

**ST. JOSEPH'S**  
**PARISH**  
**COLLINGWOOD**

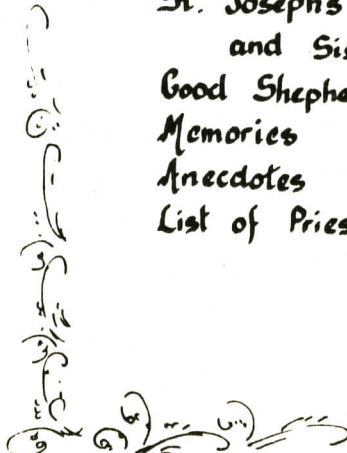


**1887** **CENTENARY** **1987**



## Contents

Foreword	p. 2
Introduction	p. 3
Time Line	p. 5
Short History	
Early Years	p. 8
Church Beginnings	p. 10
Parish Beginnings	p. 11
Parish Growth	p. 14
Parish Post War	p. 18
St. Joseph's Primary School and Sisters of Charity	p. 22
Good Shepherd Convent	p. 24
Memories	p. 27
Anecdotes	p. 41
List of Priests	p. 43



## Foreword

This Parish History emerged as one of the projects of the Centenary Planning Group whose names appear below. We begin the list with the person who did most of the work in compiling and editing the many contributions to this booklet:

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Our thanks to all those parishioners who have shared their memories and stories with us.

We also wish to record our appreciation of the considerable assistance given to us by the Christian Brothers of St. Joseph's Technical School, Abbotsford, in producing this history.

Centenary Planning Group.

October, 1987.

## ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH COLLINGWOOD

### Introduction

The celebration of 100 years of parish life is an important occasion in the life of a parish. So, Wednesday 28th October 1987 - the day on which, 100 years ago, Archbishop Carr opened St. Joseph's parish, Collingwood - is an important moment for us, at St. Joseph's, and is worth celebrating for many reasons:

- it makes us conscious that we, who are part of St. Joseph's parish today, are building on the shoulders of generations of past parishioners;
- it reminds us that thousands of people have gathered in St. Joseph's to pray over the past 100 years (and longer, the Church being opened in 1861) - that for over a century it has been a sacred place in Collingwood;
- it makes us aware of our history, that we are part of an ongoing journey: parishioners have walked before us, and will walk after us;
- it helps us realize that so many people have heard the Good News of Jesus Christ because of the work and prayer of St. Joseph's parishioners;
- it becomes a moment of deep thanksgiving to God - so much of God's goodness has been introduced to people, so many people have been affirmed in their faith.



## ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH COLLINGWOOD

We who are part of St. Joseph's Parish Community at this time in its history feel privileged to share this highpoint of parish history. We are grateful to all who have gone before us and built the strong Christian tradition of the parish. Their work is our inheritance.

May we celebrate this moment with a sense of confidence and hope for the future. God has been with us for 100 years - and God will go with us as we continue to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and express it in the community life of the parish and its mission to our world.

*Michael Casey*

Fr. Michael Casey.

October, 1987.

## Time Line

1836: first European occupation of Port Phillip.

1838: land sales of what is now Collingwood. Average block of 25 acres sold at between 4:10 and 13.

1840: factories spread out along Yarra (wool washing, tanning, leather)

1850: influx of population via gold rush, cheap land in Collingwood attract factories and working class housing.

1855: Municipality of East Collingwood is formed. First independant school is established at Ryrie St (Alexander Pde)

1857: Independant school is established at Budd St. Collingwood population at 10,775.

1858: School is established at 2 Wellington St. Later in year all the schools are combined to one at Stanley St.

1860: Girl's school established at Otter St and another girl's school at Moor St. Bishop Goold celebrates Mass and lays foundation stone for new school/church at Otter St.

1861: West nave of present church is opened as School/Church. Mass is regularly celebrated by priests from Cathedral.

1863: Four Irish Sisters of Good Shepherd Order arrive at Abbotsford from France.

1875: Fr. Aylward starts working in the area although he is attached to Cathedral. Population of Collingwood 21000



## ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH

1876: Central nave of present church completed.

1879: Good Shepherd Sisters open St Euphrasia's School.

1886: Otter St school moves to new building (present hall)

1887: Parish is proclaimed and opened with Fr Aylward as Parish Priest and Fr. Brennan as curate. They lived at 22 Abbotsford St.

1891: Sisters of Charity take over Parish school. East nave of the church is built.

1892: Society of St. Vincent de Paul formed in Collingwood.

1893: Christian Brothers open Boys School in Nicholson St.

1898: Priests move to 28 Otter St.

1902: Collingwood wins first VFL flag!

1903: Present presbytery built by Fr. O'Brien

1904: School Infants block is completed.

1912: Senior wing of school is completed

1914-18: World War 1. 501 men and 1 woman from the Collingwood area were killed while serving in Europe.

1916: Catholic Women's Social Guild is formed.

1929-33: Depression with much poverty and hardship.

1930: Nicholson St Boys School is changed to Diocesan Technical School. It is still run by Christian Brothers.

1930s: Daughters of Charity arrive in Fitzroy and work in Collingwood. Collingwood population peaks at 34000.

1939-45: World War 2.

1950s: First Italian families move into Parish.

1958: Collingwood wins last VFL flag- at this stage!!

1960s: Housing Commission clears large residential areas of Collingwood and builds High Rise estate.

1975: Garage converted into the Cottage.

1977-83: Little Sisters of Jesus live in Collingwood.

1979: Parish becomes home for the Gioan Hoan Vietnamese Community.

1981-87: Parish School refurbishment program.

1982: Annual Parish Weekends begin.

1983: The Parish Truck, donated by the Good Shepherd Order, begins operations.

1984: Parish Neighbourhood groups begin. Church sanctuary canopy removed.

1985: Sisters of Mercy begin pastoral work in Collingwood

1987: Centenary of Parish. Collingwood population down to 15000.



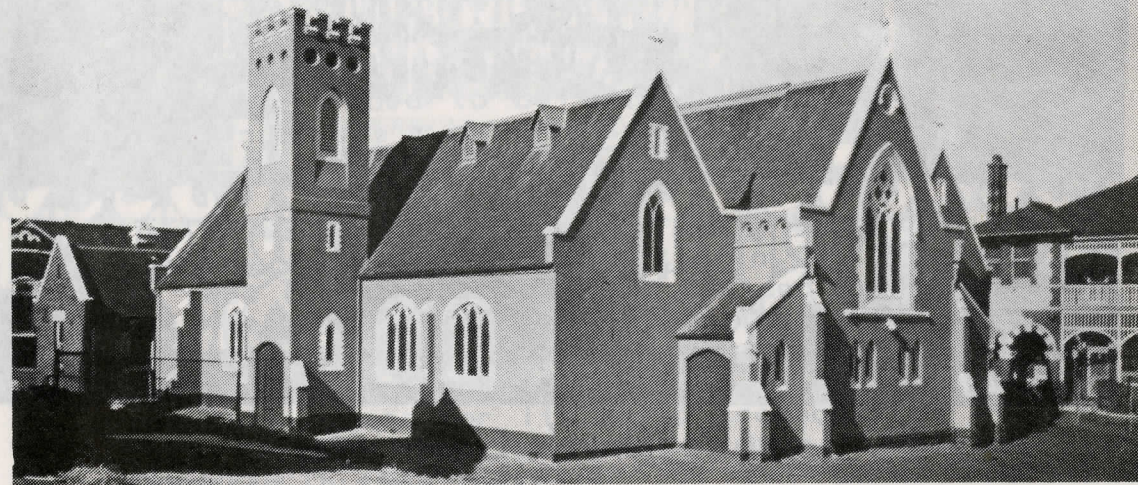
## Short History

### Early Years

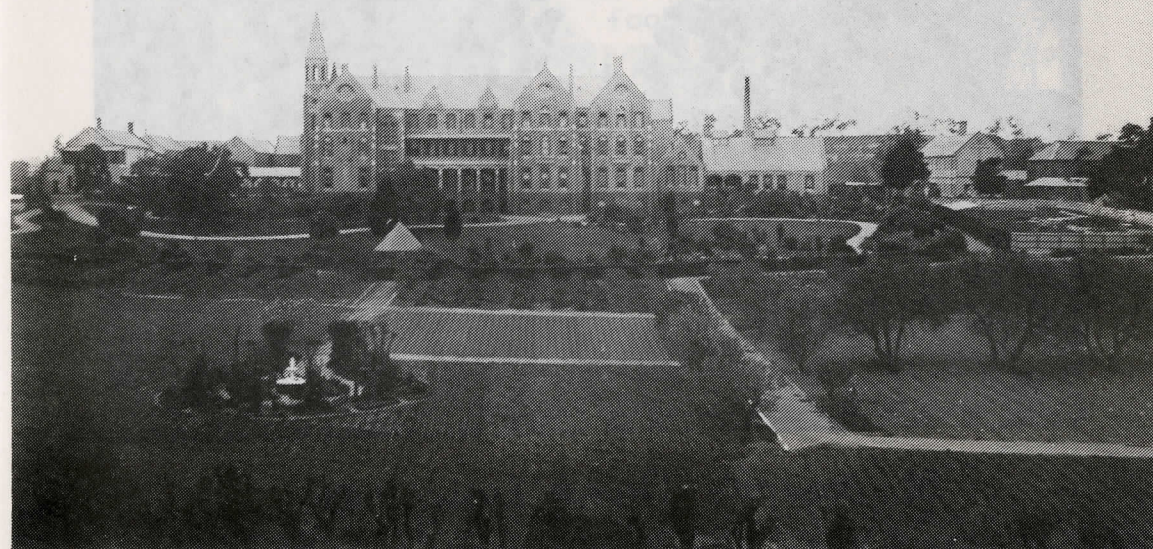
The area Collingwood now covers has been inhabited for up to 40,000 years. Although at times far from the sea during the different ice-ages, the river and the swamps of the Collingwood 'Flat' would have provided a good food supply to the aboriginal people. When the Europeans arrived the Kulin people (also known as the Wurundjeri people) occupied the whole area. However because British policy didn't recognise their rights and there was virtually no provision for their situation it wasn't long before there were no full blood Kulin people left in the area. During the 1840s there was a semi-permanent camp near Dights Falls. However those who didn't die through violence or disease were sent off to Conderack (Healsville) or elsewhere. There was also a Mission school for aboriginal children in the same area for several years.

Shortly after Melbourne was first settled by Europeans the area now known as Collingwood was subdivided into 25 acre lots and sold off as farmlets. The area was low lying and prone to flooding. Run off from the Carlton and Fitzroy areas drained into the Yarra through Collingwood, and occasionally the Yarra flooded the whole area as far as Wellington St. The higher ground was sought after for residential development and so compared with other inner city areas the growth of Collingwood was slow.

St. Joseph's Church in the 1960's



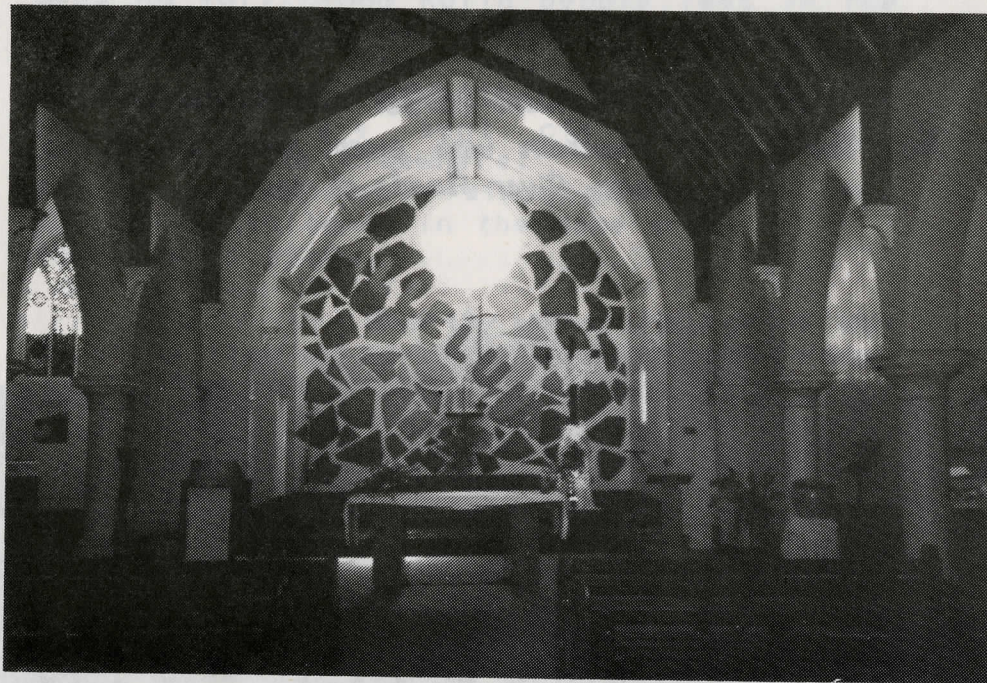
Abbotsford Convent earlier this century.  
Note the garden fountain was swept away during the  
Yarra River floods of 1934.







St. Joseph's Church, Easter 1925



St. Joseph's Church, Easter 1986

Factories such as wool washing, tanning and leather works sprang up along the Yarra banks. There was plenty of water for these industries and the land was cheap. Residential subdivision came with the factories but they tended to be smaller blocks and the dwellings were much less substantial than other areas.

After the gold rush the population and the factories grew quickly in Collingwood. In 1854 the population was 8,738 and by 1863 it was 19,000, and it was distinctly working class. Many were miners and their families, who, having no luck on the gold fields, sought out Collingwood for its cheap accomodation and the availability of work. Dr. Singleton reported in 1868 that:

" I found that a greater number of the poorer classes, artisans with large families, labourers, aged people, widows and deserted women, often with many children to provide for, with others of the same class, had gone to Collingwood, where the rentals were then very moderate, and the cost of food, vegetables etc. equally so."

Already a large proportion of the disadvantaged of the day were concentrated in the area.

With low wages and long working hours, with the constant water and mud, and the lack of adequate drainage, life was difficult. People had to wear Half wellington boots most of the year and the general health of the area was low. Dr. Singleton wrote:



" Infant mortality was very great and the Health Officer's reports for years were of the prevalence of scarlet fever, diphtheria, dysentery and other zymotic diseases due to bad drainage and lack of sewerage- diseases, however, not then peculiar to Collingwood, or the 'Flat'.

### *Church Beginnings*

In the late 1850s the Church became active in the area. Schools were started up at different locations until 1860 when the schools finally moved to Otter Street. Priests from the Cathedral were also active in Collingwood from the same time. In 1860 Bishop Goold said Mass in a wooden hall in Otter St. (site of the present presbytery) and laid the foundation stone for a church/school (present west nave). This was completed in 1861 and from then on Mass was said regularly on weekends, and during the week the school operated.

In 1863 four Irish nuns of the French order of the Good Shepherds arrived in Melbourne and purchased property in Abbotsford. They quickly set up a home/farm for orphans, the infirm and the sick.

As the population grew in the 1860s and 1870s, and as the factories grew ( shoe industry, brewing industry and textile and clothing manufacturing), so did the spiritual and physical needs of the people. As a working class area there was a continuing need for welfare assistance. Some priests from the Cathedral were more or less permanently working in the area. From 1875 Fr. Aylward was one of these.

In 1876 the central nave was built and then in 1879 the Good Shepherd Sisters started St. Euphrasia's school. At this time the Abbotsford convent and the Abbotsford area were within the Richmond parish. Then in 1884 this area was annexed to the Cathedral. In 1886 the new school building (present hall) was completed and opened. The 1880s were a boom time with a lot of building. Many old timber structures, hastily thrown up after the gold rush, were demolished and more substantial brick buildings erected. There was also a lot of public building (Town Hall etc.)

### *Parish Beginnings*

In the late 1880s it was decided to set up Collingwood as a separate parish. Fr. Aylward was assigned as Parish priest with Fr. Benson as his curate. Archbishop Carr officially opened the parish on 28th October 1887 after saying Mass. The priests moved to a presbytery at 22 Abbotsford St. in 1888. In 1891 the east nave of the church was built and the completed structure was opened on May 3rd. Then, late in 1891, the Sisters of Charity arrived to take over the school. Prior to this, lay teachers had run the school.

In 1892 the Society of St. Vincent de Paul opened in Collingwood. Made up of lay volunteers, and for many years funded out of their own pockets, this was a vocation within itself. The work was demanding as there were many people needing care in one form or another. The intention was to visit the homes and help people where they were. The volunteers had to be non-judgemental in their dealings with the poor. This demanded a lot of charity, love and especially humility. Besides supplying footwear, clothes and food, the volunteers had



to be able to link up with other support groups. The society had various shelters and refuges in other parts of Melbourne where, if needed, people could be referred. There were also contacts with various medical facilities. Up until the 1960s the St. Vincent de Paul Society had no outside funding, relying upon the poor box, the takings from the opportunity shop and private donations.

In some ways the needs of many people were different in those days compared with today. Most houses had a vegetable patch in the backyard, small as they may be. Fuel bills were small as often scraps of wood or even leather (Collingwood coke) could be found to heat the houses and cook the meals. There were no phone bills and, with fewer electrical appliances, lower electricity bills. However wages then barely covered their necessities and there was no spare cash to cover extra expenses. Further, the three great fears of the residents were housing, sickness and funerals. Being evicted has always created great problems. In those days there were few support groups to help tenants, and the landlords were often ruthless. Sickness usually meant doctor's bills and hospital bills, and there was no Medicare to pick up the bills then. Being unable to pay funeral costs meant the humiliation of a pauper's grave.

In 1893 Archbishop Carr asked the Christian Brothers to set up a school in Abbotsford as he wanted more done for the children of the area. The Christian Brothers already had some schools (some early ones near St. Francis's and Parade), and as these catered for the more middle classes, some funds were redirected to set up the Abbotsford school. The Archbishop bought a tannery on the corner of Nicholson and Mollison Sts for £2500. It was

central to Richmond, East Melbourne, Collingwood and Clifton Hill. Brother Treacy, the head of the Christian Brothers, was not prepared to convert the old tannery into classrooms and Archbishop Carr agreed to have the school built from scratch costing another 2000. On the opening day of 1893 each of the four brothers took a classroom and it is recorded that at the end of the day each room contained close to 100 pupils. It was tough work and involved primary grades, but it must have been rewarding as Brother George Louis Blake taught there for 17 years in the period up to 1930. And the type of boy? One quote of the day reads:

" We succeeded in increasing our numbers last year. The boys were in a bad state, rude vicious addicted to swearing, filthy language and sharing tobacco, but thank God all have disappeared. Assaulting teachers with slates, ink wells etc was a favourite game, as well as playing truant, some continuing it two or three months at a time. The bishop is never tired of praising our reform. The Parish Priest is the same. "

Because the school was "boys only" St. Euphrasias, Hellier Street, and St. Joseph's, Otter Street became girls primary schools. Besides the Sisters of Charity staffing St. Joseph's, there were always 2 or 3 lay teachers. One of these was Nell Hayes who taught the infant class for 50 years. Many famous and infamous pupils passed through her hands including League footballers, cricketers, musicians, Union Secretaries, and on the darker side many, sadly, who spent a good deal of time at the "College" in Coburg.



The Priests, Nuns and Brothers tended to be seen as the Holy Men and Women of Ireland, very separated and high above the rest of the parish. The Good Shepherd Order was then a closed order, but even the other orders and the priests tended to live, if not work, as recluses. They were placed high above the rough life of the rest. The present presbytery, built by Fr. O'Brien in 1903 was surrounded by a high hedge to reinforce the separation.

### Parish Growth

The parish tended to be a focus for social life as well as a spiritual focus. There were many groups within the parish to organise social and spiritual activities - the School Social Committee; the Legion of Mary, (a sodality for young girls); the Catholic Young Mens Society; the Sacred Heart Sodality for ladies (many of whom were married); the Holy Name Society (for the men); the National Catholic Girls Movement, and the Catholic Boys Legion. The Legion of Mary was active in home visitations and, in later years, was responsible for the rosary statues moving around the parish from home to home.

All these groups organised different activities. Besides organising special Masses, there were dances in the parish hall, house parties held in private homes (where the young would dance and sing in one room while their elders would play euchre in another room), picnics to the country (a motor coach would be hired for the day and all would head off together), and many sporting events. The Tennis Club was very active with the courts being located in the north-west corner of the present school yard. Many good marriages were made via the tennis club! The Men's Club, in rooms near

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the present infant's block, included a library and 6 pool tables.

Table tennis was also popular. However football always held most attention. Teams were fielded by the Catholic Young Men's Society, and by the Catholic Boys Legion. To be eligible to play the boys had to attend Mass, so Sunday Mass was especially crowded in the Winter months. To buy footballs and jumpers a barrel was often provided down by the Yarra. One event that brought all these groups together was the "Queen" competition, later changed to the "Popular Girl", and then to the "Prince and Princess" competition. Ostensibly a fund raising event, each group in the parish would nominate its favourite, have fund raising activities and then have the crowning at the Collingwood Town Hall.

Collingwood was the second branch of the Catholic Women's Social Guild to be formed. The branch was opened in 1916 with foundation members being Mrs King and Miss Florrie Beresford among many others. Miss Beresford, although in a wheel chair, was to be secretary for 48 years. They regularly had a General Mass and Breakfast with 80 to 90 women present and a guest speaker. This was kept up till 1983. Besides helping with all parish matters they always provided First Communion breakfasts and during the depression, members made clothes for women and children, especially the white frocks for First Communion.

Alcohol was always a problem with many families in the area. Collingwood had a high proportion of hotels and many pay packets were spent there. To counter this, the church often had temperance drives with many taking the 'pledge' to abstain from alcohol. When confirmed, many took a pledge to abstain from



alcohol until they were 25. Also at any stage, anybody could go and "see Father" and take an individual pledge to abstain for a set period of time. These pledges were taken very seriously.

The First World War seriously disrupted life in Collingwood. Although exact numbers of men and women who served in Europe are not known 501 men and one woman (a nurse) from the Collingwood area were killed in action. This would mean about 100 young men from the Parish, and over three times this would have served overseas. There were many groups who organised gift parcels for the soldiers at the front. The conscription issue caused a lot of dissent in the Australian community and many parishioners organised meetings and went to hear Dr. Mannix speaking against conscription.

In the 1920s there was considerable pressure for Catholic Technical schools. One commandment of the church at the time was that all Catholic parents must send their children to Catholic schools. However if parents wanted their sons to enter a trade there were only state technical schools around. Further, there was a clear absence of Catholics in the trades. Dr. Mannix put pressure on the Christian Brothers and they changed St. Joseph's Sth Melbourne into a Catholic Technical School in 1925. It proved very successful and boys were turned away in their hundreds. The Brothers were asked to open a second School so St. Joseph's Abbotsford changed to a Technical school in 1930 and it enjoyed the same sort of instant success. This also marked the beginning of more pupils travelling in from more distant suburbs to the school

Occasionally epidemics swept through Melbourne, often closing schools and halting

public gatherings for long periods of time. J. Connors recalls his school days finishing early because of a pneumonic influenza epidemic in 1919. When the schools broke up in 1918 for the Christmas break he expected to return for three months in 1919 until his 14th birthday (14 was the minimum leaving age). However in February the epidemic closed the school for three months so he never returned to school. At this time the Exhibition Buildings were used as an emergency hospital and everybody wore white face masks in public. There were also poliomyelitis epidemics in the late 1930s where the school was closed and the children were confined to their homes for weeks.

The 1920s saw the introduction of 6 O'clock closing. Excessive drinking was a problem for many, although Collingwood was not the 'skid row' of Melbourne. In Fitzroy the larger buildings had become run down by this time and they tended to be used as rooming, boarding houses. Collingwood, with its small houses, was more a family suburb. There was a high proportion of children in the area and although life was hard there was a sense of community. When the depression hit from 1929 to 1934 there were around 40% unemployed, but there was a lot of sharing and caring. Many went hungry and most went without what we now consider the basics, but there are many stories of people with very little sharing even that with others. The Daughters of Charity started work in the area at this time. Although based in Fitzroy, a lot of their work was in Collingwood.

St. Euphrasia's School opened 1879



## Parish Post War

World War 2 changed the parish. Many young men went off to the war however, exact numbers are not known. The number of men and women who served would have been about the same as World War 1 although the casualties were not as high. Most people thought that when the war was over and the men returned, everything would be as it was. However the men met new friends and tended to drift out of the parish. The motor car also meant that people could get around much more easily, so much of the social life of the parish stopped. Fr. Lombard did set up the Y.C.W. with some success at this time. However many young people got married and moved out of Collingwood to the new suburbs. Many of the new parishes of Melbourne were established by ex-Collingwood parishoners.

Problems caused by sub-standard housing led to a lot of public debate between the wars. The Victorian Government took up the issue of urban renewal through the Ministry of Housing and the Housing Commission. In an attempt to provide cheap modern housing in the 1950s, the Commission cleared large areas of land in the inner city and rebuilt. The area between Wellington, Perry, Hoddle and Vere Sts. was bought, often against the wishes of the residents, cleared and, first the 'walk-ups' and then, the high rises were built. There was a lot of opposition from local residents to this. Many had lived all their lives in these houses, and, although seen as substandard, they were 'homes'. The residents had a strong sense of belonging and of community. Many residents were relocated in other areas of Melbourne and this caused a lot of resentment. This was



*St. Joseph's Church in the early 1950's*



*St. Euphrasia's School opened 1879*





*St. Joseph's School grade 6, 1931*



*Collingwood C.Y.M.S. in the late 1930's*

really the straw that broke the back of the Collingwood community. Ironically, many of the houses that were demolished were identical to the ones that are now fetching astronomical prices and are in great demand. Further, the high rise have tended to contain a more transient population.

A further disruption to Collingwood life happened with the widening of Hoddle St in the 1970s. Again there was enforced removal of many homes and families, and it also had the effect of splitting Collingwood into two sections. The building of the Eastern Freeway had the same effect. Particulary for children and for the elderly, there was now a very busy road to cross, so many tended to stay within these new boundaries.

After World War 2 there was a rapid growth in immigration, especially of Southern Europeans, into Australia. With the inner suburbs having lower rents, many of the new immigrants were attracted there. Collingwood quickly had a large population of Italians and they became a strong presence in the parish. In more recent times the new arrivals have been the Vietnamese.

Fr. Sowersby. (Parish Priest from October 1956 until his death in July 1966) was the quiet loving force behind the parish's liturgical "update/revamp". At one of the newer Easter Vigils he set fire to the lace of his vestments with the flame of the Easter fire!

During the time of Fr. McNamara (from September 1966 until March 1974), the major re-furbishing of the church interior was undertaken. The entrance porch was added, the old confessional boxes were abolished and two new external brick ones built. Statues were



either relocated or disappeared, and the Stations of the Cross and memorial plaques at the church entrance were removed. The wooden parquet floor of the sanctuary was covered with carpet. Building update continued with the arrival of Fr. Bainbridge as Parish Priest. The body of the church was carpeted, the main altar brought down into the church from its original position and the seating was gradually re-arranged to form a semi-circle around the main altar. The statues of the Sacred Heart and of Our Lady were placed at the rear of the church, and the statue of St. Joseph was placed in the main porch. Recently, the canopy over the original position of the main altar - erected during the time of Fr. Lombard as Parish Priest - was removed. Now the beautiful rose window is visible in all its glory.

To conform with Post Vatican ideas, Fr. McNamara instituted a Parish Council by special invitation to representatives of the then existing parish groups. The first council president was Jack Flynn, followed by Michael McHugh, then Charlie Schembri and then Pat Lawson.

Just as the Capuchin Franciscan Fathers came to the parish to assist the recently arrived Italian community in the 1950s, in 1979 Fr. Bart San was appointed curate at St. Joseph's and acted as spiritual director to the Vietnamese people. The Vietnamese adopted the Church as the home for the Gioan Hoan Community, and set up a Marian shrine in the West porch.

Parish involvement in ecumenism was encouraged by Fr. McNamara when shared Pentecost Sunday services were instituted. When the first of the high rise Ministry of Housing flats in Hoddle St. were occupied, the parish,

through the Legion of Mary members and Frs. McNamara and Kenny, were part of the ecumenical welcoming groups to assist the new tenants in getting to know the area, facilities etc. Ecumenical pentecostal services grew into the Lenten paraliturgies, taking place each week in different churches in the area. After one of these Lenten seasons, those who had been meeting felt the need to continue rather than leave this contact for twelve months. The project of a youth refuge for the community was a result of these continued meetings. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul assumed responsibility for this refuge.

At all times, the Collingwood Council and the Town Hall seemed to be part of the Parish community. School balls and concerts were held at the Town Hall, as well as Parish balls and dances. Parish/Council participation is still strong with involvement in committees for Share Care, social welfare, youth affairs, Collingwood Fair etc.

During the time of Fr. Casey as Parish Priest, Parish week-ends to the Redemptorist Monastery at Ballarat were organised. These week-ends catered for all ages - babies to the 80 year olds. The time at Ballarat could be either a social holiday away, or else participation in the discussion sessions structured to deepen our Christian beliefs, and to get to know each other better. Then in 1984 Neighbourhood groups were established to further the Parish's mission to the area. Then in 1984 Parish Neighbourhood groups began, and these have become a means to mission into the area and develop a sense of church at the local street level.



After the resignation of Pat Lawson as Parish President in 1986, the parish held a Reflection Day to consider:

- "where we have been"
- "how to move into the immediate future"

From this day's deliberations Pastoral Priorities were identified and a Parish Co-ordinating Team elected. The Parish still continues this process in order to reflect on the direction of its mission and ministry.

## *St. Joseph's Primary School and Sisters of Charity*

The Sisters of Charity came to St. Joseph's School Collingwood in 1891. From 1868 until 1891 it had been operational with lay staff and administration. The staff at the school has been both religious and lay from 1891 until the present time.

A specific aspect of the Sisters of Charity's involvement has been their response to need, and the dynamic and real living out of their 4th vow of Service to the Poor. The Sisters have always been committed to equality of opportunity for everyone and the challenge has been, and still is present to provide that.

In the early days pupils were given every opportunity to become competent in basic skills, and were also offered a wide range of cultural subjects as seen on a 1906 Application for Registration:

" Religion, English, Arithmetic,  
Geography, Drawing, Music,  
Science, Kindergarten, Plain and Art  
Needlework, Singing, Drill."

The other aspect of their Service of the Poor which characterized the early years of ministry was the home visitations. This was done mainly on Sunday mornings and, less frequently, after school. This was called "on the mission" and was very characteristic of the spirit of the foundress - Mary Augustine Arkenhead.

During the Depression Years a kitchen with soup, cocoa, bread and butter was set up for the needy. It was also necessary to find clothes for many children too. This is still done today - especially for the refugee children.

In the 1950s a Silver Circle Club was formed to help pay the salaries of the lay staff. For 2 shillings a week people had the chance of winning 5 pounds or 4 prizes of 10 shillings with a major draw every 5 weeks for a prize of 100 pounds. Many went from door to door to collect these donations, and this club helped finance the school up till State Aid in the 1970s.

The enrollment pattern has changed over the past 100 years. In 1935 the maximum enrollment was reached - 560 pupils. The post World War 2 wave of migration has significantly altered the personality of the local area and the school. At present the current enrollment of 170 children include 21 different nationalities. In recent years the school has been administered by a religious principal and a predominantly lay staff.



## Good Shepherd Convent

Older than the parish and very much part of this 100 years history of St. Joseph's has been the Good Shepherd Convent in Abbotsford. At the request of the Bishop of Melbourne, Dr. J.A. Goold to the Mother General of the Good Shepherd Order in Angers, France, in 1863 four sisters were sent to Melbourne to assist the many destitute women and forsaken girls. After a voyage lasting 127 days the Sisters arrived in Australia on 24/6/1863. Warmly welcomed by the Bishop and the Sisters of Mercy, they stayed with the latter while searching for a suitable property. It was not till they inspected an abandoned property three miles from the town, which had been untenanted for two years, that the Superior, Mother Mary of St. Joseph Doyle, decided that it could be repaired and made suitable for their work. It consisted of a large dwelling house, five lofty rooms, a veranda all around and a tempting garden on the Yarra banks. It was built by an American, Mr Moss, who named it 'Abbotsford' and was designed as a river bank hotel. Mr. Moss met with financial difficulties and had to abandon the unfinished project.

The Sisters moved in immediately and before the year was out they had in their care 10 girls. The Convent was asked by the Government to take Reformatory girls to avoid sending them to gaol and the Sisters gave up their sleeping quarters to them while a wooden building was erected. A live-in Industrial school was established for these girls. In 1865 the adjoining St Helliers property was bought and there was more building to provide accomodation for the women coming in increasing

numbers, providing a dormitory, Bake house and a laundry.

Mother Mary of St. Joseph Doyle died on 13/6/1869 at the age of 34. As a memorial to her the Church was built in 1871. Designed by a Mr. J. Kelly it was modelled on the church at the Mother House in Angers, France. There were several later additions.

Life was very difficult for the Sisters and several died very young. However the numbers of girls coming to them continued to increase. A lot of alterations and building took place over the next decades. In 1874 a school for younger girls was started. Many reports from the Government welfare groups, from Catholic Welfare and others reported in glowing terms of the work the Sisters were doing. In 1877 the newspaper columnist, Julian Thomas who wrote the Vagabond Papers reported on the work of the Good Shepherds and was full of praise. This was high praise from him as he was decidedly anti-Catholic in all of his writings. He reported that there were 136 women in the asylum, and 238 children at the Industrial school.

In 1875 with the Government Education Acts there was a strong push for the Church to set up Catholic primary schools and to assist this the Convent opened St. Euphrasia's day school in 1879. This was to cater for the children living in the Abbotsford area. The convent was helping the local area not just with providing the sacraments, but with schooling and with a lot of pastoral care. For many years they also helped support the Parish Priests.

As well as St. Euphrasias school there were other sections: St Joseph's and St Mary's



section catered for orphans and children whose families were experiencing problems of various sorts. These children were placed in the care of the Sisters by the State Welfare office, by Catholic Welfare or by private individuals. Sacred Heart section was for older girls and women, many of whom were wards of the State or were sent to Abbotsford as an alternative to prison. In 1883 the Good Shepherds opened the Oakleigh convent and institution for girls, and the Wards of the state were moved down there.

By the turn of the century there were over 1000 people living in the convent. A music section was added to the school for those who wanted special tuition in music. Then in 1930 Form 3 and 4 were added to the Commercial school. After World War 2 with the big increase in migration into Australia there was a large influx of girls from migrant backgrounds.

In 1963 the centenary of the Good Shepherds, Abbotsford was celebrated. It is estimated that over 30,000 girls had been cared for by the nuns over this period.

In recent times far reaching policy decisions in regard to methods of care and in apostolic works have led to the Sisters being more visible in the district. The establishment of the Good Shepherd Youth and Family Care services in Johnston St. is one example.



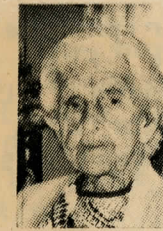
*The Collingwood Y.C.W Ball 1964*



*Collingwood Y.C.W Under 15 Football Team 1962*



## Memories



Ellen Stone

(Nee Currie)



First Communion 1937



First Communion 1985

I was born in Collingwood in the year 1892. The memories I have of St. Joseph's Parish were that I started school at St. Joseph's but after six months or so I wanted to go to the Good Shepherd Convent school where I spent the rest of my student days. I always attended Mass at St. Joseph's with my mother.

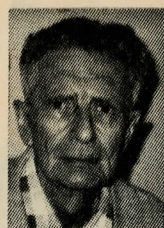
The most vivid memory I have of the Parish was one Sunday my mother attended the early Mass and I came to the 11 O'clock, (Fr. O'Brien was the Parish Priest at the time) and this dreadful parishioner (I have forgotten his name) used to have the "plate" as you entered. I did not have any money with me that day and when I could not contribute he told me to go around to the "paupers" door - that is the one opposite to our entrance today. Of course I would not comply with his request and so walked all the way over to St. John's East Melbourne. They were the "bad old days".

When I grew up I met my future husband Les Stone and Fr. Hickey, who was curate at that time, converted Les, and we were married at St. Joseph's in 1917. I have lived in Collingwood all my life and raised three boys, Lesley, Leo and Ronald who were baptised, recieved first communion and confirmation, and Les and Ronnie



were married here. Les entered the Christian Brothers.

During my time in the Parish the Parish Priests I can remember were Frs Phelan, O'Brien, Keating, Rohan, Hoare, Lombard, Bailey, Sowersby, McNamara, Bainbridge, and of course Fr. Michael Casey our present pastor.



*Bill Jackson*

I was born in Collingwood in 1912 and lived in Down St. and I have lived all my life in this area.

The first I can remember of St. Joseph's was when I went to school and started in the A.B.C. class at the back of the church alongside the Men's Club rooms. The Men's Club was a great asset to the Parish. They ran many picture nights in the city theatres, dance nights in the hall and also helped to run a Queen Carnival. All the money raised went to the Parish.

There was a St. Joseph's Choir which was a very fine choir conducted by Mr. Tom Nagle. Mrs Trapp played the organ at the 11 O'clock Mass. In those days the organ had to be pumped so the air would go through the organ. Two boys did all the pumping until the Parish Priest made it electric. Also in the church were two fine paintings, one over each side door of the church. One was The Last Supper and the other was Our Lord Carrying the Cross. The size of both pictures was about three feet six in length by two feet six in width. They were

admired by many people who came to the church. The pictures of Stations of the Cross were beautiful paintings.

The boys and girls went to 9.30 a.m. Mass on Sundays. After Mass the boys went around to the lecture hall to have instruction on the Gospel of the day by Brother McDonald. The girls went to the school room for their instruction.

On the first Friday of the month the boys from the Brothers school at Abbotsford would march to St. Joseph's to hear and receive the Blessing at the Benediction. The Brothers told us it was a good exercise for the St. Patrick's Day march.

May our Lord bless all the priests and nuns and the older generations for the work they have done for the younger people of St. Joseph's Parish. I also wish to thank the committee who work hard to keep the fine old church. It really is.



*Mildred Nagle*

I was born in Collingwood and the first encounter that I can remember with St. Joseph's Parish was the day I started school in 1926. I can remember my teacher, Miss Nellie Hayes who taught the infants, and Sister Angela of the Sisters of Charity who taught the 2nd grade - we were all in one big room and used to alternate with what was a lecture hall for our lessons. Sister Josepha was the head nun and



there were only two lay teachers. I had my first piano lesson at the school in the room behind the Office which is now Sr. Laureen's Office. I suppose we were lucky in those days to have a nun who only taught music

Besides our academic lessons we had physical culture - this teacher also taught the boys and girls to dance the polka, Parma waltz and the Alberts which was a dance for four boys and four girls in a set. This training was for our annual school ball which was held at the Collingwood Town Hall. The children would be on until 10 p.m. and then go into supper. The adults (teenagers and parents) would ballroom dance until 11.30 p.m. to a very good orchestra.

The primary school went to the 8th grade with an examination called the Merit Certificate - an important exam in those days. The Catholics had to take the exam at the nearest State School which in our case was the Cromwell St. school (now known as the Collingwood Education Centre).

After leaving secondary school at about 16 I used to go to the parish dances, and I joined the Children of Mary Sodality - that was for young single girls. We recieved holy Communion on the 3rd Sunday of the month, wearing a blue cloak and white veil. Many girls on their wedding day would be robed at the entrance of the church in a blue satin cloak and walk down the aisle with the Children of Mary as a guard of honour. The president would remove the cloak just as the wedding ceremony started and would cross to the statue on the right side of the church and lay the cloak at the feet of Our Lady.

Most of the boys in the parish belonged to the Men's Club where billiards etc were played, and the Catholic Young Men's Society who were active in sport - football teams, cricket teams, table tennis nights, tennis, debating teams. There was a very flourishing tennis club where one or two were almost Davis Cup standard. Many League footballers belonged to the parish;

Collingwood: Jack Beveridge

Jack Regan (the best full back who ever played the game according to Fr. Max Day.)

Keith Stackpole (sen.)

Jack and Vin Dougherty.

Charley Utting

Richmond: Philip Nagle (the best rover ever according to myself!!!)

North Melb: Dick Abikair.

Fitzroy: Kevin Murray.

St. Joseph's always had a splendid choir which sang at 11 O'clock Mass. Of course every Mass was sung in Latin and sometimes Gregorian Chant.

In 1942 when Australians were conscripted for World War 2 most of the boys were called up and for the next 5 years the parish was not the same. This seemed to split it up. At this time Fr. Lombard started the Young Christian Workers Movement and the girls already had the National Catholic Girls Movement (later this organisation combined with the Y.C.W.) Most of the boys returned from the war and married and moved to other suburbs.

By this time the parish was in need of funds to pay the school teachers - State Aid had not been introduced. So in order to raise money we would run a Queen Carnival and this created a great deal of social life and we had



a lot of fun. It was the older parishioners who organised and worked tirelessly for these charities. However there was a great mixture of old and young parishioners which seems to have been the norm at St. Joseph's right through even to today. The only difference is - I belong to the older generation now!!!



*Pat Lawson*

Right through my memories are parish picnics of one sort or another. As a child we had picnics on the bay steamer to Mordialloc. In later years there were more to the bayside, to the snow, to the Dandenongs etc. During Fr. McNamara's time, picnics started up once more and by the time of Fr. Bainbridge we were hiring a country train and travelling to Bacchus Marsh for the day - great fun.

As post-Vatican ideas developed I was thrilled to be able to participate in adult faith education courses of one sort or another - all very exciting and fulfilling and emanating from our parish. Then there was the teamwork and sharing of preparing for the two big parish reunions in 1967/1970s; and later on, the full ordination ceremonies of Fr. Max Kabery held "in toto" at St. Joseph's.

Dances, both big and small, also stand out, especially the first few we had when Fr. Bainbridge was here. We hadn't had such things for a long time so we really enjoyed the first ones. I loved, and still love today, the idea of the parish end of year thank you Mass

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and barbecue Fr. Bainbridge introduced and it is great to participate in this each year.

Another treasure to blossom over the years, especially after Vatican 2, is the friendship and the welcoming atmosphere of the parish. There is such a warm family atmosphere not often experienced elsewhere.

Schoolwise my memories are of -

- Miss Hayes taking us infant school children through our "sing song" alphabet and our tables. These were shown on great big charts.

- my welcome back to school after my "diphtheria" spell away in Fairfield hospital.

- the excitement of the school balls and concerts at the Collingwood Town Hall.

- first communion day.

- the day I was told I had won a scholarship to go to high school.



*Maria Iozzi*

When my parents and I first moved into Abbotsford in 1949, having previously come from Mt. Erica (Gippsland), and then from a farm in Wandin (near Silvan), the Parish of Collingwood housed very few Italian families, but in the years to come that was to change dramatically.

The late forties and early fifties started an era of immigration. At the end of World War 2, Italy was experiencing great hardship so it became imperative for many people to leave



a lot of fun. It was the older parishioners who  
their homeland in search of a better life for themselves and their families. In most cases it was the head of the family or their adult children who took this step to come to this unknown and far away country.

Victoria Dock and later Station Pier hosted the many arrivals of thousands of Italians. Many of them came with government assistance and were housed in Immigration Hostels eg. Bonegilla etc.. Others were called to this country by either friends or relatives who had come out in earlier years, and who were now established in Australia (such as my parents), guaranteeing them lodgings and assistance in finding work. Being only a temporary arrangement, people started looking for work and better accomodation.

In those years (1950 onwards) Collingwood had developed into a great industrial area providing opportunities for job seekers. Because of its location and the many factories in the area, Collingwood was chosen not only to work in but also to live in.

Settling in this country was by no means easy. These migrants were confronted with numerous difficulties, the greatest being language. The majority of these people came here with great debts incurred by their passage and also families to support back home. This meant that they had to work hard, take any job, learn new trades if they were to succeed in making a new life for themselves, and succeed they did. With plenty of determination and perseverance they paid their debts and gradually brought out their families to be once more reunited with them. Once out here it then became nessesary for both husband and wife to work if they were to establish themselves into a home. Mothers had to leave their young

children with neighbours or friends so they could go out to work, older children were sent to school, either to St. Joseph's or to St. Euphrasia's.

St. Joseph's Church played a great part in fulfilling the spiritual and sacramental needs of these people. The Capuchin Franciscan Fathers, Fr. Nazzari Mammeli, Fr. Paolo Bazzoli, Fr. Angelo Simonetti, Fr. Cassiano Iemmi and many more played a great role with their assistance to the Italian community in Australia, and in a very special way to our Italian community at St. Joseph's, Collingwood through their weekly Sunday Mass at 9.00 a.m. which commenced in 1954 and continued for many years after. The Mass, the sermons and the Sacraments all had great meaning to them because it was in their own language and with their presence and general assistance, the Fathers gave them a sense of hope and belonging. Also the coming together of the people instilled and strengthened in them a sense of unity.

An Italian choir was established about 1955 of several young men and women. The music and the hymns helped create the atmosphere of the Masses back home.

As the community expanded many of the younger men and women eventually married. I can remember many of these weddings, many of them (our friends) being performed here at St. Joseph's by the Capuchin Fathers and many during the years between 1954 and 1959. Once married the majority of these couples started to move out of Collingwood and into the then newly built areas such as Reservoir, Thomastown, Lalor, Doncaster, Bulleen etc.



In the time of Fr. Sowersby (1956 - 1966) and Fr. McNamara (1966 - 1974) we had a continuity of Italian speaking assistant priests in our parish - Fr. Heriot, Fr. McGrath, Fr. Kenny and Fr. Cronan. This continued and sustained the link between the Church and the Italian community making it no longer necessary for the services of the Capuchin Fathers. Also by 1962 their own shrine at Hawthorn was now completed and that required them there full time.

My aunt Nunziata Guglielmi remembers most vividly the beautiful Benediction services on Sunday evenings, the Feast of the Crowning of Our Lady, the first Sunday in May, and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on the 8th December. On one occasion in particular Fr. O'Connor arranged for some hymns to be sung in Italian. The Church was always full to capacity for these festivities.

In those years St. Joseph's boasted of a nice and functional hall and it was constantly booked for many parties and wedding receptions of which I attended a few. Some of our present parishioners to be married at St. Joseph's are Anna and Guiseppe Del Monte 1955, Guiseppe and Guisepina Marinelli 1957, Sam and myself 1961, and Elido and Iginia Di Blasio 1963.

Through progress and the redevelopment of roadways many industries and families were forced to relocate. Collingwood has seen many migrant faces after the war years right up to this present day and St. Joseph's has played a big role in bringing together the many communities in practising and living their faith.



*Picnic to Emerald Lake, 1948*



*Parish Weekend to Ballarat, 1966*





*Knights of the Blessed Sacrament 1930*



*Parish girls' Easter Camp at Flinders, 1946*



*Kim Tran*

Before 1975 I was a high school teacher and so was my husband. Our life was simple but happy because everything around us was intimate and simple. Unfortunately in April 1975 South Vietnam fell into the hands of the Communists and our lives changed drastically. As a Catholic intellectual my husband was sent to a re-education camp. I was left behind with my two month old baby girl. I was still allowed to teach but was assigned to work in a province 100 km away from my home.

I worked six days a week. Many Sundays I could not rest or go to church because they were "Socialist Labour Days" on which all teachers had to work on a farm. I was forced to teach differently from what I had learnt. What the new school wanted us to teach was Marxism, Leninism and the "outstanding" communist society.

A year later my husband was released, and on the same day I was dismissed from work. We reunited with tears and in great apprehension. How could we survive in a society full of hatred and discrimination? How could we find a job with our "unclean" backgrounds? The Church was a great consolation. However it was being persecuted and harrassed by the communist police.

The suffering and the despair were beyond our imagination. We could not wait to die in such a society so my husband thought of a second escape. His first escape from the communist regime in North Vietnam to the South was in 1954. We left Vietnam in a small unseaworthy boat with 30 other people. I was at the time three months pregnant. After four or five hours on the seas our boat was caught by a



police ship. All male people in my boat were forced to transfer to the ship. I was very frightened and thought that it was the end. My two year old son Hieu cried and called "Dad! Dad!" I kept praying silently. A miracle came to us: the communist police sent all our men back to my boat and allowed us to go freely after having been bribed.

After many days and nights on the high seas, oil, food and water ran out. We were so tired. The children were nearly dead of thirst. Luckily a Thai boat saved us. They gave us water, food and oil and directed us to an oil rig where we stayed one day before we were sent to a refugee camp in Thailand. I gave birth to a baby girl Phuong there, and after eight months in two refugee camps, my family was accepted and sent to Australia in 1982. Two months after our arrival we got a flat and then a house from the Housing Commission in the Collingwood area.

Living in this country my family had been faced with both happy things and unhappy things. As for the unhappy things, cultural shock, misunderstanding and discrimination have been the major ones. Language and employment were also great obstacles. In our very first months we felt very isolated and experienced different types of discrimination. One morning, for example, my husband, four children and I went shopping for the first morning in Australia. In seeing new things we happily talked to each other. Suddenly an old man walked across, looked at us angrily and said a lot of things. We did not understand what he said but through his rude attitude we could guess they were nasty things. We all kept quiet and went home with many things in mind.

Apart from these unhappy things, in the Collingwood parish we also met many good hearted people. When we first arrived we didn't have enough warm clothes. My children caught cold and coughed day and night. One Tuesday morning my husband and I hesitantly walked to St. Joseph's cottage and met a Sister in a white blouse. With a clement attitude and great love, she gave us confidence. This was Sister Margaret. She came there every Tuesday to meet the aged in the parish and help needy people. In the afternoon of that day an aged lady with glasses came to my place to visit us and gave us clothes, blankets and household items. Her name was Mrs. Oats. Since then she has looked after my family like a mother to her children. At that time my English was still very poor, but strangely she understood almost everything I said to her. We loved her dearly. My children called her "grandmother" and she was happy to hear that.

I will also never forget one winter afternoon when my second son had an operation in the Royal Children's Hospital. Mrs. Oats came to my place and consoled me. She helped look after my children while I was at the hospital. Mrs. Oats came to my family as a strong moral support. With her love we have found the real meaning of life - to live is to help one another. This is the lesson we have learnt from Mrs. Oats and many other good hearted people in Collingwood parish. Nearly all new immigrants to Collingwood recieved help from Mrs. Oats, Sister Margaret and Fr. Casey. Our very special thanks to the people who taught us the real meaning of love.

Through my years in Collingwood I have noticed a great difference between the church in Vietnam and the church here. The church in Vietnam had more children. Each time the



parents went to church all members of the family joined them.

Through my experience the religious life has saved me from desperate moments and helped me to get where I am today. The value and dignity of a human being cannot be separated from his or her religious beliefs. I strongly believe that and try hard in my life to pass on this belief to my children. I wish I could convey this message to the young Catholics here in Collingwood on the Centennial Anniversary of the establishment of this parish.

As you know, my family has settled well in this country now. We have found a happy life here. But our relatives, our friends and our people are still humiliated in Vietnam. In the Christian spirit, please pray for them. They have been struggling every second against totalitarianism to keep their beliefs alive. Our deepest gratitude to all you in Collingwood parish.

## Anecdotes



as remembered by

Margaret Oats

In the early 50s a certain parishioner had a responsible position with Woolworths who operated a store in Smith St. Small boys do not appear to have changed greatly and several were apprehended helping themselves to sweets and small toys. Horror of horrors, all these children came from St. Joseph's School. Presumably the children from other schools were more experienced. The parishioner in question happened to be the only Catholic on the staff and somewhat aggrieved by the ribbing of the other staff members, decided to enlist the help of the P.P. His Reverence happily agreed to assist. On Monday morning the school in general, and Grade 4 in particular were given a talk. At the conclusion the good Fr. then said: "Come out the boys who were stealing in Woolworths." Imagine his consternation when all the Grade 4 boys came forwards.

A new P.P., a football fan (Richmond) prefaced his Saturday evening Mass greeting with a lament - his team had lost. A well known lay parishioner, a talented dancer, was annoyed because she wished to dance the light fantastic at Collingwood Town Hall's Saturday evening Old Time Dance. She quite firmly interrupted the priest telling him "We are here for Mass Father, not the football replay!!" Mass commenced immediately.



A curate in the parish - many years ago - decided to encourage football in order to use up the surplus energy of the youth of the parish. A pre-requisite to play was attendance at Sunday Mass. As a result one half of the church was full of boys from 10 to 20, complete with jumpers, boots and footballs. In the summer months quite a number were conspicuous by their absence.

A certain lady parishioner always sat in the same seat at mass, The Church was being painted and altered and the lady's usual spot was barricaded off. To our amazement come Sunday, our elderly friend with the agility of a mountain goat, clambered over scaffolding, bunting etc and sat in her usual spot. No one quite knows how she managed it.

A lady parishioner made a donation to the St. Vincent de Paul for the whole of her life from the week she commenced work. When only a child her parents had purchased a piano for her, and then, her father died unexpectedly a few weeks later leaving a large family. The Society made the payments on the piano and the Sisters at the convent taught the little girl for love. When she commenced work her mother told her how the piano was acquired and asked her to promise to make a donation each pay day. Even at 78 this lady still made weekly donations from her pension.

## List of Parish Priests

Rev. P.I. Aylward	Oct 1887 - Jan 1889
C. Sheahan	Feb 1889 - Jan 1891
J.E. Stephens	Feb 1891 - May 1891
R. Benson	June 1891 - Sept 1891
P. Kernan	Oct 1891 - Sept 1896
P. Phelan	Aug 1896 - Feb 1900
E. O'Brien	Mar 1900 - Aug 1913
E.J. Keating	Aug 1913 - Jan 1926
A. Rohan	Apr 1926 - June 1938
N. Hoare	July 1938 - Aug 1942
F. Lombard	Sept 1942 - Jan 1955
J. Bailey	Jan 1955 - Oct 1956
P. Sowersby	Oct 1956 - July 1966
J. McNamara	Aug 1966 - Mar 1974
W. Bainbridge	Apr 1974 - Jan 1981
M. Casey	Jan 1981 -



# List of Assistant Priests

Rev R Benson	1887 - 1890	B. Geoghan	1923 - 1925
J Healy	1890 - 1891	J. O'Keefe	1925 - 1927
T. Quinn	1891 - 1892	J. Tuohy	1927 - 1927
G. Byrne	1892 - 1895	P. Lyons	1927 - 1929
J. Byrne	1895 - 1896	D. OCallaghan	1929 - 1933
M. Heany	1896 - 1897	M. O'Sullivan	1932 - 1936
L. McCarter	1897 - 1897	B. Day	1937 - 1940
J. Egan	1897 - 1900	J. Bracken	1940 - 1942
J. Shiel	1901 - 1903	L. Ryan	1942 - 1947
P. Vaughan	1902 - 1902	J. O'Neill	1945 - 1947
W. Mangan	1902 - 1904	P. O'Gorman	1947 - 1951
F. Merner	1904 - 1910	J. Brosnan	1948 - 1949
J. Carroll	1904 - 1906	G. Maltby	1949 - 1952
M. Finan	1906 - 1908	C. Cerini	1951 - 1952
P. Boyle	1908 - 1909	T. Andrews	1952 - 1955
M. Flannery	1908 - 1912	E. Loocham	1954 - 1954
T. OSullivan	1910 - 1911	P. O'Gorman	1955 - 1956
A. May	1911 - 1911	J. Nippard	1956 - 1960
P. Nicholson	1911 - 1914	M. McGrath	1960 - 1965
M. Hayes	1912 - 1914	M. Heriot	1962 - 1964
F. Hickey	1914 - 1920	G. O'Connor	1964 - 1966
J. O'Ryan	1914 - 1915	P. Kenny	1965 - 1970
J. Murray	1915 - 1916	P. James	1967 - 1972
C. Donovan	1916 - 1916	L. Saleeba	1970 - 1972
L. Kett	1917 - 1919	M. Wheeler	1972 - 1975
C. Hanrahan	1919 - 1922	K. Cronan	1972 - 1975
F. Greenan	1920 - 1921	D. Sheehan	1975 - 1976
T. Ryan	1921 - 1923	P. Alexander	1976 - 1978
T. Considine	1922 - 1926	Bart San	1979 - 1986
		J. O'Rourke	1986 -



