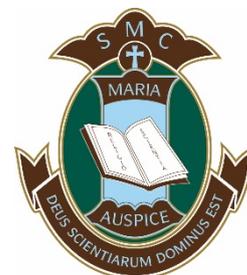


MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 9 February 2018



ST MARY'S
COLLEGE

Educational pioneer's 150-year legacy set in stone

A life-size sculpture of Nano Nagle, the foundational leader of the Presentation Sisters, will be unveiled and blessed at a ceremony held at St Mary's College today (Friday 9 February 2018).

The 1.5-metre installation of the Irish-born woman, famously known as 'the lady with the lantern', was commissioned by the College to commemorate the school's 150th anniversary in 2018.

The sculpture is the work of Tasmanian artist, Ben Tolhurst, who carved the figure using dolerite (blue stone) for the face and body, South Australian marble for her lantern and granite for the base, with St Mary's College 2017 Head Prefect, Holly Andree being the subject of Nano's face.

It is the first full-bodied sculpture created by the self-taught sculptor, as well as the first that he has produced using dolerite, which he sourced from Murdunna in Tasmania's south-east.

"Dolerite is a very hard, compact rock. Most artists choose to sculpt in sandstone or wood, which are obviously a lot easier on tools and require much less physical effort, but I enjoyed the challenge of transforming a five-tonne rock into Nano – I think she polished up quite nicely," he said.

Mr Tolhurst went through approximately 35-40 diamond blades when working on the 2.2-tonne statue, which took a year-and-a-half to complete.

St Mary's College Principal, Helen Spencer said the sculpture was a special tribute to the school's establishment in 1868 by the Presentation Sisters, the Catholic order founded by Nano.

"The story of St Mary's College can be traced back to January 6, 1868, when nine members of the Presentation Order formally took possession of their convent in Harrington Street, Hobart," she said.

"On February 3, 1868 the little school of Mount St Mary's, as we were then known, received its first pupils, making it the first Presentation School in Australia."

Born in 1718, Nano was best known for her courageous work in secretly operating schools in Cork, Ireland for deprived Catholic children for whom education was illegal at the time.

Ms Spencer said although the sisters founded the College a century-and-a-half-ago, Nano's spirit and tradition continued to inspire St Mary's.

"Nano is regarded as one of the greatest pioneers of Catholic education in Ireland, where she is well known and widely acclaimed," she said.

"Nano's heart was always centred on those with less, and her work did not end with her efforts in education. It continued in her visits to the disadvantaged families in their homes at night via the light of her lantern in the dangerous back streets of Cork."

A series of leadlight windows installed in the school's chapel will also be blessed on Friday 9 February as part of a number of initiatives to mark the sesquicentenary of St Mary's College in 2018.

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One Face Beyond...

Ms Spencer said she was looking forward to welcoming the many people with links to the College's rich history to the celebrations.

Anniversary events kicked off earlier this month with a staff reunion attended by current and previous staff members of the College.

Celebrations continue on Saturday 17 March with an Irish-themed College community event featuring a program of old-fashioned games, colonial dress-ups and a 150th birthday cake, with a College mass and anniversary gala dinner to be held on Saturday 12 May.

"The gala weekend of May 12 will provide a wonderful opportunity for St Mary's alumni to participate in tours of the College and hold their own reunion events," Ms Spencer said.

A special highlight of the school's 150th anniversary celebrations is the production of a commemorative book.

Centring on faces of the past 150 years, the book shares the story of St Mary's College and profiles significant people who have made an impact on the St Mary's College community.

Details of upcoming anniversary events can be found on the St Mary's College website:
www.smc.tas.edu.au

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