

On behalf of the Sisters of St Joseph, Lochinvar, I thank Fr Gerard for bringing us together to say farewell to the people of Windale.

The Sisters of St Joseph have lived at Windale since 1959. Prior to that time, the Sisters from Belmont Convent travelled in to teach the children catechetics after the Sunday morning Mass. The first convent was built with money donated from the Dulwich Hill and Darlinghurst parishes in Sydney. At that time, Windale was in the Archdiocese of Sydney. Sisters Anselm Brooder, Virgilius Perkins and Loretta Mullins opened St Pius X Primary School on 27th January 1959 with an enrolment of 77 pupils. Before the convent was built, these Sisters travelled in each day from Swansea convent.

In 1966 the parish was transferred to the Diocese of Maitland (as it was known then), and a parish priest, Fr Barry O'Hearn, was appointed to the parish in 1967. The school quickly grew; a new classroom was brought in from Tighes Hill that same year, and a demountable classroom was added the following year. Seven Sisters of St Joseph have served as Principal of the school, Sr Maureen Metz being the last of these to be appointed in 1980. Sr Jean Marie was appointed in the new role of Pastoral Care in Windale in 1986, by which time enrolments in the school had reached 135 pupils.

Windale girls went on to further their education at the new St Mary's Gateshead High school when it was opened in the mid-1960s, where they were taught and cared for by the Sisters of St Joseph.

After the original convent burnt down in 1994, and until the new duplex was built in 1996, the Sisters travelled from Merewether to continue their apostolate at Windale. Visiting, supporting and comforting families has always been a focus of the Sisters of St Joseph. After teaching school all day, the Sisters would visit families of the pupils or others in the parish in need. This was certainly part of the story of the Sisters at Windale. Here, as elsewhere, the Sisters walked among the people and were one with them, from the time of the first Sisters to that of the last, Sisters Norah Creigh, Celie Creigh and Catherine Grant.

Teaching has been our work. Being one with the people, in their joys and sorrows, has been our ministry. In the spirit of our founders, we have tried never to see a need without making an effort to address it in some way. As we take our leave of Windale, we are at once proud and grateful. We are proud of the selfless service of our Sisters down through the years who have lived among you. We are proud that so many of us have shared our lives and our faith with so many of you both here and at St Mary's Gateshead, with your families and your friends. We are proud to hold Windale close to the heart of our history in this Diocese. We are grateful to the Windale people, those who have died, those present, those who have lived here with the Sisters over the years, for their friendship with and support of the Sisters.

We are sad to go, but the time has come. We are sad to close the final chapter of our commitment to the people and to the parish. As we leave you, we offer you something precious to us: a replica of our Lochinvar Josephite symbol. We hope this symbol will be a reminder to you of the respect and affection we have held and always will hold for the people of Windale. We leave with this symbol also, a reminder of our continuing love and prayers for all God's people in Windale.