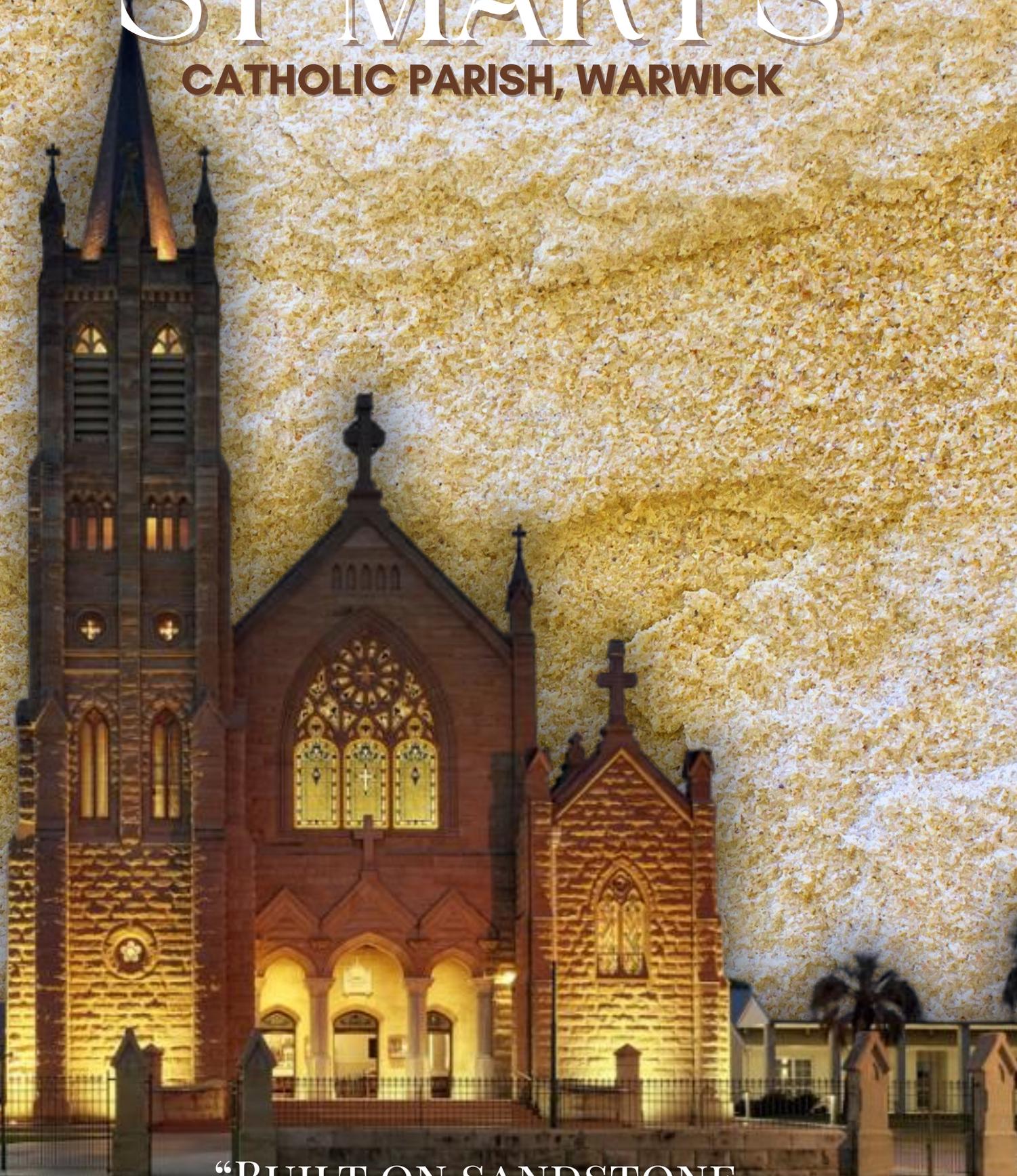


CENTENARY MAGAZINE

1926-2026

# ST MARY'S

CATHOLIC PARISH, WARWICK



“BUILT ON SANDSTONE,  
SUSTAINED BY THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE”

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# *Welcome*

To look at the sandstone walls of St Mary's is to see more than a building; it is to see a century of prayers, sacrifices, and shared lives. This year, as we celebrate 100 years since the blessing and opening of our church, we honour the pioneers who dreamed of this space in 1880, the labourers who laid the stones in 1920, and the generations who have filled these pews ever since.

This booklet is a journey through the century, from the first appeals to the restoration of our beautiful windows in 2024. May it serve as a reminder that while the stones are old, the spirit of St Mary's is as vibrant today as it was in 1926. Welcome to our centenary.



Parish Priest  
**Fr. Franco Filipetto**



Assistant Priest  
**Fr. Bony Abraham**

**THE**

# **LONG VISION**



NEW  
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH,  
WARWICK.

*Doornbusch and Connolly  
Architects, Warwick.*

**ORIGINAL DRAWING OF THE CHURCH**

**The dream of St Mary's was forty years in the making. First mentioned by Bishop Quinn in 1880, the momentum truly began in 1915 when Archbishop Duhig presided over the first official meeting to discuss the new building.**

**By April 1917, the "Great Appeal" was inaugurated. Despite the hardships of the era, the people of Warwick rose to the challenge, their enthusiasm matched only by their generosity. It was a period of "earnest appeal" led by Monsignor Potter, whose faith in his people was never misplaced.**

## **NEW ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WARWICK.**

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At both Masses in St. Mary's Church, Warwick, last Sunday, Father Potter announced that a meeting of parishioners would be held in St. Mary's immediately after the last Mass on Sunday, 29th April, to inaugurate the movement for building a new St. Mary's Church. His Grace Archbishop Duhig, who is very anxious to see the work started, will preside at the meeting. In an earnest appeal to the congregation for assistance, Father Potter said:—"The long hoped for day when a start would be made with the new St. Mary's Church, is now near at hand, Sunday, April 29, and Archbishop Duhig is coming to start the ball rolling. The ball was made on St. Patrick's Day when the Hibernians gave over the luncheon booths, concert and social for the purpose. We may call it St. Patrick's snowball, and it is going to get bigger and bigger with every roll. It is going to get a big roll on Sunday, the 29th. When the people see it on Monday morning they will wonder where it came from. But like all snowballs when it is big enough it will begin to melt away in material for the new St. Mary's Church and in wages for the workmen. What are we to do? Make up

# THE CORNERSTONE

1920

**February 29, 1920**

Warwick had never seen anything like it. Nine special trains arrived from as far as Goondiwindi and Wallangarra, carrying over 3,000 passengers.

## **The Foundation**

Archbishop Mannix of Melbourne joined Archbishop Duhig to lay the stone. It was more than just a building ceremony; it was a festival of faith. The ladies of the parish worked at high pressure to provide luncheon for thousands, demonstrating even then that the strength of St Mary's was its people.



**ST. MARY'S NEW CHURCH.**  
**FOUNDATION STONE TO BE LAID BY ARCHBISHOP**  
**MANNIX, on SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 29.**  
Excursion Trains from Wallangarra, Killarney, Goondiwindi, Maryvale,  
Goomburra, Toowoomba, Dalby, Millmerran, Crow's Nest, Haden.  
**LUNCHEON CAN BE PROCURED ON THE GROUND.**  
Mass will be celebrated after arrival of last Train.



Laying of the Foundation Stone of St. Mary's New Church, Warwick by Archbishop Mannix, 29<sup>th</sup> February, 1920. Dr. Mannix Addressing the crowd.



Fr. Potter's investiture as domestic prelate by Archbishop Duhig (Seated)



Fr. Michael Potter

# UNDER CONSTRUCTION

1921 - 1925

## **The Architecture of Warwick**

The "New" St Mary's was designed by local architects Dornbusch & Connolly in the 14th-century "Decorated Gothic" style. Every stone tells a local story:

- The Walls: Hewn from sandstone quarried at Yangan.
- The Columns: Solid grey granite sourced from Greymare.
- The Roof: Covered in historic Purple Bangor Slates.

## **A Trial of Patience**

The path to 1926 was a true test of the community's spirit. Work ceased for nearly a year due to a high-stakes Supreme Court "Breach of Contract" dispute. Despite the silence on the building site, Monsignor Potter never wavered in his ambition to see the Gothic vision realised.

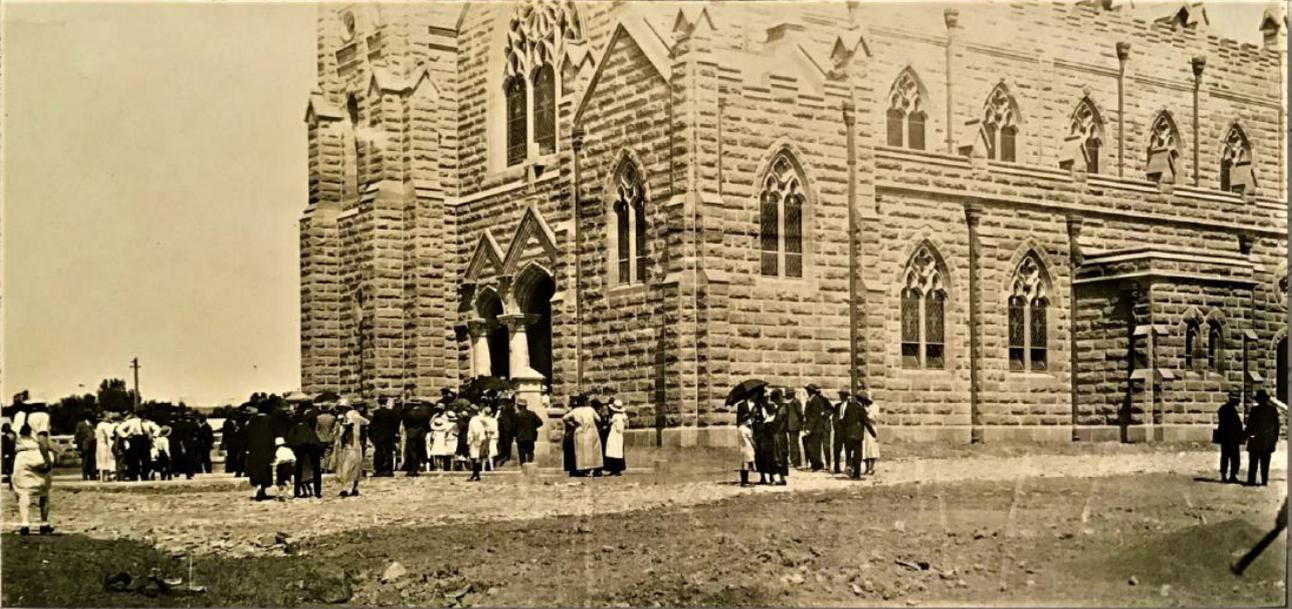
## **The Race to the Jubilee**

By April 1925, legal hurdles were cleared and satisfactory arrangements were made with Brisbane contractor F.J. Corbett. The parish entered the "last stage" of construction with a renewed race to finish. The goal was twofold: to open during the Holy Year in Rome and to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the Warwick Parish.



# GRAND OPENING

March 21, 1926



In February 1926, the dream became a reality. Archbishop Duhig returned to bless and open the New Church. It stood as a triumph of design, intended to be a lasting memorial for the Catholic community.

It was a day of immense pride for the parish - a testament to what could be achieved when a community moved with a single heart and purpose.



**Opening of St. Mary's New  
Church, Warwick.**

BY ARCHBISHOP DUHIG.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 21st.**

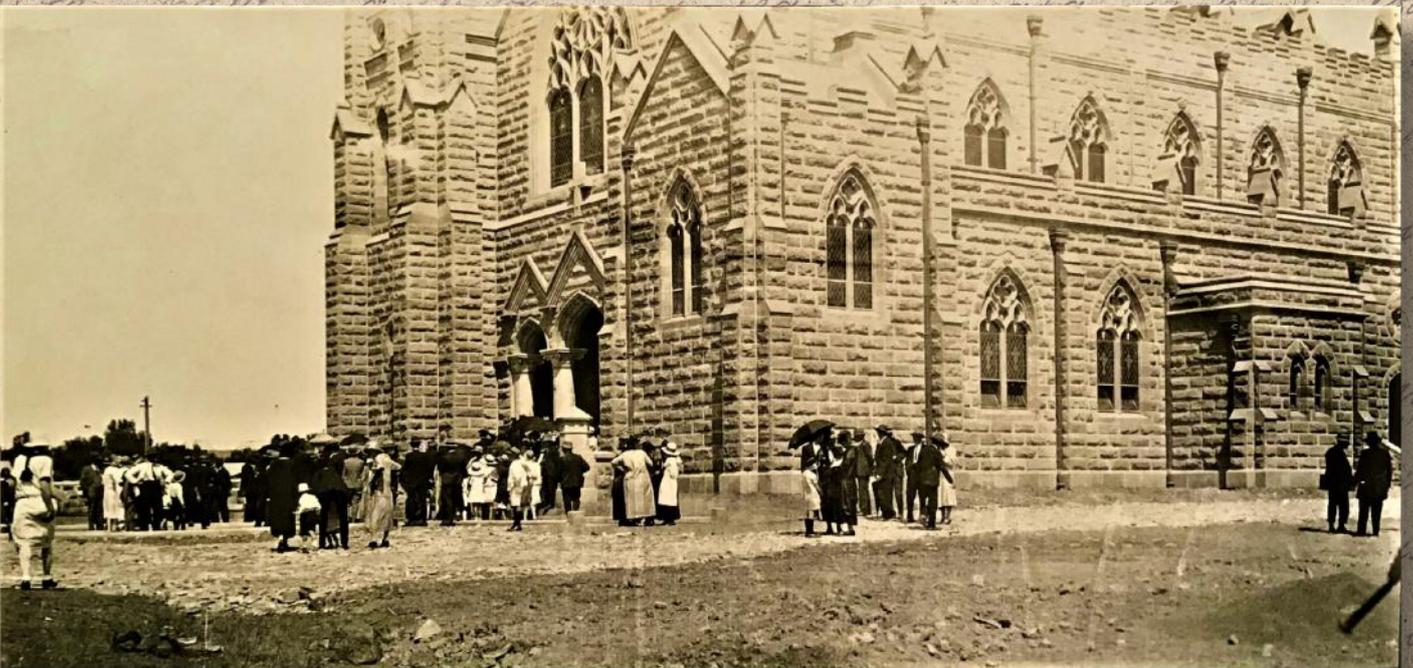
Excursion Trains from Dalby, Brisbane, Wallangarra, Goondiwindi, Toowoomba and intervening stations.

Train leaves Dalby 6.25 a.m., and arrives Warwick 10.38.

RETURN FARE 12/.

Mass will be celebrated after arrival of last train.

Luncheon can be procured on the ground.



# A SANCTUARY OF MARBLE

1929 - 1931

In 1929, the interior reached its full glory with the **Dedication of the Altars**.

- **The High Altar:** Reaching 20 feet high, featuring Sicilian marble and a high-relief carving of "**The Last Supper**".
- **The Side Altars:** Marble statues of the Blessed Virgin and the Sacred Heart, hand-sculptured in Italy.
- **The Mission Cross (1931):** Placed as a permanent reminder of the 1931 Mission, a focal point for the parish's spiritual life.



*12. Interior Roman Catholic Church, Warwick, O*

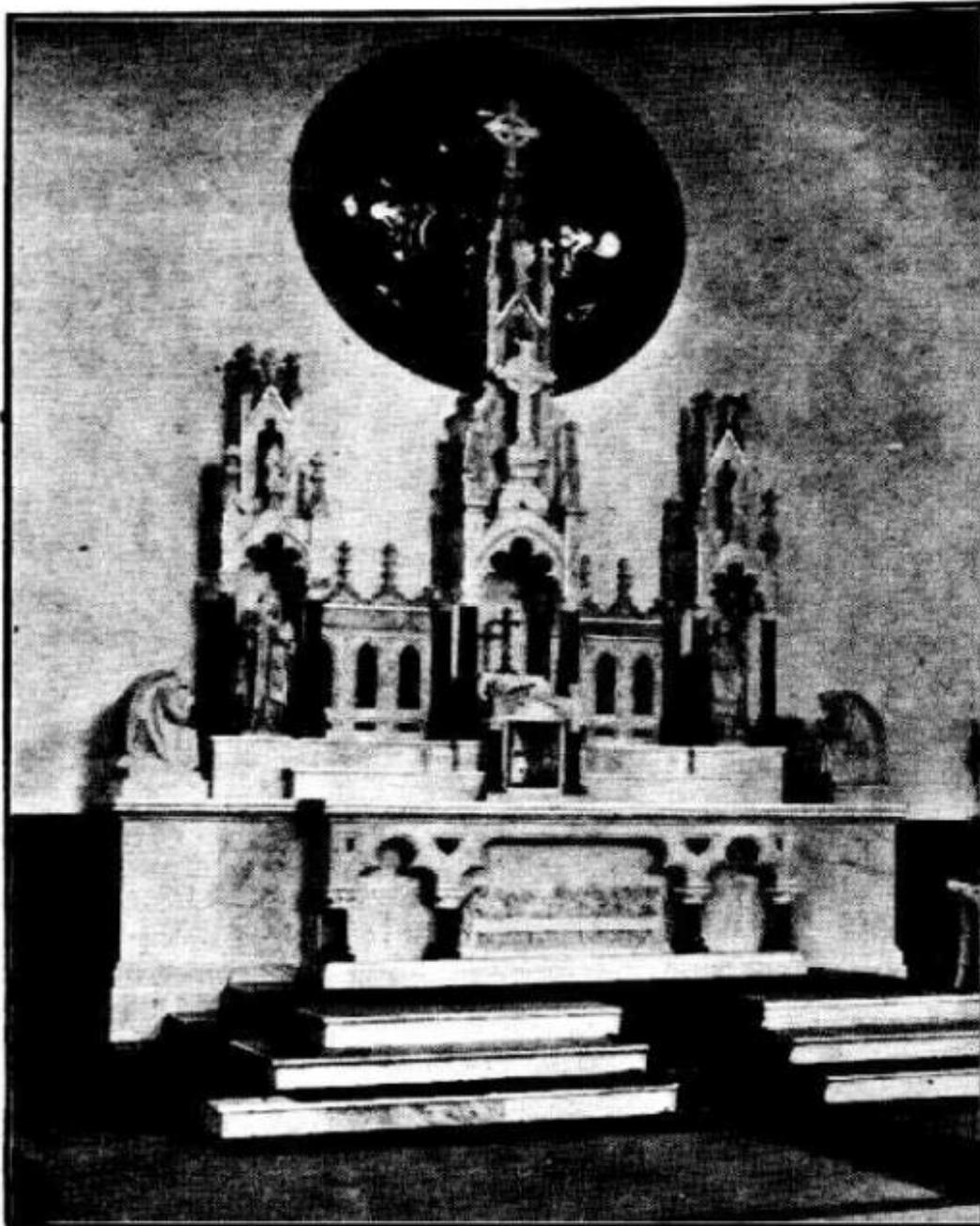
# St. Mary's Church, Warwick

## HIGH ALTAR AND TWO SIDE ALTARS.

There have just been erected in St. Mary's new Church at Warwick a High Altar and two side Altars. These have been constructed in coloured marbles to the designs of Messrs. C. C. Dornbush and D. Connolly, associate architects, by Messrs. F. Williams & Co., monumental masons, Ipswich.

The High Altar extends to a height of

form a base for the reredos and columniated niches. The central portion over the Tabernacle presents a harmonious arrangement of flowing lines, and rises in a gradually diminishing pinnacle, the niche being surmounted by a cuspid and crocketed ogive gablet, terminating in a cross and flanked by two finials. Slightly set back from this the structure



Beautiful New Altar, St. Mary's, Warwick,

—Poulsen & White, Photo.

**The installation of the Altar**

# COMMUNITY & TRADITION

1928 - 1932

While the sandstone walls provided a sanctuary, the spirit of St Mary's thrived through the vibrant social traditions and shared devotion of its people.

- **The Grotto:** Donated in 1929 by Mr. and Mrs. Martin Crane, this replica of the Lourdes Grotto was a beloved landmark and a place of quiet reflection for parishioners and visitors alike.
- **Social Life:** From the high-stakes "Miss Queensland" competitions at St James Hall to garden fetes and euchre tournaments, the parish served as the social heart of Warwick, funding its future through community joy.
- **Holy Celebrations:** Over many years the church has seen events with hundreds and even thousands of people witnessing to their faith, along with solemn occasions like the visit of the Apostolic Delegate in the 1950s.
- **A Home for Vocations:** St Mary's has been the site of profound spiritual "birthdays," including many ordinations.





Ordination of five priests, 1970



St. Patrick's day parade



Ordination of Fr. Ray O'Leary



Corpus Christi Procession





Ordination of Fr. Kevin Ryan

# CHANGE & CONTINUITY

1973 - 1991

Faith is living, and our building has evolved to match. Following the changes brought forward by the Second Vatican Council, in 1973 the sanctuary was modified and the altar turned to face the people.

Further modifications in 1991 lowered the height of the sanctuary floor & removed the altar rail which brought the congregation closer to the sanctuary than ever before.



# RESILIENCE & REBIRTH

2011 - 2026

The strength of St Mary's lies not just in its sandstone walls, but in the unwavering commitment of a community that preserves its heritage and rises to meet every challenge.

- **2011 | Preserving the Sanctuary:** A major restoration of the historic purple Bangor slate roof and guttering was undertaken to protect the church for its second century.
- **2017 | A Test of Faith:** The 2017 fire was a moment of profound testing. Yet, just as the pioneers did in 1920, the parish responded with immediate action and prayer, turning a trial into an opportunity for renewal.
- **2019 | Restoring the Glow:** The interior was revitalised with new painting and lighting, restoring the warm, sacred "interior glow" that has welcomed parishioners for generations.
- **2024 | A Legacy in Glass:** Continuing our long tradition of sacred art, stunning new stained-glass windows were installed, adding fresh colour and light to the nave.
- **2026 | The Centenary Polish:** In preparation for our 100-year celebrations, the historic Mission Cross was refurbished and the entry stairs repainted, ensuring our welcome is as bright as ever.



**New slate for  
the spire**

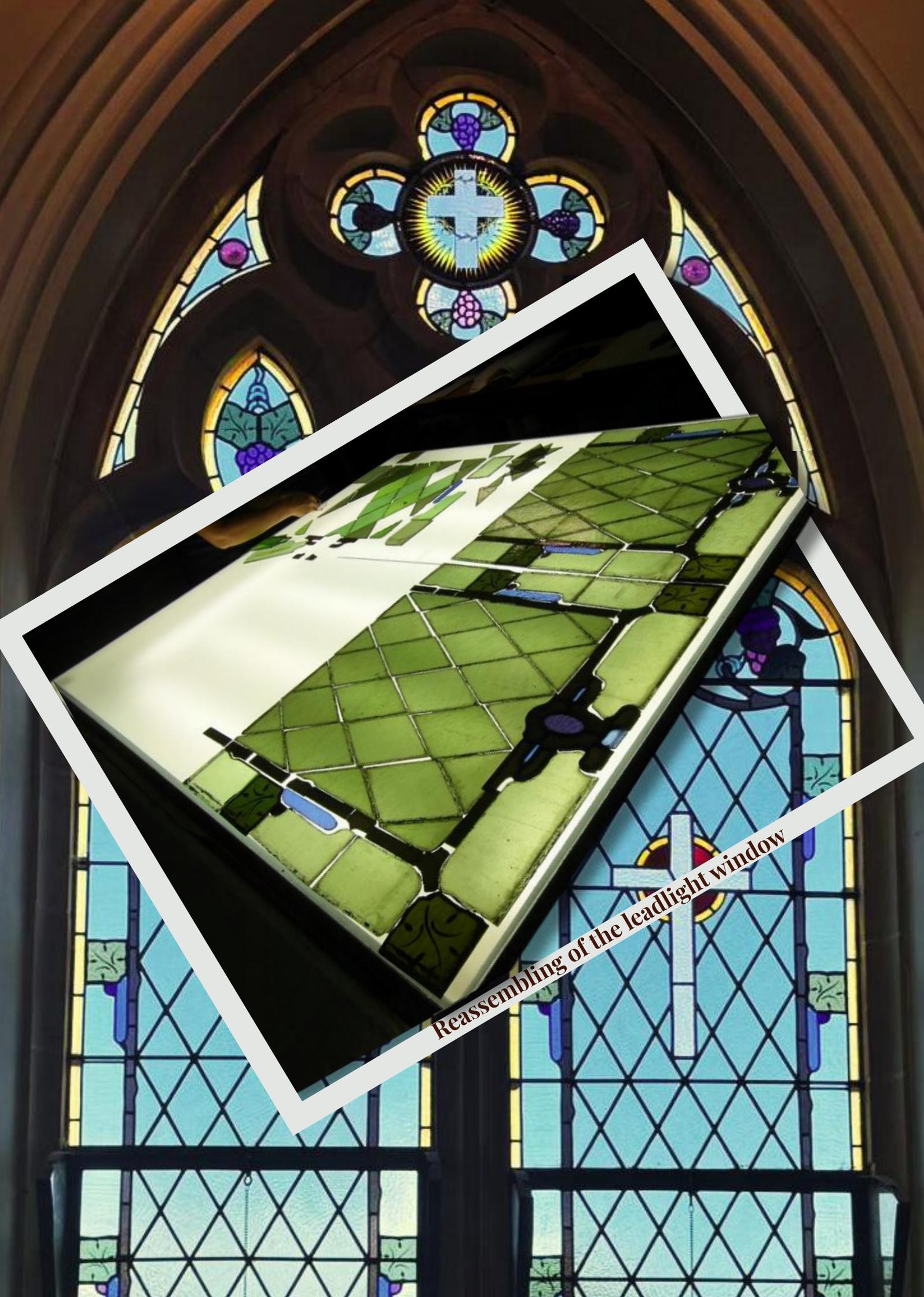


**Scaffolding for the roof  
restoration work**



*A lightning strike caused a fire in 2017*

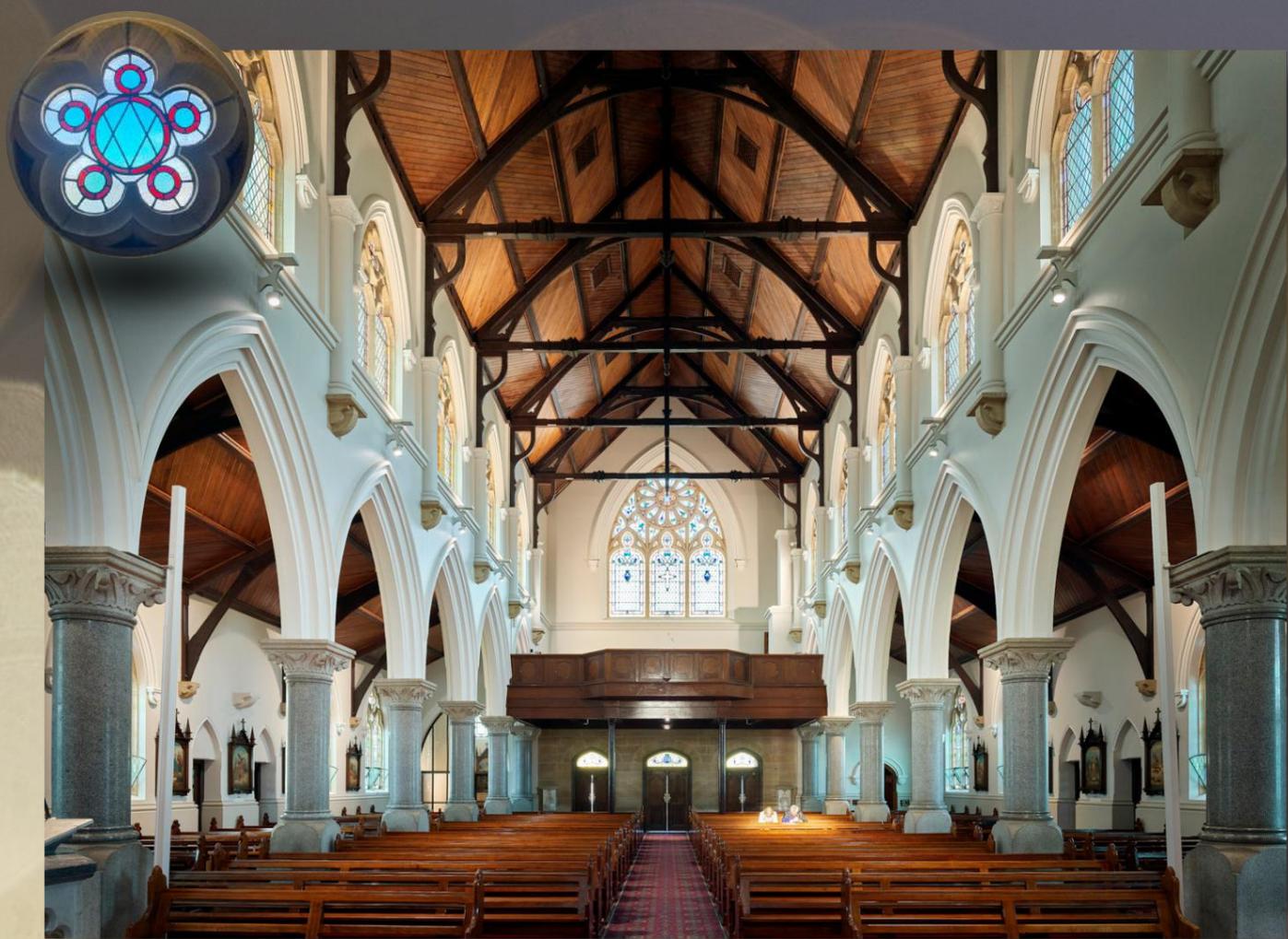




*Reassembling of the leadlight window*



**RECENT INTERIOR LIGHTING**



*The new lighting 2019*





*The interior and exterior lighting*



# MONSIGNOR MICHAEL POTTER

Monsignor Michael Potter (1857–1944) was the visionary parish priest who shaped Catholic life in Warwick for more than half a century.



Born in Cloontagh, Clonmacnoise, Ireland, and ordained in 1887, he arrived in Warwick after ministry in Ipswich and would serve the parish for 53 years, 39 of them as parish priest. A tireless pastor with a deep love for his people, he built country churches, fostered vibrant Irish Catholic traditions, supported Catholic education, and personally canvassed every home to realise his great dream: the building of St Mary's Church.

Though the church was completed only in part and amid great financial hardship, his determination, simplicity of life—"little Father Potter on his bicycle"—and fatherly devotion left an enduring mark on generations. He died in 1944, remembered as a priest of piety, perseverance, and profound love for his parish.

Fr. Potter's Tomb at Warwick Cemetery





Story by Carmel Wooding. Design by Fr. Bony Abraham