

SACRED HEART

St. Albans

1953-1978



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Introduction

This booklet is to mark the opening of our new church in St Albans — our parish Mass centre. It falls into three sections, the past, the present and the future.

It is good, while we are celebrating our achievements, to remember and give thanks for the great people who went before us. I am thinking especially of Fr Reis, the priests, the sisters, Fred Barnard, Gerald Kennedy and Dan Gavaghan, and all the people who took part in the early days of St Albans parish. There were the newcomers (many of them newly arrived migrants) and the original families from the time St Albans was a rural area; all of us here now have much to thank these people for.

The past contains pain and failure as well as joy and achievement. Because people were able to grow through their failures, we are in the position we are in today.

Memories are precious. There are many stories in St Albans — maybe more than most places — and all those separate stories are woven together in the story of our parish family. By remembering our past and where we have come from, we help to find our place in the present, and to live the present more fully. Through memory, we can learn and take to heart the lessons of the past. When we remember, we realize how much we have to give thanks for. In memory we become aware of God's action in our life stories, of his care and his presence (particularly in those situations that seemed most dark and dangerous at the time).

How can we give thanks for what has happened in St Albans, unless we stop and remember and realize just what has happened? How can we find our way in the future, if we don't know where we have come from? How can we trust God now and in the future, if we never stop to become aware of his love and concern in the past? So quite a few of the following pages are given to remembering the past.

A Special Message

St Albans sounds a holy place. Its very name is a challenge. It is a reminder that its citizens would seek to do the will of God throughout their lives. The present publication records a brief silver link with the history of man's response to God's love.

The St Albans story is a remarkable history, of which the people of St Albans can be justly proud. It is a true story of people like you and me who underwent great hardships and responded to great demands to make this parish of the Sacred Heart such a strong community of faith, hope and love.

However, it is also in the process of growth. The opening of the new church this year is but another step forward. The glory of the past gives us courage and confidence to step forward into the future.

May God continue to bless that enterprise.
His Grace Archbishop Little

Right now in the present, we have many new things to be grateful for. People have become more aware of parish community involvement. The tremendous generosity of time and money to build the new church and renovate the old shows this community involvement. We priests appreciate the executive the people gave us to oversee the building of the church: Dan Gavaghan (President), John Kennedy (Secretary), Mark Zitterschlager (Treasurer) and Robert Sheen for legal advice. We thank these men for their support, leadership and advice.

We want to thank also the various committees, especially the Works Committee under the leadership of Frank Leckie, and also the Finance, Social, Mothers' Club and Fund-Raising Committees. We are grateful to Terry Mochon and Anton Utri for their sense of dedication in supervising the building since Fred Barnard's illness.

When the first church in St Albans was opened, in 1954, Fr Reis said:

Here in St Albans we are bothered and worried by the earthly problems of constructing and paying for our church buildings, the figures of the City of God, but we must lift up our eyes and our hearts and see above all the true City of God, that community of people united in the love of Christ and in the love of one another.

We still have the same task ahead of us, to create that community of love.

As Christians we don't only remember the story of our own lives and our own parish. We remember, in the Eucharist, Christ and his way of life and his challenge to us. Through the Eucharist in our Parish Family, we know we'll be given the conviction to make our dreams of the future come true.

It has fallen to us, Fr O'Reilly and Fr Denis, to be involved in the leadership of St Albans parish at this milestone in its history.

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve.

Denis Mangan

John O'Reilly



The Executive Committee. From left: John Kennedy, Dan Gavaghan and Mark Zitterschlager.



Fr Denis Mangan and Fr O'Reilly.

St. Albans in the Early Days

I was born in 1925. I arrived in St Albans in 1926 when my Dad brought us here. The first Catholic religion to come to St Albans was the Sunday School on the corner of Fox and Afreida Streets in the house run by two sisters, the Becks. They had a big house with quite a big shed at the back. There are two women still living in St Albans who used to run the Sunday School. Their maiden names were Mary and Elsa Stein. Mary Stein's name is now Mrs Smith. Elsa Stein married Ernie Fry. They taught us Sunday School in the shed at Beck's place. I can remember Jackie Douglas, Edna Power, Phil Rowan and the Saleebas.

Mass was at Sunshine at 11 o'clock. To go to Mass we had to catch a train at 10 o'clock. Then we used to walk home unless someone came along. Mr Rowan had a car, and later, Mr Gavaghan came along. He had a horse and jinker and we used to get a ride.

Round about 1934 or '35 we started to get a monthly Mass in St Albans in the old

Mechancis Institute. We used to have everything there, from pictures to Mass. Confessions were held behind a partition in the front of the hall before Mass. We'd all arrive about quarter of an hour before Mass was due to start and we'd be looking for Fr Fennessy to come on his motor bike from Sunshine. Then he'd go in and hear confessions. After Fr Fennessy was Fr Ryder, and in between was a Maltese priest Fr Chanter.

Mrs Stein used to look after the church, wash the vestments and all those things. Later, Delia Gavaghan took over that job.

Sr Clare and Sr Marie used to come from Sunshine. They were the first sisters who came to St Albans. Sr Marie was the head sister at Sunshine. That was about 1939-40. They ran a Sunday School.

Fr Ryder got sick and I can still remember the day that Fr Reis came. He was put up by Mrs Steedman at the Deer Park Hotel. He stood up and he said, 'I'm your new Parish Priest. My name is Reis but it's spelt like Rice. So you can please yourself how you take it.' We all stood and cheered and clapped. Those days it was just one little homely place, a little church.

Joe Farrugia

The site of St Albans Parish, 1952



Gerard Kennedy was a great man. He had a very good influence on many people, especially the children who went through the school. He was headmaster of St Albans Central School. For many migrants Gerard Kennedy was the first real Australian they had anything to do with.

He was a very decent Christian man. He had very sound judgement and I relied greatly on his judgement and advice. He always, very carefully, kept out of the lime-light.

Fr Reis

When we first came here, Easter 1938, there was just a hall. We used to have Mass in the hall, and the priest used to come from Sunbury. There were two or three shops and the railway station, and paddocks.

Before St Albans was made a parish, a separate parish, we were tied to Sunshine. A group of us went down to Sunshine one night and tried to get the parish there to buy blocks of land in St Albans for a church. They were eighty pounds a block then. They hunted us out of the place.

Tom Hewitt

We didn't have any made roads. It was all mud. There was no electricity. When we went to work we used to leave all our muddy boots underneath the seat on the station and change our shoes on the train. We'd leave the boots and they'd still be there when we got home. There were no roads or footpaths at all and the drains were all open.

Maureen Leckie

We came first to St Albans from Brunswick in 1934. We had three children. My wife thought Brunswick was too congested and we'd get out a bit. Each place we looked, we went to the church and we said a prayer for guidance. We found a place out here that suited us perfectly — a weatherboard house, a little land, a few cows, 400 hens and a pony and spring cart. I was told there was Mass in the Mechanics Hall every Sunday. The very day after we moved in was Sunday, but when we turned up, the Hall was closed. We drove down to Sunshine in the spring cart and found that Mass in St Albans was only once a year!

It's incredible to think that in such a short time we've progressed from what it was — four to five families to what it is now. When His Grace told me that we'd have our own parish in a short time I thought he was starting to wander.

Dan Gavaghan



The presbytery is one of the oldest houses in St Albans. It was built for Mr A. H. Padley, a councillor in Kellie and Braybrook Shires. Named 'Keogh's', the house was later sold to Mr John Ellis. Mr Stenson bought it in 1927 and took up residence there in July 1928. He lived there till his death in June 1956.

When the parish bought the land that included Keogh's, it was at first intended to pull down the old house as it was in very bad repair. It was Fred Burnand who declared it sound enough to restore.



Every Sunday we went to Sunshine in the pony and spring cart. Fr Fennessy was there first and then Fr Ryder came. He said he would try to help and asked me to find out how many Catholic families there were. I found four or five families. I was agitating for Mass every Sunday.

My daughters Mary and Delia used to fix up the altar for the priest, to come. Fr Gilhooley was at Trentham and he used to come up.

In 1952 I went down to Queenscliff with my family. On the way down I was reading the paper and I saw that His Grace, Archbishop Mannix, was staying at Queenscliff, and it was his 88th birthday. The first thing we did after we arrived was to go and find the church and pay a visit there. When we came outside I happened to see His Grace on the verandah of the presbytery and because he was looking straight at me, and it was his birthday, I went up and spoke to him.

We talked of several things, and he said, 'You will have your own parish there before too long'. I've often thought of that.

Dan Gavaghan

I remember how featureless the place was. On the first parish visitation we went from back door to back door. Everyone lived in bungalows. There were no numbers and no fences. It seemed to be an area of identical and anonymous houses. One priest friend said to me, 'This will be a slum in the future'. I thought, 'It won't be. These people won't settle for that.'

Fr Reis

Fr Heriot was the curate at Sunshine when I came. He used to ride down on his push-bike to celebrate Mass at the picture theatre. I remember the seats were those flip-back picture-theatre seats. Sometimes when you sat down there was no seat there.

St Francis

My mother used to collect the block collection. She started it off. Then I used to help her. Then later, when I was about ten or eleven my twin brother and I would go all over St Albans collecting two shillings from people. We used to go in the horse and jinker.

Frank Leckie



In October 1954, the ninety year old Archbishop Mannix, visited St Albans for the opening of the Church, Convent, Presbytery and School.

The place was all hammering and banging at the weekend. You went to bed Saturday night and when you woke up Sunday morning someone had built a shack next door to you.

Terry Mochon

The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed . . . the smallest of all seeds. But when it is grown it becomes a tree and the birds of the air come and shelter in its branches.

Matthew 13:31-32

When people look back on their lives they see that The Presence has been there all the way through, though we are often not aware of it.

Fr. O'Reilly

Migrating to Australia

I come from Ukrainia. I was in Germany during the war. After the war we decided to come to a new country because we didn't want to go back to a country with a Communist regime. We had a choice of America, Canada and some other places. Australia was my choice. I came in 1949. We had one daughter and son and there was another child on the way. She was born three months after coming to Australia.

I came first to Adelaide, and then in 1953 I came here to St. Albans. My daughter went to Mt Lofty Catholic School in Adelaide. When we came here there was no Catholic school and I sent her to Sunshine. She was one year there before she started school at St Albans Catholic School.

When I came to St Albans they had just started building. I didn't know many people here. I met Tom Hewitt's boys, Dan Gavaghan, Darcy Smith and Charlie Farrugia. We were very happy to have found something.

I remember the first Mass after the start of the church. There was no roof, no floor.

Fr Reis was very good to us. He would speak to migrants. We didn't understand one word of English, but Fr Reis tried with us, the best he could. He visited our houses, came to us at all times. He was friendly to us.

We didn't have a penny in our pocket when we came here. We started work, and we were working very hard, shift work. I was working at Olympic Tyre, overtime always. We bought the block of land. I paid two hundred pounds for my block of land because there were roads already made and there was water laid on. I started building my house, putting up the frame and the roof, and weatherboards around. We finished a couple of rooms with plaster and a floor. We were living in that for years and years. We had no stove, we were cooking on a kerosene primus stove. We had no bath. I brought from Europe an iron bath, and we

were boiling water in the copper and washing that way. We had to be careful the neighbours couldn't see, because there was no fence or anything.

The milkman used to go through, not on the road, but straight through the paddocks, between the houses. I remember I was digging the garden at the front, growing cabbages. They were great big cabbages. Not one cabbage did we get. The cows came and ate them. The lot! I went to the farmer and argued with him — the best I could with the little English I had — and he said to me, 'Put a fence if you like'. And that's all. I could do nothing.

We were very hard working people in those times, the people coming into St. Albans. We were working at work, working at home, and Fr Reis was calling us to work at the church, and we were working there.

Bill Bazaluk

I came from Poland, but I was in Germany in the war, a prisoner. The Germans took us to work in Germany. I was there four years. After Germany I was in a camp, an All Nations camp. After a few years people started to emigrate.



St Albans is the only place in the State of Victoria where so many migrants from all nationalities were able to come together to build a parish and forget all their hatreds of the last war.

Terry Mochon

It grew very fast. It started with fifty to eighty families and grew to what it is now.

Anto Utri

Most people wanted to go to America, Brazil, places like that. We thought we might be able to go back to Poland. In the meantime a big emigration came to Australia.

We came to Australia in 1950 and went straight to Bonegilla Camp. We got to Bonegilla before Christmas and stayed in the camp about three weeks. After that we went to the Employment Office and got a job. We got food and ten shillings unemployment allowance in the camp. It was very good for us. I was working in Shepparton fruit picking. I was there six weeks in the fruit season. Then I went to Werribee Metropolitan Board of Works Farm. I was there about two years.

In the meantime, 1953 or the start of 1954, I bought a block of land in St Albans near the station and I started to build my house. I started my house from three rooms and now I have a very nice house. We have everything now. We had one child when we came and one child was born in Somers Camp. I'm here in Australia 27 years now.

Peter Sroka

I was 18 when I came to Australia in 1950. I grew up in Yugoslavia. Before that I was in a Displaced Persons camp in Austria for four years. In the camp there was fear and uncertainty. We didn't know what the future held for us and there was always the danger of being sent back to our own countries which were under Communist regimes.

For us kids there was not much schooling. I was about form two or three level. We had to build our own school by rebuilding a barracks. There was very little heating. In Autumn we used all go and gather pine cones from the forests to use for heating in winter.

We lived on starvation rations. We used to have a cup of coffee for breakfast and a slice of bread. For lunch there was soup — that was water with a little potato or a few strands of macaroni or bits of meat. Nothing much solid. For tea we had coffee and a slice of bread. Sometimes there'd be a little fish on it or something.

On Sunday we would get a little cube of butter on our bread — about half an inch cubed. People would all sit down together and eat that bread and drink that coffee as if it was a sacred meal or a special feast.

People used to work for the farmers around the area. Many of the husbands and sons were killed or lost in the war, so the women were trying to run the farms by themselves. They would pay a bag of potatoes for a week's work, or some other payment of food. Money was worth nothing.

There was a fair amount of happiness in the camp. Religiously it was great. People lived like the early Christians: sharing, helping each other, with no envy or jealousy. People's physical health was very good. You couldn't get a drink or a smoke. Mental health was very good too.

When we came to Australia, most people were looking for security. We wanted sufficient food, a better standard of living. We wanted to have proper clothes. Freedom was also something we wanted after being in camps where we were restricted to a one mile radius from the camp, or maybe no movement at all, like a prisoner.

I learnt lots of things from the whole war and migration experience. I remember the co-operation and sharing and helping each other. The absence of material goods in many ways made us better persons. It made me realise that co-operation and sharing are more important than material goods.

Mark Zitterschlager





Fr Reis had a great depth of spirituality. His understanding of the migrant people was other-worldly. It grew out of his spirituality. He had a great devotion to the Mass and Our Lady which carried him through. He always worked to unite the nationalities. He talked of 'our people — my people', while he encouraged people to remember and keep up their national days and customs. The migrant chaplains were always welcome and blessing the Easter foods was very important to people.

Sr Francis

ASSISTANT PASTORS

To the Priests who through their service and dedication have built up the Family of God — the real 'Temple of the living God' — in St Albans, we say thank you. We stand on the shoulders of those who went before and what has been achieved now is a result of the foundations laid by the dedicated team of priests who have served the Parish.

Augustine Sheehan

Leo Pascoe

John Nicholson

Val Noone

Leo Gilfedder

John O'Reilly

Brian McMahon

Barry Tobin

Anthony Guelen

Stephen Sas

John Van Suylen

Denis Minogue

Desmond Panton

The First Church

The first church was built by voluntary labour under the direction of Jim Frazer, who was a builder from Sunshine. We were a small parish then. The newly arrived migrants did a lot of the work. The church was made of poured concrete. Jim Frazer used to leave instructions of what was to be done and the work teams would work after their ordinary work and at weekends. To see the framework grow really impressed on me the determination the parishioners had at that time.

The personality of Fr Reis had a lot to do with it. He was still young. He had had experience with men in the war years. He had tremendous spirit and he fostered this among other people.

Dan Gavaghan

On the first day we had Mass in the church instead of the Mechanics Hall, we marched in procession from the hall to the church. Fr Reis carried the Blessed Sacrament and we had Benediction, with a big overflow of people out in the grounds.

On Good Fridays the big crosses were always placed outside in the grounds and then we made the Stations of the Cross in a big open air procession. Bob Mlewski did a lot of work setting up the crosses.

Dave Rowan

We used to go to all these unmade streets and knock on every door to find out if they were Catholics or not. Afterwards Fr Reis would be ankle deep in the slimy mud from the drains. Fr Reis called it the easy way of taking the census. That was because in most parishes the census was taken by the priest alone. But here, we shared the job. When we met a Catholic family we would ask would they like the priest to call. When Fr Reis called he would always bless the family. At the same time he would start to get to know the family.

Dave Rowan

Blessing the family was a European custom, certainly it was popular in Poland and the Ukraine. I don't know about Germany. It was something that meant a lot to New Australians. Another thing Father did that meant a lot to us was blessing food for Easter. New Australians used to come on Easter Saturday. Now everybody comes, Australians too, and has some food blessed for Easter.

Bill Bazaluk

At the Easter Celebrations one year we were having the Stations of the Cross outside. We had a very sophisticated system of loudspeakers and microphones set up everywhere. The choir was outside in the yard and Fr Reis was coming to the vital part of the ceremony. Dave Rowan thought the microphone was turned off in the church and all of a sudden we heard his voice amplified over the microphone singing, 'If I could sing like Bing ...'

Dan Gavaghan

Mrs Leckie was the first lady who used to do the block collection. She used to do it all on her own. Later it was divided up. I remember I had three or four streets to do and I used to collect on Sundays after Mass. It was a very small collection, 30 cents, 40 cents. If you got one dollar, that was big money. One time I brought home thirty pounds. Fr Reis said, 'Oh, that's a good collection.'

Peter Sroka



Left to right, Peter Sroka, Joe de Galavito, Joe d'Agata, Fred Bernard and Alvin Smolerek.



The Sisters, the School

Sacred Heart School opened in February 1954 with an enrolment of 180 children and 4 classrooms. It grew rapidly.

1955 enrolment 350, 3 new classrooms.

1956 enrolment 650, 2 new classrooms.

1957 enrolment 860, 4 new classrooms.

The Sisters of St. Joseph established the school and still maintain it. The first teaching Sisters were: Sisters Francis, Clare, Thomas, Josephine, Leonard and Margaret. Sr M. Maro and Sr M. Basil looked after the convent.

The early lay teachers were Mrs Clark, Mrs Block, Mrs O'Sullivan, Miss M. Gavaghan, M. O'Brien, K. O'Shannessy, D. Lee, J. Ciavola, M. Turner, M. Courtney, M. Tobin and Mrs Mahoney.

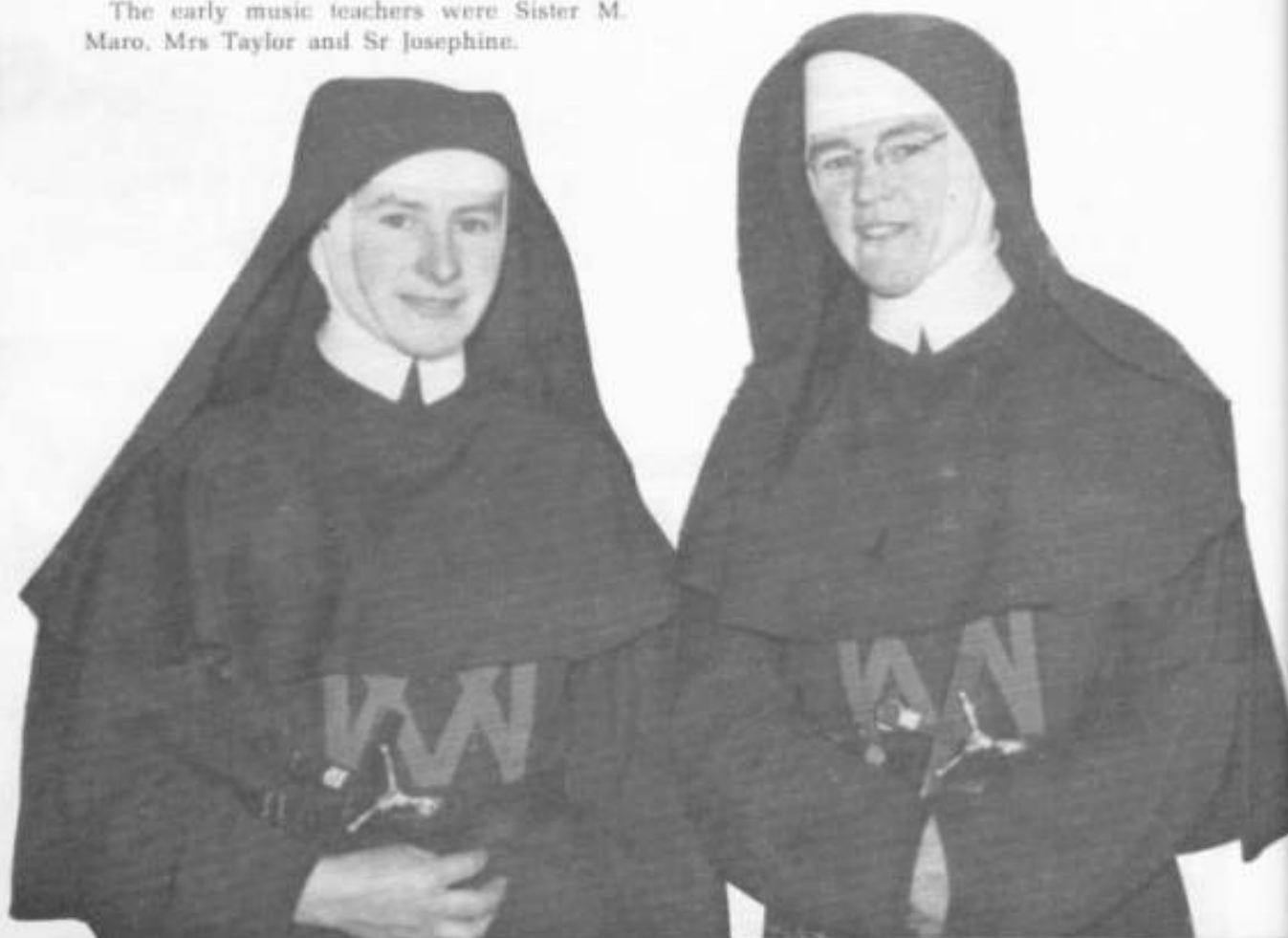
The early music teachers were Sister M. Maro, Mrs Taylor and Sr Josephine.

I remember taking Sr Francis and the Provincial of the Josephite Order to see the new school. It was just before school opened and the school was pretty unfinished. Of course, before 1954, I'd never even built a dog-kennel. I remember how Sr Francis' face fell when she saw the school.

The Sisters played an enormous part in the parish. There's no need to even comment on how good the education they gave was. They did a great deal to build up the family concept of the parish — not only through the contact with the children in school, but in their contact with people. They were always out visiting after school, not just to see parents about the children, but just to see people.

Fr Reis

Left: Sr Teresa Clare and right: Sr Francis Scanlon.





Religious Vocations from St Albans

- Sr Benedicta Smolarek
- Sr Teresa Smolarek
- Sr Bernadette Smolarek
- Sr Mary Joseph Mathysen
- Sr Helen Kennedy
- Sr Mary Zitterschlager
- Sr Mary Rowan
- Sr Mary Gavaghan
- Sr Mary Hewitt
- Sr Johanna Pleban
- Fr Victor Farrugia
- Fr Joe Gambin
- Br George Hewitt

My first sight of St Albans was on January 25, the Feast of St Paul, 1954. Fr Reis took our Provincial, Sr Adrian, and me out to see the new school. All we saw was four concrete walls, no floors, windows or doors, and school was due to open in just a week or so. It was the hottest January day, about 105°. Fr Reis was very proud of his school. My heart dropped to zero. But Father gave a week's extra holiday, and by the time we started we had doors and windows, but no chairs. We had an enrolment of 165 children, and 150 were New Australians.

I had never taught migrant children before, but the children were so eager to learn. We used signs, pictures and actions. Necessity was the mother of invention. It seemed to work well. Sr Theresa Clare was very patient and very good. Fr Reis used to drive us to and from the train each day — until the convent was built — and we had our mid-day meal in the presbytery.

The parishioners gave us tremendous help. I remember particularly the Gavaghans, Rowans, Barnards, Hewitts, O'Briens and Leckies. But there were many others.

Sr Francis

First Communion Breakfast in the old Mechanics' Hall



*We thank all the sisters who have
worked in and shared their lives with, St Albans.
May your harvest be fruitful in this life and
your joy complete in the life to come*

Sr Francis Scanlon	Sr Sheila Moss
Sr Teresa Clare	Sr Eileen McHugh (Killian)
Sr Maro Tynan — Died at St Albans 1955	Sr Dorothy Youngman
Sr Basil Chiapinni — R.I.P.	Sr Luke Cahill — R.I.P.
Sr Josephine Keary — R.I.P.	Sr Leo McFarland
Sr Patricia Coolahan (Leonard)	Sr Christine Scannell
Sr Margaret Crozier (Anne)	Sr Elizabeth O'Donnell (Edmund)
Sr Bernardine Guinane	Sr Cleopha Hill
Sr Mary John Forster	Sr Sara Lambert
Sr Ellen Russell (Gerard)	Sr Verna Curry
Sr Joan Guisey (Eugenius)	Sr Ita Kennedy
Sr Aelred Weiss	Sr Patricia Maher
Sr Furseay Carolan — R.I.P.	Sr Joan Hamilton
Sr Hilary Hoff	Sr Andre McKay
Sr Sheila Jenkins (Charles)	Sr Ellen Lane
Sr Mellitus Delahenty	Sr Emilian Grootish
Sr Eymard O'Donnell	Sr Jacinta Van Dillen
Sr Kinnia Carlin — R.I.P.	Sr Monica Milner
Sr Mary McArdle (Gerardine)	Sr Therese Quinn
Sr Verona Finnegan	Sr Ima McNamara
Sr Marion Joseph Clements — R.I.P.	Sr Patricia Robertson
Sr Raymond Howley	Sr Eucharica Reddon
Sr Agnes Therese Hickey	Sr Mary Fermio
Sr Assunta Neeson	Sr Aileen Shanahan
Sr Rosalie Corrigan (Camillus)	Sr Patricia Woolfe
Sr Kathleen Nolan (Francis)	Sr Celine Fitzgerald
Sr Peter Julian Dillon	Sr James Watt
Sr Ursula Bell	Sr Giovanni Mullins
Sr Monica Cahill (Michael)	Sr Germaine Curry
Sr Lucia Flannagan	Sr Elizabeth Kirby
Sr Mary Therese Ryan	Sr Maureen Kelly
Sr Anne Parly	Sr Judith Carlson
Sr Vendrimina Puatti (Lucetta)	Sr Magdalen Geragaty
Sr Joyce Southern (Bede)	Sr Clare Schlitz
Sr Anne Therese Bartels	Sr Martin Bolger
Sr Maureen Lomar	Sr Barbara Connolly
Sr Patricia Leahy (Rosari)	Sr Patricia Kenny — R.I.P.
Sr Patricia Williams (Jerome)	Sr Julia Finucane
Sr Vernard Carroll — R.I.P.	Sr Dominic Foley
Sr Philomena Hogan	Sr Irene O'Shea
Sr Edmund Murphy	Sr Frances McGuire
Sr Annunciata Hogan — R.I.P.	Sr Mary Dwyer
Sr Carmelita Hannan	Sr Anne Healy
Sr Elizabeth Donovan (Dermott)	Sr Moya Unthank
Sr Bernard Maher	Sr Margaret Brown
Sr Gertrude Mahoney	Sr Kathleen O'Connor

Sr Francis and Sr Clare came out from Footscray to start the first classes here. They used to come out by train each day until the earlier convent was ready. It was about 12 months later that they formed the first mothers club, which was when I had closer contact with the school.

I remember Sr Francis so plainly on the day of the first fete. Someone had sent a pair of young roosters (alive!) in a bag. She was struggling to control the roosters as she got them out and she was scarlet in the face from the effort. As I came past, she looked up and caught my eye, and she said: 'Mrs Freeland, people are just so kind.'

Sr Clare also was a terrific one to help start off the school. I remember she had some very big classes. I didn't think that you could teach them much in those conditions. But really the things they did teach those children in those first years was remarkable.

Sr Josephine used to take the girls to basketball. Her sense of fair play was terrific. Week after week she took those children to basketball and they didn't win a thing. I remember the day they came back and they had

won a match, we could hear them cheering from the bus as it drove along Arthur Street. Jack said to me, 'The kids have had a win today,' and sure enough they had. Sr Josephine used to say to them, 'Just play your hardest. It's just as important to lose well as it is to win.' I know my children, who were among those first basketball players, still remember her with affection.

Jack took the basketball girls to basketball, no matter where they were playing, week in and week out during the basketball season. He'd wait, and he'd cheer them on a bit, and he'd take a bit of sticking plaster for skinned knees, and he'd drive them all home afterwards. It must have been perhaps seven years before they finally won the Premiership. At that time Jack was in poor health and had given up driving them. The girl who was captain of the team came along and gave him the pennant.

That was one of the biggest thrills of his life. They also made him a life member of the Sacred Heart Girls Basketball Team. He's still got the pennant.

Mrs Freeland

The children in the foreground are of Australian parentage.



The Ugly Man Competition

The greatest thing that hit St Albans was the Ugly Man competition. That made St Albans. It was Fr Reis' idea. Sunshine had a popular girl competition. Fr Reis said that would create dissension among the parishioners. So he said, 'Why not have the men, and we'll call it an Ugly Man Competition?' So that's how it started.

The competition used to run for about six weeks. We would have teams (the biggest number of teams in a year was about five). Over the six weeks, the person whose team raised the most money was the Ugly Man. Mr Hewitt made the crown out of Foster's cans, and the kids (they're grown men now of course) made the camel we used to ride round on. It ran for about five years.

Dan Gavaghan, Joe Farrugia and Tom Hewitt

It was a case of raising money by fair means or foul. Once we raffled a dinner, a leg of lamb, vegetables, the lot. We took it over to the pub and sold all the tickets. When we raffled it, one of us selling the tickets won it. We thought, 'We can't do that. We'll raffle it again'. So we raffled it again and a Catholic parishioner from Keilor won it and he donated it back to us! So we took it back to my place and the same dinner got raffled again.

Joe Farrugia

Jack was the original Ugly Man of St Albans. He was the winner of the first Ugly Man competition. We've still got the key that the parish presented to him — the key to St Albans. Mr Hewitt made the crown out of beer cans and that was how every Ugly Man competition was won. On the beer cans.

I don't think there was any way of raising funds that wasn't tried in those earlier years. It's surprising the pleasure you get out of it as a group of people. It's not all hard work.

Mrs Freeland

We used to run New Australian Dances on Sunday nights. I remember being on the door. We weren't used to the way Europeans talk with their hands. We don't notice it now. But when they came first and there was a crowd in the hall, you'd swear there was going to be a blue. Two or three times you'd walk down and find they weren't having a blue at all, they were just having a talk.

Tom Hewitt and Dave Rowan

At the Opening Ball, before the opening of the church, we had 800 people from all over Melbourne. There's never been a turn before or since as big as that. The hall was choc-a-block. It was a really good night. We talked about it for years after.

Dan Gavaghan

This is a photo of the second Ugly Man competition. Dan Gavaghan, the winner, is riding the camel. Peter Hewitt is the court jester.





Fred Barnard

Fred Barnard was born in Adam Street, Bendigo. He went to school around Koondrook and Barham. He did his apprenticeship at McKays in Sunshine which is now Massey-Ferguson. He helped to supervise the building of the present church when Jim Frazer was the contractor. After that he became the builder around the parish.

He was very aware of the world of nature. He loved trees. He knew where the rocks ran underground because he was so interested and he would notice and remember and piece together all the information he could.

He had his own very strong sense of values. For example, while he would go back and do something for someone who had taken him down, he would warn me about falling into the same trap he fell into. He used to always say to me, 'When people build mansions and then shut the world out, you don't trust that person.'

The morning after Fr Reis left, he came in to see me. All he said was 'Well, I suppose I carry on as usual'. Although there was a terrific friendship between him and Fr Reis, he could see beyond that.

We express our thanks for his loyalty, his commitment, his sense of values. He knew that there was more in life than money. Because he had a proper sense of values, this parish was built. He could have made a lot of money out of

what he built here. But he did it for very little. He was such a humble man. His family accepted Fred's work for St Albans. They shared and supported his values. Kevin worked here a lot too.

Fr O'Reilly and Fr Denis

He never took anyone down and he built many many houses at cost price. Fred's name and Fr Reis' are synonymous with St Albans. As Fr Reis said, 'I've met many men in my life, but none of them come up to the calibre of Fred Barnard'.

Kees Ligthart

The parish was his life. Money didn't mean anything to him. He liked to be comfortable but he had no ambitions to be a millionaire. He treated everybody fair. It didn't matter who they were or where they were from, they were all treated the same. He devoted his life to the parish and his family — the things that were most important to him.

He sacrificed weekend after weekend. Virtually all his life he sacrificed. It meant so much to him. It's hard to understand how anyone can be so dedicated for so long.

He had a relationship with Fr Reis that he treasured very much. He was always a very quiet fellow. He didn't like a fuss. He liked to do his own thing and never looked for any thanks or any fuss. Anything that was his was everyone else's. He was never selfish with anything. He could never understand anyone else being selfish about their life or what they had.

Kevin Barnard

Fred took over from Jim Frazer and built a lot of the classrooms. He built the convent. He renovated the old house into a presbytery and built the new classrooms on this side. He built St Pauls. It's worth noting that no other builder at all would have been prepared to build them for the cost he built them for. Also he became the handyman around here. Whenever something went wrong he was the one who came and fixed it, and that was while he carried on his own business.

Dan Gavaghan

A History of St. Albans

- 1953** January. St. Albans made a separate parish (formerly it was part of Sunshine parish) with Fr Con Reis as Parish Priest.
August. Presbytery built and occupied. Daily Mass began in St Albans.
The Parish Centre, Church, Hall and School was under construction. The concrete shell of this building was poured by the voluntary work of about 80 men of the parish. They completed the initial part in 12 weekends.
Christmas. Midnight Mass in the shell of the new church.
- 1954** February. The school opened under the care of the Sisters of St Joseph.
July. The convent was completed and occupied.
August. The Hall was opened with a hall for 800 people.
October. Archbishop Mannix (then 90 years old) blessed and opened the Church.
- 1955** Three new classrooms added to the school.
- 1956** Fr Sheehan came from Ireland as Assistant Priest.
Two new classrooms added.
More land purchased.
The full restored Ceremonies of Holy Week were celebrated at Easter.
- 1957** Four more classrooms completed.
- 1967** The start of the streets being made and sealed.
- 1968** St Paul's Church, Ivanhoe Avenue, was built. It is now East St Albans.
- 1969** Five new classrooms were built.
- 1972** Holy Eucharist Parish was established with Fr Guelen as Parish Priest.
- 1973** Fr Reis left St Albans in May, after 20 years as Parish Priest.
- 1976** West St Albans was created as a parish with Fr Corbett as Parish Priest.
Kealba was established as a parish with Fr Nink as Parish Priest.
- 1977** A Secondary Regional College was established in St Albans with Sr Sylvia William of the Sisters of Mercy as the first Principal.
John Kennedy accepted the position of lay principal of Sacred Heart School (first lay-principal of the school).
The plans for a new primary school on the north side of Winifred Street were confirmed with a grant of \$416,000.00 from the Schools Commission.
In July the building of the Sacred Heart Church was started.
- 1978** May 7. Opening of the new Sacred Heart Church by the Archbishop, Bishop Little.

St. Albans Now



The spirit in St Albans now is like this — Fred took the contract on but in the process he became ill. Parishioners just stepped in and said, 'We're going to finish this for the parish. But in a way we're going to finish this for Fred.' They're doing a terrific job.

Joe Farrugia

Previously we were operating under a Parish Council. To get the new church under way we decided to form a Planning Committee which consisted of an Executive Committee, supported by a number of sub-committees including Works, Fund raising, Social, Catechetical, Finance and Liturgy Committees. This was formed in June 1976 and we started planning and 'doing preliminary work. The parishioners indicated very clearly that we needed a church, and they wanted a church. We started a renewal of the sacrificial giving. Fr O'Reilly made three promises then, to commence the church, the secondary school and the new primary school. All three projects are under way.

Dan Gavaghan

When the old church was built, there was a lot of work involved and things were hard. But at the beginning of 1978 it was also very very hard and crowded. With the new schools, renovating the classrooms, the hall and the old church, and the new church going on it's been really hard.

There's a lot of voluntary work been done again. And Fr O'Reilly has been under a lot of pressure. There's not a second his mind is at rest.

Anton Utri

We are probably moving into a totally new era now. There's the new church. A secondary school has opened this year. There's a new parish primary school to be built and a senior secondary school to open in Sydenham. I think we've come to the end of an era, and we're now moving into the next stage.

I'd like to see people really being involved in what goes on in the parish. More people being involved and more chance to be involved. That's my hope.

John Kennedy

I feel people are mixing a lot better now than we used to do. I remember the first Mothers Club Meeting. There were New Australians came along as well as old Australians. But after two or three meetings we were lucky to have one New Australian there. There were just the usual nine to a dozen old identities year in and year out. I don't know whether it was our own insularity or whether they felt they just didn't know us well enough to mix in. We just didn't understand each other well enough. I think those days are gone. And just as well.

Mrs Freeland

We have a working bee every weekend. At the moment we are working on the new church. About two years ago we cleared the area behind the presbytery which was nothing but box thorn bushes and rubbish. We had a roster of six teams with 12-15 men on each. We worked for twelve months to clear the back area and we built a shed in the ground for equipment used in parish maintenance. We call it the working bee shed. Basically the Works Committee looks after all the maintenance around the school and church.

The men who worked on the classrooms over Christmas deserve special thanks. They divided the hall into three classrooms and the church into two. There were only about five or seven men built those partitions and they worked every weekend over the holidays to do it. Then when work started they came after work each night and worked till nine o'clock.

There is not one weekend that Fr O'Reilly or Fr Denis, or both, are not down at the working bee, working with a pick and shovel for the whole weekend. Fr Denis in particular does a tremendous amount.

Frank Leckie



Sisters of St Joseph. From left to right: Sr Ellen, Sr Kathleen, Sr Moira, Sr Denis, Sr Magdalen, Sr Margaret and Sr Mary.





John Kennedy, headmaster of Sacred Heart Parish School

SACRED HEART SCHOOL

The school at present is very much in a state of physical change. We have four schools on our site at the moment ourselves, the new Secondary school, the Resurrection Parish School and Kealba Parish School.

Probably while we're in a state of physical change it is a good time to look at the ideas behind what we do and how we do it.

It takes time to get teachers together and to talk through new ideas. Also there are the parents and their ideas and what they want. We are in the very early stages of developing a clear policy that parents and teachers accept. We believe that the co-operation of teachers, students and parents will result in the establishment of common goals.

It's not good enough that the students learn reading and maths and so on. Right from the start, we have to teach them also to apply what they know to the life they lead, so that they make a meaningful contribution to society.

A catholic school needs to be different from any other school and I think it needs to be

different in terms of preparing a child to contribute as a Christian in a Christian community.

John Kennedy

In teaching religion at Sacred Heart School we are aiming to help the students build up a personal relationship with God. At the same time we fit in with the parish activities so they see themselves as growing in faith in a community. We don't come to God on our own but in the church, with others.

We teachers have a big responsibility to be more and more living the faith ourselves. It doesn't matter how good our programs are if we are not *living* it. We have one staff meeting a month put aside for Religious Education. In a few weeks we'll be going on a staff weekend. This is a curriculum development weekend. Our working together and planning as teachers is part of our task of growing in co-operation, and that's part of our job of growing in our faith.

We encourage the children to participate in the parish liturgies. We plan things at school to get them interested and encourage them to go along. We have a lot of child involvement in the school assemblies. Religion doesn't just stay in the classroom — we bring it out to share with others a lot. At assemblies the children dramatize gospel stories, they sing, dance and mime, they bring banners and pictures they have painted. Next week they are going to mime and dance the Easter Story.

We are trying to improve our communications with parents, to let them know what we are doing in Religious Education. We'd like parents to really know what we are doing and for them to be aware and confident so they will also express what they want. We want a much greater involvement of parents in catechetics.

Sr Moya

Sr Moya has been in St Albans since February this year. She is leader of the Josephite Community at St Albans and she teaches grade six. Sr Moya has a special interest in Religious Education and Staff Formation. We notice that she communicates really well with children.

We have a Language Development Program at the school. Many of the students have English as their second language and this means, usually, some problems of understanding and using English correctly. Of course this affects every aspect of school work. Many students lack basic concepts in English.

We are starting with the teachers, developing a program that we all share, so we are all working towards the same goal. Also, as the teachers share more and talk over what they are doing and what their problems are, staff morale is going up.

We are working at providing lots of enriching experiences — experiences the students share together and can explore and in doing so they build up basic concepts of language. We do lots of oral work first. When people can express themselves in speech, they have the basis of reading and writing. We work a lot on spoken English as a first step, and see reading and writing as following this.

We take a theme and build a whole series of work around this. We develop the theme as a focus and a source of motivation for the children. Once we choose a theme we bring in as many people, things, films, slides and books as we can think of to get lots of input. We see motivating the interest, excitement, curiosity and energy of the children as very important. We might use excursions to do this. On the topic 'The Sea' we set up a whole room as a sea environment. As well as stimulating by sights, sounds and objects we wanted to open up to them the whole world of fantasy and imagination. Many of our children, because English is their second language and because of other influences, have little access to books and literature.

From the motivation angle, we are very happy with our progress. Both students and teachers are very enthusiastic. It takes longer to see the effects on language development, but with our current level of motivation I'm very optimistic.

Carmel Williams

Carmel Williams came to St Albans from Hobart. We have a special grant to support her



Language Development Program. People in other areas are very impressed with the program and the Regional Consultant from the Catholic system, and consultants from the Education Department have visited the school to observe the program.

STUDENT GROUPS

Once the young people leave Sacred Heart Parish School they go to a number of different schools. We want to have some focus that also draws them back into the parish and enables them to keep up contact with each other. The leaders of the youth groups are Fr O'Reilly, Fr Denis, Sr Irene O'Shea and Miss Nora Battye.

The aim of our youth groups (Secondary Student Groups) is to promote the young

people's awareness of each other and so help them attain a degree of self confidence, willingness and ability to mix with other people in other age groups.

The program consists of 12 meetings, four activity nights and a camp. We have youth Masses, discos, barbecues. There's a lot of parent involvement too. Last year we had our camp at Lovely Banks. We hope to have the same this year. We include plenty of games and outings such as a trip to night football, as well as meetings and discussions.

At the end of last year, parents commented they'd noticed a big improvement in their children at home. There was more co-operativeness, they were more polite, there was a good spirit of give and take.

CATECHETICAL PROGRAMS

We have religious instruction classes for the children attending government schools on Saturday mornings. About one hundred attend. On Tuesday afternoons we have a class of children preparing for confirmation. There are thirty five in that.

We give religious instruction weekly in the three State Primary Schools at West and North St Albans and Stevensville. We take all the children, Catholic and Protestant, in a common program. Mr Colin Knox of the United Churches is a member of the Religious Instruction Team. We started this last year at the invitation of the Principal of one of the schools. She asked us to give some form of religious instruction to *all* the students. She wanted the name of God to be brought into the school. We went in as a team; priests, sisters, the Uniting Church Minister, the catechists. We take all the children from grade three up. We go into the classroom and the teacher sometimes stays and sometimes leaves.

We are very thrilled with this because a lovely spirit has developed between the teachers and ourselves and a very lovely spirit between the children and ourselves. This is very obvious when you meet them in the shopping centre or anywhere. We share a luncheon with the teachers once a year.

Thirty people from St Albans and Resurrection Parishes are attending a Catechist Course at St Albans South. It takes three years to complete the course. At the end of the third year the catechists are presented with a diploma and that entitles them to teach catechetics. The leaders of our secondary groups and the people whom we hope will be involved in the Sacramental Program are included in this group.

We have an increasing number of people enrolled in this course. Their willingness to keep turning up and to be prepared to take the role of leader gives us hope for the future.

Sr Irene O'Shea

Sr Irene is director of the religious education program to children in Government schools.



Joan Parson with Confirmation Class.

THE SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM

The basis of our Sacramental Program is a search for an adult faith response. At the reception of every sacrament, we are looking for some response from the person.

BAPTISM

With Baptism we see the meaning of the sacrament as a call to commitment. The adults make the commitment for the child. That means the parents have to look at their own lives and see how they are responding to God's call.

We have an information night where we look at the meaning of Baptism, and we tell the parents what our St Albans Baptism program is. Parents then return home to reflect on what their response is and their commitment is.

One of the team then visits the parents in their own home to ask, 'What are you doing to express your commitment to God and the church?' Unfortunately, sometimes people say they will start going to Mass again, but after the Baptism they quickly fall away. But others have accepted the challenge and there has been a renewal of their life of faith.

After this visit, parents attend a meeting to prepare them for the Baptism of their child. They make candles and Baptism stoles. We have a Baptism Eucharist on Sunday afternoons and the parents help prepare the service and do some of the tasks that need to be done.

We want to move in the direction of seeing Baptism as a community thing, with parents realizing that to ask for Baptism with no commitment to the community of the church, makes no sense.

FIRST COMMUNION

This year with our preparation for First Communion, we will be introducing home discussion groups for parents.

We will have a general meeting of parents at which we'll give information on how the children are taught for First Communion. Then the smaller meetings, with a leader, in homes, will concentrate on the parents' own faith: what is blocking its growth and development? what is encouraging its growth?

FIRST CONFESSION

For First Confession, which takes place one year later, we will have a similar program of a general meeting and a few Renewal of Faith Meetings. Parents can only hand on what they are living themselves.

CONFIRMATION

With Confirmation we will probably have a few parents meetings which will concentrate on what confirmation in faith, commitment in faith means in the adults' lives.



CELEBRATION OF RECONCILIATION

The Archbishop has allowed us to use the Third Rite of Reconciliation (the Communal Reconciliation Rite) at certain times through the year. We have used it particularly at Christmas and Easter. We have had very large crowds of people — mostly adults — and we've experienced the healing power of God working in a marvellous way. The parents come with the family but they leave the little children at home, so we don't have the distractions that children create at Sunday Mass. The silence that falls as people pray for forgiveness, for awareness, for love of God is very deep and powerful.

This Rite of Reconciliation helps us all to realize that forgiveness comes from God. The old rite had a heavy emphasis on telling sins, which sometimes overshadowed the forgiveness of God. This rite really seems to deepen people's awareness of their sinfulness and of the forgiveness and love of God.

The individual responsibility comes through — but it is balanced by the community aspect. And of course, we pray for each other. The Third Rite brings people back to the practice of Confession because it helps people understand the meaning of Confession.

MARRIAGE

In St Albans we expect young couples to put time and effort into the spiritual preparation for marriage. They put a lot of effort into planning material aspects: taxis, photos, getting a house and so on. That needs to be balanced.

We encourage the young couples to attend one of the Pre-Marriage Education Courses run by Fr Don Bernard and the Marriage Education Institute. We feel, after they have done this, they will be better prepared for the big step they are taking.

After the course, we prepare the Marriage Service with the couple. It is possible to have a variety of readings and prayers and other arrangements that express some of what this particular couple's love and ideals are.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

People call the priest when someone is very

sick or dying, and we give the Sacrament of Anointing to those who are seriously sick. You don't have to be dying to receive the sacrament, because it is both a healing sacrament and a preparation for death.

We have a Mass for the sick and elderly every fortnight (Sr Irene describes it elsewhere). Our care of the sick, by visits and other help, goes hand in hand with the Sacrament of Anointing.

We intend to have an Anointing of the Sick at the first of the Masses for the sick and elderly this year. That is, there will be a group Anointing during the Mass.

THE FEASTS

The great feasts of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, we celebrate as well as we can. We believe we should make these feasts live, and we should make them live in St Albans — with a special St Albans flavour about them. We use slides and music and other effects to express the meaning of the feast. At Christmas time we had Carols by Candlelight in the church, and Midnight Mass. We were emphasizing not only the Christmas story, but the meaning of Christmas for us in St Albans in 1977.

For Easter, instead of the fire we moved to a slide and song presentation on the theme of light and darkness. In the new church we will be able to show slides, play records and use a number of modern techniques of communication. We have used dance in paraliturgies to express the meaning of a feast or a reading.

THE LITURGY

Fr O'Reilly and I see the liturgy as one of the most important aspects of parish life. The liturgy teaches people their faith. The liturgy brings about a deepening of faith, understanding and commitment.

We have a co-operation between the Sunday liturgy and the preparation for First Communion and First Confession. The First Communion children make a profession of faith to the community at Mass. The First Confession children made a pledge of brotherly love. The little children are leading us. Maybe

before too long parents will profess their belief to the community, or ask formally for baptism of their child, or make a pledge of brotherly love.

The Liturgy Committee was established to organize the lectors, readers and lay ministers of communion. That runs very smoothly now. I'm looking forward to the time when the committee does more work on preparing the Sunday Celebration and making it meaningful to the life of the people. On Thursday nights the three priests of the parishes here, get together to read, pray, and discuss the Sunday readings. I think one day the Liturgy Committee will in some way join in this. They will help us see what to preach about on Sunday.

Fr Denis

The hallmark of Fr Denis' priesthood is his work with the liturgy. He is very much helped by his appreciation of what people can do. His own awareness and respect for liturgy has enabled him to convey to others the importance

of the various ministries of the Eucharist. He has trained lectors and commentators and organized a system of rosters that runs really smoothly.

Under his direction, and with the help of Sr Magdalen, there has been a vast improvement in the singing of the liturgy. Ever since the changes of the Second Vatican Council we have been trying to increase the participation in the liturgy but up to now its never been a great success.

Another area of Fr Denis' work is the Catechist Training, where he really excels. He has worked with the Finance Sub-committee for the new church. I have hardly been involved in the whole financing of the church and appeals for funds. They have done the lot. He is very humble. He tends always to avoid the limelight. He gives me support and loyalty I very much value. I think we are very lucky to have had him with us in St Albans for five years.

Fr O'Reilly



Hopes

I hope that the people have the same feeling about the new church as I think we had about the old. It got to be a home from home for us. The church, the school buildings, the old hall and all those places. Even though you might not see some people for ages and ages (lots of people got in the habit of going to one particular Mass and if you went to another, you mightn't see them for six or twelve months, unless maybe the fete came along) you always had the feeling that this was a real family corner. I feel that if the new church can carry on that same feeling among the parishioners it will be wonderful.

Mrs Freeland

When people look at a church or visit it, they are still active. They judge their experience by the time they put in or what they get out of it. There is little idea of reflection.

I would hope that looking at the church or entering it, people would become aware of the quietness or stillness, and feel in that quietness and stillness, God's Spirit moving through their lives.

When we look at the church, it should make us reflect, 'Jesus is the basis of my life'.

The church is the setting for so many family Eucharists, for marriages, Baptisms, first communions — all the great events of life. It also reminds us of our death. It reminds us we have to let go of things. We have to let God take over. If we find resurrection in our lives. If the church is helping me find a new creation, creating me, I don't fear.

Fr O'Reilly

I would like to see the media and Real Estate Agents prepared to sell land in St Albans and call it St Albans, not call it Keilor. St Albans is a good place.

No one seems to realize that we've done here what couldn't be done anywhere else. The migrants came from all over Europe, from

countries that were at war, and they settled here peacefully. For years there were no police in St Albans and no disturbance.

People got the idea St Albans was not a good place to live. That was basically an anti-New Australian prejudice on the part of the press.

Fr Reis

My idea of a parish is a community of people working together, living together, helping each other. It would be a magnified family. People would share all sorts of things, maybe their knowledge or their skills — how to do motor repairs, or find a good lawyer, or assess your insurance needs. We've done some of this in St Albans and we've done work on education and on teaching the developments of Vatican II.

Mark Zitterschlager

I hope that the young people the sisters have taught would come back to us if they needed our help in the future. I would like them to have faith and trust in us.

I hope the young people in our groups will become good citizens of St Albans. I hope they'll develop Christian attitudes and take these attitudes into society.

I hope for a community spirit in St Albans, that people would have faith and trust in each other. That they would ask for help and get help.

Sr Irene O'Shea

One of the most important things we have to look at within the parish is the youth of the parish. We seem to lose them. As soon as these kids get to eighteen they get a motor car and they're off. You can't hold them. I'd like somehow to be able to keep the involvement and interest of the youth.

I think we need some person as a youth leader, to be trained as a youth leader and they should be trained and paid for by the council of Keilor.

We are looking for leadership in the parish. We need people who are really able to lead, because the time will come when we mightn't have a priest. There's got to be people in a position to take over, to lead the parish. Some



men are born with a natural ability to lead. I think the church is going to have to sort out men within a parish and take them in hand and train them for leadership work. And this will have to be done through the cathedral.

Terry Mochon

We need more support for the religious, for the nuns and priests. There are not enough people really supporting the thing. There should be a lot more people really involved. We definitely have two terrific leaders, Fr Denis and Fr O'Reilly, but the parish is too big for just two leaders.

Anton Utri

Some people, when they came to Australia, found it a paradise. They could get land, a house, a car — things they never dreamed of. Some people wanted to make up the years they had lost. There was a big temptation to materialism. Possession and materialism have a magnetic attraction, but they deaden a person

down. The quality of life is just not there. The person becomes a robot. When their life is over, all they can look back on is work and sleep. It's not worth it. We need a better vision of life.

Mark Zitterschlager

In the time I've been involved in St Albans, there have been many visions of establishing a St Albans community, but we've never achieved it yet.

It's achievable but there have to be enough people who are prepared to sacrifice a fair bit to get it. If the school can build up the spirit of co-operation this spirit can spread right through the parish, rather than trying to start from just one little group.

If we just see the church as a physical building, and when it's finished there's no difference between what we had before and what we have now, then there's something wrong.

John Kennedy

A Challenge

The challenge we face is to be reminders, living reminders of Christ. To be that, we must be prophets, who, by our living, point our people in a new direction and guide them into unknown territory.

Our hope for the future is always built on our memories. Among the best things we can give each other is good memories. Our memories are our blue prints for the future. We become our memories, and we choose whether to re-create the best or the worst of those memories.

Our memories enable us to move forward, faithful to the vision we have been given. We can choose to leave the land of slavery, to hear the call of freedom, to move to the promised land that is still ahead of us. In St Albans, the vision that the founders of this parish struggled for still lies ahead of us. We still need to struggle to achieve the community of true followers of Christ.

What will bring us to our 'Promised Land'? It will be our involvement in each other's lives. The family is specially important; when we work to create good family life, we are accepting our responsibility to the total community. Let us check and see whether we are putting things before people and God. When we put our faith in possessions, family life suffers. Our involvement in God's family centres around a vital liturgy. This is a source of renewal and strength for us.

If we want to be really living memories of Christ, the word of God must be engraved on our hearts. It must become our flesh and blood. For this to happen we must be loyal in our attendance at Mass, to prayer in the home, to helping each other and serving the community.

If we are to have a real Christian Community we must decide to share the

burden of leadership. Many people have gifts of leadership in different areas which they can develop.

Parents face a special challenge in the upbringing and religious education of their children. Remember, your children were baptised into your faith. The school also needs your loyalty, your help and co-operation.

The youth too, face a challenge. Christ comes to all and for all. We all have a part to play in building his Kingdom. The church needs the youth for their excitement and daring, for their new ideas and freshness. For youth, being Christian means also being a leader in your own groups. To be that you need to have an appreciation of your own faith and your own parents — what they have done and still do and are. The church will continue if the youth are prepared to make similar sacrifices to those their parents have made.

The religious and priests have a challenge in that they are the professionals in the parish. You have special advantages of education and a special commitment. You bear the prime responsibility to be ministers and bearers of Christ's message throughout every day and every action in your service of others.

The teachers have accepted the role of bringing Christ to young lives and educating them for life. To approach this task responsibly, you must find within yourself the answer to this question: what kind of Christ-centred person-teacher am I?

To everyone: your part is essential. Your presence and support has a special place in God's family.

In 25 years time, what will the judgement be on Sacred Heart Parish, 1978. Will they give thanks for the dreams and hopes we had, and the way we struggled to make them come true? Or will they ask: Whatever happened to the dream?

Fr John O'Reilly

*From many homelands,
following different paths,
living many stories,
with joy and suffering,
struggling and waiting,
fearing and hoping,
we have come together,
to work, to play,
to share, to pray,
to live, to forgive,
to remember, to celebrate,
and to acknowledge Jesus
as Lord of our lives,
Lord of our stories.*

*We are a new people
valuing the richness of the old
and looking forward to the future
we are building now.*

We are the Sacred Heart Parish, St Albans.

