Statement of Significance: St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 50 and 54 Fitzgerald Street, and part Rocky Lane, South Yarra (June 2026)

Heritage Place:	St. Joseph's Catholic Church Complex 50 and 54 Fitzgerald Street and part Rocky Lane, South Yarra	**PS ref no:**	HO800



Figures 1-4: *Examples of buildings within the St. Joseph's Catholic Church Complex, including the St. Joseph's Catholic Church* (top left)*, Parish Centre and School and Hall* (top right)*, Presbytery* (bottom left)*, and Former St. Joseph's Hall* (bottom right) (GJM Heritage, April 2024).

What is significant?

The St Joseph's Church Complex at 50 and 54 Fitzgerald Street and part Rocky Lane, South Yarra, built from 1888 to 1922, comprising the church, presbytery, school and parish hall, and former St Joseph's Hall.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include:

- Complex of adjacent church buildings and landscaped interstitial spaces
- Red brick wall at the southern boundary with pedestrian access from Medley Place

Church

- Red brick church constructed in a Gothic Revival style
- Bluestone base to building
- Steeply-pitched slate-clad gabled roofs
- Cruciform plan with transepts to the south
- Asymmetrical principal elevation with parapeted front porch, bell tower with spire, recessed niche with statue
- Parapeted nave end with large traceried rose window
- Pointed arch-headed windows to nave walls
- Red brick stepped buttresses with contrasting dressings and angled buttresses at corners
- Cream brick and stone dressings and mouldings
- Rows of small gabled roof vents to the nave

School and Parish Hall

- Two-storey red brick building, displaying some elements typical of the early twentieth century period and Gothic Revival influences
- Tile-clad steeply-pitched gabled roofs with terracotta ridging
- Symmetrical street elevation comprising projecting dormers with pointed arch-headed windows at first floor level
- Broad decorative band of diaper pattern dichromatic brickwork
- Timber shingles, half-timber effect and rectangular timber-framed window bay to gable ends

Presbytery

- Two-storey red brick house, displaying characteristics of the early twentieth century period and the Federation style
- Prominent tile-clad hipped roof with terracotta finials
- Asymmetrical elevations
- Prominent polygonal bays
- Extensive deep balcony with timber balusters and angled timber shingle-clad base, contained under the hipped roof
- Substantial brick chimneys with broad decorative rendered panels to all sides

Former St Joseph's Hall

- Two-storey red brick building constructed in a Gothic Revival style
- Gabled roof forms with front transverse gable concealed by parapets
- Symmetrical upper-principal elevation of red face brick with render highlighting, bays framed by shallow piers, tall metal-framed pointed arch-headed windows and decorative panels of contrasting brickwork
- Parapet to principal elevation with piers crowned by steeply gabled elements, fleur-de-lis motifs and pointed arch motif to balustrade
- Simple pediment to west elevation
- Plaque and shield with intertwined letters 'S J'
- Metal-framed sets of windows to lower principal elevations and side elevations.

The bluestone paved bridge over a reflecting pool leading to a side entry porch and glazed covered walkway connecting the church to the former school building (now Parish Centre) do not contribute to the significance of the place.

How is it significant?

The St Joseph's Church Complex, South Yarra at 50 and 54 Fitzgerald Street and part Rocky Lane, South Yarra is of local historical, representative (architectural), aesthetic and social significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The St Joseph's Church Complex, South Yarra has strong associations with the development of South Yarra in the boom-years of the 1880s and early 1890s when rapid residential subdivision and the associated growth in the population during this period resulted in the provision of churches, and other community buildings, to service the local community. As the first church to be built in South Yarra to service the spiritual needs of the local Catholic community, and subsequently expanded in the early twentieth century to service the growing population, the St Joseph's Church Complex remains highly intact to clearly demonstrate these phases of development in the City of Stonnington and the importance of religious institutions to the population at these times. The St Joseph's Church Complex remains in use, servicing the local Catholic community (Criterion A).

St Joseph's Church Complex, South Yarra is a fine and highly intact representative example of a late nineteenth and early twentieth century church complex, comprising a Gothic Revival church, school and parish hall, and former St Joseph's Hall, along with a Federation-style presbytery. The church displays typical characteristics of the Gothic Revival style including steeply-pitched slate-clad roofs, red brick construction with cream brick and stone dressings, bell tower with spire, pointed arch-headed windows, stepped buttresses with offsets and angled buttresses at corners and rows of gabled roof vents to the nave. The school and parish hall and former St Joseph's Hall display similar characteristics of the Gothic Revival style, including steeply-pitched gabled roofs or parapet elements and pointed arch-headed windows. The presbytery displays typical characteristics of the early twentieth century Federation-style including asymmetrical elevations, red brick construction, a prominent tile-clad hipped roof with terracotta finials, polygonal bays, deep balcony with timber balusters and angled shingle-clad base and substantial brick chimneys (Criterion D).

The St Joseph's Church Complex, South Yarra comprises a series of assured and well-executed ecclesiastical buildings constructed in Gothic Revival and Federation styles. Built to designs by noted architects Tappin, Gilbert and Dennehy (Church, 1888) and Reed, Smart and Tappin (1892 Church additions), and well-known church designer/building Bart Moriarty (1917 School and Parish Hall; 1922 spire, tower and baptistry and former St Joseph's Hall), the complex presents as a finely detailed and cohesive set of church buildings from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, which together create an imposing presence within the surrounding narrow streetscapes of low-scale residential buildings (Criterion E).

The St Joseph's Church Complex, South Yarra is of social significance for its long and continuing use as a community facility in the City of Stonnington. Established in 1888, the St Joseph's Church Complex, South Yarra continues to serve the local South Yarra community as a religious institution for the pastoral care of its parishioners (Criterion G).

Primary source

South Yarra Heritage Review (GJM Heritage, March 2025).

Complex map



Figure 5: *St. Joseph's Catholic Church Complex map* (GJM Heritage).