

ST MARY'S SEA LAKE CELEBRATES

On Sunday, June 17 St Mary's Primary School Sea Lake celebrated sixty years of education in conjunction with the blessing of their refurbished learning space. Bishop Paul Bird and Fr Matthew Thomas celebrated Mass with the school and parish community. It was a truly wonderful celebration with all students participating in the Mass. The Captains of the school extended a warm welcome to all students and families, parishioners and friends who gathered. They gave thanks for all who were present and for all those who contributed to the life and success of St Mary's school throughout its sixty year history.

The School Captains reflected on Fr Gerald Payne and those who first had a vision for a catholic school in the community. They remembered those who gave their labour, their gifts and their time to build the school. They remembered the Parish Priests, Sisters of St Joseph, teaching staff, School Advisory Council members and Parents and Friends Committee members who had stepped forward throughout the last sixty years to provide governance, leadership, advice and support.

After Mass the new refurbished learning space was blessed and then dinner was shared. A birthday cake was cut by all students. Mrs Kate Nunn, Principal, spoke about the history of the school and highlighted some of the important moments of the school.

Kate stated that St Mary's School was officially blessed and opened on April 20, 1958. The first classes began in 1958 with three Josephite nuns with seventy-six students enrolled from Grade Prep to Form Three (year nine).

In the same year a Mother's Club was formed. An article in the local paper regarding the opening of the school stated it was a modern building of contemporary design in cream brick. Designed to catch the maximum light with minimum of direct sunlight, the three well equipped classrooms incorporate modern teaching facilities. A spacious office-staff room and entrance foyer with music and heater rooms complete the main block. The article went onto say the parish and the town were congratulated on having the Sisters of St Joseph in their school and it was forecasted that great good would come of it. The children were congratulated on their great efforts to raise money for their new school, and promised they would do well both spiritually and academically under the good Sisters of St Joseph.

Kate also highlighted in the history of the school that twenty football jumpers and socks were purchased in 1959 and a football match was played against Hopetoun. In 1969, the secondary part of the school was discontinued and Grades Prep to Six remained. In 1971, the first Gala Day was held.





In 1994, St Mary's was refurbished, the library extended and a new art room built. In 1999, there were fifty-one pupils in Prep to Grade Six and these represented thirty-one families. Sr Patricia Day, past Principal was the last Josephite to teach at the school. In 2000, Vin Butler, became the first lay Principal, ending forty-two years of Josephite leadership. There were fifty children enrolled at St Mary's.

In 2002 the school embarked on a building program. The program included demolishing the boys toilet/cloakroom, building a new boys and girls toilet, and refurbishing the girls toilet into a

cloakroom. Also at the beginning of that year a shade structure was erected over the playground. The Parents and Friends Association raised funds for this project.

In 2010 the school built a new multipurpose building under the *Building the Education Revolution* project. Our St Mary of the Cross Centre is a large open area with a kitchen and toilet and is used for indoor games, our performing arts program, liturgies, assemblies and whole school functions.



More recently the classrooms were completely refurbished to an open plan style with flexible learning spaces to complement the Professional Learning Community framework, which was blessed by Bishop Paul Bird on this day.

Kate also stated that St Mary's was characterised by its strong sense of community and tradition. The parents work hard to support all endeavours so that the students are provided with all they need to receive the best education possible. The staff is a close knit team who work collaboratively and extremely hard to make the school a special place to be, in which everyone is nurtured, loved and valued to enable every child to become the best for the world.

Kate concluded with "I am extremely privileged and honoured to have been a past student, a past teacher and now the Principal of this school. For forty-two years I have been connected to the school and I thank God every day for this honour. I am so fortunate to work in and with this incredible school community and I sincerely thank everyone who has been part of this sixty year journey."

Kate Nunn – Principal

