MARK Fogarty believes St Francis of Assisi is the perfect saint to guide the Catholic community in Crestmead.

The head of St Francis College Crestmead’s secondary campus, who is retiring on June 27, has spent almost 25 years trying to understand their saint’s patron better.

“You could have had all sorts of saints as your guiding light, but Francis is probably the best you can have,” Mr Fogarty said.

“St Francis was not only patron of environment, but his mission was about those outside the walls of the city.

“In his days, inside the walls, you were healthy with enough food.

“Everybody else, including the lepers, were outside the walls, and that’s where his mission was.

“We’ve been a school outside the walls doing the work within the lineage of St Francis of Assisi.

“We’re in Logan City, and it’s a socioeconomically disadvantaged area, it’s where the refugee corps, those without great finances.

“Always the Logan City outside the walls of Brisbane.

“It’s the land that Brisbane and the Gold Coast forgot, it fell in between the two.”

Mr Fogarty said the school’s Franciscan tradition had become an important part of his work with students, staff and the wider Crestmead and Logan community.

“I came here in 1999 first as deputy principal, and after two or three years I realised that I had to understand this guy because clearly he’s right for this place,” Mr Fogarty said.

Part of his research included two trips to Assisi and plenty of reading to understand his approach to mission, which he said was to be with those “outside the walls”.

A quick walk around reveals the school’s Franciscan foundation with its Franciscan iconography, and a small natural hermitage down the back of the school.

But the tradition goes deeper with the school’s Community Centre that offers a baby care clinic, a playground for two to five-year-old children, and before and after school care.

“We are in a disadvantaged area, so I’ve always believed a simple P1 to 12 school that just works well with academic staff is not quite what this community needs,” Mr Fogarty said.

“We’ve worked on issues broader than academic learning in the classroom.

“The Community Centre is the end of a long line of that sort of thinking.”

Mr Fogarty said the school was “very pleased when the new pope arrived.”

“We hope he comes to visit us,” Mr Fogarty said.

Retirement will be a slow transition for Mr Fogarty, who will continue supporting the school doing relief teaching and other pastoral work.

But his first few months as a retired teacher will be on pilgrimage following the journey of St Paul, through Turkey and parts of Greece to finish off a pilgrimage he had started years before.

“My academic interest is in the early church and historical Jesus, so I like to know the geography and culture, background of those texts,” Mr Fogarty said.