

# A Brief History

## **EARLY DAYS**

Catholics have lived in Templestowe since the early days of white settlement. They came from Ireland and were wood cutters, dairy farmers, hotel keepers and fruit growers.

The families drove in buggies to Mass at Heidelberg and children travelled there by horse drawn coach to St. Monica's [later St. John's] Primary School.

During the 1920s the orchards flourished and the families began to acquire trucks and cars. With the outbreak of World War 11, petrol was strictly rationed so Mass was celebrated each Sunday in the Templestowe Memorial Hall.

In 1946 an army hut, formerly used as a chapel by the American Forces at the Royal Park Military Camp was transported to two acres of land on the corner of Atkinson and Milne Streets which the Church had acquired in 1921. About fifty people attended Mass there but they retained strong ties to Heidelberg where Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, Funerals and most Weddings took place.

## **CHANGE**

Orchards were being sub-divided during the 1950s and the descendants of the early pioneers welcomed new parishioners to the little church.

In 1960 Templestowe became part of the new East Doncaster Parish which also included Bulleen, Doncaster and Donvale. Father Spillane, the Parish Priest lived at Blackburn and the only church buildings in the entire parish of 36 square miles were a church school at East Doncaster and little St. Kevin's.

Father Spillane introduced the first changes to the liturgy, he commenced a Catechetical Program and he set up a Sacrificial Giving Campaign. With the assistance of some local parishioners he purchased 17 acres in Herlihy's Rd. This would become the site for future parish buildings.

Templestowe was part of the new Bulleen Parish which was formed with Father Fraser as Parish Priest in 1963. Archbishop Knox blessed and opened the Church Hall in 1968 on the new land and St Kevin's Primary School commenced in 1970. The first Principal was Denise Morris, followed by Lindsay Castree.

Social life in the sixties and early seventies revolved around parish activities: fetes and other fund-raising events, the choir and the Majellan and Reading Groups.

## **THE NEW PARISH**

Templestowe became a Parish in 1971 and Father Charles McCann was appointed Parish Priest. The seventies were a time of tremendous growth with the building of the presbytery and the expansion of school buildings to cater for enrolments which reached a peak of 530 in 1975.

It was decided to put classrooms beneath the church and Jim Brazell who was in charge of building in the Archdiocese suggested that the school go into Open Education. 180 pupils were taught in this area which was built at the cost of \$34 000.

Enrolments continued to increase and a new building was designed specifically to cater for the cooperative teaching methods used in the school's child centred development program. This building cost \$258 000, having escalated by \$54 000, due to delays and the world monetary situation in 1973/74.

St. Kevin's Primary School was grouped into three teams. Under the leadership of Kaye Fox, the junior team, who taught ages 5 to 6 used the converted basement beneath the Church. The middle team, with ages 7 to 8

used the original single school building and the senior team, with ages 9 to 11 used the new senior building on the hill. In each team the teachers prepared together and shared responsibility for the whole group.

## **THE 1980S**

In the eastern section of the parish a unique venture was commenced. The Roman Catholic Church had bought 7.8 acres on Serpell's Road in 1964. Father McCann was approached by the State Education office to build a shared school on land owned by the Church, the State and the City of Doncaster and Templestowe.

St. Charles Borromeo Primary School was opened in 1983, with Sister Pauline Nicholson as the first Principal. It was part of Australia's first joint Catholic and State School. The State and the Catholic schools operated separately while sharing the Core Building. This building housed the Art Room, Library, Staff Room, Offices and Change Rooms. The building and its site were jointly funded by the State Government, the Parish of St. Kevin's and the local council which uses the change rooms and oval on the week-ends.

A feature of the school was the multi-age groupings. This had social benefits as well as the educational learning environment created by mixed abilities and mixed age groups. This philosophy was continued under the leadership of Maria Kirkwood from 1986 until 1993.

In 1984 a second Mass centre was established in the chapel at Holy Cross.

When Sheryl Roach became Principal at St. Kevin's in 1988, the enrolments were around 200 so it was necessary to re-structure the school. The Middle school was converted into a Library and Administration area and the children were relocated in the Infant and Senior buildings. Child-centred Education remained the philosophy of the school

During the seventies and eighties the vibrancy of the parish was manifested in a variety of ways: in the two parish schools, in the Youth Group, in the organisation of fetes and imaginative fund-raising events, in the Tennis Club whose members built six courts and a clubhouse and in the choir who led the congregation in innovative liturgies as well as performing at social occasions for parish and inter-church occasions.

## **THE 1990S**

The Renew Program initiated by the Archdiocese in 1988 led to a new direction in Parish activities. As a result of home discussion groups, Ministry Groups were formed, under the leadership of Tony Byrne to respond to the needs of the parish. These focus on the areas of Liturgy, Communication, Adult Education, Welcoming and Community Life and Care and Support. With the decrease in priest numbers these groups should provide a firm base for greater lay participation in the future.

To increase the loving spirit in the Parish Community, Family Groups were formed under the direction of the Passionists in 1993. Members in these groups develop new and deeper friendships through the enjoyment of simple social activities.

At St. Charles Borromeo School, there was a challenge. It had been anticipated that the schools in the Serpell Community School would be approximately equal. However, Serpell Primary became much bigger than St. Charles and when Sheryl Roach became Principal in 1994 this brought some challenges in terms of a 50/50 sharing of the Core Building.

It was a dream of Father McCann's to cater for people "from the cradle to the grave" and this dream was fulfilled in April 1997 with the opening of the Pioneers' Retirement Village. This is owned and operated by the Knights of the Southern Cross and is built next door to the Church on land donated by the parish.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the parish was celebrated on Sunday, February 18 1996, with Mass, followed by a picnic on the oval.

## **The 2000s**

Father McCann retired in November 2001. A Mass and celebration to mark the occasion was held at 10.00 am on Sunday, November 18.

Father Ross McKenny was appointed Parish Priest of Templestowe in November 2001. He resigned as a result of ill health the following January.

From the time Father McKenny resigned until Father Toms came to St Kevin's, Father Patrick Fitzpatrick, affectionately known as 'Father Paddy', travelled each day to celebrate Mass, attend meetings and plan and celebrate the Easter Liturgies.

In April 2002 Father Christopher Toms was appointed Parish Priest of St Kevin's.

Father Chris formed the Parish Advisory Board, held a Parish Forum and a Parish Conference, re-introduced the Sunday Parish Mass at the Holy Cross Monastery, introduced the Parish Annual General Meeting and re-formed the Finance Committee. Under his guidance plans were commenced to sell land at St Kevin's and renovate the school and the church.

At St. Charles Borromeo School, there was a challenge. It had been anticipated that the schools in the Serpell Community School would be approximately equal. However, Serpell Primary became much bigger than St. Charles. It was rebuilt in 2001/2002 and the staff moved out of the administrative area and the staff room. There was now pressure on St Charles in regard to outdated facilities; in response, two acres of land were sold and an up-to-date modern school was opened in 2006. This includes administration and staff areas and a multipurpose room.

Father Chris resigned from the parish in July 2009.

## **The 2010s**

Father Gerard McKernan was appointed Parish Priest in October 2009

Father Gerry has overseen the completion of the land subdivision commenced by Father Chris. In September 2014 he convened a working group to discuss and plan a refurbishment of St Kevin's Church to include a gathering space.

Church Renovations including a newly added Gathering Space and Community Kitchen all completed and opened in September 2016.