Welcome to St Stephen’s Cathedral
Archdiocese of Brisbane
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**History of The Cathedral**

Building a cathedral often takes centuries. In addition, the great cathedrals of the world rarely follow a single style. They bear the marks of every century as people added, embellished or replaced part of the cathedral in their own style. The changes of style themselves are witness to a living tradition of faith in that place.

Bishop Quinn, the first bishop of the diocese, laid the foundation stone of the cathedral on the feast of St Stephen, 26 December 1863. A larger and more ornate church was envisaged than the present one but the economic depression of the mid-1860s resulted in only part of the original foundations being laid. Using the existing foundations, work was re-commenced early in 1870. On Sunday, 17 May 1874, the still-incomplete cathedral was solemnly blessed and dedicated. It covered about a third of the area of the one first planned.
During the time of Archbishop Robert Dunne the top of the gable and the spires were added to the Elizabeth Street facade in 1884. Next the cathedral was enriched with stained glass and marble.

On 3 October 1920, Archbishop James Duhig laid the foundation stone of new transepts. He had already announced plans to build a massive Renaissance cathedral in Ann Street, Fortitude Valley. The foundation stones of a cathedral dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus were laid in a splendid ceremony on Sunday, 16 September, 1928 before a crowd of 35,000 people. These foundation stones are now located at the join between the 1921-22 extension and that of 1988-89.

Under Archbishop Patrick O’Donnell, temporary solutions were found to the difficulties of celebrating a rapidly changing liturgy in a traditional liturgical space. Archbishop Francis Rush undertook the complete restoration, renovation and extension of the Cathedral during the 1980s, culminating in its dedication on 4 December 1989. Archbishop John Bathersby blessed the Jubilee Pipe Organ on 29 October 2000. He also authorised the restoration of St Stephen’s Chapel in which a diocesan shrine to Mary Mackillop was established.
Patron Saint

The patron saint of the Archdiocese of Brisbane’s cathedral is Saint Stephen, known as the Protomartyr (or first martyr) of Christianity. His name means 'laurel wreath' or 'crown' in Greek. Acts 6:11 tells the story of how Stephen was tried by the Sanhedrin for blasphemy against Moses and God and speaking against the Temple and the Law. He was then stoned to death (c. A.D. 34-35) by an infuriated mob, including and greatly encouraged by Saul of Tarsus, the future Saint Paul. Saint Stephen is traditionally invested with a crown of martyrdom for Christianity and is often depicted in art with three stones and the martyrs' palm.

The complete text of the life of St Stephen from the Gospels is featured in the glasswork that lines the lower ground floor of the Francis Rush Centre. St Stephen’s path to martyrdom is also artistically portrayed in the Rivers of Stone, a sculptural artwork by Brisbane sculptor Rhyll Hinwood. This art is found in the liturgical space between the Francis Rush Centre and the cathedral (the north side of the cathedral).

The Nave

This major renovation of the cathedral was necessary to preserve and maintain the fabric of the building. It also provides more adequate facilities for the cathedral: an underground carpark, choir practice room, toilets and additional sacristy space. Most of all, however, the renovation was occasioned by the reform of the liturgy - which has taken place in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. Provision needed to be made for new ways of celebrating Eucharist, Baptism and Penance.

The main worship space with its seating, sanctuary and choir has been arranged to facilitate the full participation by all in the action of the liturgy. The tabernacle where the consecrated Eucharist is kept for the sick needed a chapel of its own where people could pray in silence.

On entering the cathedral, the eye is drawn up at once to appreciate the full height and width of the cathedral. The quality of light in the cathedral is especially significant. The lighting, which picks up gothic forms in its contemporary design, not only adds sparkle to the cathedral but sets the
arches and vaulting in relief, emphasising the space in the nave and aisles. The flexible system is able to produce lighting suitable for a range of occasions. The balcony over the main door helps to define the entrance space but, unlike the former choir gallery, does not impede the view of the nave. It will be used for television and still cameras as well as trumpeters, etc.

The cathedral chairs, each crafted from Queensland sycamore and equipped with a kneeler, show respect for the individuality of each person without compromising the sense of community which traditional pews were often able to achieve. They provide a seating system which is neat and flexible. Provision can easily be made for someone in a wheelchair to sit with their family or friends, and other seating arrangements are possible for special occasions.

**Stained Glass**

The renovations draw attention to the cathedral windows. These outstanding examples of the art of stained glass come from France, Germany, Ireland, England and Australia and make up one of finest collections of 19th century stained glass in Australia. Most of the glass in the nave is from the 1880’s while that in the transepts has been made since the 1920’s.

In 1989, the cathedral was enriched with new glass by Sydney artist, Warren Langley. The subjects depicted in the windows fall into several groups. Scenes from Jesus’ birth and infancy (including the annunciation to Mary and the visitation) are portrayed a number of times. These are often shown together with other pictures Of the Virgin Mary. This group is concentrated in the right (south) aisle and transept.

A number of windows illustrate the story of Jesus’ suffering and death. They are concentrated in the left (north) aisle and transept. This theme is completed and balanced by images of Jesus’ glorification (the resurrection, the risen Christ and the ascension). The image of the ascension occurs at both ends of the cathedral. Jesus’ ministry is represented only by the sermon on the mount and the raising of Lazarus. Finally, there is a group of saints who figure in the windows, mainly in the west window and the north transept (Stephen, Peter, Paul, Matthew,
Mark, Luke, John, Aloysius Gonzaga, Philomena, Anthony of Padua, Therese of Lisieux, Margaret Mary).

**Sanctuary**

The sanctuary in the midst of the assembly is designed to give the sense of people gathered around the altar in a corporate act of worship. The action of the liturgy is not confined to the sanctuary: the whole cathedral is the place where worship is offered to God by the Church.

The key elements in the sanctuary are the bishop's chair (cathedra), ambo and altar. They were designed by architect, Robin Gibson, and crafted in Carrara marble by Peter Schipperheyn.

**Bishop’s Chair** - The bishop's chair echoes the simple form of ancient bishops' seats from the early middle ages. It is surmounted with a steel frame which refers to the form of the bishop's mitre and which evokes the presence of the bishop as chief pastor in his cathedral church.

**Ambo** - Readings from scripture play an important part in the celebration of all the sacraments. Just as people are fed with the Lord's body and blood from the table of the Eucharist, so too are they nourished on the Word of God proclaimed in the liturgical assembly. The ambo's design and proportions emphasise its balanced relationship with the altar.

**Altar** - The altar changed in shape in the middle ages when the priest began to celebrate the eucharist with his back to the people. It sometimes was reduced to a kind of shelf in a highly ornate wall or backdrop. It was elongated to allow for the reading of the epistle and gospel at either end. Today it is again free-standing and of a smaller, squarer shape. The altar, where the sacrifice of the cross is made present under sacramental signs, is also the table of the Lord. The people of God is called together to share in this table. The double aspect of altar and table is held together through the design of St Stephen's altar and its change in texture.
**Crucifix**

Suspended over the sanctuary, the bronze crucifix is the work of John Elliott. It captures Jesus' pain, suffering and death but also his strength, triumph and resurrection. In this way the crucifix seeks to express the whole of the Easter mystery. The cross can be viewed as a powerful sculpture not only from the front as most crucifixes are but also from the sides and from the rear.

**Jubilee Pipe Organ**

The Jubilee Pipe Organ was put into the cathedral on 28 October 2000 and blessed on 29 October. Carefully made by Victorian, Knud Smenge, and designed by Robin Gibson, it has 2442 pipes and weighs 16 tonnes. The sound of the organ has been described as having a uniquely Australian character: bright but gentle. The organ is loud enough to lead a thousand people in song, yet soft enough to play for a single singer. The organ is named after the Year of the Great Jubilee 2000.

**Reconciliation Chapel**

The single chapel of reconciliation incorporates four places for the reconciliation of penitents. The unity of space is maintained by glass panels at floor level and above eye level. The religious quality of the space is enhanced by Warren Langley's new window and by the screens created by English artist, Michael Brennand-Wood.

It is appropriate that the chapel's position is closely related to the baptismal font and to the Eucharist chapel. Reconciliation leads sinners back to the communion table when they have been estranged from God and the Church. What happened for the first time in Baptism is therefore regularly renewed in this sacrament.
Blessed Sacrament Chapel

This Chapel forms the major part of the 1988-89 additions to the cathedral. The prayer chapel is modern in style. The tabernacle is in line with the altar. This shows a connection to the celebration of the Eucharist. The Chapel’s relationship to the baptismal font is also very significant. The sacraments of initiation which make a person Christian are three: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. For adults, they are celebrated together at the Easter Vigil. The Eucharist is the on-going sacrament of initiation.

The sacraments of initiation are symbolised in the curtain of glass. The symbols of each sacrament are in the window. The cross and water of Baptism are on the right, the flame for Confirmation is on the left and the cup and bread of the Eucharist are in the centre behind the tabernacle.

The tabernacle and monstrance are the work of gold and silversmith, Johannes Kuhman. They are engraved with crosses in silver and gold. The monstrance is placed on the tabernacle at times of prayer and adoration.

The front panels of the old Cathedral altar can now be seen on the opposite side of the wall where the altar once stood. The picture at the centre shows the story of the road to Emmaus [Luke 24: 13-35]. Saints Peter and Paul can be seen on the left and right of the centre panel.

Font

The water in the baptismal font flows from a smaller font where babies will normally be immersed into a lower pool. Adults who are baptised in the font kneel as water is poured over them.

In the Christian church baptism is sometimes described as being reborn through the waters of baptism. This idea can be seen in the marble sculpture made by Peter Schipperheyn. In the sculpture the new-born child symbolises the new Christian coming out from the waters of the font to become part of the family of the Church.
Written on the floor near the font is a verse from the 5th century poem of Pope Sixtus III that talks of the church as mother. It comes from the walls of the cathedral of the city of Rome.

> Here a people of godly race are born for heaven; the Spirit gives them life in the fertile waters. The Church-Mother, in these waves, bears her children like virginal fruit she has conceived by the Holy Spirit.

The paschal candle and the holy oils are normally kept near the baptismal font and are used during the celebration of baptism. The cabinet contains Chrism, Oil of the Sick and Oil of Catechumens.

**Stations of the Cross**

Pilgrims in Jerusalem followed the route taken by Christ as he walked to Calvary. Wishing to reproduce the meditation on Christ's passion when they returned home, they set up a number of images showing each stage of Christ's journey. The practice of praying at each station in turn became popular and widespread at the end of the middle ages, though the number and subjects of the stations varied considerably until the beginning of the 19th century.

These Stations were painted by celebrated Australian artist, Lawrence Daws. Their small scale gives them an intimacy which leads to personal contemplation. In planning the paintings, Daws undertook a detailed study of the life and geography of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus. Each painting is carefully constructed to invite the viewer to step into the deep space created in the picture and to read there the meaning of the event. The gestures, the figures and the objects speak of suffering, redemption and triumph, of injustice and liberation, of conflict, love and compassion.

**Mary, Woman of Faith Chapel**

The image of Mary, Woman of Faith, sculpted by John Elliott, shows her standing with hands extended in trust, open to do the will of God. She draws the person who comes to pray into that same response of faith in God's promises and trust in God's goodness. Those who come to the shrine may light
a candle, leave a few flowers, or kneel in prayer. Other inspiring figures of faith from the scriptures help to create a context for the central image of Mary.

The first plaque inside the shrine shows the annunciation of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah. Despite their advanced age, they trusted when God promised to make their descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky or as the grains of sand by the sea. The second image shows Naomi and Ruth gleaning in the field of Boaz. Ruth's faithfulness led to marriage and she became the great-grandmother of David whose descendants include Jesus. A larger relief sculpture illustrates the gospel story of the sick woman in the crowd who reaches out to touch Jesus' cloak. She was healed and Jesus said to her, "Your faith has restored you to health".

The Virgin Mary's own response of faith is portrayed in the panels of the annunciation and the visitation. Finally Mary is shown with the apostles at Pentecost, placing her in the midst of the early Church, sharing its life of faith.

Shrine of Blessed Mary MacKillop

Mary MacKillop was born in Melbourne in 1842 and died in Sydney in 1909. She took the religious name Mary of the Cross. Responding to the isolation of colonial families she pioneered a new form of religious life to provide education for their children. She and her sisters shared the life of the poor and the itinerant, offering special care to destitute women and children. Mary is remembered for her eagerness to discover God's will in all things, for her charity in the face of calumny and for her abiding trust in God's providence.

Mary MacKillop worked in Brisbane after her final profession as a religious, and regularly worshipped in the cathedral between Christmas 1869 and Easter 1871. Soon after she was beatified in 1995 Archbishop John Bathersby announced that a diocesan shrine to Mary MacKillop would be created in old St Stephen’s.
Brisbane sculptor, John Elliott, began with the trunk of a hundred-year-old camphor laurel tree. He sliced it and hollowed it out and then began painstakingly to recombine its elements, allowing the figure of Mary MacKillop to emerge. The ancient tree and its rough bark recall the slab hut in which she opened her first school, and the old fence posts she passed as she travelled through the Australian bush on horseback.

The figure of Mary MacKillop evokes the tough pioneering spirit of this holy woman. Her faith and trust in God’s providence is shown in her determination as she strides forward. Yet her face tells of her warmth and compassion for those in need.

The four panels enclosing the shrine are the work of John Elliott. The drawings on the panels pay tribute to Mary’s religious life and her work encouraging the sisters in their ministry – especially by her letter writing. It also allows us to discover children, Australian animals and other elements of her life and ministry.

http://www.cathedralofststephen.org.au