

REMEMBERING

Recently, I reflected on the month of November being a time of remembrance. Continuing this theme, on November 14, Sisters of Mercy gathered at Emmanuel College and later, the Warrnambool cemetery, to honour those of their Order who called Warrnambool, Terang and Camperdown home at some time during their lives and to remember the fifty-one Sisters of Mercy buried in the cemetery by the Hopkins River.

November 14, 2017 marked one hundred and sixty years since the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in Victoria and Tasmania. Their arrival saw the beginning of ministries in education, health care as well as care for orphaned infants and the aged. The foundations they laid gave rise to many schools, especially in remote communities where educational opportunities were limited. Emmanuel College is one of those schools and today we stand on the shoulders of the eight women who arrived in 1872 at the invitation of the Bishop of Victoria, Bishop Goold.

Lead by Mother Philomena Maguire and supported by Sr. M. Agnes Graham, Sr. M. Joseph Howard, Sr. M. Xavier Flood, Sr. M. Catherine McQuillan, Sr. M. Bridget Cousens and Sr. M. Stanislaus Aldrige, the Sisters opened a school on land purchased from William Ardlie, a solicitor and well known pioneer of the district. Wyton House stood on ten acres and was large enough to provide the Sisters with a home and to open a school on July 1, 1872. Five of those women went on to found the new community and convent in Ballarat East. Mother Philomena Maguire and Sr. M. Agnes Campbell died after many years of service to this community and were buried in the grounds of the school. In 1917 they were both respectfully reinterred in the Warrnambool cemetery.

Twenty Sisters and guests gathered at the cemetery where they prayed for all those buried there, including Sisters, relatives and friends and for those who have no one to pray for them. The response to each of the prayers was “and blessed through all eternity, be our Sisters who have gone before us.” May their energy and spirit continue to inspire us who lead and work in the College today.

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