

# Fr Leo Kelly Library - Campion College

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The library at Campion College is named after Fr Leo Kelly, a Catholic priest who supported the vision and mission of the Campion College even before its official opening. Fr Kelly was a generous benefactor and contributed significantly to the library in the early stages of its development.

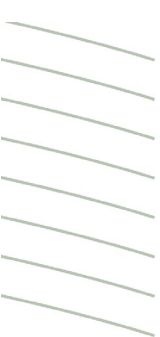
## Early Years

Leo William Kelly was born on 21st August 1919. He grew up in Heidelberg, Victoria, and attended Mercy Convent and Parade College. While little is known of Leo's academic achievements, it appears he was athletically talented, representing his college in the open mile during the combined sports event in November 1935. *The Herald* newspaper featured a photo

of Leo with his classmates in a spectacular action shot as they leap over hurdles during a race at the Christian Brothers College sports meeting. His photo also appears in the school newspaper, *The Paradian*, in December 1935 where he is shown as part of the College's athletic team.



*The Herald* Thursday 10 October 1935



Leo's older brother, John Anthony Kelly was also a student at Parade College graduating in 1931. He attended the seminary at Werribee and was ordained as a priest in July 1940. Soon after this, Leo followed in his footsteps and was ordained by Archbishop Mannix on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1944.

Because of his acute mind, Fr Leo Kelly was chosen by Archbishop Mannix to study for a Doctorate in Canon Law. He studied at the Lateran University from 1948-1951, where he earned the title of 'Dr', although he never wanted to be known as such. He resided at the College of St Peter Apostle in Rome and, according to Denis Hart, Archbishop of Melbourne, had a personal audience with Pope Pius XII in 1950. Fr Kelly returned to Australia, where he spent many years as Archbishop Mannix's personal lawyer. Due to his knowledge of Canon law, until late in his life, Fr Kelly sat on tribunals in relation to marriage annulments and other related matters.

Fr Leo Kelly was appointed parish priest of St Clare's Box Hill parish in Victoria where he arrived on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1962. Fr Kelly was full of enthusiasm to start his new parish and during his time there, he conducted a census of the parish in which it was revealed that there was a great need for classrooms and a place to celebrate Mass at St Clare's school. Much work was done by men who volunteered their labour on weekends - Fr Kelly would be in the midst of it all helping with anything he could do. Fr Kelly continued his work at Box Hill for 37 years until he retired in 1999. A plaque at the back of the church acknowledges the many years Fr Kelly served in this place and his love for the people of the parish.

## Connecting with Campion College

During his time at the seminary at Werribee, Fr Kelly became good friends with Michael and Margaret Callanan, a brother and sister who owned the local chemist and later set up the Callanan Foundation. Fr Kelly gave them advice and support in the establishment of the foundation and eventually became the foundation's trustee. In this position, Fr Kelly oversaw the distribution of funds to many organisations and supported families with the cost of school fees as the foundation was primarily designed to support Catholic education.

When Fr Kelly met some of the founders of Campion College who informed him of the need for a library, Fr Kelly immediately saw the potential that the College had and entrusted to it a significant sum of money from the Callanan foundation for the purpose of establishing a library. Several thousand books were purchased from a Dominican library that was closing in Canberra and these volumes formed the initial collection. Even before Campion College opened its doors to students, Fr Kelly was able to see the vision of the college and was willing to support the establishment of a Catholic liberal arts college.

Fr Leo Kelly passed away peacefully on December 16<sup>th</sup> 2002, only 4 years before students began the inaugural semester at Campion. Fr Kelly is remembered as a faithful man and a prayerful priest. Due to his significant support of the Campion library, the Campion Foundation Board moved a motion on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2009, "*That the Campion College Library be named in honour of Fr Leo W. Kelly.*" The current administrator of the Callanan foundation, Mr Henk van de Berg, attended the meeting to witness this recognition of Fr Kelly's support. The library continues to grow and flourish thanks to the support of Fr Leo Kelly and many others who, over the years, have believed in the mission of the college and sought to contribute to the vision of a Catholic liberal arts education.



## References

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