

Newly restored St Mary's Cathedral reopened and blessed

By Catherine Sheehan

St Mary's Cathedral in Hobart has been officially reopened after extensive restoration work over the past five months. On the evening of 8 December, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a special Mass was celebrated to dedicate the new altar and bless the Cathedral.

"May this cathedral church be pre-eminently a place where God is worshipped and the grace of salvation flows forth upon the people who gather here and upon this island of Tasmania," Archbishop Julian Porteous said during his homily.

Concelebrating the Mass with the Archbishop was Apostolic Nuncio to Australia, Archbishop Charles Balvo, Emeritus Archbishop of Hobart, Adrian Doyle, Cathedral Administrator, Fr Leonard Caldera, and General Secretary of the Australian Bishops Conference, Fr Stephen Hackett MSC.

In attendance was Her Excellency, the Governor of Tasmania, the Honourable Barbara Baker.

"Christians have always sought out the best artisans and artists to adorn their churches," Archbishop Porteous said.

"I am indebted to the wonderful skilled artisans and artists who have contributed to this renovation of St Mary's Cathedral."

After reciting the prayer of blessing, the Archbishop sprinkled the entire Cathedral and the congregation with holy water.

During the Rite of Dedication, the Archbishop anointed the new altar with Sacred Chrism oil.

Made of Mount White sandstone, the altar was a gift from the Porteous family in memory of the Archbishop's deceased brother, Richard.

A first-class relic of St Therese of Lisieux, donated by the Hutchinson family in memory of the late Mrs Mary Hutchinson, was also installed into the altar.

"The altar is the centre of every church," Archbishop Porteous said.

"Indeed, we could say that a church is the building to house an altar at which the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered."

Referring to the description of the Jewish temple in the book of Exodus (Ex 37), the Archbishop said, "As from the temple streams of life flowed, so too now from the altar streams of saving grace flow not only upon the congregation gathered but they flow out to all the world".

"Our churches and our liturgies are our best efforts to offer fitting worship to the majesty and splendour of God, to find in beauty a way to lift and inspire the human spirit," Archbishop Porteous said.

"In the liturgy we are transported to another realm, to glimpse something of what is revealed to us in the sacred texts."

St Mary's Cathedral was closed in early July to allow restoration work to commence. The entire interior of the Cathedral was repainted and the vinyl flooring replaced with terrazzo tiles. New heating and lighting systems were also installed and the former St Joseph Chapel re-established.

Much of the work was carried out by St Joseph Affordable Homes, under the direction of CEO, Ben Wilson, and under the supervision of Michael McKenna, Project Manager of the restoration.

Watch the livestream of the Dedication of the Altar and Blessing of St Mary's Cathedral:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rmNu9abhoc>