



Catholic Diocese of Bathurst

16th November 2015

Stage 1 of the Restoration of the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. John to be completed in early December

Several major milestones of the Restoration of the Catholic Cathedral of St. Michael and St. John will be reached over the next few weeks, as stage one of the restoration process is completed.

Bishop of Bathurst, Michael McKenna said, “On the Third Sunday of Advent (13th December 2016), I will open our Door of Mercy in the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. John. This will also be the day when the bells will ring out again from the restored tower, marking the completion of the first stage of our Cathedral’s renewal”.

Over the past two years, every single mortar joint of the bell tower has been replaced. For those not with a construction background, this means every piece of mortar between each and every brick, from top to bottom on all four sides of the 23 meter high tower was removed and replaced.

More than 100 pieces of sandstone were removed and replaced with replicas of the original stones, which includes extremely ornate scrolls, roses and the original gargoyle, taking many hours of hand carving and shaping.

Stone Restorations from Rylstone, completed the restoration work of the Cathedral bell tower. Ron Lodewijks from Stone Restorations said that the huge piece of work was not without its challenges.

“The Cathedral is an extraordinary and quite rare piece of architecture, not often seen outside metropolitan areas. It was extremely deteriorated after more than 150 years of exposure to the elements, with severe salt and water damage. Working 23 meters above the ground through two Bathurst winters also created difficulties”.

Ron described the Cathedral as being very complicated in its construction. “We needed to approach the work from quite a different angle, taking into account the unique aspects of the building”.

The final stones were replaced in the bell tower late last week, one being the gargoyle, as pictured.

This week, the finishing touches will be made to the brickwork and jointing around the replaced sand stone and cleaning of the walls will commence. After cleaning the top of the bell tower, the top section of scaffold will come down, followed by installation of louvres and mesh screens. Installation of the newly refurbished bells will occur in the first week of December.

Stage 2 of the restoration of the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. John will commence in the New Year.



Stone Mason, Tye Murphy from Stone Restorations making the finishing touches to the final piece of stone to be replaced



The newly restored gargoyle



The gargoyle prior to restoration