



PARISHIONERS FAREWELL LEARMONTH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH



It was a bittersweet Sunday Mass at Learmonth's St Joseph's Catholic Church, with the church closing its doors after almost 150 years. Dozens of former parishioners and their families attended to say their own farewells.

Fon Ryan, who has been going to the church since he was a baby and was one of the final regular parishioners, said people had come from near and far. "A lot of people reflected it was a sad day, but I think it was also understood that it was the reality," he said. "It was a reunion in a lot of ways, of people who knew each other, who grew up here, and who had moved away with all sorts of circumstances." Mass was celebrated by the Bishop Paul Bird, with parish priest Father Marcello Colasante.

Mr Ryan said people enjoyed discussing their memories of the church community, and not just the baptisms, weddings, and funerals. "The practice that's particularly in country towns - the long talking outside after mass - it was a feature that people stayed around and talked, often for quite a long time," he said.

