

A Reason to Celebrate

On Sunday 14th March, 2010, about 400 people gathered at New Town to share the joy of the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph as the Josephite Mission and History Centre was blessed and opened by Archbishop Adrian Doyle. Among those gathered were priests and religious of the Archdiocese of Hobart, the Director and staff of the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office, Principals and staff of many Catholic Schools and Colleges and family and friends of the Sisters. In her Welcoming Address, Congregational Leader, Sr Jillian Dance, also acknowledged particularly the presence of the President of the Federation Sisters of St Joseph, Sr Noelene Quinane and Leaders and their representatives from Perthville, Goulburn and Lochinvar as well as Sr Anne Derwin, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart and Provincials and Sisters from New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Descendants of the Tenison Woods family were also welcomed.

Sr Jill went on to say that “the blessing and opening of the Centre is a fitting way for us to mark the recognition by the Universal Church of our co-founder, Blessed Mary MacKillop, as Australia’s first canonised Saint. The work that she began with Father Julian Tenison Woods has been carried on in this part of the country by the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph. It is her legacy that we celebrate today.”



The two-storey building on the corner of Cross and Clare Streets, Sacred Heart Convent has been a landmark in the suburb of New Town since 1908. 100 years later the Sisters made the decision to preserve the beautiful old building and allow it to tell the story of what God has done through the Sisters of St Joseph since they first came to Tasmania in 1887.

The name “Josephite Mission and History Centre” was deliberately chosen for the building. The word “Josephite” acknowledges that the Sisters share the gift passed down to them by Mary and Julian with many lay people whose hearts resonate with the spirit of Joseph. This is not a Centre focusing on the Sisters alone. As Sr Jill said “Our hope is that those who come here will respond to that spirit echoing within their own hearts by engaging in the mission of Jesus to bring God’s compassionate love to the world. The story is a living one which will continue into the future through the lives of the young people in our schools, in their families and in the hearts of all those who are drawn to the particular Josephite way of responding to the Gospel. **We acknowledge and celebrate the past in order to gain inspiration for the present and vitality for the future.**”



During the ceremony, as the Tasmanian story was told, a candle was lit for each area of ministry taken on since 1887. Banners from the schools and colleges started by the Sisters were hung around the walls and present-day students took an active role throughout the ritual. The ceremony concluded with the unveiling of a plaque to mark the occasion and everyone was invited to view the displays in the various rooms of the Centre and to partake of afternoon tea provided and served by students of Sacred Heart College.

It is hoped that the story presented by the Josephite Mission and History Centre will inspire those who visit and that it will be an ongoing source of inspiration for countless generations of future Josephites.