



Anniversaries at St Alipius' Ballarat East

Throughout 2024 the Diocese of Ballarat has acknowledged its 150th anniversary and recognised the strengths and weaknesses of our history. We celebrate the achievements, and we ask pardon for our failure to live our Christian life to the full. We remember those who have gone before us, who laid the foundations of our parishes and school communities, our social services and health care.

On the weekend of December 14/15, 2024 the Parish of St Alipius Ballarat East and Buninyong gathered at a time of significant anniversaries, 170 years since the Eureka rebellion that involved many of the pioneer Catholics including the involvement of Fr Patrick Smyth, the 150th anniversary of the blessing and opening of the current St Alipius Church. Bishop Michael O'Connor, in his very first public occasion as the Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Ballarat, blessed and opened the Church. Mass was first celebrated on the Ballarat Goldfields at Brown Hill in 1851 before relocating to the existing Victoria Street site in 1853, where the tent-church-school (as captured by artist Eugene Von Gerrard) was erected. 2024 is also the 10th anniversary of the blessing and opening of Ss Peter and Paul Church Buninyong.

Parishioners and visitors were invited to gather at St Alipius Church for 6.00pm Mass on Saturday, December 14, 2024. We welcomed Bishop Paul Bird CSsR, the eighth Bishop of Ballarat to our Parish to lead us at the Vigil Mass. During his time as Bishop of Ballarat, the Buninyong Church remains the only Church that Bishop Paul has blessed and opened.

We welcomed all who gathered to acknowledge these significant anniversaries including those who were visiting us, former priests including Fr Adrian McInerney, and most of all the parishioners of the Parish of Ballarat East and Buninyong.

Thank you to those who have gathered to prepare our parish for the events associated with these anniversaries that have included the 6pm Vigil Mass on October 19 at which the impact of child sexual abuse was formally acknowledged as we stood outside in Victoria St looking into St Alipius. The Year 6 students from St Alipius Parish School Ballarat East, St Francis Xavier Primary School Ballarat East and Emmaus Primary School Mt Clear, together with some students from Damascus College Ballarat gathered for Mass on Wednesday, December 4 in acknowledgement of our parish heritage.

These anniversaries provided parishioners and visitors with opportunities to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of our history as well the opportunity to look to the future with hope and healing. Following the Mass parishioners gathered for a BYO picnic tea in the Church grounds. Photographic displays from across the years were collated as well as 'people of St Alipius' recorded for a visual display.

May these anniversaries be a time to remember, revitalise and hope.

Fr Justin Driscoll – Parish Priest