

Fr Bill Mills 60th

Mullumbimby Catholic Community



Celebrating Fr Bill Mills 60 years

Fr Bill Mills former student at St John's School:

For me, memories of school days at St John's Mullumbimby are vivid and varied. School, Church and Family worked in close relationship in my education and spiritual formation which spanned over a period of twenty-one years. This began with my year in Kindergarten in **1935** in a classroom separated from the sanctuary in the Old Church, by a curtain; right through to the end of seminary days in **1956 when I was ordained**. My secondary schooling was in St Columba's College, Springwood a junior seminary for the education of future priests.





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Memories of St John's are a mixed bag, mostly good but some not so good. I recall the 'not so good' ones first. In those early days Church and School played a very big part in our formation and training. We were expected to accept all without question. I remember being very afraid during the very loud sermons on eternal damnation and the devastation I felt when falsely accused by a teacher and subsequently punished without allowed any redress. In those days, one wasn't expected to defend oneself.

After primary school I moved onto the strict discipline of seminary life and after twelve years of study, was ordained. I think I am the only student from St John's to have been ordained a priest. Those early years of my life are part of my story and an important part, as they have influenced who I have become today.

Good memories abound of school mates and fun and games on the playground. Each year St John's (it was then called St Joseph's), would travel by train to Murwillumbah for regional sports day. I remember our school banner standing tall with those other schools at the combined school Mass in the old Murwillumbah Church, and how proud we were to see it there. It marked who we were and where we had come. On the journey home, as the train emerged from the No 1 Tunnel the engine driver would sound a "cock-a-doodle-do" for each cup we had won at the sports. We certainly could hold our own with the bigger schools.

In 1936 the parish priest of Mullumbimby celebrated his Golden Jubilee of priesthood. St Joseph's School presented a Jubilee Concert in the Old Empire Picture Theatre. I partnered my brother Frank in a song "We are Grandparents Old, Everyone!" ...one of my few boasts to being on stage!

Above all, I remember those kind and compassionate Sisters of St Joseph who had a calming and soothing influence throughout my

years of schooling. For all of them I have warm feelings of gratitude. They will always have a grateful remembrance in my prayers and Masses.

In the late afternoon of my life I look back on the good and joy-filled years and also the difficult and painful ones. Somehow I don't think I would remove even one of the building blocks of my life's edifice, even if I could. If I did I may not be the happy and contented man I am today. I have learned that times of crisis are times of growth. God uses them to get us up and going for persona; growth and maturing, and to form us into compassionate healers and helpers.

Early childhood and school years are so important in the preparation work for the fullness of life. I am grateful for mine. I would dearly love to be part of the Centenary Celebrations as an 'Old-boy' priest of St John's. Circumstances do not allow this to be, but I do wish a wonderful and happy day to all those associated with the Celebrations. St John's does have so much to celebrate. May its story continue to inspire and motivate present and future generations as they travel their journey of life.

Fr W MILLS

Former Student

St John's Primary School