

EDUCATION FEATURE

Educational pioneer's 150-year legacy set in stone



St Mary's College year three students Alice Duharte, left, Lucinda Washington and Evie Farrell pictured with the Nano Nagle sculpture, which was commissioned by the school to commemorate 150-years of Catholic education at St Mary's College.

A LIFE-size sculpture of Nano Nagle, the foundational leader of the Presentation Sisters, has been unveiled and blessed at a ceremony held recently at St Mary's College.

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.

It is the work of Tasmanian sculptor Ben Tolhurst, who carved the

2.2-tonne figure using dolerite sourced from Murdunna in Tasmania's south-east.

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 St Mary's College story can be traced back to 6 January 1868 when nine members of the Presentation Order formally took possession of their convent in Har-

ington Street, Hobart," she said.

"On 3 February 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 recognised 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 College.

"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 were also blessed as part of a number of initiatives to mark the sesquicentenary of St Mary's College in 2018.

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 commenced earlier in February with a staff reunion attended by current and previous staff members of the College.

Celebrations will continue on Saturday 17 March with an Irish-themed community 'Fun Day' featuring a program of old-fashioned games, colonial dress-ups, Irish music and dancing and a giant birthday cake.

A College mass and anniversary gala dinner will be held on Saturday 12 May at the Hotel Grand Chancellor.

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

Details of upcoming anniversary events can be found on the St Mary's College website at www.smc.tas.edu.au/150th-anniversary.

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