

## THE FOUNDATION OF HOLY SPIRIT PROVINCE (11<sup>TH</sup> July 1922)

In the early years of ministerial activity in Australia, Passionists conducted a great number of parish missions. Some of these were only one day, others two days or longer and included visits to all sorts of people in remote areas. They were seen as occasions to confirm the strong in faith, renew the lukewarm, encourage back, those who had ceased to attend church and preach a message of personal conversion and assurance of God's mercy. Travel was frequently lengthy, fatiguing and uncomfortable as missionaries visited many areas and small towns.

Even in the first year of arrival (1887-1888) Passionists gave twenty-seven missions and fifteen retreats across New South Wales and as far north as Rockhampton. The following year they gave thirty-six missions and twenty-one retreats in Eastern New South Wales and New Zealand. In 1901 Hilary Mara gave the Adelaide clergy retreat, journeyed twice to Bathurst-Orange, took a ship to Auckland, New Zealand and before the end of the year gave a number of missions in Brisbane. The small band of Passionists gave 500 missions in the fifteen years from their arrival until 1902.



Mission activity decreased after the novitiate and student house were closed in 1896 because of the lack of qualified formation personnel. Nevertheless, one hundred and four missions and forty retreats were given in 1907. Missions decreased further with the 1913-14 drought and the Great War, when fewer missionaries were available from the home Province. One significant aspect of the missionary endeavours, is that no permission was given for a single mission or retreat to be given in Melbourne between 1912 and 1946.

The English Provincial wrote to the Melbourne Archbishop Daniel Mannix in 1921 requesting a foundation. Mannix replied that Melbourne's needs were adequately met by existing religious orders. Mannix was approached three more times between then and 1946 without success. During the same time he admitted nine male religious orders to the Archdiocese, including communities of parish missionaries such as the Oblates (1925) Franciscans (1930), Redemptorists (1935) and MSC's (1939).

Applications were made by Melbourne priests for missions and retreats, but Archdiocesan authorities refused to grant faculties to Passionists. When travelling between Sydney and Adelaide, Passionists had no retreat at which to rest. If they accepted hospitality, they did not approval to offer any ministry in return, and this was the cause of embarrassment to them. Background history suggests that when the novitiate was transferred from Broadway, England to

Enniskillen in Ireland in 1909, it was done with enormous difficulty. Daniel Mannix defended the rights of the Irish Bishops against the establishment of the novitiate - and lost. Some say that on that occasion the Passionists 'won the battle with Mannix, but lost the war'.

In 1921, the Provincial visitor from England looked to the future when parochial work could be done by diocesan clergy, and exhorted the Australian Passionists to maintain the missionary spirit of the founder. Later that year, the General, Fr Silvio Di Vezza, visited Australia to explain that before receiving canonical status as a Province, the Holy See had demanded full observance of the Rule by the majority of the members. 'Full observance' meant choral chanting of the Divine Office which called for a change from the majority being involved in parish work. At the time of the General's visit in spring 1921, Australia was a pro-Province which was canonically unusual and never seen before in the Congregation. The pro-Provincial attended Chapters in England.

On 22nd February 1922 the General Council began considering the foundation a Province in Australia and presented a request to the Sacred Congregation for Religious which was responsible for the granting of such permission. On 11th July 1922, the Sacred Congregation for Religious granted the erection of a new Province and approved faculties to the General and his Council to appoint a new leadership for the Province.

On 30th October 1922 the General with his Council appointed Fr. Bertrand Mangan as Provincial. Frs Athanasius Ryan and Bede O'Brien were appointed Consultors and James Lappin was appointed novice master. The superiors of the three communities were also appointed: Casimir Maguire in Marrickville, Reginald Lummer in Goulburn; and Bernard Mangan in Glen Osmond. The numerical strength of the Province was 26 religious (20 priests 4 students and 2 novices), There were eight (6 priests and 2 students) in St Brigid's Marrickville, ten 8 priests and 2 novices) in Presentation Goulburn and eight (6 priests and 2 students) in Glen Osmond.

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 1922 the General wrote to the Provincial of St Joseph Province to inform him that the General Council has decided to put into effect the Rescript of Erection "separating the communities in Australia from their mother Province". With this final act the erection was fulfilled. The erection of the Province was a process, which started in July and finished in December, with the final separation of the communities from St Joseph's Province.

When the new Province came into existence? Was it at the beginning of the process, with the Rescript of the Holy See or at the end of it (16<sup>th</sup> December 1922)? To solve that issue we have to look at the Decree of Appointment of the new Provincial Council (see Bollettino della Congregazione, Dicembre 1922, pp. 353 – 356). In that bulletin Fr. Silvio Di Vezza states clearly: "Cum ex Rescripto S.C. de Religiosis, diei 11 Julii vertentis anni, Provincia Australiana pleno jure erecta sit...". (i.e. By the rescript of Sacred Congregation of the Religious, on 11th July of this current year, the Australian Province was fully erected by law). Therefore, the official date of erection is: 11 July 1921.

Fr Silvio proposed the title 'Holy Ghost', the name given to the land by

Portuguese seafarers 'Terra Austral do Spirito Santo'. The new Province was charged with fuller observance of the Rule and this called for the Province to relinquish the charge of the parishes attached to St Paul's retreat in Glen Osmond. St Paul's was converted into a monastic community.

St Brigid's Marrickville would have had the same designation except for a huge debt on both parish and monastery that the Province felt obliged to repay. The Goulburn community had been erected without a parish. The directive to relinquish parishes was passed on to the diocesan bishop who requested two years for this to fully occur because it left Adelaide with insufficient priests for its parishes. It also left the community without an adequate source of income. The last parish, Parkside, was surrendered to the diocese in 1925 and interestingly it was joined with Glen Osmond parish in 2002

The establishment of the Province was an endorsement of the policy to attract native vocations, despite the unfortunate period when the novitiate and student house had been closed. The surrender of parishes to the Irish clergy in Adelaide was a reversal of this dream and several priests left the Congregation as result of this policy. Nevertheless, Passionist ministry continued and with



concentration being on the home front, building programmes soon commenced. In 1927 there was a community of ten in Glen Osmond, seven of whom were priests. Plans were announced that year for a new chapel which could seat three hundred people and a new adjoining monastery, at an estimated cost of 20,000 pounds.

Despite the original monastery being unsafe for habitation, the community chose to complete the church first. Because the church in Kingswood was the official parish church of the district, the new church was known as 'the chapel'. It was officially opened in November 1928. The monastery was opened in September the following year. In 1929 a new religious house was begun at Marrickville and the students were transferred from Marrickville to Glen Osmond. The following year the Passionists took on pastoral care of Kapunda parish 85 kilometres north of Adelaide, for two years.

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