**CANBERRA CENTRAL PARISH**

**FORMERLY ST BRIGID’S AND ST PATRICK’S PARISH**

**FORMERLY ST BRIGID’S PARISH**

Canberra Central Parish had its beginnings in 1958 when the then Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn, Archbishop Eris O’Brien, invited the Brigidine Sisters to run a new primary school to be built in Dickson. The school opened in1960. At this time the parish was part of St Patricks Parish located where Merici College now is. Masses were held in two classrooms which had dividing doors which could be opened up to be turned into a Church for this purpose.

The school was gradually extended and with the building of the school hall an area was set aside at the end of the hall so that a permanent small place of worship could be established. At weekends men from the parish would come in to set up the whole hall with seating so that masses could be held over the weekend. On 2 February 1962 St Brigid’s Parish was formally established with Fr Marcus Crowe as the first Parish Priest.

By 1971 the Parish was in considerable financial difficulty and Fr Michael Quinn was appointed as Parish Priest. In an attempt to get the Parish back on a firm footing Fr Quinn got together a group of about eight men who dedicated themselves to the running of a weekly game of Housie to raise funds for the Parish. This group of men, together with the help of other men from the Parish as the need arose, over the next eight to ten years raised enough money to repay the considerable debt and to put together healthy bank balance.

In 1977 a meeting of Parishioners was held in the school hall at which it was agreed that a Committee should be formed to build a new Church. The current church was opened and the first Mass was held on Holy Thursday night, 23 March 1978.

The Primary School started to have a decline and numbers and in 1986 the Catholic Education Office made the decision to close the school. Daramalan College took over the school and used it for its Junior School for a number of years. When they no longer needed it the school was purchased and became the Emmaus Christian School. The proceeds of the sale was used to expand the Presbytery to include a Parish Office and to build the Parish Hall.

In 1994 the Archdiocese made the decision to combine the two parishes of St Brigid’s and St Patrick’s. This decision was made partly to overcome a shortage of Priests within the Archdiocese and partly to free up the former St Patrick’s Church for use by Merici College. This Church had initially been designed to be the gymnasium for the College but had instead become St Patrick’s Church.

The first Parish Pastoral Council meeting was held in 1974. The current members of the Pastoral Council are Fr Emil, Fr Andrew, Bill Meani (Chairman), Barbara Anderson, John Skene, John Armitage, Ann Collins, Ray Toohey, Shahandra Martino, Mark Hareb, Ursula Gottlob and Catherine Bandle. Please do not hesitate to make yourselves known to these people or to contact them if there are any issues you would like to addressed.

**St PATRICK’S BRADDON**

Canberra Central has two Mass centres, St Brigid’s and St Patrick’s. St Patrick’s is located in Donaldson St, Braddon, close to Civic Centre. St Patrick’s was the first church-school in northside Canberra and was established in 1935 and has been used as a place of worship ever since. From 1969 the buildings of the school were used by many different migrant communities not the least of which was the German Boniface Community which still meet at the Church for Sunday Masses. This community has contributed greatly to St Patrick’s Church in many ways over the years.

The school was closed in 1973 and the infants school at the back was leased to The School Without Walls. At the same time the St Patricks Parish Education Board recognised the need for a Mass Centre in the Braddon area and some minor modifications were made to return the buildings for use as a church. In 1983 it was decided to renovate the church and it was dedicated by Archbishop Francis Carroll on 16 March 1983. The current altar in the church is part of the altar used by Pope John Paul 11 at the Papal Mass held at the National Exhibition Centre on 24 November 1986.

**PARISH PRIESTS**

The Parish has been blessed by a succession of Parish Priests who have dedicated themselves to serving the Parish community over the years. Prior to becoming to becoming a Parish mass was held in the school classrooms by priests from the old St Patricks Parish. The first appointed Parish Priest was Fr Marcus Crowe (1962-1971). He was assisted by Fr Joe Rheinberger as Assistant Priest (1966-1968) and Fr de Mooy (1978-1972). Fr Michael Quinn was appointed Parish Priest in 1971 followed by Fr Frabcis Casey (1974-1980). Sadly Fr Casey passed away in 1980 and Fr Quinn was re-appointed from 1980 to 1994 when he retired. Fr John Armstrong was appointed in 994 followed by Fr Ken Heffernan in 2000 and Fr Frank Fuchs (2005-2007). In 2007 the Parish was administered by the priests from the Dominica community in Watson, Fr Tony Murname and Fr Rafael Cabezon. Fr Kieran Adams from the Dominican community was then appointed Parish Priest from 2010. He was followed by Fr Bernie Patterson (2013-2019) assisted by Fr Joshua Scott in 2017. The current Parish Priest is Fr Emil Milat appointed in January 2019 assisted by Fr Andrew Lotton.