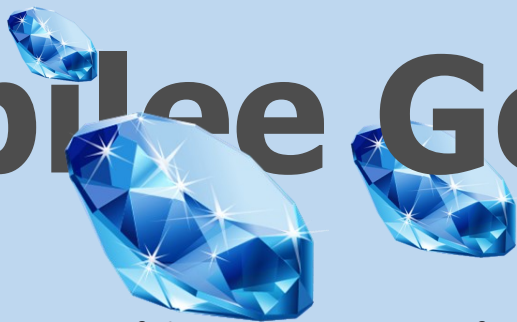


Jubilee Gems



Bringing you memories of the 50 year journey of celebration of the parish of St Joseph's and St Bernadette's.

JULY/AUGUST 2014 (Issue 3)



When we consider **the spiritual life of the parish**, we are entering a world rich with diversity and dedication. There are the clergy and messengers from the pulpit, the nuns and pastoral associates, the Faith groups, the sound of music, the lay ministry... and so the list goes on. How can you do justice to 50 years of spiritual life in 4 pages? Writing a series of features like this is made difficult by the realisation that you can't get it all. Unfortunately, there will be people, groups and notable events overlooked as we travel this fifty years.

The early days of our parish coincided with a time of growing change in the Church and its liturgy as the documents of the Second Vatican Council spread through the whole Church.

Youngsters of today would not have recognised the Mass back then. They might as well have walked into a foreign country with Latin being the language of the liturgy.



Father O'Neill with early parishioners John & Maureen Mason

The Second Vatican Council was of enormous importance for Catholicism internationally. As a writer of the time said: "It instituted sweeping changes in the church and in the church's attitude to the world in which it lives, clarifying basic teachings and practices, and modernising their expression." By August 1964, three out of the four Masses were celebrated in the vernacular, with just the one Mass in Latin. Later, changes were introduced to the Entrance Procession and the Offertory Procession which made it a more participatory ceremony. One can only imagine how our early priests, particularly the parish priests Father Laurie O'Neill and Father John Cross, felt about the sweeping tide of changes.

Father Laurie had a big job in the fledgling parish of Boronia after coming from an established one in Pakenham, but the faith community grew steadily. Within two years of being appointed to the parish, he had the first church, now the hall, built. The day the first church opened in July 1966 was momentous for a number of reasons. Apart from the opening it was also the day newly ordained Father Brian Bainbridge celebrated his first mass, and the celebration was enhanced by the arrival of the Papworth family's pigeons through an open window right in the middle of Brian's first sermon. As a local lad he had a good idea where they'd come from, but chose to announce it as a "manifestation of the Holy Spirit". Papworth's pigeons regularly attended Mass - that's how things were in the 60s!

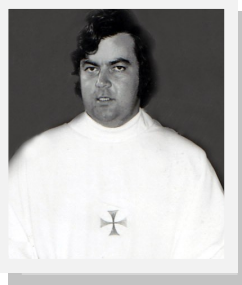
In 1970, Father Laurie left Boronia to take up an appointment at Epping. Father John Cross became the new Parish Priest. Father Cross was well loved by the parishioners and is remembered as being a caring pastor. He listened to what people had to say regarding the parish, pondered it, however if he did not agree with it did not rubber stamp it. Kath Dacy recalls that Father always gave the groups in the parish freedom to move within their own realm of expertise. Sister Verna Carroll remembered that he made a set time for you to meet with him. 'He always let you know gently if there were things he preferred the teachers to do or not to do. You could always talk to Father about anything and he would always listen carefully.' Sister Verna said that the first thing he asked was 'how are you?' and 'how are things going?'



Thanks for the great response and your feedback to Jubilee Gems. Keep your stories coming. The next edition will focus on the various groups, clubs and sporting associations. The email address to reach us on is jubileememories@yahoo.com.au

Father Cross' ministry had a significant impact on the direction of the local catholic community. He was responsible for building the present church, establishing St. Luke's school and church at Wantirna, building Saint Bernadette's school at The Basin and the extensions to St. Joseph's school.

The first curate Father Frank Bellett was appointed to the parish in 1972. Father Frank liked to get out among the people and made many home visitations. He energised the community through liturgy, his involvement with the youth and his input into the parish school. He contributed to school camps, where he celebrated Eucharist and tried to make it meaningful for the young. One of Brian and Joan White's fondest memories is of their boys serving as Altar boys leading Father Bellett up the aisle at the start of Mass with his guitar slung over his shoulder. The strumming priest was also noticed on one occasion with his pyjamas sticking out under his vestments. We're only human when we sleep in!



There's a packed compendium of memories about Father John Cross, or 'Crossie'. Clare O'Connell recalls how patient and persuasive he was. He followed her all the way down to her car where her dog was barking ferociously, and only spoke when she had stopped to ask her a favour. "Naturally, I volunteered to do whatever he was asking!"

Peter Asquith cherishes the handwritten note Fr. John wrote to the Asquith family in response to their good wishes on the occasion of his 40th year of becoming a Priest. "Although he was a gentle and quiet soul he had a dry sense of humour. He was a most humble man and loved by everyone."



Father Tony Shallue shares a vivid memory of the day he arrived at Boronia Parish - his first appointment after ordination - and the stunned look on Father Cross' face when he pulled up at the presbytery. "The students at the seminary had put streamers on the back of my car and had written Just Married on the back window." Tony confesses that when he first saw Crossie he was slightly taken aback, his first appointment living with someone he considered old enough to be his grandfather! "But Crossie was not in fact as old as I imagined," quickly adds Tony. "We grew close over the years, and although he was much older than myself, he was the most up to date priest I knew in terms of his reading of theology, spirituality and general biographies and auto-biographies."

Another O'Neill came along in 1975 - Father Grant O'Neill. He was an enthusiastic priest who passed on his love of sport to the school children. Mick Rankin remembers a Men's Club football match against FTG where the energetic priest chased the leather around the oval. But he had great pastoral energy, too. He did much to involve the school in the community service of the parish. He also had a special way with the sick and the elderly.

Small Church Community Groups, Lenten Groups and Antioch, to name but a few, have added to spiritual development. Trish Purchase has fond memories of the Charismatic Prayer Groups which have been going for well over 20 years. "Many close friendships were made and they still endure today." This is a common thread to many parishioners' stories about how friendships became bonded through these spiritual groups. For people like Maurice Costello, they were the antidote to shyness. Tentative at first, Maurice

(and Marie) joined the Stream programme, which Father Cross introduced. Over a hundred people took part. The hymn, *Here I am Lord, is it I Lord*, haunted Maurice until one day he realised its message to become

further involved. He repeated the programme and met new friends. "I think this was the beginning of a Spiritual change in my life."

Tony Shallue seconds that: "Many of the friends I still have contact with are from this experience." Tony, who now serves the Myrtleford region, had a knack of involving people of all ages, especially the youth, in the celebration of the Eucharist. He brought the Antioch movement to the parish and recalls the initial



Father John Cross with Father Tony Shallue.

pessimism some expressed about it succeeding, which made him all the more determined to make it work for young teenagers. "I believe the weekly meetings and weekends transformed the life of the parish." Many concur wholeheartedly with profound experiences.



No-one could forget John Petrusis and his passion – especially for Small Church Communities and for Spirituality of the heart. And the welcome he gave to all at the Parish House and the parish in general. He spoke with his hands during homilies but his heart always popped out.



Sister Frances Mongan says that Father John had the gift of making any Liturgical error look as though it was part of the ceremony and had been practised for months. She remembers as if it were yesterday an Easter time where he got her out of a spot. Preparing for and conducting the Easter Vigils is quite a feat of Liturgical stamina. For a time we had two Easter Vigils – one in the night at the Church and one at dawn at St. Bernadette’s, for which she overslept. “And I had the safely guarded Paschal Candle, magnificently painted and decorated by Marie Unkles and Barbara Kenny,” says Frances. Mild panic set in as she dashed to the service, only to find everything was travelling beautifully smoothly. Turns out, the old candle was made to look like the new one. “Even Kath Dacy,” says Frances, “a very wise and observant woman of long liturgical experience, didn’t notice anything was amiss.” The beautiful dawn arrived and the sun rose on another Easter Day, one of many Liturgical celebrations over the years enhanced by those who have been part of the liturgy teams and rosters.

Anne Di Nardo recalls an almighty storm with rain teeming down and the Parish House gutters blocked & overflowing – water coming into the Parish House – John walked out (wearing his omnipresent sandals and socks) and over to the down-pipe near the front door and an almost herculean effort ripped the pipe off the wall of the house. “It was just stunning!” says Anne. When he wanted to gather his thoughts and renew his spirit, John would often take off on his bike. Sister Frances remembers him regularly biking up lofty Rankin Road. “No stops – very impressive!”



Frances with Margot Hibbert, who celebrates her 102nd birthday this month.

Frances, who has been here since 1997, has the love and respect of the parish and school communities - her enthusiasm showing through like a beacon. Former principal Jeanie Hunter says she’s a ‘treasure’. “She compassionately and deftly keeps her finger on the pulse of all that is important and not so important.” During her time, she worked with two other Pastoral Associates, Lorraine McCarthy and Ewa Toomey, both of whom, among other things, resourced Small Church Communities and introduced the Alpha program enriching our parish in many ways.

Father Tony Cox, who spent 18 years in Japan as a missionary, belonged to the Columban Society of

Priests. (He often spruiked their great calendar for which he was the creative force). Tony particularly showed great love and care for his mother who lived with him at the Parish House until she died.

When we fast forward to today we come to Fr. Mirek Knap, who has been with us for over five years. Many baby boomers will recall sitting through half hour sermons as

kids. Mirek is different. He’s on and off in seven minutes and, with his challenge to us all at the end, proves that quality is more important than quantity. He thinks it is never cold here in Australia, because he has known minus 32 degrees in Poland – when the wine for Mass froze. As



Father Mirek baptizing Maya Kelaita

Frances points out: “We need to let him know when the heaters in the church are necessary!” He is one to roll his sleeves up to get a job done and does his own housework. He’s a wizard with technology - but don’t ask him about Apple!

You just never know who’s on the line...

Tony Cox had a school mass one Friday and it was Homily time. He was telling the children that they should talk to God and listen to God – when his mobile phone, which was in his shirt pocket, just next to the microphone, rang. He had forgotten to turn it off. He told the children – “Oh – there’s God ringing me now”.



A little bit of magic...

Many will remember Father Michael Court who often helped us out in celebrating mass. Michael was very adept at magic and often performed a clever trick prior to his homily. A perfect way to get attention for his wise words.

The parish is alive with people who contribute to faith development. The parish has had many stalwarts but who could forget Max Paetzold! Jeanie Hunter was struck by him from the start. "His grace, dignity and warmth never wavered and immediately gave me a sense that St Joseph's School and Parish community was indeed a special place." Sister Clare Corcoran remembers how on Sundays as they would get home from Boronia and sit down for lunch, the phone would ring. "That will be Max", those at the table would say and they were mostly right. "Max had some concern, or reflection from the day's liturgy, which he needed to share. "He was surely a stalwart in the Parish."

Josie Boyer talks about the spiritual affinity she has with the parish. As a child in Mauritius she attended a St Joseph's school and church. One day as a 12 year old she had a dream where St Joseph wanted to tell her something after mass.

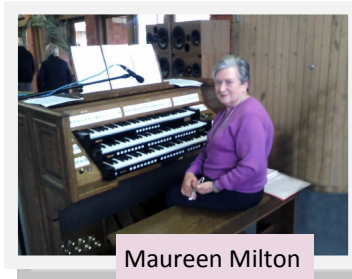
But she woke and never found out until years later when she and Gerard started looking for a house in a place called Boronia, which she knew nothing about. As the estate agent was showing her around, she asked the name of the local parish. "Suddenly my thoughts went to my childhood... it was St Joseph who sent me to Boronia."

We've come a long way since Father O'Neill asked Bill Stewart to form a choir. It originally consisted of willing singers ranging from primary school children, teenagers, parents, and



jubileememories@yahoo.com.au

grandparents. Peter Parleviet was an exuberant part of the original groups. We were also in the happy situation of having several organists, including Maureen Milton, Thea Telfer, Lexi Larkin and Beth Holohan.



Maureen Milton

Ben Abbenhuys was choir master in the new church. Music has such ability to lift and augment our parish

SVDs in Boronia. (Divine Word Missionaries)
When the Good Shepherd Contemplative Sisters needed to leave their home in Woodvale Road for smaller premises, they stormed heaven that they get a good buyer, the arrival of the SVD priests and brothers was an answer to their prayers! So the answer to the prayers of the sisters has been enriching our parish and the SVDs ever since. First we were enriched by the multicultural nature of their community and many Boronia homes and hearts opened to welcome and to help in many ways. When it was later decided to make the Janssen Centre a place for the promotion of multi-faith dialogue. (The Holy Spirit Sisters joined with the SVDs in this venture.) Father Frank Gerry was the first director and he gathered a group of helpers from our parish who worked at and promoted the centre – many short courses have been conducted there over the years that parishioners have been enriched by. The spiritual life of parishioners was also enriched by Frank sharing his enthusiasm for meditation and Centering Prayer. Parish meditation groups were formed which then used the Janssen Centre as a quiet venue for their practice. As various priests came to the Janssen Centre, they enjoyed becoming part of our parish and we appreciated their presence as they assisted the Parish Priests with Sunday Masses. It was great that while our present Parish Priest was on a holiday and home-visit to Poland we had Fr. Nick De Groot SVD saying Masses for us.

worship. And for the last twenty years we can thank people like Julie Keuken, who was first "encouraged" by John Petrus to proclaim the Easter exultet in song at a dawn mass at St. Bernadette's. She and her band of musicians and singers have since been involved in a wonderful array of liturgical musical performances. "For those involved, these occasions have been a source of immense joy!" says Julie enthusiastically.

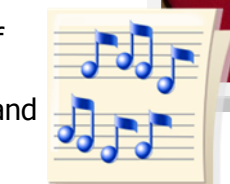
The music ministry has encouraged the involvement of younger people, and celebrated two of their own becoming married after first meeting as parish musicians. The young children at both schools are given a taste of music ministry through

learning and performing our parish jubilee song. The St Joseph's school choir under the direction of Tanya Cross were a very impressive bunch at the recent launch of the 50th Jubilee PowerPoint presentation.



They were given the task of learning the Jubilee song in three weeks and rose to the challenge! #

Julie Keuken with the choir at last year's Christmas mass.



Special thanks to Anne Di Nardo, Sister Frances Mongan and Mick Rankin for assistance with this issue. We also acknowledge Suzanna Muckenthaler's Church history Research Paper, from which excerpts were extracted.

Upcoming editions of *Jubilee Gems* will feature:

Sept-Oct—Parish Groups and Associations (including Sport)

Nov-Dec—Pitching In—How we've worked together