

End of an Era

Sunday, February 22, 2009 saw more than one hundred and fifty former and current parishioners and visitors join together for the closure of Saint Joseph's Catholic Church at Watchem as a Sunday Mass venue. For 124 years, the hundreds of families and individuals who have made up the worshipping community of St Joseph's Watchem have gathered together each week, at the church.

The Bishop of Ballarat, Bishop Peter Connors, was the celebrant for the final Sunday Mass in the Church. The celebration recognised that those who built this Church saw it as a witness to their faith in God and their desire to live and practice in a beautiful environment. "It is not so much the building that is the focus of attention," said the Bishop, "But rather it is the worshipping community that will disperse from this holy ground for the final time to live out the message of Jesus Christ." Bishop Peter went on to recall the important role of the priests who served the community as they carried out Baptisms, Confirmations and Marriages. "Many of you will take away precious memories of those moments in your lives when you came to this place to celebrate those special moments of the faith journey of you and members of your families," he said.



"Nor can we forget the occasions when in this place you bade farewell to your loved ones." "Today and for the last time in this place on the Lord's Day, we respond to the command of Jesus Christ to say and do what he said and did at his Supper with his friends on the night before he died." The Bishop concluded by saying that the traditional dismissal, "The Mass is ended, go in peace" had a special significance today.

Following the Mass, those present spent much time sharing their memories of St Joseph's, while at the same time acknowledging the commitment and dedication of the early parishioners who must have worked so hard to build such a magnificent Church. All adjourned to the hall as they continued to share their memories, along with a light luncheon.

Although no longer a Sunday Mass venue, St Joseph's Catholic Church, Watchem, continues to stand as a tribute to the Catholic community of the district.

Acknowledgement: Text & photos courtesy of "The Buloke Times" March 3, 2009

From left to right - Regular Parishioners of St Joseph's Watchem: Maree Spicer, Rhonda Barbetti, Kathy Walder, Maureen Belleville, John Barbetti, Beryl Milne, Fr Marcello Colasante, Bishop Connors, Hec Dickie, Frank Belleville, Peter Spicer, Margaret Belleville, John Colbert, Graeme Walder, Bernie Belleville.



Past and present members of St Joseph's Catholic Church congregation pictured following the final Mass.