



175TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST MASS

The arrival of the Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Polding, (pictured right) in November 1844, to the settlement of Portland was a significant occasion in the lives of some two hundred and fifty Catholics who had made the new settlement their home but had been without a priest in the community since their arrival. It was early days in the colony, which at this time was still referred to as New Holland, and the area now known as Victoria was the District of Port Philip. Portland had been visited by sealers and whalers including William Dutton in 1828 and permanently settled by the Hentys in 1834. For thousands of years, before any white men, it was the home and traditional grounds of the Gunditjmara people.

In 1842, Alexander Laurie, the first Presbyterian clergyman at Portland, wrote in a letter, "The population of the township and suburbs of Portland may be estimated at about 800 souls. The most numerous class are the adherents of the Church of Rome. They have no priest as yet: some of the less bigoted occasionally attend our service. Not a few of them came voluntary and offered me a subscription for our church."



The history records show us in fact that there was much "theological give and take" in the early days of the Portland settlement, with financial support given freely across the board from church members to other churches with assurances of reciprocal support in building their place of worship.

On April 23, 1843, a petition from the Catholics of Portland was forwarded to Archbishop Polding at Sydney requesting the appointment of a resident priest. Funds for his support were guaranteed by 116 signatures to the petition. On May 17, 1843, a subscription list was opened for the erection of a chapel and one hundred and fifty pounds was raised in a few hours. That Dr Polding had not forgotten the petition is shown by the fact that in the next year, 1844, when the Archbishop visited Melbourne, he lost no time in journeying to Portland.

On November 2, 1844, the Geelong Advertiser reports, "His Grace Archbishop Polding arrived on Tuesday last by steamer from Melbourne, en route for Portland Bay. His stay (in Geelong) will be very short as it is his intention to pass overland on horseback to Portland....."

The Portland Guardian reports, "Dr Polding accompanied by Archdeacon McEncroe and Father MacEvey held a variety of services, both public and private, in the store formerly occupied by Mr Tulloch in Gawler St. The public services were well attended on most occasions, Protestants forming as large a proportion of the congregation as the members of the Catholic Church." The first Mass then offered at Portland was that celebrated by Dr Polding on Sunday November 3, 1844, in Mr Tulloch's store.

The Sydney Morning Chronicle (December 7, 1844) records the impressions of Dr Polding and Archdeacon McEncroe after their visit to Portland and Port Fairy. "Speaking at a meeting of the Propagation of the Faith on Sunday last, Fr McEncroe said that he noticed in his travels the great spiritual destitution of many of their fellow countrymen. The Archbishop and himself found considerable numbers of Catholics in Portland and Port Fairy who had never been favoured by a visit from a Catholic Clergyman, and who had not of course the opportunity of partaking of the Life-Giving Bread of the Blessed Eucharist. It was edifying to witness the piety and fervour of these people. Their earnest appeal for a priest was heart-rending since, on account of the limited number of priests, we were not able to comply with their request for the present." During their four days in Portland, upwards of one hundred persons received Holy Communion, fifty children were baptised and several marriages blessed.

All Saints Parish will celebrate the 175th Anniversary of the first Mass in Portland with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Paul Bird CSsR on Sunday, November 3, 2019, at 10.30am, followed by a light luncheon at Bayview College. All welcome. For information and catering purposes please reply to portland@ballarat.catholic.org.au or call Di on 0427 946 053.

Source: Booklet – the Catholic Church in Portland – Centenary of the First Mass 1844 –



**The Parish of All Saints
Portland, Heywood & Dartmoor**

Invite you to join us in celebrating the 175TH Anniversary of the first Catholic Eucharist in Portland on the 3rd of November 1844.

**The Anniversary Mass will be concelebrated
On
Sunday the 3rd of November 2019
at 10.30am, All Saints Church 115 Bentinck Street Portland**

**By
The Most Rev. Paul Bird CSsR.
Bishop of the Diocese of Ballarat
&
Rev. Gregory Tait, Parish Priest of Portland**

**Following the Mass a light luncheon will be served
at Bayview College, 119 Bentinck Street Portland.**

If you would like to attend the luncheon after mass please reply indicating numbers by Friday the 25th of October to;

*portland@ballarat.catholic.org.au
or phone Di Kierce on **0427 946 053**.*