

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HOLY FAMILY PARISH

Prior to World War II the suburb of Como was sparsely developed; and it was simply included within the large parish of South Perth. However, commencing in 1947, Fr W Buckley, the assistant priest at South Perth, celebrated mass each Sunday in the Como State School. The venue was subsequently shifted to the Cygnet Theatre in Preston St.

This arrangement continued until the parish school building was completed in November 1953 on the western end of the block of land owned by the Catholic Church on the corner of Canning Highway and Thelma St.



Mass was celebrated in the school building

The sisters of St Joseph, from their convent in South Perth, commenced teaching in this parish school in February 1954. In March 1955, Como became a separate parish and Fr Thomas Linnane was appointed as parish priest.

In 1936, Fr Linnane had arrived in Western Australia from his hometown of Bellharbour in County Clare – Ireland. His first appointment was for 18 months as assistant priest at Maylands and then at Northam for 3 years. From there he became the founding parish priest at Cunderdin. His duties there included the position of chaplain at the large RAAF base that operated at Cunderdin for many years.



Fr. Linnane moved to Mundaring in 1949, becoming its first parish priest. His final move was to Como, which therefore became the third parish that he had been called to establish.

Until the presbytery was erected in March 1956, Fr Linnane was accommodated in a very cramped facility at the western end of the school building.



The presbytery was located facing Thelma St adjacent to the school building.

In addition to being highly dedicated to his routine parish activities, Fr Linnane vigorously pursued his final building activity, namely the erection of a church. This objective was achieved when the Church of the Holy Family was blessed and opened by Archbishop Prendiville on 12th April 1959.



Holy Family – Thelma Street, Como

Fr Linnane retired in 1977 and returned to Ireland where he died on 7th Jan 2005.

Fr Pat Cunningham carried out the duties of parish priest at Como on a temporary basis until Fr Pat O’Rielly took up his appointment in October 1977. He was succeeded by Fr Jim O’Brien (Sept 1981 to May 1985).

It was at this stage that a significant change occurred in the administration of the Como Parish. This resulted from the appointment of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, who had already been in charge of the adjoining parish of Kensington.



Holy Cross – Broad Street, Kensington

The two parishes continued to function under amalgamated conditions until December 1998 when the Blessed Sacrament Fathers left Western Australia and the parish of Kensington was closed with all of its facilities. The final official function at Kensington had been an emotional con-celebrated Mass that was held on November 22nd, 1998 to mark the closing of that church.

During the period of amalgamation, four parish priests had been officially appointed and they all resided in the presbytery at Como. The parish priests were:

Fr John Magill – May 1985 to December 1986
Fr Mark Rigney – January 1987 to December 1989
Fr Frank O’Dea – January 1990 to December 1993
Fr Peter Collins – April 1993 to December 1998.

These parish priests had been assisted at various stages by Fr Frawley, Fr Watkins and Deacon Pugh.

In January 1999, Father Aloysius Leong was appointed Parish priest of the Como / Kensington Parish and operated from the parish center in Thelma St Como.



Fr. Aloysius Leong

Within 2 years of his appointment he had commenced a building programme to update and integrate the parish facilities. This work was funded in part from the sale of the land formerly occupied by the church and school buildings at Kensington.

By September 2002 the parish centre was completed. The church was then closed so that general renovations could be undertaken. The modifications were needed in order to provide for a new entrance. However, this did not require any structural changes to the building. It was achieved by closing the original entrance and locating the altar in the space that thereby became available. A choir loft was removed. The seating layout had to be appropriately modified.

During this work masses were celebrated in the new parish centre until January 2003.

On 2nd February 2003 the re-opening of the church plus the blessing of the new administration centre, the parish center and the new presbytery took place with Bishop Sproxtton the principal celebrant.



Holy Family Church Interior – July 2018

In July 2014 after 15 and a half years Fr. Aloysius left for a well-deserved sabbatical in the United States followed by his current appointment as parish priest to Good Shepherd in Lockridge.

Our current parish priest is Father Oswald Lewis who was born in Burma and ordained in Rangoon on 1 March 1973. Father Ossie, as he prefers to be known, arrived in Perth in 1987 and has served in Kellerberrin, Kwinana, Dianella, Leederville, Embleton and now Holy Family, Como.

Michael Taylor
4 October 2019

(This brief history was originally prepared by Ken Kelsall and published in @HOME WITH HOLY FAMILY CHURCH, 50th Anniversary Special Edition, April 2009. Further work which includes the history of the Holy Cross Kensington parish is in progress.)