

### ***A little story from the 'far' past...***

*I was just 3 years old when I arrived in Australia in the beginning of 1952 ...*

*My father had migrated from Italy 2 years earlier and then brought my mother and myself to join him in South Australia. ...I am always in awe of their coming to this 'Great South Land' with such abundance of courage and the firm belief and hope to make a better life for our family. Their circumstance for migrating to Australia being that much hardship faced our large extended family in Italy due to loss and damage inflicted by the war ... The practical prospect for our extended family to survive on even a basic level had been painfully and critically eroded.*

*After arriving in South Australia, my father, a very resourceful and unbelievably hard-working man, had in two years saved the money to pay for our voyage to Australia and also procured a home for us to live in. The close proximity of a convent and a beautiful chapel where we attended Mass many week days and on Sundays was central to our lives. Sometimes we travelled by tram to attend Sunday Mass in the city at St Patrick's Church ...and when we could go with the few friends who had a vehicle, we attended Mass and special Feast day celebrations at what is today St Francis of Assisi Church. In the 50's this church had very much been like an 'Italian migrant centre' ...It provided for my parents and many, many fellow migrants a church where we could meet with other people who had migrated from our home region and towns in Italy. It was amazing how so many of these migrants shared similar stories and circumstances, and this church venue filled an immense social and spiritual need ... experiences reminiscent of their homeland faith culture. The sense of connecting in community and uniting with friends that had become 'extended family' was crucial to lessen the settling-in challenges and overwhelming nostalgia and longing for family and a primary culture left behind in Italy ...but which still remained understandably, so integral in their 'new' homeland.*

*On reflection it was a time when people seemed to come in community for many religious celebrations. Families visited each other regularly and most often celebrations centered greatly round their family life and faith. Marriages, babies' baptisms, First Holy Communion and Confirmation of the children, were times of faith growth and celebrated with great rejoicing, feasting and fellowship.*

*When it came to the celebration of Special Church Feast Days and especially feast days focused on the Holy Mother and Patron Saints of people's home towns in Italy, it seemed that everyone we knew would come together for day long holy observances and festivity. A true bringing of God's people together with 'The Family' at its heart!*

*I remember well how these 'Feste' were celebrated on such a grand scale. Holy Mass, Processions in prayer, hymns, the gentle sprinkling of flower petals and the holding aloft of holy banners and statues ... These traditional 'Feste' were always highly attended. After the Mass, Procession and other solemn religious observances that varied depending on the Special Feast Day, there would be a great sharing of traditional foods ...and lots of it! National music, entertainment for young and old as well as traditional activities and competitions were experienced with joy and friendship. It was a great opportunity to catch up collectively with many friends... It was a much-needed Faith experience and Social gathering, often with added 'reach-out' benefits of sharing news of loved ones back in Italy or sharing of ways to help and give practical support for each other and 'new arrivals'. Many experiences and much information were generously shared with these dear valued friends about this 'New Country' to which they had come and that was to them all, fast becoming 'home'*

*Aggie M*