

Milestone for vibrant foothills community

The vibrant community of the Our Lady of the Way Church at Glenalta celebrated its 50th Anniversary on Sunday November 24.

The church is part of the newly formed Holy Family Catholic parish (previously Blackwood and Aberfoyle Park).

A special anniversary Mass was led by Fr Paul Mwaura followed by lunch, music and a variety of stalls selling everything from plants to produce and homemade cakes.

Our Lady of the Way's Knit and Natter group was also on hand to sell their wool creations. Every Wednesday at 10.30am the group of volunteers knits blankets, children's clothing and other creative goodies to donate to Vinnies, Catherine House, and to send to children affected by world events as the war in Ukraine. During winter, they also send warm knitted jumpers to children in the APY Lands.

In the spirit of Christmas, the group crafted festive-themed decorations and sold placemats, toys and haberdashery, raising \$3000 on the day.

"Many of us have been at OLVW since it was opened," said volunteer Louise Sortino.

This includes some of the choir members who sang at OLVW's opening Mass five decades ago. Members of the Folk Group were



CARING CREATIVES: Knit and Natter volunteers, from left: front – Bridgid Medder, Ann Collins, Anne Wicker and Sharyn Black; back – Maria Schwarz, Nati Hulks and Louise Sortino.

on hand to provide heavenly sounds during the anniversary Mass. Among them was Elly Vink, who sang in the choir all those years ago. Back then, she was in her early 20s.

"We should be called the old Folk Group," Elly said. "I sang in the

opening Mass at Our Lady of the Way and still sing today. We moved into the parish in 1966. It's always been a lovely parish and a lovely community."

Parishioner Carmel Malcolm also attended with her husband Peter in the early days.

"We discovered that there was a 9am Mass at Belair in what was affectionately known as 'The Tin Shed,'" Carmel said. The Mass had a lovely atmosphere with great attendances every Sunday. The demographic was mainly young families with many small children

and some of the original attendees from when the church first started in the Belair area."

During the mid-60s and early 70s Blackwood and surrounding areas experienced a growth in population, including many young families.

"After some time, Monsignor Skehan was appointed and was parish priest for 14 years," Carmel said.

"He was here when Our Lady of the Way was built. He knew his parishioners well and I think he visited every home. He also encouraged social activities, including the Lightning Ladies Tennis Group."

Carmel recalls nuns and volunteers providing after school RE lessons for the many children in the area. Large groups of 25 to 30 children received their first holy communion and confirmation.

"Sadly, there are not such big numbers today," she said.

"It seems difficult to believe that OLVW is celebrating its 50th anniversary," she said.

"We feel fortunate and thankful to live in such a beautiful area with active parishioners who generously give up their time to help create a vibrant community. May it continue to flourish for our Catholic community."