

Fifty years later, the Brotherhood commemorates its beginning in bricks and mortar

Historic St Mary's Mission House, in Fitzroy Street at the back of the Brotherhood's Brunswick Street headquarters, is to open early in the New Year as a rooming house for mildly disabled and older people.

It is an apt bricks and mortar commemoration of the beginning of the Brotherhood's work for Melbourne's homeless poor and disadvantaged people fifty years ago.

In the summer of 1933-4, shortly after their move from Adamstown, N.S.W., Father Gerard Kennedy Tucker and two other members of the Brotherhood were living in St Mary's Mission House. One Sunday evening their dinner was disturbed by a commotion and the clanking of pots and pans in the street. They stepped outside to see police evicting half a dozen men from a dilapidated terrace a few doors down, and putting their belongings out in the street.

Father Tucker stood there with his arms folded and said, 'What kind of Church is it that stands with its arms folded? We must DO something'.

Sometime later, a young man came to the door of the Mission House and offered ten shillings. 'What can I do with ten shillings?' asked Father Tucker. 'It's from my wages,' the young man said, 'and you can have it every week.'

They went down the street and asked how much it would cost to rent the house from which they had seen the men evicted. It was eight shillings.

So they rented it, cleaned it, and the House of St Francis was duly opened and the Brotherhood's social services began.

Later they rented other houses and in the depths of the Great Depression the Brotherhood was housing up to 40 unemployed and homeless men in this way. In the 1940s the Brotherhood moved across to its present Brunswick Street premises.

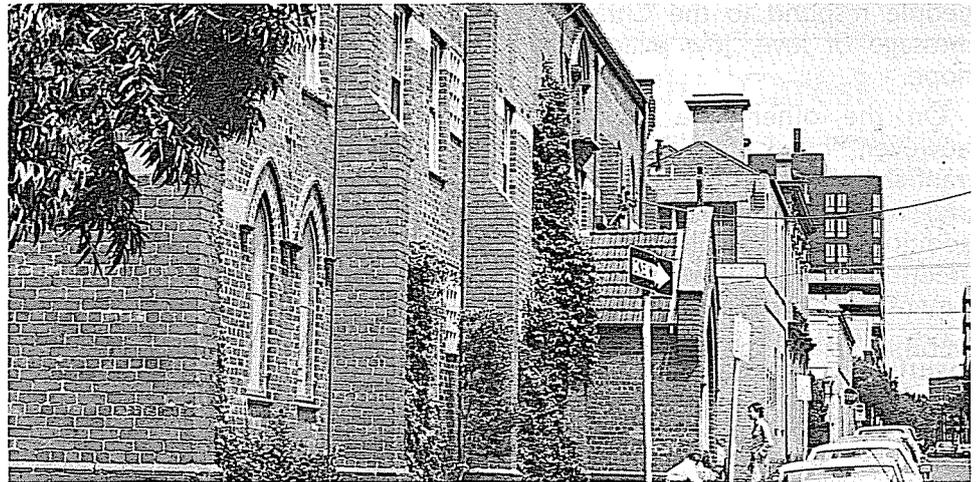
The Mission House, which was owned by the Sisters of The

The Brotherhood of St Laurence

action

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Historic St. Mary's Mission House will soon open as a rooming house.

Community of The Holy Name, went through a variety of uses as a Mission Church, The Mission to Streets and Lanes house for the Sisters working with homeless women, single mothers and women in prison, and a Russian Orthodox Church.

In 1970, it was bought by the Brotherhood and the Family Centre for low income families (which later developed into the Action and Resource Centre managed by the people it was set up to help) was established there. After ARC moved to its Clifton Hill shop front, the Mission House became the Sharing Centre and developed a new approach to material aid. The Sharing Centre is now moving to a more appropriate shop front in Brunswick Street.

Meanwhile, the present recession,

sustained levels of unemployment and a critical housing shortage have led to a renewed need for rooming house accommodation.

The Mission House is ideally set up to respond to this need, handy to hospitals and the Brotherhood Day Centre with its low cost meals and communal activities. It will be home to 25 of the more vulnerable and isolated people who may be unable to cope with living on their own or in an unsupervised boarding house.

The Brotherhood's rooming house, 'Glass Terrace', in Gertrude Street has now been bought by the Ministry of Housing for restoration. The supervisor, Ken Pound and 12 of the residents will move across to the Mission House early in the New Year. Father Tucker's tradition is in good hands.



The Archbishop of Melbourne, The Most Revd. David Penman, is pictured with Mrs Jessica Millott at the dedication of Millott House.

Millott House Opening

The historic St. Mary's Mission House in Fitzroy Street, Fitzroy, was re-named Millott House and dedicated by the Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Revd. David Penman, on 9 May.

The Mission House building has undergone many changes before its name change and conversion to a rooming house. (See 'Action' December 1983).

Millott House has been named after Mrs. Jessica Millott, a former Manageress of the Brotherhood's

Coolibah Club who worked with the Brotherhood, both as a volunteer and a staff member for 29 years. This forms a fitting tribute to someone who dedicated so much of her life to the care of the frail, the sick and the elderly.

Millott House now provides accommodation for 22 people who have developed a sense of community instead of the isolation and loneliness which marked their former lives. It is fitting that this fine old building has been put to such an appropriate use at a time when there is a serious shortage of inner city rooming house accommodation.

Recital

Cellist Otti Veit and pianist May Clifford will give a recital for the Brotherhood on Sunday 16 June at 8 p.m. at the home of Mrs. L. Spivakovsky, 76 St Georges Road, Toorak. Tickets are available from Bonnie Turnbull, telephone 419 7055, \$10. Students \$4.

Schools Programme

This year the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Community Aid Abroad are together offering a poverty education programme for Year 11 and 12 students. Poverty can be chosen as an elective subject in English and economics and many schools contact the Brotherhood for information.

The programme looks at poverty in Australia, or poverty in the Third World, or both. Students can visit the Brotherhood's headquarters in Fitzroy in groups of up to 30, choosing from videos, discussion groups, audio-visuals, a simulation game, as well as written material and a photographic exhibition.

We hope that these visits stimulate students in their studies, and that they help create an awareness and an understanding of the issues these two organisations are concerned with.

If you would like to know more about the programme, please ring Mark Sawers on 419 7055.

brotherhood gift

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ACTION is published bi-monthly and contains information on Brotherhood activities, including all new publications. Editorial responsibility is accepted by Dyranda Prevost, 67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy.