

# Fr. Frank has left his mark on Grafton

**YOUNG Frank Mulcahy was born in Melbourne in 1934, one of four children of Thomas and Kathleen Mulcahy. After serving in the Grafton Parish since 1969 he leaves on October 6 to take up his new appointment as Administrator of St. Carthage's Cathedral in Lismore.**

Frank's paternal grandfather was Irish and his maternal grandfather French. Both migrated to Australia and his parents were Australian-born.

Frank's brother Tom, is with Beaupre in Beaudesert, his sister, Kathy Croke, in Casino, and brother, John, with Tuckers, suppliers of Teacher's Whisky, and well-known in Grafton.

Frank's father worked with the Railways in Victoria for 32 years, all of them spent in Melbourne where he was traffic inspector, and young Frank began his school at St. Brendan's, Flemington, with two years at De La Salle Melbourne, before entering Woodlawn at Lismore.

It was at primary school that Frank's interests began in racing. "We were surrounded with racecourses," he laughs, "Flemington, Ascot and Moonee Valley, and St. Brendan's was full of kids whose fathers were trainers and jockeys."

"I have loved horse racing all my life. My first bet was at Flemington. I had two bob on Victory March at nine to two in a steeple chase and it won."

"Racing was to remain one of my chief relaxations."

"I was at Woodlawn between 1949 and 1951. We had shifted to Casino in 1948, when Dad came up to help his brother out in the Oxford Hotel."

"After I gained the Leaving Certificate at Woodlawn, I went to St. Columba's Seminary in Springwood, then to St. Patrick's College, Manly."

"I was ordained on March 9, 1958, and appointed to St. Carthage's Cathedral, Lismore in 1959, so in a sense I will be going home."

"I will be taking Father John Rogers' place. He was at St. Mary's earlier and was a Grafton boy."

In Lismore for 10 and a half years, Father Mulcahy served as assistant administrator, diocesan chaplain, with the Young Christian Workers Movement for nine years and member of the Diocesan Education Board for 17 years, before his appointment to Grafton.

When Monsignor Hennessy died in February, 1970, he was appointed Administrator of Grafton, and parish priest in 1974.

"In Lismore I was in charge of the youth there, and throughout the diocese it was a period of booming years for youth clubs."

"It was a fairly heavy job, as I was in charge of the diocesan youth programmes, but it was work I enjoyed."

"I have always liked working with young people, and I believe youth today is as good as it ever was. In those years, however, there were more young people interested in clubs and being together in groups."

"They did not own cars, and they depended on buses for picnics. For entertainment, dancing was very much in vogue. It was the day before the twist," he laughs.

"The young people tended to keep together, and to stay in their organisations. Jobs were not so hard to get, and they found jobs in their own towns."

"But as far as today's kids are concerned, they are beautiful! said Father Frank."

"That is one of the things I will miss in Grafton. I have been youth chaplain at Holy Spirit College for years."

During Father Mulcahy's oversight of the Grafton Parish he has been vitally active in Spiritual Renewal. In 1971, six Redemptionists conducted a six weeks' mission, led by Father John Murray, which culminated in a great Mass in the Grafton Racecourse.

"It was the first mission of its type and it became the pilot mission for the whole of Australia," Father Mulcahy

said, "Now we conduct a mission every three years."

"I have also introduced Adult Religious Education on a regular basis, and a full time organiser, Sister Fabian was appointed."

Father Mulcahy said there was an upsurge of interest in church schools.

"Here in Grafton there is a continuing increase in enrolments, with a lot of non-Catholics attending our schools," he said.

"We are planning extensions, and this will be the last building project I will be involved in as Grafton's parish priest. Father John Kelly, of Maclean, who was here in Grafton eight years ago, will have that responsibility."

"My pride and joy is the Holy Spirit College which was completely new concept in education, being a co-ed college

the co-operation between the churches.

There were many nights when Dean John Edwards of the Anglican Cathedral here and I got our heads together on joint matters, and only recently at the Law Service, the Salvation Army captain and the Ministers from the United Church and the Baptist Church joined in the service here at St. Mary's."

"I have been to many services in the Cathedral," he said.

During his stay, Father Mulcahy has initiated a building programme of \$600,000, of which \$500,000 together with interest has been paid.

"Here in the Grafton Diocese, we are very lucky. Throughout the world there is a falling off in vocation, both in the convents and in the priesthood."

"But we are having three ordained



Fr. Frank Mulcahy, on the steps of St Mary's, his parish church for 12 years.

for Years 11 and 12. It has been a tremendous success," Fr. Mulcahy said.

"My first job when I came to Grafton was the renovation of St. Mary's and we brought it up to the standards of Vatican Two."

"St. Mary's was built in 1914."

"It replaced the old church that was burnt down."

"We have found an old photographic plate of the old wooden church, and Bill Dougherty is seeing if some photographs can be printed from it."

"I have seen a lot of changes in my life as a priest."

"The nuns, too, have seen a lot of changes."

"When I was a young priest they were all garbed in the long black dresses and heavily veiled. Now they have become more and more part of the community itself, going into hospitals, serving old people and community welfare."

"One of the biggest changes has been

next year to this diocese.

"In Sydney one parish has 30,000 Catholics with two priests, in Grafton we have three priests for 3000 people."

Our priests come mostly from the diocese, and they are ordained for the diocese, remaining within the diocese.

On the walls of his study, Father Frank's love and interest of horses is evident.

There are framed photographs of Dear Dream, the horse he owns in partnership, which has had nine wins in nine races.

Dear Dream is now in foal, and will not be racing again.

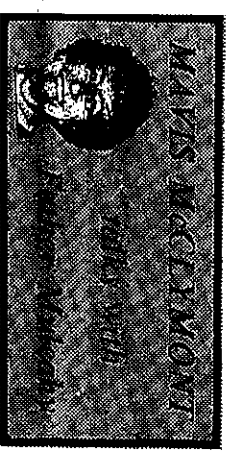
"She has never won in Grafton, unfortunately," he admits, "but her wins include Ballina, Casino, Brushgrove, Coffs Harbour and Brisbane."

"I referred to his reputation as a tipster."

Frank smiled, "It arises from a cartoon in the parish paper, with a horse sniffing a flower, and saying 'how sweet it is.' A lot took that to mean

Sweet Aroma and she did win the Grafton Cup."

"You made the metropolitan press," I said.



"Yes, said Father Frank, "and the Glasgow and London Press!"

"Then it's not true you gave the tip from the pulpit?"

"No," he laughed, "but some years previously I had said from the pulpit to think big."

"And Think Big won two Melbourne Cups in a row!"

Father Frank has been on the CRJC committee since 1974.

"I will miss it," he said.

"My main community effort has been with the Clarence Nursing Home and I am extremely disappointed the new patients will be taking up residence on the day I leave Grafton."

"David Abrahams has been a very good leader, and he has done a terrific job."

"Undoubtedly this has been one of the great things for the town."

"I regret leaving Grafton. I will miss it a lot, but it will be good for Grafton and good for me. A man should not remain in the one job too long."

Father Frank went overseas in 1977 visiting America, England, Europe, Hong Kong and Ireland.

"It was a tremendous experience, really great. I travelled around Europe with a number of young people and that is certainly the way to travel."

"I met up with Cathy and Graham Clark, she was a Gillett, in England. I had married the couple, and they were in London. They asked me to accompany them through Europe and we went with an old Kombi van."

"It was certainly a very cheap and very good way of seeing Europe. We went to some most out-of-the-way places."

"In Northern Ireland I stayed at Port Ballantrae, home of Derek and John Palmer. It was absolutely a protestant area, and I was treated like a king."

"When I was in Dublin I said how well I had been treated, even though I was a Catholic priest, and I was told, 'you may be a Catholic priest but you are not Irish.'"

"There was evidence everywhere of what was going on, in the street and particularly around clubs and pubs. There were great concrete drums to prevent parking."

"It was terrifying in Londonderry with troops and guns everywhere."

"Yet the people on both sides, the normal ordinary people are marvellous, it is the fanatics who are making Ireland such an unhappy place."

Father Mulcahy visited Rome for only four days, as his holiday was drawing to a close.

"I want to go back to Rome," he said. Rome, like many of the old European cities is dirty, but in the Vatican, St. Peters is absolute beauty."

"I went to an audience with the Pope, one of the big audiences."

"My thoughts on leaving Grafton are that the people are so very generous, the town itself is so beautiful, Grafton has everything, but perhaps we take these things too much for granted."

"After my work in Lismore is finished, I would like to retire to a nice quiet parish by the sea, still in the Lismore Diocese," he said.