

Short Histories

Use this fact sheet to learn more about St Mary's Cathedral after your visit.

People: Clergy and Religious Orders

In 1843, the first Catholic priest in Western Australia, Father John Brady, arrived at Swan River Colony and obtained land on Lord Street for a church.

In 1846, a large group of missionaries came to the colony, including members of the first religious orders: Sisters of Mercy, with their superior Mother Ursula Frayne, who founded the convent and school at the square; and Benedictines, including Dom Joseph Benedict Serra and Dom Rosendo Salvado, who founded New Norcia and were closely associated with building the Bishop's Palace (Cathedral House). In 1849, more Spanish and Neapolitan Benedictines and the first Trappist arrived, along with Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition. Skilled Benedictine tradesmen worked on building the palace (1856) and the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1865; St Mary's Cathedral), including Brother Joseph Ascione, who is believed to have been its designer.

In 1887, Cardinal Moran, the first cardinal to visit Perth, consecrated Bishop Matthew Gibney (1886–1910) at the Cathedral. Bishop Gibney invited more religious orders to the diocese, some of whom he established near St Mary's Cathedral for varying periods, including the Christian Brothers in St George's Terrace (1894–1962); the Sisters of St John of God (1895–98) and, at the same place in Adelaide Terrace, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd (1902–04). Also in Adelaide Terrace came the Loreto Nuns (1897–1937), and, at North Perth, the Redemptorists (1898).

Successive bishops and archbishops and cathedral clergy have resided at Cathedral House, including Archbishop Patrick Clune (d. 1935), a Redemptorist, and the current Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, a Salesian. Clergy and members of men's religious orders have sometimes stayed there when visiting Perth; and visiting prelates and church dignitaries have been photographed there, as in April 1926, when they visited Perth to attend the laying of the foundation stone for major additions to St Mary's Cathedral.

Clergy and members of religious orders resident near the Cathedral regularly attend it, while those farther away less frequently. The Sisters of Mercy are the only religious who have been continuously resident at Victoria Square. All the Catholic clergy and religious orders in Western Australia have significant associations with St Mary's Cathedral, the principal church of the Archdiocese.



In 1913 Archbishop Patrick Clune's consecration celebration at Christian Brothers College, Adelaide Terrace, near St Mary's Cathedral.
Photographer Webb & Webb. Archives Office