

1. INTRODUCTION

This booklet provides stories from the life of the parish of St Peter and Paul.

The parish of Melbourne South, established in 1854, was the first suburban parish in Melbourne. It is not known why the parish was dedicated to those particular saints, but it has become quite prophetic as their combined credo, 'more than one way', could have been the motto of the parish throughout its history.

During the first seventy years of its life, the parish developed all of the institutions expected of a settled parish – schools (primary, kindergarten, commercial, technical), convents, boys and girls orphanages, boys hostels, a presbytery, and both a main church and satellite church. There were thousands of mass attending parishioners. Most were Irish, or of Irish descent, and both working class and upwardly socially mobile. The Sisters of Mercy, Loreto nuns and the Christian Brothers were active in our community.

This changed from the late 1940s until the 1960s, when the so called slums were cleared, and Park Towers, Dorcas Street, Coventry Street and Raglan Street housing ministry estates were built. The golden age of the parish was over, and in the 1970s all of the institutions disappeared, except for the main church, presbytery and the primary school.

Through the 1980s and 90s there was a period of experimentation in the Parish based on the Vatican II options for the poor and the young.

In recent years the parish has concentrated on refurbishing the 'jewel in the crown', SS Peter and Paul's Church. In addition, the parish has developed a skilful program of pastoral care of elderly parishioners, both in their own homes and in the local retirement and nursing home facilities.

The parish has also founded, and hosted Open Family, for street children, the Emerald Hill Mission, for the neighbourhood socially disadvantaged, and the Father Bob Maguire Foundation.

The format for this booklet is as follows. The stories of the Saints and the history of the parish are briefly outlined, followed by the stories of the institutions, clubs, societies and sodalities that comprised the parish. These chapters are interspersed with the stories of the people who have made the parish what it is; for if a parish is to be meaningful, it must be about people.

The stories and songs of this parish may be set in the context of Catholicism and Melbourne, but they are peculiarly South Melbourne in their telling.