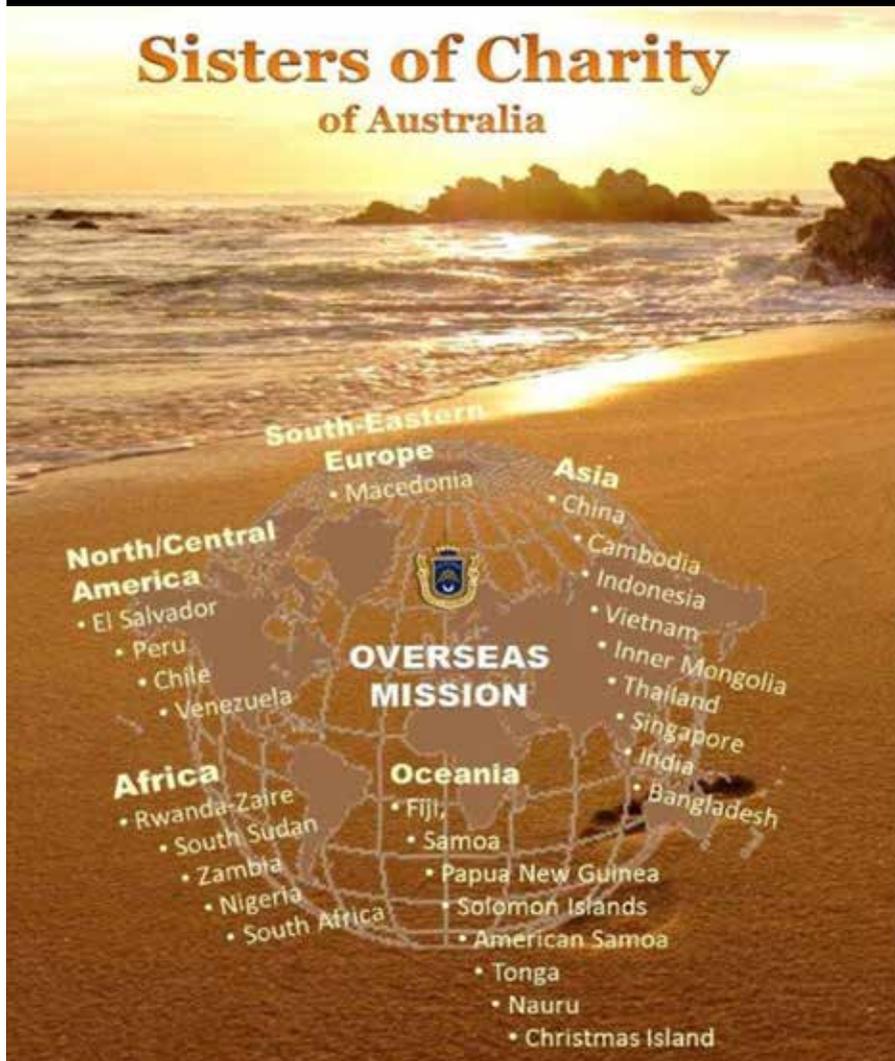


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missionaries over two centuries**

**Sisters of Charity  
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**Cover image:** The map shows the places where the Sisters of Charity have been missionaries, whether singly or in communities.

**Proceedings of the Australian Catholic Historical Society Conference**

*'To and from the Antipodes': Catholic missionaries over two centuries*

Australian Catholic University, North Sydney, 24 September 2016

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## JULIAN TENISON WOODS: ITINERANT MISSIONER

Mary Cresp\* and Janice Tranter\*\*

### Abstract

A distinctive feature of Fr Tenison Woods' missionary life in Australia is his writing on natural science, carried out along with his missions. Along with his missions, a frequent feature was a public talk to raise funds for the church.

When, after eleven years of his missions in eastern Australia, there were no more invitations to preach, Woods had to rely totally on science for livelihood and left for work in South East Asia.

Over the widespread missionary years, Father Woods directed many new members to his religious foundations, the Sisters of St Joseph, founded with Mary MacKillop, and the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. While Australian consciousness was moving from colonial to Australian identity, many new members whom Woods directed left their original colony to join an institute in another. In this way Woods became a catalyst to a growing Australian identity.

This paper draws on unpublished work, mainly from the acclaimed Master's Thesis of Anne Player rsj, *Julian Tenison Woods, 1832–1889: the interaction of science and religion*.

Julian Tenison Woods (1832-1889) combined the life of an itinerant missionary with that of a natural scientist. This paper considers his ten years in Penola, 1857-1867 and takes up his widespread mission activity from 1871 till his final illness in 1887.

### Dedication

Dr Anne Player rsj was a regular participant in the ACHS Conferences till her illness in 2013. In health, she would have been here presenting a paper, sharing her acclaimed thesis, 'Julian Tenison Woods, 1832- 1889: the interaction of science and religion'.<sup>1</sup> Her writings on Father Woods, like those of Margaret Press, are authoritative. Our paper draws on her work, as yet unpublished, and we dedicate this presentation to her. (5 /11/ 1934 – 4 /7/ 2016).

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\*\* Janice Tranter rsj is a member of the Sisters of Sr Joseph, Lochinvar. She enjoys sharing the story of St Mary MacKillop and Father Julian Tenison Woods with children and adults as part of their Australian heritage. She has a number of articles published on Father Woods and Josephite history.

## **The Penola Years: 1857-1867**

When newly ordained 24 year-old Father Julian Woods stepped ashore at Guichen Bay in March 1857 he continued to Penola, the centre of his parish, in the 75 mile two day ride, arriving on 19 March. These were the first of many days in the saddle. His subsequent ten years in the 22,000 sq. mile parish extending fourteen miles into Victoria saw him on the move for weeks at a time.

We learn precise details of this life from two first-hand accounts – his published talk, ‘Ten Years in the Bush’, and his Memoirs dictated towards the end of his life.<sup>2</sup> He describes days ‘almost continually on horseback’. He followed a routine of visits to the main centres, travelling in different directions to meet all his parishioners. The visits to Mount Gambier, Robe and the far north Tatiara, with a 3-monthly visit to Portland (120 miles from Penola) left him at Penola for eleven weeks in every six months. In travelling he usually rode 35-40 miles a day, but often 50-60, occasionally 70, but not on the one horse, he added. Sometimes he walked for miles through mud or rough country when the horse ‘knocked up’.

The privations, he said, were fatigue from riding and hunger and headaches from fasting when journeys outstripped carried supplies. He slept on his saddle or stayed in huts with shepherds or with families. It was a demanding life, but he liked it ‘because he considered it a true missionary life’. He usually reached all his parishioners once a year. Whenever he was away in Portland he used to manage not to be absent a Sunday from his own diocese. He used to start from Mount Gambier after Mass on Sunday and ride 25 miles to the mouth of the river Glenelg on the coast. Here he would swim his horse across the river where the stream was narrow but very deep. There was a house on the far side where he was always able to procure a fresh horse, and after supper he would ride leisurely along the beach to Portland where he generally used to arrive about 8 o’clock next morning. The whole distance was between 75 and 80 miles, but a very trying journey because of the beach sand. He remained until Thursday at Portland and then returned to whatever place in his own district next engaged his attention. Sometimes he had no sooner arrived at Portland than he was recalled to attend the sick or the dying.

It was because of his widespread travelling among his parishioners that he saw the spiritual desolation there and especially that of the children, who were as he said, ‘entirely cut off from any religious instruction.’ He kept remembering the Sisters of St Joseph he had seen in France and began, he

said, ‘constantly brooding’ over the establishment of a religious order of Sisters with a similar spirit, to meet the needs of these children. The idea of the sisterhood came precisely out of the vast travel the young priest did to reach all his parishioners, and his will to respond to this need. As is well known, he and Mary MacKillop launched this foundation on 19 March, St Joseph’s day, in his 10th year in the parish.

His parishioners’ presentation at the end of his Penola years reveals their love for their pastor. They loved him for his zeal and energy, his care of the weak, needy and sick. In their opening words, they said he had ‘endeared himself to them by gentle ties ministering to their spiritual wants’. They noted his ‘zealous and unceasing discharge’ of his ‘sacred office in this very large and thinly populated district’ and the privations of this ministry carried out as their ‘pastor and friend’. They concluded, ‘Go then, gentle minister of our loving God’. ‘The memory of Father Woods’, wrote Mary MacKillop, ‘seems embalmed in the district’, where many poor settlers and people of all classes sought his advice.<sup>3</sup>

An outstanding characteristic of Woods’ missionary life, enabling him to combine pastoral and scientific work, was his high degree of organisation. This was noted by Dr David Branagan, of Sydney University’s School of Geosciences, almost incredulous at the amount and meticulous nature of Woods’ geological work.<sup>4</sup>

As cited by Anne Player, from his first months at Penola, Woods began to publish his observations of the geology of the area.<sup>5</sup> His publications brought his name to the attention of men of science such as Ferdinand von Mueller, and the general public. His first major work, *Geological Observations in South Australia*, included his writings on local features, Mount Gambier, Mount Schank, and the Naracoorte caves.<sup>6</sup> Completed four and a half years after reaching his parish and on his 29th birthday, it was a decided achievement alongside missionary duties.

In her biography, Mary MacKillop noted a feature not mentioned elsewhere of Woods as scientist and missioner. By the monies gained from his writing, Mary wrote, he purchased medicines for the poor and helped many good causes.<sup>7</sup>

Another aspect of Woods as missioner and natural scientist in Penola was his relationship with the Aboriginal people. Mary MacKillop noted his pastoral concern, his instructions to them in Christianity, his care for them in sickness and his dilemma as to how to respond to their situation.<sup>8</sup> His journeys were opportunities for trusting companionship. In his first months in Penola, he set out to examine the marshy Coorong with two Aboriginal

guides and a trooper, all on horseback. Beginning early in the morning, he followed through water as his guides tested the path with spears. On firm ground, he examined further, while the Aborigine caught fish and shellfish, lit a fire 'in a snug, sandy hollow' then all shared the 'welcome repast with some damper we ... brought'. The Aboriginal men insisted on waiting until a strong breeze dropped, enabling a safe crossing. Returning guided by the stars, one Aboriginal man explained their names for the constellations. 'One constellation', wrote Woods, was 'Eaglehawk', 'Ngeery'... It was the also the native name of a very fine Aboriginal who was often a guide for me through the bush'.<sup>9</sup> The young Londoner now bush missionary was quickly at ease with the first peoples of this land, learning, seeing the land with their eyes, and at the same time, observing closely the features of the land with the eyes of a scientist.

### **Further Afield: 1871-1882**

Julian's time in Penola was followed by his appointment as Bishop's Secretary and Director of Catholic Education in Adelaide. There he was not able to pursue scientific studies because of heavy duties in this role as well as pastor in parishes, editor of Catholic newspapers and other publications, and formator of the Sisters. However, relationships with the bishop soured and in 1871 he was sent to New South Wales. This 'temporary mission' away from Adelaide did indeed become permanent. For the next two years he preached missions at the invitation of the Bishops in Sydney, Bathurst, Maitland and Brisbane dioceses, travelling huge distances as far as Bowen. At the same time he recruited for the Sisters of St Joseph. During this time also he gradually took interest in science, but left no public records. The turning point came in 1874 when he was invited by Bishop Murphy to give missions in Tasmania.

During a busy mission schedule, in July 1874 in Hobart, Woods read his first scientific paper for seven years. It was, wrote Player, 'an impressive re-entry into the colonial scientific community'.<sup>10</sup> In his three years in Tasmania he continued prolific missionary and scientific work, despite recurring illness and suffering.

Funds from his missions were directed to pay debts in Adelaide and to support new members going to the Sisters of St Joseph in Brisbane and Perthville (Bathurst) and to his new foundation, the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Brisbane. He travelled widely from the southern fishing villages and Huon forests to Launceston and other northern areas. He drew crowds, with people camping along the Derwent and, in rainy seasons,

‘trudging through seas of mud’ to attend his missions and scientific talks. Among the famous observations he made about the Tasmanian forests at this time was one that reverberates even today:

The only way to prevent the wholesale destruction of the timber will be by proclaiming reserves or State forests ... The matter is one which the Legislature should deal with promptly, or the forests of Tasmania, peerless and priceless as they once were, will soon be things of the past.<sup>11</sup>

On his 44th birthday, he left for the mainland to continue ‘a missionary life’, declining the Bishop’s request to remain.<sup>12</sup> Player has documented a dateline of his movements, listing missions in towns and villages, retreats for priests and religious, fundraising talks usually for the church (once for a hospital) and attending scientific meetings.<sup>13</sup> For six more years, at the request of bishops in Sydney, Maitland, Bathurst and Brisbane, he continued these missions, with one at Darlinghurst Goal.<sup>14</sup> He visited Perthville many times, re-invigorating the Josephite remnant and directing new members there from his missions. What Player called ‘the paramount involvement of his life, his work with the Sisters of St Joseph as their founder and Director’, was given a new outlet. He had no administrative duties. Matthew Quinn used him, wrote Player, for what he did best: to inspire the Sisters.<sup>15</sup>

Although his missionary programme was demanding, he continued scientific activity attending meetings when possible,<sup>16</sup> and presenting outstanding geological papers.<sup>17</sup> Talks to religious audiences were likewise popular. In a crowded hall at the Sydney Marist Brothers where Dean Kenny, 12 other priests and leading laymen joined him on the stage, his amusing account of mission adventures had the audience ‘in continued roars of laughter’. The Brothers’ retreat, on the contrary, wrote the Superior, was marked by sweetness and gentleness. ‘The spirit of gentleness of our preacher seemed to suffuse itself into the hearts of all.’<sup>18</sup>

In Queensland his missions and science saw him in vastly different regions, including one excursion to the Barrier Reef. For many weeks he shared the huts and humpies of miners in the Atherton tablelands. He was commissioned by the Queensland government to report on coal deposits. He preached to the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. But with all his output, by the end of 1882, requests for the missioner had dried up. The missionary orders had arrived in Australia and the bishops now bypassed Julian in their favour. Julian no longer had an official church ministry. The grief and struggle revealed in poems and letters in these years reached a new unknown.

## **Asia: 1883-1886**

In 1883 his friend Sir Frederick Weld, then governor of the Straits Settlement and Singapore (1880-1887) invited Julian to explore for mineral resources of the various Malayan states. He set off by way of Indonesia in August 1883 and later wrote to his brother Terry: 'We arrived (in Java) as the disaster to Krakatoa was taking place.' In fact the steamer he was on actually ploughed through what he called 'rafts of human bodies'.<sup>19</sup> He assembled the information gleaned from with survivors and local reports into three articles sent to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, giving one of the earliest accounts of the disaster to Australian readers.

His expeditions to other volcanoes in Indonesia were continued in Malaya and later in the Philippines. Margaret Press describes a daring climb into the steaming, roaring crater of a volcano where 'the adventurer in Julian Woods was fascinated by the spectacle and first-hand experience.'<sup>20</sup>

Despite bouts of various tropical illnesses, Woods gave thorough reports according to his brief, and also produced important scientific writings on mineralogy, biology and the study of shells and molluscs. Frequent articles were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, material collected contributed to a book published in 1888, and he gave public lectures to packed audiences. He wrote to his sister-in-law, 'I did not know my name was much known out of Australia but it appears it is.'<sup>21</sup>

While engaged on this Asian expedition for scientific purposes, Woods was at the same time a missionary. From Singapore he wrote to Terry, 'The Bishop here (Edouard Gasnier) is a very fine man and very kind but rather more anxious to make use of me than I am able to do'.<sup>22</sup> From Penang he described Holy Week 1884: 'I assisted the French Missionaries in the ceremonies, preached and heard confession. On Easter Sunday I sang High Mass and preached to a large congregation.' That same evening he preached at another church to the soldiers of the garrison.<sup>23</sup>

By September of that year he was in Canton, China, where he examined botanical collections of the Vice-consul. During his time in the Philippines in 1885 he categorised fish, shells, shoals and botanical specimens. He was asked by the bishop there to visit hospitals and offer Mass in the wards. "You would laugh to see my costume here", he wrote. "I dress as a Spanish Padre with a huge sombrero – in fact the people would be very much scandalised if I did not."<sup>24</sup>

His travel plans changed because of the outbreak of war with China, so he joined a ship to Japan hoping to find passage to Australia from there. Here, too, he was hampered by quarantine due to cholera so he stayed with

friends in Arima where he wrote in November 1885, 'I am very happy, for I have three Christians near me, one of whom serves Mass in my paper house and so far I am well provided for spiritually and temporarily.'<sup>25</sup> It was February 1886 before he could leave Japan, and from there he was at last able to return to Australia, landing in Darwin on 23 June. His travels taking him into at least the coastal areas of most Asian countries had enriched his life even though they did take a toll on his health.

Between June and October, Julian was engaged by the South Australian government to join extremely taxing expeditions along the Victoria River and to Katherine. Significantly, while in Darwin, he preached and gave a fund-raising talk for 'the Catholic Mission'. Ongoing ill health saw Julian return to Sydney in December 1886.

### **Final Years: 1887-1889**

In his last years he was confined by illness to his residence in Elizabeth Street, There he dictated his Memoirs and produced a profusion of papers and articles on his travels throughout South East Asia and Australia. These were published in city newspapers mainly in series form, certainly highly scientific in nature but written in a fresh, appealing way that gained the interest of a wide reading public. His paper on Australian molluscs, read at the December 1888 meeting of the Royal Society, won for him the prestigious W B Clarke Medal. Professors and lecturers came to talk with him, as did his clergy friends.

After his death on 7 October 1889 his funeral Mass was celebrated in St Mary's Cathedral where Julian had preached missions and celebrated Mass so often in past years. Large numbers of friends and admirers joined his sister-in-law and nephews John and Julian, Sisters of St Joseph, people of distinction from Government, university and scientific circles and over forty priests, to say farewell. The monument over his grave at Waverley Cemetery was paid for by subscription from fellow scientists and Sisters of St Joseph.<sup>26</sup>

In 1872 Julian had written in praise of a priest-friend and scientist who had died. It is as though he had, in this description, written his own eulogy: 'With him the study of nature and the love of God went hand in hand ... each new species of flower and insect was to him a new source of joy and thanksgiving to God. He was never idle. Either out amongst flowers or examining rocks, minerals, and zoological specimens, and always uniting such labors with some pious thought or aspiration. He was a true Christian philosopher. ... But it must not be thought that

while he was thus zealous in the cause of science that he was less alive to his duties as a mission priest. His zeal was, on the contrary, of the most fervent kind. At any time he would leave his studies or his specimens and travel miles to find out some bad Catholic, or to help some waverer into the true Church. His patience and care with everyone were proverbial. ... In the hospital, in the asylum, and wherever he went, it seemed as if he could not do too much; ... he had no greater pleasure on this earth than fulfilling his duties as a priest.<sup>27</sup>

For Mary MacKillop, Julian's place of burial symbolised his life. She wrote:

‘How appropriate is the last resting place of the gentle learned priest and naturalist! Crowned with the cross, beneath the statue of the ‘Sweet Mother’ whom he had so tenderly loved – a little child in the next grave, an Australian journalist and politician [Daniel Deniehy] at his feet, an orator and scholar [William Bede Dalley] close by - typifying all that during life had most delighted him - Devotion, Innocence, and Intellect!

There, on the hillside, overlooking the Pacific which washes far below the rocky cemetery, and murmurs a perpetual requiem in its own soul-stirring music, the mortal remains of Father J E Tenison Woods await the resurrection. May he rest in peace. Amen.<sup>28</sup>

## Notes

- 1 MA Thesis, ANU, 1990, for which Anne Player was awarded the prestigious J. G. Crawford Medal for academic excellence.
- 2 Unpublished typescript, Lochinvar Archives, Book I, 13-16.
- 3 Mary MacKillop, Mother Mary of the Cross MacKillop, *Julian Tenison Woods, A Life*, Introduced and Annotated by Margaret Press, Harper Collins, Blackburn, 1997, 46
- 4 David Branagan, School of Geosciences, Uni. Of Sydney, ‘125th anniversary Memories of Father Julian Edmund Tenison Woods’, unpublished paper, Celebrating Julian, Josephite Historian and Archivist Conference, Adelaide, November 2014.
- 5 Player, ‘Woods’, 1990, 11-12.
- 6 ‘South Australian Geology, no. 3, The Caves at Mosquito Plains’, *Register*, 29 March 1858.
- 7 MacKillop, *Woods*, 60, 72, 47.
- 8 MacKillop, *Woods*, 63-65.
- 9 ‘The Wonders of Nature in Australia’, *Sydney Mail*, 21 June 1879. Reference from Anne Player.
- 10 Player, ‘Woods’, 42.
- 11 A Player, see ‘Fr Julian in Tasmania, Source Material, 1987’, ‘Tasmanian Forests: their botany and economical value’, read before Royal Society of NSW, 5 June 1878; Carmel

- Doherty, *Song of Seasons*, Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Wollongong, 1996, 210.
- 12 MacKillop, *Woods*, 192.
- 13 Player, 'Woods' Movements'. This dateline extends from 1871-1889, 234- 306.
- 14 *FJ*, 8, 15 Dec. 1877.
- 15 Player, 'Woods', 205, 2012.
- 16 Woods, in ed. Anne Player, *The Archer Letters*, Sisters of St Joseph, North Goulburn, 1983, letter of 20 June 1878.
- 17 Player, 'Woods', 67-70
- 18 *FJ*, 30 June 1877; Br John, Provincial to Superior General, 9 July 1877. The talk Julian gave was to raise funds for the Brothers. Translation from Michael Naughtin FMS.
- 19 Anne Player ed., '*Yrs Most Affily*', *Letters from Father Julian Tenison Woods to Terry and Sarah Tenison Woods, 1878-1887*, Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Brisbane, 2008, 25.
- 20 Margaret Press, *Julian Tenison Woods, Father Founder*' Collins Dove, North Blackburn, 1994, 198.
- 21 15 November 1883, '*Yrs Most Affily*', 37.
- 22 5 October 1883, '*Yrs Most Affily*', 27.
- 23 Woods to Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Brisbane, 3 May 1884. Archives Brisbane.
- 24 20 March 1885, '*Yrs Most Affily*', 88.
- 25 2 November 1885, *The Archer Letters*.
- 26 Archives, Sisters of St Joseph, Mount Street.
- 27 J.E.Tenison Woods, Editorial, *Chaplet and Southern Cross*, 30 November 1872.
- 28 MacKillop, *Woods, A Life*, 220

# CAN WOMEN BE MISSIONARIES? HOW DO CATHOLIC FEMALE MISSIONARIES COMPARE WITH THEIR PROTESTANT COUNTERPARTS PRE WWI IN PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA?

Janice Garaty\*

## Abstract

This paper examines the highly gendered status and role of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (DOLSH), the first women to come to Papua with formal missionary status as a sister order to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. They arrived at Yule Island in 1887. Not long after, in 1892, two Methodist Missionary Sisters sent by the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society (AWMMS) arrived at Dobu, in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands. Their experiences (which were comprehensively described in diaries), as well as those of the wives of the missionaries sent by the London Missionary Society (LMS) are compared to those of the Catholic Sisters.

Both Catholic and Protestant women were valued for the work they could do among the women and children of their mission stations, teaching domestic skills in particular and running boarding schools. The DOLSH Sisters were seen as auxiliaries in the mission field. The Methodist women missionaries did more than this gendered work; they were free to travel and preach, leading church services. One outstanding point of difference is the average length of service in Papua New Guinea of the missionary women; for almost all of the DOLSH Sisters it was a lifetime's service. For Protestants it was a few years.

## Introduction

The central question of this paper is: can women be missionaries? It is the title of a journal article by Clare Midgely who asserts that the fundamental work of missionaries is to preach the Gospel, to translate and publish the Holy Scriptures in the vernacular and to establish schools; women could undertake the second and third of these, but the first was not allowable. As she states: "Women were excluded from preaching by all the mainstream British Protestant sects at the time they set up their foreign missionary societies" in the early 19th century. Then, missionary was a male term and only a male could be a missionary.<sup>1</sup> Women were on the foreign mission fields as a missionary wife, a help-mate, an essential provider of teaching and social services especially to women and children and to be a living

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\* Dr Janice Garaty works as an independent scholar. Her commissioned work, *Providence Provides: Brigidine Sisters in the NSW Province*, was published in 2013.

example of the civilising nature of Christianity. Protestant single women could not be missionaries in their own right until much later in the century. This paper focuses on the period at the end of the 19th century and up to the beginning of the Great War when certain women on the mission fields rejected the Victorian restraints imposed on females living in non-white, non-Christian lands. They were advantaged by a shortage of ‘manpower’ as much as any softening of attitudes by their male supervisors. At the same time, Catholic Religious Sisters working on the mission fields were never treated as equals to their male confreres; their essential contributions were unsung and mostly unrecognised.

### **Can women be missionaries?**

To answer this question one must ask who or what is a missionary? ‘Mission’ has several modern meanings which have as a commonality; persons being charged with a certain duty; an outcome to be strived for. In the 19th century, missionaries were sent to foreign fields to impart a message, one firmly based on Christian charity. These missionaries were aiming to removing ignorance of the ‘Good Word’; in other words to evangelise the heathen. This paper canvasses a period when both Protestants and Catholics were confident of the core reason of missionary activity. It is well documented that the various denominations operating in Papua at the time of WWI were cooperative not competitive. There was broad agreement on the fundamentals of the message; where the denominations differed was on the methods used.

Sydney historian, Sister Margaret (Moir) O’Sullivan has written that the Sisters of Charity were not a missionary congregation but over their history have had a “significant missionary outreach”. For her, the “evangelisation” conducted by the Australian Sisters of Charity was in reality following “the example of Jesus in revealing God by doing good”.<sup>2</sup> This notion of good example indirectly leading to the desired outcome for missionary activity allowed inspired women to be missionaries even if their own Church denied them formal recognition in the 19th century.

### **Female missionaries in Papua**

According to Anne O’Brien, between 1892 and 1931 women made up 70% of missionaries sent by the Church Missionary Society, the largest missionary society in NSW, to press further the point that the Christian Church was ‘one of the most important institutions in their lives and those that elected to work for the church full-time as missionaries, deaconesses and Sisters outnumbered men.’<sup>3</sup>

More than one third of the missionaries in Papua during the 40 years before 1914 were European women. Of these 115 women, 65 were Sisters of the Sacred Heart Mission based at Yule Island, some 100 kms from Port Moresby. This French order arrived in Papua-New Guinea in by way of Botany, Sydney where they established a foundation in 1885, at the invitation of Archbishop Moran. After establishing a mission on Thursday Island, in 1887, four Sisters joined the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart at their mission on Yule Island.<sup>4</sup>

Of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (DOLSH) Sisters, Langmore states: “there was no ambiguity or uncertainty in the prescribed role of these early missionary sisters”.<sup>5</sup> Their role was highly gendered.

Bishop Navarre, in his first pastoral letter, acknowledged and succinctly summed up the unique role of the Sacred Heart Sisters on Yule:

*It is the sisters who give the stamp of sweetness, order and good management to newly-converted families... The care given to the ill is more assiduous, more tender ... The Missionary cannot take responsibility for everything. The Sisters, besides instructing the young girls, take care of the church, the chapel, the linen and altar ornaments ... all things that the numerous occupations of the Missionary do not allow him to do.*<sup>6</sup>

Bishop Navarre has no doubt as to who is “the Missionary”. It is the priest, whose primary purpose is to evangelise. The sisters are the help-mates, the auxiliaries, undertaking the ‘tasks which were too humble for the priests’. They shared fully in the generally austere conditions on the mission, especially in its early days. The first convent was described by Sister Madeline as:

*All the walls were leaves bound with vines ... the flooring is wood but all the planks are convex and retain the shape of a tree trunk split in two: ... the roof is also of leaves, the external doors are made of wood and the windows are only bamboo shutters through which we can see out. For furniture, a table, a what-not, three wooden stools and one chair for receiving visitors.*<sup>7</sup>

This was far removed from the grand church buildings Cardinal Moran was to help finance in Sydney, including the head house of the DOLSH Sisters at Kensington. Yet this type of housing is typical of coastal Papua-New Guinea. It allows for cooling sea breezes, is cheaply made and eminently suitable. It contrasts with the substantial European style building (labelled the orphan school) shown in a photo taken at the time of the visit of the

Lieutenant Governor, Sir Hubert Murray, and a party of parliamentarians in 1911 and used by the Sydney Catholic newspaper, *The Freeman's Journal* to illustrate an account of the visit. It was explained that in Papua it was the frequent custom to bury young infants with their dead mothers and many of the children in this photo had been saved by the Sisters from that fate. The outward Europeanization of the indigenous school children, all in their best attire is well evident. The Sisters were photographed in their dark blue habit, posed with Archbishop Navarre who had personally escorted the distinguished visitors on an inspection tour. The writer noted: "The beautiful church and the many schools, residences, workshops, etc. all the work of the priests and Brothers" which had so impressed the visitors". In this account, the work of the DOLSH Sisters was expressly teaching and with regard to "... the poor little half-castes ... are taken in hand by the Sisters and trained up to become useful workers and possibly many of them will form useful teachers to assist the Fathers in their work among the villagers."<sup>8</sup> Again it is the "Fathers" who are singled out for their "work".

Beatrice Grimshaw, an Irish travel writer of prodigious output, wrote her impressions of the Sacred Heart mission after her visit and which were published by the Catholic Truth Society in 1913. She described the Sisters as wearing a distinctive habit, 'a dark blue cotton robe, forget-me-not coloured veil streaming out under a huge convent hat [and] strong-nailed miners' boots':<sup>9</sup> a practical attire for women who were no strangers to mud but surely incredibly hot in the equatorial climate. The Sisters 'shared fully in the general austerity 'which characterized the Sacred Heart Mission, especially in its early days.<sup>10</sup>

The Sacred Heart Mission based on Yule relied on financial contributions from France and Belgium. The onset of war in Europe stopped these and by February 1915, the Australian Minister for External Affairs, Hugh Mahon, was notified that the mission was down to only a few weeks supply of food and the hundreds of orphans were in grave danger. Lieutenant Governor Murray immediately went to the mission himself and reported that though the situation was not quite as grave as stated, it was indeed serious.<sup>11</sup> Contributions then were sought from Australian communities through Australian Catholic newspapers.

The London Mission Society, a pioneer in giving women an independent status in the mission field had deemed Papua too dangerous for single women; the only LMS women there were missionary wives. The second group of women missionaries to arrive in Papua were sent by the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (AWMMS) to Dobu

in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands in 1892. A third group of single women sponsored by the (Anglican) Australian Board of Missions numbered 26 by 1914.

When Jeannie Tinney arrived at Dobu along with Eleanor Walker, she proudly declared herself “the first missionary sister to land in New Guinea”. Minnie Billing, who arrived in 1895, was immediately sent with Sister Tinney to visit the seven villages on Normanby about an hour’s row from Dobu. In her diary (available online) she mentions that Tinney broke the “Bread of Life before the natives”.<sup>12</sup> The Methodist women missionaries did more than the gendered work which the Catholic and Protestant had in common; they were free to travel and preach, leading church services. It was imperative that they learn the local language as quickly as possible. Only twenty days after her arrival Minnie was to open the school on her own and on 6 February, less than a month after arriving she wrote in her diary: “Yesterday I went for the first time alone in the boat to the villages. ‘Alone’ means no other white person, as I had one of the girls and the two boys to pull”.

All the women who were employed on the mission fields of Papua-New Guinea in this pre-war period, irrespective of their religious affiliation, shared much in common. Both Catholic and Protestant women were valued for the work they could do among the women and children of their mission stations, teaching domestic skills in particular and running boarding schools. Missionaries of all denominations were entrusted with a civilising role and there is abundant evidence that the women were most effective in this regard. A section of a letter of Sister Jane Tinney published in 1903, illustrates this well:

*In going to New Guinea, we went expecting to find things very different from what we had been used to, and prepared to meet trials and difficulties. That the natives were ignorant, superstitious, dirty, and scantily clothed only appealed to us to do our utmost by God’s help to raise them, and take the light of the Gospel to them. Eleven years ago, when we went first, five or six boys about the mission house wore lap laps, but with that exception, the people only wore their native dress, and we had to coax the women and girls to wear pinafores at all. Now there are over 120 on the mission station, all nicely dressed, and most of the village children wear their pinafores to school and church, while many of the men and women wear their print garments. I would gladly give another 10 years of my life to be privileged to again see God’s power manifested as it has been during the last 12 years. Any*

*sister going to New Guinea prepared to face trials and difficulties will find them more than compensated for in the joy of the Master's service.*<sup>13</sup>

One outstanding point of difference is the average length of service in Papua New Guinea of the missionary women; for almost all of the DOLSH Sisters it was a lifetime's service. The Methodists, Eleanor Walker and Jeannie Tinney, stayed 10 years and Sister Minnie 14 years; for most other Protestants women it was fewer years. The average length of service for the DOLSH Sisters was 23.9 years. Theirs was a life service; the longest serving Sister arrived in Papua in 1900 and remained there until her death in 1966 aged 90.

### **Why has so little been written about missionary nuns?**

Few historians have asked this; one is Hilary Carey. Two groups of Protestant European women, the missionary wives and lay women missionaries, have attracted most of the attention of historians. Their diaries, letters and even memoirs/memorials written post mortem by grieving husbands provide us with vivid and often highly personal accounts of experiences.<sup>14</sup> Carey maintains that "because the women were constrained within multiple layers of church and state authority, the social welfare work undertaken by missionary Sisters was rendered both invisible and dispensable" – reflecting the low status of religious women engaged as missionaries<sup>15</sup>

There is no better example of Carey's notion of the tendency of nuns to be rendered invisible – one might say to remain veiled in historical narratives than Australian newspaper reports of an interview with Brisbane's Archbishop Duhig who had travelled to Yule Island in 1925 to celebrate the Episcopal silver jubilee of Bishop de Boismenu. The Sacred Heart Sisters, with one exception are not mentioned. In *The Queenslander* Duhig is quoted as commenting: "One of the Sisters of the mission lives quite alone with them in the village as safe and as happy as she would be in any European community". This sentence was missing from other newspapers, including the Catholic paper *The Freeman's Journal*. One can only surmise that this would be a shocking revelation to Catholics and was censored. Duhig emphasised the evangelising role of the SVD priests: "With all their learning, these good priests were leading the simplest and most laborious of lives among their dusky flocks, whom they loved and who loved them deeply in return".<sup>16</sup>

## Conclusion

Catholic Mission Australia's statement on their website that: "We engage in mission when we proclaim our own faith through our words, actions and lives" is surely a mirror of the works of all those courageous women who endured privation, assaults to health, and even a dismissive secondary role to fulfil what they regarded as their mission in life. A recent *Compass* ABC programme told the inspirational stories of Australian Jesuits who went to India some 60 years ago: one of these explained that as missionaries 'we had something to give: we thought we had the answer – but we didn't have the answer.' This is a deeply personal acknowledgement that the mission efforts of the past were grounded in problematic philosophy, one that we can now critically examine with the benefit of hindsight.

I believe that the women who volunteered to work on the Papuan missions around the turn of the century, were in no doubt that they were missionaries, irrespective of formal recognition by their Church or not; they discharged their duty with an unwavering belief their labour was much needed. All denominations regarded their contribution to the social and physical welfare of the local people as indispensable. The high participation rate of women in missions is 'indicative of their rejection from other aspects of Australian social life. Well have missions been labelled the "first feminist movement"<sup>17</sup>.

## Notes

- 1 Clare Midgely, "Can Women be Missionaries? Envisioning Female Agency in the Early Nineteenth-Century British Empire", *Journal of British Studies*, vol 45, issue 2, Apr 2006, pp 335-358, p.338.
- 2 M.M.K.O'Sullivan, "Only if we're asked: Sisters of Charity Missions from Australia" in Mark Hutchinson and Geoff Treloar (eds), *This Gospel shall be Preached: Essays on the Australian Contribution to World Mission*, Sydney, 1998.
- 3 Anne O'Brien, "Spirituality and Work: Sydney Women, 1920-1960", *Australian Historical Studies*, 20, 2002, 373.
- 4 Father Verius and two Brothers arrived at Yule in 1885, from Thursday Island. Yule Island, about 500 acres in size, was some six hours by steamer from Port Moresby. By 1915 this mission has established 25 mission stations on the mainland.
- 5 Diane Langmore, "A Neglected Force: White Women Missionaries in Papua, 1874-1914", *Journal of Pacific History*, vol 20, no3, July 1982, pp 138-157, 141.
- 6 Quoted in Langmore, 142.
- 7 *Annales* 1887, 593, quoted in Langmore, 148.
- 8 *The Freeman's Journal* 27 July 1911, 9.
- 9 B. Grimshaw, *Adventures in Papua with the Catholic Mission*, CTS, Melbourne, 1913.

- 10 Langmore, 148.
- 11 *The Maitland Daily Mercury*, 5 Feb 1915, 4.
- 12 Sister Minnie (Billing), *Life and Work in Papua*, Sydney, 1930.
- 13 *Australian Christian Commonwealth*, 14 Aug 1903, 11. Jane Tinney was born in Ballarat in 1867 and arrived at Dobu in British New Guinea as a Methodist missionary in 1892. She had to resign owing to ill-health in 1902 and later on worked among Australian Aboriginals. Her diaries are available; see PMB 633.
- 14 Much of this material is now freely available to researchers through the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau.
- 15 Hilary Carey, "Subordination, Invisibility and Chosen Work: Missionary Nuns and Australian Aborigines C1900-1949", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol 13, issue 28, Oct 1998, 251-267, 251.
- 16 *The Queenslander*, 8 Aug 1925, 40.
- 17 Stuart Piggin in *This Gospel shall be Preached*, 19.

**LAND OF APOCALYPSE: JAMES MCAULEY'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE SPIRIT:  
THE FRENCH CATHOLIC MISSIONS OF THE SACRED HEART, KUBUNA AND  
YULE ISLAND, NEW GUINEA**

**Jean Page\***

**Abstract**

The Australian poet and aspiring, if polemic, public intellectual James McAuley was admitted to the Catholic faith in May 1952. He was 34. Testimonies from his notebooks, correspondence, essays and poems from that period suggest the significant role in his “conversion” of his encounter with the French Catholic Mission of the Sacred Heart in Kubuna, in his visits to New Guinea as lecturer at the Australian School of Pacific Studies (ASOPA). McAuley’s encounter with New Guinea, described as a “school of sanctity”, can be seen as the culmination of his ongoing dialectic in essays at that time on the spiritual condition and the loss of tradition in contemporary mid-twentieth century post-Christian society. He considered his own time to be part of a wider post-Renaissance epoch he named “modernity” (*The End of Modernity*, 1959). This paper examines these testimonies, including key poems, from 1951-1953 to show how McAuley’s view of what he saw as the ordinary world of New Guinea emerging into a materialist mid-twentieth century reinforced his dark vision of modernity. In particular the paper focusses on how McAuley saw the western Catholic tradition, as interpreted by the French Catholic mission in Kubuna, including its charismatic Archbishop Alain de Boismenu and the legendary mother-superior Marie Thérèse Noblet, as offering respite for the New Guinea people and, in the end, himself in a global post-colonial encounter with modernity.

McAuley was only 59 when he died in 1976. It’s surprising, even for someone well acquainted with McAuley to reckon, that in that relatively short life, dedicated to poetry, literature and public life, he was, as he admitted in his 1961 essay “My New Guinea” (MNG) “Bound to New Guinea concerns for 17 years” (22). This he confessed was “as a performing flea in Alf Conlon’s performing circus” (23). That “remarkable circus” was a succession of evolving institutions to which McAuley and other mainly Sydney University colleagues of Conlon had been initially co-opted for their war-time service.

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Conlon was in charge of the war-time Defence Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs (DORCA), based in Melbourne, which closer to the end of the war (early 1944) became the School of Civil Affairs (SCA), based in Canberra, responsible for training patrol officers for the Australian New Guinea Administration Unit (ANGAU) in preparation for New Guinea’s independence. The School would be transferred to Sydney in 1946 and renamed the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA).

McAuley was transferred into ASOPA in March 1946 to teach colonial government to trainee patrol officers. He worked in a team headed by anthropologists from the London School of Economics, Camilla Wedgwood and Lucy Mair. McAuley, though still young (27) was already establishing his reputation as a modern poet in Australia, coming to notice at this time through his involvement in the Ern Malley anti-modernist hoax poems. Though he had had some experience at DORCA assembling maps of New Guinea for the Australian defending forces, with the help of Mitchell Librarian Ida Leeson, he had little experience in anthropology or political science.

For this highly capable scholar of the classics, philosophy and modern English, the period from 1944 onward represented a steep learning curve in anthropology, cultural history and political philosophy. McAuley’s own reading on Traditional philosophers, encouraged by his Ern Malley collaborator Harold Stewart, also part of Conlon’s “circus,” would push his reading in the direction of medieval philosophy and theology—the church fathers Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, including through the philosopher and historian Étienne Gilson’s *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (1936) as well as the Austro-American political philosopher, Eric Voegelin’s *The New Science of Politics* (1952).

In his 17-year association with New Guinea between 1944 -1961 McAuley visited the northern Island probably 7 to 8 times, usually for one to two months at a time. He became strongly committed to the School’s objectives— “the “Ward policy” of reform and development” (MNG, 30) for the decolonisation of New Guinea. Because of his commitment to his work with New Guinea McAuley twice refused offers of, what would later be much coveted, academic appointments —from the University of Melbourne (c.1945-46) and the London School of Economics (1947).

His first contact with the French Mission of the Sacred Heart, Kubuna, 100 km north-west of Port Moresby, seems to have occurred in his first visit early in 1944, and in many subsequent visits until his last in February 1960. He resigned from ASOPA in 1961 after his eventual appointment to

academia as Reader in Poetry at the University of Tasmania in May 1961.

This paper draws from a reading of McAuley's public comments on New Guinea, development and the missions, in his essays and lecture notes. McAuley may have had a hand in writing, with his supervisor Lucy Mair, the undated teaching paper written after 1944 titled "Christianity and Western Civilisation" to be delivered to patrol officers preparing for their postings to New Guinea. It has a strong anthropological bent:

Thus Malinowski speaks of religious conceptualisations as "indispensable pragmatic figments without which civilisation cannot exist" [cited from M.J. Needham] and Raymond Firth concludes: "It is not possible for human society to exist without some forms of symbolic solutions which rest on non-empirical foundations.(1)

This would be followed by the observation: "Today Christianity no longer has their acknowledged primacy [...]"(2)

Some of this anthropological background, probably drawn from his earlier reading of the Traditionalist, or Perennial, philosophers René Guénon and A.K. Coomaraswamy, is reflected in McAuley's subsequent published essays on traditional society and their art written close to and after his conversion to Catholicism (between July 1951 and June 1952)— "A Traditional View of Art" (1951),<sup>1</sup> "Tradition, Society and the Arts" (1952) and his Commonwealth Literary Fund lecture "The Grinning Mirror" (1955). While one of those texts refers to Catholicism in Australia,<sup>2</sup> they don't refer to the missions directly. However, in their critique of modernity's anti-traditional tendency, there is sympathy for the life of traditional societies which McAuley was witnessing in his visits to New Guinea and especially the most frequently visited Catholic Mission of the Sacred Heart, "Florival" at Kubuna, and their nearby Mission at Yule Island. By the end of 1951 McAuley already seems to have visited New Guinea five times and the Missions at Kubuna and Yule Island four times.

McAuley's testimonial and farewell essay "My New Guinea" offers an overview of his time in the northern islands. In his first trip towards the end of World War II in early 1944, McAuley visited Manus Island, off northern New Guinea and commented on the resentment of the local Peri people of the Australian administration and also the Catholic missions:

Their frustrated longing and resentments turned them against the Catholic Mission too. To the Melanesian a religion is above all a technology: it is the knowledge of how to bring the community into the correct relation, by rites and spells, with the divinities and spirit beings and cosmic forces that can make or mar man's this-worldly

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wealth and well-being [...] If the Catholic missionaries had the “secret of the wealth” they were keeping it shut away from the people [...] (MNG, 24)

This he linked with the practice of the “Cargo Cult”—the throwing into the sea of all old forms of property, including the religion of the missionaries, in preparation to receive the “Cargo”—white man’s wealth.

A critique of contemporary secular approaches to development becomes apparent in his 1954 essay “What Must Be Developed” for the regional affairs magazine *United Asia*, 1954. President Truman’s proposal for development for the non-industrialised world—(“[...] Development promotes democracy [...] Human resources [...] now in the main latent [...] will emerge into a world-wide spring-time [...], 184) was criticised in the following words:

[...] a terrible price is exacted for development along the lines of Western modernism.”(184) [...] The world of industrial progress is a world of disinherited beings, cut off from the deepest sources of human satisfaction, restless and jangled, driven by unstilled cravings through a course of life without meaning or direction.[...]. (184)

McAuley’s essay echoes papal doctrine cautioning against capitalism, and probably reflects the fact that its author had already converted to the Catholic faith. His Notebooks show that McAuley would read encyclicals while visiting the Kubuna and Yule Island Missions. He argues that development for people of “different traditions”, having “religious conceptualisations”, was less likely to come from the purely secular, positivist realm than from one which encompassed greater understanding of the local and their difference. He argued for the need for:

[...] the loyal development from within of the wealth of these different traditions, [...] will proceed all the more effectively in the light of a real knowledge of and respect for other traditions.[...] (186)

The 27-year-old lecturer on governance first visited the French Mission of the Sacred Heart, Kubuna, in 1944 as part of his first trip to New Guinea. It clearly made a strong impression as it would be on the itinerary of many later visits. He would later note how:

The gaiety, charm, practical good sense and endurance which I found so conspicuously among the French missionaries, are more often than not, acquired and perfected at the price of pain and desolation. (MNG, 29)

In an unpublished article, dated 1961, for the Catholic magazine *Prospect*, McAuley offered a positive account of the missions in general: “There are plenty of truly admirable missionaries in New Guinea. It has been my good

fortune to have met some of them, to have seen a little of their work and to have been influenced by them.”(3)<sup>3</sup> An accumulation of encounters with Kubuna and Yule Island elicited a particularly positive personal response both to the Missions’ approach to development and in terms of McAuley’s own spiritual journey:

[...] I owe an incalculable spiritual debt to several missionaries in New Guinea, some still alive and some dead. [...] One of the latter was a person whom I never met except as a presence persisting in the mission, Mother Marie-Thérèse Noblet. [...] She] was the first head of the native order of sisters which Archbishop de Boismenu founded at the end of World War I as a direct response to the call of Benedict XV for the “nativisation” of missions. [...] (3-4)

He noted the Sacred Heart Missions’ precocity: “These long ago projects were followed only after World War II by the bigger and more prosperous Catholic missions in other parts of New Guinea”. (Ibid., 4)

In *My New Guinea* McAuley would describe Archbishop Alain De Boismenu as :

[...] the person in my experience who most completely exemplified “greatness” —an inspiring force of mind and will, large views, courage, intense affections and complete self-abnegation, cheerfulness, candour, a noble simplicity devoid of pretensions [...] And behind these qualities [...] a rare sanctity and unerring spiritual detachment. (MNG, 27)

Though retired and elderly, De Boismenu was still a powerful presence at the Kubuna and Yule Island Missions in the Mekeo district of New Guinea near Port Moresby which McAuley used to visit. McAuley’s Notebooks suggest that the young lecturer had met the Archbishop at least by 1949 but possibly earlier. The February 1949 Notebook records that he heard the mountain song of the region, attended the Kubuna Mission’s “sung mass and benediction” and met Archbishop de Boismenu. During that visit McAuley had already observed, at the mission, Pineau’s 1938 text<sup>4</sup> on the case for the beatification of Mother Superior Marie-Thérèse Noblet. In his next visit, in July-August 1951, McAuley would discuss with the Archbishop, as well as the Missions’ work, his own comprehensive reading over the past two years including on the Traditional philosophers, the ideas of the French Catholic Perennialist poet Paul Claudel, and also questions on the Christian faith that bore on McAuley’s decision to convert to Catholicism in July 1951. He would also look again at Pineau’s text on Noblet.

De Boismenu was McAuley’s chief link with the deceased and already legendary Mother Superior. Tales of the apparently demonic attacks upon her, of exorcisms including those performed by de Boismenu, her saintly stigmata and subsequent humble but impressive ministry in the Kubuna Mission, and her later candidacy for beatification, seemed to provide for McAuley the evidence, in modern times, of the miraculous and also the demonic such as had swayed the disciples in the Gospels:

[...] The life of Marie-Thérèse Noblet presents both believer and unbeliever with a startling and disconcerting challenge. It was the locus not only of divine action but of violent and outrageous demonic action.[...] (MNG, 28)

While such evidence was crucial to his conversion, McAuley would admit that such facts might “[...] not be in conformity with sober Anglo-Saxon good taste.” (MNG, 28) He would remark on the ironic turn in his spiritual life in New Guinea:

[...] If it was in the midst of Sir James Frazer’s speculations on the primitive that my early religious faith succumbed, it was in the midst of the actually primitive that it stirred and woke at last to a fuller and more assured life. (MNG, 28)

McAuley would dedicate to Mother Marie-Thérèse Noblet his next collection of poems, *A Vision of Ceremony* (1956), his first published as a confessed Catholic.

The importance both of New Guinea and the Kubuna Mission to McAuley’s decision to convert to Catholicism can be seen in his letter to his wife Norma written on 29 July 1951 at the mission during his recuperation there from malaria:

[...] As you know, for some time past, I have been drawn more and more into a serious consideration of the Catholic faith.[...]

I resolved to try my state of mind against a changed background and if possible make my final decision at Kubuna. [...]

Here in the Mission conviction is easier than in the world at large. The outsider comes into contact with a Catholicism that is something more than a question of Labour [sic] party politics or medical ethics or Pellegrini art. This Mission has been unusually gifted with persons of saintly life [...] Something of the radiance of true spirituality can be felt here. Moreover, the Mission has been the scene of some of those miraculous and supernatural manifestations which have attended the Church from the time of the Gospels [...] (Box 21, McAuley papers)

New Guinea, the Kubuna Mission, and the associated supernatural elements, offered an exotic backdrop necessary to his conversion – quite different to what might have been possible in predominantly secular and Protestant Australia. The “radiant” spiritual ambiance McAuley felt at the Mission is also conveyed in the poem “Kubuna” written at the Mission on 3 August 1951. The simplicity and intense focus on minute detail of the interior scene where he was recuperating, foreshadows his convalescent poems of the early 1970s written after treatment for cancer:

I draw attention to the allusion in stanza 2 to the quiet sister, one of two European sisters, who “had a saint once in her care.” That saint was Marie-Thérèse Noblet who died at Kubuna in 1930:

After long envenomed hours  
Sick with fever, aching head,  
To see a vase of fresh cut flowers,  
Clean pillows and a new-made bed.

*The quiet Sister clothed in grey,<sup>5</sup>  
Who had a saint once in her care,  
Clears the medicines away  
And lets in the sweet light and air.*

Through the shutters, open wide,  
Discreetly comes a scented breeze  
That tells of the rich world outside,  
Of green leaves and the citrus trees.

To tempt the body back to use  
With a sweet fresh water fish,  
A sauce and sprinkled lemon-juice,  
And a custard in a dish.

To sink into a dream of home  
Or propped in comfort, idly look,  
While the sheep of fancy roam,  
In a gold-illuminated book.

To see the Virgin aureoled,  
With little hand upraised to bless,

Holding Him who shall uphold  
All creations in their feebleness.

Kubuna, in your peaceful vale  
Lies earth’s peace, and something more:  
The suffering that does not fail,  
The joy of those that go before.

The gold-illuminated book in stanza 5 is perhaps a replica of the devotional Book of Hours containing liturgical texts, prayers and psalms. Stanza 7 depicts Kubuna as the idyllic haven for the practice and propagation of the Catholic faith in a culture where, in anthropological terms, the ritual life was still flourishing. McAuley was received into the Catholic faith in North Ryde, Sydney, the following year in May 1952 and his wife Norma not long after.

McAuley would maintain his strong interest in New Guinea and the work of the missions but, as a Catholic convert by the mid 1950s, 10 years after his first visit to New Guinea, would become involved in and occupied with Catholic politics in Australia in B.A. Santamaria’s struggle through his Catholic Social Studies Movement against communist elements in the trade unions. Ten years after his first visit to New Guinea, the then 37-year-old Sydney public servant and poet James McAuley came to Santamaria’s attention in a letter he wrote to the Sydney Morning Herald on 29 October 1954 attacking Prime Minister Evatt for blaming “disloyal Victorian party members” (anti-communist Catholic groupers) for poor election results for Labor. Santamaria conveyed his thanks to the unknown McAuley through their mutual friend, the industrial lawyer Hal Wootton. McAuley would write to Santamaria in early 1955 suggesting the idea of a Bishop’s statement on relations between Australia and New Guinea. I don’t know if anything eventuated in a statement. Thereafter McAuley would become involved in the acrimonious split between the ALP and what would become the mainly Catholic anti-communist DLP. The years between 1955 and 1961 reflect a stepping back from public pronouncements on New Guinea. This was not entirely of McAuley’s own accord: as a public servant he had been cautioned by the then Minister for Territories, and also aspiring poet, Paul Hasluck against making public statements or publishing on New Guinea questions.

The influence of New Guinea is clearly present in McAuley’s poetic production of the time, the celebratory poems of the 1950s following his conversion, notably the apprehension of the bird of paradise as a

manifestation of the Holy Spirit (“To the Holy Spirit,” 1953).<sup>6</sup> The long narrative poem *Captain Quiros* written between 1958 and 1960 in which he depicts the Portuguese and Spanish encounter with the Pacific islands, notably the Solomon and Vanuatu Islands, in their early 17<sup>th</sup> century exploratory voyages, is saturated with his experience of New Guinea, its people, their customs and its nature. Arguably, his witnessing of the missions’ incorporation of local customs and arts in their rituals is reflected in the poet’s description of Quiros’ attempt to set up an order of the Holy Spirit in one of the islands (still named Espiritu Santo) of what is now Vanuatu: “A cross made of the native citrus wood/ Was planted by a flower-decked altar-frame[...].” (*Collected Poems* 1936-1970, 157). The explorer Quiros’ struggle with officials in the Church of Rome to pursue his utopian goal to find *Terra Australis*, is also tinged with Santamaria’s contemporary battle with the NSW Catholic hierarchy of Cardinal Gilroy on the role of the Church in giving political guidance to its parishioners, a matter which would be taken to the Vatican in 1957.

McAuley’s unpublished draft essay for *Prospect*, written in 1961 probably after he had left ASOPA, still reflects his ongoing concern about New Guinea and its missions:

I agree that Australia is in no position to stand out of the stream of events and enforce a different kind of solution for Papua and New Guinea [...]. The most important aspect is the future of the Christian missions. I shall speak only of the Catholic missions because I know them better and can exercise a sort of family frankness about them; but much of what I say has some application to the work of other Christian bodies [...] (1-2)

He saw missionary work in the Pacific islands, as: “subject to two kinds of false imaging which make the reality pretty remote and impenetrable to the distant observer[...].” Such imaging came from:

[...] the hostile caricaturing of missions from the secular side [and] resentment [on the part of colonial settlers] of the missions for rebuking greed and exploitation(2)

[...] romantic illusions about the paradisaical idyll of native traditional life, which missionaries are supposed to disrupt by injecting a sense of sin. (3)

McAuley saw the successful missionary as one who had had “all sentimentality burnt out of him” (3). He would argue the need for “a renewal of de Boismenu’s kind of generous, imperious, “premature” daring” and

propose four avenues<sup>8</sup> for such renewal:

1. prayer, as the highest action — he noted how de Boismenu had succeeded in “luring a flock of enclosed Carmelite nuns to his headquarters at Yule Island” (5)
2. “intellectual enabling” via modern scientific sociology” (mainly social anthropology)(6)
3. the proclamation of the Church’s social doctrine, via Bishop’s Statements, relating to labour, land, economic organisation for commercial purposes, marriage law, urbanisation, political rights and duties, marriage, citizenship standards of good citizenship and neighbourliness (7)
4. training secular agents in political parties, trade unions, the public service, co-operatives and the professions (8)

Impediments to Mission success were identified in some “authoritarian-paternalist approaches,” (8), “the financial semi-starvation of the mission school-system” (8-9) including through an Australian “policy weighted towards secularism” (9), and “the appalling ratio between their resources and the work that has to be done.” (9)

In McAuley’s writing, there is a persistent sense of contrast between evident and rich spiritual remnants in New Guinea and what he saw as the desiccating secular influence of the west, representing a tragedy for New Guinea. McAuley lamented the “disintegration of traditional cultures,” (MNG, 30) and the emergence of a “sterile secularism” and “disintegrated liberalism”(31). His farewell essay was, in many ways, an admission of failure as much as a declaration of concern: “Very often I have been invaded by a feeling of the sterility of our contact with New Guinea. So much courage [...] so much good work [...] yet nothing seems to take deep root, and nothing flowers.” (MNG, 31)

The literary critic Robert Dixon,<sup>9</sup> has identified, in McAuley’s critique of modernity’s effects on traditional New Guinea, a link between dystopian elements in the observation both of colonialism and the suburban. Dixon argues that, in this respect, McAuley shared the perspectives not only of English “culturalist” critics of the 1930s and 1940s such as F.R. Leavis (*Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*, 1930) and T.S. Eliot (*Notes Toward the Definition of Culture*, 1948) but also of the Frankfurt School theorists Adorno and Horkheimer, in their commentary about mass culture in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944).<sup>10</sup> Dixon argues:

A remarkable feature of this attack on modernity is that McAuley

could be speaking equally about contemporary western societies, or about westernised societies in the third world. Suburb and colony come together on the common ground of modernity. [...] <sup>11</sup>

In McAuley's essays, modern New Guinea is Australian suburbia beheld like an unfamiliar self in the grinning mirror of colonialism.<sup>12</sup>

McAuley's New Guinea experience also contributed to his developing poetics. His search for a rich traditional symbolism, seen in his early essays on the traditional arts, drove his initial enquiry into traditional societies, their art and the western traditionalism of the Catholic church, as a remedy for contemporary positivism and scepticism. This was one of the elements behind his conversion, as he admitted in his second letter from Kubuna to his wife Norma in Sydney on 27 August 1951:

Another prompting that gradually worked upon me came from art and literature. I saw more and more clearly that the art that I most admired and loved was rooted in a spiritual tradition. From my own experience of creative inspiration I could not but acknowledge that the way one's mind works naturally under inspiration is incompatible with all shallow, sceptical and merely sophisticated views of life. (4)

New Guinea and the Catholic experience offered the poet more than a rationally approached symbolic mythology. In McAuley's elegy in 1953 for Archbishop de Boismenu in the poem "New Guinea" it is clear that McAuley's own encounter involved an apprehension of the spiritual in New Guinea's "actually primitive" physical and cultural world. Perhaps more than any of his rational accounts, the poem summarises the magnitude of McAuley's encounter, the "wordless revelation", through that of Boismenu and the other Catholic missionaries, with the place in that northern island in which "the doors of the spirit open:"

Bird-shaped island, with secretive bird-voices,  
Land of apocalypse, where the earth dances,  
The mountains speak, *the doors of the spirit open*,<sup>13</sup>  
And men are shaken by obscure trances.

The forest-odours, insects, clouds and fountains  
Are like the figures of my inmost dream,  
Vibrant with untellable recognition;  
*A wordless revelation is their theme.*

The stranger is engulfed in those high valleys,  
Where mists of morning linger like the breath  
Of Wisdom moving on our specular darkness.  
Regions of prayer, of solitude, and death.

Life holds its shape in the modes of dance and music,  
The hands of craftsmen trace its patternings;  
But stains of blood, and *evil spirits, lurk*  
Like cockroaches, *in the interstices of things*.

We that in the land begin our rule in courage,  
The seal of peace gives warrant to intrusion;  
But then *our grin of emptiness* breaks the skin,  
Formless dishonour spreads its proud confusion.

Whence that deep longing for an exorcizer,  
For Christ descending as a thaumaturge  
Into his saints, as formerly in the desert,  
Warring with demons on the outer verge.

Only by this can life become authentic,  
Configured henceforth in eternal mode:  
Splendour, simplicity, joy—such as were seen  
In one who now rests by his mountain road.

(James McAuley, *My New Guinea*, 1953, *Collected Poems*, 1936–70)

The “New Guinea” of De Boismenu and his witness, the implicit author McAuley, thus describes a fertile land of the imaginary. The poem’s scenario reflects the heroic missionary encounter with a rich and strange otherworld of “specular darkness” where the witnessing of “evil spirits, [...] lurk[ing] [...] in the interstices of things” was still a literal possibility. The poem also foreshadows the sterilising impact of secular influences, “the grin of emptiness” of the West of which, both the Australian administration, colonists and the missionaries (though perhaps less) in the northern island, were also part. For De Boismenu (1870-1953) and Marie-Thérèse Noblet (1889-1930) New Guinea had been a “school of detachment and sanctity” (MNG, 27) as it also became for their acolyte James McAuley.

I hesitate to assess McAuley’s ability to judge or evaluate the missions in New Guinea. He was new both to anthropology and to Catholicism, his

conversion largely thanks to the Sacred Heart Missions' special charismatic influence as well as the impact of place and culture. But he came to know some of the missions as an outsider and two missions, increasingly, as a sympathiser and supporter. The extracts from his life and writing presented here offer facets about those New Guinea missions as viewed in the period immediately after World War II, and their particular, perhaps inordinate significance, for the emerging poet's own spiritual re-orientation in his dual encounter with modernity both in New Guinea and at the same time in Australia. This, in turn, would contribute to his engagement in political and literary culture including the setting up of the literary and general affairs magazine *Quadrant* over which McAuley would have a guiding role almost until his death in 1976.

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**Notes**

- 1 The essay’s title would become “Beauty, Use and Meaning” in the collection *The End of Modernity* (1959)
- 2 James McAuley, “The Grinning Mirror,” (1955), *The End of Modernity*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1959
- 3 Unpublished draft article “Missions and the Coming Crisis in New Guinea”
- 4 A. Pineau, *Marie-Thérèse Noblet*, Issoudoun, 1935
- 5 Writer’s italics
- 6 The poet saw New Guinea as belonging to the spiritual order of the Bird of Paradise, “Missions and the Coming Crisis in New Guinea” (5)
- 7 “Missions and the Coming Crisis in New Guinea”.
- 8 McAuley qualified: “[...]such compression might make me seem more confident and dogmatic than I really am [...]” “Missions and the Coming Crisis in New Guinea,” (5)
- 9 Robert Dixon, “James McAuley’s New Guinea”
- 10 Robert Dixon, 158.
- 11 Ibidem, 158.
- 12 Ibidem, 174
- 13 Writer’s italics

**MISSION: FROM BRINGING TO DISCOVERING THE LIGHT.  
A PERSONAL JOURNEY**

**Ennio Mantovani\***

**Abstract**

The paper narrates the life journey of a missionary who went to Papua New Guinea in 1962 to bring the Light where there was darkness and discovered and allowed himself to be enriched by a Light that was already present. The paper begins with the academic missionary formation that undergirds his journey and continues with the experiences in Papua New Guinea that influenced his missionary methods. Out of this method the author highlights only two elements, the lay centred church structures and the inner dialogue with the religion of the people among whom he was living. In the conclusion the author asks whether this fragment of personal history can teach him something new as he is now living in Australia.

**Academic missionary formation**

The personal journey that provides the topic of my presentation today began in 1952 with my studies in philosophy and theology at St. Gabriel near Vienna, one of the major seminaries of the SVD (*Societas Verbi Divini*, Society of the Divine Word) in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

In 1889 St. Arnold Jansen,<sup>2</sup> our founder, had opened this new major seminary of which he became dean of studies till his death in 1909. Integral part of the curriculum Arnold Janssen had worked out for his missionaries was ethnology, sociology, linguistics, and missiology. As far as I know, that was unique in the Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In those years, the interaction between theology and social sciences did not go beyond the missionary methods of acculturation and accommodation. The local cultures were used to sugar coat the introduction of Western Christianity. Now I realize that the seed planted by my Founder needed time to grow. And grow it did.

Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt,<sup>3</sup> who had been sent by Arnold Janssen to the state university of Berlin where he studied linguistics, came back to lecture at

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St. Gabriel.<sup>4</sup> In the field of anthropology he was a culture historian, very interested in the study of the cultures of primal people.<sup>5</sup> To that purpose he founded the Anthropos Institute which was dedicated to the study of these people all over the world. He collected the material on these people in 12 volumes of 1000 pages each under the title *Ursprung der Gottesidee* (Origin of the idea of God). Wilhelm Schmidt infused in his students and co-workers a respect for the primal people. When I arrived in St. Gabriel in 1952, Wilhelm Schmidt was in Switzerland where he and the Anthropos Institute had taken refuge from Nazism.<sup>6</sup>

In those days primal people were called primitives and, unfortunately, were regarded as such. My professor of ethnology at St. Gabriel was Paul Schebesta, a co-worker of Wilhelm Schmidt and member of the Anthropos Institute. What struck and formed me was not the theory of culture-history but the respect he had for the pigmies among whom he had done extensive field research. For him they were intelligent people from whom we could learn.

St. Gabriel for me is equivalent to knowledge of and respect for the cultures and religions of primal people.

After my ordination to the priesthood in 1958, I was sent by my General Superior, Fr. Johannes Schütte, to further studies in missiology and anthropology which I interpreted as missions from the point of view of social studies. The professors at the Gregorian University in Rome dealing with social and religious studies shared the same attitude to primal people as my professors in St. Gabriel. One of these professors, Fr. Joseph Götz SJ, greatly influenced me. I became aware of the inner link between culture and religion. Besides, for the first time I studied in depth the cultures of the planters and their religion. What the West and the Church condemned as superstition was the religion of a culture radically different from the biblical one. One needed to understand the culture to be able to understand and appreciate the religion.

Looking back at my formation, I am certain that I had received the best preparation for my life in PNG. First of all, I was convinced that the people I would meet would be as intelligent and as honest as myself. If I would encounter customs that seemed illogical or morally wrong, most probably it would be a sign of my ignorance; a sign that I was missing something important in their culture; that I needed to do more research.

Secondly, I was convinced that culture and religion belong together and that if the former changes the latter needs to change as well. If I discovered changes in the religion, I needed to study the changes in the culture that

caused them. It could well be that it was not sin that caused them, as St Paul had stated, but a sign of deep, living religiosity from which I might learn.

### **Experiences in Papua New Guinea.**

From the Gregorian University I went to Papua New Guinea, more exactly, the Australian Territory of Papua and New Guinea. For the Roman Catholic Church at that time it was clear that outside the Church there was no salvation and therefore the task of the missionaries was to convert and to baptize. We missionaries were there to civilize and Christianize.

I arrived in PNG in 1962 and flew into the Highlands, into the Chimbu Province, to Koge for my introduction into the missionary life. When I arrived a Pig Kill festival was in full swing. Thanks to my studies, I recognized it immediately for what it was: the greatest expression of the culture of the Simbu. The one who had discovered the Simbu in 1934, Alphons Schäfer,<sup>7</sup> was an SVD missionary coming from St. Gabriel as myself and, as a consequence, had a great respect for the culture of the people. The Lutheran Church condemned the Pig Kill as pagan -- as ancestors' worship. Schäfer had those who wanted to become Catholic discuss the festival and then report to him on its nature. A couple of days later they reported back on their decisions and only a couple of elements were rejected but the bulk of it was accepted.<sup>8</sup> The Pig Kills described by the anthropologists in the Simbu and Whagi valley, are these celebrations salvaged by the SVD missionaries.

It was a turning point for the mission. The founder of the PNG mission was Fr. Eberhard Limbrock, a veteran SVD from China who prior to going to the mission - to China - had to sign a document in which he swore never to raise the question of the ancestors and, more yet, never to allow the people to do so under pain of excommunication. The rituals in the Highlands were not condemned as Ancestor worship – the opinion of the Lutherans – but were discussed by the community that decided on the nature of the same, viz. that it was not ancestor worship. It was a sign of respect for the culture and for the people and their judgment that this decision was accepted. They might have been still in the Stone Age, but they were respected as intelligent and honest people. I was able to witness, be involved in, and study a dozen of these Pig Festivals.

After my arrival, on Pentecost Sunday, I was asked to celebrate the High Mass in which the melodies of the Latin parts, Kyrie, Gloria, Creed, and Agnus Dei were local and accompanied by local hand drums.

The seed planted in St Gabriel by our Founder was bearing fruits.

### **Pastoral experiences**

I began my ministry in Dirima in the Gumine District of the Simbu. Watching my parish priest baptizing babies, I noticed that sometimes he would ask the first person he saw to be god-parent. For me it did not make sense: the law was fulfilled but its spirit was ignored. Besides, I was influenced by the School of missiology of Louvain according to which the aim of the missionary effort was to establish the Church and for me baptism, the birth of a new member, was a communitarian event to be celebrated by the whole Christian community. I promised myself that I would change that.

Once I learned the local language, I began leading a catechumenate together with a catechist. At that time, in the Highlands there was a movement towards Christianity. People wanted to be baptized. It was not we missionaries inviting the people but the other way around. It would be naïve to believe that people came only for religious motives. That called for long pre-catechumenates and catechumenates proper.

When time came for baptism, I wanted to follow their cultural social structure and have somebody who was recognized as leader in the community to take responsibility for the Christian life of those to be baptized in his community. My parish priest heard of that and forbade this “innovation”. I was working in his parish and I respected his authority but I was just biding my time.

While still assistant to the parish priest of Dirima, I was given the responsibility to open up the area to the South in the Nomane District. The Lutherans had a main station further South at Nomane and Yobai, the location where I eventually started a main station was between Nomane and Dirima.<sup>9</sup> An advantage was that I had studied the missionary method of the Lutherans initiated by Christian Keysser.<sup>10</sup> It had been the subject of the written essay for my licentiate degree. The method was anthropologically and pastorally sound. I admired it and I learned from it. In a time when in PNG sometimes the tension between the denominations caused physical violence, my knowledge and admiration led to a mutual respect.

My attitude towards the people was put to the test by those who wanted to become Christians. Visiting the many schools, the pre-catechumenates in the bush while at Dirima, I noticed that for the people in the pre-catechumenate, only the bishop and the priests belonged to the church. I blamed the poor training of the catechists who taught them.

When I began the catechumenate at Yobai, I made sure to explain to

the catechumens that those baptized would belong to the Church. However, when later I asked them who belonged to the church the answer was: the bishop and the priest. There was nothing I could do to get them to change their opinion. The only concession, from time to time, was to add the catechist to the list.

It was frustrating. I began questioning my teaching ability, my proficiency in the language, my understanding of their culture and so on. On the other hand, the catechist with whom I always worked was saying the same things the same way; hence, it was not only a question of language. They were intelligent and honest, why that answer? One day the penny dropped. I told myself, put yourself in their place; sit with them. Whom do they see up front preaching and conducting the liturgy? The priest or the bishop. They were too honest to lie to me, hence their answer.

I decided there and then to change the structure in our Christian community following the social structure of their society. I watched for the leaders among the catechumens and once I found them, a male and a female for each of their clanic units, I explained to the people that from now on they would be their leaders. I had them baptised by the Bishop. It was the very first baptism in our area and only the leaders were baptized. A week or so later these leaders presented the catechumens of their group for baptism and took responsibility for them.

While in Dirima I was thinking only about male leaders, but now I chose women as well. Once talking with my main catechist who was also my teacher in cultural matters, I asked him about the girls' initiation. He told me: "I do not know anything about women's matters." I was shocked and said: "How can we lead if we do not know anything about half our community?" He replied: "That's how it is. But you as White Man do not really fit into our culture. You can ask my wife; she might talk to you." Mol, his wife became the main female leader on the main station and my adviser in women's matters.<sup>11</sup>

The leaders were responsible for the Christian life in their community. People were not used to it and came to me for decisions but I politely would send them back to their leaders. They had to decide and I respected their decisions. I was amazed at their wisdom. If people complained about a decision, on Sunday they could present their case to the meeting of the leaders of the various communities and they would decide and then report to me their decisions. I was applying the principles I had learned in St. Gabriel: subsidiarity and solidarity. Solidarity was very important: they had

to find their way but I needed to support them.

As far as I know, our parish was the first to adopt lay ministries and especially female lay leaders. Eventually lay ministries were introduced everywhere. However, it did not grow from the bottom up; it was introduced from above. It did not necessarily express a new understanding of Church but a new form of clericalism.

I introduced female leaders because I had witnessed their role of authority in the community. We Westerners know only the male type of authority and we miss the subtle but real authority of the women. Eventually female anthropologists<sup>12</sup> would study this phenomenon and write about it, proving the great Malinowski<sup>13</sup> wrong. He had not noticed this female authority.

As already mentioned, I was influenced by the missiological school of Louvain and my aim was to establish a viable Church to continue the mission of Christ. With the institution of the leaders and the parish structure supporting them, for the moment I had reached the limits of what we could do regarding the self-governing. The Christian life of the community was in capable hands and they only needed my support in the background.

At the first Orientation Course for new missionaries organized by the Melanesian Institute in 1969, I had a chance to go beyond Yobai. As the first lecture of the Orientation Course I presented to the participants two models of parish structure; the traditional priest centred one and the people centred one. It was the one I had developed at Yobai.

Fr. Jim Knight my neighbour, took part in that first OC and he introduced the same structure in his parish and when I was elected dean, I presented the new structure to the parish priests and eventually the whole deanery adopted it.

## **Social context**

In the fifties, during my studies, PNG people were regarded and described as materialist, trying to get material goods through religious means. Anthropologists wrote about the cargo movements in PNG. Missionaries in coastal areas were at a loss on how to cope with the situation. The newly discovered Highlands did not have cargo movements, but that did not mean that the cargo mentality was not there.

As already mentioned, if a people acts in ways that seem not those of intelligent human beings, then, most probably, we are missing something very important in their life. To make a long story short, the people were not looking for material things but for what those things meant; they were looking for human dignity. They wanted to overcome the obvious social,

political and economic inferiority caused by the presence of the government and the mission. The term they used for the white people, 'masta', - master/ruler/lord - gives already an idea of the situation. White people were masters and they were servants.

People were not interested in a Christ who showed them the way to heaven. Jesus had to show them the way on how to live here on earth; he had to be the answer to their questions, to their desire for a better life. I was convinced that every progress in our communities, be it in education, health care, economic development to have lasting success, had to be based on their Christian faith, had to be seen as an aspect of their Christian responsibilities.

It is in this context that I saw the movement towards Christianity. I knew that people saw baptism as a way to get education, better health, and economic development, all steps towards their goal of human dignity. I regarded this as something positive and healthy, providing a good starting point; however, I saw my task as a missionary not in doing things for the people but in helping them to find ways on how to help themselves. For me doing things for the people was a way of keeping them in dependence. I had also to keep a balance between denying them the hope for a better future and, on the other extreme, fostering false expectations.

I remember the reaction of one of the young catechists at Yobai to a publication describing the catechists as "boi bilong pater" as servant of the priest. He threw away the publication in anger and declared: I am nobody's servant, I am co-worker with Christ. He had found his dignity and identity in continuing the mission of Christ. I was very pleased about the outburst. It proved that Christ for him, was the answer to his identity problems, that I, as missionary, by bringing Christ was helping the people find their dignity. Christianity was not destroying their culture, but giving back to people their pride and dignity.<sup>14</sup>

I remember another case. In one of the outstations of Yobai people had started a business project that was going quite well. One day trouble struck and I was invited to help them to solve the problem. A leader told me: in the catechumenate we learned to care for each other, forgetting our clanic animosities. We learned to trust and help each other. You, however, insisted that we accept as members of our project also non Christians. They think only about themselves, they cheat, and steal. Allow us to throw out the non Christians and the project will flourish again. I was surprised and pleased by their evaluation of the situation. For them Jesus was also the answer to their desire of economic development. I replied: now you understand the

importance of what Jesus told you: teach to everyone what I have thought you. Try to convert your brothers to the way of Jesus. (By the way the project survived the crises and prospered again.)

The new structures in the Christian community making possible the self-governing of the people were embraced so readily, because they were answering their need for self-esteem; because they were a visible sign of their acquired dignity.

### **Self-supporting**

A Church had to be self-supporting as well. To succeed, however, the project had to be based on their new identity in Christ and on their culture.

Yobai had a collection at each Sunday Mass. Sunday was the day we celebrated the Eucharist, the “thanks giving” and Sunday became our thanksgiving day. At the beginning of the Mass I would remind people of what had happened during the week in the gardens and in the village. They knew from their traditions confirmed by the teaching in the catechumenate that the food of the garden, the fat pigs, the healthy children were sign of God’s generosity. Now they needed to recognise that generosity and thank for it their cultural way, which means through actions. The offering was their cultural way of saying thank you. It was an expression of the principle of reciprocity which was basic for Melanesian cultures.<sup>15</sup>

In the same spirit to the Sunday collection we added a yearly one. They did not have money but everybody was smoking using what we called ‘stick tobacco’ which they bought in the local stores. Besides, they were physically strong and healthy. When I asked them for a yearly contribution of one stick of tobacco they laughed, and said they could give me more than one. Within two years we became independent from Dirima regarding the payment of the catechists. Besides we agreed that every Tuesday they would work for free on the station. We never had paid workers. What we built ourselves was a sign of hope for a development of which they were proud and which they could reach through education and hard physical work.

### **Cultural and religious experiences**

The Yobai people were planters; digging stick cultivators.<sup>16</sup> In their gardens, they cultivated tubers using digging sticks. When asked, they told me that they vaguely remember a Sky Being, Yani Gelua, but that was all. A classical case as described by St. Paul in his letter to the Romans: “... these people have no excuse; they knew God and yet they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but their argument became futile and their

uncomprehending minds were darkened.” (Rom 1:20-1)

We missionaries had come to remind them of the stories of creation, urging them to give up their present superstitions. The catechumens were taught about creation, about the fall and the need for a redeemer, Jesus, who eventually died on the cross to atone for our sin.

The Simbu people, however, from being gatherers living from what nature freely provided, a few thousand years earlier had become planters, making gardens to find their living. They had changed their culture, hence, their religion, their religious symbolism had necessarily changed.

Creation is a religious symbol pointing to the care of Somebody who acts like a father does, but who is as different from him as the sky is from the ground. It expresses the religious experience of being cared for without human intervention. When we pray we extend our hand to receive the gifts; the daily bread we ask for.

The Simbu, however, do not find their survival in what the forest provides without human intervention. They have to work hard under the hot sun to prepare the gardens, cutting the trees with their stone axes, burning the undergrowth, digging the ground with their poles and sticks, planting the tubers, tending them and eventually harvesting. Their position is not looking up to heaven, but bending their aching backs to the ground. The creation symbolism, the free gift, simply does not make sense anymore; it does not express the way they find their survival.

The question for me as a missionary was: Do the Simbus experience God’s care in their life and what are the symbols pointing to that experience?

What struck me in the PNG stories, gardening was not the result of human ingenuity, but the result of a teaching by a more-than-human. More-than-human, for us Westerners could be translated as “uncreated” being. Their stories deal with religious experiences and not with philosophical reflections on the same. They state facts. So it is.<sup>17</sup>

A symbol that stood out for me was that of a brother who realizes that his family is missing that element that could make their life worth living; however, they were not aware of their pitiful situation. That brother not only knows about the situation but knows also how to overcome it and has the power to do it. He not only has the power to do it but also, as a matter of fact, cares so much for his people that he acts on it. He asks to be killed and buried. Out of his grave comes the symbol of the full life; that element that makes the life of everybody worth living.

I needed to give a name to this figure in their stories and I found the term “dema” among the Marind-Anim of Western Papua; however, I redefined it

to mean “the figure who asks or accepts to be killed and buried, and out of whose grave comes the symbol of the full life for the community.”

For me as a Christian, the Dema helps me to deepen my understanding and relationship to Christ. Christ is both my brother and more than just that. There is no sin to atone but simple and pure love; pure altruistic concern. Christ is not sacrificed, offered to God, but he freely offers his life to give us access to the true life.

If today we don't find access to that true life, it is because the channels through which that life flows are clogged or broken. They need to be mended. The channels are the relationships to the members of the cosmic family. The family comprises not only humans but flora and fauna, and environment as well.

The Simbu Pig Festival which I mentioned at the beginning is the making present of that violent death in situations where the “true life” is ebbing away. The pig takes the place of the “Dema”. The full life is restored. The Dema continues to exist in the giving of himself for the life of all.

One can see a link with the Eucharist: the bread is Christ in the act of giving life.

## **Conclusion**

My journey as a missionary began by trying to bring the Light where I expected to find darkness ending by discovering and being enriched by the Light that was already present.

I discovered these changes in the religious experience and expression of the people because I gave attention to the cultural changes which had taken place among them.

Culture is an adaptive system and hence needs to change to cope with the changing environment. If culture changes religion and its symbolism need to change as well. In the West we are experiencing great cultural changes. Are there changes in our religion as well?

Since I came back to Australia I heard complaints of decline in Church attendance among the young. Parents complain that their children do not go to church anymore.

To expect the subculture of the young to express their religiosity the same way as my generation does, would be culturally naïve. Traditional symbols, traditional rituals and liturgy, do not speak to them the way they do to me and my generation.

I do not believe that the solution consists in teaching them the traditional

ways, in encouraging them to come back to the traditions in which we older generation grew up. That's what the missionaries did with the planters in PNG.

I agree with their parents that their children are good, honest people. I admire their honesty, I am challenged by their commitment to justice; however, their way of expressing their relationship to the Ultimate is definitely different from the traditional one.

I trust in the Spirit who is leading us towards the full truth. In solidarity we need to support them; however, it is their generation that has to develop the rituals, the liturgy that express their relationship to our common Father and to Christ. It cannot be imposed from above.

There is another field that I regard as relevant. I learned to distinguish between the symbol and the signified. To hold on to a traditional symbol might not be necessarily a sign of religiosity; one might miss the signified. The fact that it was valid in the past in no guarantee that it is so today.

While keeping my Western need for facts that can be tested, I learned the power of the symbols. For me, the symbols are more powerful than the historical facts.

Unfortunately, in our Western tradition – that's the only one I can talk about – we often made symbols into concepts; into facts. Creation is not anymore a symbol of love and care but a concept, the grasping of a fact. We enquire about stories of creation and not about experiences of being cared for. The vertical symbolism – heaven, mountain, high tree, etc. – for us westerners are concepts i.e. facts. They are not expression of the otherness of the One who cares for us, who is as different from our human father as the sky above is from the muddy ground on which we walk. The Chinese rites controversy is a sad case in point. Once they become philosophical concepts, historical facts they become tenets of faith on which depends our eternal salvation. Galileo had to deny the results of his scientific research to save his soul, as the Church probably intended, or his skin, as he saw it. The long opposition to Darwin's theory of evolution seems to indicate that we did not learn much since the Galileo case. I repeat, I am a Western and I need testable facts, however, I learned that my culture misses another very important aspect of reality: the symbols; symbolism.

In the Bible we hear about those famous women who were barren and then through a miracle gave birth to the various heroes who originated and later saved Israel. Historical testable facts or powerful symbols reminding us that God cares for us, and that for God nothing is impossible; that we can fully trust in him?

As a missionary, I hope that I helped the people on their journey to God. If I can hope for that, I am quite sure that my encounter and inner dialogue with the cultures and religions of the PNG people, and of the Simbu in a special way, helped me to better know myself and it deepened my faith in the One we call eternal Love and in the One who loved us so much as to give his life so that we might obtain the true, full life.

## Endnotes

- 1 *100 Jahre Missionshaus St. Gabriel. 1889-1989* Mödling: Verlag St. Gabriel, 1989.
- 2 Bornemann, Fritz. *Father Arnold Janssen* Manila: Arnoldus Press, 1975.
- 3 Brandewie, Ernest. *When Giants Walked the Earth. The Life and times of Wilhelm Schmidt SVD*. Freiburg (Switzerland): University Press, 1990.
- 4 Wilhelm Schmidt is better known for his work as an anthropologist but the results of his linguistic research are outstanding as well. The Austronesian Language group, linguistically so relevant for our part of the world, is a result of Schmidt's study of the Mon-Khmer languages of Southeast Asia, and languages of Oceania and Australia. This study led him to hypothesize the existence of a broader Austric group of languages, of which the Austronesian language was one.
- 5 Primal people are those who express their religious experiences through primal religions. Primal, for me, gives back the dignity to the bearers of the term. As Turner states "Primal conveys two ideas: that these religious systems are in fact the most basic or fundamental religious forms in the overall religious history of mankind and that they have preceded and contributed to the other great religious systems. In other words, there are important senses in which they are both primary and prior; they represent a common religious heritage of humanity." (Turner 1977:28). My universal religion, Christianity - the opposite to primal in Harold Turner's classification - uses symbols first developed by these people. By studying their cultures and religions - two aspects of their life - I can better understand my own Christian religion. Turner, Harold. "The Primal Religions of the World and Their Study" in Victor C. Hayes (ed.) *Australian Essays in World Religions*. Bedford Park: AASS, 1977.
- 6 The Anthropos Institute publishes the journal *Anthropos. International Review of Anthropology and Linguistics*. In 2005 the Anthropos Institute St. Augustin Germany has published a CD: *100 Years. Index 1906-2005*. For the history of the journal see: Rivinius, Karl Josef. *Im Dienst der Mission and der Wissenschaft. Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Zeitschrift Anthropos*. Fribourg (Switzerland): Academic Press, 2005.
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- 8 Schäfer, Alfons. "Christianized Ritual Pig-killing," *Catalyst* 11, 213-223.
- 9 About Yobai see: Mantovani, Ennio. *Sent to Baptize or what? Letters from Papua New Guinea 1962-1977*. Ballan VIC: Modotti Press, 2011. Id. *Mission: Collision or*

- Dialogical Encounter? A Chronicle of St. Paul's Parish, Yobai, Papua New Guinea.* Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2011.
- 10 Keyßer, Christian. *Gottesweg ins Hubeland.* Neuendettelsau: Freimund Verlag, 1949. Id. *Eine Papua Gemeinde.* Ibid., 1950. Id. *Anutu im Papua-Lande,* Ibid., 1958.
- 11 On these two friends and co-workers see: Mantovani, Ennio. *Mission: Collision or Dialogical Encounter? A Chronicle of St. Paul's Parish, Yobai, Papua New Guinea,* 9-11.
- 12 Weiner, Annette. *Women of Value, Men of Renown. New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchange.* Brisbane: University of QLD Press, 1977.
- 13 Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922.
- 14 See the trilogy by the Melanesian Institute edited by Wendy Flannery: *Religious Movements in Melanesia Today.* Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 1983-1983-1984. Were they searching for the one who had already revealed himself to their ancestors as they expressed it in the Dema mythology? See also: Strelan, J. *Search for Salvation. Studies in the History of Theology and Cargo Cults.* Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977.
- 15 See: Mantovani, Ennio. *Traditional and Present Day Melanesian Values and Ethics.* Occasional Papers of the Melanesian Institute No. 7 Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 1993. See also id. "Traditional Values and Ethics" *The Ethics of Development. The Pacific in the 21st Century* Susan Stratigos and Philip J. Hughes (eds.) Port Moresby: UPNG Press, 1987, 188-201.
- 16 See Mantovani, Ennio. *The Dema and the Christ. My Engagement and Inner Dialogue with the Cultures and Religions of Melanesia.* Siegburg: Franz Schmitt Verlag, 2014, 51-83.
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# CATHOLIC MISSIONS TO ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA: AN EVALUATION OF THEIR OVERALL EFFECT

James Franklin\*

## Abstract

The paper gives an overview of the Catholic Church's missionary efforts to the Aborigines of northern and western Australia up to 1970. It aims to understand the interaction of missions with native culture and the resulting hybrid culture created on the missions. It describes the differing points of view of missionaries and the generations who grew up on the missions.

It is argued that the culture created on the missions by the joint efforts of missionaries and local peoples was by and large a positive phase in Australian black history, between the violence of pre-contact times and the dysfunctionality of recent decades. Criticisms of the missions are addressed, such as those arising from their opposition to aspects of native culture and from their involvement in child removals.

## Introduction

There is no overview available of the Catholic mission effort to Aboriginal Australia (or of the Christian missions overall). A short article cannot fill that gap, but can make a start by indicating the topics that need to be covered, the questions to be answered and the sources available.

Here, "missions" is taken in the traditional sense, where a group of white clergy and helpers establish themselves in a remote location and preach and provide other services to local black people who have had little contact with whites. Such initiatives as apostolates to urban black communities are excluded.

The topic is important because the history of Aboriginal interaction with missions is quite different from the history of other white-black interactions in Australia, and because many present-day remote communities are former missions which still have strong connections with their mission past.

While Catholic church authorities in earlier times were mostly fully occupied with establishing the Church in white society, the needs of the Aboriginal people were not entirely forgotten.

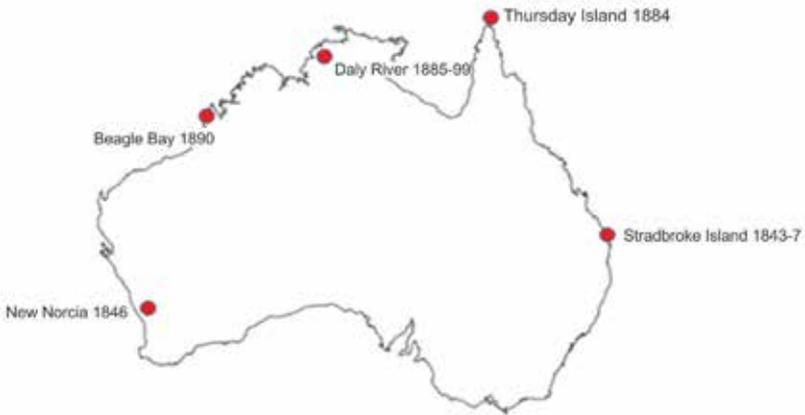
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The first Catholic bishop and archbishop in Australia, John Bede Polding, wrote:

White men have too often been apostles of Satan, have riveted his chains and confirmed his kingdom. It seems now almost a necessity that Christian missionaries should isolate themselves from all intercourse with white men. We want missionaries equal to the glorious exiles of those members of the Society of Jesus, who preached and taught the Gospel of old in the reduction of Paraguay, and, perhaps, this country will never be fully purified and absolved until such men have arisen within it. (Polding 1869, authorship discussed in Girola 2010)

Polding sent a small number of Italian missionaries to Stradbroke Island in the 1840s, but the mission failed through lack of resources and difficulties with the local population. (Thorpe 1950; Ganter: Stradbroke Island). The missions founded in the nineteenth century (survey in Girola 2013) are indicated in Fig 1.

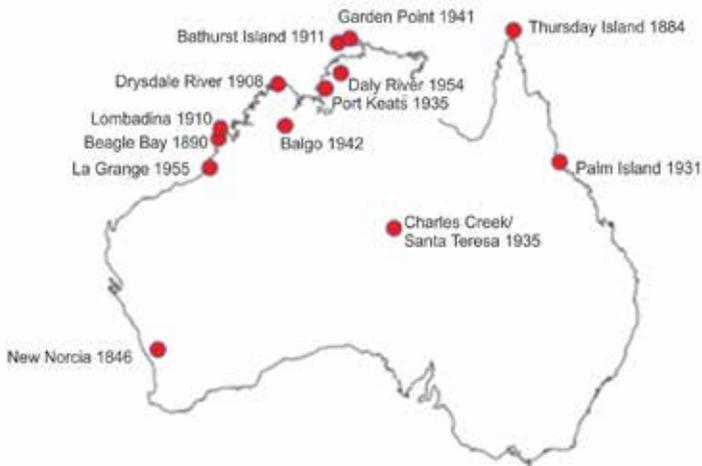


*Fig 1 Catholic missions in Australia in the nineteenth century*

New Norcia was a Benedictine Abbey with an Aboriginal ministry that was successful in the long term, and much has been written about it. (Russo 1980; Flood 1908; Haebich 2001; Williams 2001; Ride 2007; Shellam 2012; Bérengier 2014; Reece 2014; Massam 2015) (and much was written by the founders themselves: Salvado 1977; Salvado 1883/2015; Torres 1987).

Following an unsuccessful Jesuit mission at Rapid Creek near Darwin (Ganter: Rapid Creek), the Jesuit mission on the Daly River (at one time led by Mary MacKillop's brother Donald MacKillop), had some initial success but failed because of financial difficulties and a disastrous flood. (O'Kelly 1967; Pye 1976; Feehan 1981; Gray 1983; Rose 2000; Berndt 1952; Ganter: Daly River) Beagle Bay was founded by French Trappists and later run by German Pallottines. (Walter 1982; Balagai 2001; Choo 1997; Lockyer 2009; Jacobs 2014; Ganter: Beagle Bay) Its pearl shell altar is still a noted tourist attraction. Thursday Island was not a mission in exactly the traditional sense, as Thursday Island was a European port settlement, but it conducted missionary activities with the Torres Strait Islander people. (Deere 1994; Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church)

The missions in the twentieth century are indicated in Fig 2:



*Fig 2 Catholic missions in Australia in the twentieth century*

Drysdale River (Kalumburu) was an offshoot of New Norcia. (Catalan 1935; Perez 1958; Perez 1977; Deakin 1978; Perez 2001; Pandilow 1987; Choo 1994; Chalarimeri 2001; Sanz de Galdeano 2006) Lombadina was associated with the Trappist/Pallottine mission but largely founded by the Filipino Thomas Puertollano. (Ganter: Lombadina) Balgo was established in cattle country in the Kimberley and operated as a cattle station, (Choules Edinger and Marsh 2004; Ganter: Balgo) and there were some other shorter-term missions in

the Kimberley. Bathurst Island (Nguui, now Wurrumiyanga) was founded in 1911 by Father (later Bishop) Francis Xavier Gsell of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. (Ritchie 1934; Barclay 1939; Gsell 1955; Jones 1963; Stanley 1984; Bell 1988; Macleod 1997, pp. 115-22; Morris 2001; Morris 2010; Franklin 2012; Ganter: Bathurst Island Mission) A mission in the Alice Springs area existed in several locations, eventually settling at Santa Teresa. (O'Grady 1977; Pye 1989; Harmsen 1993) The Palm Island mission ministered to those dumped there from other Queensland locations. (Carey 1998) Garden Point on Melville Island was not a traditional mission but was established by Gsell to care for children of mostly mixed race removed from their families under government policy. (Brogan 1990; Leary 1998; Pye 1977, pp. 77-92; Pye 1998; Leary 1998; Ganter: Garden Point) Port Keats (Wadeye) was established in 1935. (Pye 1973; Ward and Crocombe 2009; Stanner 1954; Wilson 1979; Wilson 2010) A mission was re-established on the Daly River. La Grange (Bidyadanga) was established near Broome in 1955. (McKelson 1995)

In addition to the missions, religious sisters staffed three leprosariums, which contained mainly Aboriginal patients. At Derby WA, Channel Island NT, and Fantome Island near Palm Island, they were originally established as government facilities and handed over to orders of nuns. (Robson 2012)

Something of the tone and point of the missions is encapsulated in the most celebrated story from them, Francis Xavier Gsell's dramatic account of Martina. Gsell founded a mission on Bathurst Island, north of Darwin, in 1911. A decade later the mission was well-established. Martina was one of the young girls about the mission. A "hairy anonymous man" comes to fetch her, his promised wife according to tribal custom. Martina refuses to go but Gsell accepts that tribal law is final and nothing can be done; "trying to stifle her sobs, she goes with that man to begin a life which, I know, has less joy than that of the lowest beasts of the forest". Five days later she is back, speared in the leg but determined to stay at the mission. In the evening an angry mob of tribesmen arrive and demand her back. Not forgetting to call on God's help, Gsell welcomes them with flour and tobacco and suggests a good sleep before talking in the morning. Overnight he lays out calico, tobacco, a mirror, pots of meat and tins of treacle. When the tribesmen have woken up and had a good look, he names the price: Martina is to stay. After an interminable council, they agree. Martina is brought up by the nuns and contracts a free Christian marriage with a mission youth. Over the following decades, Gsell "bought" in similar fashion a hundred and fifty promised girls, all of them, according to tribal law, his wives. He became

known as the “bishop with 150 wives”. (Gsell 1955, p. 43; also recounted in Ritchie 1934, Pye 1977, pp. 41-2; a hostile view in Scanlon 1986)



*Bathurst Island mission sawmill, 1958*  
Australian Archives, image no. A1200, L25645

Those who grew up as children on the missions learned a monastically-ordered lifestyle that contrasts with Aboriginal life before and since. Betty Lockyer, of mixed Aboriginal and Malay parentage, believes that her removal by government action was unjustified, but is positive about her life at Beagle Bay Mission in the 1940s:

The men had their jobs to do, each going to their own workplace, whether it was the bakery, gardens or checking the windmills. The women stayed at home to look after the babies and little ones, or worked elsewhere for a few hours. Some helped out at the church, convent, presbytery or the Brothers' houses. There was no such thing

as idle hands. They all knew their jobs and did them well ... Our people were shown how to live an orderly lifestyle and in that short time they learned to conform. (Lockyer, 2009, p. 51; similar recollections briefly in Choo 2001, pp. 153-5; Zucker 2008)

(She does however think the life was rather too ordered for everyone's good.)

In a rare letter from a young person on a mission, Hilda, a girl from Drysdale River wrote to the Abbot at New Norcia about the return of the nuns after World War II:

Since the Sister are here everything very nice. We are having the meals on the table we ate doing in turns to wash the plates and set the table also we the three big girls we help the sisters to set the table for the Fathers do the cleaning and feed the fowls and some other little things; the young married women are helping in the kitchen washing iron and mending. I sometimes help the sister to make the bread fry de eggs in the morning and to take the diner to the Fathers. I'm still going to the school which I like very much because the most I learned the most useful I will be to the Sisters. (Hilda of Drysdale River Mission, 18/8/1946, quoted in Choo 2001, p. 77)

As a single illustration of what it was like for the missionaries "on the ground", Sister Antoninus recalls the early days at Garden Point:

In those wonderful tea chests that Sister Annunciata had packed in Sydney there was a pile of discarded Sacred Heart sodality banners that had really seen better days but the linings, albeit faded and streaked were made of strong sateen. These, Mother ripped up and made into pants for the small children and believe me they needed a supply for they certainly were not toilet trained. Marie and John had the habit of dirtying their trousers and discarding them anywhere, the little imps would never say where. Many a night, Sister Eucharua and I would sally forth with a hurricane lamp searching the yard for the offending articles, wash them so that the scamps would have something to put on in the morning. (Brogan 1990, pp. 61-2)

And of course the heat was appalling.



*Dressmaking class at Roman Catholic mission, Garden Point, Melville Island  
1958*

John A. Tanner, National Library of Australia nla.obj-137819334.

## **Generalities**

Some general points, mostly obvious, help to put the story in perspective.

The story of the missions (both Catholic and Protestant) is quite different from the story of other interactions between black and white Australians. Earlier settlers, pastoralists and miners forcibly occupied the country and did as they wished, while the Aboriginal population had to accommodate themselves to the situation as best they could. Missions did not operate on those principles. The missionaries invited themselves to a remote location, but after that their success depended on local cooperation. They were usually unarmed, they were unable to impose their will on the locals (at least, until much later times), and they occupied only the area of the mission. If the local people did not like it, they needed only to avoid contact – indeed, that is largely what happened at the first mission on Stradbroke Island (and initially at Drysdale River, where there was briefly armed

conflict). On the missionaries' side too, a cooperative spirit was needed, in ways not necessary for the rest of white Australia. Their aim was to persuade the objects of missionary endeavour of the benefits of Christianity and civilization, so basic research into the Aboriginal way of seeing things was necessary (e.g. Williams 2001), and there was no reason to oppose those aspects of native culture that were considered compatible with Christianity.

Understanding the initial interaction is difficult because we lack the perspective of one of the actors. The story involves three groups of actors – the missionaries, the first generation of the local population who dealt with them, and later generations who grew up as children on the missions. There is plenty of information coming from the first and third of these, but in the nature of the case very little from the second.

We can nevertheless make certain inferences about the cooperation that the first generation afforded to the missionaries. The first necessary cooperation was linguistic. Local populations did communicate with the missionaries, often in a combination of sign language and pidgin; those missionaries who learned the local language relied on the patience of locals to teach them. Locals were aware of the advantages of white technology such as fishhooks and knives, and knew that the missions could provide food security in bad times, and for people facing threats of violence, physical security. Tobacco (that is, chewing tobacco) and sugar products proved attractive, (Crawford 1978) but alcohol was avoided.

The local populations did not, by and large, cooperate in the way the missionaries most desired, by becoming converted to Christianity. Gsell, one of the most successful missionaries, had not a single adult convert in his first thirty years. But time was on the side of the missionary endeavour, because of the most momentous decision in favour of cooperation that the local communities made. It was to allow the missionaries to bring up later generations of children. The reasons for that decision are not entirely clear.

As a result the missions have had a great impact on Aboriginal history. The biggest remote communities today are former missions. The largest is Wadeye, the former Catholic mission of Port Keats.

The missionaries operated under a model that was more monastic than assimilationist. New Norcia was literally a monastery, but in other cases too it was considered best to, as Polding said, go as far away as possible from white society with its temptations and risks (“where the evils of our European civilization had not yet penetrated”, as Salvado put it, Salvado 1883; Gsell said “Bathurst had no white settlers and was completely free

of interference”, Ganter: Bathurst Island). The communities were to be isolated and self-sufficient.

Not many missionaries undertook anthropological or linguistic work on Aboriginal cultures. There is no Catholic counterpart to the Strehlows’ work at the Lutheran mission in Hermannsburg. But Fr Ernest Worms made extensive studies of Kimberley and other Aboriginal languages and religions. (Worms 1998; Bindon 2001) Donald MacKillop’s work on local languages has not been much investigated. (See MacKillop 1892-3)

The history of the missions is an Australian Catholic story largely without Irish. Whereas much of Australian Catholic history before recent times was dominated by the Irish, the mission field saw very few. Spanish, Germans, French, Italians, Filipinos and native Australians provided the mission personnel. (Discussion in Girola 2010) A rare exception is the unusual figure of Fr John Creagh, who enjoyed a successful ecclesiastical career in the Kimberley after inciting an antisemitic riot in Limerick in 1904. (Dolan 2010) Some Irish nuns worked at Beagle Bay. (Durack 1971, chs 17 and 18; McHugh 2000; Jacobs 2014).

The Catholic story ought to be compared to the story of Protestant missions. That is beyond the scope of the present article, but the careful multi-decadal study of Mornington Island in the anthropologist David McKnight’s books such as *From Hunting to Drinking* shows similar patterns. A period of relative calm in mission times separates a violent traditional past from an equally violent and alcohol-fuelled period since the 1970s.

## **Evaluations**

Evaluations of the missions have ranged widely. An extreme view is that deriving from Comintern policy which declared tribal peoples an oppressed class in the Marxist sense and hence identified the missionaries as agents of colonial oppression. That theory was sent to Australia and appeared with local embellishments in the *Workers’ Weekly* of 24 Sept 1931:

The Aboriginal race, the original inhabitants of Australia, are among the most exploited subject peoples in the world. Not only are inhuman exploitation, forced Labor and actual slavery forced upon the Aborigines, but a campaign of mass physical extermination is being and has been carried on against them, until to-day less than 60,000 full bloods have survived the murder drive ... setting up organisations of crawlers and kidnapers, known as “Aborigine Protection Boards” to enslave the remaining members of the tribes, and “Mission Stations,”

under dope-peddlers to muster the youth so that they can be sold into slavery – such truly British methods were used, and are still being used to enslave the Australian Aborigine and to totally exterminate the race ...

The *Workers' Weekly* includes in its demands:

(11) Liquidation of all missions and so-called homes for Aborigines, as these are part of the weapons being used to exterminate the Aboriginal race by segregating the sexes and sending the young girls into slavery.

No evidence for such allegations of slavery was provided then or since, making it difficult to understand why Comintern propaganda of 1931 resembles so closely contemporary views in some parts of the political spectrum of the past interaction of whites and blacks in Australia.

Views based on closer observation have generally been more positive. An example comes from Mark Nevill, a teacher and geologist who was familiar with the Balgo mission in the East Kimberley over a number of decades, both during and after the mission era.

In Mark [Nevill]'s view the work of the Pallottines and the St John of God sisters in the Kimberley is an heroic chapter in our State and national history. Mark sees the strength of Balgo then, compared with now, as being:

- Better policing, no alcohol,
- Better education, no truancy,
- Better health,
- Better diet, supplemented with much bush tucker,
- Organized work and the learning of skills. The policy was no work, no tucker!
- Industry developed, horses, cattle, etc.,
- There was a role for men,
- The Aborigines were free to move around, and,
- Minimal impact on Aboriginal culture—they were free to practice their customs outside the immediate Mission area.

Negative change in Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley is often attributed to the introduction of the equal wage. Yet, while

pastoralists were concerned about the possibility of higher wages, little displacement occurred as a result. The other factors that Mark identified as causing an exodus from the stations were:

- Access to child endowment and unemployment benefits, or ‘sit-down money’ as it was called,
- Rising costs due to the first oil price hike, and,
- Changes in the pastoral industry, which displaced the need for labour. Changes such as mechanisation - mustering planes, motorbikes, portable pumps, better fencing, steel cattle yards, etc

The result is that many Aboriginal people lost the structure they had in their everyday lives, a structure that was there in the traditional lifestyle in the desert, on the missions and on the stations. The increased disposable income gave them increased access to alcohol and nutritionally poor food (Choules Edinger and Marsh 2004).

Negative views of the effect of the missions have come from two directions – one suggesting they were contemptuous of and destructive of native culture, and the other criticising their involvement in government child removal policies.

An example of the former is an article, ‘The Catholic Church’s toll on Aboriginal Australia’. (Bowden 2013). It criticises elements of Frank O’Grady’s *Francis of Central Australia*, a biography of lay missionary Francis McGarry who worked at the Alice Springs/Arltunga mission (later moved to Santa Teresa). “O’Grady quotes McGarry ordering the children that they ‘were not to speak Arunta [sic] in church or in school otherwise they would be sent home without tucker’. McGarry also sought to ‘work quietly towards the elimination’ of adherence to Arrernte cultural practices.”

That is not convincing as it stands as criticism. The context involves children who have recently begun to attend the presbytery and go home every day, so they are not isolated from their own language. To learn any new language, one needs have a space in which that language must be spoken. Speaking in a form of English also allows McGarry to know what is going on. (O’Grady 1977, p. 28) The reference to “cultural practices” mainly concerns corroborees. McGarry regarded some as unobjectionable but did campaign against initiation corroborees that involved high levels of mutilation. (O’Grady 1977, pp. 41-2, 45, 58, 65-6)

One aspect of traditional culture the missionaries certainly did work to eliminate, namely the high levels of violence. McGarry intervened to reduce

levels of traditional “payback” violence (O’Grady 1977, pp. 43, 46, 114). Brother John Pye tells similar stories on the Daly River, and as evidence of success tells of only one murder or manslaughter being committed in mission times, 1938-1972. (Pye 1973, pp. 23, 30, 44) Gsell took little interest in cultural practices in general and for their own sake, but worked to eliminate those of the kind now called abuses of human rights, such as enforced child marriages and the burying alive of decrepit old people.

In general, present-day attitudes take it, without further argument, that the breaking down of native culture is a bad thing in itself (e.g. Scanlon 1986). That is a thoughtless methodological stance. Aboriginal society, like Western society or any other, can contain features that are dysfunctional and anti-human. Claims of the missionaries that certain practices were evil and needed to end are neither self-justifying nor self-refuting. They need to be taken seriously and evaluated in the light of universal principles of human rights. It is still true that putting stress on a culture can have evil effects such as chaos from the breakdown of authority. There is no problem with debating that in any particular case. The problem arises from the unargued assumption that criticism of aspects of another culture and efforts to change it are inherently wrong. Gsell writes of those who criticise in principle the missionaries’ attempts to change culture:

...these fine talkers, few of whom have given the subject any deep thought, themselves enjoy the benefits of Christian civilization: and they enjoy this security because, in day[s] of old, missionaries brought these benefits to their forebears. The heathens are men as we are men and, as such, they have the same right that we have to the benefits of Christianity. (Gsell 1955, pp. 38-39)

It is true however that some missionaries did behave arrogantly towards cultural practices to which there could be no reasonable objection. The Tiwi on Bathurst Island remember Fr John Fallon destroying Pukamani, the sacred burial poles. Fallon later described himself as fired by zeal to convert souls and destroy idolatrous practices, and expressed regret. (Fallon 1991)

The second source of criticisms of the missionaries comes from their involvement in child removals and the “Stolen Generations”. Government child removal policies, especially in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley, relied on cooperation from the missions to bring up the removed children. The policy of large-scale removal of children of mixed blood was pioneered in the Kimberley after the Aborigines Act of 1905, as a

partnership between state officials and the Beagle Bay mission. (Choo 1997; Choo 2001, ch. 5; Zucker 2008) It was driven initially by concerns about tribes prostituting women to lugger crews and the resulting needs of the “unfortunate half-caste and black children who are to be seen in Broome streets, acquiring all the worst vices of Asiatics and blacks” (Letter of Fr Emo of 1904, quoted in Choo 1997, p. 19) and the church was allowed to take and educate them. From 1909, government policy was to remove all part-Aboriginal children in the Kimberley, described as “rescuing of waifs and strays from the bad contaminating influence of natives’ camps”. (Choo 1997, p. 24) Beagle Bay looked after and educated them at little cost to the government.

Many of the mothers came too and lived in the mission compound, separately from their children in the dormitory. Some contact was allowed and it was not the purpose of the mission to separate the children entirely from their mothers or culture. Father Walter’s 1928 account says

It is not the duty of a Missionary to repress a child’s Aboriginal nature and for this reason the children are given as much freedom as possible to follow their customs and practices. From time to time all children are allowed to attend ordinary corrobories (under supervision) and to hold their own corrobories. Outings are utilised to make them sufficiently familiar with bush craft to survive, and one competes with another to catch snakes, lizards, kangaroos and other game, and to study animal trails. (Walter 1982, p. 24, quoted in Choo 1997, p. 18)

Nevertheless the education was almost entirely Western and children were locked in the dormitory at night.

Debate on past child-removal policies has been vitiated by a high level of moral indignation combined with a low level of attention to the evidence from those involved such as patrol officers on the reasons for what they did. Bishop Gsell, who as Bishop of Darwin was in charge of Catholic involvement in child removal in the Northern Territory in the 1940s, writes:

But, I may be asked, is it not cruel to tear these children away from the affectionate environment of their homes? The question is naive. What homes and what natural affection have these little ones? Yes, if they had families, and if they were surrounded by that love and affection family life offers to the young even amongst primitive peoples, it might be cruel. But these creatures roam miserably around the camps and their behaviour is often worse than that of native children. It is an act of mercy to remove them as soon as possible from surroundings so insecure. (Gsell 1955, pp. 154-5)

Gsell's phrase "worse than that of native children" refers to the fact that removal policies were aimed mainly at children of mixed blood, who were considered to be especially at risk. As the Northern Territory patrol officer Colin Macleod explained it, speaking of the late 1950s,

A person brought up without the protection of the tribal life, without any supporting family other than a very young mother, who almost certainly had been abused at its birth, was going to be kicked from arsehole to breakfast time.

These children were often the butt of cruelty not only from whites but also from the full-blood Aboriginals. Brother Pye of the Catholic mission at Garden Point once saw a six-year-old part-coloured boy speared by a full-blooded Aboriginal, almost as a joke, just because the boy was a "yella fella". Brother Pye took this boy under his wing, probably saving his life.

Half-caste kids would now and again turn up at missions with spear marks and signs of horrific beltings. Babies were occasionally abandoned and young children left to fend for themselves. "Yella fellas" could find themselves in a no-man's land and a no-win situation. No-one will ever know how many were left to die, killed or simply pined away ... Many of the children taken away were being given a chance to live and not die, to have a life beyond childhood without being permanently maimed. Garden Point ... was a preferred destination ... [Brother Pye] felt that in many cases these children were saved from real danger and abject misery by being sent to Garden Point. (Macleod 1997, pp. 175-6, 229; generally confirmed in Mellor & Haebich 2002, ch. 8 and Cubillo v. Commonwealth [2000] FCA 1084)

(Macleod does believe that before his time, in the 1940s, removals were sometimes undertaken for more ideological reasons.) (A first-hand account of a 1965 baby removal to Beagle Bay in Thomas 2013)

Debate on the intentions and results of child removal policies ought to proceed, and it is certainly arguable that the policy of removing virtually all mixed-blood children did not allow for individual cases to be properly considered. But debate can only proceed on the basis of considering the relevant evidence from all the interested parties.

Other criticisms of the missionaries could arise from negative memories of some who grew up on the missions. (E.g. McKee) The Bringing Them Home report contains an allegation of sexual abuse at Garden Point. (Bringing Them Home Report, 1997, ch. 9)

### **Aftermath**

Around 1970, control of the missions was handed over to governments and many changes occurred through new government policies such as welfare payments, self-determination and land rights, and the general encroachments of modernity. Despite the changes being individually reasonable, the generally disastrous effects of the whole are now well-known. As detailed in books like Stephanie Jarrett's *Liberating Aboriginal People from Violence*, Peter Sutton's *The Politics of Suffering*, Geoffrey Partington's *Hasluck Versus Coombs*, Rosemary Neill's *White Out* and David McKnight's *From Hunting to Drinking*, remote Aboriginal communities were swept by a wave of violence, alcoholism and cultural disintegration. Optimistic present-day talk of "closing the gap" covers up extreme and continuing levels of domestic violence, alcohol and drug consumption, chronic health problems and low school attendance. If the missions are to be evaluated by comparison to what happened later, the bar is low. As Sutton, the leading expert in indigenous violence, writes, "Public recognition of mission time as far happier and safer than the post-liberation era, in the segregated communities, came not just from Indigenous people but was increasingly being recognised by others, even academics ... There is, in fact, much complaint that life was substantially better under the old pre-1970 mission regimes. Even if we discount the distorting factor of Golden Age nostalgia here, for many settlements this is the uncomfortable truth." (pp. 16, 48-9).

Catholic involvement with the former missions did not cease with the changes of around 1970, although it was in a lower key. A visitor to a former mission today will find an active Catholic community with mass being said regularly. According to census data (2011), they are the most Catholic places in the country:

Parish	Diocese	Total Catholics	Percent Catholic
Santa Teresa	Darwin	490	88.8
Wadeye	Darwin	2322	86.6
Bathurst Island	Darwin	1400	86.5
Melville Island	Darwin	799	83.1
Balgo - Kutjungka	Broome	939	66.3
Daly River	Darwin	765	63.6
Kalumburu	Broome	461	62.7
Dampier Peninsula	Broome	629	60.9
Horsley Park	Sydney	2669	57.2

Table 1. Parishes with the highest percent Catholic, 2011 Australian Census (National Catholic Census Project, <http://pro.catholic.org.au/pdf/ACBC%20PRO%20E-News%20Bulletin%2021.pdf>)

Although there were no ordinations to the priesthood of former mission residents, there were a number of Aboriginal nuns (e.g. Hanlen 1999; Bishop Raible's attempt to set up an order of Aboriginal nuns in Choo 2001, ch. 6), and Boniface Perdjert of Port Keats was Australia's first permanent deacon (Anon, *Catholic Leader*).

A very colourful tribute to mission days was the 1990 comedy-drama musical and 2009 movie *Bran Nue Dae* (Chi 1991). As in *Star Wars*, the man in black is revealed to be father of one of the younger characters.

A celebrated Aboriginal Catholic image was that used on vestments at World Youth Day in 2008. It was given by Marjorie Liddy, a former resident of Garden Point, who saw it in a vision while driving at night. (Basile 2011) Liddy commented on the "Stolen Generations" in an ABC News item on the centenary of the Bathurst Island Mission:

MARJORIE LIDDY, STOLEN GENERATIONS: I had to grow up at – we were taken to Garden Point. They was collecting part-coloured children, to look after us there.

FATHER JOHN MULRONEY: I wanted to say to you today that if any MSC has hurt you in any way, or has in anyway done you any harm, in anyway has misunderstood your culture and in any way harmed your culture I say to you sorry unreservedly.

MARJORIE LIDDY, *STOLEN GENERATIONS*: Probably they feel from us being taken away, they might feel a little bit responsible about it. I don't know what they feel, but we had a beautiful upbringing. But no they did, gave us everything in life, taught us everything.

PAULINE COMPTON, *PROVINCIAL OLSH SISTERS*: Again I would also like to say we are sorry if we have hurt you, or misunderstood your culture. (Lemke 2011)

In the Northern Territory election of 2012, the Country Liberals were elected with a landslide result in the bush, where they had preselected credible black candidates. The winning candidate in the seat of Arafura was Francis Xavier Kurrupuwu. His very Catholic forenames resulted from being named after Francis Xavier Gsell. He was called after Gsell because he is Martina's great-grandson. (Northern Territory Legislative Assembly Hansard, 23/12/2012)

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# DISTINCTIVE AND EVOLVING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST COLUMBAN 1916-2016 (MAYNOOTH MISSION TO CHINA)

Charles Rue\*

## Abstract

Maynooth diocesan priests decided in 1916 to found an Irish Mission to China. A nation of 400 million was in the throes of transitioning from a failed traditional power to enter an industrialised modern world, besieged by the promises of many ideologies. Canonically recognised in 1918 the group's official title became the Missionary Society of St Columban. At the invitation of Archbishop Mannix it set up a permanent base in Melbourne in 1920 to raise funds and form priests for the Society's overseas mission. Its monthly magazine *The Far East* has been published since 1920 to garner support. It established a network of promoters in parishes who also distributed a fundraising Mite Box and to sell an art calendar. The Society had to negotiate its place in the Australasian Catholic churches. With roots among diocesan priests and focused on rapidly developing nations, the Society developed a unique character. It helped change the perception of Chinese people among its supporters and fed back to them new theological insights developed in mission churches - the RCIA and social justice as articulated by Vatican II; ecological issues as integral to Catholic faith; the unjust impact of military capitalist dictatorships in Asia and Latin America; promoting dialogue with Islam as a way of mission. The Society's 1916 aims continue in 2016.

Patricia Wittberg has written on the 'Rise and Decline of Religious Orders' using Berger's terms of frame realignment and intentional groups. With her work in mind, this paper identifies some distinctive characteristics of the Missionary Society of St Columban and how these have evolved over a hundred years 1916-2016.

**Diocesan based** – Irishman diocesan priest Edward Galvin worked in China 1912-1916 as a missionary serving neglected parishes. He invited fellow Irish priests to join him. Together they discerned that their mission work needed to be structurally maintained. So, in 1916 Galvin returned

\* Fr Charles Rue was raised in Canowindra. A farmer for four years, he was President of the local Young Farmers before joining the Missionary Society of St. Columban. Ordained in 1968, he was appointed to South Korea. On returning to Australia he headed the Regional Columban History Project and was granted a doctorate for his work (ACU).

to Ireland and invited a group of Maynooth seminary graduate priests, including John Blowick, to form an Irish Mission to China. Promoting the prestigious Maynooth name, with seminary professors they preached about the needs of China around Ireland and gained financial support from parishioners. The Maynooth or Irish Mission to China was canonically recognised in 1918 as the Missionary Society of St Columban with Galvin and Blowick as cofounders. The Society's first characteristics were set – clerical missionaries financed by parish laity.<sup>2</sup>

**Focused planning** – It was no accident that the rather assertive 6th century Irish missionary monk to Europe, St Columbanus, was taken as the Society's Patron.<sup>3</sup> The founding group was assertive and targeted Erin abroad for finance and vocations. Galvin went to the United States to raise funds. From 1917 onwards, steps in founding the Society were reported in Australian Catholic papers.

Blowick wrote to former Maynooth Rector, Archbishop Danial Mannix. At his behest, the Australasian bishops had Mannix invite the Society to set up in Melbourne.

To gain a mission area for the Society in China, Galvin and Blowick visited Propaganda in Rome in 1919. They rejected the first offer of a backwater saying they wanted a well populated but neglected area.<sup>4</sup> The Society was given Hanyang on the Yangtze River in central China. The first group of Columban priests sailed for China in 1920.

Targeted planning, cultivating allies among church leaders and picking its work areas became further characteristics of the Society.

**Asia** – China was a nation of 400 million people in 1916 transitioning from a failed power to enter an industrialised modern world, but besieged by the promises of many contending western ideologies. Galvin believed that only the Catholic faith was big enough to meet the challenge. In the background new mission ideas in China were coming from mission writers such as H Venn and J Nerijs arguing that churches adopt a 'Three Self Formula: self-governing, self-propagating, self-financing', to which 'self-ministering' was added by R Allen.

At home, the Society focused on educating parishioners about China while garnering support for its venture. Talks and promotion materials gave vignettes of China's geography, social life and political changes, including criticism of western powers for their collaboration with oppressive local elites (modern slaves of the west in the words of the poet Wu). Based on

first hand sources, the Society expanded the horizons of Catholics in home countries, a fact that runs counter to the dismissive view taken by some academics about missionary activity.<sup>5</sup>

A 1925 photo in the Society magazine shows two Australian school boy friends, one of Chinese and the other of Irish ethnic origin that carried the caption, “The Twain shall meet”.<sup>6</sup> Columban feedback to Catholics about Asian realities and large sophisticated nations gave the Society a distinctive character.

**Irishness** – Doc Edward Maguire, professor of theology at All Hallows College, was asked to join the Society with the specific task of leading an Australasian venture. With a James Galvin, arriving in Sydney January 1920 he was taken to St Mary’s Cathedral presbytery where some of his former students worked. He travelled by train to Melbourne and was met at the station by a limo arranged by Mannix and taken to his residence.

That March, Mannix took Maguire with him to the opening of a new church in Warwick Queensland and introduced him to Archbishop Duhig and other church dignitaries. But Maguire developed a “both and” approach so as not to alienate Australian born clergy and Religious. To placate opposition, Columban priests helped promote the Propagation of the Faith which did not gain strength until Mgr Laurence Martin became National Director leading up the Newcastle Missionary Eucharistic Congress of 1938.

In the same March 1920 local priests Romuald Hayes and Luke Mullany from Melbourne joined the Society, then William McGoldrick from Brisbane (Duhig’s secretary) and Michael Fitzgerald from Sandhurst-Bendigo (Propaganda College in Rome graduate). McGoldrick sailed to China in 1923 along with Christian Brother Harty who led a short lived effort into schools.

Irish connections were a significant factor in the immediate success of the ANZ Columban venture but responding to Maguire’s persuasive style, the local church soon claimed the Society ‘as its own’.

**Structured belonging** – The years 1920-24 marked the establishment period of the Society in Australia and New Zealand. It used offices in the Cathedral Hall Melbourne before buying a house in suburban Mentone. This proved too far from the city printing houses so in 1923 the Society bought a large estate at Essendon to cater for expanding needs - administration, a base of rest for priests “on the road”, visitor accommodation, a seminary and a Sisters’ novitiate.

Maguire devised a nation-wide system of ongoing contact with parishes and schools, started a mission magazine, and through its promotional material made the Columban name a Catholic household word.<sup>7</sup>

In New Zealand, Marist Archbishop Redmond was a vocal supporter and the Society's structural way of belonging was followed there.

**Branding** – *The Far East* magazine, the *Columban Calendar* and, to a lesser extent, the small coin-collection *Mite Box* most identified the Society to Australian Catholics.<sup>8</sup>

The first Australian edition of *The Far East* magazine came out in October 1920. Columban priests supplied articles drawn from their overseas experiences so that the Society “developed a school of writers who became the most skilled writing group in Australia” (Ed Campion). Articles were liberally illustrated with photographs.<sup>9</sup>

A calendar was sold primarily as a money raiser. The first in 1923, a simple black and white version, was succeeded the next year by the *Columban Art Calendar* which has been published yearly since then.<sup>10</sup> Other church groups began copying this Columban initiative.

A small cardboard collection box accepting “pennies for the missions” was a Columban first in fundraising methods when introduced into Australian schools and homes in 1920.<sup>11</sup> Columban mission activity had been branded, another Society characteristic.

**Entrepreneurial team** – *The Far East* office in Melbourne was the hub of Columban promotion. It used the latest technology and management tools. Edward Galvin took organisational ability as a prerequisite for missionaries, especially leaders, often lamenting ‘that fellow has no business sense’.<sup>12</sup> Lay office workers saw themselves as part of the mission team. Helpers in the parishes were called “Promoters” and Religious Sisters and Brothers often took the lead.<sup>13</sup> From 1922 what were called ‘Lantern Shows’ - slide shows about China - were part of the Columban promotion technique and by 1925 Columban promotional movies were shown.<sup>14</sup> Between 1920 and 1924 the Region raised £123,451 in total when a good house cost 2,000 pounds.

The “can do” approach and the use of modern methods of promotion, learnt by Galvin in the USA and passed on to Maguire, became a Society characteristic.

**Missionary vocations** – Recruiting Columban seminarians and priests became part of the Society's organised promotion. The opportunity to

become priests in an overseas missionary enterprise that was diocesan in character had not existed in Australia before 1920.

Of special note, young Australian and New Zealand women spontaneously volunteered to join a China missionary Sisterhood. By Easter 1924, one hundred and four women, many of them Sisters with professional qualifications, had volunteered. However, this proposal was opposed by the Society's Superior General who had started a Columban Sisters foundation in Ireland. It was opposed by Columban priests in China who wanted money spent on promoting local priestly vocation, regarding social commitment to schools and medical services as secondary.<sup>15</sup> As a compromise, in 1921 the Region sent a small number of local young women to the Columban Sisters in Ireland who developed an independent focus. A Columban sponsored ANZ Sisterhood for mission in China was officially dropped in 1924.

The clerical character of the Society was affirmed but also its ability to say 'no' in its commitments. The Society has never taken parishes in ANZ.

**Seminaries** – In the first years, seminarians were sent directly to the Society's seminary in Ireland. In 1928, philosophy studies began at Essendon plus an introductory Spiritual Year modelled on Ignatian self-sustaining individualistic spirituality.

Students did theology in Ireland but during WWII they initially went to the USA and from 1945 onwards to the local Werribee diocesan seminary. Columban training moved to Wahroonga, Sydney, and a theological faculty was added in 1954. A Spiritual Year house operated at isolated Sassafras 1958-1967.

Staff appealed for a new purpose-built seminary "with elbow-room for all". A new seminary was built at North Turramurra, Sydney and blessed 28 June 1959 with most of the bishops of Australia attending. Columban student numbers grew from twenty in 1952 to sixty nine in 1969, the highest number ever reached in Australia.

**New Missions** – 1927 began eventful times for China.<sup>16</sup> Communist inspired university and high school students closed much of the education system and the Christian Brothers withdrew from Hanyang. Local bandits began terrorising villages, taking prisoners for ransom and killed Columban Fr Timothy Leonard in 1929. The Society took on alternative mission outlets in the Philippines in 1929, Korea in 1933 and Burma 1936.<sup>17</sup> Central China suffered huge floods in 1931<sup>18</sup> and Japanese incursions of China from 1931 onward led to full scale war in 1937. Mao Tse Tung led the people 'to stand

up' and a Communist government took control of China in 1949. Columban bishops Galvin and Cleary were expelled. China as a Columban field of mission had gradually become untenable.

The Society was part of missions to Japan post WWII, plus seminary and parish work in Fiji from 1952. The same year Society members contributed to the *fidei donum* push for priests to minister in Latin America, going to Peru and Chile. In later decades other missions were taken to help out a diocese ministerially or for dialogue with Islam as was the case with Pakistan.

After the Cultural Revolution subsided in mainland China and Deng took control in 1977, Columbans gradually began moving back. Working as priests was not permitted so most went as students or teachers in universities. Like other missionary groups, re-connecting with Chinese priests and church personnel became a major work. The church in China is one, underground or patriotic affiliated, but keeping communities in touch with the church worldwide and facilitating members to study theology abroad became a new mission work. However, this work is not trumpeted so as not to offend government authorities.

In practice, new mission commitments modified the Society's character so that for many members, priestly ministry took on more importance than promoting the local clergy and evangelising communities.

**Consolidation** – The Society curried favour with the church leaders as it hosted important visiting dignitaries to Australia for Eucharistic conferences or lecture tours.<sup>19</sup> Significantly the 1938 Eucharistic Conference in Newcastle focused on Mission. In 1942 Archbishop Thomas O'Shea SM gave permission for a permanent Society presence in New Zealand.<sup>20</sup>

Apart from setting up full seminary training, in other signs of consolidation the circulation of Society publications increased, a new Office was built in Essendon and the House extended. The Society was becoming settled, even complacent.

**Discontent** – Some tensions in the seminary emerged 1954-1969 clustered around new ideas on church mission in the world and anti-communism. One arm had the faithful work for the 'common good' based on Catholic social principles and under the direction of the local bishops. The other arm looked to Cardijn method (YCW) to face life situations with a bottom-up approach rather than a top down one.<sup>21</sup> These two approaches epitomised divisions among seminary staff and with the Regional Director and with

attitudes in Australia optimised by Bob Santamaria.

The Second Vatican Council 1963-65 declared the *church is ever under reform*. It not only encouraged students and staff to engage the modern world but gave them the often scripturally-based terminology to do so.<sup>22</sup>

Another factor challenging complacent thinking about modern mission and the rigid diocesan seminary model was a conscious rejection of the human cost of missionary work, physical sickness and ‘culture shock’.<sup>23</sup>

Even though the 1960s saw a peak in the Society’s expansion in the Region, Society meetings in 1969-70 saw that it needed to radically reform and re-define its character - Wittberg’s ‘frame realignment’. Columban missionaries were more than expatriate priests bound by traditional training, now called to grow in the spirit of Vatican II.<sup>24</sup>

**Seminary based formation post 1970** – Society seminary leaders developed new programs to help missionaries to be effective and happy people rather than victims of their vocation.<sup>25</sup> There was no blueprint so planning consisted of a systematic process of experimentation and review. The 1976 Society General Chapter articulated a new identity for the Society - in addition to geographical boundaries, members were called to consciously cross boundaries of culture and religious experience as ‘agents of cross-cultural mission’.<sup>26</sup>

An opportunity to advance mission studies arose in 1971 when the Australian Bishops established the National Missionary Council (NMC). With its backing, the Columbans organised the first Australian National Missionary Conference at Turrumurra 24-28 January 1972.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to normal seminary studies, from 1973-1978 mission studies addressed the relationship between mission vocation, human development and spiritual growth.<sup>28</sup> The Columban formation program’s cycle of planning, experimenting, evaluating and re-planning can be taken as a case study in post Vatican II seminary reform.<sup>29</sup> The year 1996 saw the last priestly ordination in the ANZ Region which poses the question, is the diocesan based priestly overseas mission model dead?

**Pacific Mission Institute/Columban Mission Institute** – Mission Studies programs at Turrumurra seminary were opened up to clerical, lay and inter-church participants from outside of the Society. The Pacific Mission Institute (PMI) began in 1979.<sup>30</sup> The role of women both as staff members and students played a major part in developing all post-1970 Columban formation programs. In 1983 Turrumurra became the Missiology department

of the new ecumenical Sydney College of Divinity.<sup>31</sup>

The Second National Consultation on Mission at Strathfield in September 1995 stands with the First Consultation twenty three years earlier as bookends to the reform of Columban missionary and academic formation. But with declining enrolment of those with missionary ambitions, in November 1996 all formal academic programs at Turramurra ended. However, the influence of the Turramurra mission studies programs helped grow the mission education character of the Society.<sup>32</sup>

**Mission Education** – It was a new characteristic of the Society post 1970 to take on a conscious role as teachers of missiology at the parish and school levels.<sup>33</sup> The aim was to share the lived experience of Catholics in the mission churches, telling stories to illustrate their priorities and explain their new theology. Programs challenged Australian Catholics to new responses in faith but also to rejoice in the faith-riches of fellow Catholic communities in mission lands.<sup>34</sup> Columbans consciously acted as a bridge between the new theological praxis emerging in mission churches and ordinary Australian Catholics.<sup>35</sup>

**Three Issues** – Facing three issues in particular were Columban initiatives within the Australian church - capitalist military dictatorships, inter-faith dialogue, and environmental justice.

A near unique Columban contribution was raising awareness in Australia about the connection between military dictatorships and capitalist security states. Columban work areas in South Korea, the Philippines, Peru and Chile were cited as examples of dictatorial systems being courted by Western capitalist countries. This was not often addressed in detail in the secular media and it challenged assumptions about holding back the march of Communism. Columban Brian Gore as part of the Negros Nine case of trumped up murder charges gained local press and raised awareness among Australian Catholics about the evils of military capitalism.

Religious pluralism was still a new area for Catholics even if theologians had come to accept that God wills to grant grace to all and all religions ‘see in a mirror darkly’. Australia had become multi-cultural but needed help with multi-religion. Columbans began with stories from its members in Fiji, Pakistan and East Asia to emphasise dialogue with Islam. Since 1997, CMI has actively pursued face to face dialogue among Abrahamic and other religions, published and provided academic courses.

It was a first when, from 1981, Columban Sean McDonagh lectured at

the PMI on the link between ecological insights and Catholic theology. A Columban ‘Greening of the Gospel’ column appeared in the *Catholic Weekly* in 1990. In 2002 the CMI initiated a *Faith and Ecology Network* which took ecology as a common language for inter-faith dialogue. A preliminary advisory meeting was hosted by Turramurra in 2002 before Catholic Earthcare Australia (CEA) was formed by the Australian bishops the following year.

Facing new mission issues has been the continuous and the conscious work of the Columban Mission Institute (CMI) Sydney since 1997.

**Process of re-defining Columban characteristics** – The China Mission of St Patrick’s Seminary Maynooth has come a long way since 1916 as its character evolved as the Missionary Society of St Columban – clerical and parish supported, China and Asia focused, organised and innovative in promoting overseas mission, serving emerging churches, a new seminary formation system, mission studies that challenged assumptions and opening up the areas of dialogue and ecology to widen church engagement. These characteristics have given the Society a distinctive place within the history of the modern ANZ Catholic missionary movement.

**The future** - However, most of these characteristics have grown to be main stream within the church, resulting in less definable goals for the Columban Society. Its 2012 Assembly named ‘Communion’ as its focus but this is hardly a unique characteristic. The Society may be growing redundant or needs to create a new character:

- Climate Change impacts everything
- China is emerging as an international power
- Migration and slavery are pressing
- Most overseas Missionaries are lay
- Inter-faith dialogue presses
- Catholic Schools are the focus of the Australian Catholic Church ministry
- Professional Mission Studies programs are declining

## Notes

- 1 The main source of this presentation is the doctoral thesis of Charles Rue *Journey to the Margins: the Contribution of the Missionary Society of St Columban to the Theory and Practice of Overseas Mission within the Australia Catholic Church 1920-2000* (ACU) It argues that the Columban Society helped advance the thinking on missionary activity and practice within the Australian church, working with Australian Catholics to push the boundaries of faith in an ongoing 'Journey to the Margins'. New material has been added from the Columban archives Melbourne. Fr Charles Rue charlesrue@columban.org.au phone MB 0408 466 820
- 2 This diocesan model of mission did not depend on patronage or a Religious Order but it was still new within the church, the Paris Foreign Missionaries being a prime example.
- 3 Like the saint, a constant for Columban members was their commitment to mission in Jesus Christ as a meta-narrative lived out within a church structure.
- 4 This thinking was in line with the post WWI Pope Benedict's 1919 mission encyclical *Maximum Illud* #3. The Society was given a former Franciscan responsibility.
- 5 Some historians, such as Australians L. Strahan and A. Broinowski, claimed missions primarily aided western cultural imperialism and its literature fed horror stories to children.
- 6 Decades later in the midst of WWII the Columban magazine editor could confidently claim, "For years, readers of the magazine have been acquainted with China, Burma, Japan, the Philippines ... Looking back over our past issues, we see these names which have since leaped into the headlines".
- 7 The Society chose to take this high profile approach while at the same time creating a warm rapport with its supporters through personal contact by letter and priests "on the road". Enlisting a multitude of parish Catholics making small money offerings, praying and talking about mission in Asia was the bed rock of the Society's success.
- 8 The materials carried a double message: that the Society spread information about the mission needs of China and Asia; and that it collected money, vocations and prayers to support its mission enterprise.
- 9 From 1920 until the present, 10-12 issues of *The Far East* have been published annually totalling more than 25,000 pages of text and photos, a researcher's dream. In the first 12 months the magazine printed 237 photographs. Circulation climbed to 15,000 per issue within a year, reached 35,000 by 1928 and peaked at over 75,000 copies in the early 1960s. A major section was directed towards children. Mickie Daly's Diary was noted for its "funnie langwich", its mis-spellings acting like a cross-word puzzle.
- 10 *Calendar* circulation topped 25,000 within two years and sales peaked at over 200,000 copies in the 1960s.
- 11 The Gospel story of the widow's mite was the source of the name *Mite Box*. The idea was copied in Australia by Catholic Mission, Caritas and other agencies. From the 1960s the Society withdrew its *Mite Box* from schools and parishes during Lent.
- 12 Galvin noted this annoyance in letters. Six lay office staff in 1925 increased to eight

- by 1928 with a priest normally the office manager. A lay person was the accountant-bursar.
- 13 Promoters visited around their parish community to form a Mission League signing up regular supporters, also distributing magazines and collection boxes. Supporters wrote of family concerns and asked for advice which was given by return mail in personalised letters. Calendar sales rocketed in the late 1920s when St Vincent de Paul began selling them at the church door, a work now often done by piety stalls.
  - 14 Some films had been prepared for the Mission Exhibition in Rome that year. From the 1950s the Society expanded its production and use of films to promote understanding of mission work and garner support. Video productions were widely used from the 1970s and given out on loan but ventures into the digital age have been slower.
  - 15 John Blowick was forming the Columban Sisters in Ireland. Discouragement also came from the Society superior and members in China, mainly for financial reasons but also after observing difficulties with young women in Protestant Mission groups.
  - 16 W. Barrett, *The Red Lacquered Gate* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967).
  - 17 There were some 70 Columban priests in China around 1940. Elsewhere numbers peaked in early 1970s at around 240 in the Philippines and 150 in South Korea.
  - 18 Galvin as bishop was a member of a local relief committee of locally based foreign church and business leaders.
  - 19 Galvin, now bishop, attended the Eucharistic Congress 1934. The Essendon House hosted Eucharistic processions. Bishops Quinlan from South Korea and Archbishop Tuc from Vietnam toured giving anti-communist talks. Columbans and other missionaries were expelled from China post-1949 and some were killed by Communists during the Korean War.
  - 20 A house was bought in Lower Hutt near Wellington the next year. Soon after WWII, the Irish influence in New Zealand grew after priests from Ireland arrived in larger numbers. This helped the Columbans. Exactly fifty New Zealand born members have been ordained as Columban missionary priests.
  - 21 Catholic Action initiated by Pope Pius XI brought new thinking. Anti-Communism was part of this stream. Catholic engagement in social institutions like universities was another part of this stream.
  - 22 The dis-connect between spirituality and theology was questioned – rejecting ideas about obedience and self-deprecation imported from some spiritual schools to claim the value of personal responsibility and growing fulfilment.
  - 23 Some Columban priests died of illness in mission countries or were killed in political uprisings. Others returned home as damaged men suffering culture shock or illness but much of their trauma remained undiagnosed and untreated. (Louis Luzbetck SVD)
  - 24 The limitations of a diocesan type of seminary training for Columbans became apparent through the experience of members working overseas. It proved deficient both in offering adequate tools for effective cross-cultural missionaries, and in cultivating attitudes and skills that would help missionaries to be happy and fulfilled in their role without unacceptable human and spiritual cost.

- 25 The Regional leadership gathered new staff, with recent post-graduate degrees and missionary experience. “Formation of participants” rather than “training of students” became the operative phrase. Turrumurra moved to become a formation centre for missionary personnel. The historical Columban link with its Patron’s image of missionaries as “wanderers for Christ” (*peregrinari pro Christo*) was kept but transformed.
- 26 Two major positive spin-offs for the Society globally were how to run an Overseas Training Program (OTP) for seminarians, and formation for inter-cultural living. Turrumurra staff help push through the 1976 General Chapter’s support for a two-year long OTP inserted within the seminary years. OTP began September 1978, mainly with Turrumurra students. The model chosen was for seminarians to study a foreign language overseas and then engage in pastoral work rather than study theology. A second Society-wide positive spin-off of the Turrumurra innovative spirit was formation for inter-cultural living. Recognition of the local cultural background of Society members, non-Irish, had been slow to emerge. However, multi-cultural membership became an accepted post 1980s Society characteristic. The 1982 General Chapter decided to “invite candidates from the local Churches in which we work to become members of our Society and share in our missionary enterprise.” This recognised the emerging capacity of people of former mission churches to follow a unique form of missionary service that was not religious.
- 27 The need was real since there was no renewal, updating or re-entry courses offered in Australia for its nearly 1,700 Catholic missionaries. An Open Day was held at the College for Mission Sunday 1972 and by 1976 it had blossomed into a Mission Exhibition.
- 28 Teachers were contracted from outside the College to ensure that it had a competent staff and students came from other Catholic institutes. The seminary helped forge a new Columban identity within this plurality. Sexual issues were directly addressed. Most of the Catholic Church had been caught off guard by the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s, or at least its new openness about sex.
- 29 This new identity for Columbans did not come about without opposition including that from many senior members in the Society. Questions about priesthood, missionary and human fulfilment arose as the new mission formation methods were being created. In total, the number of students from the Region who did at least a year in a Columban seminary 1920-1996 overseas or in Australia was 460 of whom 169 were ordained or 37 per cent.
- 30 One spin-off was to assist returned missionaries go through a period of de-briefing and adjustment before re-entering into their home church or returning overseas. Another group who benefited was the Columban Lay Missionary Program. The PMI name was changed to Columban Mission Institute (CMI) in 1992.
- 31 In 1977 Turrumurra and the Marist-led Catholic United Theological College based at Hunters Hill joined together so that the two campuses formed the Union Theological Institute (UTI).
- 32 Between 1974 and 1996 over 900 people had participated in residential mission studies programs, plus hundreds of non-residential students 1985-1996. In addition, as

participants and staff scattered around the world, they spread the insights of mission studies to every continent, a Columban contribution to the Australian missionary movement.

33 It was variously called Popular Missiology, Mission Education, Mission Awareness, Mission in Focus or Reverse Mission. Mission in Focus had teams of returned missionaries do month long programs in Australian parishes 1973-1976 financed by National Mission Council (NMC).

34 Justice, Development and Peace teaching was growing within the official church as a Vatican II way to engage the world. What will a post-Communist world look like? How does capitalism need to be restrained by social objectives? How does military capitalism operate? What does the cry for liberation mean? What is the church's preferential option for the poor? How are ecological insights and faith linked? How is preaching the Gospel being re-defined as dialogue?

35 A central Society Justice and Peace Office (J&P) provided backup publications. The ANZ Region in 1977 assigned a priest to the work fulltime then various teams operated from Melbourne. Staff in Catholic schools became a focus in the mid-1980s and a curriculum expert teacher employed.

# THE HISTORY OF THE PONTIFICAL MISSIONS IN AUSTRALIA – WHAT THE PAST CAN TEACH THE FUTURE

Brian Lucas\*

## Abstract

In 1983 James Waldersee published *A Grain of Mustard Seed*, a comprehensive history of the association of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith with the early Australian Church.

Themes which emerge in that history include: the tension between funding specific projects and the universal solidarity fund; Australian missions as recipients of funding; accountability for donations; reports on the outcomes of projects; priorities among competing missions; relief of the poor set against the conversion of pagans. This paper takes up of some of these themes as they play out at present and explore the way in which they can inform decisions about the future direction of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Australia.

This will involve a brief outline of the contemporary theology of mission; changes to the traditional/previous understanding of the work of “mission and missionaries”, the relationship between humanitarian/development aid and mission; and the challenges to established patterns of church fundraising.

Catholic Mission is the ‘brand’ in Australia encapsulating the four Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS).

Each of the Pontifical Mission Societies has had a presence in Australia since shortly after their foundation.

I will begin with some brief background to the four Societies.

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith was founded by Pauline Jaricot in France in 1820. Especially through the Universal Solidarity Fund it enables ‘the faithful of various continents to engage in prayer and concrete gestures of solidarity in support of the young Churches in mission lands,’ as Pope Francis said in his World Mission Day Message 2015.

The Holy Childhood Society began with Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson also in the 19th century. He had an interest in the rescue of abandoned babies in China. Some may recall the days when many Catholic classrooms

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had fundraising boxes to support the missions. That need is pressing today as we see children very much the victims of the world's injustices. 'Children helping children' still resonates with pupils in our Catholic Schools.

The Society of St Peter the Apostle assists seminaries and novitiates in countries under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. It had its origins in the last decade of the 19th century due to the enthusiasm of a mother-daughter combination, Stephanie and Jeanne Bigard. They financed a church in Japan and then became aware of another pressing need, financing the education of local priests in mission lands.

The fourth society is the Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU). Unlike the three earlier foundations which call for regular prayers and financial support for the missions, the PMU, founded by Paolo Manna in 1916, has as its aim the development of a sense of mission among members of the local church.

In 1983 James Waldersee published *A Grain of Mustard Seed*. It is a comprehensive history of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith from 1837 – 1977 and its connection with the Australian Church.

Some of the themes that we find in Waldersee's history have relevance still today. There are three which I will discuss in this paper:

1. The tension between funding specific projects and the universal solidarity fund
2. Australian missions as recipients of funding and the justification for retaining money for the Australian Home Mission Fund
3. Relief of the poor set against the conversion of pagans

I shall spend just a few minutes on each with a view to explaining how the old adage "history repeats itself" is fulfilled in our own time. From our appreciation of the past we can, perhaps, formulate some better policy for the future.

### **1. The tension between funding specific projects and the universal solidarity fund**

It was Pauline Jaricot's firm conviction that the funds that she and her band of followers raised would be available to the general mission effort of the Church. At the very beginning this caused controversy.

By way of background, in France a pious society of laymen known as La Congregation founded in 1802, was revived after the fall of Emperor Napoleon. It engaged in charitable works and in 1817 Pauline's brother

Phileas joined. Associated with it was a wealthy businessman, Benoit Coste. In about 1818, Fr Rondot from the Mission Etrangeres approached Coste as president of La Congregation, to found a society to support the missions in the Far East. At the same time Bishop Louis Dubourg was seeking support for his diocese in Louisiana. Educated in the seminary of St Suplice, he had fled to Baltimore during the Revolution and was now looking to his home country to find support for his diocese. Coste was perplexed. Which of these two good causes is deserving of support?

Waldersee quotes Coste's book which recounts his involvement in the establishment of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith – *Souvenirs de l'establissement de L'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la foi*. Coste explains his dilemma:

Supposing for a moment that Mgr Dubourg's overtures were crowned with success, should we not expect that in the future, every bishop and every mission that seeks resources, encouraged by this example, will come to ask for a new association to be formed? How then could we satisfy all these associations, multiplied to infinity?"<sup>1</sup>

So we find today exactly the same dilemma as various dioceses, religious orders and lay organisations compete to fund their own projects. As well, enthusiastic parishioners often travel, find a worthwhile project, and then come back to their home parish with a zeal to raise funds. Bishops in mission places will frequently send their envoys to the first world to preach and fundraise. Foreign born priests are naturally inclined to support fundraising for their home country's needs.

When Mgr Albert Reuben Edward Thomas was National Director of the PMS in Australia he railed against this particularism and what he called the "mission of choice". In his 1969 report he wrote:<sup>2</sup>

Today people are so self-centred that even in their charity they wish to have some self-satisfaction. Hence they prefer to give to a specific need or project than to give to a world-wide fund such as the Holy Father's Propagation of the Faith. Its responsibility of providing the ordinary sustenance for missionaries, today, for people with a dwindling faith, has not the attraction it had formerly.

We need to situate these somewhat harsh words within their historical context and the particular competition that faced Mgr Thomas, especially from the newly established Project Compassion appeals. I will return to that point later.

Without doubt it is more attractive for donors to give to a specific and identifiable project. They see the photographs and have firsthand testimony.

However, the result is that those who have the best marketing, the loudest voices, the resources to mount campaigns, are rewarded and those missions that are the most in need often miss out.

The aim of the Propagation of the Faith universal solidarity fund is fulfil the original aim to have a fund to “aid all the missions of the world”.<sup>3</sup>

How we find a compromise between that need and the reality of how and why people give is an ongoing challenge.

## **2. Australian missions as recipients of funding and the justification for retaining money for the Australian Home Mission Fund**

As well as expressing his perplexity about a universal fund or funding specific missions, Benoit Coste identified the other basic dilemma of church fundraising:<sup>4</sup>

What answer could be given to those who would object that although it was true that we are bound through the bonds of charity to all the Catholic Churches in the world, nevertheless it is no less certain that we should give preference to our own county; that before going to seek out a particular church eighteen hundred leagues away in the United States, for the purpose of bestowing alms on it, we should first be able to provide all that is needed to remove entirely our own distress and that of our neighbours.

This dilemma played out dramatically in Australia in the 1920s when the Pontifical Mission Societies were formally established in Rome. There was pressure on the local bishops to abandon the local collections in favour of the Propagation of the Faith collection.

An explanation of the origin of the establishment of what is now known as the “Home Mission Fund” is set out in a paper dated 11 April 1995, prepared by the then assistant secretary of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Fr Bill Wright (as he then was). This confirms the explanation given by Bishop Patrick Dougherty in an address he gave to the National Conference of Diocesan Directors of the PMS on 1 September 1982.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to 1927 the Australian Bishops conducted multiple collections for purposes that might broadly be regarded as “missionary”, including for Aboriginal people, immigrants and people in remote places. There are references to the Kimberly Mission and to establishing an extension fund. The meeting of the Hierarchy in March 1925 specifically refers to establishing “a Home Mission Fund” to serve “Aboriginal and scattered white missions”.

In 1927, following representations from the Apostolic Nuncio to

the Congregation of Propaganda, the Australian Bishops agreed at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Hierarchy on 15 September 1927, to the proposal put forward by the Congregation to suppress the multiple collections for the African Mission, the Aboriginals and the Home Mission Fund. The intention was to concentrate on promoting the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. The agreement to suppress the collections for local purposes was “with the proviso that a percentage of the revenue - one third – might be retained here” for such purposes.

Interestingly the notes refer to a “lengthy discussion” which perhaps suggests that there may have been conflicting views about the wisdom of suppressing the local collections in favour of the proposal that all effort be given to the Roman based appeal.

So it is, that as at today, one third of the revenue raised for the Propagation of the Faith remains available for use in Australian missionary projects, especially in Broome and other dioceses that have significant indigenous programmes.

The bishops have abandoned the original premise that the Propagation of the Faith collection would replace other collections. Today, in the parish where we are now meeting, Catholic Mission competes with numerous other collections: three Archdiocesan Charitable Works Fund appeals; Project Compassion for the six weeks of Lent; Special collections for the Holy Father, retired priests, and the Holy Places on Good Friday; Jesuit Mission and three other Jesuit good works; and Winter and Christmas appeals for the St Vincent de Paul Society.

This is a crowded space and we need to be more agile in working out how to finance the various needs of the apostolate without simply drawing on the generosity of the mass going faithful.

### **3. Relief of the poor set against the conversion of pagans**

In 1870, Bishop Matthew Quinn of Bathurst wrote to the Paris Council of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.<sup>6</sup> He recounted the devastation caused by floods and the impact on farmers who have lost everything and “been thrown on the charity of the community”. He asked for an increase in the allocation to his diocese. This did not eventuate as the Council seized on the fact that he, at his own expense, brought 10 priests and 15 nuns to the diocese. He had sufficient means, so they thought. The Lyons Council went further and gave him nothing.

Subsequently Quinn wrote again to the Paris Council but this time to commiserate with the people of France who had suffered in the Franco-

Prussian war. He very generously suggested that any allocation to Bathurst be given for the relief of the poor in France.<sup>7</sup> The reply made the point very strongly that even if there was to be a grant to Bathurst it could not be diverted to the poor:<sup>8</sup>

It would be out of our power to devote the subsidy allowed to a mission, even with the authorization of a worthy missionary bishop, for the relief of the poor, since the funds which Catholic charity entrust to us have only one purpose: whatever our own needs may be, the alms of the Propagation of the Faith can never be used for any other object than to support the apostolate in those lands that are pagan or ruled by a heretic government.

Today this issue is still with us. Does Catholic Mission confine itself to only supporting specifically ecclesiastical activity – building churches, funding seminaries, educating catechists, or does it support the broader work of missions as they serve the local people through education, health, welfare and development programmes.

For a moment I will digress and mention the impact on the PMS of the establishment of Australian Catholic Relief (now Caritas Australia) by the Australian Bishops in 1965 and the resultant competition from Project Compassion and confusion as to the roles of each organisation.<sup>9</sup> In response to questions about the difference between the two agencies, my counterpart, Paul O'Callaghan and I have an agreed response:

Catholic Mission and Caritas Australia are separate, but important missionary agencies of the Catholic Church globally. The work of each agency complements the other and they share many of the same supporters in Australia.

The global Catholic Mission network works closely with the local Bishops Conference in each country and reports to the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples in Rome, whilst each agency in the global Caritas network reports to the Bishops Conference in its own country.

Funds raised by Caritas Australia assist communities, regardless of their religion, to strengthen their capacities and independence through long term programs, with a focus on sustainable livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, and protection of vulnerable children, women and men. In response to international disasters, the primary Caritas focus is on providing food, water, health care and shelter to impacted communities, as well as helping them recover for the longer term.

Funds raised by Catholic Mission support local churches and

communities through spiritual, pastoral and building programs, the training and formation of priests, religious, and catechists, care for vulnerable children, and promoting and forming people for mission. Following a disaster, Catholic Mission assists in a range of ways, including supporting pastoral initiatives and the rebuilding of church infrastructure.

The current Statutes of the Pontifical Mission Societies take a broader view of what constitutes mission in line with a more modern missiology: Among the various ways in which the missionary commitment of the Church is practiced is “reaching out to the marginalised and the concrete service of love” [statutes n.3].

Notwithstanding that the main objective of the PMS is “the support of evangelization in the strict sense” [statutes n.19], involvement in such areas as human promotion and development and collaboration with other Catholic bodies devoted to social and health assistance is not excluded [statutes n.19].

#### **4. The future of mission**

The 18th and 19th century view of mission, to use a simple stereotype, was a white priest, brother or nun, heading into the homelands of uncivilised peoples to convert them to Christianity. By the twentieth century the world had changed.

The Pontifical Mission Societies had to adjust as well. The type of mission that would be funded from the central fund needed a broader definition.

By way of example one could consider the mission of the Good Samaritan Sisters to Nagasaki after the second world war. They were not attempting to civilise the savage. They went to assist the local bishop who was anxious that they found a school. Initially their request for funding was refused – Japan was not a mission territory in the traditional sense – even though the war had left the church in disarray. Eventually they did receive some assistance from the Society of Holy Childhood.

Or one might consider the presence of Chinese clergy in Sydney in the 1960s ministering to students. Fr Pascal Chang was successful in obtaining a grant from PMS for the running costs of the Asiana Centre in Ashfield.

One could regard these two examples as anomalies but they illustrate that funding good works can be difficult when there are predetermined criteria about who is responsible for what. The PMS cannot do everything and meet every need and it is a work in progress for them to define their

priorities.

I might conclude with just one passage from Vatican II and *Ad Gentes* (n.6)

“Missions” is the term usually given to those particular undertakings by which the heralds of the Gospel, sent out by the Church and going forth into the whole world, carry out the task of preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ. These undertakings are brought to completion by missionary activity and are mostly exercised in certain territories recognized by the Holy See . . .

In this missionary activity of the Church various stages sometimes are found side by side: first, that of the beginning or planting, then that of newness or youth. When these have passed, the Church’s missionary activity does not cease, but there lies upon the particular churches already set up the duty of continuing this activity and of preaching the Gospel to those still outside.

Moreover, the groups among which the Church dwells are often radically changed, for one reason or other, so that an entirely new set of circumstances may arise. Then the Church must deliberate whether these conditions might again call for her missionary activity. Besides, circumstances are sometimes such that, for the time being, there is no possibility of expounding the Gospel directly and forthwith. Then, of course, missionaries can and must at least bear witness to Christ by charity and by works of mercy, with all patience, prudence and great confidence. Thus they will prepare the way for the Lord and make Him somehow present.

The PMS, in Australia through Catholic Mission, supports those Churches that are new and young and poor.

**Notes**

- 1 James Waldersee, *A Grain of Mustard Seed* (Kensington: Chevalier Press 1983 reprinted 2000) 24 citing Benoit Coste, *Souvenirs de l'establissement de L'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la foi*.
- 2 Waldersee, op cit 417.
- 3 Waldersee, op cit 25 citing Coste op cit.
- 4 Waldersee, op cit 24 citing Coste op cit.
- 5 ACBC Archives – Catholic Mission correspondence.
- 6 Quinn to the Treasurer for the Central Council of Paris 12 July 1870, cited by Waldersee op cit 246.
- 7 Quinn to the Treasurer for the Central Council of Paris 1 April 1871, cited by Waldersee op cit 246.
- 8 The Treasurer for the Central Council of Paris to Quinn 4 august 1871, cited by Waldersee op cit 246.
- 9 Waldersee op cit 417 citing the 1967 report by the National Director Mgr A R E Thomas.

## SAMPLING RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES' CONTRIBUTION TO MISSION

### Panel presentation

**Sr Moira O'Sullivan rsc, Fr Thomas Ritchie ofm,  
Sr Mary Campion op, Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc**

Sr Moira O'Sullivan summarises the various eras of religious engagement with missionary activity through an overview written by Fr Cyril Hally SSC, adding her experience of the time since Hally wrote. Following Sr Moira the other three presenters spoke on their experiences: Rev. Tom Ritchie ofm, in Aitape, Papua New Guinea; Sr Mary Campion op, in the Solomon Islands; Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc, in South Sudan

### **Moira O'Sullivan\***

Based on Fr Cyril Hally SSC, *An Overview of Australian Catholic Missionary Activity*, 1998.

**19th Century:** South Pacific predominantly Protestant; Australia regarded as mission territory by Vatican (until Dec 1976); mission work province of missionary, especially religious, congregations (until 1960s). Institutes active: 1845 Marist Fathers; 1858 Marist Sisters; PIME; 1882 MSCs, OLSH; 1890 Josephite Sisters to Maoris in NZ ; 1902 RSCJ Sisters to Latin America in 1902, 1907 to Japan; 1906 Redemptorists to PI; SVD procure in Australia. [Hally did not include English and Spanish Benedictines, Pallotines, Sisters of Charity and Mercy, Benedictine nuns, other individual religious, those from the Irish seminaries of Maynooth and All Hallows which were specifically aimed at providing diocesan mission priests.]

**After World War I:** 1920 Columbans to Australia (but more to Japan); from 1929 MSCs to eastern portion of PNG and neighbouring islands; Marist Brothers to the Solomon Islands 1938.

\* After secondary teaching and theological and biblical study in Rome, Moira lectured in theological colleges and seminaries in Sydney and PNG. She did her PhD on the conflicts faced by Sisters of Charity in Australia, 1838-1859. At present, her main interest is the history of her Congregation.

**World War II – 1975:** Missionary expansion in PNG: 1946 Franciscan Fathers, De La Salle Brothers; 1950 Christian Brothers; 1948 Columbans and Good Samaritans to Japan; 1949 Marist Fathers and MSCs to Japan, also, temporarily, diocesan priests from Sydney, Port Pirie, Perth; 1952 Jesuits to northern India. 1952 missionaries expelled from China. 1949 close of the modern missionary era. 1950s and 1960s: explosion of missionary activity, particularly non-clerical, mostly religious sisters and lay missionaries. [Impact of Pius XII.] Effect of governmental and NGO socio-economic development assistance in Third World countries. Paulian Association. Peace Corps. Action for World Development. The psychological climate for missionaries changed from positive to negative. 1972 National Missionary Council Conference: concern over 'lack of adequate missionary formation', absence of cohesion: 68 different agencies. Before this the mission to Aborigines was usually done by overseas religious institutes, often not Anglo-Catholic.

**1975-1988:** Fewer religious (Sisters 74% down), but more countries to which missionaries went (from 39 to 61), with the largest increase in Africa (from 8 to 25 countries). Number of lay missionaries constant. The coming of independence and/or rise of nationalism gradually phased missionaries out of jobs that could be done by nationals, so missionaries often took short-term enterprises. Jesuits set up Jesuit Asian Bureau in Australia, then Jesuit Refugee Service in Rome.

First of all, I'll mention two or three points from the conference booklet's summary of Fr Hally's 1998 overview of mission activity in the Pacific,<sup>1</sup> and then comment about the experience of one Australian congregation, the Sisters of Charity, for the period after 1998. In the next segment of this session, we'll hear three speakers' personal mission stories.

Some will remember that some Catholics in the 1940s and 1950s believed the non-baptised could not enter heaven and this fuelled missionary zeal.<sup>2</sup> Many Catholics wanted to be missionaries, while those at home raised money to help them. There was almost a universal urge to help the missions.

Early missionaries tended to share colonisers' conviction that European civilisation was superior. For example, Dutch expelled from what is now Indonesia could not understand why they were hated, saying: 'But we built them roads, schools, and hospitals.' There was no partnership, just condescension.

Hally's outline reminds us how the world was at the beginning of the 19th

century. Missionaries were mainly from Europe, for example, Spaniards and Portuguese in the main, following explorers and colonists from their nation. When Britain began taking colonies in Africa, north America and the South Pacific, its missionaries followed, except that in this case the missionaries were Protestant. Catholic Emancipation was not granted in England until 1829, though Britain allowed Catholic chaplains to go to New Holland as early as 1820, and even a bishop in 1832. Anti-Catholic persecutions in places like Germany and France helped send more workers from Europe to the missions.

The end of the modern missionary era arose partly when people began to realise the values in non-Europeans and in those of other denominations and faiths. Catholics in general, particularly children of mixed marriages, realised the goodness and integrity of their non-Catholic parents and friends and could not accept that God sends them to hell. Vatican II documents that talked of religious liberty and the dignity of each person further undermined the conviction that the western world's civilisation was superior.

Missionaries learned to adapt their thinking and their approaches. Just as the early Christian world adapted features of paganism for its own purposes, new missionaries began seeking what was valuable in what they found, instead of sweeping it all away. One Indian priest, for example, wrote on how to adopt certain features of the Hindu feast of lights, Divali, for the Christian celebration of Christmas. After more than a quarter century of lecturing in biblical studies in Australia, I was challenged by seminarians in PNG, who asked questions that had never before occurred to me, making me see texts in a new light. Incidentally, some there were amongst the most intelligent students I have had.

Hally's account notes how world trends, like economic aid to under-developed nations, had consequences for missionaries, for whether they were admitted principally for building schools and providing health care, or whether their gospel teaching was equally acceptable. Paradoxically, missionary success is best achieved when a church becomes truly localised, making outsiders redundant.

Sisters of Charity were not a missionary congregation, though five of us came to New Holland as early as 1838, but in the 20th century we responded to Pope Pius XII's challenge to be missionary, accepting an invitation in 1957 to train Fijian national Sisters as teachers. This was a group enterprise, like our later ventures in PNG. More recently, individual Sisters joined with the Irish Sisters of Charity or other groups where there was need for short term missionary involvements.

The map on the front cover shows the places we have gone since, whether singly or in communities.

## **Notes**

- 1 Cyril Hally, 'An Overview of Australian Catholic Missionary Activity' in *This Gospel Shall Be Preached: Essays on the Australian Contribution to World Mission*, ed. M. Hutchinson & G. Treloar (Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1998), 232-241.
- 2 This fuelled the popular joke about a man who did not want to enter heaven without a tour. An angel took him through the sections, pointing out, 'These are the Baptists, these are the Presbyterians, these are the Anabaptists, these are the Methodists, here are the Masons,' and so on. Eventually the angel said, 'Now you have to be really quiet and not say a word until I tell you.' Facing them was a huge wall. Through a peephole, the tourist saw another group, just as happy and luxuriously housed as every other group he'd seen. When they were far enough away, he said, 'But they were doing exactly what all the others were doing. Why is there a huge wall around them and why did I have to keep quiet while we were nearby?' The angel explained: 'They're the Catholics, and they think they're the only ones here.'

## A FRANCISCAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO MISSION, MY MISSIONARY WORK IN PNG

**Thomas Ritchie\***

### **Abstract**

Fr Ritchie was ordained in 1965 as a Franciscan Priest; by March 1 in 1967 he arrived in Port Moresby to remain working in PNG till the end of 2011. He was the 44th Franciscan working in PNG at that time. All but eight were from Australia. At the time he arrived there were over 40 Sisters and over 40 lay-missionaries working in Aitape Diocese. From the beginning the Friars tried to maintain monastic style of communities. But there was too much pressure from the example of the SVDs, and the threat of the Protestant missionaries.

By 1968 he was stationed on his own in a parish in the Torricelli Mountains accessible only by plane. It was busy but lonely. After three and a half years he was told by radio to be ready to move to Lumi parish. The people were mainly baptised as Catholics but practice was low. Minimal instruction had not elicited a deep faith. The missionaries were now being influenced by the Second Vatican Council in attitudes to sharing the faith and in approach to liturgy and culture.

In 1975 PNG became independent, but already by 1973 there was the Self-study of the Church in PNG and also expats were not required in primary school. He saw an opportunity and realised the potential of a pastoral team. During his time the order grew from a foreign Mission to an indigenous entity with around 30 national Friars.

Even as a young religious I became interested in becoming a missionary in the Franciscan mission in New Guinea. It seemed to come as a natural development for me as my father had been a lay missionary with the MSC's on Bathurst Island before he married and from the time I was born in 1939, my parents were working for the Aboriginal Welfare Board. My carers and my only companions, till I was 8, were Aborigines at Kinchella and later. on the reserve at Brewarrina.

At 7am on March 1 in 1967 I arrived on an Electra in Port Moresby to remain working in PNG till the end of 2011. I was the 44th Franciscan working in PNG at that time. All but eight were from Australia. Only two,

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\* Fr Thomas Ritchie was born in Sydney in 1939. He became a Franciscan and was ordained Priest in 1965. He worked as a missionary in Papua New Guinea for 45 years from 1967. He saw the Franciscan mission grow into an indigenous entity.

who were chaplains, and two formators worked outside Aitape Diocese. I was the last arrival to remain committed for my working life. Later Franciscans came for periods of time and returned to Australia. At the time I arrived there were over 40 Religious Sisters and over 40 lay-missionaries working in Aitape Diocese.

From the beginning the Friars tried to maintain monastic style of communities. But there was too much pressure from the example of the SVDs, and the stress to keep expanding to beat the threat of the Protestant missionaries who came into the West Sepik in the 1950's. Soon many were living alone in parishes. By 1968 I was stationed on my own in a parish at Yanungen in the Torricelli Mountains accessible only by plane or jungle track. I spent about three hours daily attending to the sick and injured in a medical clinic; I kept a lower primary school running with 70 boarders; I did regular pastoral visits to a second parish centre, Monadin, 5 hours walk away, and eleven outstations. I also helped out for weeks at a time on the Sepik River, where I almost drowned in a huge whirl-pool. At the same time I was responsible for building a new Air-strip and teachers' houses. Finance came from a small parish store and donations I could elicit from Australia. Monthly supplies and mail were flown in if a plane was available. One year there was no plane for five months. Life was busy but lonely.

After three and a half years I was told by radio to be ready to move to Lumi parish when the plane arrived the next day. No farewells, no time to tidy up. Lumi was a central station in the mountains. There was a Franciscan Brother, Sisters, a Government patrol officer with a few police, a Government hospital, a full Catholic primary school, and a larger all weather airstrip.

The people were mainly baptised as Catholics but practice was low. Minimal instruction had not elicited a deep faith. We missionaries were now being influenced by the Second Vatican Council in attitudes to sharing the faith, in approach to liturgy, respect for culture and new theology of church.

1975 was the year of independence for Papua New Guinea with huge implications for the country and our future. Before that, 1973 was an important year for us. We had the results of the Self-study of the Church in PNG. One of the chief findings was that everyone needed to realise "We ourselves are the Church", not just bishops, priests, sisters and brothers. Also in 1973 the government decided that expatriate teachers were no longer required in primary schools. From this decision resulted a big fall in lay-missionary numbers and the release of a large number of religious

Sisters no longer required as teachers. Many were looking for a new outlet for their commitment.

I saw an opportunity and realised we could team up and form a pastoral team with a local catechist and give more intensive instruction in the form of village retreats. We worked at building our team and the idea spread around our diocese then I was asked to go with our team to the adjoining diocese at Wewak and run seminars on forming pastoral teams.

Around the early part of the 1970's five of our Franciscan priests working in Aitape Diocese left the ministry and married. This led to much soul searching among the Friars and the awareness that in our eagerness for the apostolate we had neglected prayer and community life. This did lead to some revitalisation of our religious life but some Friars held that we were meant to be missionaries and not to lead community life. But gradually there was a change in attitude to recognise the important support in community life, and this was linked with the importance of having communities for our indigenous Friars to live in.

We began to receive vocations in the mid-sixties. Sending them to Australia for formation was not a success so we set up formation houses in PNG, first in Aitape and then in Moresby. During my time we grew from a foreign Mission to a national entity with around 30 national Friars.

In 1971 I had attended my first Human Relations Workshop in PNG. I found it interesting and became a Human Relations facilitator. In 1978 I studied counselling at the Ateneo University in Manila and then I did a CPE unit to prepare for formation work. Counselling and Pastoral Care became life-long interests. I conducted scores of counselling courses. During 1986 to '90 I trained in Sydney as a supervisor in Clinical Pastoral Education and conducted many CPE pastoral training programs in Australia, Papua New Guinea and Hong Kong. I continue to be involved to some extent in this work.

In 1998 after the Tsunami in Aitape which killed 2,000 and devastated the lives of another 9,000 I established a trauma counselling centre and later a counselling training centre which I directed for 12 years and which still operates there.

The counselling work was not my main work. My main work for 19 years was formation work in postulancy, novitiate and seminary. For six years I was the Provincial for the Franciscans in PNG – that was 1997 to 2003. My last six years in PNG, 2005 to 2011, were in our retreat centre, Banaule, in West New Britain. There I gave retreats and also counselling and therapy and did a big job of maintenance. When I left I knew it was

time. I was the last expatriate priest and the last expatriate religious in the Kimbe Diocese. I was called 'Bubu', Grandfather. But mainly it was repeated illnesses, malaria, chest infections, cellulitis, and the difficulties of the life that determined I needed to leave PNG and return to Australia. I departed with a sense of fulfilment and with thanksgiving in my heart.

## EXPERIENCES OF MISSION IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

### Mary Campion\*

At the invitation of the Marist Fathers, four Dominican Sisters, two lay Missionaries and four Dominican Friars went to the Solomon Islands in 1956. They were all Australian.

While the Sisters taught in primary schools, the Friars worked as parish priests, the lay missionaries gave medical care.

In 1980 I began my four years in the Solomons. By this time Solomonese women had joined our Congregation called later Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands. Those young Sisters had been educated by our Australian Sisters to junior secondary level. If we provided a teacher for the Catholic full secondary school in Honiara, the country's capital, our Sisters could finish their secondary education while living in a Dominican community. That's why I was asked to go there.

I have been asked to share my experiences in the Solomons. I had taught in co-ed secondary schools, but was intrigued by this being a co-ed boarding school. The students were friendly, studious and well disciplined.

They spent days preparing the school feast, baking the meat and vegetables outside under leaves. To my surprise there was very little conversation at the feast. I said "In Australia we have a good talk during the meal, but you just eat and go". Their reply "For us, the fun and the chatting are in the working together to prepare the meal". Indeed, Solomon Islanders have a great sense of community; they can teach us a *lot* about it!

Do any of you know a school which has a pet crocodile? We had *Oscar*, under frail wire in a small pond. He later was lost, stolen or he strayed.

The school's Holy Week liturgy was unforgettable. On Good Friday, the chapel interior was covered in greenery. A student, in custom dress blew a conch shell to welcome the huge cross. We knew to bring a flower. The cross was carried in to the accompaniment of pan pipes. Into the spikes of the palms on the cross we placed our flowers, transforming the tree of death into a tree of life.

Solomons' time differs from our time. The students invited teachers to dinner. We teachers from Pakistan, USA, Scotland, Australia, England and

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\*Sr Mary Campion OP. has a B.A. Dip Ed. (Sydney) and a pontifical diploma of Sacred Sciences (Rome). Her studies at Regina Mundi put her in Rome during Vatican II. She taught in secondary schools as well as the Dominican Teachers' College, Canberra, then worked with asylum seekers in the 1970s. She lived and taught in the Solomon Islands 1980-1983.

New Zealand arrived before or at 6pm.

Someone asked, "Why are you here now? You should know . . . in the Solomons time, 6pm means *never* before or at 6pm - any time later.

One of the funniest incidents in my teaching career happened in that school. The class had to know The Acts of the Apostles very well. To my question, "What did they do when John Mark came to the door?" someone replied, "They gave him a megapode egg." The class erupted in laughter. You see, we had a John Mark in that class. He came from Savo, home of the megapode.

The attitude to names is different from that in Australia. Students changed their names at the drop of a hat. One boy said, "I'm not Sadat (President of Egypt) this week, Sister. I'm so and so." In desperation, I would plead: "Will you please put on your essays the name used when you enrolled." One unusual name was Alphonsus Punia Frank Clayton.

No-one who has lived in the Solomons would forget boat travel there. In the larger boats we sat or lay on the floor of a below decks room for the 30 hours journey from Honiara to Gizo in the west. In the small open boats, which traded clothes etc for copra around the many islands, you lay on top of the hold, praying you would not get sea-sick.

One Sister and I were in a motorized canoe on the open sea at 4am with the canoe owner. Because of rough seas, we had to beach the canoe and walk home.

We have had many vocations from the Solomons. It came as a surprise when I realised we have 80 Australian Sisters and 30 Solomonese Sisters now. In my third year in the Solomons I joined a team of three Australian Sisters and one Friar in giving a course in religious subjects to our Sisters and men joining seminaries.

There was on a small island, Moli, quite isolated. One day I walked to the far side of Moli and prayed "God, You said; 'Take the Gospel to the ends of the earth'. This sure is it". We had inside kitchens, but we often cooked in an outside, dirt floor kitchen, baking in an oven which was a large oil drum on its side. We wanted our Sisters to retain some village customs, just as they do in liturgy.

These days we are working with our Solomonese Sisters towards their independence from us. Our leadership team and our business manager travel often to the Solomons to confer with Sisters there. They and we wish to retain some ties to each other. We join others to give courses up there as well.

Santa Sabina College staff and students have stayed in the Solomons for

short times to experience the culture and allow people there to experience ours. Scholarships are given to students from the tertiary level Dominican Providence College in the USA. These enable Americans to use their skills in various projects and to learn from the people of what have been called "The Happy Isles". The new Archbishop of Honiara is an American Dominican, Chris Cordone.

Some of you will be members of the new group, which works for action on climate change in the Pacific. God grant that group success.

I thank God for my time among these beautiful people of the Solomons. They taught me so much.

## TWO MONTHS WITH *SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH SUDAN*

Annette Cunliffe\*

### Abstract

The *Solidarity With South Sudan* project of the Union of Superiors General (Unions of the leaders of men's and women's religious Institutes (USG and UISG) involves Religious men and women from a range of countries who work together to build capacity amongst local adults in the world's newest country. Annette volunteered to work for two months in their in-service program. This enables teachers who have not had the opportunity to gain qualifications due to the 30-year civil war to attain a Certificate over four years. She was also able to visit a number of "Solidarity" sites and learn about their work in health and agriculture.

While in Rome on one occasion I heard about a project, now called *Solidarity with South Sudan [Solidarity]*. Its vision is not the traditional one of different congregations coming in and setting up schools, hospitals and other ministries. Instead it is a combined effort under the sponsorship of the International organisations of Women's and Men's Congregational Leadership groups (USG – the Union of Superiors General of men and UISG the women's equivalent). This effort commenced even before South Sudan obtained its independence in 2011.

The Country is situated in East-Central Africa, north from about 4° North of the Equator so the climate is very hot with a significant rainy season, though some mountainous parts are more temperate. In Rumbek, where I taught for the two winter months, the average maximum temperature was generally above 40°C.

Despite having gained independence the political situation is very unstable with corruption and violence extremely common and many outbreaks of fighting between different militias. Poverty is extremely widespread, due to lack of spending on infrastructure, despite its being an oil-rich country. It has a large Catholic population and religion is important to the people.

The *Solidarity* website states that its vision is of "Religious congregations together training teachers, nurses, midwives, local farmers and community leaders in the youngest country in the world." This vision excited me

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\* Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc is a Sister of Charity whose qualifications are in education, mathematics and science. After secondary and tertiary teaching, she now serves as Executive Officer of the National Committee for Professional Standards.

and I felt that I might be able to make a small contribution, as my former ministries involved both pre-service and in-service teacher education.

English is now the official language and the language of instruction, though it is the third language for most teachers and students. Previously Arabic was the official language, and they have their own indigenous languages, such as Dinka, as their first language.

Within *Solidarity*, community living is a centrepiece – with male and female religious from a range of congregations from different countries – Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada, South Africa and other African nations, and some from South American countries - sharing in communities in a number of locations.

The Australian contribution is considerable, with Br Bill Firman fsc having the role of the Executive Director, and a number of other Australians involved. Two other Australian Sisters of Charity have contributed: one in both pre-service and in-service teaching for a year, another running a clinic in Makpandu refugee camp for internally displaced people.

During the civil war, of over thirty years, no pre-service teaching courses were available, so men and women have simply been appointed by their communities to take on the work of teaching. In addition to providing



a traditional pre-service teaching course, *Solidarity* therefore conducts an in-service course in their own facility at Yambio (and previously in Malakal until this facility became too unsafe) but had also been asked to provide it in the Diocese of Rumbek, which is almost in the centre of the country.

This in-service course requires the teachers to give up two months, almost all their long (winter) holiday, each year for four years to gain a basic

teaching certificate. I was delighted to be accepted to teach in this course in Jan/Feb 2015 in Rumbek where there were two groups who were up to their third and their fourth (final) year of the course.



Our team consisted of three Australians – a lay man and two Sisters. Teaching was in a hall divided into two – with the larger section boasting a ceiling, while the smaller section only had the corrugated iron roof!

Because of distances and the challenges of travel, the participants were required to live at the venue, though several were able to travel home for one or more weekends. This posed challenges for all, but especially for those female students who were breastfeeding their youngest children. To manage this, they also brought with them one or more older children to mind the babies while the mothers were in class. The children were very competent in this responsibility.



A special effort has been made to recruit more women, but they were still very much in the minority. The joy of the graduation group was great when the ceremony was held for the final year group.

I was fortunate, before the course began, to be able to visit Yambio, a complex built and conducted by *Solidarity* – both pre-service and in-service teacher training - and nearby Riimenze -where a *Solidarity* community lives and works in agricultural development and community building work in the Makpandu refugee camp.

Malakal in the north was a stable *Solidarity* community until about two years ago when rival militias fought extensively there. The site for training for nursing and midwifery is in Wau where there is also an agricultural project.



My overall impressions were of people struggling and showing hope, despite the very real material poverty

and poor infrastructure. The human desire for connection was also evident. One student once asked me was our country anything like South Sudan. Looking up the dusty red-dirt road we were travelling I was able to say “Yes, about 80% of it is just like this.” I was then interrogated about whether we grew mangoes, paw paws and pineapples. Another student asked, when I was recommending making a ‘science corner’ in the classroom, what she could do if there was no classroom! I was able to suggest a science box that could be transported. But it reminded me of the primary school I had visited nearby where each “classroom” consisted of a wooden bench beneath a leafy tree.

This was a wonderfully rich experience for me and I hope that I made a real if small contribution.

# THIS IS MISSION LIFE: MEMORIES OF MISSION: DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART

Judith Lamb\*

## Abstract

Catholic women religious in Australia have played a significant role in the spread of the Gospel and in the provision of services, especially in education and health care, from the middle of the nineteenth century. One such group is the Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. From their base in Sydney in 1885, they sent missionaries to remote communities in Australia, Papua New Guinea and beyond. They made a greater contribution to the missionary effort than any other congregation based in Australia. In 2011, as part of the celebration of the centenary of the promulgation of the Australian Province, the Provincial Council invited sisters to tell their personal stories in a series of interviews. Many of the interviewees have spent fifty or sixty years as OLSH sisters and thus have a rich and varied experience of the life of a missionary. These fifty stories demonstrate the variety of ways this mission was achieved through the personal reflections of each individual sister.

### Sr Shirley's story

The year is 1959. The place is Papua New Guinea, on the very isolated Rossel Island, 300 miles from Samarai, a journey of three days arriving at dusk. The speaker is Sr Shirley Gallagher, reflecting on her life as a missionary:

“My first night was the most exciting. ... Sister Flavian Boland, a teacher who had some experience with mission nursing, and I were met at the jetty by Fr Earl who instructed us to leave our luggage on board and hurry to the bush hospital to attend an emergency. A young woman had been in labour for a week. Sister said to me, ‘Will you be able to help me deliver the baby?’ I told her I would do my best. I wasn’t flustered by it! I just thought ‘This is mission life!’

“We went to our little bush hospital, no electricity, just lamps throwing eerie shadows on the walls. The floorboards were broken and uneven and the young woman in labour was groaning and crying on a mat on the floor,

\* Judith Lamb was an educator for forty years until her retirement in 2007 as Principal of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College in Bentleigh, Victoria. She has continued to work with the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in documenting the biographies of individual sisters.

surrounded by her anxious family and relatives. Sr Flavian cleared the decks, rolled up her long sleeves and immediately got to work. ... She said "I'm going to give the baby to you; make sure you get it breathing." I wasn't sure how! ... Sr Flavian worked wonders on the young woman and soon the little baby, who was almost blue, came silently into the world. Sister cut the cord and gave me the baby while she tried to save the mother's life. She kept saying, 'Get it breathing, get it breathing'. There was a large group of old Rossel women there. They only wore grass skirts, shaved off all their hair and their ear-lobes were hanging down low from wearing heavy shell rings. They were quite a sight, a bit frightening, really, especially in the light of the flickering old kerosene lamp.

"I was holding the baby; they were jabbering anxiously in their own language. I said 'Sister it's not breathing!' She replied, 'Turn it upside-down and smack its bum! So I did that, and the next thing it let out a squawk. And all the old women jumped and danced with joy, thanking Mama Maria (the Mother of God) for bringing the baby safely into the world. We washed the baby, wrapped her up in a nice warm sheet, and gave her back to the mother who had regained consciousness. That was nothing to what was to come!

"By this time it was pitch black. We hadn't had a shower for three days whilst on the mission boat and were dying for a cup of tea and a decent sleep. Sr Flavian asked me to go up to the kitchen and cook us a meal. Some little children took me up and then quickly disappeared. The fire was burning and a kerosene lamp gave dim light in the darkness. I was standing in the kitchen wondering what I would cook and where to find what I needed. Suddenly a woman walked in. She had a completely bald head, no teeth, wore a grass skirt, a very thin little lady, with a hole in the face where a nose should have been. She had a sickness called yaws, a sexually related disease, I believe. The whole nose was eaten away. She looked like an old witch if ever there was one! There was a big, square table in the middle of the kitchen and she came towards me, so I started to move cautiously around the table but she followed me. I was wondering what to do next. Where was I going to go? It was pitch black outside and I did not know how to return to the hospital. I was probably praying frantically; I don't remember. The next thing Fr Earl walked in. He was the Parish Priest. He said 'Ah! Sr Maria Goretti (I was Maria Goretti in those days) meet Miriam, a pillar of the Church.' I stopped and shook hands and kept my distance. Miriam and I were to become the best of friends. She was the loveliest old lady. So that was my first night in Rossel Island." <sup>1</sup>

## **The Project**

Sister Shirley was one of forty-eight Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart who have been interviewed in an oral history project commissioned by the Australian Province as part of the celebrations of its centenary in 2011. The aim of the project was to document the heritage of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart through recording the lives of some of the sisters. The congregation's story is unique, especially in relation to its missionary focus, and within the institutional history, each sister's individual contribution is also unique. Two volumes of these stories have been published under the title of *Memories of Mission* and a third will be published by the end of the year.

The priority for the interviewer was to capture what each sister wanted to share, rather than to have a series of questions to be answered, so each sister controlled her own interview and told her own story. Generally, the stories were taped, then transcribed, slightly edited and returned to the author for amendment. For the second and third volumes, sisters were asked to provide photos, a selection of which was included with each story. For a handful of stories, sisters provided their own written reflections rather than being interviewed. The tapes of the interviews and the text of the published stories are held in the OLSH archive at Kensington.

So this project is rather different to the traditional histories written about the congregation: it focuses on the personal rather than the institutional; it is based on stories, reflections and memories of the participants rather than historical documents and events; it gives voice to the individuals who have spent their lives in missionary endeavours rather than to the achievements of the congregation as a whole; and it provides a variety of perspectives which give an authenticity, richness and depth to this record of the history of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

## **The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart**

The Society of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was founded by Jules Chevalier in Issoudun, France, in 1874. Twenty years earlier, Chevalier had founded the clerical Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart with the work of "missions among pagan peoples" written into its constitutions, and the two shared a common motto "May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved".<sup>2</sup> From the very earliest days, the mission "ad gentes" was recognised as the key focus for the work of the sisters.<sup>3</sup> In 1884, ten years after its foundation and despite the congregation having only

five professed sisters, three were sent from France to New Britain (now part of Papua New Guinea). They were accompanied by two sisters who had made their vows on the evening of their departure. *En route*, the group of five sisters arrived at Botany, NSW, on 31 January 1885, and this foundation became the base for their missions. Since that time, the story of the sisters has had two parallel yet intertwined dimensions: the apostolate in mainland Australia and the missionary apostolate in remote Australia and the Pacific. Every Provincial Chapter, from 1964 on specifically reaffirmed the priority of the “foreign missions”.

The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart made a greater contribution to the missionary effort than any other congregation based in Australia, both in sheer numbers and as a proportion of their total membership. As O’Brien’s research indicated, “The largest order of missionary sisters was the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. ... Between 1886 and 1968, 944 women entered ... though of these only 339 spent their lives as missionaries, the rest providing for the missions by teaching Australian children.”<sup>4</sup>

There were many other sisters who spent some time on the missions, although not their whole lives.<sup>5</sup> Data collected for the National Missionary Council in 1972 indicated that 219 OLSH sisters were involved in work on the missions, mainly in PNG (113) and Aboriginal communities (58).<sup>6</sup> This is over three times as many as the next group, the Mercy Sisters, with 62. It is also almost twice the number of MSC priests and brothers in the missions, who numbered 114.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the OLSH sisters had a huge impact on the church, education and health care in these missionary areas.

### **The Sisters involved in the Project**

Of the total of forty-eight sisters involved in the project, twenty-eight spent more than ten years in the overseas missions, ten had extensive experience in the Northern Territory and ten had little or no “missionary” experience. Given the focus of this conference, the stories of those in this third category have not been included in this presentation because they spent all or most of their religious lives in mainland Australia.

Sr Emmanuel Chapman is the longest-serving of the interviewees. She entered in 1938 and so has spent almost eighty of her one hundred and one years with the congregation, most of the time in remote indigenous communities, including her last appointment to Port Keats which finished in 2011, when she was ninety-five. Seven of the other sisters interviewed have been professed for more than seventy years. Only two sisters have

less than fifty years with the OLSH congregation: Sr Kathleen Leahy, who has spent most of her religious life in the Northern Territory, and Sr Delia Donahoe who was in PNG for forty-two years. The bulk of the interviewees entered in the 1950s and '60s, with twenty-three of them professed between sixty and sixty-nine years ago and seventeen between fifty and fifty-nine. Thus their experience generally extends from the post-war period to the present day.

At this point I would also like to acknowledge the sisters who have died since sharing their stories: Sisters Benedicta Carroll, Kathleen Gaffy, Margaret Kennedy, Eugenie Kennedy, Claire Mangan, and Marion Whelan. And also Sisters Therese Farrell and Noelle Albert whose stories will appear in the next volume.

### **The call to mission life**

Many of the sisters interviewed remembered an early call to become a missionary, even though they sometimes struggled with it. Sr Shirley said she often thought about being a missionary, especially after hearing her mother speak about Fr Damian and his work with the lepers. Sr Kathleen Gaffy said, "I always knew I was going to be a nun, but I wasn't all that keen about it. ... I didn't want to be a nun. I wanted to marry and have plenty of kids," but she thought, "If I've got to be a nun, I will be a missionary."<sup>8</sup> One of the exceptions to this early commitment to the missions was Sr Mary Bachelor. She was first professed just after the war, when all the missions were re-opening in PNG and Kiribati and everyone, in her words, was "fired with missionary zeal. The only one who wasn't a bit interested was me."<sup>9</sup> After happily working for forty years in Australian schools, Mary "suddenly got a missionary vocation, wherever it came from," when the province asked for volunteers to go to South Africa.<sup>10</sup> Despite being sixty years old, she knew that was where she wanted to go. She spent seven years there and then almost twenty years in South Sudan, taken by the PKLA and held captive for twelve days when she had only been in the country a few months.

### **Challenges of mission life**

One of the challenges the sisters encountered was the lack of preparation for missionary work. Sr Shirley "was considered unsuitable" to be a teacher and worked in the industrial laundry at Kensington before going to Wynyard in Tasmania to take over the cooking, even though, as she said, "I'd never done a day's cooking in my life."<sup>11</sup> Following her introduction to

Rossel Island, Shirley was told she was to teach Grade 1, despite having no teacher training. In her class there were forty students, none of which had any knowledge of English. It was not until ten years later, in 1971 that she completed her teacher training in Port Moresby. A year after Sr Emmanuel made her first vows she was sent to Thursday Island because one of the sisters there had drowned and “they wanted someone who could swim”.<sup>12</sup> Within a few months of completing her nursing training, Sr Yvonne Berecny was in charge of the health care of 1500 inhabitants on Bathurst Island and organised the provision of breakfast for 150 pre-school children. Sr Patricia Clarke had no nursing training but was sent to Sideia, in the Milne Bay Province, in 1951, the year after her first vows. She worked in the hospital, delivered the babies and sutured the lepers because, in her words, “on the missions, if something needed to be done, you did it.”<sup>13</sup>

The remoteness of the mission stations caused practical difficulties with food supplies, travel and communication. Sr Emmanuel remembered Port Keats where, in the wet, the boats could not get to the mission and their diet consisted of fish, cheese, goannas and bully beef.<sup>14</sup> Recalling having sour margarine every day in PNG, Sr Patricia described the day a sister returned from holidays with several containers of butter and the whole community celebrated. “Bread and butter, what a joy!!” she exclaimed.<sup>15</sup> In a similar fashion, Sr Catherine Mary Crocker related that they only once ran out of flour when she was in Kiribati, and they couldn’t bake bread. When the supplies arrived, school was cancelled and she made the best bread everyone ever tasted: “It was a bonanza!”<sup>16</sup> So even the basic requirement of food was often problematic.

A very time-consuming, and sometimes dangerous, aspect of the missions was transport. Many of the outstations, especially in PNG and Kiribati, required travel by boat and by foot, across treacherous seas and rough terrain. Many sisters told stories of their experiences in boats and planes, including Sr Patricia, who was on a boat sitting on a deckchair on a calm sea, when suddenly the sea came up and the boat was rocking so badly that all the supplies were washed off. One of the crew held on to Sr Patricia while she clung to the rail, fortunately with a rope tied around her.<sup>17</sup>

Communication was another difficulty. Sr Catherine Mary thought the hardest part of being a missionary in Kiribati was when the boat came in without the mail.<sup>18</sup> At one time, twenty-four letters from her mother arrived in one batch. When she first went to Kiribati, Sr Margaret Kennedy recalled, she found the lack of communication very difficult.<sup>19</sup> Initially, telegrams were the only means of sending and receiving messages and they took four

days to get to or from the main island. While Sr Margaret Jennings was at Nimowa she received a message that her father had died suddenly, but she had no details until weeks later when she came to Sideia for the annual retreat.<sup>20</sup>

Coping with traumatic events was part of missionary life. Some were natural disasters: Sr Shirley ran the care centre at the school after the eruptions of the Rabaul volcano in 1994 when thousands of people were left homeless, shocked, dazed and not knowing what to do.<sup>21</sup> Others were violent attacks: Sr Kathleen Gaffy described the break-in, attack and pack rape of a young woman who was staying with the sisters in Goroka. "It was a shocking ordeal for her as well as for us ... It was a terrible time, terrible, terrible," she exclaimed.<sup>22</sup> Also in PNG, Sr Jeanette Balding was in a community in which a young, female volunteer teacher was murdered. She commented, "I didn't know until then what fear was ... That was a very difficult time."<sup>23</sup>

In addition to these dramatic events, changes in government policies meant changes in apostolates for the sisters. In PNG after Independence in 1975, primary schools had to be staffed by local teachers. The sisters took on other roles, particularly in secondary or vocational schools or in adult education. Sr Delia Donahoe went "into the bush," travelling by boat, truck, motorbike and foot to support local teachers and "really loved it." Sr Damian Mary George began to do pastoral work in the villages visiting the elderly, dressing the wounds of the sick and giving the sacraments to those who wanted them. Sr Shirley reached the age of retirement in 1995, but "wasn't ready for retirement", so she took over a College of Distance Education. When the government closed all CODEs in 2000, she began a copra production enterprise and then a balsa plantation.

Sisters had to be flexible, adaptable and creative as they managed all the changes in their lives and their apostolates.

### **Rewards of missionary life**

Despite the many challenges, most sisters found their time on the missions very rewarding. Sr Terie McNamara said, "It was one of the most wonderful times in my life."<sup>24</sup> Sr Mary Ruth spoke of her time in Boregania, "It was the greatest experience of my religious life, to go and begin a mission in an area that had not had a Catholic influence."<sup>25</sup> Sr Kathleen Moore reflected that the indigenous people on Bathurst Island taught her so much and her interaction with them has had a long-lasting effect on her personality. Sr Maria Cornelia Speelman went to PNG thinking that she was going to

give but the reverse was true. “They gave to me, for which I was always grateful.”<sup>26</sup> Sr Delia commented, “In effect, I went and twenty-two and came back at sixty-four. Whatever I am, New Guinea played a major part in forming me.”<sup>27</sup>

Reflecting on their lives, the sisters often commented that they had a happy life and did their best. Many sisters said, “I loved it” when describing a particular people, place or apostolate. Having to leave their missionary work was difficult for many and often their health was the reason for them coming back to Australia. Others took the decision themselves, like Sr Benedicta Carroll who “wasn’t going to be a nuisance up there, so it was time to come down”<sup>28</sup> and Mary Bachelor who said, “You know when it’s time.”<sup>29</sup> Sr Damian Mary recalled her feelings when she was in Australia on leave in 1993. She had “a divided heart” – she knew the people of PNG were developing, most children had been educated and were ready to take over and find their own way, but her heart was still there because she had been away from “home” (Australia) for a very long time, living in another part of the world that was also “home”.<sup>30</sup> Sr Kathleen Gaffy was in PNG for fifty-five years, commenting on her decision to come back to Australia, “Although I knew it was the best thing to do, I was very sad to go after being there for fifty-five years. We believed we would die up there.”<sup>31</sup> Sr Robyn Reynolds put it this way: “As missionaries, we live to allow the local people to take leadership and ministry.”<sup>32</sup>

Settling back into Australia was difficult for some. Sr Shirley remarked on the contrast between the structured life at Kensington and the freedom and interesting work in PNG. She missed the social life with the Chinese community. She is happy now in a small community “in the bush”, at Elmore in country Victoria. Sr Margaret Jennings felt she was “untrained for any ministry in Australia” after spending 40 years in PNG, but began social justice work in the diverse areas of assisting migrants, Aboriginal affairs, visiting at the Villawood Detention Centre, spiritual direction in women’s prisons and interfaith relationships.

One of the positives identified by many of the returning missionaries was the opportunity to re-connect with family, especially if they had been on the missions for a long time, with visits home only every four years.

### **Change and continuity**

When these sisters joined, in the 1950s and ‘60s, the congregation was self-sufficient, with its own training facilities, schools and hospitals, experiencing an influx of new candidates and expanding overseas

foundations. Teachers, nurses and homemakers were sent to remote and isolated places, often with the expectation that they would not return. Now, most training facilities, schools and hospitals either have been closed or are conducted by others, vocations are a rarity and most sisters have returned from the missions. The 1951 total of 350 sisters in the province increased to a peak of 460 in 1971 and is now 119. The geographical field of mission has expanded beyond the Pacific to Africa and Asia and sisters are more likely to be in social justice work, in various forms, than the traditional apostolates of teaching and nursing.

Despite these quite dramatic changes, however, the mission of the sisters has remained the same: to bring the knowledge of the love of God to people everywhere, especially to those most in need. The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart are women of great faith, which, although not often verbalized, underpins their commitment. Sr Robyn said that her story of mission makes sense only in terms of her ongoing, personal journey with God, with Jesus, who “holds it all together and makes it what it is.”<sup>33</sup>

Although the experiences of the sisters are varied and each story is unique, the typical attitude of a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart could be summed up in this comment about the sisters on mission in Sudan: “Moirra and Mary stand out among the missionaries. They are prayerful women who make no demands. They simply go about their work, day in and day out, quietly serving the people and seeking no acclaim.”<sup>34</sup>

The sisters interviewed for this project have travelled to and from “the antipodes”, responding to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. This presentation has merely scratched the surface of the contributions individual women have made to the remarkable achievements of the Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. “May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved.”

## Notes

- 1 Lamb, “Memories of Mission, Volume 2” 29-30.
- 2 Mary Venard, *The History of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Papua New Guinea* (published for private circulation, 1978), 5.
- 3 According to the Constitutions: “The principal form of apostolate is to bring the Christian message to those people and groups among whom the church has not yet been planted”. (Constitutions 11) Venard, *The History of the Australian Province of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*, (published for private circulation, 1978), 92.
- 4 Anne O’Brien, *God’s Willing Workers: women and religion in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), 164.

- 5 Eight of the seventeen sisters interviewed had spent time in both Australia and mission areas, while eight spent most of their life on the missions. Only one had no missionary experience.
- 6 The National Missionary Council, *Report on the Missionary Dimension of the Australian Church* (January 1973), 58.
- 7 *Report on the Missionary Dimension of the Australian Church*, 66.
- 8 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 39.
- 9 Bachelor, Unpublished interview, 1.
- 10 Bachelor, Unpublished interview, 2.
- 11 Lamb, “Memories of Mission, Volume 2,” 27.
- 12 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 14.
- 13 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 19.
- 14 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 16.
- 15 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 18.
- 16 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 24.
- 17 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 19.
- 18 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 24.
- 19 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 50.
- 20 Jennings, Unpublished interview, 4.
- 21 Lamb, “Memories of Mission, Volume 2,” 33.
- 22 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 43.
- 23 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 6.
- 24 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 55.
- 25 Lamb, “Memories of Mission, Volume 2,” 9.
- 26 Speelman, Unpublished interview, 2.
- 27 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 30.
- 28 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 12.
- 29 Bachelor, Unpublished interview, 4.
- 30 George, Unpublished interview, 5.
- 31 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 42.
- 32 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 62.
- 33 Lamb, “Memories of Mission,” 64.
- 34 *Report on the Australian Province 1999-2001*, 24. In her report to the Province in 2001, Sr Moya Hanlen, the Provincial Leader, shared this comment, which was made to her when she visited sisters working in Sudan.

## **JESUIT MISSION – FROM INDIAN ROOTS TO PRESENT DAY FOCUS ON ASIA**

**Paul Horan\***

**Trung Nguyen~**

**Helen Forde^**

### **Abstract**

Since its beginnings in 1951, Jesuit Mission Australia has sought to help the least assisted people and communities in developing countries. With the goal of improving livelihoods by addressing basic needs and building communities, the mission to Hazaribag established a true core of service, compassion and empowerment within their community development work.

The Hazaribag province has become increasingly self-sufficient under the Indian Jesuits and their co-workers. This has enabled Jesuit Mission Australia to expand supporting development projects and missionary work in other parts of the world including Cambodia, Timor-Leste, and Myanmar.

Some projects are focused on education and the empowerment of young people to break out of intergenerational poverty, whilst others deal with healthcare initiatives, services and support for displaced people and efforts to improve the livelihoods of communities in a sustainable way. We broadly categorise education for rural communities as our primary goal.

### **Hazaribag Mission – India**

The first group of Jesuits from Australia arrived in Ranchi in February 1951 and after a period of language study and getting to know the Mission

\* Fr Paul went to Hazaribag in 1965 as part of the original Australian Jesuit Mission to India. he taught English for five years at the Campion Institute Yangon, Myanmar. He joined the Jesuit Mission Australia team in 2015, but plans to resume his mission in Myanmar in the future.

~ Fr Trung was born in Vietnam in 1974. In 1982, his family fled Vietnam and spent two years in a camp of Thailand before being accepted by Australia. Fr Trung entered the Society of Jesus and was ordained in 2011. In 2012 he was sent as a missionary to Mainland China, working with people affected by leprosy and HIV. In April 2016 he was appointed as Jesuit Mission Rector with special care for Jesuit identity and Ignatian charism.

^ Helen Forde joined the Board of Jesuit Mission in 2015 and was appointed as its first Chief Executive Officer in April 2016. In 2004, Helen spent some months experiencing Jesuit Mission work first hand in Cambodia.

they were given charge of the Hazaribag and Palamu Districts, part of Chotanagpur, the tribal area of Jharkhand.

The following year, February 1952 they were joined by eight more, a priest, a brother and six scholastics from Australia. The Australian Province continued to send men regularly and over the years 57 Australian/New Zealand Jesuits were sent to India.

One of the tasks entrusted to the Hazaribag Jesuits was to continue the work started by the Belgian Jesuits among the Catholic Adivasis (tribals), who live in scattered villages often deep in the jungle. Chotanagpur is a hilly, forested area, so these villages were often very remote and hard to get to.

The past sixty years have seen great changes. In 1952 there were no diocesan priests in the vast area of Hazaribag and Palamu and only three parishes. Now there are two Dioceses, Daltonganj Diocese, established in 1971, and Hazaribag Diocese, established in 1995. In these two Dioceses there are now over fifty Diocesan Priests and thirty-odd parishes, many of which have village schools attached to them. There are also Jesuit Parish Priests in twelve parishes.

In the 1950's India was entering a period of rapid industrialization. To secure a footing in the vast coal mining area opening up in Hazaribag District it was decided to open an English medium boarding school, in Hazaribag Town, the district capital and the headquarters of the newly established Damodar Valley Corporation. The school was to cater to the children of families involved in power generation, coal mining and all the industrial development that was taking place.

In 1966 a second English Medium High School was opened in the newly developing Steel City of Bokaro.

According to the 1950 Census the literacy rate among the tribals of Palamu was only 2%. A major effort was therefore made by the Hazaribag Jesuits, and Sisters working with them, to establish a number of girls and boys High Schools. This struggle to educate Adivasi boys and girls has not only seen the literacy rate among the tribal population rise to over 60% but has empowered them to take their place in society at large.

Besides the network of Catholic primary and secondary schools in the Hazaribag Mission there is also a Primary Teachers Training Institute and a University College was opened Mahuadanr in Palamu in 2013 to allow Adivasi boys and girls to further their education.

With the collaboration of different religious congregations and support from the Province it has also been possible to open three hospitals and a

number of health centres. Sisters also run Grihini Schools where village girls do a nine to ten months course to prepare them for marriage and to teach to manage the household.

Jharkhand has the richest mineral deposits in the country and the opening up of the vast coalfields and other mineral rich areas has led to massive exploitation and displacement of the local tribal population. In such a climate the Hazaribag Jesuits are heavily involved in the fight for social justice and there are 20 socio-pastoral institutes in the Hazaribag Province.

Jesuits have been active in their support for village people in demonstrating against the takeover of their lands by government and other vested interests. Besides supporting villagers in their fight to keep their land the Jesuits have also been active in training village leaders, men and women and helping them to know their rights before the law.

In 1992 the Hazaribag Mission became a Province with an Indian Provincial. From the original six priests sent to India in 1951 the number has grown to over 170, most of whom are tribals from the local area.

### **The Jesuit Mission in Myanmar, a brief history**

Nestorian Christians from China may have been in Burma as early as the tenth century but the more stable presence came with the arrival of Portuguese Merchants in the 16th century. By 1556 there were about 1000 Portuguese soldiers and sailors serving the Arakan king.

Francis Xavier never visited Myanmar. He was in a hurry to save Japan and China but he had heard about Burma, 'The Golden Land', and in 1548 wrote to Ignatius asking that Jesuits be sent to the Kingdom of Pegu, about forty miles north east of present day Yangon.

At the request of Philip de Brito, a Portuguese mercenary and Governor of the port city of Siriam (Than Lyin) the first Jesuits came to Myanmar from Goa in 1600 as chaplains to the Portuguese merchants and Christians from the Malabar Coast. Unfortunately de Brito got too big for his boots and when he began to demolish Buddhist shrines and Pagodas the wrath of the King of Ava, a northern kingdom, came down on him and he was captured and executed.

De Brito's men, along with their wives and children were taken north as prisoners. The Portuguese were valued for their military skills and King Thalun gave them land to the north of Mandalay and allowed them to build their own church.

Father Manoel de Fonseca accompanied the Portugese prisoners on their journey to the north and continued to work among them for thirty nine

years. We know the names of four other Jesuits who worked with Fr. De Fonseca to build up a strong Catholic community that survives to this day. Cardinal Charles Bo, the first Burmese Cardinal is from this community.

This early apostolate of the Society was one episode in the history of the Church in Myanmar. Evangelization on a permanent basis began when the Italian Barnabites arrived in 1722 and was continued by priests of the Paris Foreign Missionary Society, the PIME and the Columban fathers.

Today, out of a total population of fifty nine million there are some 740,000 Catholics. Most of these are from the hill tribes but descendants of the Portuguese-Bunnan Christians also form a sizeable group within the Catholic population of Myanmar.

### **The second coming**

Three hundred years or so were to pass before Jesuits returned to Myanmar. In 1957 the Bishops of Burma asked for Jesuits to be sent to work in the newly opened Seminary in Yangon and train local priests. In response to this request eight Jesuits from the Maryland Province were sent and on the 22nd May 1958 the seminary officially began under the Society's administration. According to Fr. Laschenski, one of these pioneers, they were surprised to discover that Jesuits had been in this land of golden pagodas some three hundred years before.

In 1962 the political and economic situation in Burma began to deteriorate. The situation in the country worsened and in April 1966 all missionaries were expelled. This was a harsh blow but despite this setback the local Church remained vibrant and continued to grow.

Fortunately Jesuit contact with the Church in Myanmar did not cease with the expulsion of the Maryland Jesuits. Fr. Leo Catchat regularly came to Yangon from Nepal to give retreats. In 1979 or 1980 he was invited by Fr. Matthias, the Rector of the Seminary in Yangon, to talk on Spirituality to the seminarians.

In 1990 Fr. Matthias, now Archbishop Matthias U Shwe of Taunggyi, invited Leo to give a retreat to his priests. Leo was invited back several times and in 1995 he was asked when the Jesuits were coming back to Burma. Leo explained that this was a decision that Fr. General would have to make.

In 1996 Archbishop Matthias along with three fellow bishops, former students of the Jesuits when they were seminarians, met Fr. Kolvenbach during their *ad limina* visit to Rome and asked that Jesuits be sent once again to Myanmar.

### **The third coming**

The third coming of Jesuits in Myanmar began in 1998. Three Jesuits were missioned to Myanmar that year and with encouragement and help from Bishop Mathias U Shwe they began taking candidates for the Society. A year later the first novice master arrived and began the novitiate in the year 2000 in the same location. They were greatly helped in this by the Maria Bambina Sisters of Charity who provided them with the plot of land at Pyaphu, just outside Taunggyi.

At the same time the Gonzaga Language Institute was established in Taunggyi, the local town, at the invitation of the Archbishop. English and computer classes were taught to our candidates and other youth in a parish building next to the Taunggyi Cathedral. Meanwhile the Jesuits found an old house and plot of land on the outskirts of the town. The old bungalow was dilapidated and, in those days outside the town, so it was going cheap. This house and property, which is the site of the present SAG, as it is known locally, was purchased in the name of the Bishop and when building and repairs were completed the English Language course shifted to its present site in mid-2003.

When he became the Apostolic Administrator, Bishop Sotero Phamo said that he was open to International Congregations living and working in Yangon. He also extended a verbal invitation to Fr. Paul Tan S.J., the Assistant for East Asia and Oceania, to open a house of the Society in Yangon.

In October 2002 Fr. Paul Tan asked Archbishop Matthias about the possibility of moving the candidates to Yangon to expose them to an urban situation and to broaden their outlook. Archbishop Matthias not only encouraged the move but reminded the Jesuits that when he invited the Society to his Archdiocese it was in fact an invitation to Myanmar not only to his diocese.

### **In Yangon**

With this endorsement from Archbishop Matthias and the invitation of Bishop Sotero the candidates moved to Canisius House Yangon in April 2003. After their arrival in Yangon the Jesuits and the De La Salle Brothers worked together to set up a Spoken English course for both Jesuit and De La Salle candidates.

In May 2005, to cope with the growing numbers the Jesuits and the De La Salle brothers began looking for a more suitable place when Archbishop

Charles Bo offered them the John Paul II building in the St. Augustine's Parish compound.

With the cooperation of the Korean Catholic Community in Myanmar the renovation of the JPII building was carried out at some considerable expense. The big halls on each floor were partitioned to make classrooms, offices, toilets and bathrooms. The school was blessed on 5th September 2005, by Archbishop Charles Bo. The new English School was named after St. Edmund Campion and was called the Campion Institute.

From the original three Jesuits who came to Myanmar in 1998 the number has grown to forty, thirty of whom are local vocations. The first Myanmar Jesuit was ordained in 2013 and there are now three Myanmar Jesuit priests with four more in theology. Ten Jesuits from abroad come from India, Indonesia and Malaysia-Singapore.

### **Myanmar Mission activities**

Myanmar Mission activities are principally located in the two cities Taunggyi and Yangon. The Novitiate begun in 2000 is now an international novitiate with eight novices coming from Myanmar, Thailand and Malaysia Singapore.

St Aloysius Gonzaga English Language Institute, known locally as SAG, continues to grow. It now runs a variety of programs, including a four year "Integrated Program" which comprises both English language learning and teacher training as well as cooperating with Campion in Yangon to run a nation-wide English language program for aspirants to the diocesan seminaries.

SAG also has an active partnership with Ateneo de Davao University and the University of Utah, and has recently undertaken online courses with accreditation granted by Jesuit universities in the USA.

In Yangon Campion Institute for English Language teaches English at four levels, and has an outreach for urban poor in the slum area of Thinganyun on the outskirts of Yangon. Campion's main overseas partner is Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro, and Sanata Dharma in Yogyakarta has also made overtures to cooperate.

Also in Yangon the Society has two extensive social outreach programs, the Animation and Research Centre and the Myanmar Resource Initiative.

The Animation and Research Centre (ARC), which hosts a social research facility and library, is engaged in Catholic Social Teaching and support for pastoral planning in dioceses and religious congregations across the country.

The Myanmar Resource Initiative (MRI) has set up a large scale micro credit scheme in the Laputta in the Irrawaddy Delta area and Housing Program in the slum area of Thinganyun on the outskirts of Yangon.

### **New initiatives:**

The Mission is exploring two new initiatives, the possibility of a new pastoral mission initiative in the Banmaw Diocese of Kachin State and at the request of Cardinal Charles Bo, the establishment of an institute in Yangon for the formation of leaders.

The three Kachin dioceses are under huge pressure because of ongoing conflict and displacement. Among them Banmaw has the greater number of displaced persons, a high proportion of Catholics and is poorly resourced in terms of personnel.

An institute for the formation of leaders in Yangon proposed by Cardinal Charles Bo is to be a Diocesan project initially set up and run by the Jesuits, serving the whole country and targeting Burmese people irrespective of religious or ethnic identity.

### **Brief history of Jesuit presence in China**

The earliest presence of Christianity in China goes back to the Tang Dynasty of the 7th century, and there is a stone tablet from the 8th century called the Nestorian Stele that speaks of Christians reaching the capital of Xi'an in 635.

Franciscan Friars came to China in 1289, but were expelled in 1368 with the rise of the Ming dynasty. China's door was closed to foreigners for the next couple of centuries. This is why Francis Xavier died on the island of Sanchuan in 1552, eyes cast toward the Mainland, longing to proclaim the gospel. In 1583 a narrow door of opportunity opened, and permission to enter Chinese territory was given to Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit mathematician. His mastery of the Chinese language won him great admiration amongst the Mandarins of the time. He was the first foreign missionary to be given permission to enter the imperial court. The favour he won with the emperor, made it possible for other missionaries to preach the gospel throughout the kingdom.

### **Current missionary work**

The Chinese Communist Party defeated the Kuomintang in 1949, and in 1950 all foreign missionaries were required to leave the country. The

practice of religion was discouraged and this would later lead to the current division in the Catholic Church; the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Church (state sanctioned) and the Underground Church, which acknowledges the authority of the Pontiff of Rome.

Apart from the division within the Catholic Church in China, many other restrictions are in place to hinder the proclamation of the Good News. Only priests ordained and registered with the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Church are given permission to operate more freely. Bishops are ordained or forced to ordain other bishops regardless of Rome's approval. Foreigners entering China must sign a form promising not to engage in any evangelising activity. According to an archival document in Rome, the superior of the Shanghai mission Reverend Louail, in his annual letter, dated 27 February 1903, to the General of the Society of Jesus, reported that he had made a request to Australia for Jesuits to be sent to China. We are not sure if this letter ever reached the Jesuits in Australia but in 2012, I was the first Jesuit to be sent from the Australian Province of the Society of Jesus to China to work with Casa Ricci Social Services to provide care and support for people suffering from leprosy and HIV.

In 1930 Luis Ruiz, a Spanish Jesuit, was sent to China but was required to leave in 1951 and went to Macau where he started serving refugees, and the disabled and became known as the godfather of social works in Macau. In 1986 he was invited to Mainland China to see the plight of those suffering from leprosy. They had been abandoned on an island and had no one to care for them. He was so moved by the suffering of these lepers that, even though he was close to 80 years of age, he established Casa Ricci Social Services to serve lepers in Mainland China. He not only provided them with better food, accommodation, access to water and electricity, but also invited religious sisters who were trained in nursing and wound care, to come and live with these people and truly exemplify the Catholic Social Teaching of solidarity.

The presence of the sisters made a remarkable difference to these people once treated like outcasts. With the care and love given to them by the sisters, they experience what love means and regained their sense of dignity. Before I arrived in Macau in 2012, Fr Luis had passed away, but the ministry of serving the poorest of the poor in Mainland China continues. I was placed in charge of the leprosy program, which consisted of 15 leprosy centres spread over 8 provinces of Mainland China, where there are religious sisters living with and caring for the patients. Casa Ricci also supports another 40 centres with financial assistance.

My task was to travel to these remote places, which were mainly in mountainous areas, to provide pastoral care and the sacraments to 50 or more religious sisters. For many of these sisters, the Eucharist was only available on average once a month if and when a priest came to visit. I was also responsible for organising and directing the sisters' annual retreat, and was responsible for their financial and practical support.

Apart from serving people affected by Hansen's disease, Casa Ricci Social Services also serve people with HIV. Amongst these are also children who have inherited the disease from their parents, and are either orphaned or have no one able to care for them. The sisters provided care and accompaniment to HIV patients in the last stages of their lives.

### **Challenges**

As I was working with a registered NGO I had no difficulty from government authorities, as long as I kept out of the public sphere. But the real challenge for me was the amount of travel and the language.

Travelling from one leprosarium to another was difficult and dangerous. I had to travel by bus, plane, train, motorbike, and on foot, and often had to spend hours waiting. Both the waiting and the travel were physically draining. I remembered once travelling overnight in an overcrowded train carriage, with no room to move and people all around smoking and eating. By the end of the journey my clothes and body reeked of cigarette smoke. And then there was the challenge of language. Even though I spoke Mandarin, the sisters and patients often spoke with accents or in dialects that I found very difficult to understand.

### **Going forward**

Given all the restrictions imposed by the Chinese government and limitations as a foreigner, I believe that the sign of the time calls for Jesuits from Mainland China to take on the responsibility of serving the poor and spreading the gospel message.

# AUSTRALIAN DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES GO TO “THE MISSIONS”: THE FIRST RECRUITS (1955-1960)

Larry Nemer\* and Don Grant\*\*

## Abstract

The Divine Word Missionaries arrived in Sydney in January 1900 as an “outstation” of the Mission in New Guinea. They had dreamed of opening a seminary for Australian recruits. However this dream was not realized until 1945 when the Superior General approved the opening of a seminary in Marburg, Queensland. Between 1945 and 1960 a total of 58 students were eventually enrolled there. 15 of these were ordained as SVD priests, and all but two were given mission assignments outside Australia. Early recruits went to New Guinea. The second group of Australian missionaries was sent to India. The work of individual priests is described.

The story of Australians joining the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) goes back to 1898, two years after the SVD began working in New Guinea at the request of the German Government. That year the Superior of the New Guinea Mission, Fr. Eberhard Limbrock, asked Fr. Arnold Janssen, the founder of the Divine Word Missionaries, for permission to establish a house in Sydney, Australia, to handle the business and financial matters of the mission – a handy port of call for ships on their way to New Guinea – and to look after missionaries on their way to and from the mission. Permission was given. He and the Founder both considered it an out-station of the New Guinea Mission.

Fr. Limbrock and a companion priest arrived in Sydney on the 29th of January 1900. They lived for a time with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. But by April of that year Cardinal Moran, the Archbishop of Sydney, asked the Divine Word Missionaries to take over the new St. Mark’s parish in Drummoyne. They faced several unsettling problems in getting started. However, Fr. Peter Klein arrived in September of 1902 and brought energy and a stable presence to the SVD community and the parish.

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Fr. Klein ran the mission procure in Sydney (not always to the satisfaction of the Vicar Apostolic in New Guinea!) until 1917 and remained parish priest of St. Mark's until 1919. That year Archbishop Kelly asked the Divine Word Missionaries to return the parish to the diocese. So at the beginning of November they left Drummoyne and took up residence in Midson Road and later moved into a house in the Epping parish.

The years during the First World War (1914-1918) and immediately afterwards were difficult ones for the German SVD Priests and Brothers. They suffered from mistrust and suspicion on the part of the Australian population. Reading between the lines of the correspondence at the time, though never explicitly stated, one gets the impression that this bias was also one of the reasons why the Archbishop requested the SVD to give up the parish.

Fr. Klein moved into their new home with another priest and a Brother. They undertook the new purposes for the Society's continued residence in Sydney: to provide a place of respite for sick missionaries, to be a house of hospitality for missionaries going to or returning from Papua New Guinea, and to search out young Australian men who might be willing to join the SVDs. This last purpose, however, in spite of renewed requests from Fr. Klein to begin a seminary, was delayed. The German Vicar Apostolic in New Guinea (Fr. Klein's immediate Superior) was not convinced that Australians had the necessary qualities to be good missionaries and so did not support a program to recruit and train Australians for missionary work. The Superiors in Rome always supported the idea "in theory" but also suggested that the time was not "appropriate".

Some tentative actions towards establishing a mission seminary were taken in 1938 but nothing came of them. However, the establishment of such a seminary took concrete form almost in the "blink of an eye" as a result of World War II. The Japanese invasion of New Guinea brought a great deal of destruction to the mission. In all, 110 missionaries – two Bishops, 21 priests, 32 Brothers and 55 Sisters – lost their lives. Some of the New Guinea missionaries managed to escape to Australia and found work in parishes throughout Sydney, Brisbane, and other parts of the country. Others needed care and recuperation. Also a group of American SVDs who had been assigned to New Guinea in 1944, even before the war ended, were given special permission by General MacArthur, probably at the request of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Panico, to come across on the US convoy that was destined for the Leyte invasion of the Philippines. When they landed in Brisbane Archbishop Panico, who was keen to rebuild the

mission in New Guinea as soon as missionaries were allowed to return, greeted the Americans with a further task – to help found a seminary at Marburg, outside of Brisbane. He believed that since the mission of New Guinea had suffered greatly in the two wars because the personnel in the mission were overwhelmingly German it was important to bring in missionaries from other countries. The Americans, plus the survivors of the Dorish Maru disaster (the name of the ship that was carrying the missionaries from Manus Island back to New Guinea on which many missionaries were strafed and killed by the Americans) and other missionaries, got to work immediately.

A property and home which was called Woodlands, was purchased, with the support of Archbishop Duhig of Brisbane, and developed first as a rest home for the evacuees from New Guinea. Then Brothers and the Fathers reconstructed and remodeled the hospitals into dormitories, class-rooms, a chapel, and accommodation for students, as well as refurbishing and giving a general clean up to the spectacular main building that had been built in the 1870s but had not been lived in for some years.

Because of their work in many parishes not only in Brisbane but also in Sydney the SVD became better known in the Australian Catholic Community. The personal contact of these missionaries with young men resulted in many of them wanting to become SVD missionaries. The first eleven Australian candidates entered the Society in 1945, and thus Woodlands became the first Mission Seminary in Queensland. They entered while the building was still going on. Of those first eleven five were eventually ordained as SVD priests and two as diocesan priests. Between 1945 and 1960 a total of 58 students were enrolled there. Fifteen of these were eventually ordained, and all but five were given mission assignments outside Australia – four to New Guinea and six in India.<sup>1</sup>

At that time the SVD in Australia were still under the Superior of the New Guinea Mission. However in 1949 the SVD General Council in Rome decided that the two SVD houses in Australia – St. Arnold's rest home in Epping, Sydney, and St. Vincent's Missionary Seminary in Marburg, Queensland – would be separated from the Region of New Guinea and put directly under the Generalate. In 1954, on 5 June, Fr. General Grosse-Kappenberg made the former territory of Australia an independent Region with Fr. Albert Aufinger as the first Regional. By this time four Australians had already been trained and assigned to mission work.

Since the Divine Word Missionaries did not have a seminary of their own in Australia for training in the philosophy and theology

needed for ordination, after they had finished their two-year novitiate training they were sent to the SVD Seminary in Techny, Illinois, in the United States. There they would be educated not only in philosophy and theology but also in anthropology, sociology, and linguistics. The first “Aussie” SVDs set sail for the United States in 1948. This journey was to be repeated yearly up to 1978.<sup>2</sup>

### **First four recruits missioned to New Guinea**

Because of the close ties that Australia had with New Guinea when it was a mandated territory to Australia between 1919 and 1941 and when it had oversight of the international trusteeship of Papua New Guinea until its independence in 1975, it is not surprising that the first four SVD recruits were assigned to New Guinea. They were: Patrick Murphy, Michael Morrison, Raymond Cashmere, and Peter O’Reilly. It is not possible to tell the full story of what these men accomplished during their time in New Guinea, but a brief description of some of their contributions to the Church in New Guinea can be offered.

**Patrick Murphy (1927-1978)** was the first Australian trained by and ordained for the SVD. He was born in Sydney, N.S.W. He went to St. Vincent’s Seminary in Marburg in 1945. He was sent in 1948 with three other Australians to the Major Seminary at Techny, Illinois, to complete his philosophical and theological education. He was ordained a missionary priest in 1953. He was a very talented man. In 1955 he was sent to Rome to take a doctoral degree in Theology at the Gregorian University. After completing his studies he was appointed Professor of Patrology at Christ the King Seminary in Manila. He taught there for one year before being assigned in 1959 to the College/Novitiate of the Divine Word Missionaries in Palda (Indore Region), India. He spent four years teaching in the Novitiate. It was not an easy time for him. He found a great split and even antagonism between the German and the Anglo missionaries, the Germans basically mistrusting the formation that was being given to the new men by the English and Australian missionaries.<sup>3</sup>

In 1962 Murphy was transferred to New Guinea for the purpose of developing the Major Seminary there. The Seminary was located at Kap near (Alexishafen) Madang. The Holy Spirit Regional Seminary was dedicated on May 1. On 8 June 1966 Fr. Murphy wrote to Fr. Superior General Schuette: *“This is the year of our first ordination to the priesthood and so the year of fulfilment of our Regional Seminary; easily this will be*

*the most important event in the history of NG for many years to come".<sup>4</sup>*

At the end of 1967 the Holy Spirit Regional Seminary was renamed Holy Spirit College and at his instigation was transferred from Kap to Bomana near Port Moresby in order to be near the University of Papua and New Guinea. That same year the director of the Theological Education Fund of the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, Dr Charles Forman, visited the Holy Spirit Regional Seminary. A direct result of the Foreman visit was the consultation in 1968 at Lae on the grounds of the Lutheran Mission headquarters. The topic was: theological education in the churches' seminaries of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. A broad spectrum of institutions ranging from the conservative evangelicals' own institute through the mainline Protestant and Anglican schools to the Catholic Seminary took part. This led to the formation of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS) in 1969. Murphy had the "honour" of becoming its first president. It was the beginning of his involvement in ecumenical activities in the South Pacific.

In 1970 Murphy's resignation as Rector of the Seminary and President of the Theological School was accepted by the SVD Generalate. He then embarked on a new ministry for the Church in New Guinea. He first found himself working full-time for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua and New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, setting up the National Catholic Ecumenical Secretariat, even while continuing to lecture at Holy Spirit Seminary. He liaised with the churches of the islands as well as the churches in London, Australia, Geneva, and elsewhere.

Set up in 1967, the Melanesian Council of Churches received the Roman Catholic Church in Papua and New Guinea into full membership in 1972. Murphy was present when after heated debate there was only one negative vote to receive the Catholic Church into full membership. The Council speaks for its seven member churches: the Anglican Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Wabag Lutheran Church, the United Church of PNG and the Solomon Islands, the Roman Catholic Church, the Baptist Church and the Salvation Army. Thereafter he took a very active part in the Council.

Because of his position in MATS he came to know many of those engaged in theological education in the Pacific. He later wrote: *It was through MATS that, after two years of careful and painstaking negotiations, religious studies became an accepted part of the Faculty of Arts degree program of the University of Papua New Guinea. The initiative for this was taken by a committee representing the Lutheran Church, the Anglican Church, the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and*

*the Catholic Church. The degree programs commenced in 1972, offering three lectureships in comparative religion, biblical studies, and the history of Christian ideas. Thus an ecumenical initiative succeeded in inserting into our young University an academic presence of Christianity.* He was appointed Secretary to the Churches' Council for University Religious Studies.

As a lecturer in Holy Spirit Seminary and Secretary to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of New Guinea and as the Secretary to the Churches' Council for University Religious Studies he was able to continue his involvement in theological education in the South Pacific. He became very involved with the Pacific Council of Churches when the Catholic Church was accepted as a member in 1978, taking on the role of coordinator for the PCC Church and Society Program which addressed justice issues.

In the sources consulted for this paper there is nothing written about the significant role he played in the writing of the PNG Constitution. When Archbishop Douglas Young of Mount Hagen read the material prepared on Murphy he said: this says nothing about his important contribution to the composition of the PNG Constitution. He promised to have someone do an article on that topic, but thus far it has not appeared.

Murphy died on 12th December 1978 from brain damage due to a road accident in Port Moresby. He was just 51 years old. At his funeral in Port Moresby wonderful tributes were paid by all the Christian Churches on account of the great work he had carried out in five years' time, bringing the Christian Churches together: "that all may be one in Christ". After the funeral Fr. Walcott wrote to the Superior General about the funeral: "You may perhaps have heard that the funeral was attended by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Michael Somare and several government ministers and that he was buried in a coffin covered in Tapa cloth in the manner of a Polynesian chieftan. He was the only expatriate working for the Pacific Conference of Churches and he was appointed by the entire assembly at a meeting in Port Moresby in 1976. There is no record of the number of people at his funeral Mass and burial, but someone counted 150 vehicles."<sup>5</sup>

**Michael Morrison (1927-1984)** was born in Ipswich, Queensland, in 1927. He went to Marburg in 1945 at the age of 18. He was sent in 1948 to the United States (Techny, IL) to undertake his philosophical and theological education. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1954 in the United States. After ordination he was sent to the Madang District of New Guinea. He began in Uligan up the coast from Madang. Later (1957) he was made parish

priest of Bundi, a mountainous parish between Madang and the highlands of New Guinea. He was also appointed the Director of Education in the Archdiocese of Madang, a position he held for more than twenty years.

In 1958 he set up a primary boarding school (because of the distances involved he had to make it a boarding school) for the outlying village children. He tells the complete story of the founding of the school, its early years, and the visitation of the UN Delegation in an article entitled: "An Experiment in English", July-August *Arnoldus*, 1962, pp.147-153. In this article he makes the following points: a) he decided to do it differently from the government schools; he would start right off with English rather than spending a year or two on Pidgin English; b) he invited the villages to send boys; 50 boys responded (from these he chose 36 in the 6-to-8-year-old range; the others were refused because of "old age"); he also admitted twenty girls (realizing that there would be difficulties if boys were educated but not girls); c) he needed food to feed these 36 boys and 20 girls, and so he started gardens with the help of a lay missionary from Australia, Max David. In 1959 there were 69 boys and 31 girls in the school and it officially became known as St. Francis of Assisi Native Boarding School. It was registered in the category of Tertiary Primary School, 3rd Class, the highest rating that could be attained outside of a rating on the Australian syllabus. This rating was needed in order to get government financial help in school materials. In 1962 the total enrolment was 338, slightly less than half were girls. By this time the Bundi school had 14 teachers, seven New Guineans and seven lay missionaries (six from Australia and one from England). In order to get stability in his teaching Institute he invited the Sisters of Charity from Sydney to come to his mission, and they did.

Since Australia looked after the Trust Territory of New Guinea for the United Nations, the UN decided to send a Visiting Mission every three years to see how things were developing. The report on mission schools in 1959 had not been very positive, and so the team was concerned to take a close look at them on this visit in 1962. When the four-man Mission accompanied by secretaries and the District Commissioner of Madang arrived in two planes at 8:15 on Monday morning, May 7, 1962, Bundians who had gathered at the airstrip heard Sir Hugh Foot say, "*The Mission School here has made the Bundi area famous throughout New Guinea and so the United Nations decided to come and see it.*" In saying good-bye to Father Morrison at the airstrip, Sir Hugh gave him a whack on the back and said, "*Morrison, you have a fabulous school!*" They approved of his method of starting with English immediately.

Morrison was also concerned about the limited diet the village people had. He decided to import some Brahmin cattle which he drove across the mountains and into the Ramu Valley. There he set up a cattle business for the people. He also wrote that *“through the kindness of the Catholic Women’s League of Sydney we were presented with a nucleus herd of Red Poll Cattle. It is through the establishment of cattle in the area – to provide meat and milk for our boarding school, to provide infant food to babies who must be weaned to Sweet Potato, and to provide meat to people who are so deficient in protein – that we hope to raise their living conditions. Cattle will in time also give a foundation for some economy.”*

In 1967 Morrison was appointed as a member of the new Catholic Education Board. The Board was necessary since that year the Government Director of Education proposed that all the mission primary schools should be closed and there should be only government primary schools. In response to this proposal the National Director of Catholic Education, Father Paul McVinney, SVD, and the National Catholic Education Board requested the Administrator of Papua New Guinea first to set up a Commission of Enquiry into Education in Papua New Guinea. The request was granted. The joint submission from the Catholic Education Board and the Anglican Education Board was considered the best program for education in Papua New Guinea. The authority of the Department of Education was therefore stripped of its control of all teachers and the National Teachers’ Association was set up as an independent body. The mission schools remained open and all certificated teachers were free to teach in government or mission schools. Morrison played an active role on the National Catholic Education Board until his death.

In early June 1984 Morrison came to Sydney, not feeling well, and went to St. Vincent’s Hospital. There the specialists informed him that he had severe cancer and he would not be returning to PNG. He lasted just eight weeks in the hospital before he passed away on 8th August 1984, just 57 years of age.

**Raymond Cashmere (1929–1977)** was born in Carlton, Sydney. He joined Murphy, Morrison and O’Reilly at St. Vincent’s Seminary in 1945 at the age of 16 and travelled to the United States with them in 1948. He was ordained a priest in Techny in 1954. After his ordination Cashmere was assigned to Australia. For one year he taught at St. Vincent’s Seminary, Marburg. In 1957 he was missioned to the Diocese of Wewak in the East Sepik Province of New Guinea where he carried out pastoral duties in the

parish of Yangoru, about five miles west of Wewak. This had happened rather quickly. On November 14, the Assistant Superior General, H. Kroes, wrote to the Regional Superior in New Guinea, G. Bernarding, to explain to him why he was not informed of Cashmere's transfer to NG. He said it was never the intention of the SVD Generalate to send him for good to NG, but only for the time being.<sup>6</sup> However, after only two years the new Regional in Australia, Fr. L. Mack, was asking the Superior General to transfer him again to Australia. On January 2, 1959, he wrote: "*Father will soon be needed here; we expect four or five new Clerical Novices on February 2nd.*" The Superior General on January 17, wrote to Fr. Mack: "*Since Fr. Cashmere was only loaned to the Region of NG, there will be no need for an official transfer.*"<sup>7</sup> Cashmere returned that year and was assigned to St. Vincent's Seminary at Marburg, where he again took up a teaching position. In 1961 he moved to Sydney and became the Rector of the House in Epping.

In 1964, after five years in Australia, he requested to return to his mission in the Diocese of Wewak, New Guinea. On his arrival there he was given the duty of preparing and teaching young Papuan New Guineans who hoped to become priests in the Diocese of Wewak, at St. John's Minor Seminary on Kairiru Island just off the coast from Wewak. Ten years later he was again requested to return to Australia and be the Rector of St. Vincent's Seminary, Marburg, Queensland. He faithfully carried out this task but did not enjoy the best of health. In early June 1977 he was admitted to the Holy Spirit Hospital, Brisbane, for a major operation. A week later a blood clot developed and the specialists were unable to save him. He passed away on 9th June at the age of 47.

**Peter O'Reilly (1925-2013)** was born in Haberfield, Sydney, NSW, in 1925. It was Father John Tschauder, SVD, a survivor of the "Dorish Maru" strafing, who suggested to Patrick Murphy and Peter O'Reilly in 1944 that they consider joining the SVD and go to the new seminary at Marburg. So Peter joined the three others at St. Vincent's, Marburg, and later at Techny. He was ordained in 1954 and missioned directly to the Diocese of Wewak, New Guinea, in 1955.<sup>8</sup>

After an introductory time in a bush parish he came to Wewak and was appointed Director of Education for the Catholic Diocese of Wewak. After the War the bishops were anxious to start religious congregations with indigenous vocations. Bishop Arkfeld founded a religious order of Sisters and of Brothers. O'Reilly was asked to set up a school for young

New Guinea lads who wished to become Sacred Heart Brothers.

Bishop Arkfeld, recognizing the competence of O'Reilly, quickly gave him many hats to wear. As well as Director of Education he was a teacher, Secretary of the Mission Land Trust for the restoration of Property Titles, Chaplain to the government High School at Brandi where Sir Michael Somare was doing his first year as a teacher, and chaplain to the European Hospital.

In 1957 O'Reilly introduced the Brisbane Mercy Sisters to Kunjingini where they set up a Primary Teachers' College. This College ran for twelve years until in 1969 a new Teachers' College at Kaindi, Wewak, was established. Student teachers from all provinces of Papua and New Guinea and the Solomons attended the College.

In 1967 O'Reilly became a member of the National Catholic Education Board representing the Dioceses of Wewak, Aitape, Vanimo and Daru. He played an active part on the Board, along with McVinnay and Morrison, in winning the right for all mission schools to exist as long as they had qualified teachers.

In 1980 O'Reilly was asked to return to Australia and be the Rector of Divine Word Seminary in West Essendon, Victoria. In 1982 he was elected Provincial Superior. While Superior, Father O'Reilly saw the necessity to build a Divine Word Seminary in the vicinity of Yarra Theological Union, Box Hill, Victoria. The new Seminary was called "Dorish Maru College" in memory of the missionaries who had lost their lives in Papua New Guinea during the Second World War.

However, after finishing his term as provincial he continue to serve the Church and the Society. He volunteered in 1987 to go to the Mission of Kiribati for three years and educate the local seminarians, Sisters, Brothers and lay persons in the Kiribati Pastoral Institute. After his return to Australia in 1990 he occasionally carried out mission duties in Papua New Guinea, with the Aborigines in Santa Teresa Aboriginal Mission, south east of Alice Springs, and priestly pastoral duties from North Queensland to Tasmania. Only poor health forced him into full retirement. He died in 2013.

## **SVD Australian recruits go to India**

### *The situation in India*

The first two SVD priests to India arrived in Indore in 1932. By 1951 the SVD personnel had increased and the work had progressed to the point that it was necessary to divide the Indian Region into the Indore and Sambalpur

(Orissa) Regions. Sambalpur consisted of the southern part of the former Ranchi Vicariate and the western part of the Calcutta Archdiocese. While the part taken from the Calcutta territory had no Catholics at all, the part taken from the Ranchi Vicariate had 65,000 Catholics (out of a population of 3.5 million), mainly of three aboriginal tribes in this area.

After Indian Independence in 1947 the government made it difficult for new Christian missionaries to enter unless they came from Commonwealth countries. For this reason the Australian recruits ordained after 1954 were sent to India to join their English-speaking confreres from the United States and England who were already there. Fr. Pat Connor wrote in a letter to the author: *In the later Fifties most Australians ordained at Techny were assigned to India because the Indian government would grant visas only to members of the British Commonwealth, of which Australia was a member nation. Not too long after that all missionaries were banned as being political agents of the West come to India to destroy India's Hindu heritage.*

After World War II the Superiors decided to admit Indians to the Society. A novitiate was established in 1951 in Palda (Indore). The candidates had two years of Novitiate and two years of philosophy before going to the Papal Seminary at Pune for their theological studies.

## **Personnel**

**Patrick Murphy (1927–1978)**, as was said earlier, was born in Sydney, New South Wales. He was the first Australian assigned to India in 1959. He was appointed to work in the SVD College/Novitiate in Palda. He spent four years teaching there. During that time he became aware of the split between the German and the English and Commonwealth missionaries with regards to their approach to carrying out their missionary task.<sup>9</sup> As mentioned above, in 1963 the Catholic Bishops of Papua New Guinea requested that Murphy be transferred to New Guinea to begin a Seminary for the territory of Papua and New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. He spent a total of four years in India, contributing to the intellectual and spiritual formation of the new Indian recruits.

**Joseph Egan, SVD (1919-1987)** was born in Portland, NSW, in 1919 and was ordained a priest in 1955. He went to India and took up pastoral duties in the Catholic Ashram, Palda (Indore Region) and also became the director of the Sat Prachar Press ("The Press of Disseminating Truth") which had been established already in 1947 and published books, pamphlets and calendars in English and Hindi.<sup>10</sup> Egan remained the director of the press for five

years. In 1960 he returned to Australia. He spent five years in India doing pastoral work, but more importantly helping the Indian confreres develop their ministry of the printed word.

**Liam Horsfall (1927–2016)** was born in Brisbane and ordained to the priesthood in Techny in 1957. He was assigned to India – the Sambalpur Region. This was a challenging area in which to work. Fr. Stephen Fuchs, SVD, a renowned anthropologist in India, wrote: *The work of the missionaries among the tribals of Sambalpur is strenuous, because of the great number of Christians at every station, the vast territory they have to cover, the extremely hot climate in summer, the poverty and primitive conditions of the tribals. But on the other hand, the pastoral work among them is very rewarding: the faithful are greatly devoted to their priests, strong in faith and sincere in the fulfilment of their religious duties.*<sup>11</sup>

Bishop Westermann was having difficulty finding teachers in English, mathematics and science for his boys' high schools which he considered an important means of evangelization. So he sent Horsfall to the U.S. in 1958 to do a Master's degree in Biology. Horsfall then returned to India to teach. He was later appointed the Rector of the New Orissa High School, Gaibira. In 1966 he was elected Regional Superior for Sambalpur and served in that office for nine years.

Besides doing administration work, Horsfall, together with his confrere Edgar Blain, involved himself with the lepers in a colony near the Province Centre. He often provided them with food. He helped build one room homes for them, typical of the houses built in the villages. He also organized the digging of wells for the colony by upper class boys from Gaibira High School during the school's summer holiday.<sup>12</sup>

Those were not easy times for the Regional. As one of his missionaries wrote in 1968: *The present political situation in India places a heavy burden on our foreign missionaries in Sambalpur. They are living from day to day a life of anxiety and uncertainty as to when an expulsion order may come.*<sup>13</sup> In 1976 he returned to Australia and was elected Provincial Superior of the Australian Province. He served in India for 17 years.

**Patrick Connor (1929–2015)** was born in Brisbane and ordained to the priesthood in Techny in 1957. He was assigned to Indore whose bishop at the time was Franz Simons. He spent nine years teaching in the College Seminary and Novitiate in Palda. In May of 1963 he had an accident and was in the hospital for six months. His Superior wanted him to return to

Australia for better medical treatment, but Rome said no – he should return to Palda and give classes as best he could since no replacement could be found for him.<sup>14</sup>

There is an interesting letter in the SVD Generalate Archives complaining that Connor was too lax with the Indian seminarians – he allowed them to play cricket and football without their cassocks! After nine years in India he asked to return to Australia. He returned in 1967.

**Clement Godwin**, SVD (1929–1993) was born in Townsville, Queensland and was ordained in Techny in 1958. His health was poor even while studying in the United States. In 1954 a doctor had removed two-thirds of his stomach. When in 1958 he was assigned to India, the Superior General wrote explaining why they were sending him to India in spite of his bad health: *In Indore he can be employed in one of our larger communities where there is a regular schedule, or even in a small station where he has not to care for a great number of people.*<sup>15</sup>

On arriving in India in 1960 he began teaching in a Catholic High School in Bombay. While taking part in an SVD On-Going Formation Programme in Nemi, Italy, he requested to do doctoral studies on the *two East Indian villages in our parish*. The Superior General approved his request.<sup>16</sup> He did a doctorate in Anthropology at Bombay University and later published his thesis under the title: *Change and Continuity: a Study of two Christian villages in suburban Bombay* (1972).

In 1975 he was appointed to the SVD Seminary at Pune where the Indian SVD seminarians were doing their theological training. There he taught anthropology for two years. During this time he also gave many workshops and retreats around India, based on the documents of Vatican II as they applied to the local situation. In 1977 he published a book based on these retreats and workshops entitled *Spend and Be Spent*.

In 1978 he returned to Australia for health reasons.

**Edgar Blain (1930–2013)** was born in Nanango in the Brisbane diocese and was ordained a priest in Techny in 1958. He was missioned to Sambalpur. When he arrived there in 1959 all of the twenty two SVD priests in the Region were foreigners. By the time he left in 1976 the Province of India was totally self-sufficient as far as priests were concerned.<sup>17</sup>

Blain spent fifteen years in Sambalpur, ten of them in the schools. His first appointment was to Gaibira High School where he served first as Assistant Boarding Master and then as Boarding Master. After a year and

a half's break in a parish he was appointed Principal of a new boy's high school. In 1967, he was appointed Secretary of Gaibira High School. He held that position for five years.

He was appointed treasurer of the Province for three years and moved to the Province Center. While there he became involved with the leper colony not too far from the Province Office.

A great contribution which Blain made to the Church in India was his development of the first English-Sadri Dictionary. Sadri was an unwritten language; there was no Sadri dictionary available. Sadri is the mother tongue of the tribals of Northern Orissa. Ninety-eight per cent of the Catholics in that area are tribals. The main reason for publishing the dictionary was to help missionaries learn the language. The era of foreign missionaries was coming to a close. However, priests, Brothers and Sisters were coming to the province from all over India, and when they arrived in Orissa they needed to learn Sadri.

Blain started collecting Sadri words; he soon had a basic collection of 600 words. Before going on home leave he typed them up and distributed them to the missionaries. One SVD suggested he should publish the list. So when he returned he gave time to collecting more words from Sadri-English speakers. He received a grant from the SVD Generalate to help him pay his collaborators. In 1975 the dictionary, with 20,000 words, was published. It is still being used.<sup>18</sup>

In 1972 he was invited to return to Australia. Blain decided it was time to leave. He did so in August 1976 after having served in India for seventeen years.

## **A Summary**

The first Australian SVD recruits were assigned to New Guinea. They were involved in many activities that were important for the development of a strong local Church: starting a Major Seminary for New Guinea vocations; supporting the growth of indigenous Religious Communities of men and women; developing the Catholic Schools and preventing their elimination by the Government in favour of Government schools; becoming involved with other Churches in the South Pacific; and carrying out parish work in sometimes difficult situations. The next group of Australian SVDs went to India. They were assigned either to the Indore Region or the Sambalpur Region. In the Indore Region they were involved in: parish work; setting up schools and teaching; establishing an SVD college and novitiate and

participating in the Major Seminary in Pune; doing research and giving workshops. In the Sambalpur Region they were involved in: educational work and pastoral work among the tribal people; caring for lepers; preparing the way for local leadership.

## Notes

- 1 Personal Letter from Peter O'Reilly to Lawrence Nemer
- 2 Much of the above material is taken from a manuscript in the SVD Province Archives in Marsfield by Paul Scott, SVD, entitled: *HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIA PROVINCE 1900 – 1941*.
- 3 SVD ARCHIVES IN ROME: Mia-Oik – 1960-1963, No. 27, Letter of Fr. Murphy to Fr. Pung – May 17,1961
- 4 SVD ARCHIVES IN ROME: Me-Ni – 1964-66, No.27
- 5 SVD ARCHIVES IN ROME, Mir-Nic, No.27, 1977-1979
- 6 SVD ARCHIVES IN ROME, Cam-Dom No. 27, 1957-1959
- 7 SVD ARCHIVES IN ROME, Cam-Dom No. 27, 1957-1959
- 8 Unless otherwise indicated all this information comes from a personal letter sent to the author of this article by Peter O'Reilly.
- 9 SVD Archives in Rome: No.27, Mia-Oik, 17 May 1961. Kevin Walcott, an English SVD who arrived in India in 1962 commented on these tensions in an email to the author in December 2011. He wrote: “*‘The German’ (in fact continental) Fathers and the ‘English’ (by which was meant ‘English-speaking Fathers’) was at its height when I arrived in 1962... It was an interesting missiological issue but full of emotional angles too: e.g. old-time missionaries and new inexperienced missionaries, issues about learning the languages and the opportunity (or lack of it) to do so... On arrival it was hard to know where one stood, who to trust, whose advice was best, etc.*”
- 10 Stephen Fuchs, “Divine Word Missionaries in India”, *Word in the World*, 1973, p.57.
- 11 Stephen Fuchs, “Divine Word Missionaries in India”, *Word in the World*, 1973, p. 61.
- 12 Letter of E. Blain to L. Nemer, 1 February 2006 (Personal Possession)
- 13 SVD Archives in Rome, No. 27, He-Hz, 24 October 1968
- 14 SVD Archives in Rome, N. 27, C 1964-1967, Schuette to Kloepper, 4 December 1963.
- 15 SVD Archives in Rome, No. 27, Geh-Hel, 1957-1959. Superior General to L. Mack, 2 July 1958.
- 16 SVD Archives in Rome, No. 27, Gi-Hd, No. 27, 1964-1966, Superior General to Zeitler, 5 November 1965
- 17 Letter of E. Blain to L. Nemer, 10 August 2006. (Personal possession)
- 18 Reflection on the Occasion of the Golden Anniversary of his Ordination, 2008. (Personal possession) In a personal letter to Nemer in August 2011 Blain wrote: “*In 1975 John Musinsky visited India. At that time he was Superior General. When he visited Gaibira High School I was Secretary. He visited me in my office. After a little*

*while he said, 'Edgar, curiosity is killing the cat'. Then gesturing towards an eighteen inches high pile of writing paper standing on a small table and leaning against the wall, he said, 'What is that?' I told him it was an English Sadri dictionary that I was working on and close to finishing. Immediately he said, 'When you know how much it will cost to publish write to me and I will send you the money.' I did that and he sent the money." Blain also wrote: "In connection with the publications of the English-Sadri dictionary, when the bones of the dictionary arrived at the Province centre from the printing press, a local diocesan priest, Father Anthony Kujur, said to me, 'Edgar, you are a foreigner, and nobody has done for our language what you have done. Seeing what you have done, it has inspired me to take on the task of translating the New Testament of the bible beginning with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.' It took Anthony ten years to finish the task. Ten years was the time it took me to finish the dictionary."*

Further Possible Reading (with more details and footnotes):

*The Great Age of Misson: Some Historical Studies in Mission History.*  
Larry Nemer, SVD. Studia Instituti Missiologici 100: Steyler Verlag,  
St. Augustin, 2013, 194 pp. Cf. pgs.99-168.

## BOOK REVIEW

*Nagoyo: The Life of Don Angelo Confalonieri among the Aborigines of Australia, 1846-1848*

Editors: S Girola & R Pizzini

Publisher: Trentino Historical Museum Foundation, 2013 (in English).

ISBN: 9788871971582

Paperback: 238 pages, from \$53.20

Book review<sup>1</sup> by Odhran O'Brien\*

Between 1846 and 1848, Don Angelo Confalonieri undertook a mission to Aboriginal people at Port Essington, now part of Australia's Northern Territory, where Britain established the Victoria settlement in 1838. Rome made the Victoria settlement a vicariate in 1845 and placed it under the Diocese of Perth led by Bishop John Brady. In 2016, a commemoration will mark the 170 years that have passed since Confalonieri arrived in Port Essington.

While in Rome during 1845, Brady had convinced Gregory XVI and Vatican officials to make Western Australia a diocese and appoint him its bishop. The proposal was based on Brady's claim that there were 8,000 European settlers and 2,500,000 Aboriginal people who required his ministry. These figures were fanciful. In January 1846, Bishop Brady returned to Perth from Europe with twenty-eight missionaries, including Sisters of Mercy, Benedictine monks and Holy Ghost Fathers. The missionaries faced difficult circumstances as there were



Fr Angelo Confalonieri.

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<sup>1</sup> This book review first appeared in *The Record* (Perth)

\* Odhran O'Brien was born in County Galway, Ireland, and later moved to Perth. He studied Western Australian history as an undergraduate at the University of Notre Dame Australia. He has worked as Manager of Heritage for the Archdiocese of Perth. Currently, he is pursuing a PhD at the University of Western Australia on the relationship between the Catholic Church and government in Western Australia during the colonial period.

in reality only a few hundred Catholics to support them. They nonetheless made a noteworthy contribution to Australia's religious landscape. The Sisters of Mercy founded schools and the Benedictines established a monastery, both continuing to this day.

The lesser known of Brady's missionaries is Don Angelo Confalonieri whose mission to Port Essington was one of a series which Brady planned to establish as an outreach to indigenous communities. Port Essington had a military garrison and little else. Lord Edward Stanley, British Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, had promised financial support to Brady and his missionaries but the bishop had to wait years for it.

While Confalonieri lived there only briefly, these studies by experts in history, anthropology and linguistics demonstrate that his work was far-reaching. In the preface, eminent Catholic historian, Rev Dr Edmund Campion notes that the nineteenth century was 'an era of great personal generosity' (p. 9). The work of Confalonieri with the Aboriginal people is one example of such generosity. New Norcia's Rosendo Salvado is another.

In the first chapter, Maurizio Dalla Serra provides an overview of Confalonieri's early life in the Italian province of Trent. The young priest suffered poor health and yet remained determined to overcome these setbacks. Eventually, he was admitted into the missionary college of Propaganda Fide. Pope Gregory XVI and Pius IX encouraged a surge in missionary activity in the nineteenth century by creating new missionary orders, colleges and territories.

Rolando Pizzini follows, discussing the challenges of Confalonieri's time in Australia. Access to resources and interaction between colonial authorities decided the fate of many missions. Pizzini emphasises that individual personalities were equally important and he shows that Confalonieri gained both the respect of the Port Essington military officers and an intimate understanding of the Aboriginal people.

Elena Franchi describes how the Victoria settlement was a hybrid between a 'military colony' and 'trade outpost'. Franchi also looks to the broader history of the locality's Aboriginal people, taking in earlier exploration by Dutch mariners and ongoing visits by Macassar fishermen from Indonesia. Port Essington was abandoned in 1849.

Leading on from Franchi, Stefano Girola provides an insightful study of the Catholic Church's ministry to Australia's Indigenous peoples. Girola contends that such missions were complex undertakings with both empowering and disenfranchising outcomes. The aim was to bring the faith to Indigenous peoples but, in the process, the Church also adopted an

advocacy role, publicly questioning their treatment by colonial authorities and settlers.

Bruce Birch explores the tangible reminders of Confalonieri's time at the Victoria settlement. The priest produced phrase-books translating into English the language of two local groups (the Iwaidja and Garig people). Nagoyo [Father] is included among the phrases as the name the tribes adopted for Confalonieri. The manuscripts contain important information on matrimonial and other rituals associated with the groups.

The final chapter, also by Elena Franchi, studies Confalonieri's exchange with the Aboriginal groups from an anthropological point of view. The relationship was by no means one-directional. Confalonieri fulfilled the roles of 'catechist, educator, physician and arbitrator in disputes' becoming a key player in their society. In recent times, such missions have regained the attention of anthropologists. They provide unrepeatably examples of relations between those on the margins of society – missionaries and indigenous peoples.

The economic, political and social aspects of the British Empire during the nineteenth century have been thoroughly investigated. However, as Professor Hilary Carey articulates in *God's Empire, Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c.1801-1908* (Cambridge, 2011) the British Empire was as much a Christian spiritual empire as it was a political realm. The centrality of religious belief and identity to the empire continues to be revealed through studies such as *Nagoyo*.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *GOD'S 'GOOD TIME': Sisters of St Joseph in Ministry with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*

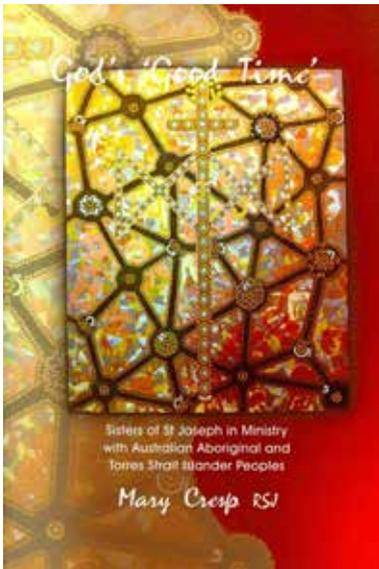
Author: Mary Cresp rsj

Publisher: ATF Press, Adelaide, PO Box 504, Hindmarsh, SA 5007 and the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, 9 Mount Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060, 2013

ISBN: 9781922239129

Paperback: 312 pages, \$34.99.

Reviewed<sup>1</sup> by Michael Costigan\*



As Congregational Leader for the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart from 1989 to 1995, Sister Mary Cresp had a prominent role in Pope John Paul II's visit to Australia early in 1995 for the beatification of Mary MacKillop. After more than six years in another key national role, as Executive Director of the Conference of Australian Religious Sisters, the South Australian-born Josephite devoted many of her efforts to writing, much of it about her Congregation's inspiring story and spirituality.

This book is one of Mary Cresp's finest achievements as an author. It is a full and carefully researched account of the development of the ministry of the Sisters with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since the time of St Mary

MacKillop and especially over the past 40 or more years.

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this book review first appeared in the *Catholic Weekly*.

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\* Michael Costigan was the associate editor of *The Advocate* [Melbourne]; Director, Literature Board of the Australia Council; and Director and Executive Secretary, Australian Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace.

In the spirit of their founder, the Josephites have continued to place education at the heart of their calling and of their relationship with Australia's Indigenous peoples in many parts of the country. They have recognised, however, that the concept of education, like the meaning of mission, has evolved and widened. Among the major developing principles are that the educator is also a learner, that the ministry of education should lead to a partnership between all concerned, that consultation is one of its indispensable ingredients and that no Catholic is exempt from participating in the Church's evangelising function.

What came to be accepted by the Sisters and others collaborating with Australian Indigenous peoples is that education is a ministry "with" rather than simply "to". The way in which this approach has in time been better appreciated and embraced by the Congregation's members from around 1970 to today is the theme of Mary Cresp's absorbing and edifying story.

In reporting that saga, the writer identifies over 150 of her Congregation's Sisters who have received appointments for this activity since the Second Vatican Council. They carried out their ministry, often in harsh conditions, in more than 40 remote and urban centres in five mainland States and the Northern Territory. The book offers summaries, in chronological order, of what has been achieved by the Sisters and the Indigenous inhabitants in all of those centres.

Prominent among those named is the late Sister Veronica Ryan, who died suddenly in Wyndham in December 2008 while concluding nearly 40 years of heroic service in a number of WA communities.

Examples of others whose work receives many mentions in the text are Sisters Clare Ahern, Anne Boland, Annette Arnold, Michelle Madigan, Angela Morrison, Joan Hamilton and Robert Aitken. The list could be much extended. They responded to the calls made by Church leaders like Bishops Jobst and Saunders of Broome and to invitations coming from the members themselves of Indigenous communities throughout the land.

The Sisters have given particular attention to the needs of the Kimberley region in WA. What began in the far northern port of Wyndham as early as 1964 spread to many other places in the succeeding decades.

One of these Kimberley centres was Warmun, previously called Turkey Creek, 200 kilometres south of Kununurra. There the Sisters have been associated with an increasingly celebrated group of Indigenous artists. On 10 May 2013 the Governor-General at the time, Dame Quentin Bryce, opened an exhibition of the outstanding work of the Warmun painters

and sculptors in the Australian Catholic University's McGlade Gallery, Strathfield. One of the items on display was George Mung Mung's wooden sculpture, "Mary of Warmun", described by the well-known art critic Sister Rosemary Crumlin as one of the great religious art works of the 20th century.

On the same occasion, the ACU's Director of the Centre for Indigenous Education and Research, Professor Nerida White, launched God's 'Good Time'.

While the Josephites, in their learning process in Warmun and everywhere else, received much enlightenment about Aboriginal culture and history from people living there, they were also helped by other well-credentialed advisers. Among them were members of their own Congregation who were pleased to share their acquired knowledge with other Sisters at a series of Chapters and Conferences.

Others from outside the Congregation who played a role have been Shirley Smith ("Mum Shirl") in Redfern, Patrick Dodson ("the father of reconciliation" and now a Senator in the Australian Parliament), researchers and historians like Colleen Malone and Margaret Zucker, in addition to such well-informed and articulate priests as Fathers Frank Brennan, Ted Kennedy, Eugene Stockton and Cyril Hally.

Mary Cresp's written account is complemented by 122 evocative photographs, in colour, scattered through the pages. The volume also has a comprehensive bibliography and index, together with the list of Sisters who have ministered in so many parts of Australia with our Indigenous people.

The work continues, but one hopes a book like this will encourage others from outside the Josephite Congregation, notably the laity, to offer their help for a service which will face difficulties with the ageing of many Sisters and the decline in their numbers.