

ST. JOSEPH'S CONVENT. HASTINGS.

On 13th September, 1888, three Sisters of St. Joseph of Nazareth, Sisters Teresa, Philomena and Bernard, arrived in Hastings from Wanganui to open a Convent and school. They were met by Fr. Lemenant de Chanais, one of the early French Fathers. The school, originally called St. Patrick's and later St. Joseph's, was blessed on the 17th but classes did not commence until February 1889. It is interesting to note that one of the first day pupils, Mary Kearins, entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Nazareth, and is still an active member today. Among the visitors welcomed by the first Parish Priest of Hastings, Rev. Dean Smyth, was Bishop Grimes of Christchurch, who spoke at the function.

The Catholic community increased rapidly and in 1895 the present Sacred Heart Church was built to replace the original Church opened in 1880. This Church, built by Fr. Regnier, S.M. the Apostle of Hawke's Bay, was moved into the school grounds, and in 1894 it became a Boys' School and later sold and moved.

The Convent that the Sisters came to in 1888 was an old dwelling. In 1899 the number of Sisters in community was increased to 10, and a new Convent, a two-storey wooden building, was erected. At the opening, 27th January 1901, the very Rev. Dean Kirk, S.M. Wanganui, was present as the principal speaker.

Difficulties in the early days did not deter the Sisters from their Apostolic work. As well as teaching the school they took Sunday School and instructed country pupils and converts. Their zeal was such that they walked long distances on their visitation of parents of the children, the sick, elderly and needy.

In 1918 during the influenza epidemic they did not spare themselves helping to nurse the sick and assisting the dying. One of the schools was used as a creche, and one of the Sisters themselves - Sister M. Thecla, died of the influenza.

1931 is a year to be remembered by the Hastings Sisters, as on 3rd February occurred the Hawke's Bay earthquake. This was a time of great sorrow, for, the Parish Priest, Rev. B. Gondringer, S.M., former pupils and other parishioners lost their lives. The Sisters, during these days, were found wherever they could help and comfort.

In 1935 a new school for Primary and Secondary pupils was opened with a separate section for secondary pupils - both boys and girls were taught up to Matric. standard. In 1940, however, St. John's College, at Mahora, was opened for the Secondary boys.

In 1951 a College was built for Secondary girls, a short distance from the existing school. The numbers grew rapidly and a fine block of classrooms was opened in 1966. In 1970 the College name was changed to Tenison College after our Holy Founder, Father Julian Tenison Woods.

An increased school roll required an increase in the staff, and in 1954 additions were made to the Convent. It gave the Sisters more conveniences, and serves as a Retreat House for Hawke's Bay.

A separate school, St. Mary's Convent, was opened at the west end of the parish in 1957. The Sisters travelled to and fro from the main Convent until a Convent was opened there in 1959.

The Sisters, true to the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Nazareth, are ready at all times to help in Parish activities. They have remained faithful to visitation of sick and aged at home, in hospital. They assist with Maori Mission work when called upon. They have a deep interest in parents and their children, and in recent times have helped where possible in training teachers for Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

The Sisters are encouraged in their labours by the ~~fideliy of the people to their religious practices and the~~ number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.