

# FOUNDATIONS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

## *Servite Friars*

*The Order of the Servants of Mary (more commonly called The Servite Friars) has a rich history and tradition spanning more than 750 years. From medieval Florence to modern day Perth, Australia, the Order continues to thrive under a devotion to Mary and a commitment to prayer and service.*



*Artistic interpretation of the seven Founders of the Servite Friars by Richard Charlwood*

### *Seven merchants of Florence*

The Order of the Servants of Mary is an order of men of the mendicant or medieval tradition that was founded in Italy in the year 1233.

Seven merchants of Florence, the principal city of Tuscany, were drawn together by a mutual devotion to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and a desire to dedicate their lives to prayer and the service of others. It would appear that they had all belonged to a lay society that ministered to pilgrims in a hospice called *Fonte Viva*.

The earliest story of the founders and of Saint Philip Benizi, one of the Order's greatest lights, is found in a narrative called *Legenda Originis OSM* and its oldest manuscript is dated 1317.

Early historical records place the seven not only in the bustling centre of the great commercial city of Florence, but also on the top of the nearby mountain Senario, where they were known to dedicate themselves to quiet contemplation for periods of time.

It is this harmonious balance between service and prayer that characterises the Order to this day.

### *International Order*

While only a relatively small Order, Servites can be found all over the world, on every continent, often in some of the world's most difficult and inhospitable regions imaginable.

As an example, Servite missions can be found in the deepest reaches of the Amazon jungle in the far west of Brazil, the extreme south of Chile in the region called Patagonia, as well as the AIDS ravaged regions of Zululand and Swaziland.

The biggest growth area for the Order in recent times is Asia, where the foundations in India and the Philippines have made positive progress towards autonomous jurisdiction. On the flip side, however, the European, North American and Australian foundations all face the similar challenge of aging friars and few new vocations.

### *Arrival in Western Australia*

The Order's arrival in Western Australia dates back to 1951 and an invitation from Archbishop Raymond Prendiville. In accepting the invitation, the Order established its first foundation in Australia.

Although the earliest ministries into which the Friars entered were parishes (St Anthony's, Wanneroo and St Denis', Joon-danna) pioneer priest, Fr James Keane OSM, had stipulated in his contract with the Archdiocese that the Order should: "Enjoy the right to erect and staff a college for the education of boys."

It would be several years, however, before this ambition could be carried out, as the Order sought to secure personnel and essential finances. Fr Keane's dream eventually materialised on 12 February 1958 with the opening of St Philip's Regional High School for boys.

The early 1970s brought with it a name and 'clientele' change to the coeducational Servite College that continues to provide a quality Catholic education for the young people of the Tuart Hill and surrounding areas.

Fr Liam Mackle OSM was the last Friar-Principal of the College. The lay Principals who have followed in his steps, preserving the special charisms that are uniquely Servite, have been Jack Shanahan, Barry Harvey, Michael Kenny and Philip Cox.

### *Ongoing challenge*

The years have also brought about physical expansion for the College that faces the challenge of severe space limitations. A concern for the College administration since its inception, the need for future developmental space was not fully understood in the late 1950s when the original College was established.

As a result, the College has, over the years, acquired nearby properties that house, among other things, practical and creative arts, music and staff facilities. While a large arts centre was constructed some years ago, it is located on the other side of a busy thoroughfare.

On a more positive note, however, the onsite gym and auditorium of the Seven Founders Centre have notably added to the dimension and physical openness of the College.

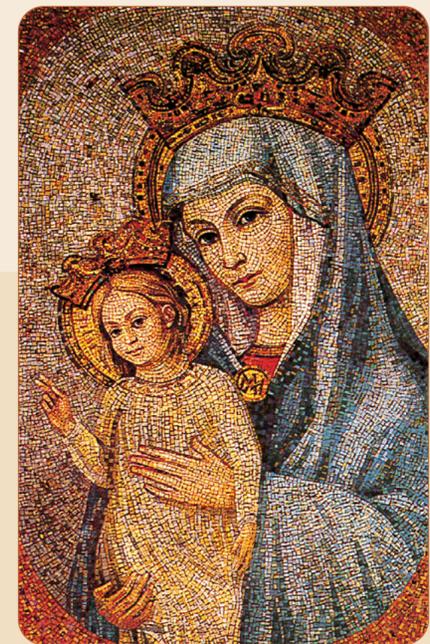
Despite its limitations, there are abundant opportunities for sports, both onsite, as well as at the large public oval that is in close proximity. In 2006, the College catered for some 830 students.

### *International connections*

The internationality of the Servite Order has meant that Servite College, whilst being the only secondary school in Australia under the jurisdiction of the Order, has connections with other similar Servite institutions around the world.

Foremost in this relationship has been the annual exchange between the College and Servite High School in Anaheim, California, USA.

Periodic international meetings of friars and laypersons involved in Servite secondary schools have also provided staff with invaluable networking and sharing opportunities.



*Devotion to Mary our Mother is made practical and effective because she is presented as the First Disciple of Jesus, a model of Christian living.*

### *Instilling the spirit*

Across all of their ministries, Servites aim to instil the spirit that has characterised their Order since its inception. Since *we drew our first breath already a community* (The Seven Holy Founders) there is a strong emphasis on aspects of fraternity, collegiality, subsidiarity and pastoral care.

The ideal to serve and not to be served dates back to those men who, from the beginning, referred to themselves as: "Servants (who) draw abiding inspiration from Mary, Mother and Servant of the Lord."

In this, the Order sees the Maid of Nazareth as one who carried out the Lord's will in her life, even when it led her to stand in compassion at the foot of the cross where her Son died for the life of the world.

In Australia, Servite College bears witness to this spirit of the Servite Order. Its vertical pastoral care system assures personalised attention to each individual student while its all-embracing Service Learning Program challenges students to be gentle and giving persons.

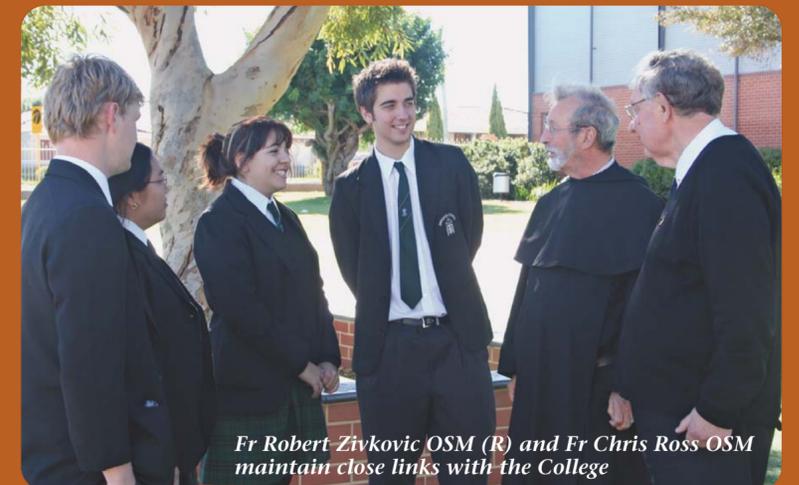
Staff members too are encouraged to regularly reflect on their 'call to serve' and this has a pervading effect on the general ambience at the College.



*Fr Liam Mackle OSM*



*St Juliana's Square, Servite College*



*Fr Robert Zivkovic OSM (R) and Fr Chris Ross OSM maintain close links with the College*