

TO THE BECKONING SHORES

URGED ON BY THE LOVE OF CHRIST



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**DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THREE
COURAGEOUS WOMEN**

Margaret Cahill

Catherine O'Brien

Eliza Williams

**who
sea-journeyed across the world
to
take the knowledge and love of Christ
to where the need was greatest**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This small volume is a gathering together in one place of people stories and historical events, many of which have been previously recorded.

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BI BLIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

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Cover: From a design by Sr. Christine Henry rsc

Foreword

Sister Josephine Cannell rsc is to be congratulated for her splendid work, 'To the Beckoning Shores'. Dedicated to the memory of three outstanding Irish Sisters of Charity, Margaret Cahill, Catherine O'Brien and Eliza Williams, it tells the intriguing story, through good times and not so good, of the Congregation, founded in Ireland, with its extension to the primitive colony of Australia.

The mortal remains of this intrepid trio, the first religious Sisters to come to this continent, repose in Tasmanian soil beneath the majestic grandeur of Hobart's massive peak, Mount Wellington.

Back in the 1970s, at a time of crisis for the Sisters, and for the then struggling parish of Kingston, (a decision had been made in Sydney to withdraw the Sisters of Charity from that place) some Sisters ventured out to the grave at Cornelian Bay Cemetery, and prayed for the assistance of the founding three. The problem was soon resolved – and the Sisters of Charity stayed at Kingston for many more years.

All who peruse Sr. Josephine's telling of such an interesting saga, will discover that modern readers are indebted to her for her research and compilation of what, I am sure, has been a labour of love. She has been highly successful in fulfilling her stated task, of gathering together in one place so much information and inspiration, contained in a diverse number of sources. Sr. Josephine, using personal reminiscences and anecdotes, as well as archival and published material, manages to fill in gaps left by academic historians.

I thoroughly enjoyed perusing this chronicle of advances, as well as setbacks, in the apostolate and ministry, since 1838, of the Australian daughters of Mary Aikenhead. This work can be recommended to all who are interested in the history of the Catholic Church and community in Australia, especially in the historic Dioceses of Sydney and Hobart.

(Fr.) W. T. Southerwood

MARY AIKENHEAD

1787 - 1858

FOUNDRESS OF THE RELIGIOUS SISTERS OF CHARITY

FRIEND OF THE POOR

When Doctor David Aikenhead and his wife Mary gazed with love and wonder on their first born child on 19 January 1787 they would not have imagined the impact that the baby, Mary, was to have on the distant, and as yet uncolonised, Australian continent fifty one years later.

Mary Aikenhead was born in Daunt's Square in the port city of Cork, Ireland. The mostly Protestant area was being gradually infiltrated by Catholic merchants because of the easing of the Penal Laws against them. Although Mrs. Aikenhead was from a staunch Catholic family, the Stackpoles, her infant daughter was baptised in the Anglican church where her father, Dr. Aikenhead, worshipped.

Proving to be a frail child, Mary, according to the custom of those days, was fostered out into the care of John and Mary Rorke at their home in the higher altitude and better quality air of Eason's Hill. "Mammy" Rorke and "Daddy John" were devout Catholics and were to play an important role in Mary's development. Mary did not begin to speak until she was three years old, but soon learned witty sayings and the everyday references to the goodness of God which were so much a part of the Rorke household.

Uninhibited by any claims of social status, Mary mixed freely with the children of the poorer neighbourhood and formed firm friendships with some of the adults. There was Joanie who sold herrings and sprats, Sean the coal man who could entertain with fascinating leprechaunian tales, Biddy the comb and ribbon seller and Tommy, who could magically make holes disappear from pots, pans and tin kettles.

Mary's parents visited regularly with items of clothing, toys and money for her upkeep. They were pleased with her gradual and healthy progress, and when she was six years old they decided it was time for her to rejoin the family. By this time Mary had two sisters, Anne and Margaret, and a baby

brother, St. John, was soon to arrive. Mary would have been very sad to part with Mammy Rorke and Daddy John, but her father spared her the sorrow by engaging Mammy to be full time nurse at Daunt's Square, and employed Daddy John as his coach driver.

Mary now attended a nearby school for the daughters of Protestant gentlemen where the reportedly smart pupil was instructed in the three R's, learnt to speak fluent French and excelled in the genteel arts of embroidery, music and dancing. Particular attention was given to correct posture, dignity and decorum. She now found herself in the wealthy society of Cork – so different from the underprivileged poor of the Catholic population at Eason's Hill - and she did not require much persuasion from her father to accompany him to Shandon church on Sundays. With her chestnut curls, large expressive eyes and winning personality she was greatly admired by the ladies and gentlemen of the congregation who congratulated Dr. Aikenhead on his charming daughter.

Dr. Aikenhead not only practised medicine, he and a business partner named Dupont kept a well established chemist shop with trained apprentices. When the doctor was about fifty years old he decided to sell the practice and retire. Through his business interests he had been able to provide for the future of his family and the medical care of his delicate son. In 1799 he purchased a larger house on Rutland St. but the enjoyment of retirement was not to last long. By 1801 he had become seriously ill, and, realizing that death was imminent, he sent for an Anglican clergyman. Although somewhat comforted, his mind was not at ease. Meanwhile, his wife, her family, the faithful Mary Rorke and a host of the Catholic poor who had been his former patients stormed Heaven with prayer. Of his own accord Dr. Aikenhead asked to see a priest, was received into the Catholic Church and died peacefully on 15th December 1801.

Her father's conversion and resultant peace made a deep impression on the fourteen year old Mary. Over the years she had become close to her mother's family, especially to a widowed aunt, Mrs. Rebecca Gorman, whose advice prompted her to seek instruction in the Faith she had known on Eason's Hill. She was received into the Catholic Church on 6th June 1802. The following years for Mary were taken up with overseeing her late father's business affairs as her mother, practically an invalid, was unable to deal with them. Her responsibilities, however, did not prevent her from enjoying the social life where she was a popular figure in recreational pursuits, and a sought-after partner for the dances of those times.

During these years the young socialite developed a deep concern for the poor. Hunger and disease were rife among them, and a group of like-minded young Catholic women had set up centres for the distribution of food and clothing. Mary Aikenhead and her friend, Cecilia Lynch, joined the group, but extended their compassion further by visiting the garrets and airless hovels, to minister to the suffering poor. Mary now began to consider the possibility of devoting her life to the service of the poor. Providence intervened and she met Mrs. Anna Maria O'Brien who had gone to Cork for her sister, Cecilia Ball's, reception into the Ursuline Order. Mary Aikenhead had never been to Dublin so an invitation from Anna O'Brien was gladly accepted. However, Mary was not free to make the desired journey until after her mother's death on 24th August 1809.

At the age of twenty two she was now head of the family, and, after completing all the legal requirements of her mother's will, she set out for Dublin. At the O'Brien home in Mountjoy Square Mary renewed acquaintance with Fr. Daniel Murray whom she had previously met at Cecilia Lynch's home in Cork. Dr. Murray was now the recently appointed Co-Adjutor to Archbishop Troy. Anna Maria took Mary with her on visits to the homes of the poor and sick, and to the Refuge for destitute girls which she had established. It was on one of these visits that Mary heard Dr. Murray remark, "If only we had an order of Nuns to look after the poor!" Mary had to return to Cork to resume the family responsibilities but both Dr. Murray and Anna O'Brien begged her to keep in touch with them.



Mary Aikenhead at the age of twenty.
From a miniature in the possession
of her grand-niece Miss Boscon.

The following year, Anne Aikenhead, now nearly twenty years old, was available to keep an eye on St John's health and Margaret was a boarder at the Ursuline Convent, so Mary was able to re-visit the O'Briens in Dublin. There she joined in long discussions about the Order of Nuns that Dr. Murray was envisaging, and, after she returned home, correspondence was exchanged between Dr. Murray and Mary Aikenhead who was now anxious to see the establishment of this Order so that she could join it. For a time Mary's zeal

and frustration frightened the prudent and cautious Dr. Murray, but in 1811 Anna O'Brien wrote to say that Dr. Murray thought he had found a suitable leader for his Order which would be known as Sisters of Charity.

Mary was delighted by this news and travelled to Dublin. When Dr. Murray joined them for supper she eagerly enquired about the proposed leader. Upon Dr. Murray's intimation that she was the person he had in mind, Mary was completely dumbfounded. At first she protested and quoted her lack of gifts and abilities, but Dr. Murray, though sympathetic, was inflexible. After being assured that this was God's will, Mary asked for a period of training in a religious community. Dr. Murray contacted the superior of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in York who graciously agreed to accept Mary and a companion. The choice of this training ground was a strategic move on Dr. Murray's part because he would have known the story of the Institute's founder. Mary Ward, who grew up in Elizabethan England when persecution of the Catholic religion was rife, dreamed of having a group of religious women, without enclosure, and free of episcopal control, who would serve the needy, in the name of Christ. She was able to form a small community in Europe and, despite being ridiculed, imprisoned as a "heretic", and having her institute suppressed for a time, she saw it continue. It was finally confirmed by Pope Clement XI in 1703, fifty eight years after Mary Ward's death.

According to the original arrangement, Miss Catherine Chamberlain was to go with Mary Aikenhead, but she became ill shortly before the time of departure, so Miss Alicia Walsh, who was also interested in Dr. Murray's Sisters of Charity, went instead. Alicia, fourteen years older than Mary, was the second daughter of a well-to-do family. She is described as small, handsome, amiable, intelligent and charming.

Mary and Alicia set out from Dublin on Trinity Sunday, 24 May 1812. They were accompanied by Dr. Murray who saw them safely across to England and received with great joy into the Micklegate Bar Convent in the ancient city of York. They were to spend three years in the Novitiate there, and, although they chose to be known by the religious names – Sr. Augustine and Sr. Catherine, - they did not adopt the IBVM religious habit, opting instead for the black dress, cap and veil of postulants. During the Novitiate years, Mary and Alicia not only prepared themselves for the religious life, they had also to work on the selection of a Rule of Life for their future Congregation.

Dr. Murray kept in touch by letters and visits, and, on 18 August 1815, arrived to escort them back to Dublin. After tearful farewells and reciprocal promises of prayers they set out for home and sailed into the Bay of Dublin on 22 August. Srs. Augustine and Catherine were taken to North William Street Orphanage, run by a group of charitable ladies. Officially they were not yet Sisters of Charity because they had not made vows, so they were back in secular dress. Almost immediately Dr. Murray was called to Rome and expected to be away for a considerable time, so he arranged for the two pioneer Sisters of Charity to make private vows for one year and to live under the York rule. This was an adaptation of the Jesuit rule of St. Ignatius – a rule which advocated non-enclosure and Central Government. Dr. Murray appointed Sr. Augustine Aikenhead as Superior, Sr. Catherine Walsh as Novice Mistress, and asked Fr. Peter Kenney SJ to be their Spiritual Director.

While in Rome Dr. Murray petitioned Pope Pius VI for a Rescript to found a Congregation of Sisters of Charity in Dublin who would live according to the Rule of the Sisters in York, but with the addition of a fourth vow obliging them to devote their lives to the service of the poor. When Dr. Murray arrived back in Dublin in 1816, the Sisters had taken over the charge of the orphanage and a small school nearby. The Assumption of Our Lady, 15 August, was chosen as the Patronal Feast of the new Congregation, and was celebrated as such that year for the first time.

On 10 September, the same day that Mary Aikenhead received news of the death of her brother, St. John, she and Mother Catherine began visitation of the sick poor in their homes. Their undertaking was without precedent. Never before in Ireland had uncloistered nuns been seen walking the streets, and so they were duly dubbed “the walking nuns”. The Rescript formally constituting The Religious Sisters of Charity had arrived, so Mary Aikenhead and Alicia Walsh pronounced their perpetual vows.

Four more Postulants had entered and it was now time to think about a simple and inexpensive religious dress. Sarah Atkinson, Mary Aikenhead’s first



Yours faithfully m. A.
Mary Aikenhead

From a painting by Crowley

biographer, describes it thus - "Composed of plain black stuff, it is not inelegant.....one thing alone is brilliant- the solid broad brass cross, bearing the image of the crucified Saviour and suspended at the breast, shines in sunlight or lamplight".

In September 1817 when two postulants were due to receive the Habit, Dr. Murray decided to have a public ceremony, instead of the earlier private one, and Fr. Peter Kenney preached the occasional sermon. His text, from St. Paul, 'Caritas Christi Urget Nos' was then chosen as the motto of the Congregation and translated as "The Love of Christ Impels Us".

Fr. Peter Kenney's obligations to the Jesuits of Ireland and America. were pressing heavily upon him so he asked Fr. Robert St. Leger SJ to take over the task of assisting Mary Aikenhead with the writing of a Constitution. Fr. St. Leger was to prove a wonderful friend and counsellor.

Through the generosity of Anna Maria O'Brien a house in Stanhope St. became available in 1819. Mary Aikenhead moved there with the novices, leaving Mother Catherine at North William Street to carry on her preferred mission to the poor and sick. Mary's gentle sister, Anne, entered the Sisters of Charity on 19 March 1823. Her brother had died and her younger sister, Margaret was happily married to Dr. Hickson. Anne, now known as Sr. Anne Ignatius Aikenhead, was a founding member of the Cork community in 1826. Visitation of the homes began immediately, but. typhus fever was raging in Cork and both Sr. Aloysius Clinch and Sr. Anne Ignatius succumbed. Fortunately, they both recovered but Anne fell into consumption, was recalled to Dublin and died at Stanhope St. on 8 August 1828.

Anne's cousin and great friend, the exuberant Mary Hennessy had followed her into the Novitiate. As Sr. Xavier, she was appointed to open the Gardiner St. School for poor children. She was – after some initial trials as a teacher - to become a noted educationalist, and was ably assisted and instructed by Br. Bernard Duggan, of the Christian Brothers. She remodeled their Bell and Lancastrian School System into a form for female schools, adding to it the method of lecturing on the 3R's she had learned from Br. Duggan. Her work was printed as The School Government System and widely used.

During the first two decades of the Congregation the number of entrants increased. Works expanded to include visitation of the gaol, the schools for poor children, a temporary hospital in Dublin to tend the poor sufferers of the

cholera epidemic and the penitent asylum in Townsend Street. There were convents at North William Street, Stanhope Street, Sandymount and Cork. The realisation of Mary Aikenhead's dream of a free hospital for the sick came with the establishment of St. Vincent's in Stephens Green – the first in the English speaking world of that time to be opened and staffed by Catholic nursing nuns.

About six months after the opening of the hospital came the genesis of a distressing event.

On 27 September 1827 an English lady with aristocratic connections, Ellet Augustine Bodenham, known as Eliza to her friends, entered the novitiate. Her personal charm, facility in speaking on spiritual topics, her writings and background in scripture made her appear as an asset. During the second year of novitiate, Sr. Ignatius, as she was now called, suffered some chest trouble and was ordered a change of air. Sr. de Sales O'Brien went with her and they spent eight months at the country home of Lord Clifford, the latter's guardian and cousin. On their return, Sr. Ignatius was again an exemplary novice and was professed 3 May 1830

Mary Aikenhead's health had deteriorated so she delegated the spiritual instruction of the novices to the qualified Sr. Ignatius. In 1833, when Mary's hospital seemed a real likelihood, she decided to send three sisters to Paris to learn up-to-date trends in nursing; she chose Sr. Ignatius, Sr. de Sales and Sr. Camillus Sallinave, the former Spanish girl from the convent school in York. The three spent a year with the Sisters of St. Thomas of Villeneuve but, on their return, St. Vincent's was not ready, so they resumed their former ministries.

The many business matters concerning the setting up of the hospital claimed Mary Aikenhead's time and attention and she saw the necessity of appointing a full time Novice Mistress. As the popular Sr. Ignatius had appeared to be a success as the Assistant, she was therefore appointed Novice Mistress in October 1834 and named Superior of the Stanhope Convent. Six months later Mary Aikenhead received an inkling that all was not well in the novitiate and went immediately to Stanhope Street. There she found evidence that her trust had been misplaced and that Sr. Ignatius was the centre of a network of intrigue to undermine the authority of the Foundress. The novices had been led to believe that they would be wasting their God given talents in working for the poor, and, showing that she had not made a proper study

of the Constitutions, she had been urging some of the professed Sisters to push for the election of a Superior General, presumably herself, who would modernise the Order.

Dr. Murray lost no time in writing to Rome and by a Pontifical Rescript 5 July 1835 Pope Gregory XVI appointed Mary Aikenhead Superior General of the Sisters of Charity until the time prescribed by the Constitutions expired, when an election would take place.

Later, it was discovered that Sr. Ignatius had made arrangements for a foundation in Hastings, England to which she would take the most gifted novices to open a school for the well-to-do, and, that in Paris she and Sr. de Sales had not really applied themselves to nursing because they considered St. Vincent's Hospital to be a little pious hallucination of Rev. Mother's which never would, or should, get off the ground.

Mary Aikenhead had never before met with such duplicity and the experience was distressing and bewildering. She called a meeting of her Council and the decision was made to dismiss Eliza Bodenham. Dr. Murray signed the dismissal on 2 June 1837 and she was removed from the novitiate. She wished to return to her family in England but her brother wrote telling her she would not be welcome, so Fr. Peter Kenney who believed her version of events and admonished Mary Aikenhead for being insensitive, asked if she could remain with the Sisters of Charity until a place could be found for her in another convent.

She went to Sandymount but there continued her underground campaign. Eventually they were relieved of the strain on 1 August 1837 when Miss X, as she was being referred to, left for England with all her books and prints. She entered a convent in Normandy where she remained until the death of Fr. Kenney in 1842. She settled in Tours as a Canoness of the Royal Chapter of St. Anne of Munich which gave her an honorary title of Countess. In 1847 she applied for a dispensation from religious vows and lived in Tours until her death in 1859.

Mary Aikenhead must have regretted that she did not take more notice of Fr. St. Leger's warning when he wondered if the aristocratic postulant 'will be very mortifying to those over her, and very injurious to the Congregation and to individuals'. But, by then the damage had been done! Thirteen of the twenty two novices left as well as three professed sisters. Those who remained

showed great trust in, and loyalty towards the Foundress and, imbued with their charism, they went forward with the work of the Congregation.

For forty three years, twenty seven of those spent confined to her room or a wheel chair, Mary Aikenhead watched her fledgling Congregation grow through times of success, sorrow, pain and joy, but through it all was her oft repeated, “God’s Will. Amen”.

For the poor she provided with love what the rich can buy with money and, in the face of obstacles, she would proclaim “because it has never been done before, is no reason why it can’t be done now!”.

Mary Aikenhead died at Harold’s Cross at three o’clock of the afternoon of 22 July 1858 and is buried in the grounds of St. Mary’s, Donnybrook in Dublin. The previous year the Foundress was consoled to learn from M. de Lacy of the establishment of St. Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney; and there was also good news from Hobart. Up to the last moment, she was thinking and praying for her Australian children.

AUSTRALIA CALLS

For us in Australia there was Mary Aikenhead’s sacrificial gift when in 1838, in spite of the internal troubles and diminution of numbers recently experienced, she redeemed a promise made four years earlier.

In 1834 Dr. John Bede Polding, an English Benedictine monk, had been appointed Bishop of Australia and Van Diemen’s Land. Even before his consecration he became actively engaged in forwarding the interests of his new mission and, during a hurried trip to Ireland, had visited Mary Aikenhead to ask for Sisters for his far distant apostolate. Mary was impressed by his fervour and was sympathetic towards his wants, promising to help when she could.

During that same visit a young lady in Tipperary seems to have heard of Dr. Polding being in Ireland, and possibly of his visit to Mary Aikenhead, because she contacted him and asked if he intended to establish a Sisters of Charity foundation in Australia. The Bishop elect made a special visit to Tipperary to

meet this young Miss de Lacy and test her motives. He was satisfied with her intentions and returned to ask Mary Aikenhead to admit her to the novitiate for training for the future Australian mission. The twenty year old Alicia de Lacy was admitted to the Stanhope Street novitiate early in 1835 and her mother wrote to say that, as a child, Alicia had been a great favourite of Dr. Everard, the saintly Bishop of Cashel and that she attributed her daughter's vocation to his blessing.

Four years passed before Dr. Polding sent his Vicar General, Dr. Ullathorne, to England and Ireland to enlist missionary priests, to plead for financial aid, and, above all, to receive from Mary Aikenhead the precious gift she had promised for the Land of the Southern Cross.

Because the Sisters of Charity had not been instituted for foreign missions Mary Aikenhead could not appoint sisters for this new venture. The only way she could fulfill her promise was by asking for volunteers. She supplemented this call by distributing a pamphlet written by Dr. Ullathorne in which he gave a harrowing description of convict life in Australia, and stated his conviction that Sisters of Charity alone, by their influence and instruction, could bring about changes for the female population.

The first to answer the call was Sr. John (Margaret Cahill) one of the early novices trained by the Foundress. Dignified, courteous and kind, she was the daughter of a prosperous glover and merchant in the fashionable Dame St., Dublin. Having been born on 10 May 1793, she was twenty six- years old when she entered and forty- five when she left Ireland.

Sr. Baptist (Alicia de Lacy) as was to be expected was included in the volunteers. She had trained and worked in St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin and would later prove an invaluable asset in setting up health care services in Sydney.

A surprise volunteer was Sr. de Sales (Catherine O'Brien) who had been a sympathetic follower of Eliza Bodenham, but who had elected to remain with the Sisters of Charity. Born on 1 June 1809 she was charming and well bred and had been educated at the Sacred Heart Convent, Lorient, near Bordeaux in France. Her father, Cornelius, was listed among the gentry of both Co. Cork and Co. Limerick but died when comparatively young, leaving a widow and two young girls. As the three were out driving the mother was thrown from her carriage and sustained head injuries, which impaired her reason

and prevented her from making a will. The children then became wards of chancery and, when Catherine, aged eighteen, returned from boarding school in France, she entered the Sisters of Charity.

On hearing of this, her guardians peremptorily demanded that she return to the world as she was still a minor, and she was obliged to obey. Her cousin, Lord Clifford, invited her to his home where she remained until she was twenty one. During the waiting time Catherine's sister, a Presentation nun, often tried to persuade her to join that Order and devote her life to education quoting "those who instruct others shall shine like stars for all eternity", but Catherine counter quoted "I was sick and in prison and you visited me", and returned to Ireland and the Sisters of Charity Novitiate. She was professed on 29 August 1834. It was Lord Clifford who sought permission from Mary Aikenhead to have our portrait of Sr. de Sales painted when she was a novice. Maybe, her volunteering for Australia was not so surprising after all. The Tasmanian Catholic Standard when reporting her death many years later tells of incidents which surely must have been passed on by the Hobart Sisters of Charity who knew her intimately.

When Sr. de Sales was ready to pronounce her vows Mary Aikenhead was too ill to attend the ceremony. The newly professed went to Reverend Mother's room as soon as she could, only to find Dr. Polding sitting beside the sick bed. After introductions and congratulations and a blessing from the Bishop elect, Mary Aikenhead said "Francis de Sales, my heart, will you consent to go to Sydney with His Lordship?" Her reply, brief and characteristic, was, "I am ready, Reverend Mother, to go wherever you send me."

Shortly after her profession Sr. de Sales was struck down by a very serious illness. She often reminisced about the fact that the Sister who looked after her offered her own life in exchange, and, as though God accepted the offer, the other Sister died and de Sales recovered. A further astonishing thing was that just before this Sister died she was heard to say, "Van Diemen's Land. Alleluia!"

The youngest of the group was the one whom Mary Aikenhead was reluctant to include. Sr. Lawrence (Julia Cater) from England, born on 28 June 1811 and professed 23 January, was twenty seven at the time she volunteered. Mary Aikenhead considered her somewhat unstable, and the fact that she had openly agreed with Eliza Bodenham about the rule of poverty being too stringent seemed a hindrance. Finally Mary Aikenhead gave in to the

pleadings of the others, but stipulated that Sr. Lawrence was not to hold any office of authority.

The fifth to offer her services, Sr. Xavier, was still a novice. Born Elizabeth (Eliza) Williams together with her twin brother William on 12 July 1800, she was the second oldest of the pioneers. Her parents, William Williams aged fourteen and Elizabeth Finn had eloped to Port Patrick in Scotland and were married, apparently with the assistance of Elizabeth's brother Michael Finn, as he is recorded as a witness of the marriage. Eliza, described as small, frail and unassuming, though not lacking in courage and business sense, did not enter the Sisters of Charity until 8 December 1836. Her older sister, Sr. Francis Borgia (Catherine Maria), known as Maria, had been professed 30 March that year. Sr. Xavier Williams was the first religious woman to pronounce vows on Australian soil when she was professed 9 April 1839.



This Pioneer Tapestry by Margaret Grafton and Ilze Sadaskis hangs in St. Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, NSW. It was commissioned in 1988 to commemorate the arrival of the Sisters of Charity in Australia in 1838.

Mary Aikenhead rejoiced with all her soul in the outgoing mission which she looked on as a truly apostolic undertaking. She had just sufficient strength to go about a little, and she spared neither trouble nor fatigue in making the necessary preparations for the journey. Besides books, manuscripts, spiritual papers and a copy of the Latin Constitutions printed at a cost of ten pounds, she packed linen, and altar supplies. Teaching aides included the black crucifix which seemed to point to her thinking that the sisters might be

teaching indigenous children, and she added everything that could contribute to their comfort and convenience on board ship.

The future missionaries made the Spiritual Exercises with Mary Aikenhead before leaving Dublin and she stressed the importance of their adhering, as far as circumstances would permit, to the very letter of the Constitutions. She appointed Sr. John Cahill Superior for the duration of the voyage, after which Dr. Polding could make a change if he so wished. She also discussed with Sr. John the possibility of their having to establish a separate congregation owing to the great distance which would separate them from the Mother House in Dublin. A possibility which sharpened the pain of parting.

On the day previous to their departure from Ireland Mary Aikenhead said to Sr. John, "It is only when you and the others are gone that I shall feel your loss. May you always remember that your engagements can only be fulfilled by a constant and generous exercise of self denial. It was the crucified image of your heavenly spouse which was presented to you on the day you pronounced your vows".

Mary Aikenhead summoned enough physical strength to accompany the volunteers to Kingstown Harbour. There must have been some heart-rending farewells before they sailed from Ireland on 12 August 1838. Fr. Whelan had graciously offered to escort them to England, where they stayed with the Benedictine Sisters at Hammersmith for a few days and met Dr. Ullathorne. On 17 August the assembled missionary group boarded the 'Francis Spaight', a vessel of 368 tonnes carrying merchandise and passengers, and set sail on the long and dangerous four and a half month sea journey to the beckoning shores of far distant Botany Bay.

The party consisted of three priests, four students and the five Sisters of Charity. In his autobiography Dr. Ullathorne tells that he secured a stern cabin for the Sisters with a room for them to meet in, and, for himself a large one with provision for an altar, so that he could celebrate Mass in moderate weather. Unfortunately he began to show scant regard for Mary Aikenhead's directions at an early stage of the voyage when he deposed Sr John and made Sr. Francis de Sales superior. Being of a monastic tradition he could not come to terms with the Sisters of Charity Rule which excluded chanting of the Divine Office and made innovative provisions, such as the non-cloistered role for their Congregation, and the canonical rather than diocesan nature of their Institute. The sisters seemed not to resent interference to their way

of life, but they must surely have been amused by the restrictions he placed on them with regard to mixing with fellow passengers – they who had been used to walking the streets and alleys and mingling with the poor, sick and all classes of people. In spite of this, as long as he remained with them, the sisters had a firm friend in Dr. Ullathorne.

We do not know a great deal about our travellers' time on their sea journey. In an answer to Mother Xavier's letter telling Dr. Ullathorne, then Bishop of Birmingham, England, of the death of Mother de Sales O'Brien in Hobart, he refers to their 1838 voyage and to his remembering her as "a poor little sick thing". When writing to her sister about their later Sydney to Hobart sailing she said: "On the long voyage to Australia not one of us remained a day in our berths, but, coming here was a very rough six day passage and we scarcely got out of them. As for me, I beat all, out and out, for sea sickness."

The monotony of the long journey was broken by one startling incident. In a fit of anger the captain struck the man at the wheel who retaliated and was put in irons, to the wrath of his mates who threatened mutiny. Sisters John and de Sales asked to speak to the men and, when all was going well, the indiscreet captain was seen peeping into the cabin and spoiled the peace making effort. Happily, the Sisters had paved the way to reconciliation and, by the following day, Dr. Ullathorne, a former sailor, had tactfully succeeded in getting all back into sailing order. There were no ports of call along the way and on the morning of the last day of December 1838 the Francis Spaight sailed through the Heads and up to Circular Quay, anchoring some distance from the shore.

When time came for disembarkment and the five Sisters waited at the gangway the sailors stood, cap in hand. and said, "God bless you, ladies," as they were lowered, one by one by a suspension chair into a small boat and rowed to Campbell's Wharf to step onto Australian soil. Archbishop Simonds wrote in his preface to Fr. J.H.Cullen's book: "It will always be the enviable distinction of the Australian Daughters of Mary Aikenhead that they were selected by Divine Providence to carry to our shores the religious habit of the Church's consecrated virgins." There would have been many in the welcoming crowd who had never seen 'nuns in habits' and it must have been a quaint spectacle! Against the sombre black the burnished crucifix would have gleamed brightly in the brilliant sunlight of that Sydney summer morning.

Bishop Polding, a number of priests, Judge Therry - a relative of Sr. de Sales, The Hon. John Hubert Plunkett – the Attorney General, a crowd of Sydney

citizens and the children of St. Mary's School were all there to welcome the newcomers. The Sisters of Charity were taken by carriage to the Bishop's House in Woolloomooloo where dinner had been prepared for the travellers, and to which the captain was invited. On the following morning Solemn High Mass in St. Mary's Cathedral was also a celebration of welcome to the band of missionaries, and the Sisters of Charity were honoured with a front seat. The Bishop spoke very emotionally of his gratitude and joy: "The Spirit of God has filled with courage, not belonging to their sex, excellent ladies, who deeming all things of small account to gain souls for Christ, have fearlessly traversed the oceans to come amongst us to consummate their sacrifice of charity on these shores of sorrow and guilt."

The house at Parramatta was not ready for the Sisters so they remained in Sydney for about a month and immediately set to work visiting the hospital, the gaol, the poor and sick in their homes and gave religious instruction in three Catholic schools. The Bishop organised a three day retreat and renovation of vows after which Sr. John Cahill was re-instated as Superior and Sr. Lawrence, whom Mary Aikenhead had declared unfit for authority, was made Novice Mistress and placed in charge of Sr. Baptist de Lacy and Sr. Xavier Williams. The Bishop was showing the same disregard for their Constitutions as had happened on board ship, and the senior sisters must have regretted not having opposed the first interference. Eventually a cottage was rented for them in Parramatta by Mr. William Davis and, towards the end of January, the Catholics of Sydney said farewell to the Sisters for the time being.

Parramatta – the head of the river, as the Aboriginal name signifies – had few roads at that time. Travel was mostly by muddy tracks and the unsanitary condition of the river flowing through the town made life well nigh intolerable for the residents. The Female Factory where the sisters were to visit housed 728 women and 176 children. The inmates were highly excitable and turbulent and there had been revolts when the violence was only subdued by the intervention of the military.

The Sisters' visits had a phenomenal effect. Within a short time they had petitioned Governor Gipps for the degrading work of women breaking stones and sawing wood to be replaced by laundry and needlework. The request was granted. A laundry was built, workrooms fitted up, and soon the public were patronising these services with such good results that the Governor paid the workers a small wage for their efforts. Many years later Mother Xavier

Williams remembered that some of the women had very good voices and loved singing the hymns the sisters taught them, but, to the horror of the nuns, one of them was heard singing hymns to the Holy Ghost outside the convent in the middle of the night. How she got out and in again was a mystery and the Sisters thought it more prudent not to enquire.

On 12 February 1839 the first postulant, Bridget Marum, entered the Sisters of Charity. She had been a fellow passenger on the Francis Spaight and was later known as Sr. Augustine. A joyous and solemn celebration took place on 9 March when the novice, Sr. Xavier Williams was professed in St. Patrick's Church. Bishop Polding received her vows and Dr. Ullathorne preached one of his masterful sermons. Mr. Justice Therry and his wife, together with The Hon. J. H. Plunkett and Mrs. Plunkett very kindly provided the decorations for the church and all that was necessary for the entertainment of the guests after the ceremony.

At night when the Sisters met for recreation in their community room, they probably talked and laughed over their many new and strange experiences. They made and repaired altar linen and vestments, and, for some time, conducted the choir on Sundays both at Mass and Vespers. When the first High Mass was celebrated in St. Patrick's Church one of the Sisters presided at the organ. On 15 August 1839 Mary Elizabeth Gibbons from Cork joined the ranks and became Sr. Ignatius, and on 11 January the following year from Dublin came Margaret O'Brien, well educated, musically talented and a personal friend of Mary Aikenhead, to enter the Australian Sisters of Charity and become Sr. Joseph. At the beginning of that year Sr. John Cahill felt she could no longer bear the responsibility of Superior and asked to be relieved. The Bishop accepted her resignation and Sr. Francis de Sales O'Brien was elected to lead the infant Congregation.

The need for a larger residence was obvious and once again their friend, Mr. William Davis, came to the rescue. He purchased a two storey brick house for fourteen hundred pounds with the addition of a small sum from church funds. This property was given to the Sisters of Charity in perpetuity to be held in trust by them, and the deed of conveyance, in the names of Catherine O'Brien, Margaret Cahill and Julia Matilda Cater was dated 2 April 1840.

From the beginning the Sisters experienced financial troubles. Bishop Polding was a very apostolic missionary but a poor business man. The interest on a sum of money set aside for the Sisters never materialised. Before leaving Ireland

they had not anticipated these problems and became anxious on discovering them. Sr. Lawrence Cater mentioned this to the Bishop and he suggested an appeal to Dublin for their dowries which they had renounced on leaving for Australia. Sr. John Cahill wrote to her sister, Sheila Lynch for help from their late father's military pension, only to find out that the regular allowance had been duly paid to Dr. Polding's cousin and agent in London, but had been directed to the Australian Mission Fund. Sr. de Sales appealed through her solicitor and rather amazingly threatened legal action. The result was that letters were exchanged between the Bishops of Dublin and Sydney and Dr. Murray bluntly told Dr. Polding to provide for the Sisters or send them back home!. At length Dr. Polding was convinced of his responsibility. The Sisters were apparently also persuaded and no more calls were made on Ireland though the struggle for the necessities of life continued.

There is some criticism to be leveled at the pioneers. From the beginning they did not communicate with Mary Aikenhead. It seems strange that she, who had been so kind and thoughtful in her preparations for sending them out, would write to Dr. Polding on 29 May 1839 five months after their arrival in Sydney enquiring if they had landed safely! Were they confused about their status? They acted as though they were a separate congregation, but, when it suited, they laid claim to their Irish links. They were, in spite of their zealous aspirations, ordinary human beings.

On 26 November 1839 Srs. John Cahill and Baptist de Lacy went to Sydney to live in a small cottage near the Orphan School in Waverley Crescent and in Sr. Baptist's words, "to put the Catholic schools there in order." They would have been using the Government School Book written by Sr. Xavier Hennessy and copied for them by Mary Aikenhead. 1840 saw the entrance of Elizabeth Fisher (Sr. Teresa), a school teacher from England who had preceded the Sisters to the Colony. That same year it was a shock for them to learn that Dr. Ullathorne was leaving Australia. In 1841 Sr. Baptist de Lacy returned to Parramatta on 6 October to be Superior and Novice Mistress and Sr. de Sales took her place in Sydney. By 1843 Srs. Xavier Williams, Augustine Marum, Ignatius Gibbons and Joseph O'Brien had joined the Sydney community.

Dr. Polding returned to Australia 9 March 1843 as Archbishop, with the honorary title of Count of the Holy Roman Empire, and bringing with him Passionist Fathers, Christian Brothers and clerical students. On 8 September Dr. Francis Murphy, who had succeeded Dr. Ullathorne, was consecrated Bishop of Adelaide. During his time as Vicar General Dr. Murphy had

ruled wisely and well so peace and harmony prevailed. There was a sense of security and appreciation that was welcomed by all, especially by the Sisters of Charity. The appointment of Dr. Henry Gregory the Benedictine successor of Dr. Murphy, as Vicar General was to herald a time of turmoil and misunderstanding which ended in an unfortunate crisis.

1844 began badly for the Sisters of Charity. Sr. Teresa Fisher died on the night of 12 January during a dreadful storm and her death was followed by that of Sr. Vincent Marum, who had fallen victim to TB and was professed the day before she died on 19 October. To compensate for the loss Geraldine Gibbons (Sr. Scholastica), Sr. Veronica O'Brien and Agnes Shortall were received as novices on 26 May.

On 17 May 1844 Sr. de Lacy as Superior moved with Srs. Augustine and Ignatius into 2 Burdekin Terrace which had been rented for them by the Hon. J. H. Plunkett. Mr. William Davis set aside 100 pounds a year for their support. The house was opposite Hyde Park so, from central Sydney they continued their mission of visiting the sick and poor, gave religious instruction to children in the Catholic schools and took classes in needlework there. They visited the recently opened Darlinghurst gaol and conducted evening classes for adults, especially young women. Means of transport were few and far between and money for fares was scarce, so the primitive state of the narrow lane ways and different Australian climate must have added to their burdens.

The first Sister of Charity departure from Sydney came early in 1846 when Sr. Lawrence Cater, or Magdalen Chantal as she was calling herself then, asked M. de Sales to arrange a passage home for her. The Archbishop was aware of her desire and had been counselling her in an effort to get her to settle, but her instability led to fluctuations of peace and restlessness. She had promised not to leave while he was abroad but reneged on that soon after he had left for Europe, so M. de Sales arranged with Dr. Gregory for Sister Cater to be sent back to Ireland. The Hon. J.H. Plunkett paid a deposit on her fare and she was to sail on the 'Dublin'. M. de Sales wrote to Mary Aikenhead to inform her of this but an answering letter came to say that she could not be taken back. Ireland knew of the Rescript separating the two congregations but the Sisters in Sydney were not yet aware of it. M. de Sales and Sr. Cater then tried to get Dr. Gregory to allow her to stay, but he refused and she sailed to England. On arrival she contacted Mary Aikenhead and received the same response, so she went to Ireland to try a personal approach. It was decided to give her one more chance and she was taken to Donneybrook but did not settle there in

spite of the kindness shown to her. She returned to her brother in England and later tried her vocation as a Benedictine Oblate, but did not persevere.

Soon after Julia Cater's departure, because of the Archbishop's absence, Dr. Gregory was asked to preside at Sr. Teresa Walsh's profession. He tried to have the other professed sisters vote on the suitability of the novice, but M. de Sales insisted that this was not their way of approval for profession. She won that argument and the ceremony went ahead in the usual way on 2 July 1846. However, after posting the 1842 rescript on the convent chapel door, Dr. Gregory declared all positions vacant and, acting as Head Superior himself, sent Sr. de Sales to Parramatta as superior and novice mistress; confirmed Sr. Baptist as superior in Sydney; demoted Sr. John and replaced her with Sr. Xavier. At the end of the month all the professed sisters were assembled in Sydney at Dr. Gregory's request and the rescript was again read aloud. At least the Australian congregation now knew that they had been separated, but, "in the same manner that it exists in Ireland" – a saving phrase!

At this stage Sr. de Sales wrote to Mary Aikenhead per the Christian Brothers who were leaving Australia without ecclesiastical permission, because they could not function under Dr. Gregory. Either not understanding the rescript, or simply ignoring it, she begged Mary Aikenhead to find a solution to the problem. She suggested that she and Sr. John be given permission to accept a previous invitation of Bishop Willson and set up a separate foundation in Hobart. When she told Dr. Gregory about her letter he responded by having Sr. Baptist de Lacy also write to Mary Aikenhead, refuting the charges against him and accusing Srs. de Sales and John of insubordination, insincerity, a worldly spirit and a dislike for authority placed over them. Needless to say, it also extolled the virtues of the Archbishop and the Vicar General. This rift between the pioneers was unfortunate, and, twelve years later Sr. Baptist probably regretted that letter. The Christian Brothers were delayed on their way to Ireland and the second letter arrived before that of Sr. de Sales. Mary Aikenhead must have wondered what was going on in Australia.

Without waiting for a reply a letter was dispatched to Hobart.

In February 1847 M. de Sales dismissed Fr. Coffey as confessor to the Sisters at Parramatta and wrote to Fr. Geoghan asking him to perform that service. This was quite antagonistic as she was usurping Dr. Gregory's role as acting head of the Sydney Church. Dr. Gregory told the Sydney Sisters about this and they wrote and signed a letter apologizing to him and denouncing M. de Sales.

On 5 April, M. de Sales, this time acting within her rights as novice mistress, allowed a discontented Mary Mullahy to leave the novitiate. The novice had been taken through a discernment process to make a decision on her future, and she expressed relief at the outcome, before returning to Melbourne. Dr. Gregory showed his disapproval of her departure because he apparently thought she should have been persuaded to remain. This, together with the fact that M. de Sales had informed him of her letter to Bishop Willson, highly incensed him. He called Sr. Xavier in from Parramatta to add her signature to a second letter written to him by the Sydney Sisters. This one included Sr. John as well as M. de Sales, and asked Dr. Gregory 'as our Ecclesiastical Superior, to remove those persons from all offices and responsibilities'

Did the Sisters write these letters of their own accord, or were they prompted by Dr. Gregory whom they supposed they had to obey? If the former, it is a sad chapter in an otherwise noble story. It seems that a line had been drawn between the two Sisters who had been professed in Ireland and Sr. Baptist de Lacy together with those professed in Australia. The human element was certainly in evidence and the character of Dr. Gregory did not improve matters. He was a young cleric who needed praise and affirmation to enable him to function successfully, and he had been placed in a position of power when he was not sufficiently mature to use it wisely. Both he and Sr. de Sales overstepped the boundaries of church law regarding Religious because neither of them had studied those regulations.

Dr. Gregory then tried to send the two offenders to New Zealand, but they refused to go, saying that they intended to remain in Sydney until the Archbishop returned. An answer from Hobart, however, changed their minds because Dr. William Hall V G had written on behalf of the absent Bishop Willson begging them to come as soon as they could. At first, Dr. Gregory said they were to take nothing with them, then he relented and gave them twenty pounds and, at Sr. Xavier's pleading allowed them to have a few of the many items they had brought with them from home. Sr. Xavier had decided to go with them because Sr. John was old and Sr. de Sales had never been very strong and she realised how lonely one would be if the other died. Maybe other reasons were that she dearly loved Sr. de Sales and that Jane Williams, the widow of her twin brother, William, was living in Bothwell, Tasmania. In the end Dr. Gregory said that he would give her his blessing and permission to go, but not his consent!.

Before following the travellers south, let us look at the community left in Sydney. The eight who remained had all entered without dowries and had therefore been financially supported by Archbishop Polding, hence they afforded him great loyalty. Sr. Baptist de Lacy assembled them and suggested that she return to Ireland and that the others could make decisions about their futures, either in another Order - they probably were aware of the fact that two Benedictine Nuns were on the high seas en route to Australia - or returning to their homes. They all declared that they had entered the Sisters of Charity and were determined to remain as such. The Archbishop arrived home on 22 March 1848 and appointed M. Ignatius Gibbons as Superior General. One might have thought that the role should have been given to Sr. Baptist de Lacy, but he left her as superior at Burdekin Terrace.

The Female Factory at Parramatta closed that year, so the Archbishop ordered all the sisters to Sydney. St. Mary's Convent was leased to tenants, and a larger place, Leary's House, was procured by the Hon. J. H. Plunkett. Three sisters, M. Ignatius Gibbons, the Superior General, Sr. Teresa Walsh and Sr. Augustine Marum, died during the influenza epidemic. M. Scholastica Gibbons was appointed to replace her late sister and also remained as superior of the House of the Good Shepherd. Once again Sr. Baptist de Lacy was overlooked, but would surely have been a point of reference for the younger sisters.

The Archbishop and Dr. Gregory set out for Europe again in 1854 leaving Co-Adjutor Bishop, Henry Charles Davis OSB in charge and Fr. Mc Encroe as Administrator of business affairs. Both were very interested in the Sisters of Charity and their plans which now included a hospital, envisaged by Sr. Baptist de Lacy as a replica of St. Vincent's, Dublin. On 1 April a new postulant entered. Jane Raymond was later known as Sr. Aloysius and proved to be an outstanding teacher, who took charge of St. Vincent's School, later, St. Vincent's College, Potts Point, when it opened in 1858.

Monsignor Cullen writes: "There was no interruption in the campaign to place the Sisters of Charity on a firm and lasting foundation. Regular meetings of the Appeal Committee were assembled under the chairmanship of Fr. McEncroe, and sometimes of the Rev. John Joseph Therry, whose support and influence proved of great value amongst the Catholics of Sydney. In October 1855 the Treasurer invited the country districts to do their share and from clergy and people everywhere the response was excellent".

Assured of success, representative citizens approached the Government for a grant of land on which to erect the proposed hospital with Sisters' residence attached. Governor Fitzroy thereupon set aside for the purpose specified, a narrow strip of land at Darlinghurst. This land was inadequate for such a venture, being only fifty feet wide and four hundred and fifty feet long, but years later more acreage was added to it and the great St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney stands there today.

Rent prices were soaring at this time so it became more and more necessary for the Sisters to find a permanent home. A splendid opportunity presented itself when Sir Charles Nicholson was anxious to dispose of part of his estate before visiting England. He approached the Sisters with an offer of "Tarmons" at Potts Point for ten thousand pounds, and the committee promptly accepted and paid the five thousand pounds they had in hand immediately, with the balance to be paid by agreement. The Sisters of Charity moved into their own dwelling on 5 March 1857 and were soon joined by two postulants, to become, Srs. Alphonsus Unsworth and Xavier Cunningham.

Following Mary Aikenhead's example, Sr. Baptist de Lacy's dreams of a hospital for the poor and sick, where there would be no distinction of creed or class, were about to be realised. In the peaceful setting of "Tarmons" the work of St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, began with a recording of the first outpatient on 25 August 1857. Dr. Robertson, a Protestant doctor, gave his services gratis to the small hospital. Conditions were far from idyllic for the staff. Water had to be drawn from a pump and carried to the kitchen to be heated on the fuel stove; lighting was provided by tallow candles and oil lamps; but the Sisters gave generously of their limited strength.

From 1854 real problems were noticed in Church administration in Sydney. The Archbishop spent one third of his twenty year bishopric travelling abroad. When he and Dr. Gregory returned from the 1855-56 trip, a statement was issued stating that they found 'ecclesiastical discipline was relaxed' and Archdeacon McEncroe was deposed. This, together with Dr. Gregory's reversal of what had been done in the interim, angered the secular clergy and the laity, who, with just cause, were complaining of there being no opportunities for them in administration of church affairs. Sr. de Lacy was also becoming increasingly displeasing to the Archbishop and Dr. Gregory. She had purchased a house and set up a hospital with the signatures of Fr. McEncroe, J. H. Plunkett and herself on the deed of conveyance, in trust for the Sisters of Charity. The death of Dr. Charles Davis OSB at that time meant that there was no mention of a Benedictine!

This was followed by the Bibles Affair when Fr. Kenyon removed Protestant bibles placed in the hospital for the use of non-Catholics by their chaplain. Dr. Robertson resigned; Protestants removed their support; the media fuelled debate and the whole thing was blown out of proportion. M. Scholastica Gibbons, in defence of her friend, the Archbishop, removed Sr. de Lacy from office, but left her in the hospital. Sr. Baptist de Lacy was experiencing a replay of 1847, but, this time she was the recipient, and her disillusionment was complete. She left St. Vincent's and went to the Plunkett home to await passage on a ship to England, so Dr. Polding excommunicated her. According to Sr. Xavier Cunningham, before the "Star of Peace" sailed a priest went on board and gave her Holy Communion.

The people of Sydney were devastated by the departure of the woman whom they had come to love and respect. On arrival in England she was assisted by Mr. McCarthy, a brother of Mother Magdalen, the Irish Superior General, who gave her a warm welcome to Dublin. Sr. de Lacy was interviewed by Archbishop Cullen, who then told Mother Magdalen that it would be right, just and charitable to admit the wanderer into the Irish Sisters of Charity. She was appointed superior of the Kilkenny convent and laboured there until 1872, when she was transferred to Donnybrook where she died on 12 December 1878. The Irish Annals tell that she was buried on a sunny morning when the frost and snow lay thick on the ground, and a path had to be cleared to the cemetery where she was buried near Mary Aikenhead.

Sr. Scholastica Gibbons was acting in co-operation with Archbishop Polding in founding a new religious order at the House of the Good Shepherd. The aspirants were following a rule based on that of St. Benedict but were uncloistered, and later known as the Good Samaritan Sisters, so she resigned as Head Superior of the Sisters of Charity. Sr. Joseph O'Brien acted in that role until 1864 when there were sufficient sisters to hold a General Assembly and she was then canonically elected to the office. At the time of Sr. de Lacy's departure there were three professed sisters – excluding Sr. Scholastica who was living at the Good Shepherd Convent and acting as their Superior General – one domestic sister and two novices, Srs. Aloysius Unsworth and Xavier Cunningham, and they all resolved to continue on with the ministries they had commenced and to trust in Divine Providence.

Sr. Veronica O'Brien who had been trained by Sr. de Lacy then took charge of the hospital, and, with the help of Doctor Frederick Milford, carried on with outstanding success. Besides being a capable nurse and dispenser, Sr.

Veronica was also skilled in financial affairs. In 1868, when vocations had increased and the hospital was proving inadequate, it was decided to separate it from the Mother House and Novitiate, so Sr. Veronica purchased land adjoining the quarter acre block in Darlinghurst and commenced the new St. Vincent's. Archbishop Polding laid the foundation stone on 12 May 1868 and praised the work of the Sisters of Charity. The building went up stone by stone as funds allowed. Today the vast complex has widened to encompass one of Australia's leading research and acute care hospitals, guarded by the spirit of Sr. Baptist de Lacy for the past one hundred and fifty years.

Reports of the 1859 affairs in Sydney were a cause of concern in Rome and there was a question of sending Archbishop Ullathorne out as a papal delegate. For personal reasons he asked to be excused from this and suggested another course. Dr. Gregory was recalled and, after spending some time in his native England, went to Rome. Archbishop Polding, who found him indispensable, made several attempts to have him raised to the Episcopate, but this was not to be. He returned to England and died there in 1877. Roger Bede Vaughan OSB came to Sydney in 1873 as Coadjutor Archbishop and the ageing Archbishop gradually handed over to him the full control and administration of ecclesiastical affairs.

Archbishop Polding died in the Sacred Heart Presbytery, next door to St. Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, on 16 March 1877 and was nursed during the final weeks by Sr. Xavier Cunningham.

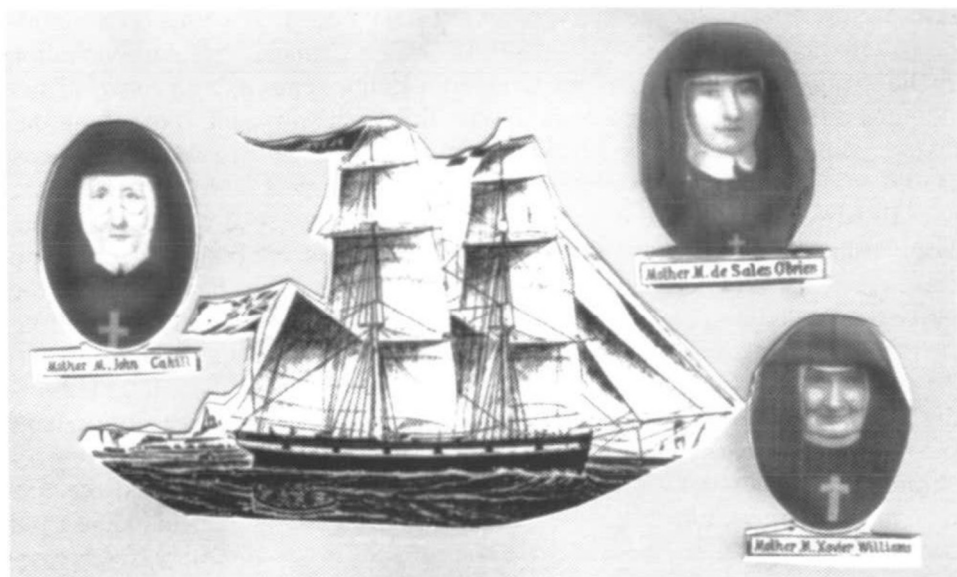
REFUGE IN VAN DIEMEN'S LAND

Let us now return to Sydney Harbour on 14 June 1847. Anchored at the wharf and prepared for sailing to Hobart is the small two mast brig, of 181 tons, the "Louisa". On board are the listed cabin passengers, Mrs. O'Brien, Mrs. Cahill, Mrs. Williams, Ensign Moffatt 96th Regiment and Miss R. Strenney. The loaded cargo comprised rum, coal tar, Chinese matting, boxes of toys, chinaware, a case of rhubarb, bullock hides, white sugar, black pepper and tobacco.

A week later Sr. Xavier Williams wrote to her sister in Ireland telling her that they went on board at 7 am only to find that Judge Therry and Mrs. Therry as well as Mr. and Mrs. Plunkett were already there with many comforts for their voyage. They remained throughout the entire day waiting for a breeze to waft them on their way, but none came. Dr. Gregory spent the day there and returned the next morning and waited until they were able to get underway at 11 am 'to see the last of us'. Once on their way the wind swept them southward at great speed and the normal ten day rough passage was made in five. On Saturday evening they passed the lighthouse in the Derwent River estuary and thought they would be in Hobart for Sunday morning Mass. Alas, when they awoke they discovered that they had not moved during the night.

Dr. William Hall, the Vicar General, was instructing children in St. Joseph's Church when news was brought to him that the "Louisa" was lying at anchor and unable to land. Immediately he secured a small boat and was taken out to meet the Sisters. He gave them 'a most cordial welcome' and they gladly accepted his invitation to accompany him back to the town in the small boat.

By this time word of the arrival had spread amongst the Catholic population and when the sea voyagers stepped ashore a large crowd had assembled to welcome them. It would have been a chilly June Sunday morning, but the little heart shaped island gathered them into a very warm embrace. A procession formed as the Sisters of Charity were taken up Macquarie Street to St. Joseph's Church for the liturgy which had been prepared for the memorable occasion. Dr. Hall then showed them over the nearly completed residence which Fr. Therry had commenced for himself, and told them that this was to be St. Joseph's Convent - their new home. He then took them to temporary lodgings in Davey Street until the convent was ready and they moved there on 2 July 1847.



The Tasmanian Pioneers and the "Louisa"



St. Joseph's Convent, Hobart, 2 July 1847

One hundred years later at the centenary celebrations Archbishop Simonds said, "On the Feast of the Visitation 1847 Our Lady made a gracious visitation to the struggling church in Van Diemen's Land, sending as a token of her clemency, three consecrated women with the spirit and habit of the Religious Sisters of Charity. They had been part of the group of five who, nine years previously, had arrived in Sydney - intrepid volunteers - whose names are gratefully written on the pages of our history". During a visit to England, Dom Hilary Willson had given his grand uncle's Episcopal ring to Archbishop Simonds who, after presenting it to Archbishop Tweedy, had asked for the loan of it so that he could wear it during the centenary celebrations, recalling the innumerable times it would have been kissed by the pioneer sisters.

Bishop Willson received news of the Sisters' arrival while he was in England and wrote to Archbishop Murray in Dublin thanking him for his part in sending the Sisters of Charity to Australia, and assuring him that the trio now in his care would have all the support and co-operation he could give them. This time these words proved to be not just empty promises, for as long as he lived Bishop Willson was the champion, friend and benefactor of the Hobart community. He then visited Mary Aikenhead in Dublin to urge her to send him more of her subjects. She regretted that this was quite beyond her resources, but was gladdened by the Bishop's expression of his admiration for her Australian daughters, and entrusted him with letters, books and other gifts for them.

Soon after the Bishop arrived home he went to the convent to officially welcome the exiles; to give them his blessing; thank them for coming; and deliver the loving messages from Dublin. Two years later Bishop Willson could still write to Mary Aikenhead about his Sisters of Charity, who by their labours and holy example were aiding so much in his peculiar and arduous mission, and that it was impossible for him to put into words the comfort he and his flock derived from their labours.

The Vicar General's reply to Mother de Sales' request for sanctuary in Van Diemen's Land, besides urging them to come as soon as they could, gave a general outline of what would be expected of them. "Besides attending to the public institutions, you will also, no doubt, give some care to the poor free women; and, above all, you will take supervision of my dear little girls. All these are much in want of your attention and care". Before the Sisters could commence these works it was necessary for them to get the Governor's permission. This was granted on 3 August 1847 by Lieutenant Governor

Denison, although only on condition that their visits did not interfere with the prisoners' labour, especially at the Cascades Female Factory, and on the Anson prison ship. They were also strictly forbidden to communicate either directly or indirectly with the Protestant women prisoners.

Close to St. Joseph's Church, when Bishop Willson landed in 1844, there was a school in the course of construction. The two-storey building was completed under the Bishop's direction. The opening took place on 23 August 1847 with lay teachers in charge of the secular instructions. A large room upstairs was used as a girls' school; while the boys were on the ground floor. Some Government assistance was given in accordance with provisions of legislation introduced by Governor Denison. The Sisters of Charity undertook the religious training of the girls and exercised general supervision. After a time they joined the teaching staff, but they refused all public grants for qualified and officially authorized teachers.

Soon after this Mother John Cahill wrote to Mary Aikenhead telling her that they had an abundance of work and describing an ordinary day's time table. After the usual hour of prayers, Mass and breakfast, one Sister went to the school till twelve o'clock when she was relieved by another who had been up at the Cascades Female Factory instructing the women. This Sister gave religious instruction to the children and dismissed them for dinner at one o'clock. They returned at half past two and remained till four o'clock. The evenings were devoted to visiting the sick etc. By evening she probably meant between four and six. She also mentioned having a 'poor' school connected with the Government where the average attendance was eighty, and that the Sisters had other tasks like repairing and making shirts for their good bishop who had been ordered a long sea voyage for the restoration of his health. On Sundays they gave religious instruction to the Catholic children in the Queen's Orphanage at New Town.

Both places were some distance from St. Joseph's Convent. The Female Factory is about four kilometers further up Macquarie Street and the Orphanage at New Town six kilometres distant. Did the Sister walk to the Cascades? Today, it is a fairly long trek on a paved footpath, but one hundred and sixty years ago it would have been almost a rough bush track. The Hobart Courier that year announced that a sum of money had been allotted "to make Macquarie Street passable in winter."! We know that the Bishop provided a carriage for the Sisters going to New Town because on 16 October 1848 the Colonial Secretary informed Dr. Hall, the Vicar General, that his request

for the exemption from the payment of the road toll had been granted to the Sisters of Charity, and that the Director of Public Works had been instructed accordingly.

The Sisters refused to accept for their own use any of the public grants available and did not charge school fees because of their interpretation of the rule: 'Whatever is done in the service of the poor and sick must be done gratis'. Through their mistaken belief they ignored the annotation that permitted them to have expenses defrayed. In Hobart, however, they were never in want because the people, being so delighted to have them in their midst, vied with each other in supplying their needs. For instance, Mrs. Dalton, accompanied by her grand-daughter, Annie Gleeson, later to become Sr. Philomena, visited each Saturday with a basket of provisions such as butter, eggs and fruit, sufficient to last for several days. Many years later Archbishop Ullathorne, in a letter to Mother Xavier Williams, refers to the same Mrs. Dalton as "a daughter of Sir George Arthur, Governor of Tasmania, who,, with her sister and her husband became converts and founded a mission near their beautiful mansion".

As early as 4 September 1847 The Hobart Town Courier announced that there would be A FANCY BAZAAR in aid of charitable purposes to be held before Christmas and that contributions would be thankfully received by the Sisters of Charity, the Vicar General, Miss Hogan of Sandy Bay and Miss Lavers of Campania. In January 1848 a boarding school was established and conducted by Miss Lavers, under Episcopal patronage. It was called "The Catholic Young Ladies' School" and the Sisters of Charity gave religious instruction there.

When the Sisters accepted the invitation to come to Hobart Sr. de Sales suggested that they revert to Mary Aikenhead's wish and have Mother John Cahill as their superior. She acted in this role until February 1849 and, after their renewal of vows, Bishop Willson formally named her as superior. She then chose Sr. de Sales O'Brien as her assistant and mistress of novices, probably because she knew of the impending entrance of their first postulant. Miss Mary Robertson, daughter of the late Lieutenant Robertson who had been a great friend of the pioneer Fr. Conolly, joined the small community on 25 March 1849 and after reception was known as Sr. Teresa. Her sister married Henry Hunter the architect of St. Mary's Cathedral and other prominent buildings in Hobart. Lieutenant Robertson had succumbed to T B and died at the age of twenty nine and his widow later re-married into the

Loughnan family, who, in both Australia and New Zealand, gave many priests and religious to work in the Church, including Sr. Antonia Loughnan, a Sister of Charity who died in 1938.

Mary Anne Kean followed as a postulant on 23 August that same year, but unfortunately died after suffering brain fever just one month later. Sr. Teresa Robertson received the Habit on 21 November 1849, showed every sign of becoming a fervent religious and was greatly loved by all, but early in her second year of novitiate she was found to have TB and, as there was no cure for the disease at that time, her condition gradually deteriorated. She was professed on her death bed and died on 6 March 1851.

The community at St. Joseph's were now back to three in number, but soon afterwards Bishop Goold of Melbourne contacted Bishop Willson to ask if the Sisters of Charity would train a young woman for the purpose of setting up a foundation in his diocese, and both the Bishop and the Sisters agreed to this plan. Catherine O'Farrell was born in Dublin on 8 July 1820 and received her education at the Benedictine Convent at Caverswall in England. After the family had migrated to Melbourne, Catherine thought about entering a religious order and consulted Dr. Goold who sent her to Hobart. She received a great welcome from the group who were still mourning the loss of "their dear novice", and soon settled into novitiate routine. At her reception she was given the name Sr. Joseph and found to be a great asset – highly accomplished, kind and of an affectionate nature, possessing sound judgement and commonsense, and deeply religious. It so happened that the Bishop's plan for a community of Sisters of Charity in Melbourne did not materialise until 1889 when a group from the Sydney congregation went south, so Sr. Joseph remained as a member of the Hobart branch until her death. For the next seventeen years there were no further postulants, but Sr. Joseph laboured alongside the others with almost miraculous results. At one time Bishop Willson wrote in a letter to England that his "four nuns did more than sixteen at home"!

Two and a half years after their exit from Sydney trouble came from there again. On 24 January 1850 Archbishop Polding sent his co-adjutor, Dr. Davis to Hobart to present a document to Mother John Cahill and Sr. de Sales O'Brien requesting them to sign it, authorising Dr. Polding and Abbot Gregory to take over the house and property at Parramatta for the Archdiocese of Sydney. The two sisters refused to sign it. They claimed that they could not hand over the property without the consent of the Sydney sisters because it had been a gift to the Sisters of Charity in perpetuity, and advised that they would consult

Mary Aikenhead on the matter. There is no record of this correspondence and twelve months later Dr. Polding again wrote to Hobart saying that he had waited with exemplary patience, for direction from their Foundress, but none had arrived so he demanded ownership of the Parramatta property.

At this stage, Bishop Willson became involved on behalf of the Sisters. He sent a petition to Rome explaining the facts and stating that the two sisters in his diocese had no desire to continue as legal trustees of the said property, but they could not consent to its being handed over to anyone other than the Sisters of Charity in Sydney. The Bishop included copies of all correspondence between Mother John Cahill and Archbishop Polding, as well as her letters to the Sydney Sisters. The Parramatta property remained in the hands of the Sisters of Charity who leased it to tenants. When the lease expired in 1885 the sisters in Sydney took it over again, and it opened as St. Joseph's Hospital for Consumptives on 2 July 1886. In 1892 this hospital was transferred to Auburn NSW. In 1896 Cardinal Moran arranged for the deeds of the Parramatta property to be handed over to the Sisters of Mercy and reimbursed the Sydney Sisters of Charity.

The above trouble was probably the key to another petition to Rome in 1852 when Bishop Willson asked the Holy See to sanction the withdrawal of the Hobart Congregation from the central authority in Sydney. It read:

We humbly petition our Most Holy Father and Sovereign Pontiff to grant a rescript to empower the Superioress of the Sisters of Charity (and her helpers in office) now residing in Hobart Town V.D.L. to receive Novices to be trained in religious life and professed according to the Constitutions (confirmed by his Holiness Pope Gregory XVI, the 19th June 1836) and, also receive the dowers, legacies or other property for the support of the members of the said pious congregation – with a penalty of excommunication incurred by any person who would alienate or transfer such property or turn any portion of such property to any other purpose whatever.

On 9 November 1852 it was signed by:

Margaret Cahill
Catherine O'Brien
Eliza Williams

There was an added note from the Bishop:

(I most earnestly beg that permission may be given for the Establishment of a Community of these Holy women in my diocese.)

R. W. Willson
Bishop of Hobart Town.

The withdrawal was sanctioned by Rome and the community became diocesan with no help outside the Hobart Diocese. The intrepid pioneers were facing another phase in their ever changing mission journey, and they would soon be witnesses to the cessation of convict transportation and to Van Diemen's Land being named Tasmania.

Because of their mistaken idea about not accepting recompense for their work these first Sisters found it necessary to ask postulants to provide a dowry when entering the congregation. This could have been one of the factors determining the fact that aspirants were few and far between. To assist the small community to carry on their work the Sisterhood of Mary Help of Christians was established by Bishop Willson on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 8 September 1858. It was a properly constituted society with a set of rules and a committee. The members took turns to visit poor families and urge them to send their children to the catechism lessons which they provided on Sunday mornings and afternoons. All members were expected to beg for money and second hand clothing as well as sheets and blankets, and they met on appointed days to make clothing for children and poor women. During these meetings an instructive book was read and each member was asked to contribute at least sixpence a month. Prayers were said at the beginning and end of these meetings and new members were inducted by making a declaration in the presence of a priest and receiving his blessing.

The Vicar General, Fr. W. Hall was a great supporter of this society and commenced a foundation with his donation of ten pounds. The Bishop, other priests and friends followed suit and the balance sheet for the year 1870 showed that the foundation had accrued and used nearly five hundred pounds. A generous donation of seven dozen woollen socks and thirty yards of blue and white flannel from Mr. G. Johnson of Elizabeth Street was acknowledged at that time, together with appreciation of the many others who had sent useful articles of clothing. The Sisterhood of Mary concerned themselves only with the provision of clothing for the poor, and especially for children, to enable them to attend church and school, because the Benevolent Society's main object was to provide food for those in want.

Bishop Willson's diary for 11 April 1864 has the entry: "Visited Sister Mary John who is in a dying state". Mother John Cahill, the first of the pioneers to go to her eternal reward, died at 10.30 am on 13 April 1864. For years after her death there were many in Hobart who remembered the grave, dignified nun who stood erect before the rood screen, which then separated the sanctuary

from the nave in St. Joseph's Church, her piercing eyes looking out over her spectacles, her slender hands grasping her book as she gave religious instruction to the classes which filled the church. Monsignor Cullen wrote: "Her love of the poor and of straying souls accomplished in old Hobart, marvels of reform and conversion, even more remarkable than had ever been recorded during her eight trying years of missionary service in Sydney".

The death of Mother John Cahill left Mother de Sales as superior with Srs. Xavier Williams and Joseph O' Farrell as the community. The three were joined by Mary Ann Murphy, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Murphy of Emerald Cottage, Richmond in Tasmania, on 21 June 1868. On the following 21 January 1869, in the presence of Bishop Murphy, who had succeeded the late Bishop Willson, she received the habit and white veil of a novice, together with a new name, Sr. Aloysius. Many priests were present at the ceremony in St. Joseph's Church, and the sermon was preached by the Vicar General, The Rev. W. Dunne, who said that he had known the young aspirant from infancy and watched her grow in virtue as she advanced in age. Having many advantages in the world, she had now preferred to forsake those pleasures for the happiness and consolation of giving her life to the service of God. Sr. Aloysius Murphy pronounced her vows on 21 June 1871 and we are told that after the ceremony the Bishop and priests repaired to the convent for breakfast with the relatives, and that in the afternoon there was a feast for the school children who entertained the visitors with singing.

After the Tasmanian Sisters re- united with the Sydney branch in 1891 Sr. Aloysius Murphy was transferred to Sydney. There she worked with great generosity and love among the sick poor and in the service of instructing converts, and at Christmas time she always managed to have a great quantity of food and clothing for the needy. She spent Christmas Eve 1916 preparing and distributing her gifts and collapsed from exhaustion in the afternoon, so a priest and a doctor were called. She received the sacrament of anointing, lapsed into unconsciousness and died peacefully on 26 December.

Mother de Sales O'Brien died on 6 November 1871 leaving M. Xavier Williams as superior with Sr. Joseph O'Farrell and the newly professed Sr. Aloysius Murphy to carry on the good work. The death of Mother de Sales O'Brien was recorded in the Standard . "On 6th November at the convent of the Sisters of Charity, Hobart Town, after a long and painful illness, borne with Christian patience, Rev. Mother Francis de Sales O'Brien in the 63rd year of her age and the 38th of her religious profession. R.I.P". The writer went

on to say that the whole Catholic community of Hobart Town, and, indeed the whole of Tasmania was filled with sorrow and mourning by the death of Mother de Sales who had departed this life on the previous Monday night at 11.30 pm. The many noble qualities and heroic virtues which distinguished her life, and the number of years during which she had exercised her charity in Hobart Town had endeared her to everyone, and especially to the poor. Although her long and painful illness had prepared them for her approaching death, yet when the tolling bell proclaimed her demise they found it hard to believe. Fortified by the graces of the Last Sacraments and surrounded by her weeping sisters, she departed this life without any apparent pain, whilst holding a candle blessed by the Holy Father in her hand and pressing her lips to an indulgenced crucifix.

For nearly a quarter of a century in Hobart Mother de Sales was employed in the active practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and one of her special duties was the religious training of the young girls of St. Joseph's congregation. At 8 30 am the Solemn Office for the dead was chanted prior to the Requiem Mass celebrated in St. Joseph's Church by Fr. C. P. Woods and assisted by Rev. J.J. McKernan as deacon, Rev. T. Kelsh as sub- deacon and Rev. F. X. Beechinor as master of ceremonies. At 10.05 am the funeral procession left the church headed by the cross bearer and acolytes. Eight young ladies acted as pall bearers and about two hundred and fifty girls wearing white veils followed the coffin together with a large number of gentlemen who took the opportunity to testify to the esteem in which they held the departed.

When the procession, witnessed by crowds lining the streets, arrived at the principal gate of the cemetery the Miserere and other psalms were intoned. After the burial service many lingered by the grave to take a last look at the coffin enclosing the remains of the one who had been the friend of the orphan and the infirm.

For three years the community number remained at three and Mother Xavier Williams, fearing that the very existence of the congregation in Tasmania was threatened, wrote to the Holy Father, Pius IX. The Pope sent his blessing to the little community with a promise of prayers for an increase of subjects. Mother Xavier also began to storm heaven by prayer and, with faith in Divine Providence and the future, she made provision for more accommodation at the convent.

In 1874 two young ladies presented themselves for admission. Mary Balfe was one of the daughters of J. Donnellan Balfe MHA a leading Catholic of Hobart, and after her reception would be known as Sr. Ignatius. Her sister, Mrs. Edwards, who was still a parishioner of St. Joseph's in the 1930's remembered how the postulants, dressed as brides and followed by the community members came in procession from the front door of the convent and walked along Harrington Street to the entrance of the church for their reception ceremony. A short time before Mary Aikenhead died she was visited by her friend Helen O'Reilly, an aunt of Sr. Ignatius. Miss O'Reilly was leaving Ireland to come to Tasmania with her brother, and Mary Aikenhead gave her gifts for the Sisters of Charity in Hobart. Sr. Ignatius Balfe was professed 23 January 1877 and when St. Joseph's Orphanage was opened in 1879 she was appointed to assist the newly appointed Rectress, Mother Joseph O'Farrell. After the Amalgamation Sr. Ignatius Balfe was transferred to Melbourne where she gave great help to Mother Berchmans Daly at St. Vincent's Hospital in Fitzroy. She was then sent to Sydney where she is best remembered for her work with the prisoners in the gaol at Long Bay. She went with a companion four times a week to instruct the prisoners, prepare for Mass and Benediction, teach the singing of hymns and visit those confined to their cells or the hospital.

Sr. Ignatius made a deep impression on both warders and prisoners because of her earnestness and dedication, and also by her personal appearance, as she was very tall and well built with a resonant voice. Therefore it came as a shock to all when, in spite of her apparent strength, she became so ill that she had to be taken to hospital. She died on 24 March 1926, revered by all who knew and loved her.

The other postulant was Mary Jane Hall, the eldest daughter of Dr. Edward Hall, the Medical Superintendent of the Colonial Hospital. The family home was at Ross in the Tasmanian mid-lands and Thomas Francis Meagher, one of the Irish political exiles befriended by Dr. Hall, has left us a vivid pen picture of the doctor, part of which is: "On Sundays, he walked to Mass at the head of his numerous family, with an illuminated volume of hymns and meditations bound in brass and brown velvet in one hand, and a black walking stick embellished with the head of St. Dunstan in ivory in the other." Dr. Hall's unfailing loyalty to his faith resulted in many somewhat barbed epistles to the editor of any paper who happened to print a suggestion of anti-Catholic opinion or comment.

Catherine Bennett, a young lady from the Derwent Valley, was employed by Dr. Hall to look after his six children, and during his visits to Dr. Hall, Thomas



Sr. Agnes Hall with her brother on her Golden Jubilee Day in 1927

Francis Meagher met and later married Catherine. Bishop Willson officiated at the marriage ceremony in the doctor's home at Ross and Mary Jane Hall, then seventeen years old went to Lake Sorell to be a companion for Mrs. Meagher. Thomas Meagher escaped and boarded a ship bound for America, and Catherine was to follow him later, so Mary Jane was probably with her when her son was born and died after his father's departure. The pathetic headstone for the four month old baby, Henry Emmet Fitzgerald Meagher marks his lonely grave beside St. John's Church in Richmond, Tasmania.

Towards the end of her novitiate Mary Jane, then known as Sr. Agnes, was considered to be rather delicate and her father suggested that she return home for some time. She was deemed well enough to make her profession 8 September 1877 and lived and worked at St. Joseph's until her death on 2 May 1934, just a couple of weeks prior to her one hundredth birthday!. Sr. Agnes spent all of her religious life at St. Joseph's, Hobart, teaching, visiting the sick etc. and celebrated her golden jubilee of profession in 1927. When her health began to deteriorate in the last months of her life, Sr. St. Pierre Lynch was brought over to nurse her. By her life she exemplified the religious training she had received from her novice mistress, Mother Xavier Williams.

A large congregation assembled in St. Joseph's Church on Friday 20th September 1876 for the reception of a young lady, Letitia Maher, the third daughter of Alderman Maher. Bishop Murphy presided at the ceremony, and was joined by a number of the clergy in the sanctuary. The young aspirant retired for a time to lay aside her worldly clothes and, after returning in the dress of the Sisters of Charity, she was given the new name, Sr. Teresa. When Alderman Maher retired in 1884, there was no Catholic left in either the City Council or the Parliament. Sr. Catherine Leahy was the next to join the ranks, and she was followed in 1877 by Srs. Stanislaus Barber and Magdalen Toohill. Unfortunately, Srs. Teresa and Stanislaus were not destined to spend many years as Sisters of Charity. They died in 1889 and 1890 being only thirty five and thirty four years old respectively, but Srs. Catherine and Magdalen did great service as domestic sisters, leaving the choir sisters free to work in the schools and on the mission.

Records as to the first burial in the vault at Cornelian Bay cemetery are not definite. Sr. Teresa Robertson, Mother John Cahill and Mother de Sales O'Brien all died before this burial place was opened in 1872 and had probably been buried in the Catholic Ground located behind St. Mary's Cathedral, and later the site of St. Virgil's College. Srs. Teresa Maher and Stanislaus Barber

seem to have been originally buried in a different section of Cornelian Bay, but Sr. Joseph O'Farrell was definitely buried in the vault on 1 September 1890. There is a record of Sr. Teresa Robertson's remains having been interred in the vault after exhumation in 1890, so we presume the five sisters buried previously were all re-interred at the same time.. As the amalgamation had become a reality earlier in the year, Mother Francis McGuigan, the Superior General, was in Hobart at the time of Mother Joseph O'Farrell's death and she may have been responsible for arranging for a vault for the Sisters of Charity and for the exhumation and re-interment.

In 1877 Mother Scholastica Gibbons, having spent about twenty years with the Good Samaritan Sisters, the congregation she had co-founded with Archbishop Polding, felt that the time was right for those sisters to elect one of their own as superior, and asked Cardinal Moran to relieve her of the responsibility. She applied to the Hobart community for admission and when this was granted, Mother Xavier Williams appointed her Mistress of the growing number of novices.

Mary Helen Kean, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Kean of Campbell Town, was welcomed on 1 March 1878. As Sr. Gertrude she was professed on 8 September 1880 and, for the next decade worked in schools, instructed converts and visited and consoled the sick poor in Hobart. In 1891 she went to Sydney and there continued her mission of visitation until she was appointed Infirmarian at St. Vincent's Convent, Potts Point, and devoted most of her time to looking after sick sisters. As she advanced in age and began to fail in health, she longed to be in Hobart again, and to see her sister and old friends there. Her desire was realised when she was transferred back to St. Joseph's Orphanage, where she remained until her death on 27 July 1928.

The next Tasmanian postulant in 1879 was Annie Maloney, a trained nurse and known as Sr. Vincent. After her profession on 20 December 1881 she worked at the Orphanage, looking after the children and helping with the laundry work. Sr. Vincent was sent over to Melbourne and worked in the recently established St. Vincent's Hospital where she became well known for her unselfish devotion to the sick poor. For a time she was in charge of the Out Patients Department and often provided food as well as medical assistance to the suffering who sought help. Sr. Vincent Maloney later transferred to Sydney and died there on 3 December 1902.

Another arrival on 2 May 1879 was Sr. de Sales Kearney. Charlotte Kearney was born in Tasmania on 11 August 1858 and professed on 3 April 1880. Her early religious life was spent in Hobart where, for a time, she had charge of St. Joseph's Orphanage and was greatly loved for her kindness. After being transferred to Sydney she was appointed superior of the convent at Bega on the southern east coast of N.S.W. Besides school work, she did a lot of visiting, including the long, hot, walk to the hospital on Sundays where she gave spiritual help, not only to the patients but also to the nurses. Her visits to homes were eagerly anticipated. On one occasion the beautiful prayers said for a sick woman had the effect of converting the husband, and on another, when a baby was thought to be dying and there were no priests available, Sr. de Sales Kearney baptised the infant and prayed over it. The baby opened its eyes, smiled and recovered. Her next appointment was to St. Anne's Orphanage in Liverpool, N.S.W. where she endeared herself to all who came to know her. Her last years were spent at Woollahra and she died on 20 July 1937.

Mother Scholastica Gibbons was being kept well occupied with entrances of postulants. Annie Gleeson, whom we met earlier accompanying her grandmother to the convent with sustenance for the sisters, now arrived to stay. After her postulancy she received the habit and the name, Sr. Philomena. As a young professed sister she became seriously ill and when recovering was ordered a sea trip by the doctor. Mother Scholastica took her to Sydney and the two were hospitably entertained by the Good Samaritan Sisters at Rose Bank. When the cure had been effected and they were preparing to return home, the Cardinal, at the earnest request of the Good Samaritans, prevailed on Mother Scholastica to remain with the congregation she had founded, and Sr. Philomena returned home without her. After the amalgamation of the two congregations of Sydney and Hobart, Sr. Philomena was stationed in Sydney and for many years worked among the poor and sick with the true spirit of a daughter of Mary Aikenhead.

Mother Scholastica Gibbons settled down in her old surroundings and later moved to the Good Samaritan Convent at Marrickville where she died on 15 October 1901 in her eighty first year. To the end of her life she wore the habit of the Sisters of Charity and lived by their rule. In the chapel of St. Vincent's College, Potts Point, NSW (formerly the Mother House of the Congregation) there is a memorial plaque near the graves of two other Superiors General,

Mother Francis Mc Guigan and Mother Edmund Daniel, which reads:

MOTHER MARY SCHOLASTICA GIBBONS

Head Superior

of the Sisters of Charity

1854 – 1859

Co-foundress of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan

Died 15th October 1901

Interred at Rosebank Convent, Fivedock

Bridget Bulger, a young lady from Westbury in Tasmania, had heard Fr. Julian Woods speaking of the want of religious vocations, but as he was emphasising those for the teaching profession, Bridget decided to wait a while. Shortly afterwards Fr. T. O'Callaghan served the Westbury parish temporarily and spoke of the work for the poor being done by the Sisters of Charity in Hobart, and Bridget felt that God was calling her in that direction. On 9 June 1888 she entered the novitiate where Mother Xavier Williams had once again resumed duties of Novice Mistress. At her clothing ceremony in January 1889 she was given the name, Sr. Ambrose. At the time of the amalgamation the Hobart novitiate ceased to exist so Sr. Ambrose went to Sydney to complete her training. After profession she returned to Hobart and spent most of her religious life at St. Joseph's Orphanage, part of the time as superior, when her constant care was to see that the children were supplied with good food and decent clothing. In 1915 Sr. Ambrose suffered a severe heart attack and was invalided for quite some time, but, when St. Brigid's Convent and school were opened in 1926, she was able to go as a member of the community and taught the infants for a time. Following a short stay at Concord Sr. Ambrose was back in Hobart again and at the Orphanage. Towards the end of 1945 she developed bronchial pneumonia, was admitted to Calvary Hospital and died peacefully on 13 December, leaving behind a reputation of having been a model religious.

The last postulant to enter the Hobart novitiate was Alice Gaul. Born on 6 April 1867, she entered on 23 December 1889 and was clothed as Sr. Bernard on 15 May 1890. Like Sr. Ambrose Bulger she went to Sydney to complete her novitiate. After that she was engaged in domestic work at St. Vincent's

Hospital in Melbourne and died there on 28 December 1903. She was described as kind, gentle and able to remain unruffled in all circumstances.

The year 1888 was very significant as it marked the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first religious women in Australia, and would have been to the forefront of Mother Xavier Williams' thoughts as the end of the year approached. She was the sole living member of that courageous sea journeying band and from August onwards had probably been re-sailing every wave across those vast oceans. The small congregation in Hobart now numbered fifteen but she was eighty eight years old, and some of the senior sisters were in failing health, so, what of the future? Mother Xavier appealed to Ireland but no help was available from there. Her prayerful consideration then led her to the idea of re-uniting with the Sydney congregation as a solution.

Mother Francis McGuigan had made contact with her, asked her to write her reminiscences of the arrival and early years in Australia, and invited her to go to join in the celebrations they were preparing. The Sydney sisters would have loved to meet her but Mother Xavier expressed her appreciation of the invitation, and said she could not go because the Hobart school would be open at that time! Her letter goes on to thank Mother McGuigan for the promised "likeness of my loved Foundress" and asked her to send it to the S S "Flora" addressed to Mr. J. Gleeson, care of Captain Bennison. That way she would get it safely and free of charge. In reply to the request for the pioneer story, she enclosed a copy of the Tasmanian Catholic Standard in which Mr. Joseph Roper had written an account, and also gave her own version of the early days, but, with regard to the three leaving Sydney for Hobart, she said "If I saw you I would tell you, but I cannot write it."

In 1888 Hobart became an Archdiocese and on 12 April 1889 Cardinal Moran came to confer the Pallium on Archbishop Murphy. The Archbishop of Adelaide, the bishops of Goulburn, Bathurst and Grafton and Fr. Sturzo, the superior of the Australian Jesuits all came to pay their respects, and remained for the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Mother Xavier Williams' profession which had been deferred until 14 August. It was a unique occasion because being the first woman religious to pronounce vows in Australia, naturally she was the first to attain her fiftieth anniversary. The Standard reports that the High Mass was celebrated in St. Joseph's Church which was crowded with people of all creeds anxious to honour the lady who, for so many years, had laboured in the cause of charity.

Fr. Gilleran, the homilist, outlined the history of the Sisters of Charity in Ireland, their arrival in Australia, and their coming to Tasmania, and praised the Jubilarian for the example she had given to all in her forty years of service in Hobart. The ceremony concluded with Cardinal Moran blessing a floral wreath which he placed on her head and a decorated staff in her hand. After an address by the Cardinal the choir, under the direction of Mr. E. Mulcahy, sang the Te Deum with Miss Reichenberg presiding at the organ, as she continued to do for many following years. The clergy and invited guests were then taken to the school room which had been converted into a banquet hall for the grand dinner prepared for them.

The actual date of Mother Xavier's golden Jubilee was 9 April 1889 and on 1 May addresses from the four schools in St. Joseph's parish were presented to her at a function in St. Peter's Hall, and an entertainment program was provided. The Catholic ladies of Hobart presented Mother Xavier with a handsome Brussels carpet, a suite of furniture, Venetian blinds and a purse of thirty five sovereigns. Presents arrived from the Sisters of Charity in Sydney; the Sisters of Mercy, Sydney; the Presentation Sisters, Hobart; Sisters of the Good Samaritan, Sydney; the Sisters of St. Joseph, Sydney, and from personal friends in Sydney, Melbourne and Tasmania. It was said that the portrait on opal presented by St. Joseph's Orphanage was a perfect likeness of the venerable Jubilarian. Perhaps the gift she treasured most was the illuminated address from the Catholic prisoners in the Hobart gaol. This gift beautifully executed by Mr. Ford, the under gaoler, was commissioned and paid for by the prisoners.

During the afternoon the Sisters entertained three hundred poor people at a meal where the tables were filled with festal food. This was in St. Peter's Hall, then situated in Lower Collins Street, and there was great cheering when Rev. Mother visited and moved among the guests. The Cardinal and Archbishop Murphy also paid a visit and added to the joy. Sometime during the festivities Mother Xavier managed to have a quiet word with the Cardinal and told him of her desire to see the Hobart branch re-united with the Sydney one, and he promised to look into the possibility. Assuming that he would discuss this with Mother Francis McGuigan, she mentioned it in a letter to Sydney, only to find that it was the first they had heard of it. However, she was assured that it would be a great joy to all if the amalgamation could be accomplished.

The tenacious little eighty nine year old then wrote to Cardinal Moran and received a reply on 28 June 1889 advising her to maturely consider the

situation. She should then consult with the members of her community, and, if they agreed, she would then have to seek approval of Archbishop Murphy as that would be necessary before entering into any negotiations. Armed with the Rescript separating Hobart from Sydney, Mother Xavier approached the Archbishop who promised to pray about the matter and get advice from his Consultors.

A letter then went to Mother McGuigan telling her of this and begging her to visit Hobart. She replied that from Melbourne she had to return to Sydney for 27 August when Cardinal Moran would be at St. Vincent's for the profession of eight of her novices, and she would then ask his permission to visit Hobart. She did pay the desired visit, probably accompanied by Mother Xavier Cunningham, because M. Xavier Williams' later letters to Sydney include messages for the latter. Mother McGuigan made a great impression, not only on the community but also on others whom she met during the visit.

On 7 November 1889 Archbishop Murphy acknowledged receipt of details of the relationship between the Mother House and Branch Houses of the Sisters of Charity and advised that he had sent the information to his Consultors for their opinions. A month later the great news reached Mother Xavier that the Archbishop and his Consultors were in favour of the amalgamation, and she wrote immediately to Mother McGuigan. In the same letter she thanks her for inviting some of the Hobart sisters to Sydney and hoped that a few weeks holiday would be of benefit to Sr. Philomena Gleeson. She also suggested that they might keep Alice (Sr. Bernard Gaul) who would be quite happy to finish her novitiate there as she was the only postulant in Hobart. She proposed that they leave on 20 December and be in Sydney for Christmas. Sr. Aloysius Murphy must have been included in the visiting party because she alerted Mother Xavier to a slight difference in the pattern of the Sydney sisters' habits.

The Rescript authorizing the amalgamation was dated 20 February 1890 and arrived in Hobart on Palm Sunday but there were a few problems to be worked through, mainly posed by Archbishop Murphy, so letters went back and forth between Sydney and Hobart. Finally, Fr. Hennebry was able to tell M. Xavier Williams that the Archbishop had withdrawn his objections and the union with Sydney was a reality. The way was now clear for M. Francis McGuigan to visit Tasmania as the Superior General and she arrived, bringing with her Srs. Louis Ryan, Albeus Glasheen, Imelda Moloney and Paul Duggan. Some of the Hobart sisters were transferred to the mainland.

A comparison of customs showed some slight differences. For instance, the Sydney sisters wore an outdoor cloak and poke bonnet and the Tasmanians were not thrilled by the prospect of being seen in this garb. Six years later when Cardinal Moran sent Mother McGuigan and Mother Gertrude Davis to Ireland to establish links with the parent body, it was found that the Sydney innovations were of Benedictine origin and that the original customs had been preserved in Hobart.

Mother Joseph O'Farrell, the superior of the orphanage was suffering from an incurable disease and in very poor health at the time of Mother McGuigan's visit. She had been able to go across to the convent on the Wednesday morning, but, on returning to the orphanage, suffered a severe stroke. She remained unconscious for the next four days, during which Archbishop Murphy and the priests visited continuously to bless and pray for her, and she died on 1 September 1890. Her death was a source of great sorrow for Mother Xavier Williams because Mother Joseph had been not only her support and kind friend for forty years, but someone to lean on in her old age. She wrote to Sr. Ignatius Balfe in Sydney pouring out her grief and loneliness, and telling her what a great consolation it had been to have Rev. Mother still with them at the time of the loss of her loved one. There were also letters to Mother McGuigan begging her to send a young superior to Hobart to relieve her of that responsibility. Sr. de Sales Kearney was to have gone to Sydney but was kept in Hobart to look after the orphanage until further arrangements were made. In December 1890 Mother Gertrude Davis, a grand niece of William Davis the great benefactor of the Sisters of Charity in Sydney, arrived to be the superior of both the convent and the orphanage.

Mother Xavier was delighted and gratefully handed over the keys and all business to Mother Gertrude who looked with love and care on the frail, little old nun, who was truly a national treasure. On Ash Wednesday 1892 Mother Xavier was feeling somewhat unwell and not able to get up for Mass and on the following day she asked for Fr. Hennebry to be called in to anoint her. She then handed over to Mother Gertrude her writing desk containing all the papers connected with the amalgamation, and declared that she could now die happily because she had nothing left in the world. From then Mother Gertrude watched over 'the little saint' who remained conscious and exhorted the sisters round her bedside to love one another and work always for God. After reciting a long Act of Love from memory she raised the indulgenced crucifix, signed herself three times, closed her eyes, sank into a little slumber and quietly passed into the presence of her God whom she had travelled the

world to serve so faithfully. It was 8 April 1892 and Eliza Williams had lived for ninety one years and nine months.

The Catholic Standard tells us that Mother Xavier Williams was laid out in one of the rooms in the convent and that hundreds of sorrowing people passed round the coffin to take a last look at the peaceful features of the one who had always been there for them in their times of happiness or grief. St. Joseph's Church was draped in black mourning cloth with white bows, and with many floral tributes of affection hanging from the rood screen. Before the Requiem Mass the coffin was carried into the church by the Sisters of Charity themselves.

Following the Mass and blessing, the procession of cross bearer, Archbishop and priests, and the sisters carrying lighted candles walked before the coffin to the waiting hearse. The funeral cortege of members of the Hibernian Society in regalia, private citizens and the children of St. Joseph's Orphanage wended its way to Cornelian Bay. Prayers and psalms were chanted as the coffin was lowered into the vault to rest beside Mother Joseph O'Farrell whom she had loved so dearly.

The last of the pioneer religious of Australia had finished the work which she had set sail to do fifty four years earlier. She had ministered to the outcast convicts, visited the poor and the sick in their homes and prisoners in gaols. She had been a solace to the suffering in hospital and to those in sorrow, had rejoiced with others in their glad times, had instructed the children and adults and been a compassionate and loving mother to the orphaned. She had gone to wherever there was a need, urged on by the charity of Christ and her wonderful trust in Divine Providence.

The blood of heroes flowed in M. Xavier Williams' veins and those who knew her well recognized the sound commonsense and wisdom, even in worldly matters, that could be called up as occasion required. Her father was educated at Trinity College and Kings Inn in Ireland where he studied law. On 1 January 1797 he joined the 9th Dragoons, a few months before he married Elizabeth Finn, and in 1798 he rose to the rank of lieutenant, and later to that of captain. Commissions were awarded by purchase and patronage and required sponsorship – the more senior or higher the rank of the sponsor, the more successful was the applicant. After his marriage William left the army and went into the banking business in partnership with his brother-in-law, Michael Finn, but unfortunately he seems to have had a financial predicament

over the years 1806 – 1811 and was declared bankrupt. William then applied to rejoin the army and, through three friends he was able to write a request to Colonel Torens and ask for it to be passed on to HRH the Duke of York. Because William had been enlisted in the army so many years earlier, he was considered too old for active service and had to prove that he was presently only twenty eight years old, before his request could be granted. He then joined the 11th Light Dragoons as a cornet – several ranks lower than his former captaincy – and was sent to Spain where the English and French were fighting the Peninsula War.

Napier's History of that war records that in the thick of the cannonade of the Battle of Salamanca a dismounted officer walked from the smoke of the battle field with a peculiar, rigid gait, appearing to hold a blood-stained cloth to his chest. In reality a bullet had ripped the flesh from his shoulder and chest, leaving his heart exposed. Although a staunch Protestant, Cornet Williams asked for a priest and later died in the arms of his son who had followed his father to the Peninsula in the hope of obtaining a commission. William's widow Elizabeth was granted a Royal Bounty of seventy two pounds a year instead of the usual thirty six pounds.

The captain's young son, Eliza's twin, William, was only twelve years old and was sent back to his mother in Ireland. He received a military education and was given his late father's commission without purchase. In 1822 he transferred to the 40th regiment of foot soldiers as an ensign, and three years later to the 57th of foot. A year later he was back in the 40th regiment as a lieutenant and, when that regiment was posted to Australia in 1824, William came with it. He was also a member of the troop which was sent to Van Diemen's Land and he succeeded Lieutenant Curtain as magistrate of the Clyde district.

At Bothwell William met Jane Reid, a member of the Scottish family who were among the early settlers in the Clyde area, and, on 16 April 1829 they were married. William was twenty nine and Jane was fourteen. The following year the 40th regiment was posted to India and William and Jane sailed with it. William had taken a subaltern's position, which he later regretted because younger men were obtaining higher positions and he did not have the resources to buy a commission. William found life in India rather stressful on account of his limited finances, and Jane was not really at ease with the social life there. In 1834 when it seemed likely that they would be able to return to Australia, William contracted fever and died on 23rd November. Jane, then nineteen, lost her second baby prematurely the day after her husband's death.

Jane wrote to her mother from Cape Town on 14 May 1835 telling her that she had booked her passage on the “Mary” and was coming home to Bothwell. She never re-married and continued to live at “Ratho” with her parents, and later with her brother Alexander and his family until her death on 1 April 1887. There is no written evidence of Jane visiting her sister-in-law, Mother Xavier, but she was a great traveller and they probably did meet, especially as letters show an easy and loving relationship.

Jane was a great writer and in Vol. 11 (1836-1840) of the Clyde Company Papers under the heading of Mrs. Williams’ Journal, (Ratho) 22 January, Saturday Morning 1837, there is the entry of her receiving from Major Butler, who had arrived by “The “Fairlie”, a letter and a miniature of her sister-in-law, Eliza Williams. At first Jane was disappointed that the portrait was not an identical representation of William, Eliza’s twin, but as she studied it more carefully she began to see the “same intellectual cast of countenance that belonged to my beloved William”.

Charles, the youngest member of the Williams’ family was only a small boy when his father died, and after the other members of the family had left home, he lived there in the care of Eliza and gave her some concern. Maria (Sr. Francis Borgia) had entered the Sisters of Charity, James was an army surgeon who served in the Crimean War and afterwards received an appointment as Inspector General of Hospitals in India, and Herbert was a merchant. When Charles announced that he was going to marry Anna Belcher, Eliza worried about his ability to support a family, so the young marrieds moved in with her at Hardwicke Place, Dublin. Their first baby, whom they called Eliza, died as an infant and after the birth of William, (Willy) Charles set out for Australia leaving his wife and son in the care of her parents. He arrived in Launceston, Tasmania, 21 October 1837 and, after visiting his sister-in-law, Jane, he went to Melbourne and became an accountant for the Union Bank. Charles saw great opportunities in the new colony so he left the bank and set himself up in business as an Auctioneer/Broker/Commission Agent. He was very eloquent and persuasive, bought up land, and was noted for his ‘champagne lunches’.

Anna came from Ireland but left Willy with her parents and life was wonderful. Charles owned large properties and a villa on the Yarra River but he had borrowed heavily and, like many others, became a victim of the economic crisis. He persuaded Anna’s parents to come to Australia to enjoy the prosperity, but, by the time they arrived in 1842 he was in deep financial trouble. Anna had two more sons, Joseph Henry in 1843 and James Herbert in

1847. Her father practiced law, became very successful and built a beautiful home in Geelong. Anna and her boys went to live there while Charles tried to regain his fortune. He tried wine selling on the Victorian gold fields, but had an accident on a return trip to Melbourne, was taken to a camp and died there on 16 September 1852.

At the end of that year Anna, her children and her parents returned to Ireland. The two youngest sons were eventually sent back to Australia by their grandfather Belcher. Joseph married Ellen Ware, settled in Queensland and had three daughters. James Herbert became a minister of the Anglican Church, was ordained by the Bishop of Goulburn in 1873, returned to Ireland to continue his studies, came back to Australia and married Annabella Willans at Queanbeyan on 14 November 1876. They had six children one of whom, a son James, married Maude Daws and had two daughters, Margaret and Joan. The latter married Tom Gordon of Leeton, New South Wales, and is now living with her daughter, Rosalie Robertson in Western Australia. Rosalie will be in Hobart to represent the Williams' family as we celebrate the 160th anniversary of the coming to Tasmania of her great-great-great-grand aunt, Mother Xavier Williams.



The first St. Joseph's School opened 23 August 1847

ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL
Harrington Street, Hobart Town 1847

When Bishop Willson arrived in Hobart Town in 1844 there was a two storey school in the course of construction. The building, at the rear of St. Joseph's Church, had been commenced by Fr. Therry. After proposing a scheme to raise money, the bishop was able to complete the school building which was opened on 23 August 1847 with lay teachers in charge of the secular instructions. A large room upstairs was used as a girls' school, while the boys were on the ground floor. Some Government assistance was given in accordance with provisions of legislation introduced by Governor Denison. The Sisters of Charity undertook the religious training of the girls and exercised general supervision. After a time they joined the teaching staff, but they refused to take for themselves any public grants for qualified and officially authorised teachers. The Government grant made up part of the salary of a young teacher, Miss O'Meara, from Sydney. When the grant was withdrawn in 1849, because the boys and girls were taught in the one building as one school, the Sisters could no longer afford to pay Miss O'Meara and she returned to Sydney. Later on the grant was restored by an arrangement to treat the boys' and girls' as two separate schools in the one building. At this time there is a reference to standards being very high at St. Joseph's Boys' School when Mr. Woods was headmaster.

The penny-a-day system posed problems, so in 1853 a commission was appointed by the Governor to visit and report on all government schools. One member of this commission was Fr. Hall, the Vicar General, who represented the Archbishop and Catholic interests, and another was Thomas Arnold, not yet a Catholic, who became an inspector and director of schools. Arnold wrote: "There were two thoroughly efficient schools in Tasmania during my term of office. One was the Central School, the other was that for girls, conducted by the nuns at Hobart Town, under the direction of the Bishop and the Vicar General". St. Joseph's Girls' School came under the Board of Education in 1853, but the Sisters withdrew it at the end of 1856, and, by doing so, according to Fr. Cullen, "merely anticipated the Government's determination to introduce free, secular and State education".

Joseph Roper, who had been converted to the Catholic faith by Bishop Willson in England, migrated from Nottingham in 1851, at the Bishop's invitation, to take charge of St. Joseph's Boys' School. Joseph Roper had

a family of ten – six girls and four boys. One son, Joseph Basil, studied in Rome for the priesthood, but, after ordination, died in Hobart at the early age of twenty seven. When Mother Francis McGuigan was in Hobart to discuss amalgamation with Mother Xavier Williams, Ella Winifred Roper met the visitor and was so impressed by her and what she represented, that she kept in touch, and later made the decision to enter the Sisters of Charity Novitiate in Sydney. As Sr. Alban, she became a highly qualified nurse who was greatly appreciated by the trainees at St. Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne. At the time of Ella's entrance, her mother and older sister, Letitia, accompanied her to Sydney. Mrs. Roper returned home but Letitia was invited to stay a little longer and accommodated at the boarding school at Potts Point. There she met a Jesuit priest with whom she had long spiritual conversations. After returning to Hobart, she decided to forego her career as a brilliant concert pianist, and, nine months later, followed her sister to the Novitiate on 3 September 1894. She became Sr. Teresa Joseph and, though often in ill health, worked for forty five years as a teacher of Music and the Classics. In her retirement years she continued the work of Mother Gertrude Davis in writing the history of the Congregation. In 1920 Mary Ina Roper also entered the Sisters of Charity and, as Sr. Marianne, taught music in various schools until her death in 1958. A fourth daughter followed her call to religious life as a member of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in New Zealand.

At the annual prize giving on 10 July 1870 a devotional chair (priedeu) was taken from its hiding place and presented to the Vicar General, Fr. W. Dunne, by Margaret Slattery, Mary Lynch, Mary Ann Slattery and Mary Carr on behalf of St. Joseph's children. There was also an illuminated address expressing the gratitude of the pupils for his care of them. On the feast of St. Joseph 19 March 1871 Bishop Murphy, who had recently arrived home after attending the Ecumenical Council in Rome, paid a visit. He celebrated Solemn High Mass in St. Joseph's Church where the statue of St. Joseph was adorned with curtains presented by the Sisterhood of Mary, and tastefully decorated by the Sisters of Charity.

In the afternoon the bishop visited the girls' school and words of welcome composed by the Sisters of Charity were sung to the tune of "Happy we, who thus united".

"Welcome, welcome our dear bishop
To Tasmania's shore.
After months of painful absence
You return once more.

Many friends you've left behind you
Faithful children meet you here.
Singing in their grateful gladness
Joyous strains to cheer.

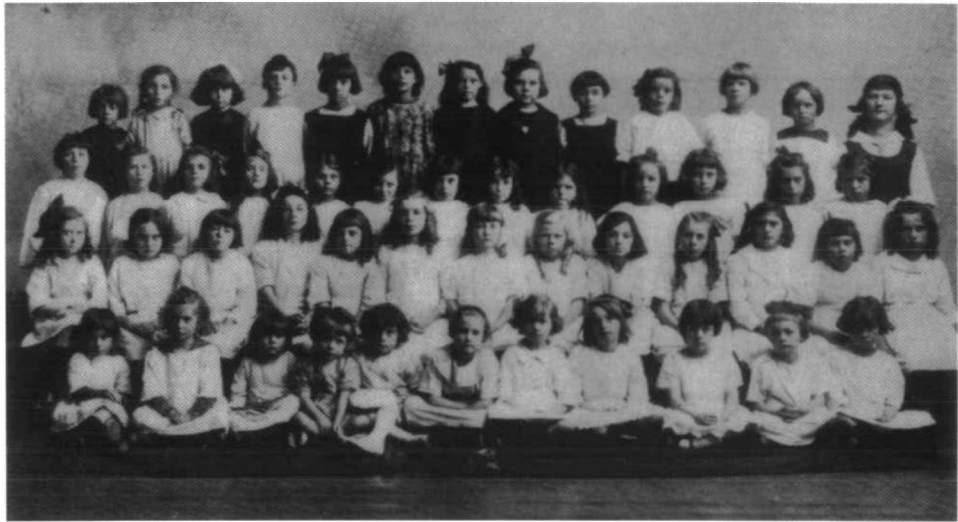
You have seen our Father
You have kissed his sacred feet,
Bringing thence a benediction
To the flock you soon would meet.

Give us then that precious blessing
Which our Father Pius gave
For his poor Tasmanian children
Far across the southern wave.

Bishop Murphy responded and gave the blessing . This was followed by a hymn to St. Joseph and one to Our Lady, and, when the bishop requested a hymn to St. Patrick, it was sung with great animation. The children were then invited to partake of the plentiful supply of fruit that had kindly been provided by Mesdames J.A.Watkins, O'Connor, McCann, Dalton and Miss McDowell. After the singing of "God bless the Pope" the bishop went down to the boys' school for a further distribution of fruit.



St. Joseph's Senior Girls 1922



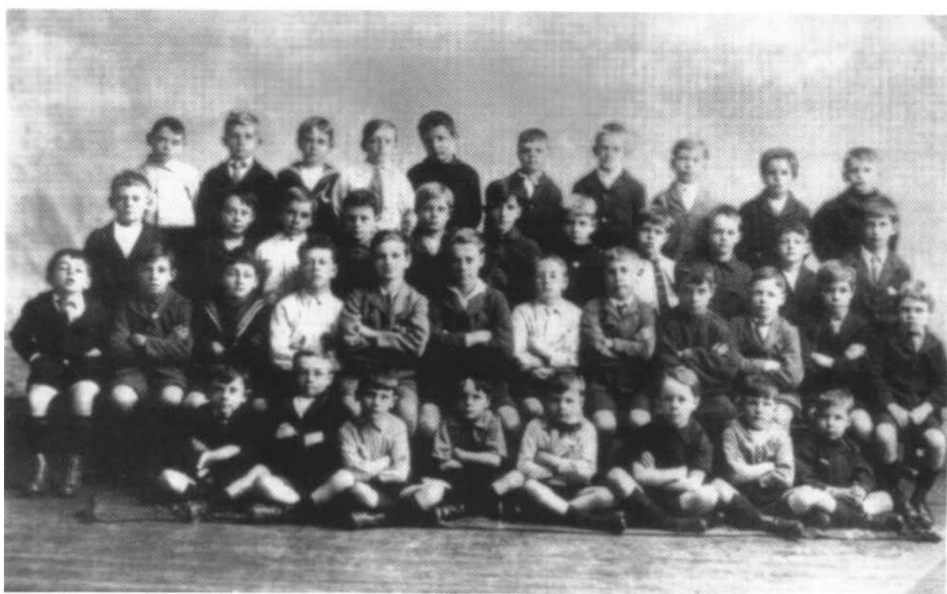
St. Joseph's Junior Girls 1922

In 1879 Joseph Roper retired – some say ‘was forced to resign’ – from the position of headmaster of St. Joseph’s Boys’ School, which he had held for twenty eight years, and the same treatment was meted out to Miss Reichenberg, after thirteen years of faithful service. Two years earlier Bishop Murphy had approached the Christian Brothers in Melbourne, and invited them to make a foundation in Hobart. The removal of Mr. Roper and Miss Reichenberg suggests that he was expecting the Brothers, but they did not come until thirty three years later. The immediate situation forced him to summon Fr. O’Regan from Cygnet to supervise the boys’ school, with the assistance of lay staff. Mr. Thomas Mitchell was the headmaster for some years, and he and some of the boys moved to the Cathedral parish in 1893, where he set up school in Fr. Therry’s former house at the corner of Harrington and Patrick Streets. The Sisters of Charity then took over both floors of St. Joseph’ School retaining some boys’ classes, at least in the Infant Department.

After the amalgamation of the Tasmanian congregation with that in Sydney, Srs. Imelda Moloney, Albeus Glasheen and Louis Ryan arrived to teach in 1891, and Sr. Vincent Ryan was appointed sister in charge in 1893. She was a State trained teacher under whose guidance many of the boys later obtained good Government positions, and two sisters, Lena and Kathleen Ward, gained scholarships to the University. Lena was rewarded with a BA degree, and Kathleen with a three year course in England. Mother Gertrude Davis



The Orchestra 1922



St. Joseph's Boys 1922

was recalled to Sydney after her second term as superior of the convent , 1901-1903. Sr. Vincent was appointed in her place, but also remained in the school. Mother Vincent was very kind to the poor, visited the gaol weekly and prepared many converts for reception into the church. Her health failed considerably during her last term of office and, when she went as a delegate to the 1920 Chapter in Sydney, she was admitted to St. Joseph's Hospital in Auburn and died there on 5 November.

Sr. Gerard Ryan, another very successful teacher, then came to Hobart as superior and in charge of the school. During her first year Father Hennebry died. He had been parish priest of St. Joseph's for thirty three years, and a great friend and supporter of the Sisters of Charity, often providing treats such as pleasure trips for them during the Christmas and Easter vacations. Mother Gerard and Sr. Phillipa Quinlan were with their dear friend when the end came. Father J.H.Cullen was officially the assistant priest at St. Joseph's, but unofficially he ran the parish affairs, particularly in the last years of Father Hennebry's life, when he nursed the saintly old priest. He was always grateful for the lessons he had learnt from observing the spiritual values of such a faithful pastor.

Because of the influx of pupils to St. Joseph's School it was becoming necessary to look for bigger premises, so Fr. Cullen worked with his parishioners to organize a monster fair for the building of a new school. Held on 29 September 1920, the fair resulted in, for that time, the enormous sum of two thousand one hundred and fifty eight pounds. Fr. Cullen then set about planning and building the beautiful building at the corner of Molle and Macquarie Streets.

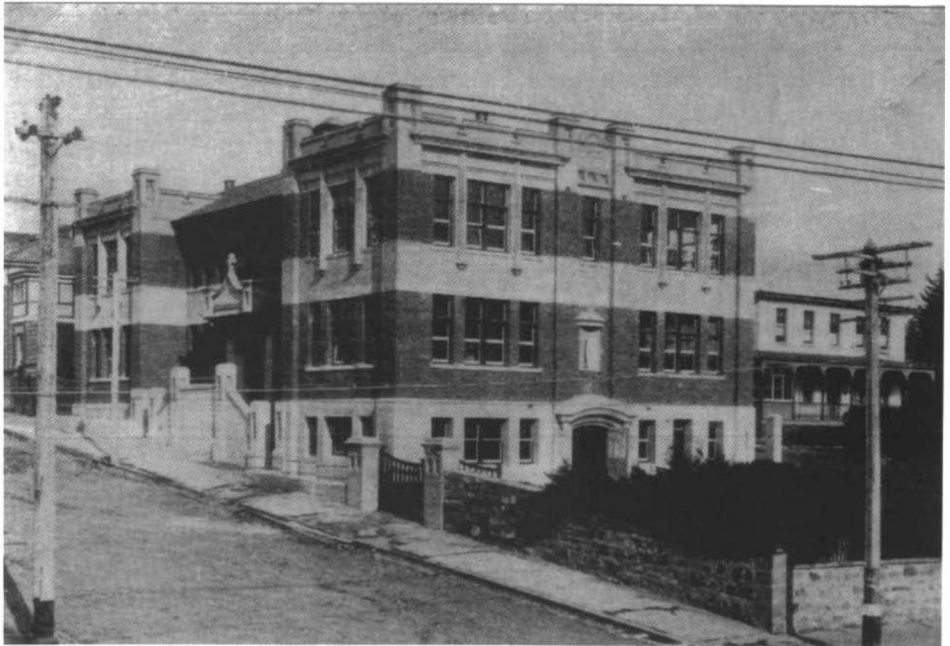
In 1921 Mother Berchmans Daly who had succeeded Mother Francis McGuigan as Superior General paid her first visit to Hobart, and arranged for St. Luke's to be regarded as a preparatory school for St. Joseph's, and for the fourth and fifth classes to be transferred immediately

ST. JOSEPH'S SECONDARY SCHOOL
Molle Street 1923.

Archbishop Mannix came from Melbourne to bless and open the new St. Joseph's School on 29 April 1923. There was a musical program provided by the pupils.

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Motet – | Ecce Sacerdos Magnus | (Santley) |
| 2. Orchestral – | Irish Airs | (Arranged by Ambros) |
| 3. Part Song – | The Wings of the Dove | (Watson) |
| 4. Song in Chorus – | Naughty Raindrops | (Rys-Herbert) |
| 5. Part Song – | Has Sorrow thy Young Days
Shaded | (Moore) |

An address of welcome was then read to Archbishop Mannix to which he responded and graciously praised the diction of the speaker.



St. Joseph's College, Molle Street 1923

Two important letters were received at that time. One from the TEACHERS' and SCHOOLS' REGISTRATION BOARD dated 29 November 1923 reads:

Dear Father Cullen,

In reply to your letter of August 28th, I am now instructed to inform you that the Board, at its meeting of the 20th November, resolved that St. Joseph's Primary School was entitled to registration as a Secondary School, and that it shall be so gazetted next March. Meanwhile it is entitled to style itself a Secondary School.

A.W. Garratt (Signed)
Registrar
119 Swanston Street
New Town

The other letter was written on 3rd May 1924:

Principal, St. Joseph's Secondary School

Dear Madam,

This Board, at its recent meeting, placed St. Joseph's Secondary School on the list of "Schools approved for the purpose of training teachers for registration".

Yours faithfully,
A.W.Garratt (Signed)

Mother Gerard Ryan would have supervised the transfer of the pupils to the new school, and in January 1924, when she returned to Sydney, Mother Margaret Ennis was appointed as superior of the convent, and Sr. Dympna Bruton was placed in charge of the school. Mother Berchmans Daly died during that year and Mother Canice Bruton was elected as the new Mother General. Because there was a need for nurses in the hospitals, Mother Canice removed Mother Margaret Ennis, a nurse, to St. Vincent's Hospital in Lismore. She appointed Sr. Phillipa Quinlan as Rectress of the convent in Hobart, and left her sister, Sr. Dympna Bruton, in charge of St. Joseph's School until the beginning of 1926, when she was replaced by Sr. Thaddeus Shanahan. Other principals to follow during the next decade were Srs. Avellino Walsh, Ethelberg Saunders, Ineen Beckwith and Ursula Smith.

During 1926 the announcement was made that in future the school would be known as St. Joseph's College. The blue hat band with the SJS shield was replaced by a navy blue one with narrow white and gold stripes on the edges and embroidered with the beautiful crest, which stood out boldly in stone relief over the main entrance in Molle Street. Knitted silk ties, also in the new college colours, then became part of the uniform.

The years of the late twenties and early thirties were not good ones economically, because of the Depression and, like so many other places, St. Joseph's felt the far reaching effects of the poverty of that time. The only sources of income for the Sisters were the school fees and the profits from their annual fair. The heavy reduction of these, during the bad times, must have caused some privation, but they continued on, and were even known to give practical assistance to the very needy among their pupils. As in the days of the pioneers, the Catholic laity, who were able to do so, often helped them with gifts of money and goods.

The year 1930 saw Sr. Margaret Sullivan arrive on the staff to teach commercial subjects. Her expertise resulted in senior girls obtaining excellent results in business principles, typing and shorthand, in the examinations conducted by Stotts Business College. For many, this was a stepping stone to a career in their working life. Another highlight of those gloomy years was the Sacred Concert broadcast live from the choir gallery of St. Joseph's Church. A combined choir of St. Joseph's College girls and St. Virgil's College boys, under the baton of Father John Ryan, rendered the items, "Regina Coeli" and "Assumpta Est Maria" in parts, and the beautiful tenor voice of Larry Simpson rang out with the solo, "Maria Magdalena". It was the first time that a children's choir had been heard from the station, probably 7ZL, and parents were faced with a minor problem – should they attend the Church rendition, or stay home and listen to it on the wireless? Some solved the dilemma by father listening in, and mother going to the concert. Rehearsals had been on Sunday afternoons for several weeks prior to the event, and, at the conclusion of each one, Br. Joyce would be outside the church making sure that his boys went one way, and 'those girls' went in another direction.

1930 was also the year when Archbishop Hayden arrived to replace Archbishop Barry who had died suddenly. A guard of honour of senior pupils was formed at the entrance to St. Joseph's College as a welcome to the new Archbishop, the parish clergy and others when they visited on 20 May. There was a musical programme, and an address of welcome, for which the Archbishop thanked

the children and granted a half holiday. Ten days later Archbishop Hayden kindly opened the Sisters of Charity annual fair in the Town Hall, where the stalls were held by the usual hard working committee members. Fancy (1) stall: Mesdames R. Griffith, H. Fitzmaurice, Misses Martin and M. Griffith; Variety: Mesdames Mangan, Bennett, Tate and Balmer and Misses Bennett and Hardwicke; Fancy (2) Mesdames F. and P. Keating and Misses Monk and O'Sullivan; Produce: Mesdames Eyles, Crane and Deegan; Refreshments: Children of Mary; Jumble stall: Misses Beard (3), Cullen, McDermott (2), McDonald and Smith. The fair that year realised two hundred pounds two shillings and one penny.

Mother Phillipa's time as Rectress expired in 1930 and Mother St. Mark Mitchell came to Hobart. A retired nursing sister, she was a very kind and considerate person who visited homes and the hospital when possible, but most of her time was spent looking after the ninety-six year old Sr. Agnes Hall. In 1933 Mother Canice Bruton again visited and put before the Archbishop the absolute necessity of increased accommodation for the sisters. Fr. Bernard Murphy the P.P., and Fr. J. Cullen met her at the convent to discuss whether it would be better to make additions to an already parish-owned house in Davey Street, or to build additions on to the existing convent. After mature deliberation, they chose the latter. Plans were drawn up and work commenced with the demolition of the first school, and the erection of a brick building behind the original house. An enlarged Sisters' Chapel, on part of the site of the old school, was ready for midnight Mass 1933. The remainder of the building was completed in time to be blessed and opened on the feast of St. Joseph 1934.

Mother Paulinus Fennessy replaced Mother St. Mark in July 1936 and became both Rectress of the convent and Principal of the college. In 1938 Fr. Cullen wished the grade six girls to sit for the Merit Examination. Good results were obtained over the years culminating in 100% in 1941. The last day of 1938 was the one hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of Charity in Australia, and any sisters who were able to do so, converged on Sydney for the celebrations. Later, in 1939 the Charity schools in Tasmania presented a modified version of the "Pageant Spectaculum" which Mother Benedicta Martin had produced in New South Wales.

Mother Joseph Barry followed in 1942 as Rectress and Principal. Sr. Mary Leo, who had lived at St. Joseph's for many years died in 1943 in her eighty-first year. After retiring from teaching she and Sr. Phillipa Quinlan had been



Senior Group St. Joseph's College 1934

*Back: L to R: Gwen Delaney, Nancy Smith, Moya Lonergan, Father Cullen, Nancy Miller, June Graves Sheila Mangan,
Middle Row: Wanda Doherty, Betty Roope, Ruby Whitcome, Rosalie Parkes,
Pauline Nicholls, Father Sherry, Marjorie Page, Miss Melba McDermott
Front: Joy O'Brien, Molly Donnelly, Josie Cannell, Mary King, Miss Isabel Nicholls*



St. Joseph's College Prefects 1944

*Back L to R: Tess Hogan, Noreen Rawnsley (Head Prefect), Betty Stubbs
Front: Mercy Kinsella, Betty Huxtable, Mary Lord, Betty Sexton, June Whittaker*

the last full time missionaries, but the school sisters continued visiting the poor and sick during the week ends. They went regularly to the hospital on Saturday afternoon, to the gaol on Sunday morning, and occasionally to St. John's Park at New Town. Converts were instructed at the convent in the evenings, and it is recorded that Sr. Anita Vaughan, besides her work as a senior teacher at the College, instructed forty converts during the years 1944 to 1948. Sr. Anita and Dean Vincent Green attended the last unfortunate prisoner to be hanged at the Hobart gaol.

A meeting of past pupils was held in St. Joseph's College on 3 February 1943 and the Old Scholars' Association was formed. The committee decided that a twenty pound scholarship would be given each year to the College, and that an annual retreat for past pupils would be arranged.

There was great rejoicing in July 1944 when Fr. Cullen was made a Domestic Prelate with the title of Monsignor, although at a school assembly, he told



Netball premiers 1944 St. Joseph's College

*Back L to R: Dorothy James, Doreen Roberts, Mary Kinsella, Kathleen McCarthy.
Front: Betty Huxtable, Betty Sexton, Noreen Rawnsley*

the children that he would still like them to call him 'Father'. That same year St. Joseph's won the senior basket ball shield for the first time and in 1946 another first was the students' sitting for the 4th Year Schools' Board Exam. The 'forties' also saw the introduction of College Prefects, who were easily recognised by the striped braid on their blazers.

1947 heralded in a year of celebration for the Centenary of the arrival of the Sisters of Charity in Tasmania. At the Centenary concert an address of welcome to Cardinal Gilroy was read by Lesley Sinclair, a prefect of St. Joseph's College. Fr. Cullen wrote the script for the night's presentation and photos of Bishop Polding, Dr. Ullathorne and Mary Aikenhead were shown on the screen. There was enthusiastic applause when the image of Monsignor Cullen appeared, because he had done so much for the Sisters of Charity and St. Joseph's over forty years. As well as outstanding items of singing and drama by the College students, St. Luke's children gave a delightful number – "A little child at the manger": St. Joseph's Orphanage presented a Rosary Tableau; St. Brigid's, New Norfolk entertained with folk dancing, and there were pictures of St. Vincent's, Launceston, and other hospitals of the Congregation.

Just as the prisoners of 1888 had congratulated Mother Xavier Williams, and expressed their gratitude for the ministry of the sisters, so too, those of 1947 sent a message of their appreciation. To add to the joy of the celebratory year, Fay Hammond, from St. Joseph's College won a much coveted Junior State Bursary.

At the prize giving day on 7 March 1950 Fr. Cullen said: "It always gives me pleasure to hear, as I often do, complimentary references to your school spirit and general conduct, and to learn of the high esteem in which past pupils of St. Joseph's are held. To the Sisters of Charity we owe a great debt of gratitude. It would be difficult to put that debt into words, nor do the Sisters look for such. Their reward is found in the realisation of their ambition to see you, faithful and persevering children of the Catholic Church".

1950 saw great progress at St Joseph's College. There were two hundred and twenty students on roll. The YCS – Young Catholic Students – activity groups were working enthusiastically through the school, and in sport there were outstanding successes, due to the dedication of Mrs. Joan Kerslake (O'Beirne) a very loyal Old Scholar and Sports' Mistress. Home Science was offered as a subject and there were very good Matriculation results as well as excellent passes in the third year examination conducted by the Catholic Secondary Schools' Association.

The newly re- formed Old Scholars Association, under the presidency of Rosalie Parkes, in 1950 had a one day retreat given by Father Johnston SJ, and enjoyed a High Tea provided by the Sisters of Charity. That year the St.

Joseph's Old Scholars' Basket Ball Team were premiers for the fifth year in succession.

On Christmas morning 1951 Mother Pius and Sr. Anita accompanied Fr. Wallis to the Hobart gaol where two Masses were celebrated, one for the men, and another for the women. Festive gifts previously collected, were distributed, and Mother Pius took photos for the women.

Archbishop Young presided at the Speech night in March 1955 and paid tribute to the "epic work done by talented, noble women who have given their lives to the cause of Catholic Education. They live without emolument, they work without acclaim, and often they die quietly in a convent, their death unknown to thousands of women they have trained". He congratulated the pupils on their successes of the past year, presented the new prefects with their badges, and distributed the prizes. Wendy Chapman gained six credits in the Matric exam, and Marie – Ann White passed in the greatest number of 3rd Year subjects, tying with two others in the highest number of points in the State. Lynette Barron gained Honours in Theory of Music and Credit in the practical exam. She also gained Credit in Art of Speech, for which she was trained by Madam Melba Kelly (McDermott), an Old Scholar.

When Monsignor J. H. Cullen tendered his resignation as parish priest of St. Joseph's parish in 1956, Archbishop Young invited the Passionist Fathers to consider a return to Tasmania, and to take charge of the city parish. Apparently a lay retreat house was envisaged, together with lunch hour Masses and daily adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. With a view to making this possible a meeting was arranged between the Archbishop, the Provincial of the Passionist Fathers and the Mother General of the Sisters of Charity, to discuss the transfer of the community of St. Joseph's Convent, and the secondary pupils of St. Joseph's College, to Sandy Bay. On the feast of the Sacred Heart, Father Provincial announced that he had received instructions from Rome to accept St. Joseph's parish, so Father Pascal took up duties as parish priest on 2 July 1956. The residence of Professor and Mrs. Hytten in Quorn Street, Sandy Bay, was purchased for the convent and necessary additions to the school buildings were commenced at Mount. Carmel.

It was decided that when the secondary classes moved to Mount Carmel, St. Joseph's would remain at Molle Street as a primary school. Between the years 1957 to 1964 there were five principals – Srs. Claudia Doyle, Blandina Mason, Hubert Flynn, Imelda Green and finally, Pauline Staunton, who saw the closure of the school and went with the remaining students to open St. Francis Xavier's primary school in South Hobart.



Last Sisters of Charity at St. Joseph's Primary School and the first to staff St. Francis Xavier's Srs. Margaret Nabbs, Pauline Staunton (Principal), Jean Montgomery



1964, Last students at St. Joseph's Primary School, Molle Street

MOUNT CARMEL SCHOOL

The story of Mount Carmel begins with the vision of the late Archdeacon T.J. O'Donnell, when he bought Friends' Preparatory School at 1 View Street, Sandy Bay, in 1941, and the first Mount Carmel junior school opened there on 30 August 1942. On that Sunday afternoon, in true "T.J." style, a band led the grand procession of flag wavers, headed by the very important first day pupils. They were followed by parishioners, St. Virgil's cadets, Children of Mary in regalia, and pupils from other parish schools in uniform. Altar boys and clergy with Archbishop Simonds brought up the rear, as the parade moved from the church in Duke Street to the new school. In his address at the blessing and dedication, Archbishop Simonds said that he "regarded the hallmark of the human mind as understanding, rather than knowledge", and that he hoped Mount Carmel would stand for the ideal of 'total' Christian education.

Monsignor Cullen later revealed that he had suggested the title "Mount Carmel" to Archdeacon O'Donnell. Firstly, because that was the name originally given to the site of St. Mary's Cathedral, and he wanted to perpetuate the name, and secondly, because in a Carmelite convent in Ireland, where he, like other members of his family for over a hundred years, had served daily Mass, his thoughts first turned towards the priesthood.

School commenced on 1 September 1942 with a roll call of fifty two boys and girls up to grade three, housed in two classrooms with a folding door partition. The staff was comprised of two Sisters of Charity, Sr. Eulalia Murphy, the principal, and Sr. Melania Viney. Sr. Eulalia will be long remembered for her pupils' successes in Singing and Art of Speech at the Catholic Schools' Eisteddfod, and Sr. Melania for her dedication as an Infants' class teacher, where no backward pupil ever slipped through the system, but was always detected and lovingly coaxed to achievement. The school inspector was full of praise for the new school in his 1943 report. In 1945, when Sr. Melania became principal she was joined by Sr. Leonore Murphy, Sr. Eulalia's sister.

Extensions were made to the school in 1944 to accommodate seventy three pupils, and, in 1948 when there was further growth and the classes extended to grade four, proving the building too small and the playground inadequate, Archdeacon O'Donnell once again performed a marvellous feat. He bought the former Fahan School site, wonderfully situated at 361 Sandy Bay Road.



1942 Mount Carmel Primary School, ^{View} Duke Street, Sandy Bay



Lauramont



1947 Mount Carmel Primary School moved to Lauramont, 361 Sandy Bay Road

The contract signed at the time of sale allowed time for Fahan to build its new school in Lower Sandy Bay before vacating the premises, so Mount Carmel did not move to "Lauramont", the name of the original stone house on the property, until 1947.

In 1950 there were innovations such as dancing lessons at St. Joseph's College with Miss Jean Hogan (an Old Scholar), tennis lessons, an invitation to join in St. Joseph's Sports' Day, and the introduction of a fawn summer uniform for the girls. Sr. Cyril Lalor followed Sr. Melania as principal and taught the upper grades from 1951 to 1953. Some of the Mount Carmel children accompanied those from St. Joseph's on the "Religion and Education" float in the 1951 procession to celebrate the golden jubilee of Federation. Sr. Marius Lucas was the next Sister in Charge from 1954 to 1956, and then Sr. Teresa Kenny followed as the last principal of the Mount Carmel as a primary school

The pupils of Mount Carmel School excelled in all facets of their school life, and won many awards for verse speaking and handcrafts. Devotion to Mary, Mother of God, was high on their agenda, but the school rules of the 1950's would probably be incomprehensible to today's students.

SCHOOL RULES in the 1950's

1. Value as your most treasured possession your Catholic faith – daily Mass and Holy Communion if possible – if not, a daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament.
2. The rosary every day – and always have your rosary beads with you. Try to bring the family rosary into your home.
3. Loyalty to school – love your school
4. Pay particular attention to the following points:
5. Navy gloves in the street. Never eat in the street, tram or bus. Always offer your seat courteously. Greet Priests and Sisters first.
6. Silence on the stairs and in toilet blocks at all times. Stand quietly if Sister is passing, and always offer to carry anything. Never see a Sister sweeping etc. without offering to help.
7. Silence in the classroom if teacher is absent – cultivate a sense of honour and trustworthiness, take pride in your classroom. Keep your desk, case, books and classroom tidy. Pay particular attention to your hair, nails and shoes.

MOUNT CARMEL COLLEGE

Sister Canisius Coupe, superior of St. Joseph's Convent and Principal of St. Joseph's College was responsible for the merging of the primary Mount Carmel classes with the secondary ones from St. Joseph's. She would have quietly controlled the influx of summer-blue-uniformed 'big girls' who invaded their new campus. Sister Canisius later recalled the sadness that accompanied the excitement of the move, but acknowledged that it was tempered by the belief that the traditions of the old school were continuing at a new site and under a new name. There was also a new winter uniform. The donkey brown with a narrow blue stripe was the material, and the style chosen was that of the uniform worn by a couple of Sisters of Charity colleges on the mainland. "Scientia et Virtute" and "Pro Deo et Patria" had been encapsulated, in "Fortes in Fide", and staff and students set about establishing Mount Carmel College as a forefront for the living out of Gospel values.



1957 Mount Carmel College – New Building for secondary classes



1958 Mount Carmel College students on a trip to Sydney

Building of the new classrooms for grades seven and eight had not been completed in time for the merger so, for a short time, grade seven had to share the "Playroom" with the Infants'! A situation that stretches the imagination. The senior girls also made use of this same All Purpose room to hold a social to celebrate the opening of their new school. Prefects from the other Catholic schools and the boys from St. Virgil's College were invited to the very successful evening.

The following letter from the Education Department, Hobart is dated 23rd February, 1957:

Dear Sister Canisius,

Your letter, advising of the transfer of pupils to Mount Carmel School, recently forwarded to the Director of Education is acknowledged.

I would like to congratulate you and your colleagues on the undertaking, & I wish you every success. The progressive outlook in the cause of Education is characteristic of your Order. I realize that such expansion calls for the whole hearted co-operation to the leadership shown. I know the pupils will benefit by the additional facilities.

I shall call to see the Sisters to discuss new trends in educational methods; but I cannot pay my annual visit this year.

Yours faithfully,
J.Ro.Bartram (Signed)
Superintendent

Because the building of the Chapel and other improvements to the convent at Sandy Bay delayed the sisters' move into their new home, they remained at St. Joseph's Convent until May. Mr. Jack Paterson, Mr. Chapman and Mr. H. Hughes saw to their being driven down each day during the interim. On 28 July Mount Carmel Convent in Quorn Street was blessed by Archbishop Young and, during the May holidays, the Sisters of Charity moved there from St. Joseph's Convent in Harrington Street, where they had lived, and performed the duties of sacristan at St. Joseph's Church for one hundred and ten years. The sisters who staffed the primary division remained in the city and lived at St. Joseph's Orphanage for the next thirteen years.



1958 Scholarship Winners: Junette Hughes, Gaye Harrold, Lynette Barron



1962 Srs. Dawn Bang, Anne Conway, Ursula Smith, Joan McKenna, Moira O'Sullivan

Sr. Ursula Smith returned to Hobart in 1961 to accept the challenge of leading Mount Carmel through a necessary building and improvement stage when finance was at a very low ebb. Inspired by her forward thinking, parents and friends rallied to support her scheme to build a new secondary block by means of a loan from the Sisters of Charity, Potts Point, and a Government Science Grant. There was an assiduous drive to repay the loan through fundraising events, and when this was achieved, Sr. Ursula's next project was a twenty thousand pound infants' block. Archbishop Young blessed and opened this building on 9 July 1966, the year that Sr. Ursula left Tasmania. She had spent a total of fifteen years in Sisters of Charity schools in Hobart, at St. Luke's, St. Joseph's and Mount Carmel, and, besides being remembered for her building prowess, she was regarded as an excellent teacher with a keen interest in singing, verse speaking and home science.

Sr. Marie Joan Gough, who had been a staff member with Sr. Ursula, became Principal in 1967 and remained for four years. This was the post Vatican II era when reform became a challenge to Catholics in all aspects of their lives. Although Sr. Marie Joan had concerns about some innovative proposals, she wholeheartedly adopted a more modern approach to the teaching of Religious

Education in the form of a thorough study of relevant documents of Vatican 11. She was a very experienced senior teacher and was remembered as 'firm but fair' and one who encouraged self reliance and independent thought. Sr. Marie Joan was ecumenically minded and urged inter-school discussion groups, and she re-introduced the school social for senior students.

Sr. Elizabeth Dwyer presided over Mt. Carmel for the next three years and made a lasting impression because of her compassionate nature, and her interest in students as individuals. Y.C.S. (Young Christian Students) members of that time remember her catch cry, "Have time for one another", and how she used the study of Vatican 11 to insist that they should take a more active part in the church's apostolate. Sr. Elizabeth had spent ten years on the staff at Mount Carmel, and returned in 1998 to give further service to the school community. Affectionately known as 'Sister Liz', she used her computing skills to organize the After School Care programme and to produce vast numbers of Mass booklets, report forms, certificates and letters. She especially delighted in her role of honorary Grandma to many little ones on the annual Grandparents' Day. She was certainly missed, when she left Mount Carmel at the end of 2002.

Sr. Gervase had previously worked in Hobart, and, as Sr. Eileen Kean, returned in 1974. This time she was Principal of Mount Carmel College only, as the decision had been made to separate the roles of Superior of the convent and the Sister in charge of the school. The diminutive Sr. Eileen was faced with a situation where there was a huge debt and no finance. She remembers her first year as one of conflict with those who pessimistically could see no way to a remedy. When her dynamism became apparent, some of the Parents and Friends recognized the great untapped reserves of leadership and strength in the 'small principal'. They pledged unlimited support, and assisted her in her aim to achieve what was best for the students. Volunteers did repair work on the original building, cleared the front bank and replaced the steps. Paths were laid down and a new play area for the younger children was constructed. Committees worked with Sr. Eileen on a capital works programme which commenced in 1975 and continued through the next seven years. The major project for 1980 was to raise ten thousand dollars for further building extensions. These were completed, and Mount Carmel College was debt free, before she left at the end of 1982. The last of her buildings was dedicated in her name, the following year, when Archbishop Young performed the ceremony on 18 September 1983. Sr. Eileen was sometimes labeled "strict", but she was an inspiration to her staff and the College community who repaid her with loyalty and support.

Sr. Maureen Quilter, an excellent teacher and competent administrator, was appointed as the next principal. Unfortunately, she was not able to complete her first year at Mount Carmel, so Mrs. Annabel Crook filled the position of Acting Principal and guided the College very successfully through 1983, and into the care of Sr. Maria Wheeler, who arrived in 1984.

Sr. Maria had completed a very successful term as Principal of her Alma Mater, St. Vincent's College at Potts Point, and at Mount Carmel was soon recognised as an educational leader. She was highly regarded by the Tasmanian Education Department, as well as by the other independent schools. She was very involved in the introduction of the Tasmanian Certificate of Education as a replacement for the Higher School Certificate, with its heavy demands of time and energy expended in the planning of curriculum, policies and programmes. Sr. Maria was a supportive strength during the traumatic lead-up to the loss of grades eleven and twelve, at the time of the re-structuring of Catholic Secondary schooling in Hobart

The purchase of 9 Quorn Street for specialist areas, tutorial rooms, clothing and book shops, and that of the White House on Sandy Bay Road for administration, provided a bonanza of space for some of the hitherto cramped areas. She was responsible for the building of the auditorium and drama/music complex and the Ursula Smith wing, consisting of classrooms and a common room for senior students. In 1997, a house in Nelson Road, adjoining the Mount Carmel campus, was bought for a kindergarten, and the After School programme was commenced. The acquisition of these properties considerably expanded and enhanced the playground space. Student choices were widened to include Activity Days which offered a range of pursuits and subjects, and Christian Living camps were held for groups from grade five upwards.

Sister Maria was a woman of strength and tender compassion towards students in need, and continued the tradition of building Mount Carmel into a community whose spirituality, education and culture are second to none. She had fostered the 'growth of school spirit', of which she had spoken in her introduction to the College, fourteen years earlier. Sister Maria left the College at the end of 1997, thus terminating the long line of Sisters of Charity Principals at St. Joseph's/Mount Carmel.

Mrs. Bobby Court, the first Lay-Principal, was inducted during the opening of the year Mass, 17th February 1998. Under her leadership the Vision Statement was created by a gathering together of students, parents and teachers. The

position of Head Prefect was changed to a dual role of two Co-Captains, and a navy blazer replaced the brown jacket of the uniform. The convent, which was vacated by the sisters at the end of 2001, became part of the College campus and was named Providence House. The chapel was refurbished and beautiful lead-light windows depicting the connection with the Sisters of Charity were designed by Mrs. Buddle. After five years of valuable service Mrs. Court resigned from Mount Carmel to fill the position of Principal of Guilford Young College.



Sr. Martha Murphy with two of her pupils

Today, Mount Carmel College forms a very vibrant and connected community led by Mrs. Laurie Wolfe, the current Principal. In her dedication and enthusiasm she is supported in the joys and challenges of conducting a twenty-first century school, by the Governing Council, the Board of Management, the staff, the student leadership team, the Parents and Friends Association, the managers of the Canteen and Clothing Store and the volunteer parents

who assist in so many generous and unselfish ways. It is interesting to note the significant number of staff members who have chosen to remain for very long terms of service. One example of this is Sr. Martha Murphy who taught music for twenty eight years (1960-87). The spread of curricular and co-curricular offerings is amazing for both primary and secondary classes, and must surely whet the appetite for learning and self development.



Sr. Canisius Coupe 1957-1960



Sr. Marie Joan Gough 1967-1970 Sr. Ursula Smith 1961-1966



Sr. Elizabeth Dwyer 1971-1973



Sr. Eileen Kean 1974-1982



Sr. Maria Wheeler 1984-1997



Mrs Bobby Court 1998-2003



Mrs. Laurie Wolfe 2004 -

It can be said that the Vision Statement is not just a compilation of empty words, but a lived practice at Mount Carmel.

VISION STATEMENT

Our Vision Statement identifies our tradition with its
foremost element – the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Individuals are encouraged to develop their potential, live their
faith, and contribute to society with confidence and integrity.

We nurture

We challenge

We care

Our values – faith, justice, respect, freedom, commitment
and celebration.



*St. Luke's Primary School, Anglesea Street, South Hobart.
Sisters of Charity took charge in 1873*

ST. LUKE'S SCHOOL

St. Luke's School in Anglesea Street, South Hobart, was founded in 1863 by Mr. William Luke Stilling for the education of the catholic children of the neighbourhood. Lay teachers staffed the school for the first ten years, and regular visits and examinations of the pupils were conducted by the priests from St. Joseph's parish. In *The Standard* we read that the way the children acquitted themselves under the searching examinations of December 1870, reflected great credit on their teacher, Miss Smith.

In 1873, when Bishop Murphy asked the Sisters of Charity to take over the school, Sr. Joseph O'Farrell went as head teacher. By 1878 there were two other sisters assisting her, and improvements, costing nearly one hundred pounds, had been made to the school. Until 1892 it was known as St. Luke's Ragged School. From 1893 to 1898 it was referred to as St. Luke's Free School. The debt on the school building was paid off towards the end of 1881, so the sisters were able to devote the whole of the government grant for 1882, as well as school fees and private donations, to the purchase of clothing, boots, shoes, books, paper and writing materials for the children. They were also able to build a shelter shed in the playground and spend a small amount on fuel and repairs.



St Luke's School Picnic

On the feast of St. Luke, 1878, the pupils, carrying appropriate banners, marched down Macquarie Street to the wharf. There they were met by Fr. Henneby, who accompanied them on board the “Kangaroo”. On arrival at Kangaroo Bluff, a feast of buns, oranges, mutton- pies, ginger beer, cake, nuts and lollies disappeared with marvellous rapidity. In the afternoon a program of various sports, and a visit from the Bishop Murphy, Dr. Hall, Fr. Beechinor and Fr. Martial Mary kept the children occupied until the time came for them to set sail for Hobart, where the Cascade bus and Dillon’s cars were waiting to take them to their homes.

At the end of 1878 prizes were awarded to:

Ellen Betts	Catechism, lessons, dictation, good conduct, regular attendance and reading
James Hinchey	Catechism
Eliza Betts	Catechism, sums and regular attendance
Mary Ann Donahoe	Lessons, sums, good conduct and regular attendance
Mary Jane Rollinson	Writing and dictation
Christina Gannon	Writing and dictation
Ann McNamara	Writing
Mary Ann Gannon	Sewing, reading and amiability
Kate Leahy	Sewing
Eliza McNamara	Sewing
Eliza Evans	Reading
Margaret Parker	Reading

Nearly thirty prizes were also given to the lower classes.

In 1884, the roll call was sixty five; school fees for the year amounted to ten pounds nine shillings and eight pence; a government grant of fifty pounds had been received; the library held one hundred books and every Catholic child of school age, in that part of the city, attended St. Luke’s School.

In 1921 we know that the fourth and fifth classes were transferred to St. Joseph’s and St. Luke’s became an Infants’ school. During the ensuing years the school again advanced to Primary level and remained in that category until the closure in 1949.

Some of the Sisters of Charity who taught at St. Luke’s were: Srs. Hedwige Bagley, Christina Weir, Brendan O’Flaherty, Lucilla Fitzgerald, Grace Bennington, Roberta Brady, de Ricci Beeden, Ursula Smith, Thecla Bertolotti, Eymard Saunders, Rene Duffey, Marcella Craft and Aiden Larnier.



Father Griffin with a First Communion group – St. Luke's about 1942



1947 St. Luke's School

Back: M Colrairie, R. Boucher, W. Sullivan, J. Pentecost, D. Absolom, P. Cracknell, R. Sullivan, J. Dobson

Middle: J. Pestrucchi, R. Stuart,, D. McGalligott, R. Absolom, M. Hopkins, J. Prenter, P. Donovan, R. Prenter,, M. Kent

Front: M. Stuart, L. Lockley, D. Woodley, J. Brambley, J. Laughner, P. Geason, B. Woodley, J. Dobson, M. Dillon, L. McGalligott, B. Sullivan, J. Carroll, F. Carroll, B. Donovan, B. Boucher, M. Kent



St. Francis Xavier's Primary School, South Hobart, 1965

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER'S, SOUTH HOBART

There were repeated requests from Fr. R. Kennedy, parish priest of South Hobart, for a primary school to at least grade four, to replace the former St. Luke's School because there were forty Catholic children in the State primary school in South Hobart. At that time the number attending St. Joseph's was sixty eight. Archbishop Young referred Fr. Kennedy's proposal to Mother Agnes who replied that it seemed desirable that there should be only one such school in the district, so the sisters would no longer staff St. Joseph's. She suggested that, unless the numbers did not warrant it, the new school should go to grade six. Her greatest concern about closing St. Joseph's was the distance the children of Aikenhead House would have to travel.

The Archbishop was in Rome so Fr. Denis Quinn, the Diocesan Secretary communicated the decision to Mother Agnes, that during 1964 a complete primary school would be built in St. Francis Xavier's parish, and that St. Joseph's would cease to function.

On 28th February 1965 Archbishop Young blessed the new St. Francis Xavier's School and Sr. Pauline Staunton as Principal, with Srs. Jean Montgomery and

Margaret Nabbs as staff members, moved to South Hobart with the students from St. Joseph's. Two years later, on the first day of the school year, they were to have the frightening experience of being caught in the tragic bush fire scene. With houses literally exploding round them, Sr. Pauline remembers the terrifying drives in the pitch-black environment as they ferried children, whose parents could not be contacted, to the safety of Aikenhead House. After the fires, St. Joseph's School Hall was used as a collection and distribution point for clothing, furniture etc. for families who had lost everything.

Sr. Pauline Nicholson was the last Principal at St. Francis Xavier's. Because of dwindling numbers, Mother Marion Corless, Superior General at the time, expressed difficulty in providing sisters for such a small teacher/student ratio and the school was closed in 1973.

ST. JOSEPH'S ORPHANAGE/AIKENHEAD HOUSE/ ST. JOSEPH'S CHILD CARE CENTRE

In the early years of Van Diemen's Land there was an establishment at New Town for neglected and orphaned children, but unfortunately Catholic inmates were not allowed to be instructed in their own religion. By the time the Sisters of Charity arrived that ban had been lifted, so they were able to visit regularly. They not only provided for the welfare of about one hundred children while they were at school, but later kept in touch with them and their parents or guardians. Changes in the political and social life in the 1860's, brought about a dwindling in the number of children needing care, so there was the possibility of the school being closed, and the building put to another use.

Van Diemen's Land had disappeared and the young Tasmania had emerged, but there were still some orphans without care. The needs of these children tore at the heart strings of Mother Xavier Williams and Fr. W. Dunne V.G. and they began to think about establishing an Industrial School and Orphanage. Fr. Dunne made a public appeal for assistance in 1870 and they continued to accrue funds through bazaars, lotteries and private donations. Bishop Murphy was aware of their plans and of their need to look for a suitable house in which to begin their good work.

Fr. Therry had bought the house on the corner of Harrington and Patrick Streets and, after he left Tasmania, his sister, Jane Anne Therry, and his

brother James lived there. In his will Fr. Therry had stated that, “without the slightest want of respect for the ecclesial authorities of the colony”, he wished the Jesuit Fathers to dispose of his property for religious, charitable or educational purposes. Mother Xavier apparently visited Miss Therry and knew of this, because in 1874 she sent a message to Fr. Joseph Dalton S.J., the Superior of the Jesuits in Melbourne, saying that the doctor advised him to come at once as Jane was dangerously ill. Fr. Dalton left for Hobart the next day, and Jane died on 21st December 1874.

James Therry either died or moved away because in February 1875 it became known that the house was for sale and Mother Xavier contacted Fr. Dalton regarding the price. The reply came telling her that she could have it for four hundred pounds, plus about eight pounds for the auctioneer’s fee. Bishop Murphy was away at the time and, when word reached him that Mother Xavier was about to procure the house, he sent a telegram with the message: “Pray take no steps Therry’s house until authorised by me.” The telegram did not reach Mother Xavier in time, and she went ahead with the purchase. This house was to be the cause of great suffering for both Mother Xavier and Fr. Dunne.

Bishop Murphy then wrote to Mother Xavier, but this letter was delivered to his sister at the Presentation Convent who opened it by mistake, and forwarded it with an apology. This letter is missing but Mother Xavier’s reply suggests that she was admonished for daring to act without the bishop’s knowledge and consent -even though he knew she was seeking a suitable place, and she acted with the approval of the Vicar. The following day she wrote again telling the bishop how sorry she was for the unpleasant affair, and offering to write to Fr. Dalton and ask him to stop Fr. Therry’s solicitor from drawing up the deeds. Fr. Dalton replied that the contract could not be cancelled and that the house had been a “heart scald” to him and he had no desire to re-possess it. Mother Xavier then offered to sell the house to Archbishop Murphy for five hundred pounds, and he finally agreed to that.

The affair did not end so happily for Fr. Dunne. The bishop accused him of, “positively declining to make amends for the extraordinary and irregular part” he played in the sale of Fr. Therry’s house, when all he did, according to Mother Xavier, was to be present when she agreed to clinch the deal with Fr. Dalton. Fr. Dunne sent in his resignation as Vicar General and it was accepted, but he remained for a few years as the priest of St Joseph’s parish.



St. Joseph's Orphanage, Harrington Street, Hobart – 1879

When this purchase fell through, a much more suitable property, an office block, in Harrington Street, directly opposite the Convent, became available. The original intention was to convert this residence into a home for orphans, but, on the advice of Mr. Henry Hunter, the architect, it was demolished and a new building erected on the site. St. Joseph's Orphanage was blessed and opened by Bishop Murphy in March 1879. The two- storeyed building, large enough to accommodate sixty children, and the land on which it stood, had cost over three thousand pounds. Mother Joseph O'Farrell was appointed as the first Superior, and she was assisted by Sr. Ignatius Balfe, a capable and energetic person; Sr. Catherine Leahy; Sr. Vincent Moloney; and Sr. Magdalen Toohill, who was to spend nearly forty years of her religious life caring for orphans, over whom she exercised great control, without being severe.

Eighteen Catholic girls, aged from eight to thirteen years, were transferred from the Queen's Orphan Asylum, New Town. Their bedding and other requisites went with them, and they were joined by three other children on the opening day. Increasing applications for accommodation soon filled the home, and the sisters' ingenuity was taxed to the utmost to provide for their hungry charges. Needlework and the taking in of washing brought in an income, but most of the children were too young to help with these tasks, so

the sisters laboured through some very long days. Gradually the place became known and donations began to arrive. Some kind friends also exerted their influence and government aid was granted.

Father William Dunne, who had taken such a great interest in the Orphanage, eventually asked for a transfer to the Melbourne Archdiocese. On his last visit he had enquired of Mother Joseph the cost of building another wing. This matter had been the subject of prayer and consideration for some time so Mother Joseph knew the answer, and replied, "Six hundred pounds." Father Dunne made no remark, but when his will was read after his death, which occurred shortly afterwards at Coburg in Victoria, there was a bequest of six hundred pounds to St. Joseph's Orphanage. This enabled Mother Joseph to build a large, well-lighted schoolroom, and to make additions to the sleeping quarters.

St. Joseph's Orphanage was the sole Tasmanian Catholic institution of that kind for many years and therefore, the recipient of wonderful material assistance and generosity from the people of the whole island. For this, the Sisters of Charity were extremely grateful. Without that assistance they could not have adequately provided for the one thousand plus who, for various reasons, needed their care during the ninety- one years in Harrington Street. Some would have felt resentment towards the institutional aspect of that period of their lives, but many did express appreciation for what was done for them, when neither they, nor the Sisters, were responsible for the circumstances which necessitated their being there. There were many happy outcomes in the way of successful marriages, well-adapted families, business, professional, and other career achievements. Nine young women answered the call to serve God and others in various Religious Congregations.

Many changes occurred over the years. The original building was further enlarged in 1924, and again in 1930 when a corresponding gable wing, housing a beautiful new chapel, was added to the northern end. Until 1950 the girls were taught at their own primary school on the premises. This was discontinued and they went to St. Joseph's College in Molle Street, thus allowing them to continue secondary studies and to mix with other children. In 1958 the name was changed to Aikenhead House to honour the foundress of the Sisters of Charity, and that same year another wing was completed to accommodate fourteen boys up to the age of nine. This was the first move in Sr. Catherine Ellis' long range plan to keep the children of a family together. The next step was the purchase of a house in a Hobart suburb and the placing of a group of children, including brothers and sisters, in the care of trained house mothers.



St. Joseph's Child Care Centre, Taroona, replaced St. Joseph's Orphanage in 1970

This scheme expanded to include family homes at Taroona, Rosny and Howrah, and in 1968 an opportunity for further extension came when the Commonwealth Government made an offer to purchase the original building. The offer was accepted and this provided finance for the purchase of Dr. Boot's home at 26 Channel Highway, Taroona. A chapel was added to the residence and three cottages were built on the site, each one, a family home for seven children. The complex, named St. Joseph's Child Care Centre, was blessed and formally opened by Archbishop Young on 1 May 1970 .

Again the governing body was assisted by a dedicated committee who worked tirelessly for the benefit of the children, and particularly by a group of young married women who adopted the cause. They called themselves the "Hostess Committee," and worked unselfishly for a number of years to raise

a substantial amount of money for programs especially for the children. There was also a volunteer group of older women who helped with the used clothing shop, first on the orphanage premises, and later at two different locations in Collins Street. Sr. Dorothy Harrison worked with these good friends for a number of years when 'the shop' was not only a source of revenue, but also a drop-in centre for many of the former girls and boys.

When Monsignor Cullen retired from his position as parish priest of St. Joseph's in 1956 he moved to accommodation at the Orphanage in Harrington Street and became full-time chaplain. There he continued his fatherly care of the children who were so special to him, and it was a great privilege both for the sisters and the children to have him continue that role, when he moved into the flat provided for him at their Tarooma home. Unfortunately they were not to enjoy his earthly presence for long. He died peacefully in his sleep on 17 November 1970.

The last child was admitted to the Tarooma facility on 13 February 1978. St. Joseph's then became a Crisis Accommodation Centre for families in 1980, and was managed by Centacare. Sr. Marie Burke continued to work with Centacare for some years, and when she returned to Sydney, Sr. Judith Christy remained as the last Sister of Charity in this ministry. It was forced to close in September 1999, because of drug abuse and violence.

A long procession of Mary Aikenhead's Australian daughters had walked along the path she valued so much – the care of the orphans. It was headed by women of various character traits and capabilities, but with a common goal – to work for the greater glory of God. The Rectresses who followed Mother Joseph O'Farrell were, Gertrude Davis, Phillipa Quinlan, Ambrose Bulger, Raphael Rigney, Inigo McBreen, Clotilde Tassell, Gabriel Heaney, Annette Cleal, Catherine Ellis, Eulalia Murphy, Leonard O'Neill, Marius Lucas and Phyllis Murphy. They were companioned and supported by a large group whose names 'will be written in heaven', but three who deserve a mention on earth are Sr. Felicitas, Sr. Callistus and Sr. St. James.

ST. BRIGID'S, NEW NORFOLK

To have a convent school at New Norfolk had long been the desire of priests and people of the parish. So when Mother Canice Bruton came to Tasmania in 1925, in her role of newly elected Superior General of the Sisters of Charity, Fr. James Murphy PP issued an invitation for her to visit the Derwent Valley. The invitation was accepted and, with Mother Phillipa Quinlan as companion, she arrived for discussion. The result was a promise to send a community of sisters to form a foundation at the beginning of 1926, and so 1925 became a very busy year. Fr. Murphy purchased the Shooobridge property, "Corumbene" in Montague Street for the convent, and set about having plans drawn up for the building of a school on the land. Archbishop Delaney laid the foundation stone on 4 October and returned to New Norfolk to bless and open the completed building and the convent on 27 December 1925. At Fr. Murphy's request the buildings were named in honour of the Irish saint, Brigid. In a somewhat ironic twist of fate, the first death connected with the new school was that of twelve year old Brigid Reece.



St. Brigid's Convent, New Norfolk – 1926



Archbishop Delaney blessing the Foundation Stone of St. Brigid's School, 1925

On Boxing Day 1926 Mother Phillipa took four junior sisters, Ethelburg Saunders, Vincent McHugh, de Chantal Costello and Elizabeth Reardon to New Norfolk. They scrubbed and polished floors, cleaned windows and made preparations for the commencement of the new school on 6 January 1926. After the enrolment of the first day pupils, they taught them until 15 January, when they returned to their Hobart classes, and the new community arrived. Sr. Xavieria Sullivan was the first rectress and the other members of the pioneer group were, Srs. Ambrose Bulger, Carmel Considine, Campion Dove and Ethelburg Saunders.

The people of New Norfolk gave the sisters a very warm welcome and did all they could to assist them. Among their many benefactors were Mr. Alex Smith, who made himself their unofficial chauffeur, and the Lee, Laskey, Broomhead and Hay families. The ladies of the parish commenced the Annual Gift Day, which continued for many years, leaving a well-stocked pantry for the sisters. A Parents and Friends Association, later changed to St. Brigid's Auxiliary, was formed in the early days and rendered invaluable support.

Besides teaching the classes, the sisters engaged in mission work after school hours and during week- ends. Every other Sunday two sisters visited the Mental Hospital and they were often at the Cottage Hospital. Catholic children from the Bushy Park state school were instructed every Friday afternoon and also on one Sunday of every month. Several students not attending St. Brigid's were pleased to take the opportunity for music lessons offered in the after-school hours. The Children of Mary Society was introduced and we read that in 1931 Clare Lee was president, Olga Fleury treasurer, Sheila Young secretary, Nancy Broomhead and Rose Manning councillors, and that seven aspirants had been consecrated and received.

In 1943 there was an 'enlightening and stimulating programme' for St. Patrick's Day and the children sang the Latin Mass for Fr. Adlum's Silver Jubilee on 5 May. The following day Archbishop Tweedy paid his first official visit and granted a holiday which took the form of a picnic at the Salmon Ponds. Furnishings for the new classrooms, blessed by Fr. Hanahoe on 3 July 1943, were supplied by the ladies of the Auxiliary. The school choir also gave several items at the Oddfellows Hall when Fr. Adlum was feted by the citizens of New Norfolk.



1949 Last Sisters of Charity community at New Norfolk: Srs. Marie Bourke, Cecily Mulquiney, Monica Green, Ethelburg Saunders, Kieran Mulcahy

In 1947 Mother Edmund Daniel appears to have had a communication with Archbishop Tweedy about extensions to St. Brigid's and/or the possibility of withdrawing the sisters, because he replied: "It could not possibly be considered at the time. Building costs are so high and materials in such short supply, that additions are out of the question. As for the Sisters of Charity leaving New Norfolk, I should be long sorry to see the day". Mother Alphonsus O'Doherty was the new Superior General in 1949 and Archbishop Tweedy writes again: "I wish to inform you, that much against my wishes, I was obliged to cause the announcement to the people of New Norfolk, that your community was withdrawing from the parish at the end of the year. Your community will be replaced by the Presentation Sisters of Tasmania, who, despite their shortage of staff, have agreed to relieve me of a very difficult situation". In the Archives there is a gracious letter from the Superior of the Presentation Sisters, thanking Mother Alphonsus for leaving so many of the furnishings in the convent.

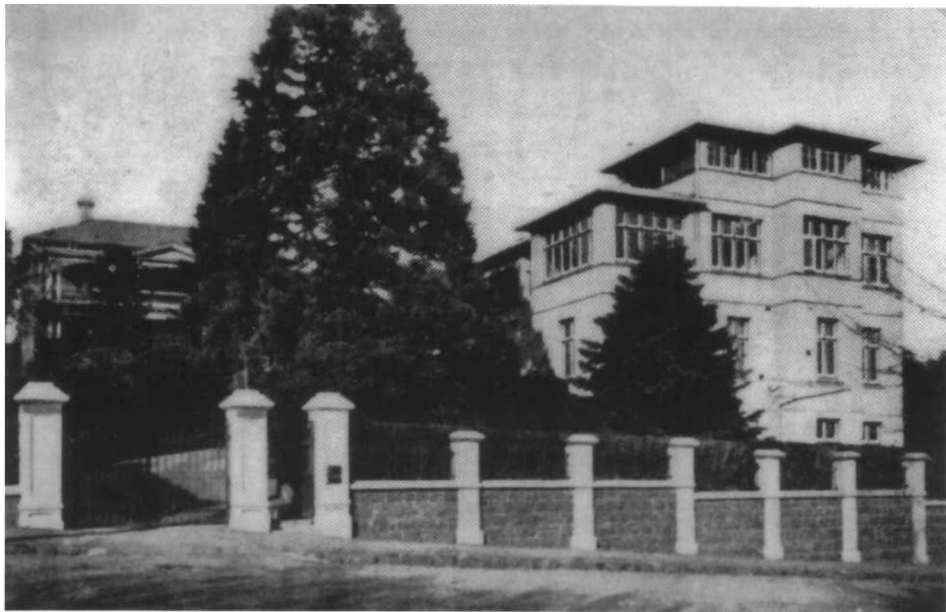


1988 Srs. Helena Parker, Marie Bourke and Rene Duffy revisit St. Brigid's New Norfolk

ST. VINCENT'S HOSPITAL, LAUNCESTON

Dr. John Ramsay, a distinguished doctor, and a member of the well-known Ramsay family of "Clydebank" in Essendon, Victoria, had built St. Margaret's Private Hospital in Launceston in 1912. It is interesting to note that, just before the Sisters of Charity acquired St. Margaret's in 1944, the Melbourne Archdiocese purchased "Clydebank".

How did the Sisters of Charity get the opportunity to add Health Care to Education in Tasmania? The answer lies in the generous bequest from Mr. William Coogan who wished his gift to be used for the setting up of a hospital similar to St. Vincent's in Melbourne. Correspondence between Archbishop Simonds and Mother Edmund Daniel confirms that a proposal for a Catholic hospital had been put to, and accepted by, the people of Northern Tasmania. The archbishop notified the Sisters of Charity of the impending sale of St. Margaret's, and encouraged them to purchase it because of the inability to build during the war years. Archbishop Simonds' advice was taken, and his successor, Archbishop Tweedy, blessed the hospital under the new name- St. Vincent's- on 6 August 1944.



St. Vincent's Hospital, Launceston

In July, Mother Edmund had arrived at Western Junction aerodrome with Mother Chrysostom Lalor and the sisters who were to form the first community in Launceston. They were met by the Sullivan family and others and taken to the Presentation Convent, where they were hospitably accommodated, until they were able to move to their own convent on 1 August 1944. Soon afterwards there was the Thomas bequest of a large sum of money for the commencement of the hospital.

When the hospital was in working order, an application was lodged for the registration of St. Vincent's as a Training School for General Nursing. Registration was granted on condition that the training period would be four years during the war. On 28 September Mother Chrysostom wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation asking for sales tax exemption, and informed him that patients were charged according to their means; St. Vincent's had thirty six beds; there was no class distinction in the availability of beds, and that twelve beds were for free patients. The appeal seemed to fall on deaf ears. The Commission wanted the hospital to be controlled by a Board.

The idea of a hospital for the poor was proving irrelevant because the Launceston General Hospital had sufficient beds for patients in that category, and was able to provide all the advantages of up-to-date nursing methods. For some years there seemed to be difficulties with regard to the actual benefits from the Coogan bequest, and the sisters were acutely aware of their obligation to repay the loan they had received from Archbishop Tweedy. In spite of the set-backs, Mother Chrysostom laboured on and was greatly missed when she left St. Vincent's in January 1951.

Sr. Ignatius Jenkins followed as Mother Rectress and her flair for fund raising soon resulted in a Men's Auxiliary, and other helpful citizens working for the first Fete in 1952, and for the first Art Union in 1957. During her time the distinctive nurses' uniform was adopted. Another major goal was to build a laundry which would service the hospital and also be a source of income. For this a loan was negotiated by a group of wonderful friends, including Miss Elvie Quigley OBE, Mr. J. E. Heritage, Dean Upton and the Sullivan family.

The nurses had been transferred to a new home in 1947 and in the Convent annals, mention is made of the provision of such luxuries as a refrigerator and separate wardrobes. Their spirituality was not being neglected either. They were encouraged to attend Mass, and to join in the recitation of the

Rosary. It was noted that the priest who gave the Sisters' annual retreat was asked to remain and give a lecture to the nurses. The first trainee to complete her training was Betty Boutchard, who gained first place in the State final exam, and was the only candidate to pass with Distinction. Her success was said to be "a credit to her own ability and conscientious work, and also a credit to the Sisters of Charity who are recognised throughout Australia for the excellence of the training they give to their nurses". The training of nurses, undertaken at the inception of St. Vincent's, continued very successfully until 1978 when Nursing Education was transferred to the University.

From 1958 to 1963 Sr. Bernice Elphick presided as Mother Rectress. Her innate warmth and compassion exuded, inviting friendship and offering hospitality, and her dedication was evident to all. She faced some complex building problems, but succeeded in completing extensions and renovations, providing a new nurses' home, and she began preparations for the installation of an electric lift.

Sr. Zita Cloonan followed Sr. Bernice and during her time the appellation, Mother Rectress, was changed to Sister Administrator. Sr. Zita, a prayerful and compassionate person, was also recognised as a clever, intelligent nurse and an astute diagnostician. She loved her nurses, and was highly regarded by the



*Some of the Mother Rectress/Sister Administrators of St. Vincnet's
L to R: Srs. Bernice Elfick, Zita Cloonan, Kathleen Higgs, Mary Frankhouser, Maureen Walters*

doctors. In response to repeated requests for extension of the care provided by St. Vincent's Hospital, Sr. Zita built the East Wing – a low maintenance structure-which included additional operating theatres, two floors for patients, two more lifts and fire staircases, and the first chapel for the hospital. Sr. Zita completed her term as Sister Administrator in December 1969 and was succeeded by Sr. Alphonsus O'Doherty.

This stately and dignified Sister of Charity had been a former Superior General, and brought a wealth of nursing experience and administration to St. Vincent's. Her dynamic personality and vision soon became evident as she introduced progressive measures. Besides the completion of the new building, there was the Block System, pay phones and a time clock. She planned a new laundry on the land adjacent to 16 Canning Street, located the convent in the former home of Dr. Pryde, moved the School of Nursing to the top floor of the X Ray building, leased "Nelumie", and paid off the building debt within the space of three years.

In 1974 Sr. Kathleen Higgs returned to St. Vincent's, this time as Sister Administrator. In the interim she had acquired a graduate certificate in Intensive Care, a wider experience in medical and surgical nursing, spent three years in nursing administration, and given six months' missionary service in Vietnam during the war. She is remembered for her generosity, dedication and friendliness. Her return to St. Vincent's was once described as a "whirlwind approaching"! Sr. Kathleen completed and opened the new laundry, phased out the three years' nursing training due to financial restraints, and commenced a two years' course for Trainee Auxiliary Nurses. In this she was assisted by Sister Gwen Molloy, the Tutor Sister, later known as the Nurse Educator, who gave twenty five years of devoted service to St. Vincent's.

An Advisory Board was formed in 1974 and the first meeting was held on 22 March. Mr. J. K. Sullivan was the chairman, and the committee members were, A. Smart, P. J. Sullivan and P. J. Parsons. In November, Mr. A Smart was elected deputy chairman, and Mr. J. Butler joined the Board. When Mr. J. K. Sullivan died, Mr. Kevin Sullivan was invited to take a place on the Board.

Sr. Kathleen appealed to the Rotary Club for assistance and was given a Renault station wagon to commence the Home Nursing service. With the addition of Sr. Felix Thorburn to the planning team, Sr. Kathleen was encouraged to undertake further building. This necessitated the demolition of the building being used as the convent, so 16 Canning Street was renovated and the Sisters of Charity moved into what was to be their last home in Launceston. The beautiful chapel near the entrance and administration on the ground floor of the hospital remains as a memorial to Sr. Kathleen Higgs who died on 24 November 2002.



Srs. Honorata Scanlon, Casimir Baptist and Felix Thorburn at St. Felix's reception of the Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1983



16 Canning Street. The last convent of the Sisters of Charity in Launceston

When Sr. Mary Frankhauser became Sister Administrator in 1982 there was not much room left for building extensions, but she did find space for the Function Room, Bulk Store, an addition to the convent, and extra parking spaces. The communication system was enhanced by the installation of a new PABX which meant that there were phones for each bed table. The electronic era had arrived so computers were introduced into the re-designed administration office, and Miss Julie Gofton became the first Record Librarian.

1988 saw the final graduation for Auxiliary Nursing Training. 170 students had completed the course since its inception. A further progression in 1989 was the blessing of the Department of Nuclear Medicine with Dr. Andrew Snarske as Director, assisted by his wife, Dr. Joanne Snarske.

Sr. Maureen Walters was appointed as Sister Administrator in February 1990. As well as a wealth of experience in general and theatre nursing, she had been Director of Nursing and Administrator at St. Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, and Deputy Director of Nursing at the New South Wales Prison Medical Service. Sr. Maureen is a Fellow of the Royal College of Nursing, Australia, and of the College of Nursing, New South Wales. She has also served in the role of Health Care Governance in the Melbourne region of Sisters of Charity Health Service, and as a Director on the National Board, and the Melbourne Regional Board of SCHS.

Sr. Maureen's health care qualifications were supplemented by strong leadership qualities, prayerfulness, and genuine concern for others. She assisted in the transition of St. Vincent's Advisory Board to a Board of Directors after Incorporation, and convened the Mission and Values committee, which resulted in Sr. Marina Ward being appointed the first full-time Pastoral Care Co-ordinator. The medical library was set up with a qualified librarian, and the Micropay system was introduced. Mrs. Lee-Ann Irwin was appointed as the first full-time Director of Nursing and was followed by Ms Kaye Gillespie in 1996. When Sr. Maureen Walters left St. Vincent's, Launceston, in 1997 the continuing role of Sisters of Charity Rectress/Sister Administrator ended and Mr. William Marshall became the first lay Regional Executive Director.

The leadership of eight Sisters of Charity over forty eight years at St. Vincent's was very successful, professional, and ministered in the true spirit of the

Charism of their Order, but they would all have no hesitation in declaring the importance of the support roles that claimed their total dependence. Their companioning Sisters of Charity, the doctors, nurses, staff members of various departments, volunteers, Board members and the many friends of the hospital, have been an integral part in the continuing presence of St. Vincent's as a health provider in Northern Tasmania.

Following Calvary Health Care's acquisition of St. Luke's Private Hospital in May 2004 discussions were held, between the Congregational Leaders of the Little Company of Mary and the Sisters of Charity, about how both Congregations and their Health Services might work together to further the healing mission of Jesus, particularly in the Launceston community. Over the next few months the Boards considered all the options and the outcome was that Calvary Health Care bought St. Vincent's. The transfer became effective with the handover and commissioning ritual shared by the Little Company of Mary and the Sisters of Charity on 14th September 2005.

Sr. Honorata is remembered in Launceston both for her nursing service in the early years of the hospital, and for the later years as Pastoral Care Sister. She had returned to Tasmania in 1978 and when she retired to Tarooma in 2002 she was given a wonderful farewell and a generous presentation by the Administration and staff of St. Vincent's Hospital. She was assured that her presence in the Convent and the Hospital would be greatly missed because of her renowned hospitality, her kindness, thoughtfulness and smiling face.

Sr. Felix Thorburn arrived at St. Vincent's, Launceston, after 'a brilliant career' in theatre administration at St. Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne. She had been sent overseas frequently to observe the latest trends in other hospitals, and her travels resulted in many "firsts" for the St. Vincent's team. A recovery unit for surgical patients was set up, and an intensive care unit with a course for the training of the staff involved in it. There was also a training course for theatre nurses which became recognised for its excellent results, and was honoured by the Royal Australian College of Nursing presentation of an annual "Sr. Felix Award" for theatre nursing. Sr. Felix, and Sr. Dorothy Bayliss, who had been working for a short time with refugee families from Africa, Burma (Myanmar) and other troubled countries, were the last Sisters of Charity to reside in Launceston. They were farewelled at the Sunday Parish Mass and at a morning tea in the hall on Sunday, 11 February 2007.



*Fr. Terry Southerwood farewells the last Sisters of Charity to minister in Launceston
L. Sr. Dorothy Bayliss R. Sr. Felix Thorburn*

ST. ALOYSIUS SCHOOL, KINGSTON BEACH

St. Aloysius School commenced on 1 May 1960 in part of the convent. The first Principal was Sr Carmelita, now Sr. Eileen Thynne, and her staff consisted of Srs. Melania Viney and Rosalia Puckeridge. The parish priest, Fr. Rex Donohoe soon had the school building completed for the classes to move into. A booklet, produced and edited by Olivia Rundle, for the Silver Jubilee of St. Aloysius School in 1985, tells us some interesting facts about the early days. Reminiscences record that the school property was once an orchard owned by Mr. and Mrs. Roberts; accommodation in Kingston Beach and Blackmans Bay consisted mainly of holiday shacks; that forty students were enrolled on the opening day, and that there was an absence of any playground equipment.

Other memories went back to a Monday Tuck Shop where hot dogs were sold for twenty cents, and that when the 1967 bush fires destroyed the garage which housed the Tuck Shop, a caravan was brought in, and Mrs. Barta and Mrs. Toogood came to the rescue. They cooked cocktail sausages and prepared rolls in their homes and sold them from the caravan, with the addition of small cakes made by some of the mothers, but no lollies were sold. It seems that a near crisis occurred because the hand bell which summoned the classes, lost its tongue, but order was restored when one of the girls found the "dinger" in a drain. She was rewarded with a toffee apple!

A trip to Stanton's orchard was recalled, as well as a visit to the Museum to view aboriginal artifacts. The children also attended ABC concerts and partook of a Passover meal during Holy Week. One person remarked that the P and F meetings got off to a slow start but improved with the passing years, and that the children of St. Aloysius School entered the Kingston Drama Festival. The Donnelly family moved to the Kingston area bringing three more boys for the school community, and their mother as a relief teacher for Sr. Myrna.

The 1985 staff is listed as: Sr. Edith King (Principal), Mrs. Burke, Mrs. Wolfe, Mrs. Westwood, Mrs. Spaulding, Mrs. Jurasovic, Ms Henry, Ms Lowrie, Mr. Cronley, Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Simms, Mr. Heffernan, Mrs. Donnelly and Mrs. Monaghan.



St. Aloysius Convent, Blackmans Bay, 1960



Early students at St. Aloysius School

Sisters of Charity Principles at St. Aloysius between 1960 and 2000 were: Srs. Eileen Thynne, Virginia Wilkinson, Deirdre Hickey, Myrna Lynch, Margaret O'Brien, Edith King, Colleen Holohan, Mathilde Harnischfeger, Linda Ferrington, Cate O'Brien. Sisters who assisted on the staff were: Srs. Melania Viney Rosalia Puckeridge, Jean Montgomery, Agnes Joseph Mulquiney, Ellen O'Carrigan, Patricia O'Loughlin, Maureen Heffernan, Genevieve Walsh, Mary Goss, Kerry Barrass, Tarcisius Donovan, Marita Sweeney.

Today St. Aloysius is a thriving primary school with an enrolment of four hundred and fifty, a full-time staff of twenty two and fifteen part-time assistants under the principleship of Mrs. Elaine Askey-Doran. Expanding



Early students at St. Aloysius School

growth in Kingborough has convinced the Catholic Education Directors of the advisability of providing the benefit of secondary classes for the area, and they have welcomed plans by St. Aloysius College to develop a campus for Grades 7 to 10 at Huntingfield.

OUTREACH - DEVONPORT

The Sisters of Charity Outreach in Devonport, North Western Tasmania, commenced operation on 1 February 2000. Colleen Jackson rsc was missioned to establish the service as a direct response to the expressed needs of the people for specialist grief and trauma counseling services. Her ministry emerged from the joint discernment and co-operation of Sr. Barbara Duggan ssj and Sr. Annette Cunliffe rsc, at that time Leaders of their respective Congregations, because they were convinced of the potential danger of very

serious implications for mental, general and public health, if experiences of abuse, trauma, and complicated or pathological grief responses were left unresolved.

Underpinning the work of Outreach is the belief that, as people who are hurting seek to adjust to their changed circumstances, they deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Non-judgmental support is offered, and they receive the very best professional care available, so that in time they will most likely commence their own healing process.

During 2000 Outreach operated from the former convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and then moved to 65 Stewart Street in March 2001. This little rent-free cottage was generously made available by the Mersey Leven Catholic Parish, and Outreach remained there until expanded services rendered the premises inadequate, and necessitated the move to another site. This took place on 5 March 2007 when Outreach was able to re-locate to a beautiful turn-of-the-century brick home near the centre of the town.



Sisters of Charity Outreach, Devonport, 65 Stewart Street 2001



Sisters of Charity Outreach, Devonport, 68 Oldaker Street May 2007

Outreach provides three distinct services: Counselling and Therapy, Education and Training and Crisis Response. The grief and trauma counselling, grounded on evidence based best-practice, is provided by highly qualified psychologists, social workers and family therapists, who work from a 'wellness' model, distinct from one that emphasises mental illness. They take a systems approach which often includes working with whole family groups.

Grief counseling is provided for those who have suffered a major loss. This could be the result of a bereavement, a severe injury, or property loss by fire. In most cases this grief is complicated, due to the fact that the particular bereavement may have occurred alongside a number of other challenging health problems, loss or trauma.

Trauma counseling is provided for those who have experienced an overwhelming event. Under this heading comes threat of injury or death to the person or to a close relative or associate, personal experience of violence, such as early childhood abuse, neglect, assault, rape and domestic violence. Also included are car and workplace accidents, suicide, murder, severe

bullying, harassment and torture. Very complex issues emerging from these experiences are depression, anxiety, psychosis, drug and alcohol abuse, severe suicidality, unexplained illness, relationship breakdown, further violence and even criminal activity. Suicide prevention is a major focus of the work of Outreach because of the sadly recorded number of cases in North West Tasmania.

By 2007 Outreach was providing one thousand five hundred counselling services annually to approximately three hundred clients - children, adolescents and adults - and the increasing demand continued to outstrip the availability of service, so an additional psychologist was appointed to the staff, who work collaboratively with medical practitioners, psychiatrists and other mental health providers. Referrals come from medical practitioners, public mental health facilities, welfare organisations, hospitals, psychologists, social workers, schools, police, the Department of Veteran Affairs, the Tasmanian Youth Justice Department, the Motor Accident Insurance Board, workplaces, clergy, church communities and frequently by word of mouth. Outreach's best "promoters" are satisfied customers!

Outreach is widely recognised as a high quality provider of professional and community education in grief and trauma management, because of 'up-to-date and best practice findings'. The Education and Training program is viewed as an important means of improving the knowledge, of both the professional and general communities, about current best practice in grief and trauma support, counselling and therapy

Over the seven years to 2007, Outreach has presented over two hundred Education and Training programs to more than seven thousand people. These programs fall broadly into two categories, community education and professional development, and have been presented in Tasmania, other Australian States and internationally by Colleen Jackson rsc and staff.

The nature of the third specialist service, Crisis Response, has become an area of serious professional and managerial debate. Outreach provides training and consultancy to organisations who are in the actual throes of responding to a critical incident, or who wish to undertake pre-event training and preparation. Initially this service focused on schools, but other organisations are now increasingly appreciating the value of the Salutogenic (Wellness) model that has been developed at Outreach, and are seeking to incorporate it into their organisation's Critical Incident Management planning.



Sr. Colleen Jackson received the inaugural Tasmanian Life Award, 2005

In addition to her work at Outreach, Colleen Jackson rsc has been a member of staff at St. Brendan Shaw College, on a part-time basis. Her ministry there has been one of support to staff and the wider community, especially at some very key moments in the life of the College, when tragedies have claimed the lives of staff, students and parents.

From its inception Outreach has been funded by, and under the direct care of, the Sisters of Charity.

The uniqueness of Outreach is encapsulated in its policy of ensuring that no person is denied care because of financial circumstances. Accordingly, fees for counselling services are determined by each person's income and their capacity to contribute what is affordable.

The financial support of the Sisters of Charity, and particularly the generous grants from the Sisters of Charity Foundation, 2001-2008, have bridged the significant financial gap between the income which Outreach can generate,

and its operation costs. From 2000-2006, St. Vincent's Private Hospital, Launceston provided valuable business and administrative support, but, after the sale of St. Vincent's to Calvary Health Care in 2005, governance of Outreach was transferred to Sisters of Charity Community Care Ltd.

No Government funding has been received for Outreach, but a concerted effort is being made to establish a community, or government funding source, that will ensure the ongoing operation of the service beyond 2008.

In May 2007 Outreach staff included: Colleen Jackson rsc (Director, Psychologist and Educator), Linda Mackay (Assistant Manager, Family Therapist and Educator), Kathy Nesham (Secretary), Annie Cook and Andrew McClymont (Psychologists) and Christine Adams (Social Worker).



Sisters of Charity Outreach Staff April 2007

L to R: Andrew McClymont, Kathy Nesham, Linda Mackay, Colleen Jackson rsc, Annie Cook

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