

St Mary's past and present staff celebrate 150 years of teaching

Celebrations for the 150th anniversary of St Mary's Catholic College in Hobart have begun with a gathering of past and present staff members at the college on February 3.

The first Presentation school in Australia, St Mary's was founded by Irish Presentation Sisters led by Mother Francis Xavier Murphy, sister of Tasmania's then-Archbishop Daniel Murphy, in response to a need for Catholic education.

Although the sisters arrived in Tasmania in 1866, February 3 marked the date when, in 1868, the college was first opened to students.

Principal Helen Spencer says that the heritage of the school is valued by the students.

"Our history is so much of who we are," she said.

In 2011 the college was

handed over to the Archdiocese but the Presentation Sisters continue to maintain strong links with the school community.

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"We invite the sisters to everything we celebrate, and they come and they are a real presence in our school – and they're treasured," Ms Spencer said.

A former student and teacher at St Mary's, Congregational leader of the Presentation Sisters in Tasmania Sr Gabrielle Morgan PBVM attended the staff reunion and says that the sisters are delighted with the staff at St Mary's.

"I feel very satisfied that

the purpose for which the college was set up is still being maintained today. Our purpose as Presentation Sisters has always been about providing a good education for students from all families," she said.

"We couldn't be happier or more satisfied with those who staff our college today," Sr Gabrielle said.

The Catholic faith, so valued by the school's founders, is still embedded in college life.

Each school day begins with prayer, school Masses are held periodically throughout the year, as well as weekly prayer and reflection services.

In May, the angelus bell is rung for students and staff to pause and pray.

Anne Warren (nee Maclean) of Hobart, was a teacher at St Mary's College approximately 40 years ago.



Past and present staff of St Mary's Catholic College gathered for a reunion at the college last weekend. Pictured: the teaching staff of 1962.

Mrs Warren, who taught Year 8 Geography/History and commercial subjects (typing, shorthand and leisure), said she was looking forward to "catching up with people and touring the college," which she said had a changed considerably since her last visit

to the school many years ago.

Eileen Lynch started teaching at St Mary's College in 1977 after arriving to Tasmania from South Africa.

"I got this job by fluke, and ended up teaching for approximately 21 years", the former English/History

teacher said.

"The girls whom I taught were certainly the highlight of my time here. They were such a lovely group of students," she said.

"It is wonderful to be able to reconnect with so many familiar faces."



Archivist Margaret Rootes with a display of St Mary's Catholic College uniforms.

Archives display a passion for school's history

A passion for the story of St Mary's Catholic College and an empty cottage has enabled the Tasmanian Catholic school's first archivist to create an enlightening and interactive display of its 150 year history.

Now in her fifth year as archivist, Margaret Rootes has transformed a cottage purchased by the college into a historical centre with displays of uniforms, prayer kneelers, and photographs of students and sisters.

Even part of the original dinner set of the college has been preserved.

With an emphasis on making the history experiential and tangible – especially for the many students who visit – one room has been set up complete with a bed and luggage to give an impression of what boarding at St Mary's would have been like.

"They always lie on the bed, and somebody plays with the doll and they move the cases around and try the hats

on. They love to come and try the uniforms on," she said.

A student at the school before returning later to teach, Mrs Rootes was approached after retiring from teaching and asked if she would establish the archives.

"I just always loved the history of the college," she said.

"The faith was all. It was about bringing people who had been hungering and thirsting for the Eucharist and for religious instruction."

Some of the items on display have come directly from the college, while others have been gifted by those who have been associated with the school. Even items as small as hat badges, or old invitations to dances, are gratefully accepted.

The archives will play an important role during the 150th anniversary celebrations of the school – capturing the story of the college as it unfolded during

the past century and a half.

Mrs Rootes says her favourite part of the school's history was the fact that the fees paid by St Mary's students were used to run a school for poorer children nearby called St Columba's.

"You had to have a bit of money to go to St Mary's and particularly to board, and out of the money they made from the boarders and the day scholars they kept St Columba's going," she said.

Mrs Rootes says that the religious focus of the education was 'front and centre'.

"The faith was all. It was about bringing people who had been hungering and thirsting for the Eucharist and for religious instruction," she said.

As part of the 150th anniversary celebrations, Mrs Rootes has been working on creating a book called *150 Faces* which will detail the personal stories of 150 people who have a connection to the college.

THE TASMANIAN BENEDICTINE COMMUNITY OF THE NOTRE DAME PRIORY

Benedictine brothers become a Public Association of Christ's Faithful

The Tasmanian Benedictine community of the Notre Dame Priory made a significant canonical step recently with the community and its statutes (which govern the brothers' monastic lives) now formally acknowledged by the Church as a Public Association of Christ's Faithful.

The step was made official by Archbishop Julian signing a 'Decree of Erection', as well as the community's statutes, a copy of which has been kept by the Archdiocese of Hobart.

Moderator of the Tasmanian Benedictines Fr Pius Mary Noonan says that it was an encouraging development for the community.

"It was very exciting for us all and very encouraging. Mainly because it was confirmation of what begun a year ago now, and it

came to confirm that what we are doing is good and acknowledged by the Church, and is very promising for the future," he said.

"It gives structure to our group and means that anybody that wants to enter

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the group – they are now entering a group that has an acknowledged identity and existence; acknowledged by the Catholic Church and as an association. We have statutes, so anyone who wants to enter the association – they know

what to expect."

Archbishop Julian said that becoming a Public Association was an appropriate step for the brothers.

"Fr Pius initially approached me about establishing a Benedictine community here in Tasmania and I was very, very happy with that prospect; in fact, I encouraged it," His Grace said.

"We now have a group of young men who have taken the habit, and prospect of others wanting to join them, so it was appropriate that we, the Archdiocese, recognise this community as a community in the Archdiocese."

The brothers are now living in Rhyndaston, where they are in the planning stage of constructing a monastery for their community.

Greater Hobart Catholic Education Review

The review into Catholic Education in the greater Hobart area is on-track, with consultants KPMG having completed a draft report entitled 'Current State Analysis and Findings', which was presented to steering committee members in December.

The Committee met in January this year to discuss

findings of the draft report, and to also receive and discuss submissions provided by Catholic schools, colleges and other stakeholders.

A further analysis of the 17 written submissions totalling 240 pages in length is complete. The submissions augment the valuable insights obtained from the 40 meetings conducted with

various stakeholders during November and December last year.

In the coming 4–6 weeks, the steering committee will work with KPMG through a systematic process of evaluating the wide range of options that all remain 'on-the-table' at this stage. The steering committee is expecting a draft report in March.