

Goodbye and Hello Celebrations

Last weekend (Nov 22-24) there were a number of celebrations in Tasmania to mark the departure of the Marist Fathers from the Burnie-Wynyard parish at the end of 2013.

The Marists first came to Burnie in 1956. It was not long before work on Marist College commenced and in 1959 the first students arrived. Since then more than a hundred Marist fathers and brothers have worked in the Archdiocese of Hobart in either the Burnie parish, Claremont parish, Marist Regional College, or more recently the combined Burnie-Wynyard parish.

As Fr Bob Barber, the Marist provincial, said:

Those Marists who have called the North West Coast "home" at any time often speak very genuinely of their warm regard and love for the area and its people. On their behalf I say a sincere "thank you" to our wonderful friends.

It is due to the decline in vocations to our congregation that we do not have enough personnel to continue our presence in the Burnie-Wynyard parish. We do wish that it was different.

The Marist Fathers offer our prayers for your wellbeing and for Fr John Girdauskas as he begins his ministry among you.

There was a memorial mass, a cocktail party, a dinner and Sunday mass followed by a barbeque. Each of these functions was well attended and wonderful celebrations of the community. We are grateful for the generous support of many parishioners, our Catholic schools, and the local community.

The cocktail party took place in at Marist Regional College in the old Marist community room. This is now part of the Cradle Coast Training Centre.

Archbishop Julian Porteous joined us for the dinner on Saturday evening and the mass in the Harcombe Centre at Marist Regional College on Sunday. The children of Stella Maris and St Brigid's Primary schools were invited to draw some colourful pictures of the parish. These were used as placemats at the dinner and also helped to decorate the centre for mass.

Fr John Girdauskas will be the new parish priest. John grew up in Burnie, is an ex-student of Marist Regional College and served for some years as a Marist before joining the Archdiocese of Hobart in 2000.

At the end of the mass Fr Tony Kennedy and Fr Fred Kado, the last two Marists in Tasmania handed the parish banner to Archbishop Porteous. He then handed it on to John who will take on pastoral responsibility for the Burnie-Wynyard parish on 1st January 2014.

It was good that some Marists who had spent time in the parish and the college were able to return for the weekend. As well some Sisters of Mercy who had been based in Burnie came back to the parish for the weekend.

The Goodbye and Hello weekend was a moving celebration for both the Marists and the Burnie-Wynyard parishioners. It is the end of a significant chapter in the life of the parish, the Archdiocese and the Society of Mary.

It was a time of saying thank you. By the Marists and to the Marists.

Tony Kennedy