

Souvenir Brochure
of
St. Mary's, Ascot Vale

Issued on the Occasion of
the Opening by

His Grace the Archbishop
Most Rev. Dr. MANNIX

On Sunday, 15th May, 1938

Rev. Father H. F. BAKKER, P.P.




Photo by courtesy "Melbourne Herald"

St Mary's Church

Ascot Vale



n glancing at the magnificent structure before us, it may be interesting to retrace our steps. For close on half a century the parish was served by a wooden church. Shortly after the foundation of the parish, a substantial and commodious brick school was erected, as well as a suitable presbytery; while in 1934, the year of Melbourne's Eucharistic Congress, it was decided to commence a fitting and suitable edifice for the House of God.

Plans were prepared by Mr P. J. O'Connor, architect, based on the ideas gathered by the pastor, Rev. Father Bakker, during his travels in 1932. On July 1, 1934, the foundation-stone was blessed and truly laid by his Grace the Archbishop, Most Rev. Dr. Mannix. The work was placed under the protection of the Little Flower, and proceeded without hitch or delay, so that the magnificent sanctuary and two bays of the main building were formally blessed and opened on December 23 of the same year.

Our debt on the occasion was £11,000, so the prospects of an early completion of the building looked remote; but God's goodness is wonderful, and the parishioners' response remarkable. As a result, 1938 saw the liability reduced to £6600. Such success gave heart to priests and people, and a bold step was made to finish the structure. This desire, thank God, is now happily realised, and we have dedicated to our heavenly Father a beautiful and unique temple, wherein liturgical and ecclesiastical requirements are complied with.

The building is Romanesque, of steel frame and brick construction; the inside walls are heavily moulded and of sandstone cement finish. The ceiling is 42 feet from the floor, segmental in shape, and finished in fibro. All windows are leadlight or stained glass. The front rose window is nearly 12 feet in diameter, and finished in beautifully tinted glass. The front doors are bronze-cased; the floor is reinforced concrete. The two campaniles are 80 feet high.

Several features in the church claim our attention. The High Altar—with its magnificent baldachino of marble and bronze standing 24 feet above the sanctuary floor—is the canopy over the throne of the King, and should, in some form or other, be found over every main altar. The altar itself is simple, as it should be; a table on which the Holy Sacrifice is offered. Between the candlesticks are four reliquaries, each containing a major relic—St Joseph, St Ignatius, St Anthony and St Aloysius. As the rubrics for the incensation of the altar at High Mass clearly specify, the placing of the relics in this way on the altar is definitely prescribed in the liturgy. The Communion rails, of Australian marble, are excellent in detail, and measure 48 feet across.

Before the end of the year it is expected that two large opus sectile works—one of the Agony, the other of the Resurrection—will adorn the large mural panels in the sanctuary.

The angels on the baldachino, 4 feet 9 inches high, are imported from Italy, and are a beautiful example of sculpture, as are also the larger ones standing 8 feet high as sentinels of the Lord on either side of the altar.

The reason for this costly and noble work around the Holy of Holies is fitly summarised by the words of the psalmist displayed in letters of bronze on the walls: "Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy House," and "The zeal of Thy House hath eaten me up."

Besides the main altar, eight other smaller shrines are to be seen—the Sacred Heart Altar on the Gospel side of the High Altar, and Our Lady's on the Epistle side. The latter, a beautiful conception in various marbles—a loving tribute to the Mother of God—was partly erected by some of the railway employes of the parish.

Continuing from the Lady Chapel, we have St Joseph, SS. Peter and Paul, and, at the end of the aisle, a beautiful altar in black and white marble to the memory of the dead. This will be the mortuary chapel, and the remains of our departed ones may rest here awaiting funeral obsequies.

Crossing to the Gospel side, we see the baptistery, and beside it the Children's Chapel, where the little ones may be dedicated to the Divine Infant of Prague, and taught to follow in the footsteps of the Child Who went down to Nazareth and was subject to Mary and Joseph. St Anthony has a shrine adjoining, and next is the altar of our great friend and benefactress, the Little Flower—St Therese of Lisieux.

It will be noticed that the choir gallery, with the organ, is near the sanctuary, and not at the end of the church, where, unfortunately, it is usually placed.

We hope, in the future, to have not only many stained glass windows donated, so that the plain ones of the clerestory may be replaced by suitable subjects of devotion, but also triple windows for the Mortuary Chapel and the baptistery.

In the church grounds are to be seen a Grotto of Lourdes, a Shrine of the Little Flower, and a permanent crib, modelled after one in Carfin, Scotland.

A few words re parish finance may be appropriate here. Founded in 1912, under the pastorship of Rev. Father May, £6615 was expended. In 1919, when Rev. Father Bakker took charge, there was a debt of about £2200. Since then, £46,200 has been spent, and £33,200 paid off, leaving a debt, when the contract for the completion of the church was entered on, of £13,000. This amount will, we hope, be considerably reduced this year by means of the carnival in progress and the collection on the opening day. Whatever our financial position is, it compares favourably with older and richer parishes. We have excellent assets and excellent people, far from rich as worldly goods go, but endowed with faith and a generous, active spirit.

The people are proud of their church and are anxious to pay off this debt, so that other improvements may be carried out to make the parish property worthy of the central fane which now adorns St. Leonard's Road.

transcribed from:

Souvenir Brochure

of

St Mary's, Ascot Vale

Issued on the Occasion of
the Opening by

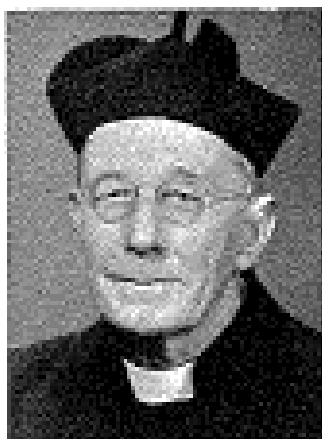
His Grace the Archbishop

Most Rev. Dr. MANNIX

On Sunday, 15th May, 1938

Rev. Father H. F. BAKKER, P.P.

Pray for the Soul of



Fr. Henry Francis Bakker

Parish Priest of Ascot Vale

Died

Feast of Corpus Christi
June 8th, 1950