

Speaking at the centenary celebrations at St Joseph's Collingwood last week, Archbishop Frank Little told a personal story about the strength of feeling generated by the renowned loyalty of the Collingwood football team:

"When people ask me what team I follow, I always reply that I barrack for two teams. The Bombers, and the team playing Collingwood."

His forthright admission was well received by the overflow congregation on the evening of Wednesday 28 October, exactly one hundred years after the parish was opened by **Archbishop Carr** and **Fr Aylward** was installed as the first parish priest. (Masses had begun at Collingwood 26 years before that as part of the cathedral parish).

The archbishop praised the "special loyalty" of the people who live in Collingwood but pointed out that it has not been restricted to the football team. It grew out of the high percentage of Irish Catholic migrants in the area, he said.

Furthermore, in his judgment, St Joseph's was "right up near the top of the ladder" in the task of making the parish a sign of the

Archbishop praises Collingwood loyalty at parish centenary

By VAL NOONE

presence of God in the world.

The archbishop went on to preach on the Gospel reading of the day about the Samaritan leper who, out of 10 cured, was the only one who came back to say thanks.

His sermon highlighted the importance of thanksgiving by pointing out that at the Last Supper when Our Lord "knew that his enemies were making ready to arrest him, the thought which filled his heart at the first Mass of Christendom was an overwhelming impulse of gratitude."

Noting the role played by successive waves of migrants, the archbishop remarked: "Just imagine how many different languages have been heard in this church, and realise what a remarkable contribution it has made to the linking of the human family gathered from the four corners of the globe."

The singing for the centenary Mass was shared between the congregation and two choirs, one of "Aus-



• **Fr Michael Casey** with 95-year-old parishioner **Mrs Ellen Stone** and **Archbishop Little** at the centenary celebrations at Collingwood.

sies" (conducted by **Cecil Cox**), the other of Vietnamese-Australians. Both choirs sang superbly, hymns old and new.

It was fitting, however, that one of the Scripture readings was spoken with the accent of Ireland, by **Pat Price**, mother of eight and native of Armagh. And that **Simon Dinh**, the president of the Vietnamese John Hoan Community, gave a speech of thanks during Mass and made a presentation to the parish priest, **Fr Michael Casey**.

A 95-year-old parishioner, **Mrs Ellen Stone**, proposed the toast to the parish at the supper after Mass. Flowers for the church were given and arranged by the nearby Anglican parish of St Phillip.

The centenary celebrations lasted a week. They began with a Mass of thanksgiving celebrated by the regional vicar, **Bishop Eric Perkins**, which was followed by a luncheon served in the parish grounds.

There was also a display of memorabilia and photographs at the Good Shepherd Convent, Abbotsford; and an open day (and rededication) at the parish primary school. The week ended with the centenary

ball in the Collingwood Town Hall.

Bishop Perkins said that the history of St Joseph's parish was "summed up with almost uncanny accuracy by the opening words of the Second Vatican Council's document on The Church in the Modern World.

He quoted those words: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."

Bishop Perkins spoke of some of the joys and griefs of the parish: the weddings, baptisms, and funerals. He mentioned also the depressions of the 1890s and 1930s which affected so many people in Collingwood.

He startled many of the younger members of the congregation by recalling that five hundred young men from Collingwood were killed in action in World War I.

Referring further to World War II, Korea and Vietnam he went on to remark that "in the light of the dreadful

draining loss of so many young lives in twentieth century wars, it is not surprising that in later years the peace movement has thrived in this parish."

The whole celebration, as both bishops remarked, combined profound respect for tradition with genuine enthusiasm for facing the future. The centenary committee emphasised gratitude for the pioneers, and for today's older generation, as well as a willingness to listen to the young. A sign of hope.

This sense of time past, and its power in time present and time future, was captured in the 44-page booklet on the history of the parish prepared by the committee and written by **John Lay**. (See page 14)

As befits the eve of Australia's bicentenary, the booklet puts the parish in a perspective of 40,000 years of prior human settlement. Hundreds of copies were sold and some are still available from the parish house for \$3 (includes postage).

The local Member of Parliament, **Mr Gerry Hand**, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, attended the thanksgiving Mass and joined Bishop Perkins in leading a community planting of a memorial tree.

For a financially battling parish, it was a big achievement to provide hospitality to some six hundred guests at the garden party after the Sunday Mass, and a champagne supper on the Wednesday night.

Parishioners and their friends rallied behind the centenary committee's call for help. And even the two brewing giants, CUB and Swan, assisted by donating refreshments. Wedgewoods helped out with cakes including a decorated anniversary one.

The permanent display of extraordinary photographs and other memorabilia at the Heritage Room, Good Shepherd Convent, Abbotsford was opened daily. In addition, for the Sunday function, Catherine Ryan arranged a display of

photos by parishioners which sparked many of those "do you remember when" conversations.

At the open day at the school, run by the Sisters of Charity, **Mgr James Murray** unveiled a plaque marking both the centenary and the completion of the six-year long Commonwealth funded refurbishment. He went to school at St Joseph's exactly 50 years ago.

Tickets for the Centenary Ball were sold out within days of going on sale. An anonymous senior parishioner donated the cost of the Denis Farrington Band who provided fine old-time dance music.

From the first number, a *Pride of Erin*, there was no problem getting people up to dance. Collingwood City Council, represented by the Mayor, **Cr Jenny Backholer**, donated the use of the Town Hall. And **Mildred Nagle** coordinated a fine floorshow by parishioners to entertain us during supper.

Planning for the week-long centenary celebrations started 12 months ago. The centenary planning group consisted of **Fr Casey PP**, **Sr Laureen Dixon RSC**, **Betty Gray**, **Maria and Sam Iozzi**, **Patricia Lawson**, **John Lay**, **Les Lillyst**, **Bob McNamara**, **Bob Massey**, **Andrew Mountford** (chairman), **Mildred Nagle**, **Margaret Oats**, **Sr Angela O'Donoghue RGS**, **Pat Price**, **Sr Veronica Ryan RGS**, and **Claire Tuke**.

Funds for the whole celebration were the biggest initial headache but a special parish centenary raffle of a bundle of manchester raised \$1400 which was ample.

Archbishop Little paid special tribute to the parish priest, **Fr Casey**; and the congregation responded by giving their pastor a standing ovation.

A score of past priests of the parish attended the week's functions. And at the ball, a flyer was circulated to advertise a forthcoming booklet about the life and death of one of them who died recently, the dynamic young **Fr Peter James**.

• **Val Noone** is a parishioner of St Joseph's who discovered after moving into the parish 16 years ago that his grandfather was born and baptised there more than a century before.