



VALE THURGOONA

In November 1996 I arrived in Thurgoona along with other members of CCS to undertake this work of founding a parish. It was Bishop Brennan's wish to found a parish here in Thurgoona. In the beginning we offered Mass at Guadalupe House, now the Mercy Centre, St John's Anglican Church and a chapel at our residence at Tawonga place, St John's Hill, Thurgoona. Since those days an enormous amount has been achieved:

Forming a community of faith
Fundraising & Highway to Heaven.
Planning, acquiring building materials and site preparation
Building work and landscaping, all with the help of volunteers.



A Public Opening & Dinner Function by December 2002

Consecration of the Church in September 2003 by Bishop Hanna.

The Flyaway to Heaven Charity which gave us the opportunity to hand on blessings received by supporting orphanages in East Timor.

A shrine honoring Mary's Immaculate Conception, built by volunteers in thanksgiving for privileges received.

I like to be very clear, that without the courageous commitment of faith-filled families, we could never have achieved this beautiful outcome: a parish complex with first class facilities which we all should be so proud of. May our gratitude for the sacrifices made by those pioneering spirited men and women who boldly offered themselves to serve, be acknowledged by the way we respond to Christ's calling in our day to day lives. To build a Church & parish complex was a radical undertaking which at the time was looked upon by many as unwanted, but it is clear now who really wanted it! And yes, you and



I, are not merely here by accident but God has called each of us into his service to honor and make known his will for a particular devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart.

Now marks the end of my time with you here. As you know, priests do get moved and it was my pleasure to have

been able to serve you all here for 25 years. It is sad to leave so many friends behind, but it gives me immense joy that we have formed a dynamic community of faith. To me, it seems a lifetime of service and commitment draws to a close while a new window of hope opens. Yes, we are all challenged to rise up to a new day, a new way of following Jesus with renewed dedication. And yet, with the same spiritual focus to honor Mary's Immaculate Heart. This is what makes our parish uniquely pleasing to the Lord. For it is Jesus' desire for us to honor his Mother. It is through our devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart that Jesus, was and is, perfectly loved and adored. So, let us continue to honor her Immaculate Heart so as to confidently approach the altar of grace for all our needs. This is the particular way we show our love for Jesus.



It is important the Gospel be preached and lived; that our families be nourished with the faith; that what we have received without charge be given without charge. We are to be evangelists, living the faith and drawing others to come to know and love Jesus by the way we love one another.

We seem to think that a priest comes to form the faith of his people; and to a certain extent it is true. But it is also true, that the faith of the people forms the priest into becoming a true shepherd. For this I thank you.



I was young and enthusiastic when I came to Thurgoona; and yes, wet behind the ears too! But with your prayers and God's grace we have, together, forged a relationship that has produced characteristics that

our parish has come to be recognized for. Simple but prayerful liturgies. This, I think is at the foundation of all our other achievements.

I want to personally thank you all for supporting me over these 25 years. Nothing could have been achieved if you, God's people, had not said "yes" to accepting Jesus' call to "Come Follow Him". Your love and generous support have enabled me to live my priestly life for so many years with you.

Now, I undertake a new journey with the Lord. But I go confidently forward knowing that good faithful people like yourselves will say "yes" to the call of Jesus, to follow Him. And enriched as I am with the faith you have shared with me over these years, I confidently go out on mission with your prayers. And I know, as you have shown me



loyalty and respect, so you will give the same loyalty and respect to those who come after me. In the end, we are all mere servants; we have been called to serve in various ways; and together we form a community of faith that is unlike any other: it is unique as each of us are unique. But it is a true reflection of the mystery of Christ on earth, serving his people within the Church, his Mystical Body. As St James 2:18 reminds us: "Show me your faith apart from your works and I by my works will show you my faith."

Now it is up to you to keep this beautiful foundation alive. Your faith filled lives is what is required; nothing more. By leading by example you do all that the Lord asks. We are not here for our leisure; but to serve. Jesus himself is very clear about that: "I have come to serve and not to be served." Make no mistake, we are servants in the humble service of Jesus Christ Crucified. It is not a path way for the faint hearted. Yet, we will be true to it because Mary our Heavenly Mother pleads our cause before the throne of grace.

As I take my leave, I take with me the treasured memories of my parish family and place you all into the Heart of Mary in prayer. May we all continue to do what Jesus has asked: "Get them to honor My Mother." In honoring Mother Mary, we grow to love Mother Church and her son Jesus Christ.

God bless, Fr Fowles.



