

# New Catholic Hall Acclaimed As Forward Step

In bright sunshine an attendance of 300 parishioners and members of the public yesterday afternoon watched the Bishop of Armidale, the Right Rev. E. J. Doody, D.D., set the foundation tablet for the new St. Francis Xavier War Memorial Hall at Narrabri.

The ceremony opened with a colourful pageant of church dignitaries across the grounds from the Presbytery to the new hall building.

Extending a welcome to the Bishop before the gathering which assembled on the site, the Right Rev. Monsignor Mahony expressed his thanks to the Bishop for travelling a considerable distance to be present on this important occasion. He knew the Bishop had a warm spot in his heart for Narrabri. On the other hand they were as equally pleased to welcome him whenever he visited his section of his Diocese.

As he was about to read the donations already received towards the cost of their new hall, Monsignor Mahony said he would like to say a word of thanks to those people for the cheerful and generous manner in which they had given.

The Rev. Father McKeon extended his heartfelt thanks for the way in which everyone had responded to the appeal, from all people in all walks of life in every section of the parish.

He was particularly pleased to note the generous response from the young people.

While one and all would benefit, the hall would be a great asset for them. Efforts had been made in the past to

had been made in the past to form strong Catholic youth organisations but it had been difficult for them to survive, mainly because of the lack of facilities. To meet this need they would find the hall of tremendous value.

The Rev. Father Shanahan said he was pleased to re-visit Narrabri for the occasion and to meet old friends. He recalled that when he came to Narrabri in the first year after the war the need for a hall was envisaged but building difficulties did not make the project feasible. It was indeed pleasing to see the generous response that had today made the undertaking possible.

## Early Narrabri

Thanking Monsignor Mahony for the cordial welcome, Bishop Doody said that records disclosed the interesting fact that the first visit of a Bishop to this parish was made in 1861—just 83 years ago.

Several references were made in the records to services held at a small settlement known as Glenquin, somewhere between Gunnehah and Wee Waa—never any mention of Narrabri—so he had come to the conclusion that Narrabri and

conclusion that Narrabri and Glenquin were one and the same place before 1861.

There was no indication why the name of the township had been changed.

In those years the Bishop set out on horseback from Murrurundi and rode as far as Armidale and Tamworth and thence to the North Western districts. In 1872 the Bishop administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to six people when permission was obtained to hold a service in the Court House. At this meeting £158 was contributed towards a building fund and he gathered that from this the first parochial church emanated.

The foundation stone of St. Francis Xavier's Presbytery was laid on June 21, 1914, almost to the day 40 years before they laid the foundation stone of their new hall.

#### Need for New Church

Bishop Doody said he thought parishioners would agree that although the present church had done its work well it did not satisfy the needs of a parish this size.

In fact a new church had been given first consideration but when the position was examined it was realised some

means would have to be found of holding services while the new one was being built on the present site. In this respect some part of the present structure would be retained so that nominally the church would be traditionally the St. Francis Xavier's built by their grandparents and early settlers.

Bishop Doody paid tribute to the part played by Father McKeon in their successful task. He had sent him to Narrabri knowing that he would be of great support to Monsignor Mahony. Not only had he been a great help but was an inspiration to Monsignor Mahony in their twofold

nor Mahony in their twofold task. The response to the appeal that day indicated the whole parish was behind them in their objective.

"If you have made sacrifices towards completing these important buildings then you will have the satisfaction of knowing you are worthy of the faith you follow," added Bishop Doody.

#### A Challenge

"I estimate you will have no difficulty in clearing the debt on this hall within seven years. How long it will be before you make a start on your new church depends on the extent of the sacrifice you are prepared to make. I give that to you as a challenge. I believe that based on your past efforts, that estimate will be reduced considerably," concluded the Bishop.

"I believe that not only can I accept but that I can better the challenge in having the debt paid off in five years," said Monsignor Mahoney in announcing that honey announcing, amid applause, that collections that day had amounted to approximately £2200.

The architect, Mr. F. J. Madigan, who was unable to be present owing to illness, presented the traditional silver trowel for the ceremony.

At the conclusion of the function, afternoon tea was served on the grounds by the ladies.