

Tweed Heads Centenary Speech given by Mr Tony Boyle, Principal

Thank you to Father Michael for your address which outlined the history of Education in the Parish of Tweed Heads and indeed at St Joseph's Primary. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Fr Michael for his great support of the schools in the parish in recent years and the role the various Parish Priests over the past 100 years in their continuous support and drive to ensure Catholic Education was and still is an important ministry within the Parish of Tweed Heads.

From Humble beginnings 100 years ago as a small country town school with a population of 60 students, St Joseph's Primary has grown into what some might call an inner-city school of 340 students.

Although many things have changed over the years, the strong sense of community and Pastoral Care has always remained integral to the of life St Joseph's. Throughout years of both the Ursuline Sisters and the Presentation Sisters and in more recent times of the Laity, St Joseph's has built and maintained a reputation as an open, welcoming school community that was and still is willing to reach out to those in need.

From the early days when local farmers would camp under the original school building for their summer holiday by the sea, through to the countless pack-ups so that the school buildings could be used for card parties, dances, bingo and other community events. To current days where our staff and students reach out to the community in a variety of activities and events, St Joseph's has become a very recognisable and important part of not only the Parish Community but the broader Tweed Heads Community.

In recent months, in preparation for this very special celebration staff and students have had the opportunity to view, read and discuss the rich history of our school.

It is here I would like to pay particular tribute to both the Ursuline Sisters who started the school in 1917 and the Presentation Sisters who took over the running of St Joseph's upon their departure in 1952. Looking back and reading what was undertaken under the difficult circumstances that prevailed over the years I am in awe of their achievements. No Government grants, no support from a Catholic Schools Office as we do today, no Parish managers, etc. Yet the school flourished and grew to what it is today. Thank you for your wonderful work and commitment not only at St Joseph's but throughout your various schools within Australia.

History is such a wonderful thing and the links between the past and present are amazing.

One such link is the original school building which still stands as St Joseph's Chapel at the Tweed Shire Council's Lawn Cemetery at Environ. Thanks to the generosity and assistance of Tweed Shire Council our current school community were able to attend a liturgy in the chapel yesterday and participate in a games day on its lawns. What an experience for all!!

I would like to publicly acknowledge and thank Tweed Shire Council for its support of our centenary celebrations.

Another link...

Two sisters of the Ursuline order Sr Peg Gallen (who is present with us today) and Sr Ursula O'Dwyer (who has sent her apologies) are past students of St Joseph's and both currently have grandnieces who are currently on staff at St Joseph's, Mrs Sara Wilkinson and Mrs Jess Roy.

I also had the privilege to chat with another past student Mrs Joan Sands (also with us today) who has seen five generations of her family go through St Joseph's. For many years Sand's Bakery in Wharf Street was the pseudo canteen for the school, with many a student only too willing to take the lunch orders around would know that a free cake would be in the offering. My own wife (Tess) only too willing to volunteer in her day. Boy how times have changed – students leaving school grounds unsupervised – unheard of!!

It has been an honour to lead St Joseph's as its principal over the past 16 years, but it would be extremely remiss of me not to pay tribute to those Principals who have led St Joseph's throughout the last 100 years. Right from the first Ursuline Principal, Mother Angela Dalton in 1917, the first Presentation Principal, Sr Mary Reynolds in 1952 to our most recent principals who are with us today, Sr Mary McFadden, Sr Janice Duggan and Mrs Beverly Kelso who I took over from. Unfortunately, Mrs Elain Ryland the first lay principal after the Presentation Sisters in 1988 is unable to be with us today due to a recent fall, but I am sure she is with us in spirit. Thank you, Ladies!

Likewise, it would also be remiss of me not to pay tribute to the past and present staff who have devoted themselves and worked tirelessly to provide the best possible education for the thousands and thousands of students who have passed through the doors of St Joseph's over the past 100 years.

I would also like to pay tribute and thanks to the many families who have supported the school throughout its rich history and will continue to do so in its future.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our current staff for their willingness to embrace the significance of this special event and for the tireless effort they have put in preparing various liturgies and displays for the past two days. Without your efforts, our celebrations would not have been the success they have been. Thank you one and all!

Tony Boyle

Principal

St Joseph's Primary Tweed Heads