



175 reasons to celebrate

175 YEARS and smiling... All Saints Catholic Parish will mark its largest celebration since 1947 later this month when it brings up 175 years as a parish. There has been plenty of work going on behind the scenes for a busy weekend of events, and parish priest Father Greg Tait is among those looking forward to it. [READ MORE ON PAGE 2.](#)

Picture: KAREN HODGE 220810kh07



FATHER Greg Tait at the site of a planting later this month to mark 175 years of the All Saints Parish.

Picture: KAREN HODGE 220810kh05

175 reasons to celebrate

CHALPAT SONTI

IT'S been a long time since All Saints Catholic Parish has held a celebration about itself, but that long drought is about to be broken.

The parish will celebrate its 175th birthday with a series of events from Friday, August 26, to Monday, August 29.

Victoria's third oldest parish, after St Francis in Melbourne and St Mary's in Geelong, All Saints was formed in 1847.

Three years earlier the Archbishop of Sydney John Polding held the first Mass in Western Victoria in Portland – the 175th anniversary of that event was held in 2019, with plans then to celebrate the same anniversary of the parish founding.

Father John Kavanagh was the first parish priest, and built the first church in 1849, though his tenure almost ended before it started.

"He nearly died when he got here," said current parish priest Father Greg Tait.

"He got down from the vessel that brought him here and in going between that and the shore boat he nearly fell in.

"It could have been an ignominious start and never got off the ground, so luckily he didn't."

Fr Tait said it was important to mark the parish's milestone, given its place in the state's

history. "Originally St Mary's went to the end of Portland Bay, then Portland was established which was Portland and Belfast (now Port Fairy)," he said.

However, he hasn't been able to track down the founding document of the parish, with neither the Archdioceses of Sydney or Melbourne having it.

"Melbourne was actually proclaimed a diocese in early 1847 but a Bishop wasn't installed until the following year," Fr Tait said.

"Whether (All Saints was erected as a parish) from Sydney or Melbourne, or the proclamation was made in Rome, I don't know.

"All I know is the year a proclamation was made."

The parish celebrated the centenary of the first Mass in 1844 but nothing of its origins after the centenary of its founding in 1847, Fr Tait said.

"There was a booklet published for that event but we'll probably record the Mass and put it on You Tube," he said.

"We've become entirely digital, all our Sunday Masses are online."

The celebrations start on Friday, August 26, with an event at All Saints Parish School including a Mass at noon followed by a sausage sizzle for students.

Deputy principal Kerri-Ann O'Keefe has also prepared a historical tableau of the parish which has been on display at the school.

On the Saturday the main event will be a dinner at the Royal Hotel, with the Bishop of Ballarat, Most Reverend Paul Bird, in attendance.

This event, which will start at 6.30pm, is open to the public and Fr Tait said he hoped to get close to 120 people attending, the maximum number allowed.

Numbers for the dinner have to be finalised by Monday, August 22 – see below for details.

The main Mass of the weekend will be held on Sunday, August 28, at 10.30am, presided over by Bishop Bird.

Following that there will be a ceremonial planting of a magnolia tree at the front of the church – with the oldest and youngest members of the parish to do the honours – and a lunch at Bayview College afterwards.

On the Monday there will be an informal gathering of the clergy of the diocese to have lunch with Fr Tait, a traditional Monday event.

To book a place at the Saturday night dinner or for more information about the weekend email portland@ballarat.catholic.org.au.

• Portland historian Bernard Wallace is compiling a history of the parish to be published in the *Observer* leading up to the celebrations.



ALL Saints Parish School captains Delaney Hol and Grace Dainty speak at the 175th anniversary Mass, as on the other side of the altar are All Saints parish priest Greg Tait and Bishop of Ballarat Paul Bird. Altar boy Hamish McCallum is in the background. Picture: CHALPAT SONTI 220828cs01



ABOUT 200 people attended the 175th anniversary Mass. Picture: CHALPAT SONTI 220828cs02



BISHOP Paul Bird and Father Greg Tait offer the Eucharistic Bread to parishioners during Communion. Picture: CHALPAT SONTI 220828cs03



FATHER Greg Tait helps parishioner Betty Teal during the planting of the commemorative magnolia tree, as Bishop Paul Bird watches on. Picture: CHALPAT SONTI 220828cs04

A celebration like few others

CHALPAT SONTI

IT was a long weekend that got longer, but at the end of it All Saints Catholic Parish can look back on a successful 175th anniversary celebration.

The Portland parish was born in September 1847, making it the third oldest in Victoria, and hundreds of people gathered from Friday to Monday to honour the anniversary.

Celebrations kicked off with a gathering at All Saints Parish School on Friday, including a Mass at noon and a sausage sizzle for students.

The Royal Hotel was the venue for a celebratory dinner on Saturday evening (with a talk on the parish's past by Portland historian Bernard Wallace), before the main Mass at the All Saints Catholic Church on Sunday, itself followed by lunch at Bayview College.

The festivities were rounded off with an informal lunch at the parish office on Monday.

Sunday's Mass was attended by about 200 people, going close to filling up the church's seating.

It was led by the Bishop of Ballarat Paul Bird, with support from All Saints parish priest Greg Tait – Fr Tait also celebrated the 30th anniversary of his ordination as a priest.

Most Reverend Bird told the congregation, some of who came back to Portland especially for the weekend, that there was plenty to celebrate from the past.

"It's important to think about the blessings God has given to all those people who have gone before

us," he said.

"Many would be prominent in society, many would be scarcely known beyond their families and friends but all of them would have been known and loved by God.

"God is the one that has raised up this parish from humble beginnings... we rejoice in the history of the parish as it unfolded from those beginnings.

"We give thanks to all the people that have cared for the community, I would suggest that has often been in very humble and hidden ways.

"In our Mass we give thanks for what God has done in this parish community and we pray that God's blessings may continue on this community for the years to come."

Fr Tait thanked all those who helped make the celebrations a reality, including the parish pastoral team, other parishioners who helped them, Bayview College and Jen Collett who prepared the garden beds for the ceremonial planting that followed the Mass.

All Saints Parish School staff led by deputy principal Kerri-Ann O'Keefe also got a special mention.

"Friday was a wonderful experience to get something of the feel our children have in their history," Fr Tait told the congregation.

Following the Mass, parishioners and guests adjourned in front of the church where a magnolia tree was planted by Bishop Bird, Fr Tait and some of the oldest and youngest parishioners.



FLORENCE England, 1, is helped by her grandfather Ron Eichler, after helping during the tree planting, as Bishop Paul Bird watches on. Picture: CHALPAT SONTI 220828cs05



ELSPETH Donovan, 4, gets digging during the tree planting. Picture: CHALPAT SONTI 220828cs06



BISHOP of Ballarat Diocese Paul Bird (centre) with All Saints parishioners Geoff White and Hazel Webb following the Mass. Picture: CHALPAT SONTI 220828cs07

All Saints Parish 175th anniversary

IT is some 175 years since the Parish of All Saints was erected or proclaimed. This significant anniversary is being celebrated this weekend.

The establishment of All Saints Parish was the logical outcome of several earlier developments.

By the early 1840s, Portland was a developing, progressive settlement. Portland, at that time, was in the Port Phillip District of the Colony of New South Wales.

Religion loomed large in the lives of the people of Portland in those times. Most of the settlement's population professed a religion and regularly worshipped at various locations around the town.

Whilst all major religions of the day were well represented in Portland, the Church of England was the established church. Most people worked, associated and socialised with people of the same religion.

Only one religion had its own church at that time—Saint Stephen's Anglican Church had been built in 1842. The Anglicans also had a resident minister, as did the Presbyterians. The other major religions made do in regard to premises, but were actively raising money to erect churches.

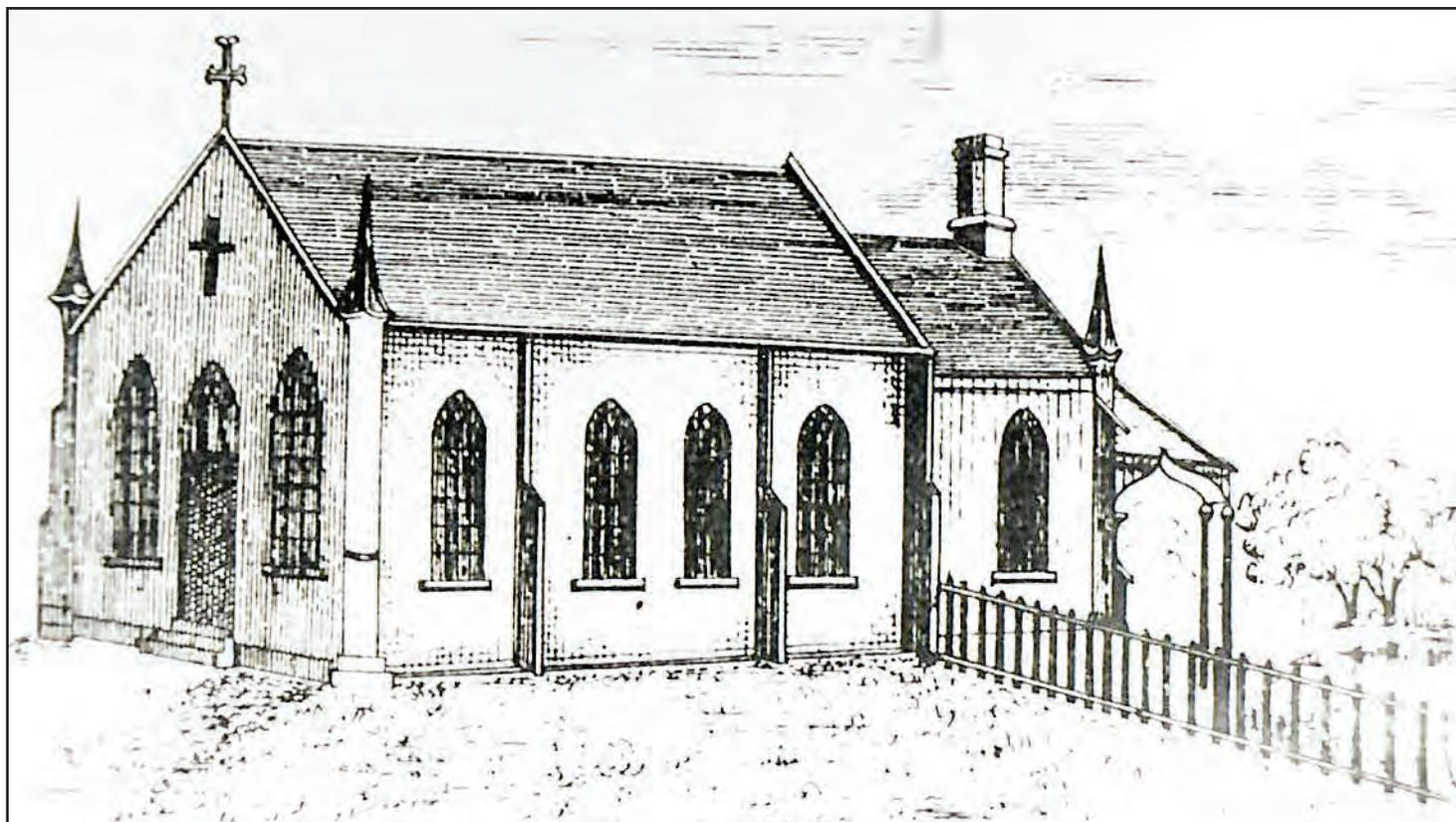
Although far from free of sectarian differences, Portland was a generally tolerant settlement. When one religion commenced collecting subscriptions to construct a place of worship, members of other religions contributed freely. In those times, religion, even in different forms, was seen as a progressive, civilising influence.

Substantial Catholic presence

Those of the Catholic persuasion in Portland were generally better off than those in other settlements. In the first instance, they had a substantial presence — 'The most numerous class are the adherents of the Church of Rome'. As well, they were co-religionists of several powerful and influential Catholics including Police Magistrate James Blair and Chief Constable, later prominent businessman, Tom Finn.

Portland's Catholics sought to have a resident priest and a proper church of their own. In the early 1840s, there were only three priests in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales—and they were in Melbourne or Geelong.

On 23 April 1843 Portland's Catholics forwarded a petition to the senior representative of the Catholic religion in the colony, Archbishop John Bede Polding



PORTLAND'S first Catholic church was constructed shortly after the establishment of All Saints Parish 175 years ago.

Picture: SUPPLIED

of Sydney, requesting the appointment of a resident priest. Funds for the support of a priest were guaranteed by 116 signatories to the petition. Subscriptions opened in May 1843 for the erection of a Catholic chapel in Portland. An impressive one hundred and fifty pounds was raised immediately.

Archbishop's visit

In late 1844, Archbishop Polding, accompanied by Archdeacon McEncroe and Father MacEvey, made their way overland from Sydney to Melbourne on horseback. There, they performed a range of religious duties.

They later proceeded from Melbourne to Geelong by steamer, and then overlanded on horseback via Port Fairy to Portland Bay.

The arrival of the Archbishop of Sydney in Portland was a significant occasion in the lives of the 250 or more Catholics in the settlement. During his four days in Portland, upwards of 100 persons received Holy Communion, some 50 children were baptised and several marriages blessed.

First Portland mass

The first Catholic mass or service to be held in Portland was celebrated by Archbishop Polding on Sunday November 3. The mass took place in Mr Tulloch's store, in the vicinity of what is now 7 Gawler Street. Polding and his party were the guests of Portland's most influential Catholic, Police Magistrate James Blair, at his residence 'Greenmount'.

The *Portland Guardian* reported that

'Circumstances have brought about the introduction of Catholic worship into Portland. On Saturday last, in the afternoon, his Grace Archbishop Polding with two of his priests, arrived in the township, and on Sunday held a variety of services, both public and private'. Furthermore, 'the public services were well attended, on most occasions, Protestants forming as large a proportion of the congregation as the members of the Catholic Church.'

Parish established

During his time in Portland, Catholics prevailed upon Archbishop Polding to create a parish in this part of the colony and to permanently locate a parish priest in Portland.

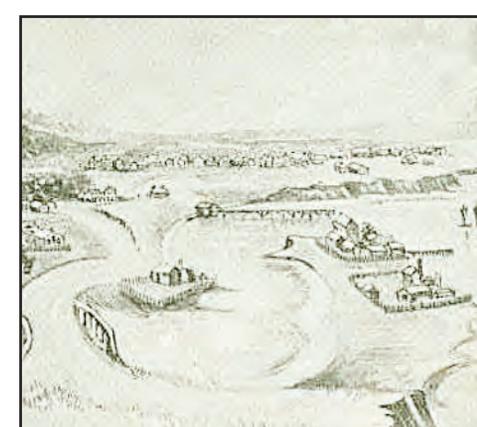
Such representations were not forgotten by the Archbishop Polding. *The Sydney Morning Chronicle* later recorded that 'the Archbishop...found considerable numbers of Catholics in Portland and Port Fairy who had never been favoured from a visit from a Catholic Clergyman.'

During 1847, the Catholics of Portland became part of a newly-created parish, All Saint Parish, had a resident priest appointed, and were well on their way having their own church. The first parish priest was Father John Kavanagh. In addition to routinely serving Portland and Port Fairy, he regularly ranged far and wide to serve the needs of the region's Catholics. Between 1847 and early 1849, he made his way to what became Hamilton, Dunkeld, Heywood, Mount Gambier Wannan Falls, Peshurst, Coleraine, Harrow and

beyond.

The establishment of All Saints Parish also led to a Catholic church in Portland. During his time in Portland, John Kavanagh finalised fund-raising for a church and oversaw its construction. Portland's first Catholic church was blessed and opened on 11 February 1848.

* All Saints Parish will celebrate its 175th Anniversary with a Parish Dinner at the Royal Hotel on Saturday August 27. An Anniversary Mass will be celebrated by the Bishop of Ballarat, Most Reverend Paul Bird, on Sunday August 28 at 10.30am. This will be followed by an Anniversary Luncheon at 12 noon, at Bayview College.



PORTLAND in 1847, when the population of the settlement was around 800 and religion loomed large in the lives of most people.

Picture: SUPPLIED

All Saints Parish – the early years

It is some 175 years since All Saints Parish was erected or proclaimed. This significant anniversary was celebrated in various ways last weekend.

The proclamation of the parish saw a parish priest appointed and led to the erection of a Catholic church on a prominent site overlooking Portland Bay. The brick structure, completed in 1848, served as Portland's Catholic Church for some fifteen years. It was the third Catholic Church constructed in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, which in 1850 became Victoria.

Religion played an important part in the lives of the people of Portland in those times. A large percentage of the settlement's population professed regularly worshipped.

Influential Portland Catholics

Whilst all major religions of the day were well represented in Portland, the Church of England was the established church. Portland was a generally tolerant settlement. Powerful and influential Portlanders of the Catholic persuasion included Police Magistrate James Blair and former Chief Constable, later entrepreneur, Tom Finn. Others of note included John Cronin, licensee of the Golden Fleece Hotel, Walter Birmingham, who pioneered the tanning industry in Portland, and a number of inland pastoralists.

By the mid-1850s, the Catholic population had grown substantially as part of a general increase in the settlement's population due to economic growth stimulated by the Victorian Gold rushes. In 1850, some 1000 people lived in Portland. By 1855, there were nearly 2500 people and by 1860 some 3000.

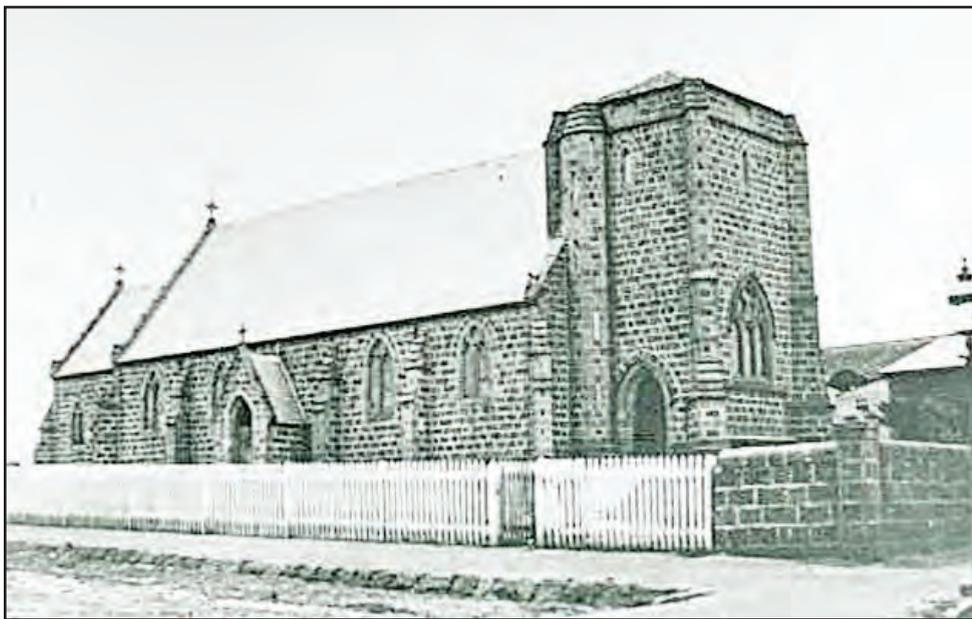
Larger church needed

A larger Catholic church was needed. Construction of All Saints Church commenced in 1857 and was completed in 1862. The relatively long time taken to complete the church was due to the challenges of financing its construction and a shortage of builders and stonemasons. The rapid growth and development experienced by the colony meant that there were many calls upon the skills of those who could construct public and private buildings of substance.

Be that as it may, on Sunday, 6 April 1862, All Saints was opened or dedicated by the Right Reverend Dr. Gould, Archbishop of Melbourne. It was a significant event in the life of Portland and the ceremony was most impressive. Some eight hundred people of all denominations were in attendance.

During the dedication, Portland's pre-eminent Catholic, Police Magistrate James Blair presented the church with a life-sized copy of Van Dyke's 'Crucifixion' and a fine cedar pulpit. This painting still graces All Saints.

Australia's first Catholic saint, Mary MacKillop, worshipped in All Saints between 1862 and 1866, and made key life-decisions there.



THE construction All Saint Church commenced in 1857 and was completed in 1862. The spire was added some 25 years later.

Picture: SUPPLIED

1887.

Church to school

The original church building then became a Catholic denominational school. In 1862, when the Victorian Common Schools Act was passed to unify the National and Denominational school systems, it became Portland Common School 510.

After 1872, when the Victorian Education Act and 'free, compulsory and secular' education came into being, Common School 510 became a Catholic denominational school. In 1885, the Loreto Order took over the school and the building became part of All Saints Primary School.

All Saints Church featured on many picture postcards over the years. These images show the interior has changed considerably over time, mainly in the interests of comfort and functionality.

One of the greatest changes to the church, however, was external in nature. In 1887, a striking iron spire was added. A newspaper of the day observed that the iron spire was 'the only one of its kind south of the line.'

Spire donor

This impressive addition was substantially paid for by prominent Catholic, businessman and pastoralist Owen O'Reilly. In 1885, shortly before his death, he donated £1000 towards the construction and erection of a spire. The balance required, some £300, was raised within the community.

The project was duly approved by the Bishop of Ballarat. The services of an architect, Mr. Bromfield of Hamilton, were retained and tender documents drawn up and tenders were called for. However, a closer examination of the church's foundations indicated that they could not carry the weight of a stone tower and spire.

Spire builder

In time, a contract for the construction and erection of a steel spire went to J. W. Horwood and the Albion Foundry, Castlemaine. The spire was to be some twenty-one metres from the base to its highest point. The high point, including its richly gilded cross, would be some forty metres from the ground.

Works commenced in early 1887 and progressed quickly. So hazardous was the work due to strong winds that 'at times the workmen were tied to their work, with ropes.' Works were successfully completed in March,

Guardian report

The *Portland Guardian* of 21 March 1887 declared that 'Mr. Horwood has reason, indeed to be proud of his beautiful piece of handiwork. It is a new and novel design in architecture, and his anxiety was great to make it a success. He spared not time, trouble, or expense in drawing the plans and designs to bring it to perfection. To Mr. Sheehan, the foreman, very great credit is due. In fact the success of the work, and the perfection of the building, depended in great measure on his exertions.'

Furthermore, the *Guardian* asserted, 'All Saints' Church is now an ornament to Portland, and will no doubt attract many visitors, and...it will be the most finished and perfect Catholic Church in the colonies.' The spire contributed to All Saints church becoming one of Portland's most striking and impressive buildings.



ALL Saints Church Portland, with its spire. The steel spire was added to the church in 1887.

Picture: SUPPLIED

All Saints Parish – the later years

It is some 175 years since All Saints Parish was erected or proclaimed.

This significant anniversary was recently celebrated in various ways.

The addition of the spire to All Saints church in 1887 saw it become one of Portland's most striking and impressive buildings. It also became a landmark enabling mariners to safely make their way into the port. Local fishermen in particular used it as a navigational point of reference.

Postcards and photos

As a building of substance, the church routinely featured on visitor souvenirs including picture postcards, postcard folders and collections of snapshots or photographs. Postcard publishers such as the Rose Stereographic Company, Valentine Publishing Company, Nucolorvue and Murray Views all included All Saints church on their postcards over the years.

As well, in the 1930s and 1940s photographers from the big firms of Rose and Valentine gained access to the spire to take panoramic photographs of the bay and harbour, and of Portland looking north to the lighthouse. Local photographers and postcard publishers Toye Brothers also took photographs from the spire.

Examples of postcards including views from the spire include Rose's 'The Deep Water Pier', 'Bird's-Eye View of Portland' and 'Looking Towards Lighthouse Bluff'. Valentine examples included 'The Harbour, Portland Victoria', whilst Toye Bros had 'Panoramic View of Portland'.

Centenary celebrations

A significant event in the history of All Saints was the 1944 centenary of the first Catholic mass celebrated in Portland. All Saints Parish celebrated the anniversary with an impressive

program of events including a Parish Fete and Exposition, celebratory masses, a Grand Centenary Ball, a Parish Reunion, a play by Loreto pupils and an impressive publication.

The year 1962 saw the centenary of the completion of the construction of All Saints, accompanied by celebrations appropriate to the occasion.

The late 1970s saw the All Saints slate roof replaced. A few years later, during the Portland-Victoria 150th in 1984, the church loomed large during the Portland celebrations by being illuminated at night. This was particularly impressive on the night of the foreshore bonfire.

Mary MacKillop

In 1995, the parish celebrated the Beatification of Mary MacKillop, later to become Australia's first Catholic Saint. Mary MacKillop is a famous woman, a famous Australian and a famous Portlander. The beatification celebrations included walk tours of sites linked to her time in Portland, a history forum, the showing of the film 'Mary' and other events. Many people of all denominations attended the commemorative mass in the Portland Civic Centre. The Mary MacKillop-themed stained glass windows at the eastern end of All Saints Church were also commissioned at this time.

In the late 1990s, the decision was made to amalgamate All Saints Primary School and MacKillop Primary School, with the new entity known as All Saints Parish Primary School. The process was completed in good time for the 2003 school year. All Saints Parish Primary School is said to be the second oldest Catholic primary school in Victoria.

All Saints church saw an impressive mass held in 2009 to acknowledge the centenary of the death of Mary MacKillop. It was celebrated by the Bishop of Ballarat and

attended by people of all religions.

The canonisation of Saint Mary MacKillop towards the end of 2010 was also a major event in the life of All Saint Parish. The *Portland Observer* included an 8-page special supplement and a souvenir poster in its 15 October issue. The book *Mary MacKillop's Portland Years 1862-1866* was launched

Spire replaced

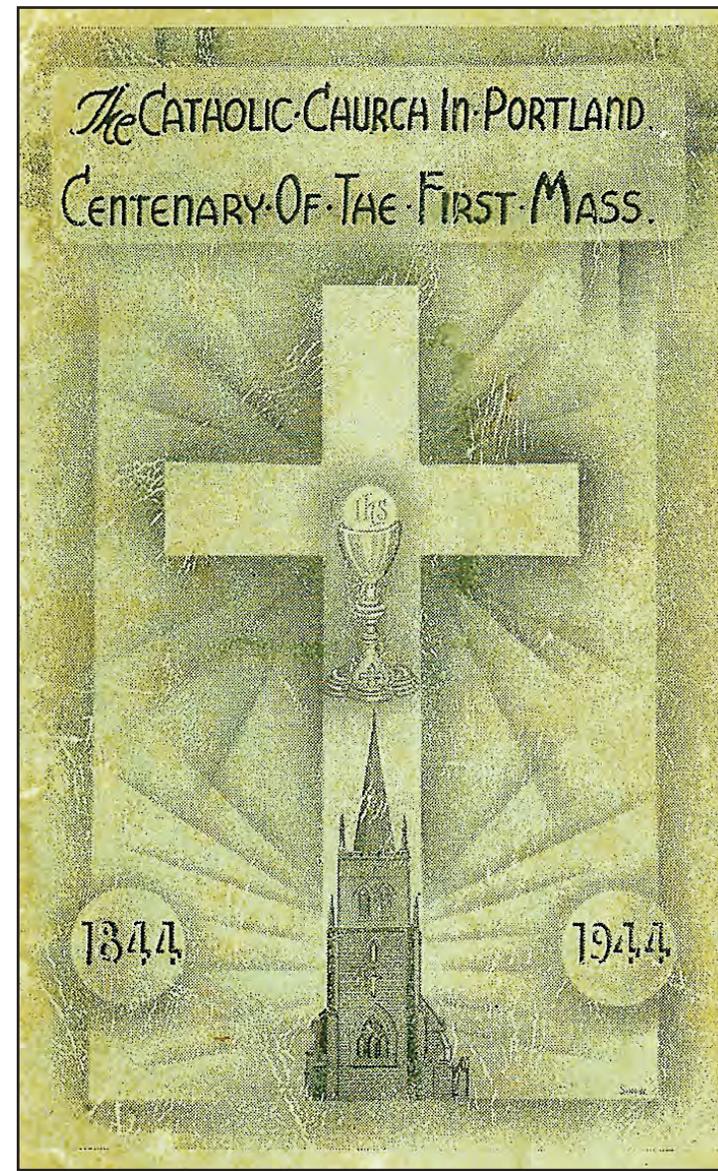
The year 2012 saw the 150th anniversary of the completion of the construction of All Saints church. By this time planning was well underway to replace its ageing spire. These plans became reality on Friday 31 January 2014.

January 2016 saw the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Mary MacKillop's departure from Portland. A special mass was celebrated by the Bishop of Ballarat. The years Mary spent in Portland between 1862 and 1866 were very formative years. She gained her first experience of formal teaching, learning how to teach, organise large classes, develop curriculum, and administer a school. She also encountered major challenges and reverses during her time in Portland. Above all, Mary made momentous decisions about her future—to adopt a deeply spiritual and religious way of life and to work for the good of others.

Recent developments

Recent years have seen considerable re-development of the parish precinct. In 2017 the slates of the storm-damaged roof were replaced with quality Welsh slate. As well, the 1858-1957 presbytery was replaced, new parish offices were constructed and a range of site works completed.

And, of course, we had the recent 175th anniversary of the establishment of All Saints Parish.



A MAJOR event in the history of All Saints was the 1944 centenary of the first mass celebrated in Portland. The celebrations included this publication.

Picture: SUPPLIED



DURING the twentieth century All Saints church regularly featured on picture postcards including this Rose Stereographic Company card from the 1950s.

Picture: SUPPLIED