Christian Brothers’ Appreciation Mass and Reception
Tuesday 3 May 2016

Celebrating 80 years of Christian Brothers teaching and residing at St Pius X College Chatswood
Celebrating the Christian Brothers

On 3 May 2016 St Pius X College Chatswood acknowledged with deep appreciation the Christian Brothers who have lived and worked at the College since 1937 at a Mass and Reception held in their honour.

We were honoured that the Most Reverend Peter Comensoli, Bishop of Broken Bay celebrated Mass with Bishop Peter Ingham, Bishop of Wollongong and Old Boy (1956), Bishop Emeritus Michael Malone and Old Boy (1957), Father James Elmore (Old Boy), Our Lady of Dolours Parish Priest, Father Paul Finucane, Father Barry Nobbs and Father Vincent Nguyen. We gave thanks for the work of the Christian Brothers and prayed for the College leadership team and staff who are now entrusted to continue their legacy as there will no longer be Brothers teaching and residing at the College.

It was my honour to warmly welcome each of our 600 guests to this special Eucharist, where we, the Catholic education community of Chatswood, gathered to ask God's blessing in appreciation and thanksgiving for the service of the Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice communities.

On behalf of our College community, past and present, I thanked the Christian Brothers – those present and those who could not be with us. We prayed for those called to God and the Founding Brothers of this great school.

I also restated our shared commitment to Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition. Our Vision remains solid “to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ through quality Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition”.

Their dedication, commitment and leadership remain as an inspiration for the College. From a small Brothers community of five led by the first Headmaster Br Baptiste Quirke in 1937, our community has grown into this dynamic, faith-filled community through their faith and hard work.

We prayed for the grace to continue the on-going call that Christ makes to us to spread the Good News to all and for the College community “To Do and to Teach” – so beautifully modelled for us by the Christian Brothers and we asked for God’s blessing on all Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice communities.

Our Vision remains solid “to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ through quality Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition. We reaffirmed our commitment to this vision and to offer once more our appreciation and gratitude for the rock solid foundations of this College which continues forward – “Fide et Labore”.

John Couani – Principal

More than 600 people attended the Mass. Special guests included:

- previous Headmasters of the College Br Pat White (1973–78), Mr Tom Casey (1979–81), Br Brian Moynan (1982), Br Myron Byrne (1983–85), and Br Michael Walsh (1986–94);
- Christian Brothers David Curtin, Jude Butcher, Don Stewart, Paul Caster, Don Connelli, Matt McKeon, Stan Cusack, Brian Murphy, Berend White, Mr Jim Robinson and Professor Graham Rassiter, Br Carl Shenkin - College Archivist and Old Boy (1959) and the last members of the Chatswood CB community Br Tony Wheelan and Br John Henry Thambaram;
- Mayor of Willoughby City Council, Councillor Gail Giles-Gidney;
- Br Ted Magee, Christian Brothers Oceania Province Leadership Team;
- Br Paul Oakley President of Edmund Rice Education Australia, EREA Directors Mr Geoff Doyle National Director Stewardship and Resources and Mr Brian Roberts Director Regional Support – East;
- Mr Peter Hamill Director of CSO schools in Broken Bay and his wife Jenny;
- Principals of EREA schools, Mr John Murphy St Patrick’s Strathfield and Mr Jon Francis St Edmund’s Wahroonga;
- Mrs Suzanne Kavanagh Principal Mercy College, Mrs Helen Chambers Principal of Our Lady of Dolours Primary School and Mrs Jenny Shrivington Assistant Principal and her husband Mr Peter Shrivington, an Old Boy of St Pius X;
- Mr Peter Hughes College Board Chair and Members of the College Board;
- Mr Warren Boyd, First College Board Chair;
- Mr Paul Hunt, President of the College P & F and Old Boy; and
- the College Leadership Team, Student leaders and senior students, staff, parents and ex-students of the College.
A speech in acknowledgement of the work of the Christian Brothers by Mr Tony Cunneen (SPX 1971), Senior Studies Co-ordinator, St Pius X College Chatswood

Bishop Comensoli, Bishop Malone, Bishop Ingham, Christian Brothers, distinguished guests, fellow teachers, fellow ex-students, friends, members of the St Pius X College Community

Welcome, Welcome, Welcome!

Welcome everybody to this acknowledgement of the contribution of the Christian Brothers to the education of thousands of young men from this area of Sydney.

Tonight marks the end of an era because, for the first time since 1937, there will be no Christian Brothers living and working on this site in Chatswood – although I note that my friend and colleague Brother Sherrin continues with his mission in the archives and a number of other Brothers such as the much valued David Curtin maintain their links with the College in a number of ways.

I have been asked to give some historical context to this evening’s ceremony. I have lived through much of the College’s history – having come here as a young boy in Year 3 in 1962 and then returning to stay here as a teacher from 1984. The School and the Brothers have become a part of my DNA it seems, so in part this will be a personal reflection.

All history is personal, and please forgive me any heresy.

In any history of a school, the buildings, the budgets, the academic results are important, but of more value for me at this time is to remember the men who worked here – the Christian Brothers, both as individuals and as an Order.

There are many threads to their story and I cannot name all the people who have been a part of the fabric of this school, but I will do my best to acknowledge the overall impact of these men and their mission, because it is as people I will remember them.

It would have been impossible in 1935 to have imagined such an evening as this as ever occurring. The Australia then and the Australia of today are two different countries. Then, most of the students were of Irish heritage, and many young men found their vocation to be the Religious Life. Mass was celebrated in Latin and it seemed that the Catholic Church would continue in that form forever. The local church was keen to expand to help those who were still suffering the effects of the Great Depression.

In 1935, Parish Priest Father Thomas Barry, in collaboration with Bishop Kelly, asked the Christian Brothers to set up a school on the extensive church grounds which rose up the hill behind me here. There was plenty of land for what they had in mind – a modest school of just six classrooms that would cater for those Catholic youth unable to afford more established and more expensive local Catholic institutions.

The first buildings took their form amongst the sparse forest of blue gums, angophoras and bloodwoods which dotted the open fields. Only two remain. The site was bounded by sprawling Federation-style houses. The paddock between the classrooms
The School started when the Catholic Church opened the School on that first day, on 2 February from overseas, as outlined by Bishop Kelly when he saw itself as a bastion against the forces of chaos – Communists lurked everywhere.

The School started when the Catholic Church had a strong sense of cohesion and a real sense of mission to improve the lot of their young men – almost a pioneering spirit. This community commitment would continue throughout the School’s history, made manifest by the practical sense in collaboration with the Christian Brothers. The Brothers inspired a sense of community.

The first community typified the many Christian Brothers who followed. They were men committed to their religion, who saw their life’s work as a mission of service to God through education. Brother Quirke, our first Principal. We are privileged to have so many of them with us tonight.

The School continued to expand. It purchased land in Lane Cove for playing fields and used the seemingly endless store of goodwill from the laity to support the project. The irreplaceable Brother Max O’Cannor was instrumental in giving the school its name – St Pius X College – after the great Pope from earlier in the century.

The Catholic community maintained its sense of identity throughout the stresses of the 1950s. The boys from St Pius X attended parades of Catholic students in the Showground on St Patrick’s Day. Cadets, which had been started by Brother Levander, were a popular school activity, giving the boys the opportunity to experience leadership and adventure. Rugby, Cricket, Athletics, Swimming kept the boys fit. The Christian Brothers’ eisteddfods fostered the cultural life of the students.

The 1960s saw great change in the world. Brother Stephenson worked hard to gain a better site for the School – the site of space here has always been debted. Under the magisterial leadership of Brother Kett, the School challenged the boys to achieve their best despite a critical shortage of classrooms. The cultural forces of that turbulent decade made boys naturally resistant to authority in a place where once discipline was simply taken for granted. Our facilities improved.

Br Collins, Bishop Barry Collins, Michael Malone and Peter Ingham.

Christian Brothers Chatswood at that time only went to Third Year High School. But it became a part of the local Catholic community. Soon after its foundation, the Second World War took hold. Boys destined for battle would come and visit the Brothers, such as Bernard Carter, as part of the ritual of farewell before heading overseas: two of them, Jacob de Sisto and Anthony Gillespie to be killed in Action. Fathers dug air-raid trenches in the yard in June 1942 and, soon after, the School hosted a fundraising event for the war. Two Japanese midget submarines which had been captured in Sydney Harbour were displayed on trucks in the wide space beneath the gum trees just below the classrooms.

After the war, the Catholic community worked to expand the School. Brother Moylan, here tonight, was part of the community from that time. Each of the College’s principals made their mark. Each Christian Brother endeavoured to make the school a better place. The then Parish Priest, Father Flynn, knew that one problem was the lack of Science facilities so he purchased the ex-army huts to house Science labs and classrooms. These huts became a feature of the School for many years. The completion of the first Leaving Certificate in 1948 was a significant moment. This first public exam showed the success of the School with regard to its capacity to educate in that the College Captain and Dux, James Biggs, went on to have a distinguished career in Medicine.

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Then Brother, now Professor, Graham Rosalier oversaw the establishment of the Science labs, which still serve
A mark of the success of a Christian Brothers’ education is the many fine ex-students it has produced. We were always proud to have three Bishops as Old Boys – Bishops Malone and Ingham, here tonight, and Bishop Collins, now deceased. Prominent citizens such as Justice Michael Stannar of the Supreme Court of New South Wales who is also an Admiral and Judge Advocate General of the Australian Armed Forces sat next to me in Year 3. His mother planted the ironbark trees in KVK Street and led tree-planting working bees at Chaplin Oval. Senior Editors Paul Kelly and Greg Sheridan of The Australian newspaper went to school here and are still friends with their fellow ex-students. Current Wallaby Michael Hooper was here, although he will not be the first Pius boy to run out onto Twickenham Oval in England. Many professionals, tradesmen, workers, fathers – many simply decent men – owe their formative years to the Brothers at St Pius X.

So what will people remember of the Brothers?

Many ex-students remember the Brothers as caring, sincere, interesting, often inspiring men who gave their all in service to God. The memories of the Brothers are the memories of people: the kindness of Brother Carter; the rare ability of Brother Brian Jeffers to teach virtually any subject to the HSC level; the fantastic speaking; Brother Connell’s musical spectaculars; Brother White’s desire to teach the finer points of social etiquette and manage the school with such efficiency; Brother Murphy’s hospitality; Brother Thornber’s care of and interest in all his students, an interest that continues today; Brother Jim Elmore’s devotion to his faith; the prayerful sincerity of Brother Boyd Egan and Brother Hugh Witting; the scholarly humanity of Brother Johnson; the unique Brother Maurice McCullum; Brother Thomas and his boomerangs; Brother Whelan’s constant keen interest in all that went on here; the amazing experience of wallowing in the world of art with the talented Brother Mac, or sitting in the remote Grey Mare’s hut in the Snowy Mountains while the storms lashed the tin roof and Brother Des Kelly sat by the flickering fire and recited Coleridge’s epic poem, The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner – all of it from memory.

Such recollections are an important part of the legacy of the Christian Brothers at this College. Such memories are worth preserving.

The School has come a long way from that first day in 1937 – spiritually, socially, intellectually and physically. St Pius X College has moved out of the shadow of other more established Catholic institutions around the State – all on a tiny block of land hemmed in increasingly by high-rise buildings and with an intractable parking problem. Some things just can’t be solved.

So, in the end, I wish to acknowledge the Christian Brothers who are here tonight, as representatives of so many who have lived and worked on this site. The full history of the Brothers will not be written for some time, but meanwhile we promise to hold fast to your mission and hold sacred the memory of those men who have gone before, many of whom are now, I am sure, having their reward with God.

And to the Brothers:

God bless

Thank you

Well done

Brothers who led education here up until recent years developed this school from a small concern of only a few classrooms to be one of the premier boys’ schools in the State – all on a tiny block of land hemmed in increasingly by high-rise buildings and with an intractable parking problem. Some things just can’t be solved.

us well today. There were more classrooms. Music went from strength to strength. Debating, Public Speaking and Drama became features of the College. The School was, for a brief time in the 1970s, co-instructional with Our Lady of Dolours across the road, with the boys and girls sharing classrooms and activities.

In recent decades, the School has been lucky to have a succession of inspirational principals, who each had a distinctive style and sense of mission. Brother Patrick White led the College with great flair and character. Pat Casey developed the buildings further. Brother Moylan returned to assist in a time of some need. Brother Myron Byrne supported his staff passionately in the face of many pressures and had a vision that he would put every boy on stage at the Opera House to sing, just so they could say for the rest of their lives that they had performed at that wonderful venue. Brother Walsh brought great stability, energy and a genuine love of learning, along with a passionate care for all within his world. He developed the Treacy Centre at Oxford Falls, and used to like to go down and see the work unfold – and was even seen wielding a shovel on occasion. The ebullient Brother Leary managed the next round of extensions as the needs of the School outgrew the site, and the final Christian Brother Principal, Brother Hoffman, astutely extended the College’s footprint in Chatswood, buying property in Anderson Street at a time when land prices in Chatswood were only ridiculous and not as bizarrely astronomical as they are now. He worked hard to make the College financially secure and supervised the building of the gymnasium at Oxford Falls.

Speaking and Drama became features of the College. The School was, for a brief time in the 1970s, co-instructional with Our Lady of Dolours across the road, with the boys and girls sharing classrooms and activities.

This school is constantly evolving and is one of the forces that shape the world we live in now. We have changed. There was no St in 1937, nor did we then acknowledge the Kameraigal tribe as the traditional owners of this land. No institution is perfect, but the
We began our Liturgy this evening with the lighting of a Commemoration Candle. As John Couani noted, it will be a candle to be lit at College liturgical celebrations as a reminder of the significant legacy and responsibility that has been given by the Christian Brothers to the College.

In our technologically advanced world, where the production of light is such an automated reality, perhaps the simplicity of the physical gesture of lighting a candle for light can be lost on us all. The lighting of a candle is such a humble activity, requiring minimal effort and virtually no skill.

Yet, one of the early experiences of delight for most children is this act of learning to light a candle. It speaks to our innocence and joy, and it touches a deep and primordial dimension of our humanity: we cannot live long in the world without light.

Creation began with light. It was God’s first, his primary creative act. God gave form to the empty void with light. It separated out the darkness, and delineated God’s presence in the cosmos. From the beginning light shaped the contours of the world into which humanity found its purpose.

It was in the light of dawn that the gift of creation found its redemption. The resurrection of Jesus, the true light of the world, reveals how light is transformed in the image of God’s Son. It is most appropriate, then the Commemorative Candle stands alongside of the Easter Candle. One light that illuminates the other.

St Paul, in this evening’s 2nd reading, touches on this light of Christ, that is both creative and redemptive. To recall what he said: “I am quite certain that the One [God] who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Jesus Christ comes.”

The good work of St Pius X College was begun in Christ, via the charism and service of the Christian Brothers some 79 years ago. A candle was lit that has illuminated the lives of thousands of young men over the decades. The candle had been the Christian Brothers, but the light is always Christ. That light, to be carried by a new candle, is now entrusted to others, you who are to carry the legacy of the Christian Brothers into the future.

But before a legacy can be built on, a word of gratitude is to be spoken. St Pius College – its leaders, staff, students and families – is the beneficiary of the gift of creative and redemptive illumination lit by the Christian Brothers, who have witnessed to the knowledge and recognition of Christ down through the years.

To these men of faith, in all their strengths and weaknesses, is due our collective thanks. They lit the candle that has remained alight, and continues to illumine our lives. To these teaching Brothers: thank you. May the words of St Paul, also from today’s 2nd reading, be yours: “May you reach the perfect goodness which Jesus Christ produces in us for the glory and praise of God.”

As for us, who have been entrusted with the candle that burns with the light of Christ, now it is our turn to pass on the creative and redemptive gift of faith: humbly, simply, but forthrightly. Remember, a candle is such an uncomplicated thing to light, yet a challenge to keep it burning brightly. This light has been entrusted to us: it is near to us, it is in our hearts, it is not beyond our reach.

May the light of Christ, life and kept burning by the Christian Brothers to this point, continue to illumine the lives of all who pass through the doors of St Pius X College.
Speech by Brother Ted Magee, Christian Brothers Oceania Province, Leadership Team

Bishop Comensoli, Bishop Ingham and Bishop Malone, Fr Paul and fathers, my brothers, Mr John Couani, and members of the St Pius X, Chatswood community,

I stand before you tonight as a member of the Oceania Leadership Team of the Christian Brothers and representing our Province Leader, Br Peter Clinch, in humility and gratitude.

We Christian Brothers are grateful to our God who has inspired our Founder Blessed Edmund Rice, to bequeath a legacy of transformational education of young men and women throughout the world.

Since 1937 some 166 brothers have shared in handing on that legacy in this place at Anderson St, Chatswood. Theirs has been a selfless and self-effacing service which in generosity, enthusiasm and courage they have willingly involved their talents and their lives.

The often quoted Old Testament scripture: “seventy is the sum of our years or eighty if we are strong” is most apt tonight. Strong has been the eighty years of service which the brothers have given here; courageous has been their decision to develop such a fine educational centre for the people of this place; and, bequeathing St Pius to the new and energetic leadership of others is a tangible sign of our belief and confidence in Providence which our Founder, Blessed Edmund Rice, impressed on us is our inheritance.

Edmund was a man who knew full well that it was in partnership and in community that the dream he had of transformational education would survive. He and his founding brothers set their sights high and never deviated from their vision. Today marks one more step in that journey, here at Chatswood.

There is a time to plant, to water, to nurture, to build, to grow and there is a time to let go and know all that has been done in the past will continue soundly and resolutely into the future as St Pius X continues to be a Catholic College in the Edmund Rice Tradition.

The time has come. This is the acceptable time – the right time. That right time is now.

We acknowledge the support we have received from the Diocese, the Parish and local community of Chatswood all these years. We are deeply grateful for the support of the staff, parents and school community who have cherished and cared for our brothers for nearly eighty years. We assure you of our continued prayers for your welfare.

In this present era our Congregation directions are calling us to new expressions of living out our Founder’s charism and being brothers for the world. Religious brothers are men who are transients. Our commitment gives us the freedom to move where the Spirit challenges and beckons. In spite of our age we respond happily to the challenge. Could I add here my personal gratitude to the last two brothers in residence – Br Tony Whelan and Br John Henry Thomber – who have responded to the new challenges with characteristic generosity, and to Br Carl Sheerin who continues his valuable work in the Archives of the College.

We pray for you all and ask humbly that you pray for the Christian Brothers particularly the many who have served this community faithfully and made their home here at 35 Anderson St. We are confident that the good work begun some eighty years ago will flourish and continue to grow to that perfection which is its destiny.

Headmasters past and present: Principal, Mr John Couani, Mr Tom Casey, Br Michael Walsh, Br Pat Whiles, Br Brian Moylan and Br Myron Byrne

Bishop Malone and Bishop Ingham
Chatswood Christian Brothers 1937 - 2016

Addicott, A T
Adroe, M J
Arsel, L J
Baldwin, J D
Barclay, H D
Bent, L A
Bible, L P
Bird, R N
Bourke, T N
Bowler, L L
Brady, M Q
Burke, T N
Brow, L L
Bradstreet, A F
Brady, P V
Burke, W C
Byrne, F M
Carter, B J
Casey, J L
Connell, F X
Connell, D C
Corbett, J R
Corkeron, P B
Crohan, L S

Flynn, J G
Fogarty, C B
Gamble, R P
Garretty, W R
Gillen, C D
Gillies, N C
Graham, B J
Gray, J P
Grealy, F A
Greeff, L B
Griffith, J E
Gravenor, J E
Gygar, H F
Hall, T A
Hanley, J K
Ellis, P L
Elmore, J P
Farrell, K M
Fay, D H
Fitzgerald, B E
Flannery, M J

Hoffman, M M
Howard, V A
Humphreys, W E
Hussey, J C
Hyde, J E
Jackman, P D
Jeffers, B J
Johnston, W P
Keenan, A I
Keenan, J A
Kelly, D X
Keogh, P J
Kerr, G D
Killian, J R
Kilpatrick, A C
King, K L
Kirwan, K M
Knights, M C
Koerner, J R
Hayes, G M
Hester, P A

Leary, P V
Levander, L L
Long, W R
Loth, J T
Maher, T R
Mahony, T B
Martens, R P
Matthews, T L
McCallum, P M
McCracken, P F
McDade, K X
McDonald, C J
McFadden, W J
McKenna, R S
McKean, P M
McMaster, K C
McNamara, S G
Malloy, J G
Malloy, J J
Maloney, C P
Mooney, P A

Moss, M K
Moylan, B A
Moylan, W L
Mullen, M J
Murphy, B B
Murphy, J M
Murphy, T B
Naughtin, T C
Neville, D T
O’Brien, A L
O’Connarigan, V M
O’Connor, D E
O’Connor, J F
O’Connor, M M
O’Donoghue, L C
O’Mara, B J
Oxman, P E
Parkes, W S
Pearl, P J
Peel, B C
Quirke, R B

Raftery, C G
Riley, F G
Robinson, J M
Rodgers, F E
Rossiter, G M
Seery, T C
Shannahan, M D
Shannahan, R G
Sherrin, F C
Slyney, T V
Smith, C A
Smith, K C
Smith, K E
Stebbings, L B
Stephens, J C
Stephenson, J B
Stewart, D M
Sullivan, W J
Sullivan, W M
Tanzer, M P
Thomas, B M
Thomas, F D

Reception in honour of the Christian Brothers
With deep appreciation

The College community gives thanks to the Christian Brothers who have served at Chatswood with faith, dedication and commitment from 1937 to 2016. St Pius X College Chatswood continues as a faith-filled community building on the leadership, witness and legacy of the Christian Brothers.