

A Summary of Jubilee Celebrations

During September, 1974, the 50th Anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church at Mullwa, was celebrated. Plans for the jubilee celebrations got under way several months prior to the actual events, and commenced with the appointment of an organising committee by the Parish Council. This original committee consisted of the parish council president, Phil Keefe, together with messrs A. J. Keefe, R. Weir and mesdames P. Mills, D. Bone & B. Thomas.

This committee met for the first time in March at the presbytery, and fired with the enthusiasm generated by the parish priest - Monsignor E. Bayan - began discussing what form the celebrations would take. Mons. Bayan put forward a proposed programme, and with a few slight alterations this programme proved ideal. It comprised the following - a mass & luncheon on 5th September for all Presentation Sisters who had ever taught in Mullwa, and on September 19th a special mass for the children, a clergy dinner & a Jubilee Ball. On Friday, 20th September, conducted tours of the mass locks, old cemetery, and church and Priesthouse were planned. These tours were to be followed by a Jubilee Dinner for past and present parishioners. A solemn Pontifical High mass was planned to follow the dinner at 5.30 p.m. and then a barbecue at 7.00 p.m.

From the very commencement of planning, it was obvious that all parishioners shared the enthusiasm of the committee in their organising the forthcoming events. A wonderful spirit was evident among the Catholic

community, with help being given willingly & uninstinctively.

The committee began meeting weekly when the celebration time neared & others to join the organisers were messrs L. Keffe, K. Butler, P. Barden, - mesdames J. Docherty & M. Weir, & M. Barnuthens.

Perhaps the most time consuming task was compiling lists of past parishioners. As names came to mind they were added to the list (which seemed to be never ending) assistance from some of the older identities was enlisted in an effort to include names of those not remembered or even known to most of the committee. It was surprising that so many people had, at some time been members of the Catholic community in Mullwa in the past 50 years. After weeks of collecting names, the task of finding addresses began. This proved more difficult than the names to acquire. When at last, our invitation list was complete, invitations were forwarded.

While awaiting replies to the invitations various sub-committees were formed to deal with each function. To begin with, the dinner for the sisters was organised by mesdames J. Docherty, E. Leinberg, L. Keffe, M. Barnuthens, D. Bone & M. Keffe. This sub-committee did an excellent job & the dinner was a wonderful success. Prior to the dinner a mass was offered by a past pupil of the Mullwa Convent - Monsignor J. Barden. Monsignor Barden gave a very lovely sermon, which was appreciated by the 23 Sisters present, as well as the rest of the congregation. A feature of the mass was the wonderful singing by all present. Following mass the Sisters gathered on the lawns outside the church where they were given the opportunity

of renewing acquaintances with many of their former pupils. The sisters had journeyed from many parts of the State, and very few were unable to attend. Telegrams & souvenir booklets were sent to those sisters, who had taught in hullwa & were unable to attend. One of the sisters' past pupils, Mr Glen Keffe (who had attended the school from its inception in 1915) prepared a vote of thanks to the sisters. Following the dinner, the sisters returned to Geraldton, to make their way back to their various convents. All voted it a most enjoyable day.

On Thursday 19th Sept a special mass for the children was celebrated at 9.30 am. Father Louse offered this mass & spoke at length to the packed Church. His sermon was most interesting & enjoyed by all. As well as 120 children from the convent attending, many from the hullwa Junior High School also attended. The mass took the form of a Solemn mass with Kenny Keenan and Laurette Denize playing guitars. The mass was concelebrated by Father J. Mc Carthy from Victoria and Father B. Ahearn from Newman, together with Father Louse, who came from Pt. Hedland.

At 6 p.m. on Thursday 19th Sept. thirty three members of the clergy were invited to a dinner. This was held in the T.V. room of the old convent and was catered for by sisters and parishioners. Mesdames L. Keffe and M. Carstairs set up the tables for this occasion & Mr Hechey & Messrs R. Weir and Tim Freeman attended to the liquid refreshments. Mrs D. Bone helped the sisters organise the food.

The Jubilee Ball was held on Thursday 19th Sept, and commenced at 8 p.m. Much thought and work had gone into the preparation

of the decorations for this Ball. The decorations which were branches of artificial peach blossoms, with peach and aqua streamers were a replica of those used many years before at the annual Catholic Nels Balls many hours were spent at the home of Mrs. D. Bone several weeks prior to the ball, by groups of ladies painstakingly making the tiny peach blossoms & attaching them to the branches. Mrs. Keith Bone's help was invaluable regarding this task. He remembered exactly how each blossom & streamer was to be placed. Some of the ladies who were regular keepers at these afternoons were Mesdames M. Mc Cracken, J. Keeffe, M. Lewis, J. Docherty, B. Bone, M. Cannuthers, L. O'Brien, B. Thomas, M. Harken, L. Jefferson, E. Butler, E. O'Brien, P. Keeffe, L. Keeffe, M. Lane, W. Steele, P. Mills, & Miss N. Bryan, & of course Mrs. D. Bone. The decorations were erected in the hall the day before the ball & helpers there were Mesdames, K. Bone, K. Mills, J. Keeffe, B. Bone, P. Keeffe, J. Keeffe, P. Butler, K. Butler & Mesdames D. Bone, B. Thomas, E. Butler, P. Mills - Miss S. Long. Music for the Ball was supplied by Ted Danishes band from Wrenawa. A very enjoyable floor show of exhibition ballroom dancing was staged by dancers from Wileen Dawson's School of Dancing at Geraldton. The supper for the ball and the Jubilee Dinner was excellently catered for by Mrs. Kennedy of Geraldton. Over 300 past & present parishioners attended the ball, and the very happy, friendly atmosphere which had been evident from the beginning of the celebrations was once again to the fore. It was so heartening to see visitors from all parts of the state, and even in a couple of instances from other states. We all felt the meetings, and all the work had been well

week, while the M.C. for the Ball was Mr. H. Sharry who in a large way was responsible for the smooth running of the evening. Tickets at \$5 each had been sold prior to the ball, and Mr. P. Barden was in charge of this department. Visitors and locals alike voted the Ball a resounding success.

Friday the 20th Sept. at 10 a.m. was the time for the conducted tour of the Mass Rocks, Old Cemetery, the Church - Priesthouse. Many visitors availed themselves of this opportunity to return to visit these places. Bars & drinks were at their disposal and Messrs Bent Keppe - A. Weir helped out here.

At 1 p.m. The Town Hall was the venue for the Jubilee Dinner. Over 280 people attended this function, which was organised extremely well, down to the last detail. Everyone was issued with large name tags on entering the hall, and as was the case at the Ball the night before people everywhere were excitedly greeting old friends not seen for many years. The sub-committee in charge of this function was ~~Miss~~^{messrs.} A. Weir, A. Cream, K. Weir, P. Barden, A. Haslett, B. Weir, J. Freeman, K. McLuffe & B. Bone. The M.C. was Mr. H. Sharry & drinks waiters were Messrs. G. Keppe, J. Keppe, A. Bone, & P. Thomas.

During the afternoon the President of the Parish Council, Mr. P. Keppe officially welcomed the guests. Mr. Bent Keppe then gave a wonderful account of the history of the Parish, and Mr. J. Ballaghan told some amusing anecdotes of the past. The most Rev. J. P. O'Connell, a former Bishop of Geraldton, and now living at Ballarat spoke of his association of many years with Mons. Hawes. The dinner drew to a close at about 3.30 & guests then took the opportunity to browse through many old photographs of people and events in the parish. These photos were on display at other events during the celebrations & were collected & prepared

for display by Mrs L. Keefe & Mr. McCracken.

At 5.30 p.m. on Friday the 20th September, was, as has been described many times since, the highlight of the Jubilee Celebrations, the Solemn Pontifical High Mass. This was one of the most awe inspiring services ever conducted in our 50 year old church. Seventeen clergy took part with the main principal celebrant being Bishop F.X. Thomas of Geraldton, together with Concelebrants Bishop O'Connell of Ballarat, and our own parish priest Monsignor E. Bryan. Others to assist were Fathers Lowe, Ahearn, Moffat, O'Shaherty, Fitzgerald, Newglass, Curran, McEneaney, Lonsdale, Bagnall, McWilliams, Cashman, and McBarthly. Altar boys were Duane Bell, Benedict Docherty, Anthony Docherty, Philip Docherty, Brett Stille, L. Keefe & P. Lynch. Master of ceremonies was Monsignor Barden and assistant M.C. was Mr. Peter Sharry. The Readings of the Mass were carried out by Mr. L. Keefe & Mr. Docherty, while the Petitions of the Prayers of the Faithful were read by Mesdames P. Mills, W. Bone, P. Keefe & B. O'Brien & Messrs R. Weir, C. Bone, & Mr. Thomas. The Offertory Procession was taken up by Mesdames Mr. McCracken, Mr. O'Brien, Mrs. J. Ventura, & Brother Morgan. Ushers for the Mass were Messrs R. Desmond, L. Keefe, C. Keefe, K. Sharry, A. Cream, J. Ventura & B. Barnuthers. The crowd packed the church & overflowed into the grounds. External seating and amplification were used to cater for the many, many, people unable to be accommodated inside. Mrs. L. Keefe & Mrs. B. O'Brien who had so ably arranged the flowers for the sisters Mass, had done the same for this Mass. The singing ~~was~~ could only be described as inspired and was certainly a credit to the Children's Choir, Sisters Helenes, and Damian & Mrs. Kay Bone. The organist was Mrs. J. Cream who was as usual

indispensable even all the Church functions.

Altogether this Solemn Pontifical High Mass was an event which will long be remembered in our Parish.

At 1 p.m. it was back to the Hall once more where barbecues had been set up on the adjoining lanes & ^{Mr. O. Winter was in charge, and} several parishioners had donated sheep, 600 bread rolls were bought, together with large quantities of drinks for all ages, and tastes. In a very informal, relaxed mood, between 500 - 600 men, women & children enjoyed this final function. The weather was perfect and although the cooks were somewhat overworked, everyone had plenty to eat & drink. Those who stayed as cooks on this occasion were Mesdames L. O'Brien, M. Harkin, ^{M. Stealy,} G. O'Brien, ^{M. Keefe,} Messrs K. Mills & ^{B. Barrett,} J. McHardy.

Whilst the barbecue was in progress, Monsignor Bryan had organised a replay of the T.V. Documentary "The Stones lay Out" in the adjoining hall. Many people, who had not had the advantage of watching this on T.V. earlier now took this opportunity.

At a late hour the tired but happy crowd reluctantly headed home.

At a meeting a few weeks after these events it was decided that a record be kept for future reference and interest in years to come. It was felt that to help parishioners planning any other such events in the future we would point out mistakes or omissions we had made. It was generally felt that although the Jubilee Celebrations had been very well organised a few matters could have improved things a little. It was regretted that a Public Relations officer had not been appointed to the committee. Journalists from newspapers in Geraldton should have been invited to give the publicity events such

as these justly merited. It was also unfortunate that tape recordings of speeches had not been made. Some speeches, especially that of Mr. Bent Keeffe at the jubilee dinner was outstanding. The display of old photographs created much interest, but it was felt that many more people could have given photos for display, also those displayed should have been more carefully name tagged. At this meeting Mr. H. Sharry moved that the President, Mr. P. Keeffe & Secretary Mrs. D. Bone together with the historical research committee be officially thanked for their work, & also all committee members.

In compiling this summary (if anything so lengthy can be termed "a summary") I have endeavoured to mention the main helpers for each function. No doubt, my memory being quite unreliable at times, I have inadvertently left many people out. For this I apologise sincerely. However the person behind the whole idea, & the one who inspired us all with his enthusiasm & optimism was our beloved parish priest Monsignor E. Bryan. Whatever problems any member of the committee put before him he faced with an attitude of "it'll work itself out" & sure enough, it always did. I do not wish to start naming people again or I will fill this book, but my account would be incomplete without a mention of our president, Phil Keeffe. He was faced with an enormous task, which he fulfilled admirably. Although everyone was always willing to help in anyway, Phil was the mainstay of all the organisation. One aspect of the organising that seemed remarkable was the way in which people worked together. Everyone seemed anxious to do anything they were asked, and more

often than not, they didn't have to be asked. A wonderful community spirit prevailed from our very first committee meeting to the cleaning up of the Hall on the Saturday morning, following the barbecue!

Although the foregoing events were the official jubilee celebrations, the annual school sports were held on the 15th October and being the jubilee year it was decided to make this a rather special sports day & call it the jubilee sports. Over 120 children participated and were divided into three factions, with as would be expected for a golden jubilee, Gold faction, captained by Cheryl O'Brien, winning. Red, captained by Pauline Eakins was second and Blue captained by Paula Mills was third. Over 50 events were held and the following children were champions. Senior girl - tie between A. Eakins & P. Mills, Senior boy. Greg. Brown, Intermediate girl Alana Keeffe, Intermediate boy, tie between M. Wall & M. Barrett. Junior girl champion was N. Lyman and Junior boy - A. Keeffe. At the close of the day, children were given ice creams, cool drinks & sweets.

The conclusion of the jubilee sports brought to a close the celebrations for the jubilee. However, the memories of these events will be in the minds of many for many years to come.

P. Mills