in the goodness of God whenever he was sick or in pain. This could not fail to inspire us, his parishioners, with the courage to imitate his faith and trust. Fr Crennan's entire ministry was both strong and compassionate, whether dealing with the old or the young, with the sick, with penitents or with the bereaved.

<sup>11</sup> Fr Victor Crennan, February, 2008.



We have seen that we owe to Fr Crennan the fact that our parish has remained steadfast in the faith throughout the years of turmoil caused by dissent within the church which, together with the increasing tides of secularisation, saw many people leaving the Church. Since the sixties, there has been a decline in faith, in church attendances and in vocations which has also affected our parish. Fr Crennan has recorded that, according to 1991 census figures, “we are, after Prahran, the smallest parish in the city area of the Archdiocese of Melbourne”. However, the prophet Isaiah has foretold that “the surviving remnant of Judah will bring forth new roots below and fruits above” and that “Yahweh Sabaoth’s jealous love will accomplish this.”<sup>12</sup> Today, we can see that this prophecy is being fulfilled not only in our parish community, but worldwide.



*Drawing of the completed Church (without the Narthex)*

In July of this year, we saw evidence of this worldwide renewal in our own parish when hundreds of young pilgrims came here during the *Days in the Diocese* preceding The World Youth Day that was held in Sydney. The vigorous and joyful faith of these young people not only encouraged us but we know that it is a genuine phenomenon because, as Pope Benedict had told us, the World Youth Days have produced many vocations as well as a deeper commitment to their faith in many young people. In our own parish community, Fr Crennan has always encouraged his people to grow in faith by welcoming into the parish those faith groups which he discerned to be genuinely inspired by the Holy Spirit and faithful to the teaching authority of the Church. In this way, the words of the prophet are being fulfilled in our midst. Pope John Paul II often encouraged us with the words, “Do not be afraid”, to remind us that Christ is always with His Church and that God will accomplish everything in us. We have only to trust in His Will and to be obedient.



### ***Fr Crennan Retires***

After thirty-six years, the name of Fr Victor Crennan had become synonymous with that of his parish in East Hampton, especially in the hearts of his parishioners. Therefore, his retirement in April, 2005, left us with a keen sense of loss and anxiety. For three months after Fr Crennan’s retirement, we were blest that the parish was looked after by Fr Romuald Murphy and our neighbour, Fr Cyril Blake of Highett. Both priests were gratefully accepted by the parish in our time of need.

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 37: 31, 32 *New Jerusalem Bible*



### ***Fr Sagay is appointed Parish Priest of Immaculate Heart of Mary East Hampton***

We saw how generous God continues to be with this parish when the Most Reverend Denis J Hart, DD. Archbishop of Melbourne, negotiated with Archbishop Barry Hickey of Perth for the loan of one of his diocesan priests, trained at the missionary Redemptoris Mater Seminary. Archbishop Hickey generously agreed to lend one of these young priests to the Melbourne Archdiocese and Fr Sagayaraj Arokiyadoss was appointed parish priest of Immaculate Heart of Mary on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2005. This was a great blessing for us since, in Fr Sagay, we have another parish priest who is firmly rooted in the faith and on fire with zeal to strengthen the faith of those who come to Mass, to encourage the “flickering flame” and to go out and look for the “lost sheep”.

Fr Sagay, who received his call to the priesthood during his formation in faith in a Neo-Catechumenal community in India, has already demonstrated his love for all the people of this parish through his dedicated service and support for all individuals and groups in it. His ministry includes a particular care for those who suffer and an energetic focus on leading more young people to involve themselves in parish activities. Since his appointment in August, 2005, he has already made an impact on our parish. Fr Sagay’s thought-provoking homilies are especially appreciated by parishioners, who also testify that they are grateful to him for integrating the various groups here into one parish. There have been many tributes to Fr Sagay’s enthusiasm, humour and welcoming manner towards everyone.

As part of his ministry, Fr Sagay is involved in giving adult catechesis in this and other parishes so that all who profess Christ should rediscover the mission which Our Lord, Jesus Christ, entrusted to the Apostles and to the Church that He established. Within the parish, Fr Sagay encourages all of us to live our faith to the full so that we may also experience the full dimension of Christian happiness. His message is in the tradition established by Fr Crennan who constantly guided us towards the same aim. By providing us with another priest of deep faith, God reveals what He wants to accomplish in us: that our parish, however small in numbers it may be, should become a great light of Christ in East Hampton.

|                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| <b>Baptism</b>      | <b>1886</b> |
| <b>Confirmation</b> | <b>889</b>  |
| <b>Marriage</b>     | <b>620</b>  |

## ***Priests of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish***

### ***Fr Dan Daly***

Between 1939 and 1959, Fr Daly was the parish priest of St Mary's, Hampton. Due to the growth of the new area of East Hampton in the 1950s, his school was one of those most affected by what has been described as a "flood of children" from this area. In response to the crisis, Fr Daly took the initiative and set in motion the events which would lead to the establishment of our parish.

Most parishioners remember Fr Daly from the fifties and the "Mission in a tent" which he set up, significantly, on the site of the present church. The memories of parishioners such as Mr Des Keary and Mr Pat Kelly belong to an earlier era. Mr Keary began school at St Mary's in 1926 while Mr Kelly began school there in 1935, so theirs was a long association with St Mary's parish and with Fr Daly. Their experience indicates that a natural relationship already existed between the older parish of Hampton and the new area, now called East Hampton, in which Fr Daly took a fatherly interest. Although he was not a priest of this parish, Fr Daly was parish priest to many of our parishioners before our parish was born and it was he who was responsible for its birth. He laid a final benediction on this parish by dedicating it to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. As our founding father, he has an honourable place in our history.

### ***Fr Fred Nolan: Parish Priest 30<sup>th</sup> January 1958 - 1971***



Fr Nolan is renowned for having been the best sportsman to come out of the Corpus Christi Seminary at Werribee. After he was ordained on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1943, he worked in various parishes in the city and country before coming to Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1958 as our first parish priest.

Many parishioners remember him fondly as a good parish priest to all, with a special gift for engaging the youth of the parish, and they recall with sadness how his severe rheumatoid arthritis eventually crippled him. By 1965, Fr Nolan's illness became too acute for him to be able to carry out his work unaided and by 1971 it led to his retirement. Before his health failed him, Fr Nolan had extensions made to the school, promoted fund-raising activities and introduced a planned giving system into the parish to help manage the parish debt.

Throughout his debilitating illness, Fr Nolan was cared for by Fr Carmine Tricarico, a man gifted in the care of sick and elderly priests and described by Bishop Elliott as "unique and unforgettable". After long years of suffering, Fr Nolan died in 1991 at the Little Sisters of the Poor at Northcote and his Requiem Mass was celebrated at Immaculate Heart of Mary, where he had served as our first parish priest.

We have a concrete memorial of Fr Nolan in his Pyx, given to him at his ordination and inscribed "A Gift from Mother". It is still used by this parish for taking Communion to the sick.

### ***Fr R. Poulsen: Parish Priest 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1965 - 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1965***

Fr Poulsen was the first of the priests appointed to care for our parish when Fr Nolan's illness had become seriously debilitating. His appointment was temporary and Fr Nolan was re-appointed as our parish priest in July, 1965.

### ***Fr Brian McCormack: Administrator of the Parish 1968***

Fr McCormack became administrator of our parish during the six-month period when Fr Nolan was hospitalised. He left when Fr Nolan returned.

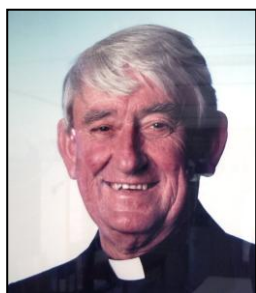
### ***Fr F. Guerin: Assistant Parish Priest 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1969 - August 1969***

Because Fr Nolan's health continued to decline, Fr Guerin was appointed to assist him. His appointment ended when Fr Victor Crennan became administrator and priest in charge of the parish in August, 1969.

**Fr Victor Crennan:**

**1. Parish Administrator 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1969 - December 1972**

**2. Parish Priest 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1972 - 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2005**



Fr Victor Crennan was born in Footscray on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1924, in time to know of the terrible deprivations of the Great Depression. It was a period of high unemployment when the children in poor areas left school at thirteen or fourteen, and when there was widespread hunger and a lack of adequate shelter or warmth in winter. Fr Crennan was only fifteen years old when another disaster struck: the Second World War began. The twenties and thirties saw many having to defer their education in favour of finding a job. Fr Crennan learnt a good trade as a fitter and turner. After the war, he was able to enter the Corpus Christi Seminary at Werribee.

After being ordained to the priesthood on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1954, Fr Crennan said his first Mass at St Monica's, Footscray, on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1954. Subsequently, he served in the following parishes: Heidelberg (1955-'58), East Brighton (1958-'62), Bacchus Marsh (1962-'66), Mitcham (1966), Brunswick (1966-'68), and Bennettswood, now known as Burwood (1968-'69). His appointment as Administrator of Hampton and East Hampton on 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1969 was the beginning of Fr Crennan's long and fruitful pastoral care for the parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Neither age nor frail health will ever diminish his stature as the great father of our parish. On his retirement on 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2005, after a remarkable 36 years in the parish, Fr Crennan was appointed Pastor Emeritus of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish. It is a mark of gratitude and esteem, as well as of deep affection, from his parishioners and the Archdiocese.

**Fr Peter Elliott: Assistant Priest, 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1987 - 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1987**

The Most Reverend Peter J. Elliott, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne, and our regional Bishop, was sent to our parish by Archbishop Little in 1987 for a brief experience as a curate before he left to take up a position in the Vatican.



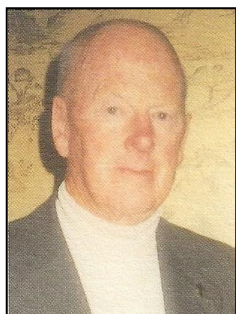
Bishop Elliott, who was educated at both Melbourne and Oxford Universities, was received into the Catholic Church in 1968 while studying Theology at Oxford. Upon his return to Melbourne, he studied for the priesthood at Corpus Christi College, Glen Waverley. He was ordained a priest by Cardinal Shehan, Archbishop of Baltimore and Papal Legate, on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1973, during the 40<sup>th</sup> Eucharistic Congress. Subsequently, he worked as assistant priest in Springvale, Lilydale and Mentone, where he was secretary to Bishop John A. Kelly (1979-1984). In 1984 he went to Rome to study at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family where he was granted the Degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology in 1986.

Bishop Elliott's brief return to Melbourne was spent working in East Hampton, where the "grass roots" experience would have provided both material for and a useful balance to his work at the Vatican. On the same day as he finished his period as curate in East Hampton, Bishop Elliott left for Rome and a position on the Pontifical Council for the Family at the Vatican. In 1992 he was appointed a chaplain to Pope John Paul II with the title of Monsignor. He worked at the Vatican for ten years and represented the Holy See as a delegate at various international forums until his recall to Melbourne on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1997, as Episcopal Vicar for Religious Education. In 2001, he became the parish priest of St Mary's, East Malvern where, between 2002 and 2005 he received further appointments. In 2002 he became a member of the International Commission for Catechetics of the Congregation for the Clergy. In 2004 he was Director of the Melbourne Session of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and the Family and in 2005 he was appointed a Prelate of Honour.

On 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2007, Pope Benedict named him as Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne.

By the time Bishop Elliott came to spend his 48 days here in 1987 as our assistant priest, he already knew Fr Crennan and this parish from his years as Bishop Kelly's secretary. Those years with Bishop Kelly were also the years of the fabled "fish feasts" hosted by Fr Crennan. These happy occasions were not merely recreational. They forged bonds of communion between like-minded people who loved the Church. Bishop Elliott has described Bishop Kelly as "a courageous pro-life Bishop, notable for his strength of character and balanced and clear orthodoxy". His words can be equally applied to himself and to Fr Crennan. So it is as an old friend that we joyfully welcomed Bishop Elliott into our parish to inaugurate our Golden Jubilee celebrations on 1<sup>st</sup> June, when we also celebrated the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

### ***Fr Frank Maher, S.J. Priest in Residence, 1998 - 2005***



Fr Michael Francis (Frank) Maher was born in Yarrawonga on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1917, during the First World War. Despite the Great Depression, he was able to complete his education and qualify as a teacher by 1938, as well as later earning a Master of Commerce Degree in Economics. On 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1945, he began his life as a Jesuit at Loyola College in Watsonia and was ordained a priest on 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1956 at St Mary's in Sydney. For seven years he served as Dean of Aquinas University College in Adelaide and later at St Leo's in Brisbane.

The life's work for which Fr Maher is best remembered began in Richmond where he directed retreats and edited the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* from his office and bookstore there. He was editor of the *Messenger* and Director of the Apostleship of Prayer for nearly 20 years, after which he moved to Kostka Hall in Brighton and added the spiritual care of its students to his work. At this time he transferred his writing and spiritual direction activities to his new premises in Hampton Street. For 16 years he continued to give retreats from his Marian Centre in Hampton, notably with Brother Andrew who had worked with Mother Teresa in Calcutta. At the same time, he was producing the *Messenger of the Two Hearts* and running an excellent Catholic bookshop.

Kostka Hall came under lay management in 1995. By 1998 Fr Maher had been made welcome by Fr Crennan in the Immaculate Heart of Mary presbytery as priest in residence. In this capacity he celebrated some of the Masses on weekends and served wherever there was a need. Fr Maher is remembered in our parish for his deep faith, his thoughtful homilies, his devotion to Our Lady and the austerity and dedication of his priestly life and ministry. His death on Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2005, a month after celebrating the Golden Jubilee of his entrance into the Society of Jesus, deeply affected many people of this parish.

### ***Fr Romuald Murphy and Fr Cyril Blake: April 2005 – August 2005***

Upon Fr Crennan's retirement, Fr Murphy was appointed to care for our parish. Fr Murphy served us well during his time here but, a few weeks after his appointment, he also had to retire. Archbishop Hart then appointed Fr Blake as administrator of the parish until Fr Sagay took up his duties as pastor in August.

Fr Blake took excellent care of this parish. He was thorough in ensuring that the security of the premises and all administrative matters received due attention, as well as being sensitive to the needs of the parishioners. Evidence of his pastoral care is recorded in the minutes of his meeting with groups and individuals of the parish on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2005. Fr Blake called this meeting not only to introduce himself but also to assess the needs of the parish and get to know its people. His aim was to help promote mutual understanding and unity during the period of grief, confusion and anxiety which followed Fr Crennan's retirement and which was exacerbated by the retirement of Fr Murphy. Fr Blake's prompt and sensitive action was both reassuring and healing. He supported us in our need and smoothed the process of transition. In every sense, Fr Cyril Blake, of Highbury, was a good neighbour to us and we thank him for his care.



Fr Sagayaraj Arokiyadoss, known to most as Fr Sagay, was born on 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1969 in Chennai, South India, where he earned degrees in Commerce and Philosophy. Whilst a member of a Neocatechumenal Community there, Fr Sagay received his call to the priesthood and entered a seminary in Bangalore in June, 1993. From there, he was sent to the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Perth, W.A. in 1995 to continue his studies and in 1999 he graduated with a Bachelor of Theology Degree from Notre Dame, W.A. Until 2002, Fr Sagay received a broad experience of pastoral work in parishes in Darwin, Brisbane and Fremantle.

On 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2002, he was ordained a Deacon and worked at St Gerard's, Mirrabooka, until his ordination to the priesthood at St Mary's Cathedral in Perth on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2002. During the next two years, Fr Sagay spent a year each at two West Australian parishes, St Gregory's, Wongan Hills in 2003 and Sacred Heart, Bencubbin in 2004. This was followed in 2005 by six months as an itinerant priest, giving adult catecheses in various parishes around Australia.

Fr Sagay was appointed Parish Priest of Immaculate Heart of Mary on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2005. He came to us after having received the long, intensive formation that is characteristic of the missionary priests who study at the Redemptoris Mater seminaries. Part of this formation includes extensive and varied experience in many parishes and contact with a wide range of people and conditions. In Fr Sagay we see the fruits of this formation in the breadth and depth of his understanding and compassion, his deep faith, zeal, and willingness to give himself generously in the service of God's people, regardless of his own comfort. He is a worthy successor to the priests who established this parish and quickly endeared himself to his parishioners by his outgoing personality, his care for all his parishioners, his energy and his concern for binding all the different people and groups here into one community: the Body of Christ in East Hampton.



## ***Immaculate Heart of Mary School History***

On the 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1957, the Immaculate Heart of Mary School was blessed and opened by Archbishop Mannix, thus signalling the birth of the parish in East Hampton. The new school, which would also be a church on weekends, began with three rooms. A fourth room was quickly added and eventually three more were built at right angles to the first, the final cost being about \$75,000.

### ***The Presentation Sisters, 1957 – 1974***

According to the archives of the Presentation Sisters who were in charge of the new school, it began with two teachers, Sister Mary Columban Coleman, principal of the school from 1957 to 1964, and a lay teacher, Miss P. Stapleton. They taught 134 pupils in two composite classes. Preparatory and Grade 1 were taught by Miss Stapleton, while Grades 2 and 3 were with Sister Mary Columban. Modern teachers would find the student-teacher ratio staggering but class sizes remained high in most schools until the 1970s. Our school was always a small school although Catholic Education Office figures reveal that during the first half of the 1960s enrolment exceeded 200 pupils. By 1974, when Sister Frances Suhr was principal, the school ran from Preparatory to Grade 6 with an enrolment of 154 students. As well as Sister Frances, there were four lay teachers and two part-time specialists. The staffing had increased dramatically although the average increase in enrolments was about twelve percent.

The Presentation Sisters continued to teach at the school until the end of 1974. Sister M. Paulinus (Maureen) Cullen followed Sister Mary Columban as principal. Between 1965 and 1967 Sister M. Cletus McCarthy took over and she was succeeded by Sister M. Ita McNulty during 1968-1971. The last Religious school principal was Sister Frances Suhr, who held the position from 1972 until the end of 1974. According to Sister Diana Gabel, the Archivist for the Presentation Sisters, “The sisters were withdrawn from the school out of necessity”. She tells us that this necessity, according to M. Eymard Temby, arose “Through the ageing of sisters, the leaving of Religious Life in some cases and a disproportionate number of younger sisters”. In this explanation there is a tentative allusion to the effects of dissent and secularisation. Sending its first shock-waves throughout the Church during the late sixties and the seventies, this unfortunate trend affected not only lay people but also some Religious Orders.

It is to the legions of generous women who embraced the Religious vocation that many Catholic people in Australia owe their education. They gave their services freely, neither in pursuit of a career, nor in search of self-fulfillment, but for the love of God and the people whom they served. In the recollections of two of the Presentation Sisters who taught at our school we have an example of this. These women, after a lifetime of service, reflect a spirit of happy tranquillity as they speak with warm affection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary School and the children whom they taught there.

Sister Genevieve Jeffrey was at the Immaculate Heart of Mary School for a year in 1963 and has very fond recollections of the “really lovely children”. She provides an amusing anecdote which calls to mind the traditional yarns of old Australiana: “A Grade IV boy brought a blue-tongued lizard into the school-room. Its head rested on his shoulder and its tail was in his shirt pocket. I ignored the lizard and he then went out into the playground. Life continued regardless.” Like all good teachers, Sister Genevieve appreciated the individual idiosyncrasies of her pupils at the same time as maintaining order.

Sister Frances Suhr was the last Presentation Sister to teach here. She came to Immaculate Heart of Mary School in 1971 to teach a composite Grade 3/4 class while Sister Ita McNulty was principal and describes it as having been a relatively small school of approximately 150 pupils at the time. It was staffed by two Sisters, two lay teachers and two visiting teachers for singing and physical education. Evidently, after the boom figures of the early 1960s, school numbers had returned to the medial range. Sister Frances seems to have enjoyed the children she taught as much as Sister Genevieve had enjoyed hers. She praises her pupils for their co-operation in cleaning and preparing the school on Fridays for conversion into a church and restoring it to a school again on Mondays. Moreover, since Mass was also celebrated at 9.05am on

weekdays, the children again “co-operated marvellously” by participating in very quiet lessons for that period.



At the end of 1971, after Sister Ita retired, Sister Frances became the school principal. She remained in this position for the next three years, which she describes as a happy time because “the parents and children were so community-minded and supportive. It was like belonging to an extended family.” The same sentiments have been expressed by parents more than two decades later. During the time that Sister Frances was principal, the school was flourishing. Instead of being crowded into a couple of classrooms, there were now five classrooms, three of them detached and located beside the playground.

Sister Frances refers to “a very active Mothers’ Club who worked diligently to provide equipment for the school” and to the parish fetes which were organised every year to raise funds for the parish. These were very big events to which the entire community contributed, including Sister Frances and her pupils. Other main attractions in the school calendar included the football clinics featuring famous footballers who donated footballs to the school. However, the most momentous event of all was the building of the church in 1972-73. It was a source of endless fascination as a work-in-progress, followed by the excitement of inspecting the finished product and admiring the stained glass windows.

### ***The Lay Principals 1975 - 1983***

When Sister Frances left the school at the end of 1974, an era ended. The first lay principal, Mary Cousins, was appointed for the beginning of the 1975 school year. By all accounts, the school continued to flourish with the support of the parish community. When Miss Cousins left, Mary Carroll became principal in April, 1978 and remained in this position for six years.

Mary Carroll also enjoyed her time at the school and, in a tribute that has been repeated by everyone associated with the school, she describes it as having been a very happy place and a close-knit community of parents, teachers and pupils who provided a lot of support for one another. This support was not confined to school-related business and Mary has personal experience of the entire school community coming together in order to help people in acute crisis situations. Naturally, the school also benefited materially from there being such a remarkably close-knit community because “everyone pitched in wherever there was a need”. Thus, the garden was maintained by organised working bees, whilst Bingo in the school hall raised funds for the school’s needs. The school, which had been a fertile recruiting ground for many parish groups from its origins in 1957, continued to be supported by the activities of the Mothers’ Club and the Catholic Women’s League throughout the 1980s. The bonds established between school and church had remained so strong that Maurice and Pat Kelly, whose children had long ago left the school, continued to provide voluntary maintenance for it until the end. This was also the case with Joan Mealing, who was still involved in the school’s fund-raising activities in 1997.



Consistent with the tradition established when it was a church-school, much of the social activity of the parish was also centred on the school. During Mary Carroll's time as principal, a strong netball group was formed, taking advantage of the extensive school grounds. Later, the experience of a school parent, demonstrates that the same pattern of working and playing together continued over the years when many of the parents who supported the school were also members of the tennis club. These sports and social activities made a vital contribution towards fostering a community spirit in the parish. Throughout 1997, despite the imminent closure of the school, the small, courageous Parents' Association continued to raise funds, organise social events and provide encouragement to the school and parish community. In spite of the problems which arose during the 1990s, everyone associated with the school, both parents and teachers, were passionately committed to it. All describe it as having been a really good school and everyone, regardless of any personal differences, has expressed deep regret over its closure

The personal involvement and dedication that typified the school's teachers is apparent from Mary Carroll's experience. For Mary, each child made a valuable contribution to the school and "all are remembered for different things", in spite of any individual problems. That this was not just a theoretical position for her is demonstrated by her work. When the school bought a library with its Schools Commission Grant, Mary herself organised and catalogued all the materials. She also took the year 5/6 class to an annual camp to Wilson's Prom, initially by train, but when this proved to be too expensive, she learnt to drive a mini-bus and drove them there herself. With this example of caring and enterprise, it is not surprising that the children were happy to contribute by helping in the kitchen. Moreover, the accounts of everyone associated with the school, from its beginning until towards its end, present the same picture of hard working dedication and closeness between teachers and parents, together with happy, well-cared for children.

The school population was very diverse, with children coming from all the surrounding suburbs and it ranged from the comfortable middle class to migrants, the poor, the disadvantaged and refugees. This was still the demographic up to the time of the school's closure. According to Mary Carroll, this was a good mix which helped to extend sympathetic bonds between people. When Mary became principal in 1978 there were 154 students at the school. By the time she left in 1983, the enrolment had risen.

### ***The Lay Principals 1984 - 1997***



In the five years between 1984 and 1988 three principals ran the school, beginning with Peter Ansell in 1984, until Joan Baxter was appointed in 1989. The upward trend in enrolments peaked in the mid 1980's and remained sturdy until the onset of a decline in the mid 1990s. In spite of these variations, the character of the school remained remarkably consistent, with caring teachers, active parents' groups and happy children.

The 1993 records of the Catholic Education Office show a healthy enrolment of 142 children from 90 families. According to the demographic profile, a diversity of

religious, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds continued to characterise the school. Although the staffing establishment remained high, it was supplemented by .5 of a teacher being funded by the parish and another .5 being covered by teachers taking long service leave and holidays without pay. This personal sacrifice demonstrates the dedication of our teachers to their school. Notwithstanding this support from the teachers and the parish, the situation was deemed to be unsustainable, especially as school numbers continued to decline. A teacher redundancy seemed to be unavoidable



## ***Falling Enrolments***

There was a rapid fall in school numbers which culminated in the closure of the school. A number of parents continued to support the school and struggled mightily to reverse the downward trend in enrolment, with some parents even door-knocking the parents of prospective pupils. In a message to the school community in April, 1997, Fr Crennan pointed to the mutual accord between the remaining parents and teachers at this time and referred to how well the children were doing. Elsewhere, he had expressed pride in the small school that was the envy of other, bigger ones. Parents and teachers have praised the Immaculate Heart of Mary School in similar terms and it is a striking phenomenon that all still react like people in mourning whenever the school is mentioned. No one had wanted to see the parish school close.

Our school may have been dealt a harsh blow with the steep drop in enrolments, but it was not the only school to face difficult times during those years. With some neighbouring schools also struggling, the Diocesan authorities believed that one of the schools would have to close. As our school enrolment was down to 32 by June, 1997, it was this school that had to close. A neighbouring school, whose enrolment had once dropped to 50, has since recouped its numbers and is now thriving. It has been suggested by a former teacher that the population increase in our area since 1997 may have led to a similar outcome for our school. However, as this population trend was not evident at the time, the authorities had to make the decision to close our school.

## ***Preparing to Close the School***

In the meantime, the remaining school community continued to work for the good of its children, including making the necessary arrangements for their re-location to other schools. The school newsletters throughout 1997 continue to report purposeful activity both in the school programs and in the Parents' Association. Working together, the school principal, Joan Baxter, and her staff ensured that the children benefited from a full curriculum, including a number of excursions. As well as Joan Baxter, the last staff members at the school were Rae Ryan, Carmel Lynch, Annette O'Callaghan, Pauline Price, Anna Di Silvio, Sue La Ragy, Kirsten Milinski, Vivienne Muller and Anne Boyle. Some of these staff members had significantly reduced workloads and others were either part-time or relief staff. All of them loyally persevered in providing a school environment that was as normal as possible whilst preparing the school for its transition. Parents and staff also co-operated in finalising the sale and re-distribution of school property.

## ***The Role of the Parents' Association***

From the late 1980s, a Parents' Association at the Immaculate Heart of Mary School worked alongside the Mothers' Club. Parents' Associations had functioned from 1958 under various titles and were umbrella bodies which both included the Mothers' Clubs and allowed for the inclusion of men. In later decades, when more women went out to work and fewer women participated in voluntary parish groups, the Parents' Associations tended to become the dominant parent bodies at our schools. The remaining Mothers' Club members supported the hard-working Parents' Association in the school's last years.

The School Newsletters reveal that a small Parents' Association worked heroically throughout our school's last year. Some parents continued to meet to plan fund-raising and social events and to prepare the final transition procedures. They continued to run successful car boot sales, raffles, cake stalls and dinners throughout the year in support of the school they loved. Fr Crennan's letter of 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1997, announcing the closure of the school, merely acted as a spur to their efforts to provide a good final year for the children and a smooth transition into 1998. Their records show that they helped all parents to ensure that each child had a place in a new school for the following year. When it was announced that Larmenier would be using our school premises from 1998, our parents co-operated with the incoming Larmenier parents by running their weekly cake stalls for shared fund raising.

## ***A Farewell to 40 Years of Parish Schooling***

On Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1997, 10.30a.m, at the Mass of Thanksgiving for 40 years of Catholic Education at the Immaculate Heart of Mary School, the parish bade farewell to the school in which their children had been educated and for which they had worked hard over the years. They were also saying farewell to the symbol of their origins, the church-school that was opened by Archbishop Mannix in 1957 and whose foundation stone marks the birth of this parish. The school premises, redolent of 40 years of parish children beginning their education within their parish, were now going to be used by a different kind of school.

### ***Larmenier School***

Larmenier School, which now occupies our school premises, was established in 1976 by the Poor Sisters of Nazareth and named after its foundress, Victoire Larmenier. Originally located in Camberwell, it was briefly in Hawthorn before coming to East Hampton. Earlier this year, the sisters of Nazareth handed the school over to the Melbourne Archdiocese in order to concentrate on their mission of serving the elderly. Under its principal, Patrice Duggan, Larmenier School assists students and families who are experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties and offers support services to Catholic schools in the Melbourne Archdiocese. The enrolment at Larmenier School is limited to 32 students attending the school site with an outreach program to a further 140 students. Those students enrolled in the Larmenier school program attend the school for up to four days a week and go to their mainstream school the rest of the time. Larmenier class teachers also travel to the mainstream schools to provide support to the teachers there. As students improve, the number of days spent at Larmenier is reduced since the major emphasis of the Larmenier program is to support the student in making the behavioural changes which will allow for positive reintegration into the mainstream setting.

### ***Future Directions***

As Fr Crennan pointed out in 1997, "... our school continues to serve the important purpose of Catholic education." It is equally true that the loss of the traditional parish school has had a range of repercussions for the parish community and that many people are still struggling to come to terms with these. Underlying this response is the reality that a parish school, where the children of parishioners receive their first formal education, is a vital sign of life and continuity within the parish. When the children of the parish have to attend school at other parishes, there will always be a sense that the integrity of the parish community has been affected. As we celebrate the story of our parish school during this Golden Jubilee year, it is natural that we should also mourn its loss. We know that our parish had its beginnings with the school and we also know that we grew as a parish because the Lord had blessed us. Remembering this, we can resolve to heal any past wounds with a spirit of mutual forgiveness and, trusting in God, wait to see what He will do with us in the future. As God's people, let us take courage and bless Him at all times.



## ***Lay Organisations in the Parish***

### ***Catholic Women's League***

**Motto:** *She has put her hand to strong things*



The Catholic Women's League was founded in Victoria in 1916 under the patronage of Archbishop Carr who appointed Fr W. J. Lockington, SJ as Spiritual Director. It was Fr Lockington who chose its motto from the Book of Proverbs. Originally called The Catholic Women's Social Guild, it was renamed The Catholic Women's League in 1970. The first president was Dr Mary Glowrey, after whom its headquarters in Richmond, Mary Glowrey House, is named. The CWL is dedicated to the Holy Spirit and Our Lady Help of Christians.

By 1975, Catholic women's organisations in Australia all came under the banner of the CWL. The Australian organisation is now affiliated with the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations which is recognised by the Holy See and has consultative status on five Councils of the United Nations. In 1997, Catholic Women's League Australia Inc. was granted its own on-going United Nations accreditation.

The CWLA presents the Catholic viewpoint to governments, provides companionship and support for Catholic women and, most importantly, encourages them to deepen their faith by studying the Gospels and the teaching of the Church. On the local level, members are concerned with matters such as defending the Christian family way of life, upholding morality in society, supporting their parish priests, praying for the needs of the Church, and engaging in works of Christian love, especially for the needy. Regular meetings and fellowship encourage them in their purpose.

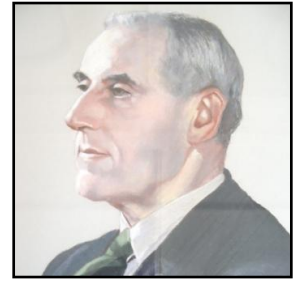
The CWL was a strong force in this parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary from its inception. It began its operations here after Una Clarke, who was then a member of the Hampton branch, asked the parish priest to open a branch in East Hampton. Among its members, Sheila McKenna had been prominent in canvassing for the original building of the school and after the church was built, Mary Rabbitz and Una Clarke encouraged women to join. According to Mrs Joan Mealing, there were 40 members and associates in the CWL here at its peak during the seventies. As well as organising community-building events in the parish, they admirably supported their parish priest with fund-raising activities, including raffles and a strong involvement in the parish fete. Their policy of responding to needs as they arose is typical of their Christian ethos of service. They made a valuable contribution to parish life and are still remembered in the parish for their devoted fulfillment of the charter to defend the Christian way of life, engage in works of Christian love and support the parish priest. Mrs Mealing, the only active CWL member still in the parish, gave Fr Crennan secretarial support for many years and supported the parish school until it closed in 1997.

## ***Legion of Mary***

### ***Prayer with Action***



Frank Duff was the founder of the Legion of Mary in Ireland in 1922. It has spread to over 187 countries in the world. The local group is called a Praesidium; the regional group a Curia and the Governing Council of large area a Senatus. The Legion structure and Latin names are based on those of the Roman Legion. It is Our Blessed Mother's army. The local Praesidium is then connected through this structure to the Concilium, the world wide governing council, in Ireland.



The object of the Legion of Mary is the glory of God through the holiness of its members developed by prayer and active co-operation, under ecclesiastical guidance, in Mary's and the Church's work of crushing the head of the serpent and advancing the reign of Christ.

A Peregrinatio Pro Christo (A walk for Christ) or an Exploratio Dominicalis (A Sunday search for souls) are door knocks and crowd contacts organised on a large or small scale by Legionaries with the permission of the Parish Priest.

In 1956 a doorknock was done throughout the East Hampton area by the Legion of Mary from the neighbouring local Legion Praesidium of Hampton under the regional Caulfield Curia supervision. From the information gathered a school was built in 1957 to accommodate about 200 Catholic families in the area.

The information on the number of Catholics and non Catholics in the area assisted the Archdiocese of Melbourne to consider the establishment of a parish in the East Hampton area. The area borders South Road, Cummings Road, Nepean Highway; then Exley, Leonard, Keith, Widdop, Cooke Streets; Wickham, Bluff, Highett Roads; Wales, David, Sargood, Myrtle, Edinburgh Streets and Earlsfield Road.

The Legion of Mary was then established in the East Hampton Parish and has operated in the parish over most of the years of the Parish's existence. The current Praesidium is smaller than the original numbers in the Praesidia of the 1950s but just as dedicated. The present works of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Praesidium are door to door visitation of every home in the Parish; Eucharist to the sick; office duty at the Senatus centre in North Melbourne and any other work requested by the Parish Priest.

The Active Members meet every week to pray, organise and report on their active work. There are Auxiliary Members of the Legion of Mary who pray some short prayers of the Legion and the Rosary every day for Our Blessed Mother's intentions.

### ***Missionaries of Love and Peace***



The Missionaries of Love and Peace, founded quite recently by a lay woman, Josefina Maria, were received into Immaculate Heart of Mary parish by Fr Crennan in 1998, together with the Two Hearts Prayer Group which they coordinate. They live out their mission by participating in the liturgical life of the parish and providing a wide range of services, including stocking and staffing the piety shop. They are involved in catechism classes and the sacramental preparation of children, as well as offering spiritual retreats, conferences and talks by Josefina

Maria. A large part of their work is devoted to the care and support of the sick and elderly for whom they provide transport to weekend Masses, video mornings every first Wednesday of the month, outings, and visitations, including Holy Communion. Their care for the poor includes food aid and pastoral support and supplying Christmas gifts. They also assist at parish functions and are available to provide support as required.

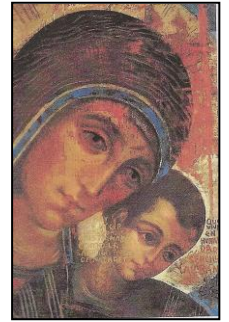
This prayerful community seeks to live the gospel message of love and to encourage it in others, considering it a great honour and blessing to love and serve the Church.

## ***The Neocatechumenal Way***

***IT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES LIKE THE HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH WHO WILL LIVE IN HUMILITY, SIMPLICITY AND PRAISE AND WHERE THE OTHER IS CHRIST***



The Neocatechumenal Way, a journey of Christian initiation for adults, began in 1964 in the shanty town of Palomeras Altas on the outskirts of Madrid. After an existential crisis, followed by a conversion experience, Francisco (Kiko) Arguello, a Spanish painter, left everything in order to follow in the footsteps of Charles de Foucauld by going to live among the very poor in the slums. His silent, prayerful presence aroused the curiosity of his neighbours who asked Kiko to talk to them about Jesus Christ. To Kiko's surprise and joy, he saw that a deep fraternal bond had arisen amongst those who came to listen to his improvised catecheses. Carmen Hernandez, a graduate in chemistry and theology, who had come to Palomeras Altas with the intention of forming a missionary group for Bolivia, was impressed by what she saw happening and began a collaboration with Kiko out of which grew an itinerary of Christian formation along the lines of a Catechumenate. It led to the formation of the first community, consisting of the poorest people from the fringes of society.



Bishop Ricardo Blazquez has observed that the first community was not the result of any human planning but that it was "a precious gift of God". As word of what was happening in Palomeras Altas spread, several parishes asked for these catecheses. Since then, the Neocatechumenal Way has spread to over 105 countries and more than 860 parishes throughout every continent of the world and it continues to grow. Missionaries from the Neocatechumenal Way came to Australia in 1977 and the Way is now present in nine dioceses. There are two Redemptoris Mater Seminaries in Australia, one in Perth and one in Sydney.

The Neocatechumenal Way was welcomed by Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II who guided the founders and encouraged them. In 1990, Pope John Paul II recognised it as an "itinerary of Catholic formation valid for society and for these times". As a young priest in 1952, Pope John Paul II had written of the need for a Catechumenate and in his 1962 intervention during Vatican II he had again urged the need for a post-baptismal Catechumenate because the baptised "are not sufficiently initiated into the full truth of Christian life" and hence "are not sufficiently mature to oppose secularisation". Under Pope Benedict XVI, the final decree of approval for the Way was formally given. It was presented on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, June 28, 2008 by Cardinal Stafford, president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, to the initiators of the way, Kiko Arguello and Carmen Hernandez, together with Father Mario Pezzi.

The definitive approval of the Way's statutes recognises the authenticity of this charism which urges humility and obedience to the Church which it serves. Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko referred to this approval as "a moment of great joy for the Church" as well as for the Way itself, because of the distinctive fruits that it produces: "The Way already has a long history in the Church – more than 40 years – and brings to the Church's life many fruits, many profoundly changed lives, many rebuilt families, many religious and priestly vocations, and much commitment in favour of the new evangelisation."

The Neocatechumenal Way is not an autonomous entity but is at the service of the diocese and parish priests and operates in the diocese *under the direction of the bishop*. It calls those within the Church to deepen their understanding of the gospel as well as evangelising those outside the Church.

In 1990, Fr Crennan welcomed the Way into this parish and since then, as a result of the work of itinerant catechists from East Hampton, more communities have been established in this Archdiocese, as well as in Adelaide. The members of a Neocatechumenal community meet regularly twice a week to celebrate the Word of God and the Eucharist, including the sacrament of penance once a month. The Way has a strong emphasis on family and community. Because of the willingness of members of the Way to go anywhere in the service of the gospel, the Holy See has recognised this Way as an instrument for the re-evangelisation of modern man in a society which is increasingly dechristianised and secularised.

## ***The Society of St Vincent de Paul.***



The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was established in Paris in 1833 by Frederick Ozanam (now beatified), a 20 year old student of the Sorbonne University. In response to a taunt, "What is your church doing now, for the poor? Show us your good works and we may believe you." Frederick and a group of fellow students formed a conference to visit the poor of Paris in their homes, taking them food and clothes and, more importantly, their friendship and concern.

This small group took as their patron the great French priest, St Vincent de Paul (1581--1660), who had devoted his life to serving the downtrodden.

In Australia the first conference was established by Fr Gerald Ward at St Francis' Parish, Melbourne, on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1854. Today in Australia there are 1,217 Conferences, 15,415 members and 3,772 associates (Source: Annual Report 2007). "The mission of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia is to deepen the Catholic faith of its members and to go out into our nation to heighten awareness of Jesus Christ. We do this by sharing ourselves - who we are, and what we have - with people in need on a person-to-person basis. We seek to co-operate in shaping a more just and compassionate Australian community, and to share our resources with our twinned countries. Our preferred option in this mission of service is to work with people in development by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny." (Mission Statement)

The founding date of the East Hampton Conference is 31<sup>st</sup> August 1959, and among its first members were Laurie Dundon, Charles McKay, Brent Doran, Ron O'Connor, Ron Reichman, Bert Kiley, Frank Keating, Bert Belden and Pat Kelly. Today there are nine members. Members are expected to give of their time and personal presence, conversation, talents and most of all their ear. Members are not required to have any special qualities or talents, apart from a recognition that all are equal before God and a further recognition that God calls each one of us to Him in the service of others.

In order to support each other in their life in Christ, members meet twice-monthly in a spirit of fraternity, simplicity and joy. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the problems that are encountered, as well as the successes, are discussed in order to help each other to improve the quality of service that is provided to the needy.

The main work of the Conference is visiting people in their homes. Visits are made in the company of another member, and members are asked to live their faith in a caring and compassionate approach to the needy and to respect them. All people are equal in the sight of God and aid is given without distinction of race, creed or political persuasion. Material assistance is offered in the form of supermarket gift cards, clothing, furniture, but more importantly we try to encourage those assisted to be independent, to realise that they are important to someone.

Funding to carry out the work that the Conference does is received from the Parish and Hampton Regional Council, who obtain funds from the Hampton Centre. Donations are also received from members of the Parish, and the response to the Annual Christmas Appeal is tremendous.



## *Parish Groups in the Parish*

### *The Altar Society*

The Altar Society was one of the first groups to be formed in the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish. It was the initiative of Mary McKenna, Fr Nolan's housekeeper, who held the first meeting of the Altar Society in the presbytery early in 1958. The ladies who rallied to the cause undertook a demanding job as the Mass was said in the school, which doubled as the parish church for fifteen years. Daily, and especially on the weekends, they had to be vigilant to ensure that the altar was set up properly and that everything was in place. Special events demanded an additional effort and Pat Flarve organised the meetings which made the preparations for such occasions.

Both Pat Flarve and Margaret Herbstreit were founding members of the Altar Society and have an intimate knowledge of the scope of the work that was performed. For nearly 40 years, this outstanding group of women undertook all the housekeeping and maintenance work of the church, which included vacuuming, dusting and cleaning. It was they who polished the candle-holders and vases, removed any candle wax, and provided the fresh flower arrangements. All the church linen was also their responsibility. To maintain the altar linen in good condition, they either mended it or sewed or bought new linen as required. The priest's vestments and those of the altar boys were cared for in the same way although, on one occasion, they had the altar boys' robes made for them. This work incurred significant costs which the Altar Society covered through their fund-raising enterprises.

We all expect the church to be well maintained, shining and beautiful, as well as being filled with flowers and candles. These are important signs, pointing to the Glory of God which resides in the Blessed Sacrament and within the Communion of Saints on earth, as represented by the people who gather together in worship. It was the Altar Society which faithfully provided this essential service by their hard work and dedication. These women can be compared to the women of the New Testament who worked in the background for the good of the whole church community and became our model for the great Christian tradition of service.

In the early years, the membership of the Altar Society grew to 6 groups, with 5 members in each group, which further testifies to the community spirit of our early parishioners. In the 1970s and 1980s, described as "the good years" by Pat Flarve and Margaret Herbstreit, the Society continued to thrive. Later, as more women joined the workforce, there was less participation in parish work, a reality that was reflected in the decline in the Society's membership by the 1990s.

The current Altar Society consists of a loyal handful of helpers who have devoted themselves to taking care of the altar linen and the flower arrangements and the cleaning of the church. To prepare the church for special feasts, a working bee is now organised by the parish.

## ***Tennis Club***

By the 1980s, with the primary structures of the parish in place, a period of relative prosperity led to a reassessment of the needs of the parish community. As the Church is fundamentally a *community* of believers, it is appropriate that the parish should be at the centre of its people's lives and this had certainly been the case during the years when people had worked together to establish their parish and support the school. Fr Crennan, who favoured initiatives which would promote the strengthening of community bonds, welcomed a suggestion from some parents at the school that a parish tennis club should be established. As our parish was blessed with extensive grounds, he was also keen that this land should be utilised by parishioners.

In 1985, a meeting held in the parish hall was attended by many families from the parish and the school, together with Fr Crennan. It led to the establishment of the tennis club and the election of its first president, Ed Featherstone.

As well as being a focus for community-building socialisation by adult parishioners, the tennis club proved to be a major asset for the children of the school. One of the school's teachers, Chris Hoare, was a tennis coach and he inspired both adults and children to compete at championship level against other clubs. Some of the children reached State level and, as a former club president reports, "We even had the McDonald's Squad Tennis at our courts, a great achievement".

The Honour Boards in the club house testify to a thriving club community and the generosity of many club members. By 2000, the St Agnes tennis club and the St Mary's tennis club both had to close and their members amalgamated with the Immaculate Heart of Mary club. This boost to club membership increased its activity with the courts being well utilised, including Saturday Senior Competition and Sunday Junior Competition.

Between 2003 and 2004, club membership had declined due to the increasing work loads and life style changes taking place in our society. With the closure of the parish school in 1997, the club also lost its traditional recruiting ground, which had a lasting impact on its membership. Upon his arrival in the parish, Fr Sagay contacted the remaining tennis club members and encouraged their continued activity. The Immaculate Heart of Mary Tennis Club has re-formed with a new committee and a renewed sense of its purpose.



## ***Mothers' Club***

When the church-school of Immaculate Heart of Mary was opened in 1957, the formation of the Mothers' Club soon followed. The founding members included Una Clarke, Dorothy Dundon, Audrey Quinn, Val Tyson, Vera Liddell, Lou Harvey, Betty Anglim, Pat Flarve, Margaret Herbstreit, Rita Jones and many others. These women became pioneers in a new level of organised parental involvement in the educational welfare of their children.

Having seen the success of the Mothers' Clubs in state schools, a Mr J. Carr suggested that the various parents' organisations throughout Victoria should join forces to form a federation. In August, 1958, at a meeting attended by 500 women delegates from suburban and country parishes, the Victorian Federation of Catholic Mothers' Clubs was established. Its goals included publicising the achievements and needs of Catholic schools in Victoria with the aim of securing free education for all children in the schools of their parents' choice. On the local level, the Mothers' Clubs also sought to improve educational facilities and opportunities, provide schools with modern improvements and teaching aids and promote co-operation between parents and teachers. Expressing the views of Catholic mothers on the education and welfare of their children was also on their agenda. Finally, the federation sought to encourage links between the Mothers' Clubs. Between 1958 and 1998, the umbrella organisations for the Mothers' Clubs in Victoria underwent some name changes. The last one was the Victorian Federation of Catholic Parents' Clubs (1958-1998).

Evidence that the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mothers' Club was a member of the Victorian Federation is revealed in the Hampton Standard of June 17, 1959. Under the heading *School News*, it reports that the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mothers' Club had held its first annual meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. Guests at the meeting were the regional delegates from ten schools in the Cheltenham zone. Mrs Cullen, the inaugural president of the Victorian Federation of Catholic Mothers' Clubs, was the guest speaker. Her speech described the work and progress of the Federation and she also answered questions put by the members.

From this newspaper report we also learn that the president of our Mothers' Club at the time was Mrs Val Tyson, who was elected by the meeting as the regional representative for the Cheltenham zone of the Victorian Federation of Mothers' Clubs. The parish priest of Hampton, Fr Nowlan, was present, with Fr Nolan of East Hampton. This, together with the fact that the Mothers' Clubs of St Mary's and Immaculate Heart of Mary had combined to provide the supper, also shows the close links that continued to exist between these sister parishes. It is also clear from this report that the Mothers' Club of Hampton East was a prominent member of the Victorian Federation from the beginning, that it operated in co-operation with other Mothers' Clubs and that it was active in promoting the stated aims of the Victorian body.

To this day, the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mothers' Club is remembered for its dedicated work in the parish. Not only did their work help to support the school but it also benefited the whole parish. As a member of the Victorian federation, our Mothers' Club can also lay claim to a share of the credit when a concession to the needs of non-government schools was made by the Federal Government in 1969, introducing a per capita grant of \$35 per primary child and \$50 per secondary student. Notwithstanding the improvement that this represented to our school's funding, it still fell far short of providing for its needs. Consequently, in 1970, our Mothers' Club was asked to run a fete. This it did, with spectacular success. A fete Committee led by Margaret Herbstreit and Dulcie Jopling had a list of 90 people on the rosters for its first fete, which raised \$21,000, an amount never equalled by subsequent fetes. The parish fete became an annual event with the co-operation and support of other parish groups.

Sr Frances Suhr, who came to the school in 1971 and was its Principal from 1972 until she left at the end of 1974, observed that "There was a very active Mothers' Club who worked diligently to provide equipment for the school". Her tribute fittingly describes the dedication of the Mothers' Club throughout its years of supporting the school and the community of this parish.

## ***Donations to the Church***

### ***Introductory paragraph***

From the moment when it appeared as an idea in the mind of Fr Daly, this parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary has known the generosity of friends, neighbours, the Archdiocese and its own parishioners. When the church was built in 1973, the showers of donations from within and outside of our parish reassured us of the loving providence of God and the fraternal love within the Church. These gifts to our church are all around us still. It is worth noticing them and remembering the love of God and neighbour that had inspired them.

### ***Within the Sanctuary:***



- The **altar** was paid for by Fr Murphy of St Joan of Arc, Brighton, for Masses in memory of his parents, and the **altar furnishings** were donated by several parishioners.
- A lady parishioner made an anonymous donation to pay for the **tabernacle**.
- The **chalice and ciborium** were donated by a parishioner in memory of her husband, Len Byrne.
- The **base of the crucifix** is a donation. It was made for the first celebration of Easter in this parish in 1958, so both the crucifix and its base provide a historical link with the original church-school.
- Adaptations to the **church brassware** were made by John Galvin, a childhood friend of Fr Crennan.
- The **Divine Mercy Picture** was generously supplied by Fr Maher.

### ***In the Church:***

- The **Statue of Our Lady** was given to us by Fr Daly, who had named our parish in honour of her Immaculate Heart.
- The **votive candle stand** was donated in memory of John Minihan.
- The **four crosses showing that the church has been consecrated** are the work of one of our founding parishioners, Pat Kelly.
- Fr Maher donated the **Picture of Our Lady's Assumption**.
- The **Stations of the Cross** are hand-painted pictures and were given to us by Fr Ashe of St Finbar's.





- The **Statue of St Joseph** is the gift of a parishioner.
- The **Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour** was carved by a Polish lady who also painted the icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa from the Polish shrine at Jasna Gora (Note: Jasna Gora [p: yasna goora], meaning “bright hill/mountain”, is the hill where Our Lady appeared to save the monastery there from the invading Swedish army. The icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa, sometimes called “The Black Madonna”, commemorates this event. A World Youth Day pilgrimage was made to Czestochowa during the time of Pope John Paul II.)
- Bishop Elliott donated the **El Greco** painting Of Our Lord.
- The **Army, Navy and Air Force Medallions** in the foyer are on permanent loan to us from the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Bishop Elliott renovated these for us during his time in our parish.
- The original carpet in the church was paid for by a friend of the parish.



#### Outside the church:

- The **Narthex** was subsidised by the generosity of a number of people.
- **Our Lady's Grotto** is the gift of Fr Crennan's friends, and the **Statue** inside it was donated in memory of Fr Crennan's mother, Susan Crennan.





# World Youth Day 2008

## Days in the Diocese at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish



In July this year, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish was given the opportunity to participate in the *Days in the Diocese* aspect of World Youth Day which was held in Sydney from 15-20 July. By welcoming the pilgrims into our parish and our homes, we received the full impact of the mighty surge of faith with which each WYD sweeps the Church and the world. In his address to Australian clergy at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, Pope Benedict noted that "All too often.....God's name is passed over in silence, religion is reduced to private devotion and faith is shunned in the public square". There was nothing private or hidden about the purpose of the thousands of WYD pilgrims who descended on various Australian cities in preparation for Sydney. We saw for ourselves that God won't be silenced and that during this WYD He was speaking to all of us through His Church and the waves of pilgrims coming here in His name.

The *Days in the Diocese* program was designed to enable our young visitors to not only see the sights in their host city but to experience Australian family life and participate in a number of liturgical celebrations in preparation for the WYD in Sydney. Our parish had the opportunity of welcoming many of these pilgrims into our homes. Twenty-six of our parish families welcomed into their homes 79 pilgrims from Poland, Tanzania and Italy, together with the 9 priests who led the groups. There were four main groups of pilgrims: a group of 16 from Olsztyn, Poland; the 18 people in the Guiseppini del Murialdo group from in and around Rome, Italy; 13 pilgrims from the DSM Youth Movement in Tanzania and a second, composite Polish group of 32 from Bielsko and Zywiec. As one of our organisers of *Days in the Diocese* quipped, "A number of our host families were able to dust off and practice their Polish and Italian". Many of the pilgrims also spoke English.



*Polish Pilgrims from Bielsko and Zywiec*



*Italian Pilgrims*



*Polish Pilgrims from Olsztyn*



*DSM Youth Movement from Tanzania*

As well as taking time to explore the city, most of the pilgrims also participated in a full liturgical program which began with a moving celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation which was followed by an official parish welcome, given in English, Polish, Italian and Swahili. Pilgrims and host families then enjoyed a sausage sizzle together and the spontaneous fun culminated with dancing and singing in the Narthex. For many people, the Commissioning Mass at Telstra Dome, led by Archbishop Hart, with 40,000 in attendance, was the most memorable event and a vivid sign of the vigour of the Church and the power of faith.

Even for those who could only be present at the 10.30 am Sunday Mass in the parish, there was a joyful surprise. The church was full of people, most of them young, and all of them joyfully praising God in the different songs of their various communities. Their voices shook the rafters and moved the hearts of parishioners with a joy that impelled even the most frail to clap their hands or turn their heads to neighbours with smiles of delight. What we were seeing was a Church in the full panoply of her joy, celebrating the love of Christ for His Church and the love He generates amongst her members. This was the effect that the pilgrims had on all the masses in the parish, invigorating us with the sense of the vitality present in the Church. It was a balm to faint hearts and a boost to our faith.

In addition to the pilgrims hosted by parish families, our parish also welcomed 700 young people from the Neocatechumenal Way. These young people from England, Italy, Spain and U.S.A. used our church to celebrate Mass, do the Morning Prayer of the Church and give catecheses. Together, they went out on popular missions, singing and preaching in the streets to bring the gospel to “the public square” which, as Pope Benedict reminded us, usually shuns any mention of faith. Finally, on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July, Bishop Peter Elliott celebrated the Eucharist with 85 young people from Treviso (near Venice) and young people from our parish.



The energy and fervour of the young pilgrims was a gift that they brought to all of us, reminding us that, whatever our age, all our hearts can still catch the fire of zeal and be renewed. Being pilgrims, they also reminded us that we are all “the pilgrim Church on earth” and that the Church is not a static collection of doctrines and rituals but an assembly of people on a journey. By their coming to stay amongst us, and through the beautiful liturgies that we celebrated together, we were given a taste of a new Pentecost in the Church. Just as the original Pentecost filled the apostles with courage and the zeal to announce Christ, so this new Pentecost calls us to embrace our Christian vocation with courage.

For many parishioners, the *WYD Days in the Diocese* was an unforgettable experience. It was also memorable for the pilgrims, some of whom have said that staying with a Christian family from a different culture was one of the most valuable experiences of their pilgrimage. A particularly entertaining episode is provided by the experience of parish stalwart, Jack Foley, who hosted four pilgrims from Poland. Well past the first flush of youth and living alone, Jack not only cooked lavishly for his four sturdy guests but also developed a warm relationship with them. To better express his appreciation of their distinctive personalities, Jack re-named three of the pilgrims Junior, Moses and Charlie, and conferred the rank of ‘*Bishop*’ on the priest in the group. These Polish pilgrims were not only happy to answer to their new names but, in a postcard to Jack from New Zealand, they signed themselves with the soubriquets that he had bestowed on them. As several parishioners have noted, we will now always have the sense of being connected to certain brothers from Italy, Tanzania and Poland. Pilgrims and parishioners met and became a blessing for one another during this memorable WYD encounter in our parish.



# Golden Jubilee Celebrations 2008

## *A Time to Celebrate*

In this Jubilee year of the Parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary, we recognise that, under the protection of Our Lady, our parish has not only arrived at a historical milestone but that we are full of life and looking forward to continuing the great adventure of our pilgrimage of faith. It is truly a time to be jubilant and to give thanks to God.



### **Sunday June 1<sup>st</sup> Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary: Our Parish Feast**

Our Jubilee festivities began on our Parish feast with the 10.30 am Mass being celebrated by the Most Reverend Peter J Elliott, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne. A happy throng of parishioners continued to celebrate at a special morning tea, the centre of which was a jubilee cake, iced blue in honour of Our Lady.

### **Sunday July 27<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church**

Fittingly, it was the Reverend Fr Victor Crennan, our Pastor Emeritus, who was the Principal Celebrant at the 10.30 am Mass. The festive crowd at the morning tea afterwards was enhanced by a large gathering of World Youth Day pilgrims.



### **Friday August 15<sup>th</sup> Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

To honour our Mother who was assumed into heaven and intercedes there for us, the parish, led by our priest, the Reverend Fr Sagayaraj Arokiyadoss, met at 6.30 pm to pray the rosary during a procession of the statue of Our Lady around the church. This was followed by the celebration of the Mass at 7.00 pm.

### **Sunday September 7<sup>th</sup> Feast of the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

The Liturgy of the feast was celebrated at the 10.30 am Mass and concluded with parishioners gathering for a morning tea.



### **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October Immaculate Heart of Mary Golden Jubilee Mass**

The highlight of our Golden Jubilee is the 6.00 pm Mass at which the Principal Celebrant is the Most Reverend Denis J Hart, Archbishop of Melbourne. To crown the celebrations, this is followed by Dinner in a marquee set up in the church grounds.

### **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December Closing Mass of the Golden Jubilee**

The Principal Celebrant at this 6.00 pm Mass is the Vicar General, the Reverend Monsignor Les Tomlinson. As the Church at this time also joyfully anticipates celebrating the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Supper that follows will culminate in Christmas Carols and a concert held in the Parish Hall.





## ***Blessed are those who dwell in your house***<sup>13</sup>

This year of celebrations has been an opportunity to reflect on what the Lord has done with us, His Church at East Hampton. By presiding over our major celebrations, Archbishop Hart, Bishop Elliott, Monsignor Les Tomlinson and our Pastor Emeritus, Fr Crennan, have helped us to understand that we belong to the Universal Church which rejoices with us. With the blessed Eucharist at the centre of our celebrations, we have also been reminded that “*Christ unites us with his Passover*”<sup>14</sup> which, St Paul tells us, means that “*There is no permanent city for us here; we are looking for the one which is yet to be.*”<sup>15</sup> We have already reaped the fruits of brotherly love whilst sharing in the celebrations and the feasts of this Golden Jubilee. Our future direction in Christ is also shown us by St Paul: “*Through him, let us offer God an unending sacrifice of praise, the fruit of the lips of those who acknowledge his name*”.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Parish Prayer***

*St Joseph, Head of the Holy Family, you know the hardships and the monotony of a daily routine. Help us to work hard and make good use of the gifts God has given us.*

*You worked with Christ and for Him, help us model our lives on yours. May we grow in the spirit of service and commitment to our vocation in life.*

*St Joseph, our Parish should be a family in spirit. It should be shaped by love and concern for others. You showed these qualities in your own life. Help us to develop that same healthy trust, love and service for others you had and have. Amen.*



**This History of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish was compiled by Janina Clarke.**

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<sup>13</sup> Psalm 84(83)

<sup>14</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, p.209

<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 13:14

<sup>16</sup> Hebrews 13:15