



SACRED HEART PARISH - CABRAMATTA

Our History



From 1949 to 2024



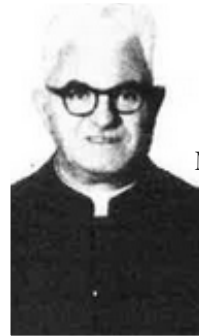
The Parish Church in 1949 facing Park Road.



Fr Kiely among the volunteer workers at what was known as the Blue school.

FIRST DECADE: 1949-1959

The first Catholic church at Cabramatta was an Australian Army hut placed in Park Road in 1919, with Fr Walsh from Liverpool coming here to officiate Holy Mass. When WWII came to an end on 1st February 1949, Cabramatta became its own parish under the patronage of the Sacred Heart. The buildings were used as classrooms on weekdays and as the Parish church on weekends. Our first Parish Priest was Fr Michael Joseph Kiely, who served Cabramatta from 1949 -1959 with Fr Daniel McAuliffe the first Assistant Priest, joining the parish in August 1956.



Fr Michael Kiely



Fr Daniel McAuliffe



The first group of students to receive Holy Communion at Sacred Heart Cabramatta in 1949, under the guidance of the Sisters of Charity.



Playtime in front of Kindergarten building (right side of picture built in 1953) and infants' school (left side of picture built in 1956)



Sacred Heart School has always been an integral part of the Parish. The Sisters of Charity resided at St Mary's convent in Liverpool and travelled daily by train to Cabramatta. When the new Presbytery was built on Park Road in 1953, Fr Kiely moved out of the cottage in Bartley Street where he had been living and this then became the first convent. The Sisters no longer had to travel from Liverpool every day.

The Polish Community:

Post war migration of the early 1950's brought about 700 Polish refugees to Cabramatta and its surrounding districts by 1956. At first, the spiritual needs of these predominantly Catholic people were met on an ad-hoc basis by visiting priests.

A regular monthly Sunday Mass for the Polish community was inaugurated at Sacred Heart towards the end of 1952 when Fr Stanislaw Mika CSSR and Fr Arciszewski CM began to celebrate the first Polish Mass. Fr Sadok Mackowiak OP was the first permanent chaplain and remained so for seven years.



Baptism by the Polish Chaplain

SECOND DECADE: 1959 - 1969

In 1959, Fr Kiely left Cabramatta and Fr Darcy O'Keeffe was appointed as the second Parish Priest. He arrived in March 1959. Within twelve months, Fr O'Keeffe addressed the parishioners on the need for a new church and for new methods of financing it, which included the Planned Giving Scheme (Weekly Envelopes). Fr O'Keeffe was considered the driving force behind so much of the construction and financial practices of the Parish. He built onto the pioneering work of Father Kiely and the early pioneers and has left his mark on the tremendous growth and development of our Parish.



Fr Darcy
O'Keeffe

What Is The Canvass?

During the past weeks the Catholic men of the Parish have planned—

AN ORGANISED

VISITATION

BY LAYMEN

TO EVERY CATHOLIC HOME

FOR PLEDGES

OF REGULAR WEEKLY SACRIFICIAL OFFERINGS

OVER 156 WEEKS COMMENCING

SUNDAY, 10th APRIL, 1960.

Sacred Heart Rectory
Cabramatta 23.3.68

This card authorizes

(Mr) A. ZAMMIT

who has signed below
to collect donations for the Sacred Heart Church.

D O'Keeffe
REV. NO' O'KEEFFE
Parish Priest.

A. Zammit.....

SOME OF OUR VOLUNTEER CANVASSERS



Fr O'Keeffe's volunteer
canvassers, his '72
disciples'.

Approval from Archdiocese of Sydney to proceed with the construction of the new church using the Cruciform design. In early 1961 the Army Hut (Church) was moved to the rear of the church grounds (where the present Canteen & learning area is situated) and work commenced on the new church.



Laying of foundation stone by Cardinal Gilroy 1961.



The new church, with a seating capacity of 800, was packed for this holy and joyous occasion. His Eminence later addressed the congregation at the following 11am Polish Mass. The final cost of the new church in 1961 was about 60,000 pounds.



With the success of the Planned Giving Scheme, it was decided to continue with the Scheme and to build a new Convent at Park Road for the sisters to live in. This was opened in 1963.

Agreement was reached by the parishioners to continue with the fund raising through the Weekly Envelopes and to seal the previously dirt playground, to construct a Parish Hall, a School Canteen, Administration Block and add classrooms as required.

On Sunday 24th December 1961, his Eminence, Cardinal Norman Gilroy, solemnly blessed the completed church and Mass was celebrated at 10am.



Procession of "Our Lady of Czestochowa" before placing it in the new church.



First Quarterly Bulletin and school upgrades during this decade.



CARDINAL Karol Wojtyla talking to members of the Polish community at the White Eagle Hall in Cabramatta when he visited Australia in February 1973.

The **Polish community** continued to grow alongside with the Church. With its use of the new church, the Polish readily applied themselves to church cleaning duties after their first Friday Masses. Perhaps the most momentous and memorable visit by a Polish church dignitary to Cabramatta has been that of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) in February 1973.

The Spanish Community: The first Spanish Mass at Cabramatta was celebrated by Fr Gines Ortin 1974. It continued for a while however with the Spanish numbers dwindling, they continued to have Mass at Fairfield parish.



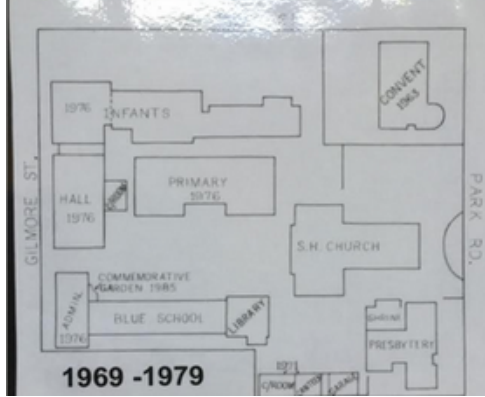
Maria Mammone while baking home-made bread for the feast of St Anthony. Traditionally, the bread would be blessed and then distributed to fellow parishioners attending Italian Mass.

The Vietnamese Community: In 1977, Asians (Vietnamese, Chinese, Laotian, Thai, Malaysian and Cambodian) arrived in Cabramatta after the end of the Vietnam War. Visiting priests often came to hostels to say Mass, however many attended the English Masses in order to receive Holy Communion. It was not until 1982 that the first Vietnamese Mass was said at Cabramatta.

The Italian Community: Father Angelo Buffalo celebrated the first Italian mass at Sacred Heart, Cabramatta, in 1977. This 7:30am Sunday Mass was the start to the building of the Italian community. The Italian community in Cabramatta was born, coming together with a common purpose to reinvigorate the faith for all the elderly, who perhaps had lost touch as a result of the language barriers and to introduce the young to the Italian traditions and to participate in the work of the Sacred Heart Parish. There was a great willingness of many lay people to participate, in particular the youth, who became the go-between that facilitated the breaking of the cultural barriers that existed.



The Solemn Closing - Combined International mass was celebrated on Sunday 29 October 1978.



THIRD DECADE: 1969 - 1979

In September 1974, Fr O'Keeffe was appointed to Balgowlah Parish. He managed to receive approval from Cardinal Gilroy for an extension to the Presbytery before leaving. The Saint Vincent De Paul shop was added to the side of the Presbytery. Fr Patrick McAuliffe arrived at Cabramatta on 1st October 1974 and became our third Parish Priest.

During his stewardship, Father McAuliffe ministered over an increasingly challenging and diverse Parish and took it into the 21st century.

We can all still hear his rallying cry of "Not a worry in the world". Fr Mac as he was known, not only to the parishioners, but also to the general public, had an impact on the lives of those he ministered to and befriended. He had an energy about him that was infectious, if he asked for your help, you just accepted and did your best to assist. Fr Mac was very involved with our primary school, Mary MacKillop College and Patrician Bro's College. He knew the future of our parish and indeed the church was the youth.

The PCYC was another huge part of his life, and he could be found there coaching the basketball or just having a chat with the young people.



25TH ANNIVERSARY: 1974

Our Parish celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 1974, which included a big mass that welcomed all cultures and nationalities, memorabilia inside the Church, and many festivities throughout the day.





Redesign of the church



The Vietnamese Community:

Fr John Tran Quang Thien approached Fr McAuliffe for permission to have a Mass in Vietnamese held here at Cabramatta each week. Fr McAuliffe agreed and extended a warm welcome to the Vietnamese people. The first Vietnamese Mass here was on the 20th June 1982 at 4pm.

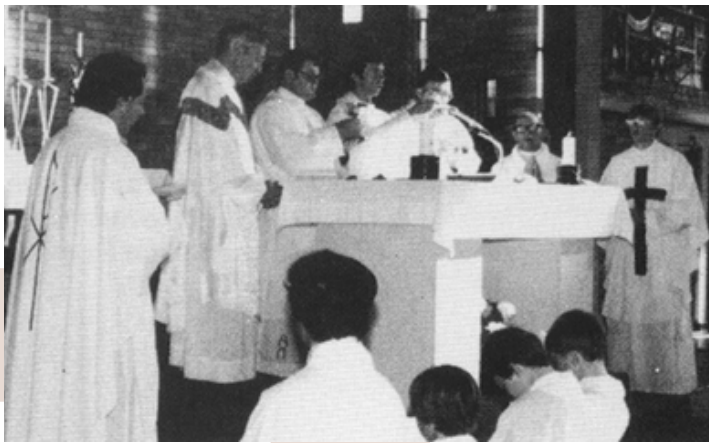
In 1985, Sacred Heart school celebrated its Golden Jubilee, which included a Thanksgiving mass.



Sacred Heart Primary School staff 1985

FOURTH DECADE: 1979 – 1989

Fr Paul Finucan was the first Cabramatta parishioner to be ordained as a priest on 22nd August 1981. He celebrated his first mass at Cabramatta with his family and the parish community.



In 1984, our Church underwent renovations following changes to Catholic worship and the celebration of mass post Vatican II. This included the removal of altar rails, relocation of the altar and having priests now face the congregation.



The **Sisters of Charity** continued to serve in our school and parish, with Sister Margaret Case joining the Parish Pastoral team in 1980 and Sister Jean Montgomery in 1985. Sister Enid Doherty was principal of the school from 1979 to 1985, followed by Sister Margaret Valentine in 1986. After 50 years, Sacred Heart School got its first lay Principal with the appointment of Mrs Shirley Jackson from 1988-1996, followed by Mrs Sybil Dickens.



The **St Vincent De Paul's Society** had volunteers doing 20 – 30 home visits per week, helping with the influx of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, South America and Poland. We were blessed to have the support and guidance of a spiritual advisor Father Mac and the assistance of the other parishioners. Over the years we have received generous support from Sacred Heart Primary School, Mary MacKillop College and Patrician Brothers' College, and the anonymous benefactors of SVDP in Cabramatta. As we celebrate our 75th Anniversary, we are saddened at the passing of our current president Mr John Zammit. May he rest in eternal peace.



Father McAuliffe relaxing with members of SVDP Society.





Parish Family Ministry: Cabramatta was the first Parish in which the Parish Family Ministers were commissioned on behalf of Sydney Archdiocese.



FIFTH DECADE: 1989 – 1999

This was the decade of the Church's Golden Jubilee. The decade started with Sacred Heart Parish getting actively involved in the archdiocesan program known as Parish 2000. Parish 2000 was a three-year strategy of parish renewal with aims to build a deep and continuous sense of community within the parish.

1991 - Stage 1 - To gather the people

1992 - Stage 2 - To listen to the Bible, ourselves, others, the community, the world.

1993 - Stage 3 - To respond to this challenge as God's people with energy and imagination

Lenten Group: The Prayer Network Team which linked up people to pray for the renewal of the parish. The small groups began to gather in 1990; there were more groups meeting in 1991 growing to 23 by 1993.



A **Liturgy Committee** was one of the recommendations. This required interested parishioners to work closely with the clergy to develop our liturgical celebrations. Some of the developments have come about – rostering commentators and readers at weekend Masses; intense planning for special occasions and masses; preparing notices; having organists and choirs to participate through music and hymns; having PowerPoint presentations and many more.



Installation of Acolytes and Special Minister on 12th December 1992.



Acolytes and Special Minister: With the growth of the parish, the spiritual needs of parishioners also increased and additional ministers were required to assist the priests. In October 1978, Bishop Cremin installed the first acolytes into the Ministry of Acolyte at Cabramatta and in 1990 Extraordinary Ministers were also introduced.



Catechists continued to bring the word of God to Catholic children in the state schools in our area. They teach for half an hour per week to the children in the six state public primary schools in our area.



The **Liturgy Team** concentrated on making Sunday Masses, especially the roam English mass, a family celebration. To this day, the Sunday roam mass is known as the 'Children's mass', with hymns being sung by the children's choir.



Fr Martin Nicol ran the RCIA process in Cabramatta, where he gathered a small team of catechists who were trained in the RCIA process. People who were interested in finding out more about the Catholic Faith were invited to join.





The **Vietnamese community** continued to grow with additional Masses added to the Sacred Heart weekly calendar. A significant occasion in our parish this decade was the erection of the statue of Our Lady and her Divine Child (in Latin, 'Mater Misericordiae' and in Vietnamese, 'Mẹ Từ Ái'). The statue was unveiled and blessed by Bishop David Cremin on the 26th August 1990.



In 1998, the Vietnamese community donated the statue of the Sacred Heart, which was positioned where the old baptismal font used to be. Fr D'Arcy O'Keeffe blessed the new Sacred Heart shrine and statue at Sacred Heart Parish.



In 1999, our Parish celebrated its 50th anniversary. There was a display of memorabilia and photos in the parish hall and many celebrations.

A Jubilee Dinner in the auditorium of the Cabra Vale Diggers.



From left to right: Fr Peter Kelleher (the first boy baptised at Cabramatta), Fr D'Arcy O'Keeffe, Fr Ron Hickman (former assistant priest), Fr Patrick McAuliffe, Fr Joseph Vu Minh Nguyen (Vietnamese chaplain), Fr Chris Toohey (former assistant priest), Fr Anton Totonjian (former assistant priest), Fr Rafal Rucinski (Polish chaplain).





SIXTH DECADE: 1999 - 2009

Our Parish celebrated our Diamond Jubilee Anniversary during this period. In August 2005, we thanked the Sisters of Charity for serving our Parish from 1935 to 2005. The Sacred Heart school motto "LEARN OF ME" came from the Sisters of Charity, and is still adhered to in our school life and parish.



On 30th September 2006, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Southern Cross moved to the convent.



On 23rd July 2006, we celebrated Fr McAuliffe's Golden Jubilee of his Ordination.





The Parish celebrated our 60th Anniversary on 21st June 2009.



World Youth Day 2008 came and was celebrated in Sacred Heart Parish Cabramatta.





In October 2009, Sacred Heart Parish celebrated Year of the Priests at Cabramatta Bowling Club.



Lao Community



Polish Community



Vietnamese Community



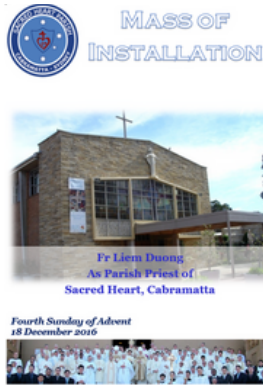
Fr Huy Trong Pham comes to our parish as a Deacon, is ordained as a Priest at St Mary Cathedral and remained as our assistant Priest until January 2009.





SEVENTH DECADE: 2009 - 2019

On the 17th June 2012, the Apostolic Nuncio to Australia, Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto, celebrated mass and blessed the two new shrines of The Holy Family and Saint Mary Mackillop, which are on our parish grounds.



In January 2016, Archbishop Anthony Fisher appointed **Fr Liam Duong** as the administrator of our Parish and officially installed as the fourth Parish Priest on the 18th December 2016. During his leadership as our fourth Parish Priest, the parish held huge celebrations. Fr Liam brought his creative vision to the Parish, expanding the decorations around the Church and actively involving the community. In 2018, the family conference retreats and talks took place with parishioners able to obtain a Papal blessing. The Christmas cribs also seemed to grow in size and reverence.

Fr McAuliffe officially retired after 60 years of active ministry as a priest, 42 years of which were in Cabramatta. He may have moved to Rosary Village, but he was always back to help out when asked. He also continued his work at Mary MacKillop College for many years into his 'retirement'.



A significant celebration included the Year of Mercy in 2016, which featured a trip to St Mary's Cathedral

Celebration of the Blessing and Opening of the New School Building and Facility on 30th October 2017.



"The Church celebrated the Year of Mercy in 2016, with Parish Mission Week closing out the year on 11-20 November 2016. This included a week full of retreats, talks and reflections.

Walk with Christ in 2015.



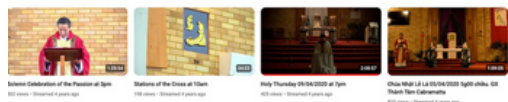
EIGHTH DECADE: 2019 - PRESENT

Fr Remy Son Lam Bui, our current Parish Priest, started his ministry in our parish on the 3rd September 2019. Fr Remy was officially installed as the fifth Parish Priest on 15th December 2019. Fr Moses Tamale also joined as assistant parish priest from 2019 to 2022.

After Fr Moses, Fr Roberto Keryakos joined our Parish as Assistant Priest and served from 2022 to 2023.



Archbishop Anthony Fisher appointed Fr Roberto as Assistant Priest at St Mary's Cathedral in late 2023, and Fr John Pham (current Assistant Priest) started in 2024.



We celebrated our Parish's 70th Anniversary on Sunday 8th December 2019.

COVID-19 was a shock to all but the closure of the church was unthinkable before this. On the positive side, the parish was forced to get familiar with the digital age, with the Sisters and the youth posting bulletins, notices and updates via the web and Facebook. Mass from our homes became common and use of technology grew. As we came back to physical Mass, phones were needed to 'check in'. Fr Remy, Fr Moses Tamale and many volunteers assisted with live-streaming masses on Youtube. Wow, what a growth spurt!



Our beloved friend and spiritual father, Fr McAuliffe, passed away on 24th April 2020. Due to COVID-19, the parishioners were unable to attend the Pontifical Mass of Christian Burial for Fr McAuliffe. The Parish celebrated Fr McAuliffe's Mass of Remembrance on 24th April 2021. During his stewardship, Fr Mac ministered over an increasingly challenging and diverse Parish and took it into the 21st century. We can all still hear his rallying cry of "Not a worry in the world" and feel his impact on the lives of those he ministered to and befriended. Fr Mac was very involved with our primary and high schools. He knew that the future of our parish and the church was going to be the youth. The PCYC was another huge part of his life, and he could be found there coaching the basketball or just having a chat with the young people. May he rest in peace.



The **Youth group** continues to grow in the Parish through volunteering in altar serving, reading, media or general running of events in the church. As of 2022, there is a Youth Committee representative as part of the Parish Council, hosting monthly Adoration and Young Adults group talk sessions, a youth choir that sings at Saturday 6pm masses and many other events.

