

# WENDOUREE PARISH CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

In July 1964 the then Bishop of Ballarat, Bishop O'Collins announced the establishment of a new parish in the Ballarat Diocese, Our Lady Help of Christians Parish, Wendouree. The Parish was to include Miners' Rest, Learmonth, Waubra and Wendouree with the chaplaincy of Lakeside Hospital. Up to this point these communities had been part of the larger Ballarat Cathedral Parish. In more recent times the parish boundary has been extended to include the community of Lexton.

On the weekend of November 21 and 22 the parish gathered to celebrate its fifty years of witness to the gospel and its endeavours of making the kingdom of God a reality in the local area. It was an opportunity to thank God for the many blessings that have been bestowed on the parish throughout the years and to come together as a community to remember, to celebrate and to catch up with old friends.

Celebrations began with an Anniversary Dinner on the Saturday evening attended by one hundred and fifty three people in the OLHC School Mercy Performing Arts Centre. A number of people were disappointed when they were unable to obtain tickets due to the physical capacity of the venue being reached. A beautiful two course meal was provided by the OLHC School Catering Team. Throughout the evening the guests' knowledge of the history of the parish was tested by a quiz. A video, produced by some of the Grade 5 & 6 students featuring interviews with a number of parishioners who have been part of the parish for the fifty years, was shown and all participated wholeheartedly in a community sing-a-long. The Exodus Players from the Exodus Community provided a thought provoking performance of *'Who Is My Neighbour'*. This program of entertainment supplemented the much reminiscing and catching up with the many former parishioners who had returned for the occasion.



Bishop Paul Bird CSsR was the principal celebrant of our anniversary Mass on the Sunday morning along with the Parish Priest Father Tom Brophy, Father Frank Smith CSsR from the Exodus Community, Monsignor Glynn Murphy, Father Kevin Murphy and Father Rupert Bowd, all of whom were priests in the parish at various times during the fifty years. The Church was filled for this celebration.

In his homily Bishop Paul noted that fifty years ago 'The Beatles' were in their prime singing songs such as 'All you Need is Love' and 'Help'. Maybe they could have been applicable as the new parish commenced its journey! More importantly though, the Second Vatican Council had convened at that time and it

was Bishop Paul's observation that the Wendouree Parish throughout its fifty year history was a community that had endeavoured to live out the spirit of the Council.

Special guests that parishioners were delighted to catch up with at various stages across the weekend included priests who had ministered in the parish, former Parish Priests, Kevin Murphy, Gerry Baldock, Justin Driscoll and former Assistant Priests, Glynn Murphy, Brian Welsh and John Clonan. In addition Bishop Peter Connors (whom the parish can claim as a former parishioner!) attended the dinner and BBQ. Former principals of the school, Connie Walsh RSM and Anthony Clifford were also guests. A large number of Sisters of Mercy, many of whom had taught at the school, also returned for the occasion.



L- R: Fr Frank Smith CSsR, Fr Kevin Murphy, Bishop Paul Bird CSsR, Mons. Glynn Murphy, Fr Rupert Bowd and Fr Tom Brophy

Following the Mass the school was opened for a visit. For a number of people, this was the first time back in the school for decades and there were many positive comments about the modern facilities and resources that the students now experience. A community BBQ concluded the weekend of celebrations. Over five hundred

sausages and two hundred and fifty hamburgers were expertly cooked supplemented by a delicious range of salads and sweets provided by the parishioners. The occasion was blessed with beautiful weather and many groups of parishioners and visitors stayed until well into the afternoon.



Quoting Glynn Murphy from his RSVP, to *OLHC Parish*: 'Ad Multos Annos' (Unto many more years!).....

Vin Dillon – Parishioner  
Photos by Fon Ryan

Bishop Paul Bird's Homily on this occasion can be read below:

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**Bishop Paul Bird's Homily on the Golden Jubilee of the Parish of Wendouree,  
Our Lady Help of Christians, Wendouree – November 23, 2014**

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If we could step back to the very early days in this part of the country, we would be in the era of the Wautherong people who were the original custodians of the land. If we could step back fifty years, to 1964, we would be with the first members of the parish of Our Lady Help of Christians. Fr Coley McKenzie was the first parish priest and some of the people with us this morning were among the first parishioners.

1964: It was the year that the Beatles came to Australia. Perhaps there are some links between the Beatles and the parish of Our Lady Help of Christians. The parish might be in harmony with a number of the Beatles songs. Some of the titles might apply to the life of the parish at various stages: "All you need is love", "We can work it out", "Help!", "Let it be", "The Long and Winding Road". So there may be some connection between the Beatles tour of Australia in 1964 and the founding of this parish in that same year.

This morning, though, I'd like to focus more on another event that was happening at that time: the Second Vatican Council. The parish of Our Lady Help of Christians was founded in the middle of Vatican II. I'm not sure how much connection there is between this parish and the Beatles but I'm very sure there is a connection between this parish and the Second Vatican Council. This is a parish that was founded in the midst of the Council. I believe it is a parish that continues to draw inspiration from the Council.

As we celebrate the golden jubilee of this parish, we're also celebrating the golden jubilee of the Second Vatican Council. It would be interesting to look through the documents of the Council from around fifty years ago and see how the Council's teachings influenced the early years of this parish and how they have influenced the parish ever since. I would quote just one example, the opening words of the Council's document on the Church in the Modern World:

"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts." I believe we see these words fulfilled in many ways in this parish.

So we could well say: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of Wendouree and the people of Waubra, Learmonth and Lexton, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the members of this parish of Our Lady Help of Christians. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."

This parish began in the midst of the Second Vatican Council and the teachings of the Council have continued to inspire the parish's life, sharing the joys and griefs of those around us, taking part in the liturgy as a community, serving one another in the spirit of Christ.

Today we are celebrating the feast of Christ the King. He is indeed a king but a king in a special sense. He is a servant-king who washes the feet of his disciples. He is a shepherd-king who looks after us as a devoted shepherd looks after the flock. As we celebrate this feast, may we be inspired to serve like him. May we care for the needy. May we be shepherds to one another.

Today we give thanks for the golden jubilee of this parish. We rejoice in those beginnings fifty years ago. We honour all those who have been members of this parish over these five decades. We pray that we might continue to build on the foundations that they have laid. The most important foundation, of course, is Christ himself. May this parish community continue to live in the spirit of Christ.