

Identification and location

Name of place: **Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church**

Other Name Maidstone Catholic Church

Address 46-48 Ballarat Road
Maidstone

Place Identifier 21809

Heritage Significance: Regional

Creation date(s): 1962, 1984 **Map (Melway)** 41 J1

Boundary description Extent of current allotment including the church exterior and public parts of the interior, with emphasis on fabric from the 1960s. Also contributory contemporary buildings including the residence, hall, car park and toilet block.

Local Government Area: City of Maribyrnong

Ownership Type: Private

Description

Site Type Church complex

Physical Description

The church has been designed in an unusual style for the era and the area. It is a landmark building and adjoins a contemporary residence to the east. Byzantine-influenced design is unique among Catholic western suburbs churches.

The church is broadly rectangular in shape, built of cream brick and has a terracotta tiled pitched roof. Red and white marble is used on the facade, edged by brick pilasters, and a skillion roofed eastern wing contains the sacristy. The detached belfry, with its distinctive oval bell turret, is 18 metre high and on the western side of the facade. Glass entry doors are flanked by four Belgian rouge Ionic columns; above this a circular stained glass window depicting Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Arched side windows are of coloured glass.

Externally the church combines elements of neo-Romanesque, Byzantine and the Baroque elements often seen in Spanish architectural styles. Internally it reflects the influence of Byzantine design with broad and impressive archways. Behind the altar is a Venetian mosaic, flanked by two smaller mosaics.

There were interior renovations in 1984 but the original character is evident and still dominant. The presbytery was refurbished in 1985.

Next to the church is a custom designed and visually related cream brick complex which includes a residence, hall (also 1962), car park and toilet block: these elements are of contributory significance to the church.

Condition

Good (partially disturbed, well preserved)

Integrity

intact/minimal intrusions

Context

Located on major arterial road among a mixed largely unrelated residential area, with some Edwardian-era villas and Bungalows adjacent.

Threats:

None known- liturgical changes to the interior?

History

The new church, presbytery, parish hall and parish centre were all built in 1962 when Our Lady of Perpetual Help was proclaimed a parish. This was the result of over a decade of fund-raising, planning and prayer by the parish priests and parishioners of St John's, West Footscray, who had been unable to cater for the needs of a growing parish being hemmed in by residential development. The parish school, St Joseph's convent and St John's church, remained at West Footscray. A girls' secondary school had also been intended for the site but with a decline in parish income during the 1960s and the proximity of Christ the King College, Braybrook, these plans were dropped { Barnard, Jill (1990)}.

The parish was largely Anglo-Celtic in the mid 1950s. In the 1980s there was a broader ethnic base with masses held in Portuguese, Croatian and Italian in addition to four in English each Sunday. Filipino, Italian and Vietnamese social groups are associated with the church and over 25 nationalities are represented among the parishes of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St John's, West Footscray.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish is also responsible for the Catholic chaplaincy of Western General Hospital. The large semi-circular mosaic in the northern chancel wall behind the altar was a gift from a local family { *ibid.* }.

The architect, T G Payne, followed in his father's footsteps and designed several distinctive buildings in the Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese during the 1930s-60s. Our Lady of Perpetual Help has an unusually short, broad nave for a pre-Vatican Two church and the absence of pillars in the church body is reflective of the transitional phase of Catholic church architecture. Marble in the interior and facade came from Melbourne's

Colonial Mutual Life Association building, demolished in 1959 { *ibid.* }.

In 1963 Mr and Mrs Sitch, proprietors of a local bus line, donated a bell cast in Dublin at the Byrne foundry. It was blessed by Archbishop Simonds and installed in the belfry { *ibid.* }.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme:

PAHT Subtheme:

Local Theme(s):

Cultural Significance

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church is significant aesthetically within the Western Region because:

- it is an uncommon but successful use of the Baroque/Byzantine revival architectural styles, both externally and internally, judged among other churches in Melbourne's western suburbs (criterion B2, F1);
- it is a highly visible landmark along Ballarat Road and is a visually striking church in comparison with other western suburban churches (criterion F1);
- it is the last Catholic church to be designed by the noted church architect T G Payne in the western suburbs and, with its highly mannered execution, provides an interesting contrast with his earlier work (criterion H1);
- the church is a striking representative of a phase which saw the movement towards building a church worthy of God after initial parish concerns, such as establishing a modest place of worship and a school, had been achieved (criterion A4);
- the construction of the church, presbytery, parish hall and parish centre together, as a complex, and sited away from the original parish site and parochial school, makes the complex a distinctive yet highly representative Catholic church complex for the period (criterion A3); and
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help church is socially significant within the Western Region of Melbourne as the product of over a decade of fund raising and prayer by the St John's, West Footscray, parishioners and Parish Priests Fathers Morrison and Gilhooly, as expressed by the exterior and the public parts of the interior (criterion G1).

Comparative Examples:

Other churches designed by Payne include St Theresa's, Essendon, and St Monica's, Moonee Ponds, (1930s). Newman College Chapel, St Dominic's tower, East Camberwell, and work with another designer on the completion of St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register:

Register of the National Estate:

National Trust Register:

Historic Places - Non-industrial places in former City of Sunshine (Maribyrnong, Maidstone, Braybrook and Tottenham)

Other Heritage Listings:

Planning Scheme Protection:

External Paint Controls Apply?:

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?:

Tree Controls Apply?:

Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act:

Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?:

Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?:

Recommendations:

Conserve and enhance the identified significant fabric, with emphasis on fabric from the 1960s, with enhancement including reinstatement of missing original elements, colours and finishes.

Conservation of the associated buildings from the same era on the site (residence, hall, car park and toilet block) should be encouraged.

Conserve the public view of the significant fabric, particularly from Ballarat Road.

Promote the continuing original use of the place and its amenity.

Continue historical research into the place and provide public access to the findings.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

A3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscape or cultural features.

The construction of the church, presbytery, parish hall and parish centre at the same time and at a position away from the original parish site and parochial school, makes it a remarkable example.

A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.

The church is a striking representative of a phase which saw the movement towards building a church worthy of God after initial parish concerns, such as establishing a modest place of worship and a school, had been achieved.

B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practiced, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help is aesthetically within the region for its uncommon use of the Baroque/Byzantine architectural style, judged among other churches in Melbourne's western suburbs.

E1 Importance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.

It is a highly visible landmark along Ballarat Rd. and is a striking church in comparison with other western suburban churches.

F1 Importance for their technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help is aesthetically within the region for its successful use of the Baroque/Byzantine architectural style, judged among other churches in Melbourne's western suburbs. It is a highly visible landmark along Ballarat Road and is a visually striking church in comparison with other western suburban churches.

G1 Importance as places highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help church is socially significant within the Western Region of Melbourne as the product of over a decade of fund raising and prayer by the St John's, West Footscray, parishioners and Parish Priests Fathers Morrison and Gilhooly.

Historic Places - Non-industrial places in former City of Sunshine (Maribyrnong, Maidstone, Braybrook and Tottenham)

H1 Importance for their close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, state or region.

It is the last Catholic church designed in the western suburbs by the noted church architect, T G Payne, and contrasts with his earlier work.

historical significance architectural significance social significance scientific significance

Documentation

References

Barnard, Jill 1990, 'Expressions of Faith Twentieth Century Roman Catholic Churches in Melbourne's Western Suburbs', history thesis (undated but author advises the preparation date as 1990);
Barnard, 2000 Project 1 Vol 2 Environmental History.

Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:

Historic Places - Non-industrial places in former City of Sunshine (Maribyrnong, Maidstone,
Braybrook and Tottenham)

