

## HORSHAM BASE FOR BAPTISTINE SISTERS

Horsham is the centre of a first for the Catholic Church in Australia, becoming a foundation base for an international order of religious sisters.

Two Filipino Sisters from the Congregation of the Sisters of St John the Baptist, or Baptistine Sisters, have set up base in Horsham where they have joined the community to spread a message of faith.



Sr Manuela is working for the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat on Rite of Catholic Initiation and Sacraments and Sr Tirsa is working with district and neighbouring parishes.

As the first Baptistine Sisters to be based in Australia, the eighteenth country to become a home for the congregation, both are keen to get out and mix with parishioners. "We're here to work for everyone, which of course includes any Filipinos here," Sr Manuela said. "We're here to spread the good news of Christ to everyone we meet." Sister Tirsa said people she had met were welcoming and hospitable. "They made us feel at home right away," she said. They said they had three basic parts to their mission in Horsham – education, human promotion and evangelisation.



Horsham Parish Priest Peter Hudson said the Sisters had responded to an invitation by Bishop of Ballarat, Bishop Paul Bird to establish themselves in the region. "Once they get settled in they will be working right across the parish where they will reach out to people with a spiritual presence," he said.

The Baptistine Sisters' international headquarters are in Rome, Italy. St Alfonso Maria Fusco, a Catholic Priest, founded the Sisters in 1878. The Sisters' mission was to evangelise and educate as well as promote the faith among adolescents with particular emphasis of poor or abandoned people.

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Top: Sr Tirsa, left, and Sr Manuela  
Bottom: Bishop Paul Bird welcomes the Sisters