



## 'WINDOWS TO THE INFINITE .....' An historical piece by JMH.

*Having been born with an historical bent, I am pained whenever I pass No. 265 Riccarton Road, Christchurch. Behind the extensive wrought iron fence which fronts the property, lie lawns, trees, and rose gardens once lovingly cared for but now overgrown and neglected.*

*While the exterior of the original homestead still looks to be in pristine condition, the town side of the property looks like a Third World building site. Concrete stairways were added to the outside of major extensions built there in the early 1960's. The additions look like the workmen knocked off one Friday afternoon and forgot to come back. On the fence outside hangs a sign now long since out of date which reads: 'Antonio Hall.'*

A potted history of No 265 Riccarton Road would read something like this: Six acres of land were purchased by Thomas Kincaid, a grocery merchant, in 1904. He commissioned Clarkson and Ballantyne to design the homestead he planned, which was to have the name 'Kilmead'. It was established with the principle rooms facing the sun, and marked a departure from the Victorian mansion to the comfort of a family home in English Domestic style. With its double balconies and robust forms, the building reflected the North American influences filtering into New Zealand at the time.

To compliment the homestead, Thomas Kincaid engaged a Mr A.W. Buxton, known throughout the country as a landscape gardener, to design the grounds of 'Kilmead'. In 1929, after the death of his wife and himself, the property was sold to a Mr John Montgomery, a prominent Christchurch citizen. It was he who had the grounds re-landscaped by Mr Buxton. Later with the original house, the grounds would be designated a heritage site by the Historic Places Trust.

In 1946, Bishop P.F. Lyons purchased the 'Kincaid' property on behalf of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops, who had agreed to establish a national minor seminary under the patronage of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. It would cater for the education of boys desirous of becoming priests. Their training would be entrusted to the Jesuit Fathers and forty boys from around the country were duly enrolled as first day pupils on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1947. And so 'Kilmead' became Holy Name Seminary.



**The grand 'Kincaid' homestead which became Holy Name Seminary in February 1947.**

By the late 1940's it was obvious that additions to the seminary were needed. A new dining room, library, dormitories and chapel were opened in 1950. In 1959, when Holy Name Seminary became a house of Philosophy and a Major Seminary, the need was seen for further accommodation, lecture halls and a larger chapel. The completed buildings were blessed and opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1963.

But sadly, the days of Holy Name Seminary were numbered. A decline in the numbers entering Holy Cross College, Mosgiel, meant the Bishops had little choice but to amalgamate the two seminaries on one site. Mosgiel was chosen, and Holy Cross College reverted to diocesan control at the start of the academic year 1979. The Church, however, retained the Holy Name property, running it as a hostel for university students under the name 'Campion Hall' until 1980, when the Church had no more need of such a large property, and preparations were made to sell it.

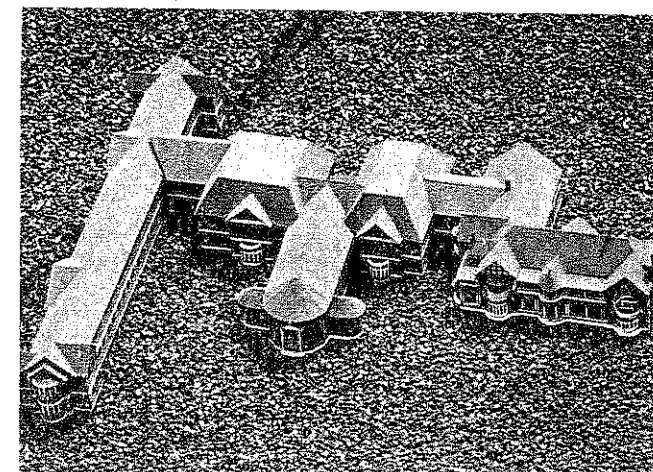
In 1981 'Campion Hall' became the property of a Mrs Luisetti and her husband. They lived there with Mrs Luisetti's son and daughter-in-law, and ran the place as a boarding house catering for up to a hundred people at a time. They also put the facilities to use in providing wedding receptions. The name was changed from 'Campion Hall' to 'Antonio House' in memory of Mrs Luisetti's son who was tragically killed in 1975. In 1986 there was a fire at 'Antonio House', which fortunately caused no structural damage to the buildings. The Luisetti's sold the property in 1993 to the Wellstar Company Ltd.

Today the property sits on three and a half acres of land, and the total floor space of the house is 4283 square metres. It has over one hundred bedrooms, seven lecture rooms, a library, a cool store, and dining and reception rooms – a total of two hundred and seventy nine rooms in all. But, sadly it would seem, the property at 265 Riccarton Road has become yet another victim of the economic downturn.

(Over)

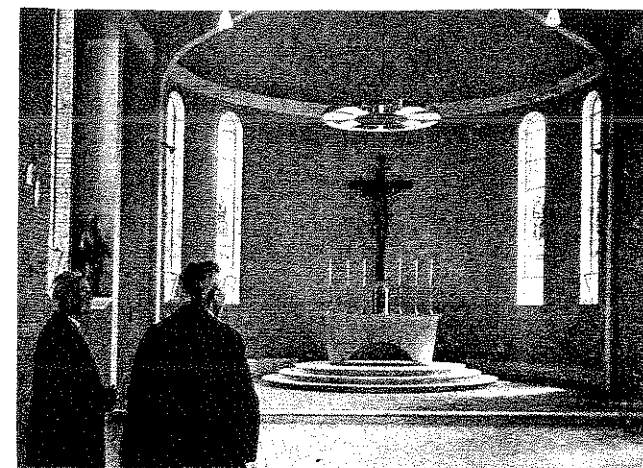
*As a first-day student of Holy Name Seminary, is it any wonder that I am pained when I pass the property which holds so many memories? But there is another reason why I feel pained. In the chapel on the town side of the property are 16 stained glass windows which I designed. 'Windows to the Infinite' they may well be, but sadly, at present they are doing no more than 'wasting their sweetness on the desert air'.*

*When I saw them for the first time, the windows of the new seminary chapel were only scale drawings and a mass of figures in a book of plans three inches deep. There were to be sixteen windows in the chapel – four in the sanctuary and six on either side of the nave. The most striking thing about them was their size – 14ft high by 3ft wide. The frames were to be of steel, and the glass specified was 'Cloudy Cathedral'. Since the windows were to be such a prominent feature of the chapel, the rector had been wondering whether some simple sandblasted designs could be worked on the glass, and he showed me a set of cards from America which featured the sacraments and other truths in symbol form. Timidly, I suggested that something original could be done, possibly depicting some aspects of the priesthood. That's how it all began.*



**A model of the seminary as completed in 1963.**

*The bishop of the time, Edward Michael Joyce, so taken with the drawings, suggested that I should go to Sydney to supervise the beginning of their manufacture. I was only too pleased to take up his suggestion, since the Diocese was paying for it. And so it was that I had my first 'OE'. To say the least I was not disappointed when the stained glass finally arrived, and I saw the finished product erected in the new chapel. I was present when it was consecrated. It was, of course, a proud day for me, unlike the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1997, when I saw the chapel for the last time. Fifty years on from the opening day of the Seminary, a group of those who had been first day pupils of Holy Name Seminary assembled in Christchurch for a reunion. The following day we sought permission from the present owners to relive the memories of times past with an inspection of the buildings. Permission was readily given but to my dismay the chapel was packed with rolled up carpets obviously destined for overseas markets.*



**The interior of the seminary's third chapel with its stained glass windows ready for blessing.**

*Thankfully, the stained glass was still intact and as powerful as ever. There along both sides of the nave were the symbols I had developed to depict the virtues of the priest and his office in the Church. And in the sanctuary were images I had chosen from the antiphon 'O Sacrum Convivium' by St Thomas Aquinas.*

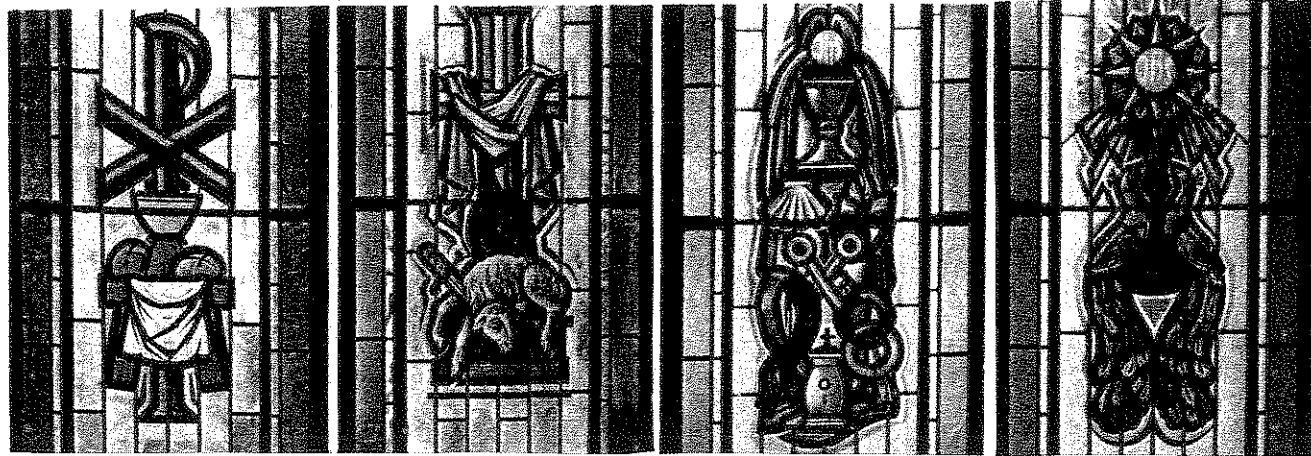
*Symbols express visually a truth for which many words would be required. A symbol could be called 'a parable in picture.' A parable draws a parallel between earthly and heavenly things; a symbol embodies a comparison between the seen and unseen. There is, however, this difference. The symbol reaches the mind through the eye and in that lies its great value, especially as a teacher of religious truth. In the domain of spiritual and abstract thought it is not easy to form pictures in the imagination, and figurative art can make a more definite impression than any description in words. Realising this the Church made use of symbolism from the very beginning and we are witnessing a revival of liturgical symbolism in our day.*

*Besides being a means of adding beauty to a church, Pope Gregory 11 saw in symbolism 'a way of elevating people's feelings and raising their hearts to God.' Pope Pius X11 said: 'The function of all art is to break through the narrow and tortuous enclosures of the finite ... and to provide a window to the infinite for people's hungry souls.'*

*In accordance with the mind of the Church that the Holy Eucharist is the proper theme for the decoration of the sanctuary, I close the beautiful word pictures found in the Office for the Feast of Corpus Christi:*

(Over)

(The Sanctuary windows from left to right)



**'O Sacred Banquet in which Christ is received .....**

Symbol forms for this great truth suggest themselves. Superimposed on the early Church Symbol of Christ, the Chi Rho, stands a banquet table and on it the readily recognised symbols of the Holy Eucharist, the chalice and loaves of bread.

**'The memory of his passion is renewed ....'**

The Jewish paschal lamb is one of the most striking types of Christ found in the Old Testament. Christ, the new pasch redeemed us from the slavery of sin and made it possible not only for a commemoration of his death, but for a re-presentation of the reality of his death. The dead Lamb of God, the dagger in its breast, is seen here lying on the altar of sacrifice. Stark in the background stands the cross.

**'Grace is given to the mind ....'**

The Catechism of the Council of Trent describes the Holy Eucharist as 'the source and fountain from which the other sacraments derive whatever perfection and goodness they possess.' This design illustrates that truth. The chalice with the host above it, overflows in a stream of grace. Below can be seen symbols of the other six sacraments.

**'And a pledge of future glory is given to us ....'**

The monstrance was chosen as the centrepiece of this window, as best suggesting Christ in glory. Two graceful peacocks gaze toward the monstrance. The peacock, an ancient symbol of immortality, is an example of a pagan symbol turned to Christian use. Believing the words of Christ we look to the Eucharist as a pledge of our eternal happiness.

*Hopefully, if No 265 Riccarton Road is one day sold, a place may be found for sixteen stained glass windows which are part and parcel of my history, and a never to be forgotten connection with Holy Name Seminary.*

# NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF THE CATHEDRAL



No 77 : April 2009

## NOT TO BE MISSED .....

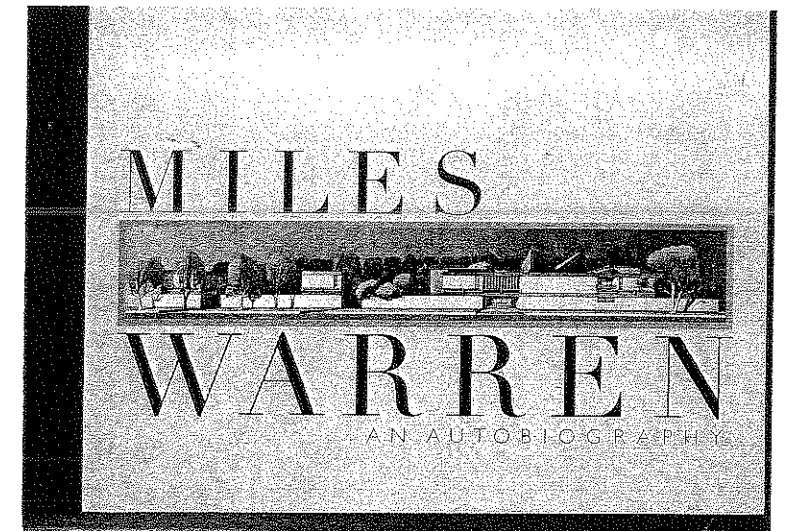
For Christmas last year, our parish secretary gave me a handsome book wrapped in cellophane. Its title: 'Miles Warren – an Autobiography'. Little did we know that my name featured in its pages under the title 'Cathedrals, Churches and a Citadel'.

In mid-December 2008, a review of the book had appeared in 'The Press'. The reviewer said: '..... the most intimate glimpses of Miles Warren filter through his easy to read prose style. It is as if, after dinner, someone had asked a reticent man to talk about his work. The conversation is urbane and unpretentious, often witty and coloured with amusing anecdotes.'

Sir Miles Warren is, of course, one of New Zealand's most acclaimed architects. In 1985 he was made a Knight of the British Empire. He is also a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit, and in 2005 he was awarded the NZ Institute of Architects' God Medal. Replying to the generous words of the then Prime Minister, Helen Clark, Sir Miles said: 'My life in architecture was such a pleasure, I would like to start it all over again, but next time as an apprentice in Ian Athfield's office!'

'Miles Warren – an Autobiography' is spliced with working drawings of Warren and Mahoney buildings, together with watercolour sketches by Miles Warren himself. They were made to show clients what the finished product might be like. They often proved to be the selling point, ensuring that Warren and Mahoney got the commission.

Driving to the Cathedral one day, I saw Sir Miles sitting on the low fence of the Polytechnic car park opposite, sketching his vision of what the Cathedral forecourt might be like when completed. He had talked of cobblestones framed by a band of black marble on which would be inscribed a text from one of the psalms. Flanking the forecourt, he envisaged two built-up areas of grass and trees planted on a decking of Timaru bluestone. And so the forecourt came to be – the last chapter in Sir Miles Warren's long association with our Cathedral as consultant architect.



**Brett de Their brought together the text and illustrations and designed the cover to produce this handsome book.**

In my homily on the occasion of the Cathedral's centenary I could say in all honesty that Miles Warren was worthy of recognition alongside Francis William Petre, its architect. It was Miles Warren who had overseen the exterior conservation of the building in the 1970's; it was he who had supervised its interior re-ordering in the light of liturgical change introduced by the Second Vatican Council. His sensitive work on heritage buildings was just another branch of his imagination and incredible capacity for work.

As a footnote, a bust of Sir Miles Warren has recently been unveiled in the Arts Centre on Worcester Boulevard, along with eleven other prominent citizens living and dead, and the Christchurch Art Gallery is presently featuring an exhibition of his work, which is not to be missed.



A Blessed Easter  
to all the 'friends'

For the Cathedral Trustees

*Jean Harrington*  
Monsignor J.M. Harrington