

Homily. Solemnity of Christ the King. 19/20 November 2022.

In preparing to celebrate the 85th anniversary of Christ the King Parish school this weekend I went on a hunt for both facts and photographs. Some of these facts are given in my Pastor's Pen which you can read for yourself. The photographs I found were rarer, but even more revealing.

On that Sunday of January 24th 1937, in the heat of noon, the overriding fashion was for dark suits, ties, dresses and hats on for everyone. Most impressive of all where the robed Clergy and servers in black cassocks and white lace and of course Archbishop Duhig wearing all regalia and the tallest Mitre possible. Those of us who recently met Bishop Ken during his visit will need to treble our the vision of his mitre to get near to the height of that worn by Duhig. The nuns too, the Presentation Sisters who had come to staff the school, were dressed in dark robes and veils, somber, sober and surely all sweating much in the mid-Summer heat.

In a way it all looks somewhat foreign to us now, yet in my time I've had a hand in building at least one Church and seeing to the erection and opening of a couple of schools and more than a few renovations. I've lost count of the various blessing and opening ceremonies I've attended and who knows, there may be more yet to come. The fashions have changed, along with the hats, garments and regalia of office, but the community of faith remains, as does the use of Churches, Schools and other buildings put at the service of the people.

All of which brings us to this moment in time, which itself one day not too far off will become just words in a dusty book and photographs out of step

with that future time. Yet, something connects us back and forth over the decades, our memories recalled by anniversaries like this and like our Parish celebrations of 2018, that time before Covid, now 4 years ago. But there is more and much deeper that unites us, calling up and joining together the dots of our history and our lives. It's the person of Jesus Christ and our living memory of what he did and keeps doing for us.

He is our King and the servant of our lives, the One who remains stable and true, yesterday, today and forever. We change quickly and are gone, but he is always here, guiding, shepherding us and giving himself away for us and for our salvation. We know this to be the case because we can see, hear and feel it in the Priests, Principals and parents, the staff of our Schools and Parish along with the students, parish members and families we meet daily. In them and through them we are touched by our shepherd King still laying down his life for us, unselfishly and abundantly. This is what anniversaries in our Church do; on the basis of the past they deepen our awareness of Jesus Christ present, active and with us right now.

Just a few weeks after the opening of Christ the King School a terrible accident happened that captivated the hearts and minds of all Queenslanders and Australians. On the 19th February that year a three engined aeroplane call a Stinson crashed on a flight from Archerfield to Sydney with 2 pilots and 5 passengers onboard. Days passed, no one could find the wreckage and people lost hope. Then a man called Bernard O'Reilly, who lived with his family on the Lamington plateau, followed his hunch and alone and at great personal risk and sacrifice cut his way into the dense bush and scrub until he found the crash and the 2 survivors.

His book Green Mountains recounting this rescue became a best seller. The O'Reilly family and guesthouse still maintain a memorial of this accident and courageous rescue. I'm telling you this bit of history today because in the exploits of Bernard O'Reilly, a Catholic, the people of 1937 were given a living image and example of our Shepherd King at work. Now, it's over to us to keep writing this same story in our own ways, showing to others the heart and face of our Lord, Shepherd and King.