

After visiting the Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy in Penrose Park in New South Wales in 1991, Brother Alan Archer, or Al as he is more commonly known, decided there and then that he would dedicate his life to God and to the service of others.

During the next five years, Brother Al began volunteering at the Matthew Talbot Hostel in Kings Cross, Sydney, which at the time was a 500-bed hostel for homeless men.

During his time there serving as a Night Supervisor and Pastoral Carer, Brother Al claims he truly saw the work of God.

“Let me tell you, this is where I truly witnessed God at work, there with the homeless, the addicted, among the rejected of society... this is where violence, sadness and miracles happened every day.”

Moved by his experience there, Brother Al continued to dedicate his life to helping the downtrodden when he moved to Perth in 1995.

He was appointed manager of St Bartholomew’s New Crisis Care Unit, which provided short-term and emergency accommodation for people with mental health issues.

During this time, Brother Al met and befriended many people who were battling mental illness and shared their experiences of homelessness, loneliness, addiction and suffering. Unable to keep up with the demands for spare beds and resources, Brother Al embarked on a mission to provide long-term accommodation for adults with mental health issues that would allow them to live independently, with assistance and support, whilst being part of a collective community, and so, in 1996, the spiritual journey of the Emmaus Community began.

Twenty-one years later, and Brother Al has continued to put his heart and soul into the Emmaus Community.

In 2000, he sold a property that he personally owned, and used the proceeds to buy a modest house in Queens Park, which has become the first home and foundation of the Emmaus Community.

Today, the Emmaus Community is now registered as a charitable organisation and functions autonomously.

There are more than 150 non-residential members and their families who form an integral part of the Emmaus Community, by sharing with each other the highs and lows of living with mental health issues.

Today, 50 people now call the Emmaus Community, based in Perth’s southern suburbs, home.

BROTHER AL CELEBRATES 21 YEARS OF EMMAUS

WORDS Daniele Foti-Cuzzola



The majority of these people currently living at Emmaus had been separated from their biological families and were isolated by society because of their mental illness, but the Emmaus Community has offered them a second chance at life.

“This is not a hostel or a crisis unit – it is a real home,” says Brother Al.

“This is a place where people can live independently, with support, in an environment of love.”