

FESTA DELLA MADONNA DEL MONTE CARMELO 2016

Festa Della Madonna Del Monte Carmelo 2016 in Swan Hill was a great success according to Italian Social Club treasurer Tony Marsili. Celebrating its 60th year of commemorating the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the weekend festival drew people from across the state including Cobram, Shepparton and Melbourne as well as visitors from Italy.

On Saturday evening, three hundred and eight people shared dinner at the Italian Social Club. This included dancing accompanied with music and wishing Bishop Paul Bird Happy Birthday. On Sunday, Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was celebrated by Bishop Paul and Fr Domenico Muscari, a nephew of parishioners Michele and Grace Conidi. Consistent with Italian customs, at the conclusion of Mass the Statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was taken in procession through the neighbouring streets adjacent to St Mary's Parish.



All who attended Mass and participated in the Procession then adjourned to the Italian Social Club for lunch comprising pasta or barbeque, sweets, music and dancing.

Mr Marsili was part of the original group who formed the committee sixty years ago. As a young man he served for twenty years before taking a break. He returned to the position four years ago with a view to ensuring that the Italian culture is carried on to future generations.



The committee was formed by a group of people from different regions across Italy who migrated to Australia in the 1950's. Gathering for the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was a way in which the Italian Community could maintain and build solidarity within their new home.

Sixty years on and Australia is a very different place to the 1950's when European migration was in full swing. Today we want the event to remain inclusive and welcome to all cultures who would like to celebrate with us.

St Mary's Parish, Swan Hill

Photo 1 courtesy of the credit Pamela Blackman, Swan Hill Guardian

[Bishop Paul Bird's Homily on this occasion can be read here:](#)

Our celebration today marks sixty years of celebrating this feast of the Madonna here in Swan Hill. If we count back sixty years, we come to the 1950s. It was the time after the Second World War when great numbers of people came to Australia as immigrants from many countries in Europe. They brought with them their many gifts, including their faith and devotions. Large numbers came from Italy. They too brought their gifts, including their faith in Christ and their religious practices. These included the devotions that expressed their trust in the intercession of Mary. Sixty years ago members of the Italian community here in Swan Hill introduced this celebration for the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and you have been celebrating this festa ever since.

I give thanks for those who introduced this celebration back in 1950s. There are some people with us today who remember those first years of the festa here. I offer my congratulations to all those who have continued the celebration through these sixty years. I offer my thanks to those who have helped to prepare our celebration for today. I also offer my congratulations to you all as you take part in this celebration. It is a tribute to your faith in Christ and to your trust in the Madonna.

Each time we come to Mass we are expressing our faith in God our Father and our faith in Jesus Christ our Saviour. We pray to God who is rich in mercy and we ask God's help in all our needs. We remember Christ who gave his life for us and we pray that we might follow his example in the way we live our lives.

When we celebrate a feast of Our Lady, as we are doing today, we also remember Mary. We remember the example she gives us of how to serve God and serve the people around us and we ask Mary to pray for us in our needs.

In the gospel that Fr Domenico read for us this morning, we heard the story of Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth. It is a beautiful story of Mary hurrying to help Elizabeth in a time of need. Mary had heard that Elizabeth had conceived a child and Mary went quickly to her. In this, Mary gives us a great example. She shows us how to be sensitive to the needs of others. And she shows us how to take practical steps to help people in their needs. For us this might be someone in our family who is sick or someone in our street who is lonely. The example of Mary encourages us to do what we can to help the sick and to visit the lonely to help them through difficult times.

In this gospel story Mary also gives us an example of prayer. She offers a prayer of thanks to God for all that God has done for her. "The Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is God's name. God's mercy is from generation to generation." Mary gives praise to God for God's mercy. This can encourage us in our prayer. Here at Mass we have some wonderful prayers of praise of God's mercy. May the example of Mary inspire us to pray these prayers from our heart. We give thanks and praise for God's mercy and for all the gifts that God bestows upon us day by day.

May God bless us all as we celebrate this feast day and may Mary pray for us in all our needs. Mary is a Mother of Mercy. She is a Mother of Perpetual Help. She is always ready to help us. We ask her to pray for us and for our families and for the whole community. Through the prayers of Mary, may we have all the help we need in our lives. May we have the peace of Christ in our hearts.

Che Dio ci benedica tutti mentre celebriamo questo giorno di festa e Maria prega per noi in tutte le nostre esigenze. Maria è Madre di Misericordia. Lei è una Madre del Perpetuo Soccorso. Lei è sempre pronta ad aiutarci. A Lei chiediamo di pregare per noi e per le nostre famiglie e per l'intera comunità. Per le preghiere di Maria, possiamo avere tutto l'aiuto che abbiamo bisogno nella nostra vita. Possiamo avere la pace di Cristo nei nostri cuori.

Bishop Paul Bird CSSR