

# Land of Wait and Wonder

Brigida Nailon CSB



# **LAND OF WAIT AND WONDER**

***THE LAND BRINGS UP THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
IN THE KIMBERLEY***

**A History of Catholic Presence in the  
Kimberley West Australia, 1884-1990**

**Brigida Nailon CSB**

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The captions placed at the beginning of each chapter tell a story about farming, and a dynamism generated by 'man', 'seed', and 'land'.

The seed growing spontaneously symbolises the generative power of the Divine Initiative 'in 'God's Place', that is, the place chosen, in which to cast the seed.

Beverly Treacy, a pastoral assistant at Derby, 1984, put the gospel parable (Mk 4:26-29), into language more compatible with the Kriol being used in catechesis.

*'God's place is like a seed growing from the ground  
When a man throws it on the ground  
Night and day while he is sleeping  
When he wakes up,  
The seed is coming up and growing  
He doesn't know how this happens,  
The land brings the plant up,  
The plant comes up  
Makes fruit until it is ready  
When it is ready the man starts to reap"*

To Bishop J.Jobst  
on the occasion  
of the Silver Jubilee of his Episcopal Consecration.

19 March 1984

*He carried in his heart the two great hopes for humanity:  
Human brotherhood and the image of Christ..*

Manning Clark

## FOREWORD

The Catholic Church came to the Kimberley because of its concern for the evangelization and education of Aborigines, and to minister to Catholic settlers. In *land of Wait and Wonder*, there is a chronological arrangement of information around key figures working within the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church. The social pattern of this Church is cosmopolitan, its nature is Catholic, but with an Aboriginal and Asian majority which was always the subject of debate as to how it should be subjugated, exploited, controlled, protected, bred out, or developed, there was often conflict. Those who served the Church here numbered among them Scottish, Aboriginal, Irish, French, Australian, Spanish, Asian, German, Italian and others.

As part of their mission, the missionaries brought stability based on love of God, love of people, and the ability to endure and persevere in the face of poverty and hardship, while waiting for Divine Initiative to bring their efforts to fruition. There was always a shortage of 'men, women and money', and not only the cemeteries bear witness to those who found the 'pearl of great price', but the people of the land, at the heart of the Church in the Kimberley, remember them.

This history will attempt to describe the quality of life of some of the lives which have been linked by the movement of the Spirit through this beautiful land.

Mission structures kept adapting to changing policies, and Missionaries became the buffer between Government officials, Aborigines, and settlers. Documentation of events will help those caught in changing social patterns to know the spirit of earlier times, and perhaps understand the need for Aboriginal belief systems within the Church

context, as well as the necessity for the exercise of pastoral care by Aborigines as they determine their own future.

J.Jobst

Bishop of Broome

***Editors Note:*** *Most of this history was written in the early 1980's. It was not published. There was a Diocesan publication of Kimberley history in the 1990's with a reprint of this. The publication used Brigida's research as a major reference. It publication acknowledges Sr Brigida's work in its introduction and expresses the hope that eventually Brigida's (more extensive) work would be published. Probably the original manuscript is with the Diocese of Broome. The text at hand here is based on a copy that is in very fine print with no formatting at all. In its reproduction it was scanned to a pdf format then changed to a Word document for editing. It was then changed back to the present pdf. In this process Word had trouble recognizing the text exactly and there were continuing mistakes. For example the word "The" had special problems. If the reader comes across the occasional spelling mistake, this was not in the original text! It is hoped in time a hard copy of this publication will be available online through Amazon.*

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Brigida Nailon CSB.

# **Part I**

## **1929-1900**

### **SETTLEMENT OF THE KIMBERLEY**

The predicament of the Settlers and the Aborigines.

The nature of the Catholic Church, and its implanting in Australia and the Kimberley. Fr.Duncan Mc Nab, Pioneer Priest, Kimberley, 1884.

Bishop M.Gibney - "The Father of Beagle Bay Mission'. The first Beagle Bay Missionaries 1890.

The cradle of the Church in the Kimberley; Fr.Alphonse Tachon OCSO;

Felix Gnobodnor, Br.Cornelius Daly OCSO;

Newly Baptised Christians at Beagle Bay, 1896; Disaster Bay; Fr.Nicholas Emo OCSO, to Broome,1895;

West Australian Government given administration of Aboriginal Affairs, 1897; Bishop W.B.Kelly of Geraldton, appointed 1898.

## INTRODUCTION

In Australia , for thousands of years in almost complete isolation, small communities of Aborigines spread across the continent, developing unique patterns of social organization .Sylvia Hallam has explored the concept of how Australia moulded " the first Australians."<sup>1</sup>

In languages and physique they were unlike any of the societies of the main Old World land mass. A widely spread group of hunting people, supplementing their diet with roots, nuts, and the seeds of grasses and other plants, they came together to share ritual, trade, and enjoyment. <sup>2</sup> The size of their tribal areas varied according to resources, but right of possession was registered with individuals by name, by knowledge of a tradition, or by some tangible marker, such as a stone or wooden tjuringa kept near the clan sacred sites. <sup>3</sup>

Aborigines adjusted their food gathering to seasonal changes, to incoming or outgoing tides. Their semi-nomadic lifestyle made material possessions a burden. They did however, possess 'The Dreamtime ', a coherent and sophisticated set of concepts to explain and interpret their environment. This gave meaning to places by names, and by association with special stories. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia J.Hallam 'The First Western Australians' in C.T.Stannage (Ed.) *A New History of Western Australia* (Nedlands, 1981), p.35.

<sup>2</sup> Field work 1934/35 in Kimberley district. Phyllis M.Kaberry, *Aboriginal Woman, Sacred and Profane* (London, 1939).

<sup>3</sup> N.B.Tindale *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia* (Canberra, 1974), p.24.

<sup>4</sup> E.Vaszolyi, 'The Kimberley, A Linguistic View', in E.Brumby & E.Vaszolyi, (eds) *Language Problems and Aboriginal Education* (Mt. Lawley, 1977), p.19.

G.Blainey described Aborigines as 'an inventive, working, fighting, travelling people, who stamped the land with their presence'. According to him, they enjoyed a higher standard of living than the majority of Europeans in 1800. Infanticide, abortion, may have been adopted as a means of checking population growth. Warfare would have had

the same effect.<sup>5</sup>

N.G.Butlin of Australian National University, an expert in economic history, expressed his view that Aborigines test our whole society, "*A society functions as an integrated whole or disintegrates.*"<sup>6</sup> His approach calls for re-evaluation of theories concerning pre-contact history. Basing his arguments on economic speculation about pre contact population, N.Butlin calculated the effects of disease and resource loss consequent upon white settlement. His ideas presented the antithesis to the 'success story' usually presented of white settlement.<sup>7</sup> He estimated that nine tenths of the population of 250,000 in the south east corner of Australia at the time of contact, had disappeared within two generations.

Early explorers described the evidence of small pox, measles, venereal disease, whooping cough and influenza prevalent in Aboriginal communities. H.C.Coombs points out that few, if any early European observers had an opportunity to see 'Aboriginal Society' in pristine operation, they, and subsequent whites seem likely to have underestimated the degree to which Aboriginal communities were sedentary and had developed hunter-gatherer

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<sup>5</sup> GBlainey, *Triumph of the Nomads: A History of Ancient Australia* (Melbourne, 1975), p.vi.

<sup>6</sup> N.G.Butlin, Emeritus Professor of Economic History at Australian National University, *771e Age*, 20 March 1990, p.13.

<sup>7</sup> An underlying assumption of the Whig view of history is that Australian history is essentially a story of progress - economic, social, and political. W.K.Hancock, *Australia*, (Brisbane, 1961).

forms of social organization.

He further suggests, the killing of blacks by Europeans can best be seen as a component in the competition of white and blacks for Aboriginal resources <sup>8</sup> And that loss of those resources was probably more destructive than the direct killing. <sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> D.E.Barwick, and H.Reynolds also point to inroads of acute infections as responsible for destroying much of the Aboriginal population in Eastern Australia. Judy Campbell presents evidence of three major outbreaks of smallpox among Aboriginal communities which spread without further contact after the initial infection. <sup>11</sup>

The position in Western Australia was different, largely because European penetration of those areas came later. Although the West Australian coast was not close to shipping routes, Aboriginal contact with European and Asian shipping was inevitable.

When the Dutch ship, the 'Batavia', went aground near the present site of Geraldton in 1629, more than two hundred passengers struggled ashore. <sup>12</sup> There are recordings of two landings made by the English pirate, William Dampier. His first visit was to the west coast to repair his ship 'Cygnet' in 1688. During his second visit in 1699 he tried to get the Aborigines to carry water to his boat. <sup>13</sup> His unsympathetic description prejudiced English opinion for the next

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<sup>8</sup> Foreword, pp.ix-x, in N.GButlin, *Our Original Aggression Aboriginal Populations of southeastern Australia 1788-1850* (Sydney, 1983), Preface, pp .xi-xii.

<sup>9</sup> D.E.Barwick, 'Changes in the Aboriginal Population of Victoria, 1836-1966' in DJ.Mulvaney and I.Golson (eds) *Aboriginal Man and Environment in Australia* (Canberra, 1971), pp. 303-309.

<sup>10</sup> H.Reynolds, *77ie Other Side of the Frontier* (Townsville, 1981), p.102.

<sup>11</sup> Judy Campbell 'Smallpox in Aboriginal Australia, 1829-31', in *Historical Studies* 20, 81, (Oct.1963), pp.536-559.

<sup>12</sup> Neville Green, 'Aborigines and White Settlers in the Nineteenth Century' in C.T.Stannage (ed.) *A New History of Western Australia* (Nedlands, 1987) p.73.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p.73.

hundred years.

All along the coast, today's place-names record European contacts. Cygnet Bay, Roebuck Bay, and Beagle Bay are among places named after ships. In 1802 ·La Grange was named by a French navigator. <sup>14</sup>

Such naming signified only the gap in communication between the Nadya Nadya Aborigines and the explorers. This gap widened as later European legislation made greater rifts between the dominant and subdominant groups. <sup>15</sup>

For centuries before European contact, small groups of Japanese fishermen were sailing their vessels along the Chinese coast, south to Indonesia and into the Pacific and Indian Oceans in search of food and trade. According to Japanese pearl-ers who worked in the Kimberley in the 1880's, the fact that remote Aboriginal tribes were using words identical with Japanese vocabulary as part of their daily language indicated much earlier contact <sup>16</sup> with the Japanese. In the far north west, from 1669 to 1763, the Maccassans from Sumatra had built earth fortifications to protect them from Aboriginal assaults along the coast <sup>17</sup>

These traders were collecting trepang from the sea floor. Its dried flesh

was a major export to Asian markets with the trade continuing into the 20th century. <sup>18</sup> According to C.C.Macknight, approximately a

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<sup>14</sup> K.McKelson, 'Nadya Nadya Country' in R.M.Berndt and C.H.Berndt (eds.) *Aborigines of the West 77ieir Past and Their Present*, (Nedlands, 1979), p.214.

<sup>15</sup> Paulo Friere put great emphasis on the prerogative of 'naming' for illiterate peoples, "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it." P.Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (Sheed & Ward, 1972), p. 76.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Albertus Bain, *F111/ Fathom Five*, Oku - Bain: Interview, 28 May 1975, Taiji, Japan. (Perth, 1982), p.201.

<sup>17</sup> I.M.Crawford, 'Late Prehistoric changes in Aboriginal Cultures in Kimberleys, West Australia', Ph.D. thesis, (London, 1969), p.90.

<sup>18</sup> C.C.Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege' Maccassan Trepangers in Northern Australia*,

thousand Asians made annual voyages to the trepang beds. On the Kimberley Coast this activity was known to the Maccassans as 'Kayu Jawa'.

This pearling and shelling brought the Aborigines into contact with many different cultures: Japanese, Chinese, Malays and Manilamen. Though the full effect of these contacts on Aboriginal life cannot be historically judged for lack of sufficient records, it is a possibility that Malay kidnapping raids at Cambden Harbour and as far as Roebuck Bay were occurring before the Europeans arrived.<sup>19</sup> In any case, the Aborigines did not welcome visitors.<sup>20</sup>

The contact that was to prove most significant for the future of the Aborigines was to be the permanent arrival of the Europeans. From the first explorers to West Australia prior to the establishment of Perth in 1829<sup>21</sup>.

Aboriginal communities quickly began to disappear as settlers took their water, their land, their freedom, and often their lives. Towards the north west in 1875 one party of settlers killed sixty-three Aborigines as they explored between the De Grey and the Gascoyne.<sup>22</sup>

A further problem for Aborigines was that Crown Land, when it was eventually set aside for Aborigines in the '80's, was often stony and without water, like that at Dalgetty, and hence also without Aborigines. An alternative prison culture began for Aborigines. In 1883 most Gascoyne Aborigines were in the prison on Rottne

(Carlton, 1976), pp.2, 33, 164.

<sup>19</sup> Roebourne Resident Magistrate, 1866.

<sup>20</sup> Sholl to Colonial Secretary, Perth. 16 February 1866, S.S.R. 581, p.126, B.L.

<sup>21</sup> A.P.Elkin, 'Aboriginal-European Relations in Western Australia: An Historical and Personal Record', *Aborigines of the West 77ieir past and 77ieir Present, Ned/ands*, 1979, p.285.

<sup>22</sup> A.O.Neville, 'Relations between Settlers and Aborigines in West Australia' *77ie West Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* 2,19, (1936), p.43.



Island . The rest were employed by settlers or were outlaws, roaming in the hills trying to avoid the police. <sup>23</sup>

The less scrupulous settlers were helped by unpatrolled coastal waters, a plentiful supply of inland Aborigines, and a philosophy which claimed the intellectual superiority of the white man over coloured races. Aborigines suffered most from unsavoury types of employers, gaol escapees, ex-whalers, convict expeires and adventurers. By 1883 all land along the rivers had been taken up by settlers in 1000 acre lots costing 5/- an acre. By these methods the coastal Aborigines of most of West Australia had been quickly dispossessed and their social systems disrupted.

Pearling and the establishment of the great pastoral holdings had the greatest impact on the life of Aborigines. Pearling had been carried on along the West Australian coast by various Asian groups. Aborigines were taken into service on the pearling boats.

Europeans moved into the pearling industry. The Aboriginal method of gathering shell by beach-combing or dry-shelling during the three to four hours each day when the reefs were bare at low tide gave them the opportunity to have access to native food, which prevented beri beri, and freedom to return to their camps. <sup>24</sup> Aboriginal divers persuaded to work on board ship in local waters sometimes found that the vessel had sailed 200 kilometres during the night. They became virtual prisoners. They returned to find their families scattered, their women stolen and carried away. <sup>25</sup>

In one year the six hundred Aborigines employed in the pearl fisheries at Cossack were said to have been brought from places

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<sup>23</sup> McNab to Gibney, 3 November 1883. *ACAP*.

<sup>24</sup> *op.cit.*, Bain, p.16.

<sup>25</sup> Sholl to Col. Sec. Perth, 646, pp. 178-9, B.L.

between Champion Bay and the Kimberley, distance of several thousand kilometres.<sup>26</sup>

Changes were made in the pearling industry after an inquiry into the treatment of Aboriginal divers. In 1871 the Pearl Shell Fisheries Act had become law. Women were prohibited from employment and from boarding vessels. It made little difference as the act continued to be flagrantly broken.<sup>27</sup>

With the introduction of diving gear, indentured Asians began to replace Aborigines in the pearling industry. In 1872 eighty-four Asians were employed on the north-west coast.<sup>28</sup> Within three years the number had increased to 989. When the price of shell continued to fall after 1875, these numbers dropped off, leaving only twenty-four indentured men three years later.<sup>29</sup>

The largest of the West Australian pearlery was the London firm of Streeter & Company.<sup>30</sup> As early as 1875, it had recruited six divers and an interpreter from Yokohama<sup>31</sup>. The indentured system enabled naturalized pearlery to bring Japanese into the country.

Pearlery from Thursday Island and Port Darwin began coming to the West Australian pearling grounds around the mid 1880's. J.V. Clarke had sailed to the Torres Strait pearling grounds in the 'Amy' in 1876 and was to dominate the pearling industry for thirty-nine years. He established floating stations with a mother schooner controlling a fleet

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<sup>26</sup> McNab to Gibney, 3 November 1883, *ACAP*.

<sup>27</sup> *op.cit.*, Bain, p.22.

<sup>28</sup> C.P.D. Vol. 2 Session, 2 November 1905. p.4453/b.

<sup>29</sup> *op.cit.*, Bain, p.29.

<sup>30</sup> *op.cit.*, Bain, p.92.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* p.108.

of luggers.<sup>32</sup>

Captains Erickson and Wood left Port Darwin for Cygnet Bay in King Sound. In 1884 when news was received at Port Darwin of their profitable discoveries, two more luggers were sent to the west with Japanese crewmen.<sup>33</sup>

The revised Law stipulated that indentured labour had to be registered and covered by a written contract, completed before embarkation from Asia. This was to prevent the earlier practice of dumping old and sickly persons on the coast. The most important clause in the Act stated that no 'alien'<sup>34</sup> could own a boat or be issued with a licence for pearl shelling.<sup>35</sup>

Leading pearlers such as Captains Bedell, Mogg, Biddies, Brown, Larcom and Clarke migrated to King Sound and other north western ports, taking schooners, two hundred luggers, and diving plants with them.<sup>36</sup> With the arrival of Thursday Island fleets, the area became a busy seaway after 1866.<sup>37</sup>

There were always risks. At the Eighty Mile Beach 140 men were drowned during the cyclone of 1887. Competition between Europeans and Asians for the pearl shells was keen. Legislation favoured European pearlers who sent a petition to the Queen, asking that the northern portion of the colony be excluded from the application for self-government.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p.71.

<sup>33</sup> The vessels left 5 November 1884, arriving approximately 15 days later. *Northern Territory Times & Gazette*, 25 April and 15 May 1885, Bain, p.92.

<sup>34</sup> Persons without naturalization papers stating that they were Australian citizens.

<sup>35</sup> 'The Imported Labourers' Registry Act, 48 Vic. No. 25, 13 September, 1884, Bain, p.95

<sup>36</sup> K.M.Wood 'A Pioneer Pearler' Reminiscences of John Wood *The Western Australian Historical Society, Journal and Proceedings* 2, 12, (1932), pp.40-46.

<sup>37</sup> *op.cit.*, Bain, p.95.

<sup>38</sup> *Dampier Despatch*, 19 May 1904, Bain, p.73.

At one time, the naturalized aliens (Francisco Charles and Ram Sammy from Jamaica, Josef Manuel and Francis Rodriguez from the Phillipines and John Chi of China), employed fifty-four aliens. When the Surveyor General for the western colony visited the pearling grounds in 1889, he was presented with a petition that only Europeans hold licences.<sup>39</sup>

In 1889, the Thursday Island fleets were working on newly discovered rich reefs and banks eight to ten miles out from the land, and due north from a stretch of country on the Eighty Mile Beach between Red Hill and Cape Latouche.<sup>40</sup>

The far North West was one of the last frontiers for the colonizers. After Alexander Forrest reported on his 1879 exploratory tour, pastoralists began moving into the Kimberley, taking up huge areas of land.<sup>41</sup> The name honours the Earl of Kimberley, who was once the British Colonial Secretary. The Dampier peninsula is roughly triangular in shape. Its southern base from Broome on the west, to the vicinity of Derby on the east, is about one hundred miles long. The apex of the triangle would be at Swan Point.<sup>42</sup>

While the Emmanuels took up large lease holdings along the Fitzroy river to the west, the Duracks secured the grazing rights to the rich Ord valley. In all, the tentative Durack-Emmanuel selections covered about two and a half million acres, a comparatively small area to that over which their respective interests would extend in the years to come.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Col. Sec. Perth to Res. Magistrate, Roebourne, 5 September 1889, CSR 2609/89, *B.L.*.

<sup>40</sup> T.W.Smith to Col. Sec., Perth, 11 November 1889. CSR 3301/89 B.L. p.231.

<sup>41</sup> *Australian Encyclopedia* 4th edn, (Sydney, 1983), p.25.

<sup>42</sup> E.Vaszolyi, in E.Brumbay and E.Vaszolyi (eds) *Language Problems*, p.19.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Durack, *Kings in Grass Castles*, (London, 1981), p.210

One of the longest cattle drives in world history took place in May 1883, when cattlemen set out to reach the Ord River by September 1885. The distance was several thousand kilometres. Early in 1886 Michael and John Durack sailed to take over the vast <sup>44</sup>

Kimberley estate their father had previously registered in their names. Land in the Ord River district was stocked with cattle brought in by Nat Buchanan, Donald Swan, <sup>45</sup>Sandy Maughter and Bob Button.

In 1885, four more stations began. The Ord River Station, Lissade II Station, Argyle Station and Rosewood Station. <sup>46</sup>

The Premier, John Forrest, was of the opinion that the small selector should not be allowed to hamper the large leaseholder by taking up small fee-simple locations in spots where there was good water on the large runs. In 1883, a committee had recommended that squatters be entitled to renew their leases for a further term at the same rent as was paid in the beginning .Kimberley. <sup>47</sup> Pastoral leases were approved in this fashion and this was an added attraction for settlers. <sup>48</sup>

Another attraction was that the pastoralists claimed free labour from the Aborigines who lived on their vast estates, and took possession of them in the same way in which they took possession of game and

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<sup>44</sup> Mary Durack, *Sons in the Saddle* (London, 1983), p.2.

<sup>45</sup> Mary G Durack 'An Outline of North Australian History - From Cambridge Gulf to the Victorian River, 1818-1887', *The West Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* 2, 12, (1932), pp.I-II.

<sup>46</sup> P.M.Durack, 'Pioneering the East Kimberleys', *The West Australian Historical Society*, 2, 14, (1933), p.44.

<sup>47</sup> Any Lessee in the Kimberley Division had a reduction of one-half the rental due under the Regulations, computed from 1 January, 1887, for the first 14 years of his lease if he have there, within five years of the date of the Regulations, 10 head of sheep or one head of large stock for every thousand acres leased. *The Western Australian Year Book for 1886*, p. 21.

<sup>48</sup> P.M.Durack, 'Pioneering the East Kimberleys', p.2

water.

At Yeeda Station, Hamlet Comish had welcomed the opportunity to squat on thousands of acres of grassland. With four other young men he formed the 'Murray Squatting Company'. He then applied for 120,000 acres of land rent free for fourteen years. It was not long before the 'Mary Smith' arrived in Beagle Bay with Hamlet Comish and his party. He had brought 700 sheep and some horses. Their welcome at Beagle Bay was a wide drift of sheep carcasses and bones spreading from the shore, refuse from the last settler's landing. Their neighbour was Julius Brockman who had acquired 400,000 acres south of the Fitzroy River.

Hamlet Comish quickly stocked his land with 10,000 sheep, 45 horses, and 50 cattle. One employee was a convict who had escaped from the Lacepedes Islands where guano was being mined. In this context it is relevant that Western Australia was the last place to which convicts were sent in Australia. When they escaped, or when they were released, they too, had an impact on the Aboriginal society. This man had been convicted of murder. He was employed by Hamlet Comish as a shepherd, and became involved in incidents with the Aborigines accused of stealing sheep.<sup>49</sup>

When Anthony Comish was killed, Yeeda Station became the scene of a tragic clash between pastoralists and Aborigines. Captain Walcott with a party of police troopers held forty Aborigines in chains until the alleged murderer was captured. There was a trial held on board a boat. Guirella was sent to Perth, and executed. Those Aborigines found guilty of killing sheep were sentenced to Rottneest Island Prison, near Perth.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Irene Shackcloth, *The Call of the Kimberley*, Melbourne, 1950.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, pp.215-259.

Hamlet Comish had moved on within a few years. His station became the property of another syndicate.

During the latter part of 1886, 5000 persons landed at Wyndham while about 1500 landed at Derby, looking for gold at Halls Creek. This new increase in population caused more racial tension.<sup>51</sup> Punitive expeditions were not unknown. When one of the Duracks was speared near Wyndham, 17 November, 1886, a punitive expedition killed many Aborigines in retaliation.<sup>52</sup>

Sometimes new settlers mixed their pastoral and their oceanic pursuits. On the northern shores of Dampier land, in and around Swan Point, Sydney Hadley and Harry Hunter were among some half dozen European settlers.<sup>53</sup>

With Harry Hunter and French)! D'Antoine, Hadley had begun dry shelling along the coast of Dampierland in 1880.<sup>54</sup> In the sheltered creeks up the coast to Cape Leveque, then south into King Sound to Cygnet Bay the luggers lay up during the cyclone season. The waters round Cape Leveque teemed with a wide variety of edible fish, dugong and turtles.<sup>55</sup> At each camp, Aborigines helped white men who supervised them as they combed the reefs for shell and trepang to be cleaned and packed ready for transit to Koepang.

Sydney Hadley had arrived in 1877. He was to be forty-six years on the coast. In 1897, after 6 months on Forrest River Mission he convinced the Aboriginal Protection Board he would be successful on another mission venture. The 8000 acres of Sunday Island in the Buccaneer Archipelago became the site of his mission from 1899-

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>53</sup> 'Tapper's Inlet', 'Thomas Bay', Cygnet Bay, Boolgin, are a few of the sites.

<sup>54</sup> M.Durack, *The Rock and the Sand*, (London, 1969), p.130.

<sup>55</sup> E.J.Stuart, *A Land of Opportunities*, (London, 1923), p.10. *loc. cit.*, Bain, pp.188-191.

1923. With Aborigines, he shelled the hundreds of reefs. When he left there were 250 Aborigines on the island. <sup>56</sup> The surrounding reefs were fished out.

Harry Hunter took up leases of land, first at Lombadina, south of Cape Leveque, then at a spot known to the people of the area as Boolgin (Bulgin). A Frenchman, 'Frenchy d'Antoine' sometimes worked with him, and sometimes he moved over to Cygnet Bay, where Harry and Jack O'Grady had a small station. During the south-east winds, the O'Gradys used their schooner, '*Minnie*', to take wood and water south, to luggers working the Eighty Mile Beach. <sup>57</sup> They returned with shell to Broome. The abundant smokeless 'red' mangrove of King Sound, was eagerly sought by the pearlers for cooking on board the luggers. <sup>58</sup>

The Broome Telegraph Office and Cable Station came into operation in 1889. The colony now had communication with England via Singapore, India, Aden, Egypt, Malta and Gibraltar. <sup>59</sup> Therefore, by 1890, the European settlement of the North West coast of Western Australia was well established. With it came the final dispossession of the Kimberley Aborigines from their land. Aboriginal communities began to disappear. Settlers took their water, their land, their freedom, and often their lives. This change was justified by a philosophy of progress, and a belief in the intellectual superiority of the Europeans.

Before the advent of Europeans, Aboriginal life was organised in definite complex structures. AP.Elkin classified five Aboriginal systems in Western Australia constructed on similar principles, but with considerable variation between them. They were Gariera, Garadjeri,

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<sup>56</sup> op.cit., Bain, pp.188-191.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>58</sup> Mary Durack, p.130.

<sup>59</sup> *News copy from the Postmaster General's Department, Public Relations Officer, Perth. West Australian*, 16 December 1965, p.13a.



Nyu Inyul (similar to the Central Australian Arrandja), Ungarimyn (north west Kimberley), and Aluridja (the general name used for Western Desert groups).<sup>60</sup> There was a discernible pattern of Aboriginal tribal ownership of land on and around the Dampier Peninsula.<sup>61</sup>

As far back as 1669 to 1763, some of these tribes had contact with Asian traders, like the Maccassans from Sumatra. The dried flesh of trepang from the sea beds was a major export to Asia. On the Kimberley Coast, the trade was called 'Kayu Jawa'.

The issue of whose land whose law was intensified by differences in culture. Before contact Aborigines of Australia were masters of their land and spiritually alert. They had accountability to their elders for communal resources. There was a detachment from material possessions. The consumer society which appropriated their country, depended on exploitation of natural resources. A policy of development at all costs and the pursuit of wealth and material possessions were of prime importance to the Europeans. This history discloses the terrible cost to the original inhabitants of the impact of incursion. After 150 years from settlement (1829 in Western Australia), Government Policy with regard to Aborigines culminated in the Noonkanbah Crisis (1979-1980).<sup>62</sup>

Australia is a wealthy country, with a third world country for Aborigines within its shores. A very large number of personnel has been sent by the Catholic Church for the last century to the Aborigines of the Kimberley, West Australia.

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<sup>60</sup> A.P.Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines* (Sydney, 1938/1974), pp.71-76.

<sup>61</sup> N.B.Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names*, (Canberra, 1974), pp. 239-262.

<sup>62</sup> S.Hawke & Michael Gallagher, *Noonkanbah Whose Land, Whose Law*. Fremantle, 1989. p.21.

One of the recent developments in the writing of Australian History is the re-appraisal of Aboriginal-European relations.<sup>63</sup> This is applicable to the relationship between the Aborigines and the Catholic Church which has played an important role in the Kimberley.<sup>64</sup> lxiv

To what extent, reflective action can enable critical consciousness in the subdominant group to become a vehicle of healing, depends on many factors. In the Kimberley, in the 1980's, the Catholic Church has endeavoured, by the memory of shared events, to recreate the circumstances of its presence in different places, in times past, in order to enable new insights into the slow, and often painful process of development. But a brief look at the vulnerability of the 19th century Australian Church is necessary to put Catholic missionary efforts in the Kimberley into perspective.

This survey is to introduce the hierarchical structure of the Church. Though theology today stresses that the Vatican Council of 1962 turned the pyramid structure upside down, so that the movement for change begins at the grass roots, rather than at the top, the supportive function of authority has given stability to the movement of the Spirit, and unity to those members of the Church who were both called, and sent over the last hundred years.

When philosophic reference is made to man as 'homo raison', 'homo faber', 'homo socius' and 'homo convictus', it has implications for the study of society.<sup>65</sup> In the context of this book, the word 'religion' is

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<sup>63</sup> H.C.Coombs, H.McCann, H.Ross and N.M.Williams, *land of Promises*, Canberra, 1989.

<sup>64</sup> Brigida Nailon, 'Duncan McNab, the Pioneer Priest of the Kimberley' 1980. Unpublished Document

<sup>65</sup> Reference made to concepts elaborated by Willem Zuurdeeg in *An Analytical Philosophy of Religion*, (London 1959), cited by W.E.H.Stanner, *On Aboriginal Religion*, pp. 27,247.

used to designate the realm of meaning which pertains to man's convictions about ultimate reality, his perception of his position in the kosmos and his contingent relationship with supernatural and fellow beings.<sup>66</sup> In a way, the book focuses on the Church in the Kimberley as a microcosm of the whole, and provides a focus on the whole from the perspective of isolation in the North West of Australia.

In governing, the Pope is assisted by Sacred Congregations, composed of Cardinals with a Cardinal Prefect as head of each. The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide was founded in 1622 to supervise and direct missionary activity around the world. Since 1967, it has been called the *Sacred Congregation for the Evangelisation of Nations*.

Mission territories are under its jurisdiction. In their ascending order of rank, they are:

<i>Prefectures Apostolic,</i>	headed by Prefects Apostolic, who are Priests; <sup>67</sup>
<i>Vicariates Apostolic,</i>	headed by Vicars Apostolic, who are Bishops; <sup>68</sup>
<i>Dioceses,</i>	which are headed by Diocesan Bishops; and
<i>Archdioceses,</i>	headed by Archbishops. <sup>69</sup>

The Bishop, as the visible principle and foundation of unity in a particular Church, is the link in the communion between that Church and the universal Church.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> P.Phenix, *Realms of Meaning, A Philosophy of the Curriculum for General Education*, (New York, 1964).

<sup>67</sup> Fr.Duncan McNab wrote M.A. after his name, presumably meaning Missionary Apostolic.

<sup>68</sup> The Kimberley Church was not called a Diocese until 1966.

<sup>69</sup> R.Wiltgen, *The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania 1825- 1850*, (Canberra, 1979) ,p.xxi

<sup>70</sup> *Constitution of the Church*. Vatican 2. par.24.

This episcopal office is called 'diakonia' or 'ministry'. In it is enshrined the mystery of Christ's presence in His Church, for it is Christ himself who presides in the pilgrim Church through the ministry of his Apostles and successors. It is therefore the Bishop who is the living sign of Christ present in the Church, and of the Church present in the world.

The first Catholic Bishop to take up residence in Australia, was the thirty-nine year old Polding, who was consecrated 29 June 1834, after being appointed Vicar-Apostolic of New Holland and Van Dieman's Land. He took up residence in Sydney. It was an important event for Australians. Prior to that they were canonically part of the Church of Southern Africa and adjacent islands with their Bishop located on Mauritius, an island in the Indian Ocean.<sup>71</sup>

At the suggestion of Bishop Polding, Pope Gregory XVI founded the Australian hierarchy, 10 April 1842. In the already existing *Vicariates Apostolic of New Holland, Tasmania and South Australia*, the Archdiocese and the suffragan Dioceses were conceived as enclaves, and the Archbishop and two Bishops continued to serve as Vicars Apostolic.<sup>72</sup>

*The Prefecture Apostolic to the Aborigines of Australia*, was given to the Passionists, 12 June 1842.<sup>73</sup> By 24 May 1843, they were housed in the dilapidated buildings at the former penal colony of Dunwich, usually referred to as 'Cunwich Island', but today officially known as North Stradbroke Island.<sup>74</sup> Fr.R.Vaccari had been named 'Prefect Apostolic', which meant that the mission to the Aborigines was to be an enclave in the Vicariate Apostolic of New

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<sup>71</sup> op.cit., Wiltgen,p.95.

<sup>72</sup> ibid , p.353.

<sup>73</sup> ibid.,p. 358

<sup>74</sup> Map taken from O.Thorpe, *First Catholic Mission to the Australian Aborigines*.

Holland, and thus not within Archbishop Polding's jurisdiction. The latter objected to this arrangement, and eventually he was informed that Vaccari's office as Prefect Apostolic would be automatically dissolved if the Passionists were released from their commitment and allowed to go to Perth.<sup>75</sup> The Passionists moved out.

Archbishop Polding's Vicar General, the Rev.J.Brady, made a proposal that the Western section of New Holland be erected into a diocese, and the Vicariates of Essington and King George Sound to be governed by the Bishop of Perth, in virtue of his being granted the additional title of Vicar Apostolic. This was decreed 4 May 1845 by the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. The Holy See retained the right, even after all three territories had become dioceses, *'to divide them and alter their borders as time and other circumstances might require'*.

Archbishop Polding submitted another map to Propaganda Fide, with proposals for re-organising ecclesiastical divisions, by having the Melbourne Diocese, and suppressing the Vicariate of King George Sound. There was a new boundary for the Vicariate Apostolic of Essington, which became the Diocese of Port Victoria, 9 May 1847.

<sup>76</sup>

Those who staff mission territories may be drawn from diocesan clergy anywhere in the world, but for the most part they come from religious communities known as orders, societies, or congregations. Before individuals or groups take up missionary work in a specific territory, they need authorisation from the Pope, through the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelisation. Subsequently these individuals or groups are accountable for their missionary activity to this Sacred Congregation, and through it to the Pope.

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<sup>75</sup> op.cit. , Wiltgen, p.360-376.

<sup>76</sup> ibid. , pp.368-393.

As Mission territories develop, they are nearly always divided, thus allowing for the creation of new mission territories. At times the new territory is offered to the missionary group already in charge of the parent mission, but it is not obliged to accept. This process of dividing territories and reassigning them goes on indefinitely.

The Vicariate Apostolic of the Kimberley grew out of the mission Fr.Duncan McNab struggled so heroically to establish on the shores of King Sound. The Plenary Council held in Sydney, 1885, voted that the Holy See be requested to establish a Vicariate in the region.<sup>77</sup>

Fr.McNab's departure left no one to exercise jurisdiction in the new Vicariate. The Cistercians did not want the responsibility of being in charge of a Vicariate.<sup>78</sup>

It was not until 1906 that an administrator was named, Bishop Kelly, of Geraldton. Four years later when the Benedictines of New Norcia founded their mission on the Drysdale River, the Abbot, Fulgentius Torres was appointed Administrator Apostolic of the Kimberley.<sup>79</sup> After his death in 1914, the Vicariate remained without an administrator until the appointment of Fr.Creagh, CSSR. He became the first resident ecclesiastical superior of the Vicariate Apostolic of the Kimberley.<sup>80</sup>

The charism of authority in the Catholic Church has been an integral part of the rationale of the people of God in the Kimberley, and must be understood when studying the goals of individual missionaries.

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<sup>77</sup> Acta et Decreta Concilii Plenarii Australasiae, 1885, Sydney 1887, pp.67-68.

<sup>78</sup> Mary Durack, *The Rock and the Sand*, (London, 1969), p.107.

<sup>79</sup> Cerretti to Creagh, 4 July 1916

<sup>80</sup> Samuel J.Boland, Father John Creagh CSSR in the Kimberleys. West Australia, 1916 – 1923. Unpublished. ADB<sup>80</sup>

## CHAPTER ONE

He also said, "*This is what the kingdom of God is like ...*" Mk 4:26

### IMPLANTING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AN ABORIGINAL WORLD

By the late 1870's Perth was a small city. Its streets, its flowers and shrubs controlled the appearance of the environment. Fr.Matthew Gibney appreciated its difference after his visit to the north coast of Western Australia with its vast uncontrolled areas of red earth and pindan scrub stretching into the distance.<sup>81</sup> It was fifty years since the Swan River settlement, yet disturbing stories still drifted in from the outback. 'Fifteen Aborigines shot on the Murchison!' 'Sixty-three Aborigines killed between the De Grey and Gascoyne!'<sup>82</sup>

With his old Spanish Bishop, he had planned to help the Aborigines in their need, and Dr.Graver had missioned him to sail on the 'Rosette', 30 July 1878. For four months, in obedience to his Bishop, he had explored new frontiers where Aborigines continued to be evicted from their tribal lands, displaced by land speculators taking up leases along the rivers.<sup>83</sup>

There was something very wrong about the argument that British

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<sup>81</sup> D.F.Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*. Perth, 1979 p.143.

<sup>82</sup> A.O. Neville, 'Relations between Settlers and Aborigines in West Australia', *171e West Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, 2, 19, 1936. Footnote in Ch.2, p.43.

<sup>83</sup> McNab to Gibney, 3 November 1883, ACAP.

sovereignty had the right to alllex all land, lease it or sell it to the colonists, making little or no provision for the old inhabitants. <sup>84</sup>

Fr.Gibney knew his Irish history. These things had been done before. In the future he would do what he could to help rectify the injustice. Fr.Gibney knew that the Governors of each colony had been given the power to grant land to the original inhabitants. <sup>85</sup> But pressure from land hungry speculators filled them with human respect, and they abrogated their responsibility. <sup>86</sup>

In each colony, those who had been given imperial power to alter the situation, bowed to the strong will of powerful self interest groups whose plans for exploitation and development were boundless. <sup>87</sup>

The social predicament of settlers and Aborigines occurred at the point of contact. There, Aboriginal dispossession of land and basic rights created a strong demarcation between the dominant and subdominant groups of colonists and Aborigines. The rationalization of the minority group in the area of potential wealth, had a constant theme, 'Whose land, whose law!' This was the Australia of the 1880's. It would be the Australia of the <sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Daphne C.Nailon, 'How valid was Blackburn's judgement that the original British claim of sovereignty extinguished all Aboriginal rights to property?' Unpublished Document.

<sup>85</sup> H.Reynolds, *Frontier*, (North Sydney, 1987), p. 180. H.Reynolds wrote of 'This Whispering in our Hearts', as 'guilt', saying, "There were great advantages in believing that all Aboriginal property rights disappeared in 1788. The British were able to gain by 'settlement' legal title... It was the ultimate confidence trick ... The law which defended property provided no protection for Aboriginal land. Although they were British subjects, 20-30,000 died under the foot of the pioneer. Only a handful of whites were ever brought to trial for killing Aborigines."

<sup>86</sup> "I apologise that what is offered is less than what was asked, but the times are such that concessions to Religious Bodies are watched with jealousy." Napier Broome to Gibney, Perth, 12 July 1888. ACAP.

<sup>87</sup> P.M.Durack, 'Pioneering the East Kimberleys', *The West Australian Historical Society*, 2,14, (1933), p.44.

<sup>88</sup> S.Hawke and M.Gallagher, *Noonkanbah Whose Land Whose Law*, (Fremantle, 1989).



## 1890's.

The conflict generated by the debate affected Fr.Gibney at every turn, but it did not determine his course. He had seen Bishop Griver's New Year resolution effected. A letter was posted to the Governor, 1 January 1879, asking for a 50,000 acre reserve on which to establish an Aboriginal mission. But "*not yet*", had come an answer from John Forrest, <sup>89</sup> "*wait for the report of the Government's exploratory party*". The two Catholic Administrators waited in vain <sup>90</sup> Meanwhile 20 million acres of good well watered country, named 'The Kimberley' after the Colonial Secretary in London was made available to pastoralists in huge leases. <sup>91</sup>

By the end of 1879 Bishop Griver and his nine diocesan priests were praying for an apostle, knowing that even he would labour to a great extent in vain. It had been late in 1882 that Fr.Duncan McNab, a Scottish priest from Queensland, agreed to come at the request of the old Bishop. Fr.Gibney had felt a surge of relief as he watched Fr.McNab made chaplain of the Rottnest Island Prison, April 1883. <sup>92</sup> He saw Fr.McNab's theories on Aboriginal Education tabled in the Legislative Assembly by May, 1883. <sup>93</sup> He agonized with the missionary priest when he was refused access to 'Guirella', an Aborigine from the Kimberley who was hanged in Perth for killing a pastoralist on Yeeda station, <sup>94</sup> and wept with him over the plight of the sheep stealers being shipped from the Kimberley tropics to cold

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<sup>89</sup> Forrest to Griver, 21 January 1879, ACAP.

<sup>90</sup> *Australian Encyclopedia*, 4th edn, The Grolier Society of Australia, Sydney, 1983, p.25.

<sup>91</sup> *The Western Australian Year Book 1886*.

<sup>92</sup> Fraser to Gibney 31 March 1883, ACAP.

<sup>93</sup> *Notes and Proceedings of Legislative Council 1883*. Paper 16.

<sup>94</sup> Frazer to Gibney, 14 May 1883, ACAP

winters in Rottnest Prison for long terms of imprisonment. <sup>95</sup>

Aborigines, and in some cases, squatters, paid for the land in blood. Hamlet Cornish, the youthful leader of 'The Murray Squatting Company' which was granted 120,000 acres of land, rent free for 14 years, <sup>96</sup> He had set out full of wonder at his good fortune, saying, *"Imagine, thousands of acres of grassland. and all a chap has to do is march in and squat on it."* He lost his brother. Guirella lost his life. His companions lost their freedom, and may well have died on Rottnest Island, like many others. <sup>97</sup>

A new landing place at one of the Yeeda sheep wells was named Derby. Yeeda Station changed owners. <sup>98</sup> Hamlet Cornish and a friend were contracted by Sir John Forrest to plot a track Southward for the movement of cattle to La Grange Bay, with wells every 15 miles. <sup>99</sup>

Fr.Gibney believed that Fr.McNab's apostolic call to the Kimberley had become more insistent because of personal experiences both in Queensland and Perth. <sup>100</sup> He admired Fr.McNab's efforts to learn the Aboriginal languages from the prisoners at Rottnest Island. In his role as vicar to Bishop Griver he had encouraged Fr.McNab's mission to the North West. From Fr.McNab's descriptive letters he was conscientized about the sufferings of Aborigines collected from different parts of the coast, to be trapped in the

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<sup>95</sup> op.cit., Irene Shackcloth, pp.215 ff

<sup>96</sup> In 1837 Captain George Grey had described the North-West of Australia as a most beautiful country, that must be as well watered as any region in the world! *Western Australia, An Atlas of Human Endeavour*. (Perth, 1979) p.24

<sup>97</sup> Malcolm Fraser, Colonial Secretary to Rev.M.Gibney, 14.5.1883, A.C.A.P.

<sup>98</sup> At the time it carried the most stock of any station in the district, 10,000 sheep, 45 horses, and 50 cattle, and the property would eventually find its way into the possessions of Sir Sydney Kidman.

<sup>99</sup> op.cit., Irene Shackcloth, pp.215 ff

<sup>100</sup> Queensland Legislative Assembly, 29 November 1876.

pearling industry at Cossack, of others outlawed in the ranges of hills up the coastline, and of more working on stations on the De Grey River. He read Fr.McNab's recommendations that the Government make Aboriginal reserves near the rivers rather than where the stony ground had neither water, nor Aborigines.<sup>101</sup>

Clear directions had been given to Fr.McNab about his mission in the following letter:

*Perth, 11 February 1884 Rev. Father McNab,*

*As I wish that a Mission to the Aborigines may be founded at the Northwest part of this Diocese, where they are said to be more numerous than in any other position thereof. and as you came to this Diocese for said good purpose, I direct you to go by the steamship 'Ferret', which is advertised to leave Fremantle 011 the 19th of this month, and to land at 'Cossack' to reside for the present in that town, or at Roebourne, to administer to the Catholics of that district, and to inquire about the best place to found the Mission for the Aborigines between the Beagle Bay and King Sound, or about the River Fitzroy, or in any other place where the Aborigines be more numerous, and as far as practicable, remote from white settlers.*

*I expect from your zeal for the Christianizing of the Aborigines that you will take great interest in this good work, and report to me on the place, which after diligent inquiry, you will deem most suitable for the object we have in view.*

*As soon as I will be able to dispose of another Priest, I will send him to labour in the same district or Mission.*

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<sup>101</sup> McNab to Gibney Correspondence'. ACAP.

*For the present I will give £7 every month towards your support or maintenance, and whatever support you will receive from the white settlers.*

*I will give you a letter in which I will state that I, their Bishop, sent you to afford them the consolations of their holy Religion, and exhort them to contribute to your support, as they are in duly bound.*

*I am willing to give all the support that will be in my power towards the foundation of the intended Mission to the Aborigines.*

*May God bless and protect you.*

+ *Martin Griver*

*Bishop of Perth*

<sup>102</sup>

For Fr. McNab, his destiny was clear. From Propaganda Fide in Rome, Cardinal Simeoni had sent him to do what he could for the Aborigines.

<sup>103</sup> There was no ambiguity about the extent of the field of his endeavours. As a Catholic Priest he believed from experience that the way would open up before him as he took the first steps.

The swell of the sea and the warm tropical breeze was balm to Fr. McNab after the 'Otway' left Roebuck Bay in the Kimberley. They moved up the coast, past beautiful beaches. The little steamship waited for the tide to deepen the water before it manoeuvred the channel leading through the myriads of islands north of the point into the entrance to King Sound. <sup>104</sup> At Derby, as the tide receded, the

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<sup>102</sup> Griver to McNab, 11 February 1884, ACAP.

<sup>103</sup> Simeoni to McNab, 12 August 1883, ACAP

<sup>104</sup> McNab to Gibney, 1 April 1884, ACAP.

little ship settled down in the sea of deep mud which formed the King Sound when the tide was out. The marsh had not completely dried out. Not a breath of wind. The tropical air hung heavy under a cloudless blue sky.

Memories of his priestly life were with him, seminary training in Rome; turbulent years in a Scottish ministry; parish life in Victoria and mission work in Queensland; travels overseas to Europe and America in search of missionary groups. Now at the age of sixty-four, he could be considered a bit old for this venture. Luckily he had a strong assistant, pledged to stay on with him, a Gascoyne Aborigine baptized at Rottneest Prison.

Fr.McNab watched as his horses were safely landed, and the last punt with his goods and baggage pushed ashore.

Derby, originally a sheep well belonging to Yeeda station, was separated from it by a long rough stretch of tidal terrain. The Resident Magistrate of Derby had welcomed him, put a cottage and the services of the police at his disposal, and pledged any other assistance which might be necessary.

By the time he reached Yeeda, the sun had a bite in it. Fr.McNab looked with dismay at the rash on his companion. Measles! There was no doubt. They would have to turn back. The risk of infection for others with no immunity was too great. Even the pack horses were reluctant to retrace their steps to Derby.

Rather than go overland again, Fr.McNab arranged with a pearler, to cross the King Sound by boat and be landed on Cunningham Point, where he could be picked up a month later. But he found himself in the wrong bay, thirty to forty miles to the north of his destination.

He waited. The days and the nights of the month dragged on. He missed the boat, or the boat missed him. There were plenty of fish and crabs, and he had some supplies.<sup>105</sup> He settled down to explore and wait. Time is a different commodity in a tropical bay where the climatic conditions affect all decisions and determine one's attitudes to the environment. Perth was far away. It was another land.

Fr.McNab waited a long time for his promised companion. But at last Fr.Treacy came to work with him. He told him that all the diocesan priests had volunteered when news of his plight reached Perth.<sup>106</sup>

Prospecting for pearl shells around the King Sound enabled one party without a licence to pick up over a ton of shell, return to Port Darwin, sell it for £200, buy a ten-ton vessel for £300, apply for a licence and return to work the waters of Cygnet Bay. Near Point Cunningham they raised a large quantity of shell and purchased a 45 ton schooner which with three luggers constituted a nice little pearling fleet. This was utilised to land passengers, horses, and stores from steamers at Derby for the gold diggers.<sup>107</sup>

During the latter part of 1886 about 5000 persons of all classes landed at Wyndham, while about 1500 landed at Derby. In November 1886 Patrick Durack travelled to the goldfields to collect accounts from his store in the lively little town at Hall's Creek.<sup>108</sup>

He was the first man to set up a store in East Kimberley, so all his

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<sup>105</sup> McNab to Gibney letters. ACAP.

<sup>106</sup> *Record* 11 June 1885.

<sup>107</sup> K.M.Wood 'A Pioneer Pearler' *Reminiscences of John Wood The Western Australian Historical Society, Journal and Proceedings* 2, XII, 1932. pp. 40-46.

<sup>108</sup> P.M.Durack, 'Pioneering the East Kimberleys' *The West Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* 2,XI V, 1933.

goods were allowed in duty free. <sup>109</sup> Many Aborigines were shot by a police punitive expedition when his brother, John Durack was killed about 150 miles south-east of Wyndham 7th December, 1886. <sup>110</sup>

This fulfilled a prediction by the exploratory party's scientist that gold would be discovered and the few whites killed by Aborigines would mean death for many of the latter. <sup>111</sup> On a business trip to Derby, Fr.McNab was caught up with the drift of prospectors heading for the gold fields in Halls Creek and he joined them. <sup>112</sup> He felt that fear stalked the land. He realised that most of the trouble lay in interference with the Aboriginal women. When the Aboriginal men retaliated, there was no mercy. This land was for the taking, its people went with it. It was an accepted colonial code. There was no redress for Aborigines. They often only spoke tribal languages. To them white law was a mystery.

In the East Kimberley in 1884, land in the Ord River district was stocked with cattle brought in by Nat Buchanan, Donald Swan, Sandy Maughter and Bob Button who was left in charge. <sup>113</sup> This was financed by Panton with the aid of Osmond, a millionaire. In 1885, Ord River Station, Lissadell Station, Argyle Station and Rosewood Station were established, so there would have been a fair sprinkling of pastoralists in the vicinity of the gold seekers. <sup>114</sup>

After his arduous journey back from the gold fields, and his witness

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<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, P.M.Durack, p.30

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*, P.M.Durack p.43.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, P.M.Durack.

<sup>112</sup> Durack, 'The Priest who rode away' *Westerly*, November, 1962.

<sup>113</sup> Mary G.Durack 'An Outline of North Australian History - From Cambridge Gulf to the Victorian River, 1818-1887', *The West Australian Historical Society Journal*, 2 XII, 1932. pp 1-11. ,

<sup>114</sup> *op.cit.* P.M.Durack

of the inevitable suffering and death brought by the pursuit of wealth, Fr.McNab picked his way across the Pindan to his Mission. It was burnt to the ground. Some said, "By Nimanbor!" Others said, "By Pearlers". What did it matter? Fr.Treacy was gone! <sup>115</sup>

The old missionary knew what to do. Others would come! On the ruins of his three and a half years of effort, he believed his brothers would build. He salvaged what he could and boarded a pearling lugger heading for Darwin. The money from the sale of his horses and the things he had salvaged was given to the Jesuit mission. <sup>116</sup> By August he was in Victoria.

In Perth, Bishop Griver was dead. His place had been taken by Fr.Matthew Gibney who was consecrated early in 1887. <sup>117</sup> In that year, it was recorded that the Catholic Church had been established in the Kimberley. <sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> op.cit., Mary Durack.

<sup>116</sup> Strele to General, 1887, AJAH.

<sup>117</sup> Clark, M. (1980) "The Quest for an Australian Identity," in Clark, M. *Occasional Writings and Speeches*, Melbourne: Fontana/Collins , pp.215-233.

<sup>118</sup> Acta et Decreta Concilii Plenarii Australasiae, 1885, Sydney 1887, pp.67-68. (Editor's Note: The Hirarchia Cattolica listed it each year as the Vicariate Apostolic of Kimberley, New Zealand.)



## CHAPTER 2

"... *A man throws seed upon the land. .*" Mk 4:26

### THE KIMBERLEY WHEN THE TRAPPIST MISSIONARIES CAME

For Bishop Gibney, new frontiers had opened up for him in his public role of administering his far flung diocese. He was well aware of the existing social conditions in his colony. The complacency which gripped the emerging pastoral elite, and indeed most of the colonists, had not succeeded in cloaking his perceptions.

In Western Australia, the current popular opinion held was, *the Aborigines were better off if left alone, and they were dying out anyway!* John Forrest, rapidly rising to the peak of his political career, had risked his popularity by publicly expressing some sympathy for "*these poor old decrepit natives, almost dead, wandering about our streets with nowhere to go.*"

During the debates on the Constitution Bill and the associated Aborigines Bill in 1888, apart from this expression of sympathy by John Forrest, there is no indication in the vital debates of 1887, 1888, and 1889, of any provision which colonists thought should be made for the Aborigines. The chief concerns were:

1. the reputation of settlers and white interests;
2. questions of too much land being alienated for Aborigines;
3. the Ministry not being given charge of Aboriginal Affairs,

- which was being reserved to the Imperial Government;
4. the chance of sentimental English theorists interfering with existing conditions ;
  5. whether all the money it was proposed to set aside was really needed for Aborigines; and
  6. whether the colony could get its constitution without yielding on this last point.

In 1899, the Colonial Office, in London, insisted that the Constitution Act provide that Aboriginal Affairs remain the responsibility of the Aboriginal Protection Board rather than that of a minister of the Crown, and that a minimum of 5000 pounds or 1% of gross colonial revenue (whichever was greater) should be appropriated annually to the welfare of Aborigines.

In Parliament, the fear was expressed that a Governor: 'imbued with extraordinary views with regard to the rights of natives, might take it into his head to set apart large areas of the very best lands of the colony for the native population against the wishes of the voters.

The doubt was expressed that an Aborigines Protection Board was really necessary when Aborigines were being fed and cared for in the service of the settlers.<sup>119</sup> Unpaid Aboriginal labour was always of economic importance to the colonists. Convict labour ceased in Western Australia in 1870. Free Labour was seen as essential to white enterprise in the early days of pearling, and permanently in the establishment of the pastoral industry. By 1872, 350 Aborigines were employed by 75 European pearlers.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Paul Hasluck, *Black Australians, A Survey of Native Policy in WA. 1829 -*

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*, Hasluck.

At the end of 1886, the total area of the Colony of West Australia was an estimated 678,400,000 acres. Revenue paid from sales and rentals was £51,890. This aspect of revenue from the sale of Aboriginal land was the major reason why the Aborigines were subjected to a system of 'dole and control'. The legislation ostensibly made to protect them from the settlers, in reality secured the land for the pastoralists.

Pastoralists had begun coming in 1879. Patsy Durack went into partnership with Solomon Emmanuel, a Goulburn banker and landholder, to finance a further investigation of the area. The expedition they mounted returned with an optimistic view of the potential of the country, and the promoters decided to move in on river frontages and rich natural pastures without delay.

The Emmanuels took up large lease holdings along the Fitzroy river to the west. The Duracks secured grazing rights to the rich Ord valley and began one of the longest cattle drives in world history from May 1883, till September 1885 when they reached the Ord River with half the original 8000 head. Early in 1886 Michael and John Durack left by ship to take over the vast Kimberley estate their father had registered in their names.<sup>121</sup>

In the Kimberley the rental for leases was in blocks of not less than 50,000 acres with frontage, and 20,000 without frontage. Conditions for leases were:

For the 1st 7 years ... 10 shillings rental  
 2<sup>nd</sup>        7 years 15 shillings rental  
 3<sup>rd</sup>        7 years 20 shillings rental.

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<sup>121</sup> Mary Durack *Sons in the Saddle*, Constable, London, 1983, p.2.

Any Lessee in the Kimberley Division had a reduction of one-half the rental due under the Regulations, computed from the 1st day of January, 1887, for the first 14 years of his lease if he have there, within five years of the date of the Regulations, 10 head of sheep or one head of large stock for every thousand acres leased. <sup>122</sup>

Kimberley pastoral squatters were entitled to renew their leases for a further term at the same rent as was paid in the beginning. <sup>123</sup>

The Premier, John Forrest, did not want small selectors to hamper large leaseholders by taking up small fee-simple locations in spots where there was good water on the large runs. By his policy therefore, Imperial and State Revenue, with the pastoralists, benefitted from the impoverishing of Aborigines, and it was the pastoralists who became the legislators who imprisoned them under so called 'Protective Acts'. Their positions were consolidated by means of protective legislation which effectively put Aborigines into a different category from white people. Landowners claimed their land was unoccupied, and it was landowners who were the force behind legislation. They wanted Aborigines either as cheap labour, or out of the way.

From 1822 - 1897 control of the Aborigines had been nominally under the British Government. Gradually the principles of civilising and converting them to Christianity had been abandoned, and that of protecting their physical well being was neglected. <sup>124</sup>

Though in 1829 legal action against Aborigines had been prosecuted as against Europeans, within twenty years a law had been passed

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<sup>122</sup> *The Western Australian Year Book for 1886.*

<sup>123</sup> P.M.Durack, 'Pioneering the East Kimberleys' *The West Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, 2, 1936.

<sup>124</sup> op.cit., Hasluck.

allowing summary trials of Aborigines with an offence not punishable by death.<sup>125</sup> The 1886 Act claimed to provide for the better protection and management of the Aboriginal Natives of West Australia, and to amend the law relating to certain contracts with such Aborigines.

In the 1887 session of Parliament, it was argued that the regulation of employment by the 1886 Act had been ill-advised and the ideal state had been when the Aborigines were 'well-fed, happy and contented in uncontrolled employment on the stations'.

The 1897 Act would claim to further amend the Constitution Act of 1889, and for the better protection of the Aboriginal Race of West Australia ; The 1905 Act to make provision for the better protection and care of the Aboriginal inhabitants of West Australia, in effect made them State Wards with no right to own land.

The 1907 Electoral Act excluded them from franchise.

The 1936 Act to Amend the Aborigines Act, 1905, took away the last vestige of freedom for missionaries.

The 1962 Act to amend the Electoral Act, 1907 - 1959 would not be implemented in the Kimberley until 1971.

Aborigines in Western Australia , as recipients of 1905 'Protective Legislation', were effectively set apart from the general populace and prevented them from acting as 'citizens'. As 'state wards' they never had the basic rights given to migrants such as the right to own land or vote. The small minority who obtained Citizenship Rights, were

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<sup>125</sup> Peter Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens The Aboriginal Problem in WA. 1898 - 1954*, (New York, 1973), p.44.

under special conditions, such as giving up their Aboriginality.

Since the Federation Constitution of 1901 had stipulated that they were not to be counted in the population statistics of the various states, and since the definition of what constituted an Aborigine changed over the years, it is impossible to make sense of the Statistics in successive Australian Year Books, even since 1967 when the Referendum gave them the right to be counted and receive the basic human rights given to any other citizen, there is an ambiguity about statistical information on Aborigines.

Bishop Gibney may not have known all the legal implications of 'Native Title' as raised by the anti-slavery and missionary groups in the 1830's and 1840's in the House of Commons in England, or the policies originating from arguments about international law put forward by men like Buxton and Glenelg. These opinions had been very unwelcome in Australia, although heard and implemented to some extent in Canada, New Zealand, and later in Fiji <sup>126</sup>

But Fr.McNab had informed Bishop Gibney of his efforts in Queensland in 1876 to obtain land for individual Aborigines by sponsoring three applications for homestead blocks of 640 acres each, with contiguous boundaries. At the time, this was the least amount of land being granted to newcomers at a cost of sixpence an acre, and Fr.McNab had used it as a test case. There was no other precedent for arguing that individual Aborigines be allowed to own land. The Land Office bureaucracy could not handle the concept at all, for the Aborigines have no money to buy. Fr.McNab argued that the Governor had the power to grant the land without payment, for surely the original inhabitants had more right to the land than aliens. The case had failed after being tabled and discussed in the Legislative

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<sup>126</sup> Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, (Ringwood, 1987).

Assembly. <sup>127</sup>

Only Aboriginal ethno-history, and archival documents provide material for knowledge about the predicament into which the indigenous race was plunged. The Aborigines quickly realised that whites were interfering with their natural rights: stock disturbed their hunting grounds and game preserves, therefore Aboriginal food supplies had been diminished and become uncertain. Also, they could no longer travel from one watering place to another and be certain that on arrival there would be flocks of wild fowl to be snared. Nor, when they desired a repast of snakes, goannas or other reptiles, could they set fire to the first piece of well grassed country they encountered. The stock holder used the billabongs for cattle and let the Aborigines understand that it was at their peril they put a firestick to it. <sup>128</sup>

References from Fr.McNab's letters had convinced Bishop Gibney that something must be done to right affairs. He took up his pen in 1888 to write to the Colonial Secretary that to achieve anything of lasting value for Aboriginal welfare a strong staff of missionaries or a numerous community was needed. Cardinal Moran of Sydney could successfully negotiate for a group of missionaries while in Rome, if he had some reliable facts about means of support through the Government. <sup>129</sup> This plea moved the Governor to act. Bishop Gibney received an immediate personal answer to his request for three concessions. <sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Legislative Assembly, Queensland, 1876. Copy of all the Correspondence that passed between the Rev.D.McNab and the Government, respecting the Aborigines, and the proper mode of providing for them. See also, Notes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council 1883, Paper 16. Letters from the Rev.D.McNab relative to the settlement and civilization of the Aborigines of W.A.

<sup>128</sup> *Quarterly Report of J.Langdon Parsons. Government Resident for the Northern Territory*, (Darwin, 1885).

<sup>129</sup> Gibney to the Col.Sec., 12 July 1888. ACAP.

<sup>130</sup> Napier Broome to Gibney, 12 July 1888. ACAP.

Bishop Gibney's intuition bore fruit. His request for missionaries was presented to Pope Leo XIII through Cardinal Moran, and the Abbot of the monastery of 'Sept Fons', Lyons, was to send men.<sup>131</sup> There had been a suppression of the community of "Notre Dame des Isles" of New Caledonia, and a new community with some of the monks would be created at Beagle Bay. Fr. Alphonse Tachon returned from New Caledonia to France. At his arrival in Marseilles, he was welcomed by the his Abbot, Dom Ambrose Janny, and Bishop Gibney of Perth. They took themselves to Rome where they were received in audience by His Holiness Pope Leo XIII. Fr Alphonse then left with the Abbot to begin the Beagle Bay Foundation.<sup>132</sup> He had not returned to Sept Fons Abbey in Lyons.

After a 20 hour train trip to Brindisi, they boarded the 'Brittannia', a four masted sailing ship. By Good Friday they were welcomed in Sydney by Cardinal Moran who accepted their letters from Cardinal Simeoni and the Abbot of Sept Fons. He reminded them that the Government expected ten men.

Later in the month, with Dean Martelli as translator, they were being warmly welcomed by Bishop Gibney in Perth. He took them to Subiaco and offered them a site on which to establish a monastery before they went to the Kimberley. But the Abbot modestly represented that this was not what they had in mind. So, within a couple of days, after a quick visit to New Norcia, Bishop Gibney left Perth with them, on board a boat bound for Derby.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Walter, *Australien, Land, Leute, und Missionen*, (Limburg, 1928), cf. *Australia, Land, People, Mission*, (Lahn-Verlag Limburg, 1982) p.127.

<sup>132</sup> Bibliographies of the Beagle Bay Community from the Abbey of Sept Fons. Doc.5, ADB.

<sup>133</sup> French Correspondence, TASF.



At the end of May, when the mornings broke fine and clear in Derby, they had arrived with Bishop Gibney. Neither man was used to the saddle. Quite an important deputation had awaited the group. Mr. Emmanuel of Liveringa Station, Mr. Martin of Lillmooloora Station, and Mr. Gilbert Lodge, Resident Magistrate. They shared their perceptions of the country with him, but Bishop Gibney was conscious of the other side of the picture. There was a changed social environment for the Aborigines. Aborigines in the Kimberley had their creation dreaming, sacred places and cultic heroes. On a comparative basis there were more Aboriginal languages in this area than in any other part of Australia.<sup>134</sup> There had been an efficient system of Aboriginal education which had prepared children for socialization processes.<sup>135</sup>

Now, the public opinion that Aborigines were a nuisance was expressed by the 'strong and prompt measures' to be taken to protect Kimberley settlers from 'the treacherous hostility of the Aborigines'. The settlers' complaint was simply that the authorities did not punish the Aborigines severely enough for sheep stealing and pilfering.<sup>136</sup>

An increase of police depots and Aboriginal assistants had far-reaching and tragic side-effects for the Kimberley tribes people. Miserable processions of anything from twenty to forty natives, suspects (never discharged), and 'witnesses', chained neck to neck on their way to Wyndham, had become a common sight throughout the countryside. Though the police did not always get the number of men they hoped for, they frequently came upon groups of women, children, and old people, either hastily abandoned on the approach of the patrol or awaiting the return of their men from hunting or the

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<sup>134</sup> *Western Australia. An Atlas of Human Endeavour, Education and Lands and Surveys Departments of Western Australia*, (Perth, 1979), p.24. c.f. *Australia, Land, People Mission*, (Lahn-Verlag, Limburg), 1982.

<sup>135</sup> W. Droste, in G. Walter, *Australien, Land, Leute, und Missionen*, (Limburg, 1928)

<sup>136</sup> *op.cit.*, Hasluck.

performance of some sacred ceremony. As the settlers were usually on the lookout for likely young helpers, the patrols were thus able to give them youths and young women to settle down well enough to station life.

Such disturbance of tribal balance caused conflict among bush natives who, deprived of their own wives, looked for substitutes elsewhere, so causing endless trouble, with Aborigines killing each other.<sup>137</sup>

In reporting on the deaths of certain white men, a Resident Magistrate, in 1881, had said that the murders were due to the theft of the Aboriginal women, and this was supported by the Governor: "Their women are surely as valuable to them as our flocks and herds are to us; and so long as we outrage those feelings which human nature has placed in a greater or less degree in even the most savage breast, what right have we to expect that they will respect the property of the aggressor."<sup>138</sup>

The non verbal message communicated by eight Aboriginal prisoners loading drays, and eighteen more road making in the heat of the day, seared into Bishop Gibney's consciousness.<sup>139</sup>

He recorded in his diary his first impressions of the Aborigines, and followed with a description of their journeys (abridged):

*They were linked to each other or to their barrows, with chains passed around their necks and locked on the ankle - the bit of cloth keeping the hot, heavy chains from the ankle flesh - the deep shirt*

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<sup>137</sup> Mary Durack, *Sons in the Saddle*, (London 1983).

<sup>138</sup> A.O.Neville 'Relations between Settlers and Aborigines in W.A.' *The West Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, (XIX, 1936) Footnote in Ch.2. p. 43

<sup>139</sup> Diary of Bishop Gibney as edited by Daisy Bates. ADB.

*collars between the iron collars and the skin of the neck. The four new prisoners had never seen a white man until the policeman arrested them for stealing sheep.*

*Mr.Lodge had suggested a week's travel to the Reserve, a week's exploration, and a week back. I allowed another week. The horse Mr.Morley had given me looked strong and healthy and there were three packhorses. By 3 June all hands were busy with Constable Daly in charge of preparations. Fr. Alphonse was not coming. He was designated to look after the Catholics in Derby, and to learn the language.*

*The evening we arrived at Yeeda Station, Mr.Rose described a station out from Beagle Bay, owned by an Englishman who ran 14,000 sheep and 2,300 cattle. All the laborious work was done by Aborigines. Also on Yeeda the Aborigines shored the 6000 sheep, grew the vegetables and did the teamster work. I was pleased with the progress of my small party, though the guide was sick.*

*The Fitzroy River was reached 6 June. Fr. McNab's Bay was just north of Point Cunningham. The first guide was left here, and another joined them for the trip to visit Hunter and Hadley's station on the way to Beagle Bay. The journey of thirty miles was slow. It took all day. Mr.Hunter received us kindly and entertained us most hospitably. At his suggestion, we rested the following day while meat was killed and salted for us. Mr.Hunter had about sixty Aborigines in his employ. They looked well and were content. Beagle Bay opened up before us, a beautiful expanse of water when the tide was in. When it was out, vast sand bars.*

*On the feast of John the Baptist, 24 June, we returned to Beagle Bay, and started for the head of the river running into the Bay.*

*At Yeeda, Mr. Rose promised to let us have six bullocks broken into harness and yoke and team as soon as he reasonably could. Mr .Daly*

*gave us two more, eight in all. On reaching Derby a note of thanks to the magistrate brought him around for a meal.*

*The following day I applied for a pastoral lease of 100,000 acres of land, off the Reserve, at Beagle Bay. I paid Mi: Lodge the £25 fee.*

*Sunday, 6 July, Mass was celebrated at both ends of Derby.*

*Monday, goods were loaded on board the police cutter and the day after Fr: Ambrose and Daly left for Yeeda at noon with two horses and a foal. The police spring cart was lent to convey goods to the bullock team. Mr. Lodge, Mr: Morley, and Messrs Johnson and Yates, police constables, worked hard together to load the quarter ton of flour and other goods. The boarding was at 5.45 p.m. We floated with the receding tide, first close in then directed our course to Point Torment where we anchored at 11 p.m. as the tide began to turn. We hoped to have an easterly breeze which would bring us on the returning tide to Goodenough Bay. We landed instead at Disaster Bay.*

*The Aborigines had never shown us any hostile or unfriendly disposition. Their camp was a pretty sight at night. Everyone had his own little bright fire which he fed attentively so that there were as many fires as natives, and they looked lovely at night. The men stood their spears at their respective camps and left their shields and other weapons neatly arranged just beside their camp. They generally camped in lines, so that the fires were only a few feet apart. The women camped by themselves.*

*By 31 July, Fr: Ambrose and Mr: Daly arrived at Goodenough Bay. Most of August would be spent labouring to take the team of bullocks through to Beagle Bay. I arranged with one of them who called himself Caley, to show us round the neighbourhood, so we might select the most suitable place. He came with Fr: Ambrose and me in the morning.*

*We were led about for six hours, and saw innumerable wells and springs. I had never seen any like them before. They nearly all stood higher than the surrounding ground, and filled to the brim. I believed it was destined to become one of the prettiest of places. We found two large swamps with such springs in them, one about 400 acres and the other 200 acres. They would grow vegetables of various kinds, and tropical plants that required much moisture.*

*15 August, Feast of Assumption. I recommended this mission to the Blessed Virgin Mary and placed it specially under her protection. The country was chosen near Ngarlen, but not the place for the house or camp. Ngarlan was about eight miles from Bunguaduck and seven miles from Kirmel, Beagle Bay.*

*On the feast of St. Bernard, the principal patron of the Trappists, 20 August, the mission was dedicated to the Saint. Fr. Ambrose had the names of sixty residents in Yemering alone.*

*29 August, the party with the dray started for Ngarlan.*

*2 September, when I returned from Bunguaduck, the Abbot told me that they came here to establish themselves, and if the Bishop thought it was the will of God they would do so. My belief was fixed, so that settled the matter. Abbot Ambrose expressed his fears about the means of support until the ground began to produce. My answer was, "God will provide, and I will not see you hungry." I thanked God it was settled. The work was done.*

Later generations would remember Bishop Gibney as 'The Father of Beagle Bay Mission'.

## CHAPTER 3

*•...night and day, when he is asleep,  
when he is awake... " Mk.4:27*

### **MONASTERY OF " NOTRE DAME DU SACRE COEUR'**

The story goes, that in the monasteries of old, day followed day, with increasing regularity. The rule was always the same, everything went on, today as yesterday. "NOTRE DAME DU SACRE COEUR' was the name Bishop Gibney chose for this new place of monasticism.

Fr. Alphonse Tachon thought the name apt for a place of nurture and new beginnings . It would not be with money that they could do good here. It would be through humility, sweetness, patience, penance, prayer, and ardent and sacrificial love such as came from the Sacred Heart of Jesus and his Mother.<sup>140</sup> He had spent more than a month with the welcoming tribe at Goodenough Bay, waiting for the Abbot to come overland. This tribe had wanted to keep the missionaries. He had found them honest. There was great love between the parents and children. Nearly every woman had a little child which she carried on her hip.

Polygamy was practised, and each old man usually had four wives, some of whom were very young girls. The women were often sisters. This would be a big obstacle for conversion to Catholicism. Men, women and children were nearly all completely naked. They had only a little bit of material as big as a hand, which they attached with a cord made out of their sleek hair. They were well formed with

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<sup>140</sup> Tachon to Janny, 8 October 1891. TASF.

slender limbs and had deep set eyes which gave them a hard appearance. All had contact with Englishmen and many of the youth were absent on pearling boats. Their languages were difficult and each group of languages had five or six families which were dialects of the mother tongue.

Fr. Alphonse was determined to learn the language of the place and to have catechism and prayers in it. Ten times a day he was asked for tobacco and something to eat. He believed that the people had to be fed, clothed, and given tobacco, or the missionaries would get nowhere. There was so much to do. They had barely touched the surface. Communication depended on a passing policeman, or pearlmen who lay up in creeks, about eight miles away.

Fr. Alphonse had the beginnings of a little religious community in the making. Unlike New Caledonia, there were two postulants here already, Cornelius Daly, and James Montague.

A temporary monastery was constructed of wood beams and rafters was with large sheets of bark stripped from paperbark trees. It had been erected by the two Priests, Br. Daly and the men. About twenty by three metres, it had twelve small cells and a large room surrounded by a large verandah. The Church had been built of the same material, and adorned with a little cross.<sup>141</sup>

When Fr. Duff from Perth, visited, June, 1891, Fr. Alphonse had prepared the meal. Under the scanty shade of a gigantic, aged, tree, the two lay brothers, about thirty men, women and children, and the visitor ate in the open air. At sunset everyone assembled when Fr. Alphonse blew the horn to say the Rosary and sing hymns which

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<sup>141</sup> French Documents from TASF.

he had translated into Nyulnyul. <sup>142</sup> The young chief, Felix, took a great interest in the singing.

Fr. Alphonse saw Br. Daly as a good worker. Before his brother had gone to settle further inland, Daly's share of the cattle were left at Rose Station, so that they could be picked up at any time. The Missionaries found it difficult to get labour. It was said that the pearler, Tommy Clarke, had all the young men as far as Carnot Bay, or Roebuck Bay, signed up. Fr. Alphonse believed that the catechumen, or neophyte, must be completely free, but his original workers had persevered at the mission. When there was only tobacco from the garden, Fr. Alphonse had told them they were free to go into the bush, but they stayed on.

Since the Abbot had left for France, the mission had bought nearly two tons of rice, one ton of flour, seven or eight bags of sugar, a big box of tea, boxes of tobacco (ninety for the year). In storage was a box of pipes, two boxes of cartridges, an unfinished drum of salted beef, and about sixty kilos of salted emu meat.

A deep spiritual relationship formed between Felix Gnobodnor and Fr. Alphonse Tachon. It was Felix who brought in a big bag of game every day. Sometimes there was a kangaroo in the morning and two emus in the evening. Fr. Alphonse wanted to avoid destroying Aboriginal culture. It was possible to extend the Aboriginal infrastructure of the community. Fr. Alphonse was aware, that because of missionary concern to promote their welfare, Aborigines could use them to provide an essential bridge between the two cultures. The religious change which occurred at Beagle Bay was linked to a cultural exchange between Felix, the decision maker for the Aboriginal community, and Fr. Alphonse, the representative of the

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<sup>142</sup> Duff to Gibney, 1891, ACAP.



Catholic presence.

Aboriginal religious practice allowed for the exchange of ceremonies. When religious conversion occurred, it was possible for the Aboriginal community to retain its identity, by adding to, rather than replacing traditional religious practices. The relationship between Felix and Fr.Alphonse grew deep enough for this exchange. There would be selective adaptation on the side of Felix from the ideas proposed by Fr.Alphonse. It was appropriate for Felix, as an Aboriginal leader to seek to increase his participation in, and his ownership of new rituals. Since Aboriginal culture did not separate religious beliefs from other social domains, there was no need to change his world view. His tribe came with him to share the Church presence.<sup>143</sup>

By the beginning of 1892, Mr.Hunter had gone bankrupt . Bishop Gibney arranged with Captain Harry O'Grady and Br.Cornelius Daly to take possession of the pastoral lease, the pearling plant, the buildings, chattels, cattle, sheep, horses, and fowls. The 'Water Lily' was unseaworthy, but the men believed that Mr.Hunter had acted towards them honestly. The 30 ton schooner, 'Jessie', was complete in everything except the small boats which were unfit for use.<sup>144</sup>

Fr.Alphonse lost no time taking a trip on the 'Jessie' to Roebuck Bay from where he could telegram the Bishop in Perth, and send correspondence to Singapore. He took another trip to Lacepedes Islands, about 30 km from Beagle Bay, and they had found fifty turtles.<sup>145</sup> At the mission they had built a great artificial lake surrounded by a fence. The females had laid seventy eggs. As well as tender flesh like veal, each turtle gave two or three bottles of oil

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<sup>143</sup> Remy Balagai from Sandy Point, interviewed by Fr.Francis Huegel, SAC, at BBM.

<sup>144</sup> O'Grady to Gibney, 24 February 1892. ACAP.

<sup>145</sup> Tachon to Abbot, 19 May 1892.

preferable to olive oil. On the islands there were innumerable wild birds which lay big tasty eggs. *There were thousands of tons of guano.*<sup>146</sup>

In 1829, a letter from the 'Melbourne', mentions a new contingent of monks from France. After they arrived, Fr.Alphonse found that he was still the cook. The newcomers were nearly all sick with colic, fevers, and sore eyes. Some of the luggage crates had been mislaid in Singapore. After transporting the goods from Beagle Bay, Br.Daly and the men had gone with Fr.Anselm and Br.Etienne to Lombardina to muster the cattle and bring them to the mission. This had taken nearly a month. The cattle and goods were transported by the 'Jessie' in four trips. The cattle with horns came overland in five days. It was due to the expertise of Br.Daly that the mission herd continued to flourish. Sunday, Father Anselm had celebrated Mass on the back of a cart.

The two postulants had insisted on taking the Brothers' habit.

Br.Bonaventure lent his to Daly and Br.Felicien lent his to James, and they were received into the Order on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Daly had been a postulant for twenty-five months, and Montague already a year. They had received the names of Br.Xavier, and Br.Jacques. Brother Xavier was in charge of the cattle, sheep, the working bullocks and the carting. Br.Jacques organized and directed the men's work, distributed tobacco, milked the cows, and each evening prepared a bread that the cook baked the next day. Br.Francis took charge of the Sheepfold. Fr.Alphonse directed and watched over the cooking, prepared his Catechism, some instruction, and studied the language. The Abbot busied himself with carpentry and building of fences, because the dingoes had attacked the sheep in

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<sup>146</sup> Janny to Wyart, 11 March 1892.

packs, dispersing and killing them. The government paid for each dog's tail collected. It had not been possible for the monks to follow regular spiritual exercises mainly because of sickness. It was doubtful if the strongest would be able to follow the meatless regime.

For Abbot Ambrose, the whole enterprise was quite above human power. He deplored Aboriginal customs. He complained that they were passionately addicted to passing entire nights at the corroborees, sometimes three or four times a week. Fr. Alphonse had told him that the people had a body of religious beliefs, or doctrine. They believed that the material and physical world had always existed and would always exist. The world and men were, if not governed, at least watched over by beings above nature. There were many of these but the greatest lived in Disaster-Bay. He was almost all-powerful, old and young at the same time, covered in blood which rendered him magnificent and shining. His eyes flashed and threw piercing spells and death on evil ones under the shape of worms which poured out from his eyes. The great sorcerers alone were able to see him, and Felix claimed to have done so. It was to appease these superior beings that they made corroborees, painted their bodies, made a din, and above all, shed and drank blood.<sup>147</sup>

Abbot Ambrose left the mission behind to take the 'Jessie' on the first stage of a journey to Perth. He intended to discuss mission policy with Bishop Gibney. The latter had expressed his ideas to the Governor in 1893. He questioned the advisability of using the squatters as the channel for distribution of food and blankets to the Aborigines. This practice was substituting the national dole for the wages due to the Aboriginal labour on the stations. Bishop Gibney had attacked the complacent acceptance of the colonists that the black race was to be effaced by the Europeans. To his mind, this philosophy was repugnant to humanity and dangerous to the community thus relieved

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<sup>147</sup> Janny Wyart, 12 July 1892. TASF.

of its responsibility.

He had argued that the welfare of the Aborigines would be primarily affected in their preservation. The best guarantee would be the judicious expenditure of the annual subsidy. He attacked the unequal distribution of such monies with the Anglicans receiving more money for fewer Aborigines.<sup>148</sup>

With regard to education on the Mission, Bishop Gibney advised the Abbot, that Fr. Alphonse teach in French in which he was proficient, instead of English, and that they get French Sisters to educate both boys and girls. It was said that New Norcia's results had suffered from the lack of women in their mission effort. The Bishop also wanted the Abbot to accept the responsibility and the duties of Vicar Apostolic of the Kimberley. The Abbot was reluctant. He had not heard of a precedent in other monasteries. He did not want the responsibility. While Bishop Gibney lived, and he was superior of the Mission.

There was no need for change. There would be time later, to create another person Vicar Apostolic.<sup>149</sup>

On his side, the Abbot was aware of many changes in his order. Before 1892, the Reformed Cistercians (Trappists) had two Congregations which wanted to reunite, and also two smaller groups of monasteries. The larger Congregation of twenty monasteries was the strictest of all of them. The Abbot of Sept-Fons presided over the smaller group with houses in China, Palestine, South Africa and the East Indies. Pope Leo XIII summoned community leaders to Rome. Among these were thirty-four mitred abbots.

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<sup>148</sup> Gibney to Governor, 2 January 1893. J.T. Reilly, *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Western Australia.* (Perth, 1903). pp. 419-429.

<sup>149</sup> Janny to Wyart, 7 July 1894. ACAP.

The three larger Congregations of La Trappe, Sept Fons and Westmace had united. All the essentials of the Cistercian life were incorporated in the rule of Strict Observance. The name 'La Trappe' had been dropped from their title. The Pope had insisted that they acquire a sound theological basis for their lives of prayer and contemplation. He also asked for foundations in Mission territory, and that an orphanage be founded at the monastery of El Althroun in the Holy Land.<sup>150</sup>

Abbot Ambrose had felt obliged to mould the monks at Beagle Bay in the tradition of strict observance rules. When the monastery buildings were finished in November 1883, the rule commenced in earnest. The community rose at 2 a.m., said Office and Meditation until 3 a.m.; the Brothers went to milk till 4 a.m., while the Fathers continued the Office; all attended Mass; after Mass the Brothers worked till 6 and the Fathers said Office; breakfast 6 a.m.; Work till 10.30 a.m.; visits to the Blessed Sacrament; reading in Chapter; 12 noon, Angelus, then dinner; siesta till 2 p.m. ; Office till 2.30 p.m.; work till 6 p.m.; Meditation, quarter hour, supper, pious lecture in Chapel; Compline, night prayers, examen in Church, Salve, Angelus; 8 p.m. to rest. It was a life complete in itself.

Back at Notre Dame du Sacre Coeur, a sad accident had broken the harmony. The shepherd brother, Francis of Assisi, fell into one of the many springs, 29 January 1893. He had wanted to go swimming and missed his footing. The water was a good three metres deep. It was necessary to bury him quickly.

Father Abbot left again for France to confer with the Abbot General on the subject of the foundation. His visit resulted in a letter written

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<sup>150</sup> T.Merton, *71ie Waters of Si/oe*, (London, 1976).

in Spanish by Fr. Maria Sebastianus Wyart OCR, from the Cistercian house in Rome. He asked Bishop Gibney asking for a solution to the problems put forward by Abbot Ambrose. The latter wanted the Kimberley monastery closed. He had reported that there was no hope of converting anyone, there was little hope of recruitment, there was no sure financial assistance, and with the added unfruitfulness of the soil and the poor crops, even the life of a Trappist was unbearable.<sup>151</sup> Cardinal Moran advised against withdrawing the five priests and six lay brothers from the Kimberley.<sup>152</sup>

At the Chapter of 1894, Abbot Ambrose again tried to resign from his post He knew that Fathers Anselm, Jean Marie, and Alphonse , and Brothers Etienne, Felicien and Bonaventure had been unable to agree on a suitable superior to replace him. He had again submitted the resignation to the Abbot General, but was told to return.

As missionary, Fr. Alphonse Tachon, was more attuned to the needs of the people at the mission. There were fourteen boys attending the school and five girls. All were over six years. Br. Xavier Daly, in his capacity as a Protector of Aborigines had written to the Secretary of the Native Protection Board asking that cash be given in preference to goods in bulk, because the mission schooner sailed only once every three months to Broome, and they had to pay for storage at Streeter's store. His request had resulted in a smaller annual sum instead of the requested per capita allowance.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Wyart to Gibney, 27 October 1893. ACAP.

<sup>152</sup> Undated document of 10 pp. in French from TASF mentions a letter, Moran to Wyart, 15 January 1894 to dissuade recalling of the mission community. ACAP.

<sup>153</sup> Payments were temporarily suspended because Mr. Streeter had informed the Board, that numbers were incorrect. Aboriginal Protection Board to Daly. Undated. ACAP. Note: In 1894 Streeter was nominated to stand against Alexander Forrest in the elections. Forrest defeated Streeter (53-28 votes) only because the Thursday Island and English men in the pearling fleet were not eligible to vote.

The Catholic community of Western Australia had felt shame at a widely publicised story condemning the Mission community for wanton destruction of turtles on the Lacepedes. According to H.C.Howe, this was typical of the lying and unfounded attacks to be launched on the Beagle Bay Mission from time to time. The mission men took the whole turtle since they ate the meat as well as the eggs. So did the Japanese. It would have been the Malays who ate only the turtle eggs, who would have disembowelled them and left them to die after taking the eggs.<sup>154</sup>

The Abbot had returned from France with Priests and Brothers: Fathers Ermenfroi, Bernard, Marie Joseph, Narcisse, and Emo; Brothers Antoine, Joseph, Francisque, Placide, and Jean. Bishop Gibney had been delighted with the number of new men, and asked that they look after the spiritual welfare of all the territory.

Abbot Ambrose wrote to Bishop Gibney of a community of nuns who had volunteered to come, German sisters from South Africa. He had again written home to France that he no longer had the health, nor the courage to be in charge, and had asked for a substitute to take his place.

Abbot Ambrose had been on the 'Australind' with the contingent from France when it had pulled into Roebuck Bay in 1895. Among other passengers and goods, it had put ashore the little Spanish Priest, who had sadly said goodbye to the group of religious travelling with the Abbot to Beagle Bay. He was Fr. Nicholas Emo, a novice. His Abbot in Sept Fons had promised to let him live and die in Australia on behalf of the natives. Now, without a penny in his pocket, he was landed. The ship sailed off This was not what he had

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<sup>154</sup> Correspondence H.C.Howe to Mary Durack after the publishing of *The Rock and the Sand* in 1969. ACAP.

in mind. Fr.Nicholas had been in the Priesthood for a long time in the world. Though only a novice at Sept Fons for a year, he was mature and experienced in his priestly duties.

The Abbot had asked Bishop Gibney to give Fr.Emo authority to exercise his priestly faculties for the Manilamen in Broome. He was destined to become an itinerant missionary. He would move in and out of all the foundations of the infant Church. His bones would eventually lie on a Lombadina sand hill.<sup>155</sup> The Broome 'Animarum',

written in Spanish, in Fr.Nicholas's neat hand, discloses some interesting facts about Broome's Catholic population in 1896. The majority were single Asiatic men between twenty-five and thirty-five, employed on the pearling boats. A typical entry was No.178.

*Tomas Puertollano Pamfilo, de 28 anos de edad, soltero, natural de Santa Cruz de Marindoque, Prov.a de Mindoro (Filipinas), hijo de Victoriano Puertollano (difunt..) y Barbara Pamfilo, vecinos de Santa Cruz. Es matelat del 'Gessy de la Mission de Beagle Bay. CnCm todos las sababos.*<sup>156</sup>

In Beagle Bay, Fr.Alphonse was challenged by the attitude of the 'last to arrive'. The Spanish novice, Brother Nicholas Emo seemed to be getting on more quickly in his efforts to evangelize in Roebuck Bay. He not only had his mission to the numerous Filipino Pearlers who spoke Spanish, but had announced his intentions of baptizing about thirty or forty Aborigines to begin with. Also, old Father Joseph was full of zeal as he prepared to go to Wyndham. The challenge for Fr.Alphonse was to reconcile certain Aboriginal practices with Christianity. Grappling with what he saw as moral problems for those being instructed for Baptism, Fr.Alphonse

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<sup>155</sup> *Lombadina Chronicle*. ADB.

<sup>156</sup> *Allimarum* ADB.



Tachon began writing to his predecessor, Fr.Duncan McNab, asking for his advice as to what course of action he should take. For example, two of his students, Joanny and Yolk, had been circumcised and had taken part in the ceremonies which followed.

Fr.McNab, in Richmond, Victoria, tried to get clerical advice on the matters raised, for he felt his experience was inadequate. He wrote long letters to Fr.Alphonse to give the content of his own method of religious instruction, his ideas about ownership of property, polygamy, the law of the land, marriage, education and corroborations, hiring for work, instruction and prayers, doctrine and language, education, and the attitude of the Melbourne Synod. He had encouraged Fr.Alphonse to get more Government support for educational programs and training.

With regard to Baptism, Fr.McNab wrote: "What may be done in Tonga is no rule for you!"

*"If an Aborigine is well instructed and promises to renounce certain customs, and you believe him to be sincere, he may and should be baptised. The grace of Baptism might enable him to keep his resolution and promise."* <sup>157</sup>

Fr.Alphonse Tachon was encouraged to proceed with preparation for group Baptism. The day finally came in Beagle Bay, 15 August 1896, when the names of twelve new Christians were recorded: Joseph Santamara, born 1874; Joachim Friday, born 1870; Pierre Telediel; Edmund Palebo, born 1876; Louis Wanaregne, born 1879; Narcisse Wanaregne; Malgen; Jacques Tiarbarbar, born 1875; Remi born 1883; Sebastian Kalbokarbar born 1885; Leon Palsmorebon; and Patrick Wardiebor; born 1876. <sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> McNab to Tachon Correspondence 1895-1896. SJAJ.

<sup>158</sup> Bay Baptismal Regista ADB.

When 23 Aborigines had asked to be instructed for Baptism , at an open meeting, Fr.Alphonse was faced with a changing situation. Felix was among them, but he had a broken heart, for he must send away one of his wives. He gave the youngest of his wives to his brother Henry. Felix was baptised in 1897 by Fr.Alphonse. His godfather was Thomas Puerto llano. Among other early Christians were Emmanuel, Augustine, and Leonie Widjie.

When Fr.Nicholas Emo had been in Broome for awhile, he began to wonder if, by mistake , he were in an ante-chamber of hell. Nothing more unlike the monastic life, to which he had committed himself in France, could be imagined. He tried not to see the promiscuous lasses who were visiting the camps of the lugger crews and making themselves available to all comers. They were cause of constant fights among the Filipinos and between the Filipinos and Malays. There were also the 'coquettes', those girls who were more selective, generally the more attractive. Fr.Nicholas soon found that spotted reputations did not interfere with marriage prospects. He devoted himself to enable family life to survive among the coloured populace.

From his first appearance in town, complete with habit, cowl, and cross, he had been regarded with respect, which grew to esteem by the White Protestant population , and by the coloured population other than the Filipinos , who accorded him the respect given to a priest of any denomination. His dignity and simplicity were at all times impressive. The stone cross which he set up was one of Broome's earliest monuments . When he had landed with nothing, he had to throw himself upon the charity of others. He obtained a tent, land on which to pitch it, and he had a church. It was easy enough to erect a bough shed behind it for shade, and this was his room. There was plenty to do.

After a little time, being dependent upon public charity, Fr. Nicholas was able to open an orphan school in order to gather in the Aboriginal children, as well as some half-caste girls.

The Abbot from Beagle Bay then commenced to give assistance in the way of provisions, and with this help, for the next three years, Fr. Nicholas succeeded in supporting thirty- seven children and adults, and in paying a small salary for a school mistress. She was a half caste woman married to a Manila man. Because she had spent some of her earlier years at Broome, she had considerable influence and sympathy with the Aborigines , especially among the children. He gave her and her husband , who was his sacristan, the title of half of one of his allotments of land, and paid her £3 per month. He saw a good deal of her and judged that she was a good, pure and trustworthy woman.

In 1897, the West Australian Government constitution had been granted by the Imperial Government. The control of the Aborigines was handed over to the West Australian Government by the British Colonial Office, which had stipulated that 1% of the revenue of the colony be granted to Aboriginal welfare and education. At the time, this was nearly £30,000. Within a year, this would be reduced to £5000, and any such other amount as Parliament might choose to vote. A sub-department was set up to manage native affairs.

This Aborigines Act of 1897, which was an amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act of 1886, removed equity in educational opportunities for Aborigines as compared with other Australians in West Australia. Because at this time, Aboriginal education became the responsibility of the Aborigine s Department, later Education Departments were able to evade responsibility for Aboriginal children. This legislation enabled white parents to have Aborigines

and half-castes removed from State Schools when they so wished.

As part of a report on the Kimberley Natives to the Aboriginal Protection Board, Mr. George Marsdon described Fr. Nicholas's Broome Mission. He began by saying that there were ten girls and three boys, all well clothed, healthy, and that the food supplied to them was sufficient. They attended school and chapel twice daily. Fr. Nicholas stated that the conduct of the children was good and that he had no trouble with them, that five adults had been converted and three of the women had been married. Then Mr. Marsdon added a short note: *Report says that the women are offered to the Malays by the Matron, but I scarcely credit it. These people who have told me these things have not seen it themselves.*<sup>159</sup>

The Secretary of the Aboriginal Protection Board forwarded the report to Bishop Gibney asking for any remarks he might have to make on the subject of the Roman Catholic Mission School, Broome. A reply was sent assuring the Board that a great deal of care was taken in the selection of the matron of the Aboriginal school in question. In Broome, Fr. Nicholas asked for references from the local doctor, Mr. Brownrigg, and the police sergeant, Mr. Thomas, for his school, and forwarded a supporting letter signed by 27 Broome residents, 26 August 1897.

Fr. Nicholas wrote his explanation of the situation in Spanish, 1 August 1897, to Bishop Gibney, saying, "There were children with no one to care for them on the Broome streets. One gentleman had sought admission for five half-castes of both sexes. When I have room, there are three more Aboriginal boys. Many Aboriginal boys and girls who are roaming about would be able to attend to school and classes if my school is a success. Manilamen of reputable character are willing to

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<sup>159</sup> Marsden to Secretary of APB, 11 March 1897, ACAP.

marry two of the grown-up girls, as soon as they are of marriageable age.

But, the whole affair of the slanderous note had done a great deal of harm. It had been a major setback. Finally, disgusted and disheartened, Fr.Nicholas let the school go, asking the European ladies in Broome to take the older girls into service. He kept with him , and continued to support , the older boys, and the younger children. <sup>160</sup>

In Disaster Bay Fr.Jean Marie and Fr.Narcisse had established another little mission. Originally they had gone to put cattle there, and then a mission started for those families who came each year to pass some time there. The first two baptisms of people in danger of death, were entered in 1897. Within a few months, the number had grown to twenty. Eight children were being cared for.

In Beagle Bay. Fr.Alphonse had baptised twenty-four people and celebrated five marriages. Thirty children were being permanently cared for. Fr.Alphonse lamented the plight of the women, and the need for religious women to help them. The Abbot had gone again to France. He had been appointed chaplain to the monks of Ubexy, then to those

who were refugees from Holland, at Blitterswijk. <sup>161</sup> He would not be back.

The Aborigines Department which had come into existence on 1 April 1896 was now the agency responsible for the administration

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<sup>160</sup> Interview with Fr.Nicholas Emo, *Roth Report* 1905.B.L.

<sup>161</sup> French Documents. ADB.

of Aboriginal Affairs. As a sub-department of the Treasury, its entire staff consisted of two clerks (in 1899, the number was reduced to one). The duties of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, defined by legislation, were discharged through part-time protectors of Aborigines.

John Forrest was the Minister in charge. He had some knowledge of Aboriginal customs as an explorer, and regarded the portfolio as important for imperial relations. The Chief Protector was H.C.Prinsep, who knew little about them, and had no experience. The right to 1 % of revenue had been repealed, and there was a drive to reduce departmental expenditure. The Beagle Bay grant disappeared altogether.

Henry Prinsep, was of the opinion that the efforts made in Beagle Bay, Broome, and Disaster Bay were misdirected, for in such an out of the way corner the Aborigines were not being interfered with, or demoralized by the whites. He notified the Premier's office that Br.Daly had written an appeal for some assistance. In 1899, the three stations were supporting 48 children, Broome 6, Disaster Bay 12, Beagle Bay 30. There were also 30 sick and infirm Aborigines relieved. No decision was made about any subsidy.<sup>162</sup>

Bishop W.Kelly had been appointed to Geraldton in 1898, and had been given responsibility for the three Missions in the Kimberley. Fr.Nicholas wrote to him about the possibility of Religious Sisters coming to Broome. Bishop Kelly replied that because the Sisters of the Trappist Order had been already invited there could be a conflict of interests. Then there was the problem of a suitable house and resources to support them. He suggested that Fr.Nicholas write

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<sup>162</sup> File in Battye Library Archives: Daly to CPA, Report on Broome, Beagle Bay, and Disaster Bay 31 December 1898; Prinsep (Undated), Premier's Secretary, 13 January 1899, North, 16 January 1899.

directly to Bishop Gibney reminding him of his promise regarding town blocks for the Church in Broome.

With the help of subscriptions from the people of Broome, and the carpenter and joiner Brother from Beagle Bay Mission, Fr. Nicholas had built a church, and a residence for himself. This house served as a school for the remaining children of his Aborigines. About the same time he bought seven or eight town allotments in close proximity to the church. Each allotment cost over £20.

He erected huts on these for the Christian married couples. These allotments and improvements were paid for out of his own private pocket. Then he made them over to various of the native couples, and impressed upon the wives the necessity for always retaining them, so they might always have a permanent home in Broome. They occasionally paid back a little towards the cost of purchase. He was quite satisfied with what they had given him. <sup>163</sup> CL

Many of the couples whom Fr. Emo married were illiterate. On their marriage vows, only his very carefully hand recorded the information required by the Government. Their only sign was a cross, where signatures were required. On one of them he wrote that the ceremony was in the Church of N.S. de Paz. <sup>164</sup>

One of the Aborigines from Beagle Bay, Remi Balagai described the Broome Church of the time in the following words: *"When I was in Broome, Father Nicholas was there. I get Holy Communion when the boat was laying up at Christmas. Many people go to Church in Broome, white, black, coloured, Manilla people. All Manilla, when Christmas coming, big concert in the Church, you couldn't get in."*

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<sup>163</sup> Roth Report. 1905.

<sup>164</sup> Catholic Church Records. ADB.

*Fr.Nicholas got two places, one in the point, where they build new jetty later, this side a bit more. In town, he live in the Church.*

By 1899, the population living ashore in Broome was over a thousand whites and Asiatics, including about a hundred white women living ashore, and a number still living aboard the schooners. There were probably two thousand Asiatics working on the luggers at sea. Of them, Malays were the most numerous, followed by Koepangers. There were probably three hundred to four hundred Filipinos living ashore and working on the boats and about the same number of Japanese.

The Chinese population were nearly all shore dwellers. As lugger crews and divers the Filipinos were regarded by many pearlers as being as efficient as Japanese, who were just beginning to make their presence felt in the industry. Most of them were Catholic with some knowledge of Spanish, perhaps one third of them were Moslems and non-Christian. Either voluntarily, or on the orders of his superiors, Fr.Nicholas was not sure, he had assumed control of this unruly mob. His word was law, not only among the Catholic Filipinos, but also among the Moslems and others.

Fr.Nicholas's alleged monopoly of the half caste girls enhanced his reputation among the Japanese. Their failure to set the half caste girls up in Japanese-owned Geisha houses, convinced them that Fr.Nicholas exercised an immensely powerful influence in the town. It was said that there were three cases of white pearlers, all men with several boats and well off financially, who wanted to marry girls from Madame Anabia's establishment.

They abducted the girls with a view to marriage. They were arrested, and while they were held (but never charged), the girls were married off to Filipinos by Fr.Nicholas. Notwithstanding the jokes and



rumours about his establishments, Fr.Nicholas' reputation remained high.

The most serious allegation against him was that he operated an illicit still which allegedly supplied bootleg spirits to the Asiatic population. This story was utterly without foundation. But every year just before lay-up, some unfortunate policeman was sent out to search for Fr.Nicholas's supply of illicit liquor.

The pearlers all knew about his 'still'. Most had watched him working at it. It consisted of an ordinary lugger camp-oven about sixteen inches in diameter and eight inches deep. Into it Fr.Nicholas used to fit nine or ten 'Perfection' whisky bottles filled with mashed up leaves or chips and water, with the bulbous part of the whisky bottle immersed in water (their shape permitted simultaneous immersion of nine or ten in the camp oven). Through the corks of the bottles ran a quarter inch copper tube, formed into a coil running through a kerosene tin full of cold water, with the end of the tubes sticking through the corks of clear glass bottles standing in another kerosene tin of cold water. The whole arrangement, was a crude but most effective still, which could have been used for making whisky, rum, gin, or any other spirit, but *was not*. It was used to make Cajeput Oil.

The Malay word for the paper bark ti-tree is Kayu Putch, white wood. The Koepangers, Macassar men, and Filipinos pronounced the Kayu as Kaju- and among them the name became 'Kaju putch', and among the Aborigines and Whites, 'Cajeput'. Cajeput Oil was used as a remedy for tinea and other skin diseases and was a popular cure for many ills among the Filipinos, Malays, and other Asiatics. All divers used it as an embrocation, and quite a quantity was consumed by the pearling fleet. Much of it was imported, but that produced locally by Fr.Nicholas was favoured above all other. He

was able to sell as much of it as he could produce. The proceeds of the sale of his Cajeput Oil and other products provided his income.

In addition, he prepared several other medicaments from bush shrubs and fruit, notably a brown, sugary material he made by boiling quantities of the leaves of one particular bush, he kept adding more leaves to the brew until it was in his opinion strong enough, then he boiled it away until only the brown crystal remained. He prescribed it as a specific for beri beri. The Asiatics believed in it. Many pearlshells used it. It seemed effective. He also distilled seeds of a wild plum to produce a strongly perfumed oil, which had a powerful purgative effect. The little brilliant red and black wattle seeds, the spinifex seeds, all full of oil, were used by Fr. Nicholas. He distilled some essence from almost every plant he encountered. He had been known to operate on a Malay who suffered severe abdominal wounds from the bursting barrel of a shotgun, and the fact that the man survived demonstrated his surgical capacity. <sup>165</sup>

At Beagle Bay Mission the bark buildings were being eaten by white ants, and were going to ruin. There had been great storms and the interiors were flooded. Fr. Alphonse wrote to his brother, "*The white ants continue to devour us. I am obliged to argue with them over the altar, plank by plank, and to make war on them regularly.*" Fr. Alphonse had attended the corroboree that had come from afar. The men had been excited about it for five months. He saw nothing wrong in it. <sup>166</sup> In July he had celebrated another nineteen baptisms. The two godparents for this Baptism were Remy and Agnes Puertollano. <sup>167</sup> He had now prepared a hundred and eight for Baptism.

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<sup>165</sup> Correspondence, 'Howe to Durack' ACAP.

<sup>166</sup> Tachon to his brother Louis, 15 April 1899, TASF. clxvii *Beagle Bay Baptismal Register.ADB.*

<sup>167</sup> *Beagle Bay Baptismal Register.ADB.*

Father Alphonse had been elected Superior by the Beagle Bay community, in June, 1899, by the community. Before assuming the position he waited for confirmation from France. Two of the Priests who had come out with the 1895 group had become discontented and had been disrupting the community. In August they left together to return to France. Fr.Alphonse heaved a sigh of relief upon their departure. The help he was waiting for from God had been given.

It had been said that after their departure peace would come to Beagle Bay. This was partly what happened. He had intended to accept the role of authority, but he did nothing. He waited for a reply from the Abbot General. He knew if his election as Superior was approved there was a possibility of eventual election as Abbot. The answer arrived in Beagle Bay 19 November 1899. He read the letter to the community 23 November, and declared that he had accepted his election. He then declared that he had to go away in the interests of the Mission and left some minutes later. From this moment, all the strength, all the energy of his soul and body, night and day were consecrated to this Community which had given itself to him.

He changed his itinerary and went to Perth to speak to the Government of the titles to property, and for the increase of the subsidy. The business dragged. He was hopeful. There was no doubt of the next success. He did not write to Rome because Fr.Anselm had done so. Moreover he would have closely followed his letter in person. With his titles of property, with the promise of abundant help, he would present himself to the Abbot General. His election would have been confirmed. <sup>168</sup>

Meantime , one of the priests who had left the Community in August, returned from France to the Kimberley bearing two personal letters

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<sup>168</sup> Alphonse Tachon, 'Beagle Bay Mission Defence Document 21.ADB. from TASF.

from Sept Fons. One of these was dated 12 December, 1899. Apparently, the directive was for Fr.Nicholas Emo to take charge of Notre Dame du Sacre Coeur, and replace Fr.Alphonse Tachon. Blissfully ignorant of the situation, in Perth, 22 February, Fr.Alphonse received fragments of a letter, half French, half Latin, and partly unintelligible, informing him that eight members of the community were leaving for Palestine, and that La Trappe had been reduced to the state of 'Grange', while awaiting better times.

The sad news stimulated him to try all the harder to conclude the business in Perth. He obtained permission from Fr.Nicholas to break the news to Bishop Gibney. There was a painful scene with the latter 24 February, but Fr.Alphonse succeeded in getting the Bishop to call on the First Minister, John Forrest, about the title to the 10,000 acres of land. From him came the favourable reply, *"You have fulfilled your conditions, we are going to fulfil ours."*

It was at this time that Mrs Daisy Bates met Fr.Alphonse at Sunbury. She wrote:

*"The poor priest was truly a most pitiful creature, nearly blind and dreadfully emaciated, and, although still comparatively young in years, he seemed trembling with the feebleness of old age. From this little warrior I heard much of the natives and the mission and their work and its setbacks, and my own interest in the aborigines began with that meeting."*<sup>169</sup>

Fr.Alphonse left Perth to return to Beagle Bay with the words of Bishop Gibney ringing in his ears, *"Tell your Community that I am going to hasten the conclusion of your business."* Promises had been made for gifts of £500 to £1000 to buy fishing boats.

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<sup>169</sup> Daisy Bates, *71ie Australasian*, 'Trappist Mission at Beagle BAy' 10 August 1929. State Library of Victoria.

In France, the suppression of La Trappe had been decreed. In Beagle Bay, that suppression was known, trunks were packed, bookings were made for sea travel. Sheep were sold. Cattle, machinery and furniture were up for sale. During that time, the recognised Superior of Beagle Bay had been in Perth, moving heaven and earth in order to get land and money for a work already abandoned. Only when he landed in Broome, 2 April 1900, did Fr. Alphonse learn of the suppression of 'Notre Dame du Sacre Coeur'.

The irony of it all! Fr. Alphonse believed God had seen his ambition and chastised him for it. He blessed God then, and would continue to do so. He could pray, *"Throw the unfaithful! Jonas into the sea. But may the ship be saved."*<sup>170</sup>

Fr. Nicholas advised him to go with the others and personally represent the case for the Mission to the Major Superiors. The boat on which the ten religious were leaving was due at Singapore 19 April, and was met at Port Said, 12 May 1900, by the Abbot of Sept Fons, Dom Chautard.

The appointment to go in charge of the mission at Beagle Bay, had come as a shock to Fr. Nicholas. He had problems enough in Broome with white fellows who refused to come to Church under the pretence that the Church was full of coloured and black fellows whom they utterly detested. How could he prevent these coloured Christians from going to Church when he had established the mission for them?

Then, Fr. Alphonse had accused him of contradictions in his telegrams to Perth. Now, to be put in charge of everything, not to

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<sup>170</sup> Tachon, 'Beagle Bay Mission Defence'.

build and consolidate but to destroy, namely to dismember the community, was a blow not easily forgotten.

The two sick and dissatisfied members who had returned to France, had claimed the mission could not support itself Fr.Nicholas had sent Fr.Alphonse to Europe in his name and as the bearer of a letter pleading for the continuation of the mission. <sup>171</sup>

The Superior General of the Pious Society of Missions (Pallottines), wrote 13 June 1900 to Fr.George Walter PSM, telling him that their Order had been offered the Mission at Beagle Bay by Bishop W. Kelly, the Bishop of Geraldton. <sup>172</sup>

22 June 1900, Fr.M.Rua of the Salesians had been offered the mission by the Abbot of Sept Fons, who was prepared to leave two Fathers there while awaiting the Salesians' reply. The reasons the Abbot gave to the Salesians for the closure of the mission were that it was too isolated, there was the absence of regular visitation, and the missionary life

was incompatible with their Rule. <sup>173</sup>The Renewal movement within the Order, as described in *Waters of Silence* by Thomas Merton called for more conformity than was possible at the Mission.

In August 1900, Bishop Gibney left Fremantle in the S.S.Karrakatta, for Broome and Beagle Bay, with Dean Martelli and Mrs Daisy Bates. He would attempt to save the Mission. In September 1900 they were in Broome.

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<sup>171</sup> Emo to Bourke, 8 May 1900, ACAP.

<sup>172</sup> Whitmee to Walter, 13 June 1900, ADB.

<sup>173</sup> Wyart to Rua, 22 June 1900, ASC.

Bishop Gibney was pleased with the new Broome Church, a neat, substantial building made of galvanized iron with wooden lining and ceiling and surrounded by a side veranda. It had been erected by the Manilamen.<sup>174</sup>

At Beagle Bay, they were met with horses, and rode by moonlight the 8 miles to the Mission.

The survey notes were compiled nightly by Mrs Bates:

*There had been a community of sixteen, but Fr. Nicholas, Brothers Jean, Daly, and Sebastian were the only ones left with the strength to work. Gardens, paddocks, sorghum, sugar cane, every plantation and paddock was smothered in growths of sapling, sucker and native herbage.*

Felix took them round the cultivated land surrounding the monastery.

There was need for haste in what was to be accomplished, as the Government was sending a surveyor and valuer to the mission to see whether the improvements justified the title to the 10,000 acres promised if there had been improvements to the value of £5000.

*On the first day they took hoes and things to clear paddocks and garden of the rank growths that had reduced them to 'wild bush' again. The Bishop and several men had one paddock. Dear Martelli, Mrs Bates, Domcilla, Philomena, Agnes, and Mathilde, and some other women were set to work at sorghum and sugarcane paddocks. Everyone worked.*

*The surveyor arrived 25 September just as they had cleared the last*

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<sup>174</sup> Gibney to Pennefather, 27 August 1900. ACAP.

*cornel: He was evidently surprised to see a thriving property where he had been led to expect ruin and decay.*

*They went round all the cleared gardens and paddocks with the surveyor, who valued every fruit tree, vegetable patch, sorghum, sugarcane, and couch grass paddock and every industry in operation. Inoted down every valliation made. Each night these were read over to the surveyor and audited by him. The practical Bishop lefl nothing to chance; all was done on strict business lines. After the valuation had been completed they departed for Disaster Bay.*

*Surveyor Dreyer left 26 October. He had found that the sum of his valuation of his fixed improvements amouunted to more than £6000, while the live stock added £4000 to the valuation. The Bishop was greatly heartened, and said, "Thanks be to God, the mission is saved for the Blacks. "*

*Then began the survey of the 10,000 acres for which the Bishop now knew he would receive the title deeds. The only surveying instruments available were the chain and the compass from the 'Jessie'. Felix did the pegging. Over marsh and through pindan they went, the Bishop throwing down a small branch, which marked the chain limit, Brother Jean and Felix doing the rest. They ran their lines to and beyond Buanguadok five miles from the mission.*

*Bishop Gibney wrote to Rome of his admiration for the spiritual achievemellts of the missionaries. At Beagle Bay mission he had found 147 Christians. At Disaster Bay there were 55. In Broome there were 63. He had confirmed a total of 153 people at the three places.*<sup>175</sup>

Early in January 1901, Fr.Nicholas finished a very lengthy letter

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<sup>175</sup> Daisy Bates, op. cit., *The Australasian* , 10, 17, 24 August 1929.



commenced it 23 November 1900. It was in French to the Abbot in Sept Fons, and in it he tried to express his attitude to the suppression of the Mission.

From these extracts it is possible to comprehend a little of his missiological spirit. *"I have convinced myself. Rev. Father, that the lord wants the continuation of this Mission for all the efforts to sell or liquidate it are failing. However, that does not mean to say that we Ourselves ought to continue it. Perhaps the good God has reserved others more capable and more worthy than us for this work..."*

*There is a11 important question that it might be necessary to clear up. 'Can our Order in conscience, accept Missions or not?' There is in the Church of God, through a special grace of His Providence and Mercy, by which he wants to accommodate himself to all dispositions and temperaments, three types of life, Contemplative, Active and Mixed.*

*To which of these three does our Cistercian Order belong?*

*The contemplative is like a 'gondola' placed in a pool in a park, which need not be as strong as the 'golette' (a fishing ship), which must make its way through the furious ocean, breaking the foaming waves which resist it.*

*To know how to pray and love is the art of the Contemplative. On the contrary, it is necessary for the active person to be well educated.*

*In a word: the Australian Missionary needs to be sufficient in himself or often there will be no one for him to consult.*

The climate works a great deal on the organism and renders moods sour.

*Today I frankly believe that God wanted to change the personnel of the Community and again, not all, but certain members for whom the Australian climate was unsuitable."*

Fr.Nicholas had assumed responsibility for supporting the married Manilamen who worked, among other things, at carpentry and tailoring. He wrote, *"Our Manilamen are of an irreproachable morality and all are devoted to us, without paying them any more than their keep and their clothes."*<sup>176</sup>

But the words of Fr.Nicholas had no power to stem the tide of change which had been unleashed by the spirit of disorder and decay. His group was dissolving into its constituent parts. He continued to believe that God's love worked more powerfully when all the agencies of destruction seemed bent on destruction.

In France, the Abbot of Sept Fons, Jean Baptiste Chautard made the final decisions. He was prepared to leave Fr.Nicholas, Brothers John and Xavier in Australia for a certain time. He had delegated to Fr.Jean Marie Janny, brother of Abbot Ambrose, the powers of procurator. Fr.Nicholas would no longer deal with the business of the Order. The money remaining after liquidation of the mission would defray expenses at the mission of El Althroun in Palestine.<sup>177</sup>

This chapter of history was finished. The cradle of Catholic presence in the Kimberley had been prepared with many signs of special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Names given to the Churches were, 'Our Lady of the Sacred Heart' in Beagle Bay, 'Our Lady of Peace' in Broome, and 'Mission of the Annunciation' in Disaster Bay.

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<sup>176</sup> Emo to Chautard, 25.November 1900. TASF.

<sup>177</sup> Emo to Chautard, 25.November 1900. TASF.

## PART 2

**1901 - 1927**

### **The Growth of National Identity**

The Pallottines come to the Kimberley.

Interaction between missionaries, Aborigines , settlers, pearlers, police, and officials;

Government Policy regarding half-caste children, 1902; The Roth Inquiry, 1904; The Aboriginal Protection Act, 1905;

Fr.William Droste PSM ;

Fr.Nicholas Emo OCSO, Broome, Cygnet Bay;

The Benedictines at Drysdale River; Abbot Fulgentius Torres, OSB, Vicar Apostolic 1910;

The Sisters of St.John of God, 1907;

Fr.Nicholas Emo takes charge of Lombadina.

The First World War. Death of Abbot Torres and of Fr.Nicholas Emo;

Fr.John Creagh, C.ss.R., Apostolic Administrator

1916; Attempted closure of Lombadina Mission

1917;

Opening of Beagle Bay Church, 1918; Death of Fr.Thomas

Bachmair, PSM;

Appointment of Bishop E.Coppo SDB, Vicar Apostolic 1922; \

The Salesians come to the Kimberley 1923;

New Pallottine Personnel, 1925;

Changes for the Sisters, 1926;

Resignation of Bishop E.Coppo, 1927.

## CHAPTER 4

••• The seed is sprouting and growing:  
*how, he does not know... "Mk. 4:27*

### THE PALLOTTINES COME TO THE KIMBERLEY

At the beginning of the century when the Federal Constitution of Australia was being written, an attempt was being made to define national identity. Elements of racism and bigotry in the new nation caused the contribution made by Asians (especially Filipinos), Germans and Aborigines, to be omitted.

Bishop Kelly of Geraldton had invited the German Province of Limburg to send a group of religious men to take the place of the French missionaries at Beagle Bay. Fr. George Walter PSM, the founder of the Pallottine Order in Australia, had been one of the four men sent from his mission field of the Cameroons in Africa. Through no fault of his own, he found himself in the centre of controversy, as soon as he set foot in Australia, in 1901. <sup>178</sup>

To begin with, he had to cope with public feeling whipped up by media coverage which had snapped up cliches about his Beagle Bay Mission, such as:

1. Monks marry Manilamen to Aboriginal women!
2. 'Plot to lease land to Manilamen!'
3. 'Mixed settlement of Manilamen and native women!'

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<sup>178</sup> .Schuetzeichel SAC, *Familienbrief*. "Die Pallottiner in Australien", 5,6, November 1966, p.305.

The first slogan portrayed Mission Policy as directly violating the 'White Australia Policy'; the second involved legislation prohibiting land ownership by temporary indentured coloured workers; the third was caricatured as a travesty of 20th century civilization.<sup>179</sup>

It was the beginning of a very stormy eight years in Fr. Walter's life. When he reached Beagle Bay Mission, he found elements of the reports were true. There were many Manilamen there. They were working with Fr. Nicholas Emo, the acting Superior of the Mission at that time. As Church workers, they were making up the numbers demanded as one of the conditions for the land grant. Some of them had been married to Aboriginal women. For example, the Puertollano family was the backbone of the fragile Catholic presence in the area.

The team at Beagle Bay consisted of Fr. Nicholas, Brothers John, Xavier, Sebastian and Filipino families working as lay helpers for board, food and clothing. Their women folk assisted the other Aboriginal women keeping the garden going and doing chores. At this time there actually were two camps on the mission, one for Aborigines, and one for Manilamen.

Fr. George Walter had heard Bishop Gibney's argument that the Catholic Church was bound to protect the Aboriginal women by marriage, as it would protect white women under similar circumstances. First of all, both Europeans and Asiatics who were from Catholic backgrounds were expected to conduct themselves in a moral manner and marry the women with whom they were living. Secondly, Bishop Gibney had claimed that the land issue had been orchestrated because of the prospect of a few thousand acres being set aside for the welfare of the Natives.

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<sup>179</sup> *The West Australian*, "The Beagle Bay Mission: The Question of Asiatic Population: Interview with Bishop Gibney" 4 February 1901. 8.23, 27/1. ACAP.

There was fear that it could set a precedent.

By the Land Acts of the colony, the Government had been empowered to grant individual Aborigines up to 200 acres.

In any case land was being granted to the missionaries, to be held in trust for the Aborigines. The title would secure for missionaries the right to use and occupy the land, to enable them to continue their work without fear of disturbance. The Bishop was prepared to accept the title in his own name in trust for the Aborigines and their descendants, thus guaranteeing the land against the future manipulation of the concession.

Fr. Walter knew that Bishop Gibney had written to the Commissioner of Crown Lands applying for the land in 'fee simple'. It was stirring up so much trouble. The Bishop had fulfilled his side of the bargain. He was determined to get the title. He applied for 8000 acres near the Mission site, and 2000 acres at Disaster Bay.<sup>180</sup>

Another problem which plagued Fr. Walter was that the outgoing missionaries expected reimbursement for money invested by them in the Mission. Unwittingly, as new Superior, Fr. Walter entered into a contract with the Trappists, through Fr. Nicholas Emo (who was unaware that he no longer represented his Order in Australia). The latter had not felt justified in selling the buildings, fences, and improvements at Beagle Bay Mission, because he considered them to be part and parcel of the Trust. They had been built with the labour and assistance of the Aborigines and had been erected for their use and benefit. He was prepared to sell the cattle. Then Fr. Jean Marie Janny turned up to replace Fr. Nicholas. Fr. Walter signed another

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<sup>180</sup> Clifton to Gibney, 13 March 1901. ACAP.

contract. He promised to pay £3,740 for cattle and chattels at Beagle Bay and Disaster Bay, and for two lots of land at Broome. Payments were due in 1901, 1903, and 1905. <sup>181</sup>

Bishop Kelly of Geraldton, responsible for the Vicariate of the Kimberley, wrote to Fr. Walter to tell him that he was very unhappy about the contract. He believed that all the profits and increased assets of the Mission from the beginning, belonged to the Church and not to the Trappists. He regarded this as a simple matter of justice. Did the Trappists come to Beagle Bay to labour for their own profit or for the good of the Aborigines? If the former, they deceived the Church, the State and the Public. If they came for the latter object, then there was no doubt that these assets belonged to the Church which represented the Aborigines and was the guardian of their interests. <sup>182</sup>

In his anxiety, Fr. Walter turned to Bishop Gibney for financial help. He could see the resources of the Mission but he was helpless. The French would not let him sell any of the 800 cattle until he paid the money for them in full. Fr. Jean Marie watched him like a hawk. Because of his innate honesty, and the fact that he did not know how properties changed hands in the outback in Australia, he complied with their wishes. Since he could not meet his commitments, he became depressed and impatient.

Bishop Gibney made enquiries about taking out a mortgage on the cattle at the station at 6%. This enabled £1200 to be placed in the bank to Mission credit. <sup>183</sup> Fr. Walter happily forwarded £1000 to the Abbot of Sept Fons, as the first of three installments. But this meant that he still had no money. There was now another debt on the

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<sup>181</sup> Memorandum of Agreement between Janny and Walter, 28 March 1901. TASF.

<sup>182</sup> Kelly to Walter, 28 April 1901, ADB.

<sup>183</sup> Walter to Gibney, January 1902. ACAP.



property, and a liability for the guarantor, Bishop Gibney.

In the following years, the Abbot of Sept Fons, through letters, and through his agent, Fr. Jean Marie Janny, continued to forbid the sale of any cattle from Beagle Bay Mission. He charged interest on the overdue amounts, and demanded security from Bishop Gibney (who, in his heart, agreed with Bishop Kelly's comments).<sup>184</sup> The German Province was in no position to take on any more debts, they had financial problems of their own.<sup>185</sup>

Through decree, Propaganda Fide Rome had commissioned the Beagle Bay Mission to the Pious Society of Missions (Pallottines), in January 1901. To begin with, there were four missionaries in this group, Fr. George Walter, Fr. Patrick White, Br. Matthias Kasperek, and Br. Augustine Sixt. Fr. Walter could not have foreseen that the bones of the two Brothers would eventually lie in the Beagle Bay cemetery. The first would work 29 years on the Mission. The second, after some troubles in community with Father Walter, would apply for a dispensation in 1908, and live the life of a hermit near the Mission for decades. Fr. Patrick White was English.

The German Lay Brothers were to become the pivot on which the whole missionary effort swung. They were the unsung heroes. Another party of four would leave Limburg for Beagle Bay in 1902. Three more joined the staff in 1903. Four more came to the mission in 1904.

On arrival at Beagle Bay, Fr. Walter succumbed to the charms of Fr. Nicholas immediately. He wrote to Trappist General: *"I was able to observe with great pleasure and joy, what great good Fr. Nicholas*

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<sup>184</sup> V Kelly to Walter 14 April 1902. ACAP.

<sup>185</sup> Whitmee to Walter. undated. ADB.

*has done in this mission...allow the good Father to stay here in his place as missionary."* <sup>186</sup>

As Superior of the Mission, Fr.Walter kept himself informed about all aspects of it. For example, he knew that from the moment that Father Jean Marie's authority was known, Fr.Nicholas had put the horses and the land in Broome to the Order's benefit and he had lived in the little sacristy behind the Church. He had kept his goats, pigs, and fowls to pay his fare and that of Brother Sebastian to the Trappist house to which they would be sent when they were withdrawn from the Mission.

Later, when a Government official had offered Fr.Nicholas 50 acres of land 3½, miles from Broome, Fr.Walter heard that he had given the house to a Manilaman and his Aboriginal wife. Fr.Nicholas had also had been offered a fenced paddock with 200 acres of land, a big well of fresh water, a house for a 21 year lease, for a pepper-com rental. It was only 1½, miles from Broome. <sup>187</sup>

These had been offered in support of Fr.Nicholas's work, because of his views in favour of large reserves, and smaller local reserves, under Government supervision, near those towns where Aborigines were employed. Fr.Walter believed that as he was in charge of the Mission effort, he should control these acquisitions.

Fr.Nicholas had taken steps to place half-caste and black children who were roaming the streets of Broome, under some control so that they had an opportunity for education. He had taken six of the older boys from Broome to the Beagle Bay Mission. They had been well trained by him in Broome, and were potentially good students.

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<sup>186</sup> Walter to Wyart, Undated. TASF.

<sup>187</sup> Emo to Chautard, February 1902. TASF.

In Broome Fr.Nicholas kept under his special care nine old and infirm women, two old men (one senile), five little girls (one blind), two small boys, and two sick women. One man had an amputated leg, two others suffered from an incurable disease, one young man from consumption, and one from pleurisy. A total of twenty-six people he fed three times daily and supplied with medicine, rice, meat, bread, tea, pumpkins, tomatoes, and watermelons. Often some goat's milk was given. Nicholas paid for all this and was in debt to the amount of £100 at one time.

The Government had not given him support in the beginning, except for a box of medicine. With the exception of the worst cases (the amputated leg, the pleurisy, and the syphilitic) who were at the back of his premises in a tent and a hut, they were all at the Point, a headland, within the town boundary where he had ten acres. This was a very healthy locality with a sea breeze, for which Fr.Nicholas paid £3 rent. It was his Aboriginal camp. He had baptised 131 Aborigines, 45 men, 16 boys, 45 women, and 25 girls. Of the 33 who had died, all expenses in connection with the sickness, death and internment were borne by him.

His work had borne such good fruit that the non-Christians in the bush invariably came to him for help and assistance in the way of medical and other comforts. He frequently visited their camps for this purpose. He let them know when he visited their camps that he was fond of their children and offered them rice and flour for any infant they did not want. The police had always helped him. Because it was known that Fr.Nicholas was denying himself to give food and medicine to ten sick Aborigines, Government relief had been given.

<sup>188</sup> Broome RMO, Dr.Blick, supported Fr.Nicholas's ideas agreeing that drink and prostitution were the chief evils. Apart from those suffering from syphilis and allied diseases he believed that there was

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<sup>188</sup> Interview, *Roth Report*.

not a happier people living than the Aborigines. With regard to the work and compensation of Father Nicholas, Dr.Blick had recognised an energetic but disinterested worker among the Aborigines. He had recommended that his work should be subsidized.<sup>189</sup>

Fr.Walter, on the other hand, was hampered by his dilemma about resources. This would always be central to his missionary work in Australia, He described it as "*The sword of Damocles which hung over the mission.*"<sup>190</sup> Because he had given his word to pay the French for the Mission cattle, he was 'hoist with his own petard'. He was a proud man, an experienced missionary from the Cameroons in Africa, and this was not a good start. For Fr.Nicholas it seemed so effortless to be successful. Fr.Walter began to have his suspicions about him.<sup>191</sup>

The new Pious Society of Missions' Provincial Superior had written from Limburg. He had found debts everywhere, and since the funds allocated from Lyons had been used to liquidate Fr. Walter's debts, the Council of Limburg found that it could not keep its promise to send him money. He could send more Brothers if Fr.Walter would forward the money for their fares. They would help with the difficult task of getting supplies from Broome to the mission, and in other ways.<sup>192</sup> Bishop Kelly had requested Fr. Walter to spare a priest for a trip to Port Darwin.<sup>193</sup> The latter did not oblige.

In 1904, one of the biggest problems for Fr.Walter was the replacement of Fr.Rensmann who had been drowned in Beagle Bay Creek. Another problem was that the Mission boat had been wrecked

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<sup>189</sup> Interview with Fr. Emo, *Roth Report*.

<sup>190</sup> op.cit., Walter, *Australia, Land, People, Mission*, (Limburg-Lahn, 1982).

<sup>191</sup> Walter to Kelly, 24 October 1904.ADB.

<sup>192</sup> Kugelmann to Walter, 28 November 1903, ADB.

<sup>193</sup> Kelly to Walter, 30 December 1903. ADB.

on a reef at the mouth of the bay, in 1903. With the aid of skilled and native labour Fr. Walter built two new boats. Native timber which had strength and durability was used. Also, he rebuilt the chapel which had been destroyed by fire. <sup>194</sup>

Martin Sibosado described it:

*"That was the old timber, the paperbark, the Trappist church, no sheet iron. They built up a new church, a long building, a sacristy.*

Another division was Br:Sixt's room.

*In the same building was the boys' dormitory, and at the end was the Brother.*

The other side the girls' dormitory . " <sup>195</sup>

Under Fr. Walter's care, a policy of self reliance and education had been introduced at the Beagle Bay Mission. He believed that the Aborigines were not bad or useless people, on the contrary, through proper education and care they would be a valuable asset to the Australian community. The missionary attempts which failed were not due to their response, but to local conditions and inadequate mission expertise. Permanent results would be achieved only if they were encouraged and given continued opportunities for education. Provided they had a favourable environment, their birth rate would increase.

He worked very hard to make the mission self sufficient. His attempts at farming on a commercial scale failed because the tropical climate was unsuitable for rice and other varieties of grain. His project with 10,000 sisal-agave (hemp) plants failed because the soil was too poor. The cotton buds of that crop were attacked by bugs and

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<sup>194</sup> *Catholic Directory, 1904*. ACAP.

<sup>195</sup> Martin Sibosado, from Marble Bar, interviewed by F.Huegel at Lombadina, 8 December 1972. *This is Your Place*, pp.45-47.

beetles. Green parrots descended upon the large scale millet plantation as soon as the shoots came, and only the stalks were left. European crops were affected by the heat of the summer and the frosts of the winter. Vegetables grew well on good soil, but were commercially unviable on account of the distance to the Broome market.

Although the climatic conditions, poor soil, and distance had disastrous effects, in the face of all failures, Fr. Walter persevered and kept trying. The whole thrust of his missionary endeavour was not only to make the Aborigines Christian, but to help them survive, as a race living with dignity. He believed that anthropology must eventually play an important role because the Aborigines belonged to one of the most interesting races in the world. Fr. Walter saw them doomed to extinction if they were not brought into contact with a more complex culture. <sup>196</sup>

An anthropologist, Hemnan Klaatsch visited the Mission several times, writing most of his reports in German. He praised the efforts of the missionaries to raise the standard of education without destroying the ancient customs. He had been present at a corroboree arranged by Felix. The large number of healthy men and women proved that everything was being done for their welfare and hygiene. Drawings done by the school children were similar to those found in the caves near Port Hedland. There were outstanding men, at the Mission, Victor, Emmanuel, Joachim, Thomas, Emile, Remy, John Louis Albrecht, Amabile, George, and Sebastian. Klaatsch advocated that there be more places like Beagle Bay. He believed that if nothing were done to integrate the people, then, in spite of missionary efforts, they would die out. <sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> GWalter, "The Aborigines Question - Half Caste Children', 15 April 1905, ADB.

<sup>197</sup> op.cit., Walter.

When, in January, 1901, the Constitution of the Commonwealth had come into force, Australia itself was in a state of political change. Under the new legislation, Section 51, and Section 127, Aborigines were not to be counted in reckoning the population of the Commonwealth, or of any state. The definition of an Aborigine meant that he or she, as a State ward, was under a completely different set of legislation. Aborigines were born under the Act.<sup>198</sup>

Before Sir John Forrest left Western Australia for his post in the newly formed Federal Government, Bishop Gibney expressed his concern for the welfare of the Aborigines in a personal letter, asking that he,

- (i) fix an equal capitation grant for all children under 14 years of age born of Aboriginal women whether black or half caste, who are kept at any mission institution,
- (ii) declare Dampier Land a Native Reserve when present leases expired,
- (iii) provide that all Native offenders of the North West of the State might be transported and kept by Missionaries instead of being sent to any prison, with the Government allowing for their support.

<sup>199</sup>

Sir John Forrest resigned the Premiership of West Australia and consequent political instability in Western Australia saw four different ministries the same year. The ministers of the various Governments responsible for the Aboriginal Department were in office for such short terms that the administration of Aboriginal matters was dominated by the Chief Protector, H.C.Prinsep, who had never visited the North West. He exercised his power through the Magistrates and the Police.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> P.Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens, The Aboriginal Problem in West Australia, 1898-1954*, University of Queensland Press, St.Lucia, 1973. p.52.

<sup>199</sup> Gibney to Forrest, 31 January 1901. ACAP.

<sup>200</sup> op.cit., Biskup, pp. 67-70.

Fr. Walter became more and more unhappy about Government interference. The Lands Department forwarded a copy of the form of grant of land to Bishop Gibney, 30 May 1904. He gave it to Dr. Roth to give to Fr. Walter, who was distressed at the terms of the deed. He felt strongly that the Government was using the Pious Society of Missions as unpaid civil servants who could be dismissed without redress.<sup>201</sup>

He made a written objection to the terms of the title deeds to Dr. Roth.<sup>202</sup> Copies of the title deeds were sent to Fr. William Whitmee, Superior General of the PSM. It was the Bishop's wish that the property remain in the Pallottine's possession so long as they carried on the mission successfully.<sup>203</sup>

The Roth Report, compiled in 1904, had described the inhuman situation where 90% of Kimberley Aborigines had been arrested for cattle stealing. The larger the number of prisoners and witnesses brought in, the better pecuniarily, for the police, who received up to 2/5 per head. By their own assertions, every Native caught meant more money in their pockets. One witness who had brought about 100 Aborigines into Court did not remember any who were found 'not guilty'.

Except in times of sickness prisoners were neck-chained from the day they went into goal until the day they left, sometimes two to three years or more. At Wyndham, one out of every group of three (neck chained together) was chained by the ankle to a ring-bolt in the floor. Still neck-chained, the Native prisoners worked outside on the roads, etc., about 8 hours daily at Broome, sometimes longer at Wyndham. The

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<sup>201</sup> Walter to Gibney, 30 September 1904. ADB.

<sup>202</sup> Walter to Roth, 1 October 1904. ADB.

<sup>203</sup> to Whitmee, 8 December 1904. ADB. CCIV

*Roth Report, 1905.*



weight of the neck-chain , cuff, and connecting chain was as much as 5½, pounds and double the weight was carried by the man in the middle. Throughout the state, in 1904, there were approximately 300 Aboriginal prisoners in the goals. <sup>204</sup>

More and more demands were being made on Fr. Walter's limited resources. Bishop Gibney had hopes that the Rottnest Prison would close and hundreds of Aborigines would be transported to the Reserve where the Governor would pay for their support. He asked Fr. Walter for 20 more missionaries to take charge of the prisoners when this happened.

The country from King Sound to Wyndham was being taken up by English Syndicates for pastoral purposes. Fr. Walter quickly became familiar with police reports about the vicinity of Beagle Bay Mission. Pearl lugger came into the creeks and coloured men visited the Aboriginal camps with quantities of flour, rice, tobacco and other supplies in return for women. The coloured crews were supplying large quantities of liquor.

Legislation was no help to Fr. Walter:

The 1905 West Australian Aboriginal Protection Act had aimed to make provision for better protection and care of the Native inhabitants of West Australia. In reality it provided legislation for a system of 'dole and control' for those 'under the Act'. Exemption from being an 'Aborigine under the Act' was difficult to obtain and could be revoked at any time, whereupon the Act again applied to the formerly exempted person as if no certificate had been issued. The restrictive legal framework impinged on every aspect of Aboriginal life. Whereas the Aborigines Act of 1886 had defined Aborigines as

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<sup>204</sup> Roth Report, 1905.

those who were full blood, and half castes who habitually associated with full bloods, the Aborigines Act of 1905 defined an Aborigine in four categories:

- (i) Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia (Aboriginal parent on both sides);
- (ii) Half Caste (person with an Aboriginal parent on either side);
- (iii) The children of such persons who lived with an Aborigine as wife or husband, or otherwise habitually lived with or associated with Aborigines.
- (iv) Half caste children, irrespective of their mode of life, whose age did not exceed 16 years of age.<sup>205</sup>

With little variation, this was the unpromising political and social backdrop to Pallottine missionary efforts in the Kimberley up to the Second World War. Throughout the long years during which they were to maintain their presence, though their efforts to do so, were fraught with great difficulties.

In 1902, a circular had come from the Aborigines Department:

*Sir, I would feel obliged if you would, through the police and other available sources, ascertain and inform me of any half caste children in your district who could be induced to enter one of the institutions now existing in the State for their care and education.*<sup>206</sup>

Fr. Walter claimed that given proper surroundings half caste children were as good as any others. In school, they displayed an intelligence and aptitude for learning equal to white children, and when older,

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<sup>205</sup> *The 1905 Aboriginal Protection Act: An Act to make provision for the better Protection and Care of the Native Inhabitants of West Australia. 23 December 1905.*

Royal Assent 27 April 1906. B.L.

<sup>206</sup> Memo from CPA to Protectors of Aborigines. Archives B.L.

they made excellent settlers. He was convinced that the eventual union of the half caste children with their Aboriginal school fellows would do more than anything else to overcome the nomadic cravings of the latter, and that the results of such unions would be settled, happy and self supporting families of whom the State would be proud. His ideals would be implemented through education. <sup>207</sup>

At Beagle Bay, he was in charge of about 80 Aborigines residing at the mission, and 15 children who rarely missed a day from school. In 1904, there had been 11 lay brothers and a school teacher helping with the education. The trades were those of the carpenter, blacksmith, bricklayer, settler, and shoemaker. On his staff there were three farmers and other tradesman. Mr. Randle, the teacher, had been there since Fr. Rensmann drowned. Messrs. Olivey, Surveyor Wells, and Kingsmill (late Colonial Secretary) had inspected the school. It had never been inspected by the Education Department as it was not a Government school. Reading, writing, arithmetic, music, object-lessons, religious and bible history were taught with three and a half hours teaching daily, 8-10 a.m., and 2.30-4 p.m. 21 boys and 10 girls attended the school. Outside school hours the children helped in the garden, and in the different trade shops, to give them technical education. Meals were 7 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m. and consisted of rice, vegetables, fish or turtle meat, and beef.

All except the very small ones were always clothed.

But Fr. Walter soon tired of the inspections, and of the continuous reports required for government funding.

At the turn of the century, the Kimberley Catholic Church was

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<sup>207</sup> , "The Aborigines Question - Half Caste Children', 15 April 1905. ADB.

composed mainly of Manilamen, some of them wealthy pearl-ers, but many were coloured, and most were poor, dispossessed Aborigines, like Paddy Djagween, Bernard Bandog, Peter Niledon, and others. Their reminiscences about events which affected their lives present another version of the history of the Church and its process of providing education. The focus is on the Beagle Bay Mission because the Catholic presence in the Kimberley was small and tenuous for most of the area, almost non-existent, and the mission represented almost the whole of it for many years. In later years, these students would tell their own story.<sup>208</sup>

Fr. Walter kept hearing of Fr. Nicholas and his successes. When Governor Bedford visited Broome in 1904, he had shown particular interest in the arch erected by Fr. Nicholas Emo and Fr. White. Along its horizontal top were a half dozen Aborigines, garbed mainly in war paint and fully armed. Stretching from its base stood lines of similar warriors.

The Filipinos, the majority of whom were devout Catholics from Spanish Luzon, had built a small timber church near Streeter's in Dampier Terrace. Here they celebrated the religious feasts of the year with great solemnity and fervour, followed by greetings of friendship when they went in gaily dressed troupes serenading friends and business associates to the accompaniment of palm leaf instruments. A few years later the church was burnt down as an act of reprisal. It was rumoured that some of the Muslims were delighted to see it disappear for they had come from the Filipino island of Mindanao and a minority of them still practised their religion in the small mosque to the south of the settlement. Other critics maintained the Aborigines had set the building on fire.

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<sup>208</sup> F. Huegel and Brigida Nailon, Eds. *This is Your Place* (Broome, 1990).

With the aid of Pat Percy and his friends Father Nicholas Emo built another in the white quarter, opposite the New Institute. The Filipinos then bought land nearby where they erected a fine hall and having established their own Club, and built up a large stringed orchestra.  
209

Fr. Walter was becoming so uneasy about Fr. Nicholas in Broome that he had begun to look on him as a baneful influence, and his attitude became one of distrust. He asked Fr. Nicholas if he could live on the collection of the coloured people and his other income, so that Fr. Russell could have the support of the white congregation.<sup>210</sup> The following day a petition went round Broome asking the Bishop to give Nicholas the sole charge of the place.<sup>211</sup> His popularity with the Manilamen and the Aborigines was too great for Fr. Walter to control. Fr. Walter had warned that if the mission lugger came back to Beagle Bay, without Brother Sebastian, the latter was to be 'ipso facto' dismissed from the Society. Br. Sebastian was not on the lugger.

Fr. Walter wrote to Rome hoping the two promised Pallottine Fathers promised would soon come, because since Fr. White left, he was by himself Fr. White had moved to Broome where the number of white Catholics were increasing, then to Perth, where he obtained five Sisters for the Mission, but Fr. Walter said it could not support them. The two Trappists were still around, one at Disaster Bay and one in Broome, but Fr. Walter found them unreliable and working against his administration. An English speaking Priest of their own Order was needed for Broome where there about 120 Aborigines, 300 Manilamen, and 50-60 English speaking Catholics. Fr. White had not kept any books and had incurred many debts. All the money taken

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<sup>209</sup> Op.cit., Bain.

<sup>210</sup> Agreement between Walter and Emo, Broome, 23 October 1905. ADB.

<sup>211</sup> Walter to Martelli, 26 November 1905. ACAP.

from the bank had been used for repaying the Cistercian Abbey of Sept Fons in France, and it was hard to manage on the cattle income on account of having boats and the buildings in Broome built.

Thomas Puertollano was leaving Disaster Bay to establish himself at Willie Bay. The Disaster Bay mission was finished. Thomas had stayed so long only to care for the sick Aborigines and the cattle.

Friction continued to mount between Fr. Walter and Fr. Nicholas. Fr. Nicholas knew he could withdraw and work with the people around the coasts, because while he was in charge at Beagle Bay he had made a point of visiting, travelling with, and living amongst, the tribes of natives around King Sound and Disaster Bay. He had been in touch with practically all those tribes occupying the country bounded by the peninsula terminating at Swan Point. To do this work he would need a boat. The one he wanted cost £300. He had been promised £100, and asked Bishop Gibney for a loan of £200.<sup>212</sup>

It had been as early as 1901 when Bishop Gibney asked Abbot Torres to take a section of his diocese under the spiritual administration of the Abbey at New Norcia. At the same time he suggested that the Benedictines could open another mission for the Aborigines of the North West. Fr. Torres had written to Fr. Nicholas for information, and the latter visited New Norcia, 15-19 February 1905. He discussed the foundation of a Mission to the Aborigines of the North.

In 1905, Fr. Nicholas wrote in his diary:

*I left Broome to go to Geraldton (and from there to*

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<sup>212</sup> Emo to Gibney, 17 May 1905. ADB.

*Leederville to the consecration of that Church, where Bishop W.Kelly was waiting for me). I arrived at New Norcia after coming back from the consecration, at 10 p.m. 15 February, and I remained there four days, and the Rev.Father Abbot and I discussed the foundation of a new Mission for the Aborigines towards the North of Western Australia. I left New Norcia for Perth to visit Bishop Gibney, 19 February 1905. In Perth having brought together the main ladies in the "Hibernian Hall", I formed a 'Permanent Committee of Ladies for the Aborigines of the Northwest. President: Mrs O'Connor; Vice President: Mrs Rodoreda; Secretary: Mrs Hayes; Director: Fr.Smith.*

*I arrived at Broome again [from Perth where I was presented to the Premier and to the Colonial Secretary by Bishop Gibney and the Minister of Lands after I visited the Governor with the Bishop and attended the great big meeting on Aborigines in the Town Hall and had sworn to make myself an English Subject (be naturalized)].*

*Then Fr.Abbot and I continued corresponding by letter, until a day arrived when a telegram announced to me his arrival in Broome. At that time Bishop Kelly (Apostolic Vicar of the Kimberley) was in Broome.*

*Rev.Fr.Abbot and I, after discussing the matter at great length decided we would together make a voyage of exploration of the whole coast from King Sound to Wyndham, with the purpose of finding a suitable place for the said Rev.Father to establish a new Mission on behalf of, and with personnel from New Norcia. For that reason, on their behalf, we made all the preparations; and with sufficient crew and provisions, after taking leave of Bishop Kelly and the*

*Superior of Beagle Bay, we set out in my schooner 'Salvador', leaving ourselves in the hands of God and his holy Mother for the dangers of the journey.*

*In reality we had to navigate through almost unknown seas, badly chartered on the marine maps, and we had to visit islands and bays, and a coast totally unknown, inhabited only by numerous savage tribes.*<sup>213</sup>

Meanwhile, Fr. Walter asked the Abbot of Sept Fons to withdraw Fr. Nicholas, but that Fr. Jean Marie Janny be left. The Abbot had replied, "*Either both priests go, or both priests stay*".<sup>214</sup>

Bishop Kelly in Geraldton was amazed to find that the removal of Nicholas Emo from Broome was an almost 'fait accompli' before he had heard about it. He wrote to say that he regarded it as a crime to which he could not consent.<sup>215</sup> From Germany came the observation that it would seem that Fr. Walter had brought his own private quarrel into daily life, and the Mission he was charged with suffered in consequence. It was pointed out that anti feeling against the Mission in Germany had been caused by letters from the Mission itself and Fr. Walter was advised not to attempt to do anything against Fr. Nicholas or he would be hooted out of the country.<sup>216</sup>

Fr. Joseph Bischofs had come to the Kimberley missions in 1905 and he jotted down his first impressions in German:

*"23April 1905: Numerous blacks and whites at Holy Mass. The blacks*

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<sup>213</sup> Diary of Nicholas Emo, in Spanish. BL.

<sup>214</sup> Chautard to Walter, 25 February 1905. ADB.

<sup>215</sup> Kelly to Walter, 13 April 1905. ADB.

<sup>216</sup> Whitmee to Walter, 12 June 1905. ADB.



*presented a beautiful sight, they were all dressed in different attire.*

*24 April 1905 A walk through Broome. A mixture of English people. A string of black convicts chained by the necks to each other led through the streets, a warning example. Drunkenness: Drinking of spirits is prohibited to blacks. Whites give a truly disgraceful, example... <sup>217</sup>*

In October 1905, an unhappy Fr. Jean Marie Janny was at Lombadina, with almost all the Christians from Disaster Bay. <sup>218</sup> The Abbot of Sept Fons expected him to return to Sept Fons within a month of the receipt of his letter. It had been impossible. It was difficult for those in France to realise that Lombadina was cut off. There was little hope of getting in, or out, without a boat. Also, since Fr. Nicholas Emo was Chairman of an Association of Manilamen, the latter would need a month or two to settle his affairs. Whether or not Fr. Nicholas came, Fr. Jean Marie Janny intended to leave by April 1906.

In the case of Fr. Nicholas remaining in Australia, Fr. Jean Marie had written to Bishop Kelly to officially notify him that Fr. Nicholas was dispensed from his vows and no longer belonged to the Order. Fr. Bischofs had delivered a letter to Lombadina from Beagle Bay as a friendly gesture. <sup>219</sup> Fr. Walter was prepared to help defray the expenses of travel for Fr. Jean Marie, but not for Fr. Nicholas, about whom he gave a very bad report. <sup>220</sup>

Fr. Nicholas himself claimed that he intended to arrange his affairs and return within a year to Sept Fons. Fr. Jean Marie, who had suffered much from the feud between Fr. Walter and Fr. Nicholas, found that his attitude to Fr. Nicholas was less severe than formerly.

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<sup>217</sup> *Diary of Fr. Bischoft.* ADB.

<sup>218</sup> Walter to Janny. After 21 October 1906. ADB.

<sup>219</sup> Janny to Chautard, 25 January 1905. TASF.

<sup>220</sup> Walter to Chautard, 23 February 1906. TASF.

Fr. Walter had reported Fr. Nicholas to Bishop Kelly on two counts re marriage. Firstly, Fr. Nicholas had married a couple where according to Fr. Walter, there were impediments. Then the woman was refused the sacraments because of the relationship. All blame was laid at the door of Fr. Nicholas Emo.<sup>222</sup> Secondly, a Manilaman named Seriochino wished to marry Dorothy, one of two half caste girls Fr. Wa. Iter had rescued from the Broome streets.<sup>223</sup> Fr. Walter had told him it was illegal, but Fr. Nicholas went ahead and performed the marriage. Fr. Walter recommended that the Bishop make clear to Fr. Nicholas that Manilamen could not marry Aborigines.<sup>224</sup>

He wrote to Fr. Nicholas telling him that he wanted his services no longer and asking him to withdraw from the Region. Because of his poor health, Fr. Walter himself was going for a holiday, and he had let the presbytery to a Catholic family during his absence. At the same time, he hoped the white Catholics would come to Fr. Nicholas's Mass, and asked him to change the time to suit them. He also thanked him for the bottles of milk he had been sending to the presbytery.

Abbot Chautard had written to Fr. Walter that if Fr. Nicholas did not depart by the first boat he was to make it known to the Bishops and to all outside works that he was released from his vows and was no longer part of the Order, that only Fr. Jean Marie had his delegation since his arrival in Australia. Fr. Nicholas had never had power except under Fr. Walter's authorization. To Fr. Walter he ought be obedient in all exterior works of the mission. His temporary enterprises were

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<sup>221</sup> Janny to Chautard, 22 July 1906. TASF.

<sup>222</sup> Walter to Russell, 22 February 1906. ADB.

<sup>223</sup> Sec.42, 5 Eds. VII No.14.

<sup>224</sup> Walter to Kelly, 17 October 1906. ADB.

without any regular mandate or permission from the Order.

After receiving the Abbot's letter, Fr.Nicholas wrote:

*"It is the will of God which I want to respect always, but the Superior does not know my actual situation nor my many embarrassments and engagements and the absolute impossibility of my carrying out this order, also that he does not know that I am here. I am going to write to him to explain everything as I almost thought that he would leave me in Australia. "*

Fr.Jean Marie had thought that Fr.Nicholas wanted a dispensation, but then he changed his mind and thought he would have liked to stay in Australia as a Trappist. However, as Fr.Joseph Bischofs had pointed out, as a Trappist, any debts incurred or contracts entered into would seriously involve the Order. It was said, *"It's certain that if Fr.Nicholas wants to keep his vows, it's because he needs his Trappist name for a purpose we don't know. .. "* Fr.George Walter had published in all papers that credit given to Fr.Nicholas Emo was not the responsibility of the Beagle Bay Mission. The rumour also went around that Fr.Nicholas was planning to found another mission under the jurisdiction of Bishop Kelly among the savages of Couleur Bay. If Fr.Nicholas did not return with him, Fr.Jean Marie planned to tell officially he was dispensed from his vows.

In 1906, Fr.Nicholas was released from his vows in the Cistercian Order. It would appear that the formal letter of dispensation from the vows of Fr.Nicholas Emo, monk and priest, secular name Ricardo M.Emo, was neither expected nor wanted by him. It would also appear from later correspondence, that Fr. Walter and Fr.Jean Marie Janny knew of the dispensation some months before Fr.Nicholas was

told. <sup>225</sup>

Bishop Kelly sent all documents in connection with Fr.Nicholas's boat, bill of sale, etc., to the Union Bank in Broome, asking Fr. Walter to meet the bills to the value of £90, and then take the boat to be held on security until he made arrangements either to take the boat altogether from Fr.Nicholas refunding him what he had paid, or until Fr.Nicholas the money owed. <sup>226</sup>

After Fr.Nicholas Emo had left the Point in Broome, Fr.Walter had written to the Chief Protector of Aborigines notifying that he had taken charge as Fr.Nicholas Emo 's successor. It was his intention to bring a Brother to the Point from Beagle Bay, and to reside there himself driving into town to attend to parochial duties.

Fr.Walter was afraid that Fr.Nicholas had used his influence with the Magistrate in Broome to prevent the Mission taking possession of 'The Point', so he had written to the Aborigines Department asking that he, Fr.Walter, be made Superintendent of the Point Reserve. All his letter had effected was a reply from the Chief Protector saying: *"You, no doubt, by this time have seen that the town site has been proclaimed a Reserve, against the presence of unemployed natives, under Section 39 of the Act. Large print notices for posting at prominent places have been sent to the Resident magistrate."* <sup>227</sup>

Fr.Nicholas had gone!

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<sup>225</sup> Author's Note: Fr.Jean Thibaudin OCSO, who had been translating the French documents made the written comment: "All this story is full of religious distrust, the worst of all...spoiling the best works of the Spirit... Here we are... with our problems solved... and a spiritual lesson...; if the superiors and religious, even monks, were less mistrusting they would be more blessed."

<sup>226</sup> Kelly to Walter Correspondence. ADB.

<sup>227</sup> Walter to CPA Correspondence. ADB.

With him was Abbot Torres. Captain Johnson and four Manilamen had been engaged to man 'San Salvador'. This was the exploratory trip to found the other Catholic mission in the North West. Two days were to be spent on Sunday Island getting experienced local guides. They first went to Wyndham, where about 30 Europeans lived.

The party had left Broome 11 May 1906, and arrived 15 June 1906 in Wyndham. The Abbot inspected the prison. 87 Aborigines were kept imprisoned there in their bush nakedness. All but two were young, tall, and well built.

It had been decided that the most suitable site the new mission was Barton Plain, where the Barton and Drysdale Rivers met. The Abbot was to return on the coastal schooner, and Nicholas farewelled Wyndham by firing nine shots from his schooner's little cannon. On the way back to Broome, in front of a magnificent pool of fresh water, Fr. Nicholas solemnized the christening of his schooner 'San Salvador' with a Manilaman, Don Damaso Maagna Trinidad, formerly a Beagle Bay novice, acting as sponsor. A new era had begun for him. After dropping the two Aboriginal guides at Sunday Island, the party were entertained by 60 Aborigines performing a 'Kabba Kabba' at Cape Leveque.

In July 1906, Fr. Jean Marie had still been in Lombadina, unable to get the mission lugger to pick him up to take him to Broome. It was 6 months since he had received any funds but Thomas Puertollano was supplying him with necessaries, and was happy that he stay with them forever. Perhaps Fr. Nicholas picked him up on the way back. Fr. Jean Marie had been sent to Brazil.

To ease the money problems, in Perth, Fr. Walter asked Fr. White to come with him on a fund raising trip to the Eastern States of Australia in

1906. When it raised enough money to clear his debts, and pay for the foundation of the future educational enterprises of the Beagle Bay Mission, he felt more secure and planned his next move. The administration of the Kimberley Vicariate had become more difficult for Bishop Kelly, who had been keen to cede his jurisdiction. Fr. Walter felt a quick solution was needed. He went to Europe to discuss the matter with his Major Superiors.

At the same time too, he would try to recuperate his health. The Cameroon fever and the stress in Australia had robbed him of his last strength. He had spent the last fourteen years in the tropics.

He had no success with any of his submissions. The African Cameroon Mission was given all available staff. There was nothing for Australia. He tendered his resignation and was relieved of his duties as Mission Superior. In Limburg, after the resignation, the councillors would not agree to taking over the Vicariate of the Kimberley as they believed the mission to the Aborigines in Beagle Bay and Broome was enough. <sup>228</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> op.cit., Walter,

## CHAPTER 5

*"Of its own accord, the land produces ... " Mk. 4:28*

### THE SISTERS COME TO THE KIMBERLEY

Few histories of Australia have acknowledged, in any depth, the contribution of women in building up the nation, although in recent years several historians have attempted to redress the imbalance. Aspects of the history of women in Australia is essential to an understanding of the position of women religious in Australia today.

In 1907, Fr.George Walter left on a fund raising trip to the Eastern States for money to pay off some of the debts and to bring up the Sisters from Perth.

With regard to the fund raising, in Adelaide, he found that generally speaking there was not much time or interest for the Aborigines , no money, and no sympathy for them. The mission would have to become self supporting.<sup>229</sup>

With regard to the Sisters, Mother Antonia O'Brien had been a volunteer on the Kalgoorlie-Coolgardie mission where she had worked hard and long. She had heard of Bishop Gibney's plea for nuns for the North West and begged to go. In Subiaco, those in charge were loath to give consent, so Mother Antonia went to Ireland and obtained the consent of the Mother General who made a proviso that she would have to be responsible for the Sisters who went with her, and for the future work of the mission. Eight of the nine pioneers

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<sup>229</sup> Walter to Bischofs, 2 March 1907. ADB.

would serve the Church in the Kimberley until death, and their bones lie there in the cemetery. The other sister left the Kimberley group and joined the Presentation Sisters in Geraldton.<sup>230</sup>

Mother Antonia's group was made up of two professed sisters, three postulants from Ireland, and she also had two Perth girls for entering, so there would be 7, if not 9 sisters to come to Beagle Bay, and after a year or two, they would start in Broome.<sup>231</sup> Fr. Joseph Bischofs, who went to Perth to travel up with them, advised them to bring materials for school and plenty of mosquito netting.<sup>232</sup>

Fr. Joseph Bischofs wrote to Bishop Gibney that in sending these good Sisters he had crowned all his works for the mission, and he could be assured that they would minister to the poor black people that gentle charity of Christ he would have wished to extend to them.<sup>233</sup> When the nuns arrived at Beagle Bay, as well as the Pallottine priests and brothers, there were at least two Manilamen with their families working on the mission. Thomas Puertollano and Catalino Torres had signed contracts of work in 1907 for a year.<sup>234</sup>

When the nuns embarked from Fremantle 29 May 1907, Mother Antonio and her group of Sisters had assembled at the ship's rail while the junior, Sr. Joseph, said aloud with a big sign of the cross: "*Wego, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* "

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<sup>230</sup> M. Ignatius Murnane *A Precip of the Kimberley Mission of the Sisters of St. John of God*, June 1978, ASJG Subiaco.

<sup>231</sup> Walter to Bischofs, 10 February 1907, ADB.

<sup>232</sup> Bischofs to Rev. Mother, 6 April 1907, ADB.

<sup>233</sup> Bischofs to Gibney, Perth, 9 June 1907, ADB..

<sup>234</sup> Contracts between Puertollano, Torres, and Walter. 5 May 1907, ADB



On board, prayers had been said in common, and the office recited. Lectures were given by Fr. Bischofs PSM, who had come to Perth to escort them to the Beagle Bay Mission. The Sisters wore their heavy black habits, with the stiff starched guimps and forehead bands.

When they arrived outside Broome, in the Bay, there had been no sign of the mission lugger. Therefore the Captain had kept them on board and sailed for Beagle Bay. It was noon, 5 June 1907, when the 'Pio', the mission lugger, moved towards the steamer. It was a fine day, and the nuns soon transferred to it. They should have crossed to the shore in two hours but there was not a breeze to catch their sails. They had to beach in the Bay until daylight. There had been nothing to eat but rations of a small piece of damper, a few biscuits, and black tea.

From the deck of the S.S. 'Bullara', Mother Antonio surveyed the 'promised land' of Beagle Bay. She knew that her team of women were exceptional. To start with, the majority were very young. Six were only novices. After their initial sea sickness just out of Perth, they had disembarked at each port and really had a splendid voyage from Geraldton. The Gennan Priest, Fr. Joseph Bischofs had taken great care of them, spiritually and materially. This delay was the first setback, and he had not provided for it. He had been very embarrassed when the women were all sick again, but then the wind dropped. The Sisters had become calm and happy for the next twenty-four hours.

Mother Antonio was a true adventurer, dedicated to the Lord, but anxious to get on with the work to which He had called her. She was being made to wait. She used the time to pray for herself, and each of these North West volunteers. She had worked hard and long on the Kalgoorlie-Coolgardie mission as a nurse. She knew that the work of a volunteer was often taken for granted, but when she had

heard Bishop Gibney plead for nuns for the North West, she asked permission from those in charge in Subiaco, Perth. They were loath to give consent. They had a hospital. There was enough work there. They did not approve.

Undaunted, with the Bishop's blessing, and purse, she had then gone to their Head House in Wexford in Ireland. The Mother General blessed the enterprise, with the proviso that she would have to be responsible for the Sisters who went with her, and for the future work of the mission. In other words, this was a new work, a new beginning. The Subiaco community regarded them with scepticism. They were a radical group.

Mother Antonio knew her Community. She, herself, was generous, with an iron constitution, unusual strength, and inexhaustible energy, she would undertake anything. She could be gentle and affectionate, but liked to get things done and did not always understand others.

Mother Bernardine Greene and Mother Benedict Courtney came from the Subiaco community. The first was gentle and delicate. With a sensitive spirit and loving heart she would be vulnerable to the rough surroundings and hard times that were inevitable in the life for which she had volunteered. Young, ardent, fervently devoted to her Lord, she was unlike her leader, but a faithful loyal assistant. A woman of prayer, intelligent and well read, her loving manner and concern for all under her care would always surround her with friends.

The second, Mother Benedict, was the third professed member of the group, a courageous woman with a terrific will. The other six were novices.

Sister Patrick O'Neill was the senior of the group. She wasn't young, and was remarkable for sheer commonsense.

Sr.Margaret Carmody was the second recruit. She came from Skibbereen, far from robust. Her brothers had all died of tuberculosis

Sr.Michael Power was affectionately called 'the mighty atom', and 'Jack of all trades'. Sr.John Walker, a native of Wexford had a talent for making friends wherever she went. She was warmhearted and humorous.

Sr.Joseph McCaffrey (Blanche), the baby of the group, was the daughter of an Irish policeman in Perth, and lamented that she had so little time before receiving the habit and stepping into the 'firing line'. She was calm and gentle with a very delicate conscience.

Sr.Visitation, (Brigid Cavanagh), of them all, had found the journey not what she expected. Another girl had volunteered, and was to follow shortly. Sr.Matthew Greene, one of Sr.Bernardine's sisters. <sup>235</sup>

Mother Antonia called them around her, and they knelt down and prayed for fair weather. The wind rose so strongly that instead of a favourable breeze, a storm blew up and their lugger was hurled back repeatedly from the shore. At length, Fr.Bischofs said, "*Satan must be on the shore, driving us back, but he will be defeated.*" There were two small boats tied to the lugger and into these the Sisters were lowered. They set out, three in one and six in the other. They were driven in opposite directions, with one boat nearly capsizing, but they were not frightened.

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<sup>235</sup> Archives of the Diocese of Broome.

Finally both boats landed, one seven miles from the Brother's cattle station and the other four miles. Those in her boat were carried ashore, Sr.John, Sr.Joseph and herself. The others refused to be carried, took off their boots and stockings and waded through three feet of water. The first three had only four miles to walk, and had the pleasure of welcoming the others and inviting them to kettle tea, damper and biscuits.<sup>236</sup>

Paddy Djagween remembered the landing: *Weyoked up the bullock team, all the Sisters up there... From there, that archway is covered with nothing but flowers, you can't see leaves, but everlasting flowers ...Big corroborree, dancing, for the Sisters...Cockatoo feathers on head... Twenty to thirty men out dancing... Fr.Bischofs; was amongst them.*<sup>237</sup>

Lawrence Clarke spoke of the changed social scene: *"When the Sisters arrived, we all thought it was something different, of a womanhood which they thought it was hard to explain, but it was true, what they really thought was, it was a woman all closed in close covered in, it was a very curiosity. All the Sisters were as friendly as could be. They attended to quite a lot of sick life such as going into camp, brought some medicine, washed the sick and brought the food to the sick and infirm, and the Sisters took on the years of hospitality."*<sup>238</sup>

The hospitality, the opportunity for a lifetime of it, was flung out before the Sisters like a carpet. Sr. Margaret Carmody was one of the six novices. She took over the school from Fr.Russell, beginning at the ABC stage with the girls. The children loved to sing. But Sr.Margaret's first duty at Beagle Bay was the welcoming of students

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<sup>236</sup> Antonio to Gibney, June 1907. ADB.

<sup>237</sup> Paddy Dwagween, *This is Your Place*. pp.54-55.

<sup>238</sup> Lawrence Clarke, 3 January 1967. *This is Your Place*, p.48.

to school. She described her task as follows:

*"There were 24 boys and 7 girls attending the school, which was conducted by Fr.Russe//, an Englishman, a fine teacher who had trained at Kensington, England, before he became a priest. The Junior classes were taught by a 15 year old Aboriginal girl, Leonie.*  
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*The senior classes could read fluently the most difficult English, and I well remember the amazement of Mr.North, the Under Secretary, who paid a visit to the Mission in 1908, on hearing a black boy reading Macauley from the Sixth Reader, then the highest grade book used in the Christian Brothers Schools. On their arrival, the Sisters took charge of the school, much to the satisfaction of Fr.Russel. It was a fairly substantial building made of sheet iron with a cement floor. At each end were the dormitories for the boys. Fr.Russel slept with the bigger boys at night and during siesta time, and could hear all that went on in the school, sometimes to the embarrassment of the Sisters.*

*School hours were from 7.30 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. for the Juniors, who did odd jobs, cleaning, raking and picking up rubbish until dinner at 11.30 a.m. A small army of little girls went the round of the Mission with a large basket into which they gathered the .flotsam and jetsam that collects with such alarming rapidity. "*

*At 9.30 a.m., the senior boys, who were learning trades, came to school and remained until 11 a.m. At 1.30 p.m. there was Religious Instruction, and at 2 p.m., the boys went home again, at 4 p.m. and back to school until 5.30 p.m. This programme which looked like a University prospectus was abandoned ajler a.few years and the school hours then lasted from 8.15 a.m. to 3 p.m. with 2 hours' rest.*  
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<sup>239</sup> Leonie Widjie. *This is Your Place*. p.12.

<sup>240</sup> op.cit., Lawrence Clarke, 3 January 1967.

In the time intervening between 1907 and 1926, the school suffered many vicissitudes, but then the solid building was erected. The first building had been of old corrugated iron, later a school was built of stones and mud with a bark roof. The later school was built of bricks made by the boys and girls after school. The background experiences and the languages of the children varied enormously. Mr. Gale often visited the Mission very pleased with the improvement in the children, and each time he returned, he brought in children, mostly little girls. Within a year, the number of girls had grown to 70. They were brought in almost naked and often only dressed in a man's coat or shirt.

On Sundays and Holidays, the children went on picnics, the girls with a Sister, the boys with a Priest or a Brother. These picnics consisted of a walk to a well 3 or 4 miles away.

They carried the tucker, a few loaves of bread and occasionally a tin of jam. The billy was put on to boil and tea made, then the children went off to look for bush fruit and wild honey. If near the sea they tried to get fish or crabs. *"We must catch woman crab, Sister, more soft. Man crab, he hard fellow."* <sup>241</sup>

The missionary Priests and Brothers had vacated their monastery for the Sisters. It was made of local timber and galvanised iron, and was cool. It had a large dining room, seven large rooms, ten small rooms, a semi-detached kitchen, and verandas on four sides. It was capable of holding fifty people. The Sisters became part of the extended family of the children they were caring for. Because of the great need of these dispossessed people, an enormous burden was laid on their willing shoulders. The Mission was very poor, and in the Sisters' first

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<sup>241</sup> Mother Margaret Carmody. 'Notes'. ASJG Derby.

year, there were soon seventy girls to be cared for. They were very young, they were scared, they had different languages.

The Sisters were to have a lasting effect on their charges, and their influence would permeate the Kimberley through them. For example, Phillippina Fraser was born at Yeeda Station, and her father, Tim, an Indian, was born there. Her mother was a full blood Aborigine, and her father came to Yeeda to work for himself. Her name when she was taken by the police was Sarah, she was seven, her sister Gypsy was five. Fr.Droste, who came to Beagle Bay in 1909 baptized her. Their names were changed. Some years later, the Drysdale Fathers sent some of their boys to Beagle Bay Mission to look for wives.

Fr.Droste married her to Fulgentius Fraser, and in 1924, they sailed up to Drysdale Mission for a year. <sup>242</sup>

Bishop M.Gibney was still writing long letters for financial assistance to the missionaries. <sup>243</sup> Charles Frederick Gale, as Chief Protector, was responsible for the education of all Aboriginal Children in Western Australia. The Education Department had no responsibility for them. Therefore, letters and reports coming from the Kimberley were addressed to him. Though he was popular with the Missionaries, they were still circumscribed by their dependence on the Department for finance and policy. J.Isdell, the travelling Inspector sent in a 10 page report praising the work done by the Beagle Bay Mission. <sup>244</sup>

Some of the white fathers had tried to prevent their children coming under the Act'. Mr. Button was one of these, but he wanted them to

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<sup>242</sup> Phillipena Fraser, *This is Your Place*. p.39.

<sup>243</sup> Gibney to Colonial Secretary, 2 June 1908, ACAP.

<sup>244</sup> Isdell, to CPA 23 March 1908, B.L.

be educated.

He wrote to Fr.Bischofs , 5 June 1909:

*"I will be starting for Wyndham in a couple of days with four of my children and two little half caste girls on behalf of the Government, which I promised Mr.Isdell I would take down when I took mine.*

*The father of these two girls is named Thomas J.Lynnott. He is the Publican living at Booroolooha on McArthur River, Northern Territory. If you were to write him he may pay you, for their keep. I would like you to give my boy George the full time of school so that he would be able to come back to me all the sooner. George and Maggie have been taught a little some two years ago, but I have been too busy and could not attend to them. If I can raise the money I will send £50 at once.*

Three telegrams give a little more information about the process:

Robert Button, Halls Creek to Fr.Bischofs Broome:

*Sending four of my children Koombana leaving Wyndham 24th letter accompanying Robert Button 20 June 1909.*

Mr.O'Brien, R.M. to CPA Perth:

*Following half castes being sent to B.B.M. by the mail Steamer leaving Wyndham today: Jacky Lynott. Bella Lynott, Mary Lynott, Ruby Kitty Nita Long, Lily McCarthy, Tom Murphy, Chloe Clarke, 4 of Mr.Button's children 25 June 1909.*

Broome to CPA:

*13 half castes comprising 11 girls 2 boys arrived Broome 29th for Beagle Bay 29 June 1909.*

Before Mr.Button died in 1911, he had tried very hard to have his children exempted from under the Act. But like many of the men who



had mixed blood children, he had not married their mother, and the Government controlled the children.<sup>245</sup>

By 1911, there were 109 children receiving education at Beagle Bay, 28 boys and 20 girls were full bloods, and 20 boys and 41 girls were half caste. The yearly subsidy of £800 worked out at less than 4d per day per head. There were 45 indigent natives who received rations, for whom the Mission received 9d per head per day.<sup>246</sup>

Nancy Leo, remembered the photograph from 1911. The little girls at the mission were being put in line for their photo.

Back row from the left: Rosa Roe (now Rosa Mamut), Belinda Dan (other name 'Nancy'- now married in Port Hedland); Mary Joseph (other name 'Nancy'); Agnes Joachim from Beagle Bay; Kevin; Agnes Imbal from Carnot Bay; Margaret Cassachi from Ruby Plains (other name 'Rubiana'); Topsy O'Meara from back of Ord River (other name Topsy Clark); Barbara Lynnot, had a sister named Bella, came from near Ruby Plains (married Cassie Drummond); Maudie Bigley from Derby; Laura from near Halls Creek; Eva Booty from near Halls Creek (married David Bigby); Judy Clement (she was Judy Thompson); Phillipina Frazer (was Sara Cassina, with an Afghan father, she married a 'Drysdale boy', Fulgentius Fraser);

Middle row from left: Zita, from Ord; Lucy Bigley, from Derby (became Mrs Brumby); May from Derby, a cousin of Lucy, (married one of the Drysdale boys to become Mrs Howard); Pinda, whose father was an Afghan from Ord River (she married 'Placid', one of the Drysdale boys); Teresa from Broome, (her mother's name was Teresa Tolentino. Her father was working for Fr.Nicholas called

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<sup>245</sup> Button Correspondence, BL. ADB.

<sup>246</sup> Bachmair to C.P.A., July 1911, Ace 1439/11, B.L.

Cornelius, a Manilaman, a diver); Gracie Beazely from Ord River (baptized Ursula, married name Martin); Dora from Ord, cousin to Nancy Leo (married Dick Smith, a Nygina boy);

Front row from left: Regina Kelly from Beagle Bay; Nancy Leo from Ord River (her father was Pianti); Maggie Murphy from Turkey Creek (married George Kelly); Winnie from Beagle Bay (married a Lombadina Boy, Anthony Sampy- he later married Christina , a Derby girl); Sophie from Carnot Bay (married Paul McKenzie); Mary from Beagle Bay, worked for Sister Michael, her mother was Leonie Kelly (Mary married a boy from Pender Bay, Paddy Joyce).

About this time there was a pattern emerging with the population increase at Beagle Bay Mission. The majority of the children being brought into the Mission had little or no opportunity to return to their people until they had completed their schooling, and by then many of them had lost contact, and took on work elsewhere if there was an opportunity to do so. Joseph Bischofs was intrigued with the Aboriginal culture.<sup>247</sup>

In his report, 1906 - 1908, on the number of children taken up at the Beagle Bay Mission Joseph Bischofs listed the names, where they were taken from, by whom taken, the date, and the age of the child. Eleven of the children were half caste, and twelve were full- blood. Four of them were sent from Broome, nine of them from stations, South Broome, and La Grange Bay, five from Derby, and five from Cygnet Bay who had been educated for a time on Father Nicholas' station. The mission had an overdraft of £3400 with the bank, and a debt of about £1000.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> J.Bischofs, 'Die Niol-Niol, ein Eingeborenenstamm in Nord West- Australien' *Anthropos*, 1908 p.32

<sup>248</sup> Bischofs to C.P.A., 7 August 1908, ADB.

The Chief Protector of Aborigines in Perth used the Mission Authorities as an arm of the State Administration.

There were problems Asian men wanting to set up families, for example: A request to the Aborigines Department from Cyriaco Costalis, a Manilaman, to marry, meant that though the C.P.A. had a distinct aversion to the marriages, Fr. Joseph Bischofs was asked if he approved.

It appeared that the local Manilaman had been living in Broome with Amy, a full blood Aborigine, for four years, and had a 2 year old son by her. He earned £5 a week, and had just been fined £20 for cohabiting. He would pay the fine, but wished to marry the woman. Joseph Bischofs recommended the marriage. A confidential request was then wired re police opinion and since a positive approval was given the marriage was approved. However, J. Edgar then advised that the husband was in his employ.

J. Bischofs thanked the Protector for the permission to marry the couple though in his opinion, because of the white Australia Policy, permission should not be granted. However, he wrote of two more couples and recommended marriage for the sake of the children. The reply from CF. Gale, the Chief Protector was adamant: Re application marriage have informed parties not approved.<sup>249</sup> Joseph Bischofs asked for the intention of the Aboriginal Department with regard to coloured man wishing to marry full blood or half caste women, and the reply from CF. Gale, the Chief protector of Aborigines was " No application from or on behalf Asiatics to marry Aboriginal women will be entertained."<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Correspondence re Cyriaco Costalis and others seeking permission to marry. C.P.A. to Bischofs, rough notes, Bischofs, Police, Edgar, 24 July -18 August 1911, B.L.

<sup>250</sup> Bischofs to C.P.A. and reply from same, Ace 695/12 13.5.1912, B.L.

At the end of 1913 there were 147 children being cared for at Beagle Bay Mission. There were 84 girls, 28 full blood, and 56 half caste, and there were 63 boys, 30 full blood, and 33 half castes. Amongst the boys 11 of them stayed in the camp with their mothers at night. There were 20 girls in the sewing room in the morning, and the bigger boys had obtained skills and proficiency by the training in the different workshops, so that without their assistance it would have been impossible to run the Institution properly. A new Sisal Hemp plantation had been operating for about 5 months. <sup>251</sup>

Aborigines near the sea could get food, but those whose country was inland, were unable to get sufficient food. On the Ord River all the settlers complained bitterly of the damage done to their stock by Aborigines. They would not allow them to chase kangaroos, or other game among the stock. Severe sentences were passed on Aborigines for having meat in their possession, it being assumed they came by it unlawfully, and resident magistrates considered that flogging had as much effect as imprisonment. When the stations were first started in Kimberley many Aborigines were killed, but this could no longer be done without police knowledge. The settlers were all in favour of clearing the Aborigines away onto Reserves.

The Filipino community in Broome was a most extraordinary case of a group developing their own customs and culture from a number of others and preserving it against all outside pressures. They were in fact the core around which the mixed blood society in Broome developed. The first Baptisms recorded in Broome were from the family of Rodriguez. It was Mrs Gonzales, an Irishwoman herself, but part of the pearling community, who befriended the nuns when they arrived in Broome. Men like Rodriguez and George Francis

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<sup>251</sup> Bachmair to Gale, 2 October 1913, Ace 652 2707/14, B.L.

had taken their pearling fleets from Thursday Island round to Cossack about 1886, and been around Broome ever since.<sup>252</sup>

Mother Antonia was determined to visit Broome and see if a house could be obtained for a convent. The Sisters could take on nursing or teaching to support themselves. Three postulants had offered to come, two from Ireland. There was no need for so many nuns on the Mission. There they had to depend on the Mission Superiors for everything, food, clothing, postage, medicine, and transport. It would be good to have some independence.

Therefore, she sailed out to Broome, June 1908, to find an independent footing. Her determined manner and blunt speech didn't make friends easily, but she was to find stalwart and faithful friends in Broome. Her pressing excuse for going was that Mother Benedict Courtney needed to consult Dr. Blick about an eye infection. Mother Antonio and Fr. Thomas Bachmair accompanied her.

Mother Margaret Carmody wrote:

*"After three days' sailing, they arrived in Broome 5 June 1908. The Pio" stopped at the wooden jetty which ran out for half a mile into the sea. It was almost midnight when the priest and two nuns left to walk to the presbytery a mile away. They carried their suit cases with clothing and prayer books. Fr. Thomas had the key of the Church and in they went. It was a scene of desolation, dust everywhere, and the Christmas decorations still on the altars.*

*As it was still dark (no electric lights then), the priest went to the Presbytery and the nuns sat and dozed on chairs in the small room at the back of the Church. As soon as day dawned, the Sisters swept the Church and laid the altar for Mass. Luckily they had brought wine.*

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<sup>252</sup> Howe to Durack Correspondence. ACAP.

altar breads, and some clean linen

*After Mass, the nuns went out onto the street and after a while espied a half caste boy. Mother Antonia beckoned to him, "Could you take us to the house of a Catholic lady?" she said. The boy considered, "Yes, I'll take you to Mrs Gonzales." They walked up the street for a quarter of a mile and came to a nice house with a lawn in front. A woman in the front verandah looked up in amazement at the appearance of two nuns at 7 a.m.!*

*Mother Antonia wasted no time. "Would you give a cup of tea to two poor nuns?" she asked. "Of course I will," was the answer, and in an unmistakeable brogue, "Come on inside and I'll have it ready in two jiffies."*

*"Now, my boy," said Mother. "would you do another act of charity. Bring the Priest here from the Church." The lad rose to the occasion and went off whistling.. In due time Fr. Thomas arrived, escorted by the young Samaritan. Mrs Gonzales had laid a table in her parlour and besides the bread and butter there were nearly two dozen eggs. The nuns enjoyed their breakfast and found out that Mrs Gonzales was from Tipperary and was married to a Filipino pearler. The Gonzales were well off and Mrs Gonzales proved a sterling friend to the Sisters (It was she who donated the organ for the church and the lovely statue of the Sacred Heart. She also helped to furnish the Convent)."*

Sr.Benedict added a little more to the story:

*"Meals were ordered for three from a small 'eating hoiiise' in Sheba Lane downtown (where the 'long' soup was made. They were eaten at the presbytery.*

*Then the Sisters were offered a small hut, free of charge. It was about 14 square feet. There was land attached. They scrubbed it*

*inside and outside to make it respectable before taking possession. Later on they were able to enlarge it by adding a long high building which was divided into rooms by curtains. A house to house collection had been made and all contributed generously. The donors included many races, namely whites, Japanese, Chinese, Malay and Filipinos .*

*Fr. Thomas Bachmair advised the Sisters to open a school and gave up one of the rooms at the back of the presbytery. They began teaching 29 June 1908, with one little white boy, James Stewart. Soon, many others came, consisting of white, Japanese. Chinese, Malay and Filipinos."*

Sr.Margaret Carmody recorded about the old shack near the Church.

*"A benevolent pioneer - Tom Clarke, soon realized the necessity of providing some kind of dwelling for the Sisters and found for them an old shack with a piece of land attached. It had been the royal palace of a noble representative of one of the Aboriginal tribes."*

A white woman and two Japanese women went around with the Sister on her begging expeditions. Father Thomas Bachmair gave up one of the rooms at the back of the presbytery as the first school room and they began teaching 29.6.1908 with one little child. Soon many others came consisting of white, Japanese, Chinese, Malay and Filipinos.<sup>253</sup> The idea of the convent in Broome came from some Broome ladies, the Bishop, and Mother Antonio, who wanted the school opened at once, and would not wait until Christmas as formerly agreed to. At the beginning of November 1908, Br.Frank Stuetting came to Broome and worked mainly for the Sisters as carpenter till 20.2.1909. The Mission supplied the Sisters with fowls, firewood, and fence posts.

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<sup>253</sup> M.Benedict Courtney, 'The Pioneer Nuns of the Kimberley', ASJG Perth.

She was to be appointed Novice Mistress in 1913 and she taught in the Broome school. She became Provincial Superior of the North West and held office for many years. During her years many works were begun, the Leprosarium (1937), the establishment of the Holy Child Orphanage in Broome (1942), the native Hospital in Derby (1946), and the first attempt to begin a Sisters school in Derby (1946/47). Of all the Sisters she was probably the one most remembered by the Aborigines. She had a great zeal for them. When Aboriginal Reserves were established at One Mile and Kennedy's Hill, Mother Margaret was to be a constant visitor, inspector, ombudsman, and catechist. The breakfasts which followed first Communion were free for all. Mountains of sandwiches were necessary, piles of cake, and basins of jelly.<sup>254</sup>

Bishop Kelly came to visit Broome at the end of August, and at the beginning of November Br. Frank Stuetting came to Broome and worked mainly for the Sisters as carpenter till 20 February 1909. The Mission supplied the Sisters with fowls, firewood, and fence posts.

The Broome school grew, and the church was used as a classroom. Quite a number of the children were non Catholics. There were no black children then in Broome, but a large number of Chinese and Japanese. Most of the shops were owned by Chinese. They paid 2/- a week school fees. The Sisters taught music and book keeping in the afternoons to eke out a living! The new school was finished at the end of 1911, a splendid building with wide verandas. A house, left to Mother Antonia in Ireland by her father was sold and the £100 sent to her by the nuns enabled her to put up two timber rooms.

The Japanese in Broome, mostly pearl divers, obtained permission to erect their own hospital and bring in a Japanese doctor. The trained

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<sup>254</sup> Archives of the Diocese of Broome.



nurse they were expecting from Perth was lost at sea. The Doctor, who had been taking English lessons at the Convent, asked the nuns for help. Sr Immaculate had been trained in Ireland and had spent a year on the Mission. She took charge of the hospital. Another Sister went to the hospital every afternoon and helped with the nursing and did night duty. At the time there was no proper water supply in Broome and epidemics of typhoid were common.

In 1912, Sr.Immaculate caught the infection and died. A huge marble celtic cross was erected by the Japanese of Broome in her memory. Most of the patients were suffering from the 'bends' (diver's paralysis), at that time thought to be incurable. They were generally paralysed from the waist down, so were almost helpless. The Sisters stayed on nursing at the hospital until the war broke out and the Japanese had to leave Broome.

While the Sisters were making their foundation in Broome, Fr.Nicholas was using his boat to make contact with other Aborigines, the pearlers and the settlers about the coast.<sup>255</sup>

H.V.Howe, a perler, wrote his recollections of Nicholas Emo as he met him, in the context of a 'big blow', in the ebb and flow of the tide.

*It was a fitting place and time, for the climate dominated lifestyle: I first met Fr.Nicholas on the eve of the blow in April, 1908. With our five boats and the schooner we had gone into Beagle Bay for shelter. Late in the afternoon while we were anchored in the bay waiting for high tide for the luggers to enter the creek, Fr.Nicholas sailed alongside in his 'Salvador', and asked for the loan of some anchors and chain to enable him to ride out the gale.*

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<sup>255</sup> Archives, SJG, Derby.

*After the blow he stayed with us aboard the schooner for a few days, he was the first of his type I had met, a man of wide and varied experience and a splendid raconteur. He lived the very hard life of a missionary at Cygnet Bay, but he could enjoy a change to good food and entertainment. He was no mean hand on the banjo. His influence was greater among the 'binghi' than that of any of the other missionaries.*

*I found it strange that Nicholas, Hadley, and Hunter, three men of such entirely different character with such close understanding of binghi mentality, should be gathered together in the small area around Sunday Island, Boolgin, and Cygnet Bay, but Father Nicholas's experiences covered a wider field than those of any of the others.*

*I met him frequently at various points along the coast, and always marvelled at his survival among the Drysdale River binghis who were altogether too handy with their spears when approached by strangers. Thomas Puertollano was at Cygnet Bay and later at Chilli Creek. Nicholas always had an abundant supply of fish, fowls, eggs, goat milk, goat milk cheese, and goat meat if he wanted. He was usually well supplied with the maize beer Thomas made.* <sup>256</sup>

Fr.Nicholas Emo had continued preparations for the new venture with the Benedictines from New Norcia. His ambition to work among the wild tribes was about to be accomplished at Napier Broome Bay in the mouth of the Drysdale River. <sup>257</sup>

In May, 1908, Fr.E.Planas, and Brother Vincent were sent to Derby from New Norcia, to join Fr.Nicholas and the crew of the San

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<sup>256</sup> Howe to Durack Correspondence. ACAP.

<sup>257</sup> Emo to Gibney, 29 July 1908, ACAP.

Salvador at Derby. Fr.I.Alcalde was to accompany Abbot Torres in the 'Bullara', and both parties were to meet at Hat Point. The San Salvador left Derby 5 June 1908. Fr.Nicholas communicated his joy to Bishop Gibney (Spelling left as in the original):

*29 June 1908*

*My dear Lord,*

*Rev.Fr.Planas and brothers with me on board my schooner 'Salvadore'. 'Bullara' will arrive tomorrow on 30th with Lord Abbot Torres and Fr.Alcalde. We will go after to Napier Broome Bay in the mouth of the Drysdale River 42 miles from here.*

*Oh, beautiful to see, in the night, the 5 or 6 tremendous fires of the natives round de Bahie. The desire of my heart to work among wild tribes is accomplish. We have erected a big Cross at the top of Hat point.*

*May her influence convert de numerous tribes all round. Rev.Fr.Planas and staff are full of religious enthusiasm.. of New Norcia, with the help of God will succeed.*

*For me, poor old sardine, I have one only recommendation to make to your Lordship, to the rev'd clergy of this country, to the sisters of the convents and all Catholics. In case I where burried in the stomach qf one of those strong aboriginals, I humbly implore somma preayers for my poor soul. I shall be very much oblige. Kindly send me your blessing. Fr.Nicholas. "* <sup>258</sup>

The missionary party was Abbot Fulgentius Torres, Fathers E.Planas, I.Alcalde, Br.Vincent, from New Norcia, then Fr.Nicholas Emo, an Aboriginal couple, five boys, The Manilaman Leandro with his Timorese wife and their 12 year old adopted daughter from Broome. Cclix

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<sup>258</sup> Emo to Gibney, 29 June 1906. ADB.

At the Drysdale River, a party of ten, four missionaries and six of their boys including Leandro rowed up to the end of the tidal waters and met about 26 Aborigines. They were unfriendly and fled when some shots were fired. The Mission at the Drysdale River was officially opened 15 August 1908. A big cross was erected in the centre, and the historic bell, brought by Fr.Nicholas from the old Trappist Mission of Beagle Bay, was hung from a nearby tree. The Abbot returned to Broome in the 'San Salvador'. Nicholas Emo wrote to Bishop Gibney giving an enthusiastic description of the Aborigines with whom they were making contact, and asking him for a loan to pay an overlooked bill. <sup>259</sup>

The Drysdale Mission was first established at Pago, one kilometre from the coast at Mission cove. A number of buildings were erected and the land cultivated. <sup>260</sup> Twenty years later, Kalumburu, further inland, was chosen as a more promising site for a permanent Mission, and in 1932 a road was opened to the selected land. A start was made to erect buildings. <sup>261</sup>

Fr.Nicholas's 'San Salvador' was the life-line of the Drysdale Mission from the beginning, and during the first year, it was 138 days on the move, in and out of Mission Cove on various errands. It collected the nine half caste boys whom the Government sent from Derby to be trained and educated at the mission. The same day, 19 December 1909, it collected another 30 sheep for the mission flock at Parry Harbour. <sup>262</sup>

Fr.Nicholas had arrived at Drysdale, II November, 1910, and a few

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<sup>259</sup> op.cit., Perez, *Kalumburu* pp.7-12

<sup>260</sup> Emo to Gibney, 7 November 1908, ACAP.

<sup>261</sup> E.Perez *Kalumburu War Diary*, (Perth, 1981). p.12

<sup>262</sup> op.cit., Perez, *Kalumburu* pp.14-16.

days after he left, the Aborigines twice attacked Drysdale Mission.

The mission boat was wrecked by cyclones. With his boat at present unfit for service, he had completely severed his connection with the Mission.<sup>263</sup>

The Drysdale Mission School consisted of the eight half caste boys sent by the Government, two years before, and they were also occupied in the garden. With them at the mission were two Fathers, one Brother, and four labourers with their wives.<sup>264</sup>

When 'Dickie', the new mission schooner was wrecked, 12 August 1912, Leandro, who had served the Mission from the beginning, and his friends, the Filipino family brought to the Mission to after look it, returned to Broome. Fr. Nicholas had made a pencil note beside entry no. 157 in his Broome Census Book of 1896,<sup>265</sup> " This is Leandro Lored, husband of Matilda (Aboriginal) living at the Point but nobody knows (but me) the true name."<sup>266</sup>

At the Drysdale River, in 1913, groups of Aborigines, 20 to 60 at a time were visiting the Mission. They were mostly well built men, all circumcised, occasionally some youths and a few women with one or two children. They were taking the watermelons. One day, when the Manilaman Toribio had gone fishing with one of the boys, the missionaries were speared. Fulgentius had cried the warning, and running to get a gun, had fired into the air. The shot acted like an order to stop, and the attacking Aborigines ran away. After this event, the life at Drysdale became a state of siege, but they carried on with the work of the garden and dressing bush timber for buildings. Nothing was known of the outside world as the monks had no boat or

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<sup>263</sup> Correspondence re Drysdale River Mission. 29 November 1910– 14 January 1911, B.L.

<sup>264</sup> Torres to CPA., 30 June 1911, B.L.

<sup>265</sup> op.cit., Perez, *Kulumburu* p.15

<sup>266</sup> Emo Broome *Census Book, 1896. ADB.*

other means of communication.

At the request of Abbot Torres, Nicholas Emo visited the Drysdale Mission, for it had been reported that the mission had been destroyed, when the captain of the 'Bedout' had returned the cargo of supplies to Broome. Fr.Nicholas promised to accompany Constable Johnston to Sunday Island, as soon as his lugger, which had been damaged in the hurricane the previous November, had been repaired. <sup>267</sup>

He was to spend the last five years at the Lombadina Mission.

Credit for the founding of Lombadina Mission is given to Fr.Wilhelm Droste in 1910, though it had already had Fr.Jean Marie Janny as a resident priest with his Catholic community from Disaster Bay. Situated slightly North East of the plain of Chilli Creek, with the huts of the Aboriginal camp sited to the West on the sand dunes of Thomas Bay, the extensive sand dunes provided a beautiful setting. The Aborigines belonged to the Bard tribe which extended from Pender Bay Creek, Lombadina, Boolgin, Malombo, right down to Disaster Bay. It was one of the biggest tribes in the North West. Some of the people had been with the Fathers in Disaster Bay, while others had been with Fr.Nicholas in Malumbo at Cygnet Bay. He had looked after them and the Manilamen who were there with the pearling luggers. Fr.Droste with Br.Anton Helmprecht had erected a small building at Chilli Point which was destroyed in the same year by a 'willy-willy'.

The Sisters were all fully occupied in Broome and Beagle Bay, and Fr.Nicholas was appealing for nuns for Lombadina. Mother Antonia wanted more help. She sent Mother Bernardine and Sister Xavier to

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<sup>267</sup> Johnson to Stewart, Broome 12 May 1911 652 591/11 B.L.

the Eastern States, where they secured seven young postulants, one of whom was Sr. Ignatius Murnane. She herself, left for Ireland with Sr. Dolores. In Ireland, she found five young girls to come to the Kimberley, and left them with the Wexford nuns to train as nurses in the Mercy Hospital in Cork.

One of these who entered in Wexford was Sr. Gabriel Greene. She told her story to the author when she was 96 years of age in the John of God Hospital in Perth:

*Five of the girls in my family entered the St John of God Order. I entered in Wexford for the mission in 1912, and came out as a nun in 1916 with four others, Philip, and Elizabeth, who were nuns, and Evangelist and Raphael who were postulants. My sister Bernadine, had come out for Subiaco. She was the first volunteer for the North. I was only a girl, my mother died in 1910. My mother didn't want her to go, she used to cry and say, "...transported to Australia ... " She didn't go home to say Goodbye. Then Mother Antonia came home and got us, Sr. Philip, Sr. Elizabeth and me....*

*The real start of the Leprosarium at Derby was my sister. Sr. Gertrude Green, who said to me, "There was an advertisement in the paper this morning asking for volunteers to go to Darwin Leprosarium, will you come with me?" I said, "No." She wrote to the Department in Perth and volunteered her services and they wrote back to Bishop Raible, said to tell the Sister who volunteered for Darwin Leprosarium that they were building a Leprosarium in Derby, and later on she could go there. Another sister went with her. Sr. Brigid went. I never wanted to go but I was sent, under obedience, a year or so afterwards. I was there for several years.*

*I know a bit about the nuns buried at Beagle Bay. Sister Gerard, died in 1946, an Australian. Sr. Xavier died the same year. She was Irish descent. She had been a novice in a Mercy convent, her brother's wife*

*died and left little children. The Bishop told her to go home and mind the children. Sr. Philomena died of cancer in 1945, a young nun, her mother wasn't a Catholic. A lovely sister. very young, late 20's maybe. Sister Ila, Irish, a novice just professed, suffocated in the heat. Sr. Agnes, an Australian, died in 1947, a great cook. Sr. Philip, died in 1926, a trained nurse, a big powerful sister. We came out during the War in a captured German ship 'Omragh' in 1916.* <sup>268</sup>

Lombadina Mission was founded in 1910, by Fr. Droste. It was situated slightly North East of the plain of Chile Creek, and the huts of the Aborigines camp sited to the West on the sand dunes of Thomas Bay. The Bard tribe extended from Pender Bay Creek, Lombadina, Boolgin, Malombo, and right down to Disaster Bay.

Some of the Aborigines had been with the Trappist Fathers at Disaster Bay, and followed Thomas Puertollano and Fr. Jean Marie Janny to Lombadina. Others had heard about the Christian Faith from Fr. Nicholas in Malumbo at Cygnet Bay when he looked after them and the Manilamen from the pearling luggers. Fr. Droste and Brother Anton Helmprecht erected a small building at Chile Point which was destroyed in the same year by a willywilly. <sup>269</sup>

The Lombadina Mission was taken over by Nicholas Emo at the beginning of 1911. It had been opened 6 months previously by the Pallottine Fathers. Its school was opened 20 January 1911 with an attendance of 15 children. This was increased by six children brought in by Constable Johnston, in February. It decreased by six when they ran away some weeks later. There had been a regular attendance for March, April, May, June and July of the first 15 children. At the Mission, a total of fifty-five Aborigines, consisting of the children

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<sup>268</sup> Sr. Gertrude Greene, interviewed by Sr. Brigida Nailon, 1982. ADB.

<sup>269</sup> *Lombadina Chronicle*. ADB



and the sick, old, and infirm were fed daily.

The number of Aborigines in the camp varied from 60 to 100, usually about 70. In Lombadina, Thomas had offered his 3 roomed house to the Priest to live in and to use as a temporary chapel. he had built a small house for himself to the West, which later became the Presbytery. He also supported the Mission as best as he could. Fr.Nicholas, together with Thomas Puertollano and a Manilaman called Sebastian, and the Aborigines prepared everything for the Sisters to come to Lombadina.

An epidemic of Small Pox passed through afflicting nearly everyone in the camp, and the family of the station, but thanks to the isolation and prompt measures adopted it disappeared without any serious consequences. Harry Hunter accused Fr.Nicholas Emo of running a coloured man's brothel at the 'Thomas Place', and sent a copy of his letter to the Aboriginal Department.<sup>270</sup>

Fr.Nicholas wrote his side of the story to the same Department, and then wrote to Mr.Hunter telling him that since they were women from Boolgin, selected by Hunter, and learned at his own school, to complain to himself. Constable Johnston took four young women from Lombadina Mission to Beagle Bay Mission. Two of them had half caste children fathered by Hunter. On Sunday Island there was a half caste girl about eight years old, and a woman with an unborn child whose father was supposed to be Hunter. Hunter could have been requested under Section 34, Aboriginal Act 1905, to maintain these children.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Emo to C.P.A., 30 June 1911. Acc. 652 1244/11 B.L.

<sup>271</sup> Correspondence between Emo, Hunter, Johnston, and CPA, 5 September 1911 - 7 September 1911,\* Law Department, 26 September 1911, B.L.

After much effort to bring action against Hunter, T.Houlahan, Sub Inspector to the commissioner of police said, that even if a verdict were secured against Hunter, he had no means to pay. <sup>272</sup>

Fr.Nicholas wrote from Lombadina to the CPA (Spelling left as in the original):

*I have the honour to include here for your perusal, the Return of the blankets and clothing distributed during the year 1912, and 1913, regretting not to be able to ascertain the numbers during my absence, and also, myself been very feeble of memory, I frequently forgot to take note of the distribution, leaving my esprit in the double..*

*So I preferred not to put nothing than to state anything I considered a lie.*

*I apologise to you Sir, for this omission which will not occur in the future, as I hope the Sisters of St. John of God will do figures at your own satisfaction. But you may believe, for the past, that as a protector of natives myself. I have administered always in conscience regretting only, by the special circumstances not to have been able to have more memories, that undeniably will stop when in the hands of the Sisters..* <sup>273</sup>

Martin Sibosado told of his role in Lombadina with the Sisters:

*"In 1912, I left Beagle Bay Mission. Fr.Droste told me I could help Thomas Puertollano at Lombadina. There was a Manilaman there, Sebastian.*

*In 1918 I went to work for Harry O'Grady. We started a garden at*

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<sup>272</sup> Correspondence between Johnston, CPA., and Police, 21 September 1911 - 25 November 1911, and Correspondence between Johnston, Houlahan, etc., 27 December 1911 - 28 December 1912, B.L.

<sup>273</sup> Emoto CPA. BL.

*Billabong at One Arm Point. Fr.Droste came to Boolgin. and I was up at the Billabong.*

*He asked for me to come to Boolgin to see him. He asked me, "You mind coming back to Lombadina? If you don't I'm going to take the Sisters away from there."*

*So I said. "Well, I've got children, so I'll come back lo Lombadina where there will be a school." <sup>274</sup>*

Fr.Droste sent the Sisters back from Beagle Bay when I came back."

Bertha and Martin Sibosado had played a special part in building up the Lombadina mission. It was a great event for Lombadina when in 1913, the three sisters arrived, Mother John, Mother Bernardine, and Sister Joseph. It was a relief for Fr.Nicholas, and a blessing for the education and care of the small girls and women. The sisters had their fair share of deprivation and worry. Communication with Broome and Beagle Bay was very difficult, either by the little boat 'Salvador' or by donkey cart.

Materially during these years as long as Mr.Gale was the chief protector of the Aborigines, much was done for them by the government. <sup>275</sup> Without Martin and his wife, the sisters would not have been able to staff the isolated mission. When Fr.Nicholas had appealed for nuns for his mission at Lombadina, Mother Antonio had sent Mother Bernardine and Sister Xavier to the Eastern States to look for postulants. She herself left for Ireland with Sister Dolores who was to be trained as a nurse. When she came back, she had five young Irish postulants, and seven more from the Eastern states. <sup>276</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Martin Sibosado, *This is Your Place*, p.45.

<sup>275</sup> *Lombadina Chronicle*. ADB.

<sup>276</sup> Margaret Cannody, 'Arrival of Sister Dolores and Sister Xavier' ASJG, ADB.

## CHAPTER 6

*"..first the shoot, then the ear. . "*Mk.4:28

### THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

The outbreak of war was not the only problem in 1914. Early in the year, there was a rumour that the Drysdale River Mission had been destroyed, and all Missionaries killed. Fr.Nicholas had then sailed up to the Drysdale in the 'San Salvador' with P.C.White of Broome, and reported that all were safe. <sup>277</sup>

Abbot Torres died in October 1914. This left the office of Vicar Apostolic of the Kimberley vacant.

Other old identities were passing into eternity. The last Will and Testament of Antonio Gonzales, a pearler in Broome was drawn up 11 February 1914 in favour of one of Nicholas Emo's most loyal workers, Sebastian Damaso, a Manilaman, resident of Broome and Chilli Creek. He was bequeathed all real and personal estate, including the pearling luggers 'Auk', and the 'Maori', an unregistered ship, together with all gear and equipment. He was also left Gonzale's half share in the Building known as Foreshore Camp, together with all clothing, jewellery furniture and all moneys. <sup>278</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Correspondence re Drysdale River Mission, 29 November 1910 - 14 January 1911, 1206/10, BL.

<sup>278</sup> Antonio Gonzales 'Last Will and Testament', 11 February 1914. ADB.

Fr.Nicholas Emo made his Last Will and Testament 1 February 1915, and he left everything, including his boat, the 'San Salvador' to the Sisters of St.John of God, to enable them to go from Beagle Bay to Broome and Lombadina. The pump, helmet, corselet, the sextant, and the cost book of the boat went to Thomas Puertoilano. The bag containing his book for publishing was to be sent to the Bishop of Barcelona with the letter and money, £150 sterling in gold. The rest of his sister's money was to go t?

Fr.Thomas Bachmair to pay accounts and do according to his conscience. <sup>279</sup>

When Fr.Nicholas Emo died 8 March 1915, and the Aborigines commenced a great wailing. He was buried on the slope of the sandhill and his bones were later exhumed and interned in the new cemetery. <sup>280</sup>

Beagle Bay Mission had capable leadership with the German Pallottines, Fr.Joseph , Fr.Thomas Bachmair, and Fr.Droste. One hundred and forty-three children were being sheltered, clothed, fed, and educated by a large staff of Sisters and Brothers at the mission. Often, there was care of the parents, as well as of the aged and sick. There had been nine recent arrivals, 7 boys and 2 boys, all half castes, who had come from Thursday Island, the Fitzroy, Cossack, Liveringa Station, Carnot Bay, and La Grange. Ninety-four of the children were in regular attendance at the mission school, and the rest received regular training in the mission workshops. <sup>281</sup>

It was a sad event for the missionaries when the Chief Protector of

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<sup>279</sup> Nicholas Emo, Last Will and Testament, 1 February 1915. ADB.

<sup>280</sup> W.Droste, PSM, *711e Sower* 'Faithful Friend of the Aborigines' May 1915 ADB.

<sup>281</sup> Bachmair, Bischofs, and Droste to Gale, 1 October 1914, 2387/ 14, BL.

Aborigines , C.F.Gale, had been retrenched. This was due to the "*reorganisation of certain Government Departments'*" according to the official explanation, but it was said that he had been dismissed because of clash of personalities. A.O.Neville who had been appointed to the Office had little sympathy for the Catholic Missions. All mission subsidies had been reduced in 1915.

Unseen forces began to undermine the missions. An unsigned letter, 29 July 1915, to the Hon.Rufus Underwood , M.L.A. Perth, started the ball rolling. He had been informed that at Lombadina Mission, there was an Asian holding a lease, and responsible for employing Aborigines.

In 1916, it had been proposed to close the Beagle Bay Mission and this proposal had been averted only by the fall of the Scadden Government, and the fact that " Aboriginal Affairs' was not a political issue. But the war was an issue. The German missionaries from the Kimberley often stayed in their Redemptorist monastery, so Fr.Creagh knew them well.

When War Policy began to impinge on the Missions, it was Archbishop Clune of Perth, who diplomatically arranged affairs to suit all parties. Rumours had been circulating about the Germans at the mission. Some stories were engendered by fear, others by racism. It was said that if the German ships sheltering in the Indian ocean needed meat, there were plenty of cattle available in Beagle Bay. Negotiations had to be made to protect the threatened German missionaries. Fr.Bischofs had made the long journey of 1800 miles to Perth to discuss the situation.

Captain Corbett of the Intelligence Section had contacted the Archbishop Clune, *24 February 1916:*

*"Your Grace.*

*The Beagle Bay Mission near Broome has been discussed with you several times since the outbreak of the war: It is anomalous that a Mission of this sort, composed entirely of aliens, should have a quasi-independent organization, subject only in Australia to a Superior who is an enemy subject.*

*Would it be too much to take this matter in hand with the view of arranging some satisfactory method of local control whereby drastic action on the part of the Department would not be the only remedy in certain contingencies? "*

After more letters, and telegrams were sent. Fr.J.Creagh had received a letter from the Archbishop, 9 May 1916:

*"... In virtue of the powers conferred on me by the Holy See, through His Excellency, the Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Cerutti, I hereby appoint you Superior of the whole Kimberley, until such time as the Holy See releases you from your charge...*

"Fr.Thomas Bachmair, PSM, Beagle Bay, had received his letter from Archbishop B.Cerutti, 11 May 1916:

*"...I write to inform you that you Superior General, with the approval of his Eminence, the Cardinal Secretary of State, has authorised the Archbishop of Perth to appoint a Superior to take charge of the Kimberley Mission provisionally.*

*His Grace, Archbishop Clune, by virtue of such authority has nominated the Very Rev.John Creagh, C.SS.R. of Perth. You yourself. and the other members of the Kimberley community*

*will therefore recognise Fr. Creagh as your Superior, and show him the respect and obedience due to a "fully-constituted authority..."* <sup>282</sup>

So Fr.Creagh had come to the Kimberley to take charge. He had been asked by Captain Corbett to discourage the Germans from coming to Broome and other centres of white population , particularly Fr.Bischofs, Fr.Droste , and Br.Wollseifer.

It was not to be long before Fr.Bischofs was removed from the mission by the Military Authorities. The day he left was like Good Friday. He spent the remainder of his time in Australia at the Ursuline Sisters' Convent in Armida le, NSW.

During Fr.Creagh's stay in Broome, social life had been disrupted. H.V.Howe described the effect on the pearling industry. At the outbreak of the War, Captain Gregory had 4 boats, MacDaniel 3, Hunter 4, and Byrne 4, and Mackenzie came to Broome later with about 20 boats. These were appointed as the big 5, the advisory committee on pearling during the war, on the nominations of the rest of the Broome pearlers, Goldsteins, Norman, Streeters, and Rubin.

The four storekeepers stood aside from the committee as they would be responsible for rationing out the supplies of pearling gear as it came to hand during the war. About 120 boats had laid up when their owners enlisted. Six months later, most of them had been sold. Only the Filipino pearlers still had their boats. <sup>283</sup>

In 1905, J.V. Clarke had moved his pearling enterprise to the Aru Islands. He formed the Celebes Trading Coy with Dutch merchants.

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<sup>282</sup> Correspondence held in ACAP, and ADB.

<sup>283</sup> Howe to Mary Durack, 4 October 1969. ADB.



By 1914 the beds were worked out and Clark was refused admittance to Queensland and New Guinea waters, while at Broome the pearlers fought to prevent him taking over licences and indenture permits previously held by enlisted men. They were not successful and in 1916, Clarke obtained Federal permission to bring thirty-four luggers and two schooners to the coast.<sup>285</sup>

Fr. Creagh was to enjoy good relationships with the Japanese. During his time there, the Japanese population was very active.

The Japanese '*Nanyo Boeki Kaisha*', the South Seas Trading Company, had widespread fishing, agricultural and commercial interests in the islands of Micronesia from where the more important items of trepang and sandalwood were sold to China. Their principal bases were in islands as far flung as Guam, the Gilbert Islands and New Ireland with Palau, due east of the Southern Philippines becoming the most important.<sup>286</sup>

Until the South Seas Trading Company was floated in 1890, Japanese mercantile activity was restricted by competition with the German firms of Godetfroy und Sohn and its subsidiaries, but they were now able to establish themselves in the Caroline Islands in Micronesia. When Spain was defeated by America in the Philippines in 1900, she sold her Micronesian Islands to Germany with Japan establishing trading centres where she did not have a foothold. At the outbreak of World War in 1914 it had been agreed between England and Japan, following the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, that the

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<sup>284</sup> Mackay Report, Q/A 5364.

<sup>285</sup> op.cit., Bain p. 196

<sup>286</sup> ibid., p.201

latter would patrol the waters north of the equator and Australia would guard those to the south.

In late 1914, when there were increased submarine attacks on Allied shipping, Japan was asked to send destroyers to the Mediterranean Sea. In return for this service, England entered into a secret agreement supporting Japan's territorial claims to Micronesian islands held by Germany. These rich volcanic islands, surrounded by coral reefs, were useful as sources of food and raw material, while the Marianas, Caroline and Marshall Islands were also valuable for wireless stations and outposts of defence.<sup>287</sup>

In February 1916, when Britain asked Japan to increase her naval help she insisted on an improvement in the attitude of Australia and other British colonies to Japanese nationals.<sup>288</sup> She sent eight warships.

At the Peace Conference, Japan helped to fashion the Treaty of Versailles, and supported England's claim to the German islands of Samoa, New Guinea and Nauru. She was confirmed in her occupation of the German islands north of the equator, and was to control them as Mandated Territories.<sup>289</sup>

At the Peace Conference, Japan raised the issue of racial discrimination, and requested that the principle of racial equality be incorporated in the peace covenant. When this was not done, Japanese delegates left with a deep feeling of resentment. From this

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<sup>287</sup> *ibid.*, pp.202-203

<sup>288</sup> I.H.Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, London, 1968, p.129.

<sup>289</sup> *op.cit.*, Bain. (Note) Large mainland combines and organizations such as Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Yasuda and Sumitomo then moved into the area. The Nanyo Kaihatsu Kabushiki Kaisha (South Sea Development Company), spread rapidly after 1920, strengthening its sugar production in New Guinea where 15,000 Japanese were employed by 1933, and by 1940, there were 30,000 acres under production compared with 1,100 in 1920.

time there developed concepts of 'Asia for the Asiatics,' and the 'White Peril!', as Europeans moved into productive and export markets.<sup>290</sup>

On Thursday Island, shell and pearls were sent direct on Japanese steamers to Kobe and Tokyo at a cost of only \$7 a tonne, while Australians paid as much as \$20 to \$39 a tonne to Hong Kong.<sup>291</sup>

The controversial problem of 'international waters' was to continue. In 1924 a pearler reported a three-yearly appearance of a large schooner, employing two motor boats and five whale-boats. It was known to be a Japanese vessel from the Caroline Islands. The master employed local Aborigines for a month at a time, and paid them with 'cherichee' (pidgin for rice).<sup>292</sup>

The little town of Broome had been particularly hard hit when the owners of about 120 pearling boats had joined up. It was said that new owners were renting the boats to Japanese divers for £5 a week, and only those boats being legitimately worked by their white owners employed Malay or Filipino divers.<sup>293</sup>

Fr. Creagh began to attend to the white population and the Asiatics along the coast as far North as Wyndham. He also had in his charge three Pallottine Priests with nine Brothers and sixteen Sisters. He brought about good changes for the Sisters by obtaining salary for a trained teacher in the school, and regular salaries for day and night

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<sup>290</sup> W. Macmahon Ball, ed. *Australia and Japan*, (Melbourne, 1969), p.16.

<sup>291</sup> Lt. R. Asburner, R.A.N.- Naval Board, 19 February, 1920. Sc.E.27/1 Item 36/8733. A.A.C.

<sup>292</sup> op. cit., Bain, p.200. *West Australian* 4 August 1980, p. 1. Oe. In 1973 there were 62 sightings of Indonesian fisherman. In 1980, there were 62 sightings in one seven-week period.

<sup>293</sup> Howe to Durack, 4 October 1969, ADB.

Editor's Note: H.V. Howe was a member of a pearling crew from 1907 - 1928. He was later private secretary to W.M. Hughes for five years, and Military Secretary to the Minister for the Army 1940 -1946.

## Sisters in the Japanese Hospital.

Fr. Creagh had the St. John of God Sisters put on the Nursing Staff at the District Hospital where they did night duty, and Sister Michael became acting Matron. The nursing Sisters now had 'days off'. He encouraged the school Sisters to spend the weekends and holidays at the Point in a house he had built. He kept a family group there to milk and herd the goats, tend the garden and maintain the supplies.<sup>294</sup>

Many of the mixed blood children educated by the Sisters were illegitimate, either because the Europeans had not married the Aboriginal women, or because, if the fathers were coloured, permission had been refused by the Chief Protector of Aborigines.

Pastoral care of Broome's mixed population brought Fr. Creagh into contact with the problems of the drifting population. When he applied to the CPA for permission to marry a Filipino lugger hand to an Aboriginal woman, the application was refused.

He made a sharp rejoinder to the refusal:

*It is not, and could not be, my policy any more than yours to separate any couple lawfully married. I am aware that Peries is an indentured man, and he is not likely to want employment at the expiration of his present engagement, and after the number of years he has spent in Australia, permission would not be denied to him to live ashore, as has been permitted to very many other Manilamen.*<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Archives of SJG Derby.

<sup>295</sup><sup>295</sup> Correspondence re marriage of Mary Johanna and Antonio Peries, between Creagh, 28 December 1916- Neville 21 January 1917; Lange, 19 February 1917; Walker and Drewery, 20 February 1917; Neville 9 March 1917; Creagh 15 April 1917. ADB.

Another pressing problem was transport in the Kimberley. In the absence of any kind of road to Beagle Bay, the main means of travel was by one of the mission luggers. There was the 'San Salvador', and the 'Nambon'. Fr.Creagh had purchased a motor vessel which he named the 'San Gerardo'. It was never anything but a worry and a disaster from the day of launching, and there was unending trouble over the sale.<sup>296</sup>

Fr.Creagh had been sent north to safeguard the Missions. He began to learn more about them.

Sr.Ignatius M umane SJG, had been posted to Lombadina early in 1916 and he had heard her description of the conditions.  
*"School was a big shady tree; there were some desks and a portable small Harmonium. Sr.Lawrence was a splendid worker and companion. Sr.Ignatius was cook, and wash-lady.*

*There was a big open hearth with two iron bars across it. The kettle hung by a chain from the chimney. There also hung a boiler for the house supply of hot water.*

*A bucket of white sand was at hand to clean pots and pans. Water had to be carried in buckets from a well. Washing was done in iron tubs under a shady tree. Clothes were boiled in kerosene tins set on stones and ironing was by flat irons heated on the same stones.*

*There were no bathrooms. The Sisters washed in hand basins. The girls were taken to the sea a few times weekly. Faces and hands were washed at the well."*

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<sup>296</sup> Samuel J.Boland, C.s.s.R., 'Father John Creagh, C.s.s.R., in the Kimberleys, W.A., 1916-1923'. ADB.

Within a year Fr.Creagh was involved with officialdom in a struggle to retain Lombadina. Early in 1917, the Colonial Secretary, H.P.Colebatch wrote to Fr.Creagh regarding the reduction and possible withdrawing of Mission subsidies which had already fallen from £800 to £400. Half of a subsidy of £72 to the clergyman at Lombadina, and the first payment of a subsidy of £125 per annum to the Broome School had been made, but requests for school requisites at Broome, Beagle Bay and Lombadina were refused.

The Colonial Secretary claimed that there was no basis of comparison between an institution such as Beagle Bay, conducted on denominational lines, a semi-philanthropic, semi-commercial enterprise, and a state institution brought into existence for the sole reason of meeting the necessities of the Aborigines.<sup>297</sup>

Lombadina was the more vulnerable of the missions. An immediate danger came from Mr.Neville who had his plans for the Dampier Peninsula.<sup>298</sup> Mr. Neville recommended that, *"Lombadina, a branch of Beagle Bay Mission, established on private property, should be closed, as unsuitably situated."*<sup>299</sup>

Then, as Chief Protector of Aborigines, Mr.Neville had visited Broome. He called a meeting, 31 August 1917, with Fr.Creagh, Fr.Droste, the Resident Magistrate, the Inspector of Police, and P.C.Watson of Beagle Bay to 'lay down the law'. Lombadina was to be closed by the end of September that year.

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<sup>297</sup> Colebatch to Creagh, 26 March 1917, ADB.

<sup>298</sup> A.O.Neville, *Australia's Coloured Minority*, (Perth, 1947).

<sup>299</sup> AO.Neville, *Report on the Missions in W.A.*, 25 July 1917. BL.

*"Lombadina was established as a temporary measure in order to receive those natives who were living in the vicinity of Hunter's place at Swan Point... Should this opportunity be taken of closing Lombadina, and the natives be removed to Beagle Bay, which would then receive about £100 less than at present, a sum almost wholly accounted for by the discontinuance of the salary for the priest in charge at Lombadina."*

With the Policeman, he went to Lombadina and personally announced that Government support to Lombadina had ceased. The mission was to close before the end of the year. It was a great blow.  
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Fr.Creagh wired a strong protest to the Colonial Secretary, who wired back that he had no knowledge of the proceedings. Messages flew backwards and the file of correspondence kept growing until the end of the year. More and more people became involved.

Archbishop Clune had a personal interview with the Premier, in response to which, Mr.Neville was told to leave the matter in abeyance, until there was a cabinet meeting.<sup>301</sup>

Fr.Creagh had done his best on all fronts in this matter. He had carried out his own private negotiations. He had arranged with his brother and Mr.Frenez to buy the land of Lombadina from Thomas Puertollano.<sup>302</sup>

They then made over the land, 19000 acres, to Fr.Creagh, for the Vicariate of the Kimberley.

It was a successful move. Lombadina gained independence from Mr.Neville's control but it would not be easy. Deprived of Government sustenance, its cattle sold to pay for the land, the mission could still eke out an existence. Monkton Creagh had helped save Lombadina. The sad memory for Fr.Creagh had been that his brother died in hospital not long afterwards as a result of an accident

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<sup>300</sup> *Lombadina Chronicle*.ADB.

<sup>301</sup> for the North West, to the Premier, 'Proposal for establishing an Aborigines Station on Dampier Peninsula'. Submitted to the Cabinet 16 January 1918, cf II October 1917. Map 1159 C Acc 893. B.L.

<sup>302</sup> Puerto llano to Dept. of Lands and Surveys, 22 January 1918. ADB.

on a lugger.<sup>303</sup>

During the war there was much propaganda. The fact that the Sisters were British subjects and taught in English had helped. So had the prayerful children, who prayed from morning to evening, "*Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, protect and bless our Missionaries.*" In these troubled times, something wonderful had happened in Beagle Bay. It remained as a beautiful monument of hope. A new church had been built by the community. Everyone had rallied to help Fr. Bachmair. The Children of Mary sewed work dresses from flour bags to save their other clothes while they made the bricks. The nuns had evening classes so that they could work during the day. A year after the commencement, the Church was completed. It was dedicated by Fr. J. Creagh, 15 August 1918.

But even this event was marked by tragedy. Before the festivities were over, Fr. Bachmair, whose health had been deteriorating for a couple of years, died of blood poisoning. His was the first Requiem.<sup>304</sup>

It has been written: *The garden in the waste land, the pure beauty of the altar in a church raised by devoted hands are the glories of this place. Somehow the making of these two things appears as a manifestation of something lasting and vital.*

Broome had provided occupation enough for Fr. Creagh, especially in the early months of the year. In the 'lay-up', the stormy cyclone season, the cosmopolitan population of the port was swelled by the idle lugger crews. Racial antipathies became as violent as the weather.

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<sup>303</sup> Aboriginal Department Files. 26 June 1918 - 2 July 1918. ADB.

<sup>304</sup> *Beagle Bay Chronicle*.



Among the mixture of nationalities those who claimed most of his attention, next to the Filipinos whom he always favoured, were the Japanese. As well as being numerous they were also well organised. The patients at their medical centre had been so touched by the kindness and Christian charity of their nurses, that in time they began to come to the Convent for lessons in English and religious instruction. Before long there were Japanese names in the baptismal register. One group Fr.Creagh baptized was composed of fourteen luggermen, 2 February 1919.<sup>305</sup>

The Filipinos had rallied to his support by providing the choir and the music. Church became one of the entertainments Broome could boast of on a Sunday. He had used his eloquence to denounce the pearling companies for exploiting the divers and the luggermen, nearly all of them Asians working for a pittance to support their distant families. His wrath was turned on the Government for the paltry grant given to the Sisters' Missions. They were reduced to using 'dugong oil' for every imaginable ill. There had been the post War epidemic of influenza. Fr.Droste, the Sisters, and the Aborigines were down with it. There had been many deaths.<sup>306</sup>

Fr.Creagh's expectation that the end of the war would mean a final decision about the Kimberley was not to be fulfilled. The months passed without any word to justify his being "*most hopejid of being freed.*" It had not been until March 1919 that the Apostolic Delegate spoke, and it was cold comfort he offered.<sup>307</sup>

Archbishop Clune had made

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<sup>305</sup> The Broome Baptismal Register contains the names of more than thirty Japanese baptised by Fr.J.Creagh.

<sup>306</sup> S.Boland, C.ss.R., *Faith of Our Fathers*.

<sup>307</sup> Cattaneo to Creagh, 2 March 1918.ADB.

recommendations that Fr.Creagh be left in Broome with the Vicariate remaining a Redemptorist responsibility.<sup>308</sup>

In 1920, Fr.Droste and Fr.Collins , a secular priest, took it in turns to look after Lombadina and Beagle Bay.<sup>309</sup> In May, Archbishop Cattaneo, the Apostolic Delegate had visited Beagle Bay. He had taken the mission lugger from Broome. The event was unreal. It was magic. In the glow of the evening sun, the little ship slowly sailed towards the anchorage. There was a 25 gunshot salute. Eighteen black riders wearing papal coloured sashes formed a guard of honour.

A carriage drawn by six suitably decorated animals was ready to receive His Excellency, and after a short welcoming address, the party took off in full gallop for the festively decorated eight miles away. Bells rang, and shots were fired as soon as the clatter of hooves were heard in the distance. The carriage came to a halt at the large triumphal arch where the entire Mission population was standing to attention. A little girl recited a poem of welcome.

The honoured guest stayed for six days, each of which had its own programme, theatre and concert, horse and mule races, spear and boomerang throwing and a grand corroboree with 40 painted figures leaping out of the dark to perform their spectacular dances in a clearing between two bright fires.

The beautiful Corpus Christi procession through the surrounding bush had the Delegate carrying the Monstrance. Three Priests, altar boys in red soutanes and white surplices, followed by Brothers in Black, little Aboriginal Angels, Sisters in white, Children of Mary in white veils and men and women in all possible colours followed. All

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<sup>308</sup> S.Boland, Op. cit., p.32. (Footnote 94. Gleeson to Murray. 22 March 1919, in *A.G.R.*).

<sup>309</sup> *Lombadina Chronicle*.

sang Latin hymns. The smell of the bush was enhanced by clouds of frankincense giving praise to God as the sun set in the cloudless sky.

When he left from the sandy banks of Beagle Bay, the scene was just as unforgettable. Blue sea, yellow sand, a background of dark green mangrove bushes, a small boat in which sits the Delegate, the link between the Pope and the Australian Church. On the shore, already greying Missionaries and bare headed Blacks singing 'Ave Maris Stella' to the gentle lapping of the waves. The ship sailed out to sea. The mission community returned to their life of prayer and unheralded work. <sup>310</sup>

In November 1922, the Vicariate was entrusted to the care of the Salesian Society. <sup>311</sup>

Fr. Ernest Coppa, who had worked in the U.S.A. for 20 years, was consecrated Bishop in the Basilica of Mary, Help of Christians, Turin, 24 December 1922. His motto was "Deus Providebit". He was 52 years of age. His priests were: Fr. John Setaro (Italian); Fr. John Siara (Polish); Fr. Erminia Rossetti; Fr. Filimon Lopez, (Spanish,). The three Brothers were Br. Caesar Asseli; Br. Emmanuel Gomez, and Br. Celestine Acerni .

Bishop Cappelletti and Fr. Setaro set out for the U.S.A. to say good-bye and make a collection for the Mission. Fr. Siam and the rest went to Australia. <sup>312</sup>

Brilliant yellow blossoms of the castor oil tree lit up the gardens of

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<sup>310</sup> Op. cit., Walter, *Australia, Land, People, Mission*. pp.182 - 183.

<sup>311</sup> *Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda*. 28 November 1922. ADB.

<sup>312</sup> Pro Memoria on the handing over of the Vicariate to the Salesians. 6411/1. SAO.

Broome. Vivid red and purple bougainvilleas were backed by olive green leafy masses with mangoes hanging heavy from the straining boughs. November high tides swelled with buoyancy for the approaching equinoxes, and the heat was really oppressive.

Fr. John Creagh C.S.S.R., dreaded this prelude to the wet which covered him with prickly heat rash. He was tired of waiting. It was months ago, in July 1921, that the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cattaneo, had been arranging with Archbishop Clune, for the *Terna*, to elect a Vicar Apostolic of the Kimberley. He knew that some thought he sought the mitre and crozier for himself but he did not.

<sup>313</sup>

His memories of the last seven years were vivid. They had been years of change. In Broome, Fr. Creagh waited as patiently as he could to be replaced. He needed patience, as he had a long wait. In April 1923, he cabled his Provincial Superior, that he expected soon to return to Perth. Entries in the Baptismal Register show that he had not been relieved from his Broome position in September, 1923. Fr. Creagh had sent the first contingent of Salesians on to Beagle Bay when they arrived in May. They had been welcomed with true fraternal charity but the position was embarrassing. The Germans were still in charge, and here they were faced with a new Congregation claiming to have taken over the Mission, and the prospect of a newly consecrated Bishop to arrive in a few weeks to take charge.

Fr. Siara allocated positions to his group. He went to Wyndham himself. Fr. Lopez and a Brother stayed at Beagle Bay, and Fr. Rosetti went with two brothers to Lombadina.

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<sup>313</sup> Droste to Resch, 2 May 1922. AGP.

When Bishop Coppo arrived in October 1923, he sent Fr.Siara to Lombadina, Fr.Lopez and Brother Gomez to Carnarvon, and he stayed in Broome with Fr.Setaro, Fr.Rossetti and Br.Acerni. Br.Asseli had been sent to Perth to the Doctor.<sup>314</sup>

Life was difficult for Bishop Coppo. Used to his successes in U.S.A, expecting thousands of Aborigines waiting to be converted, his vicariate was difficult to come to terms with. A Benedictine mission up on the north coast, the 'Drysdale Mission', was 'sui juris', and administered from New Norcia. He offered Wyndham to the Benedictines of Drysdale River, with its surrounding stations, so that they would be responsible for establishing new Missions in that area.<sup>315</sup>

Fr.Droste remained, puzzled and uncomfortable in Beagle Bay with his Pallottine Brothers.<sup>316</sup> The 'Beagle Bay Mission' was still occupied and administered by Fr.Droste and his team. He left service of the central area to them. The Salesians could not afford to buy it, and there was no future there unless it was given to them as a gift. He arranged to have his area of jurisdiction extended down as far as Carnarvon, the Geraldton Diocese. But it had few scattered settlers and Aborigines, not enough to support a priest. Hopefully he turned his sights to La Grange area where there was a 'feeding station' for about sixty Aborigines. But Mr.Neville soon put a stop to that.<sup>317</sup>

From his predecessor he had inherited the debt of the 'San Gerardo'. Bought for £2000, it was half paid off, and with interest on the debt was to cost £3500 before it was disposed of. It was a scandal to the locals. He wanted to raise the money to liquidate the debt by collections among the Bishops. Then he wanted it either auctioned or

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<sup>314</sup> E.Cooper and J.Ayers, *The First 25 Years 1921 - 1946*. SAO.

<sup>315</sup> Droste to Resch, 16 March 1924. ADB.

<sup>316</sup> Hartigan to Murray, 28 April 1923. AGR.

<sup>317</sup> Droste to Resch, 16 March 1924, AGP.

destroyed. Lombadina was asking for a new school, and a boat.

In three places he had communities of nuns. They were going through a period of growth and were making an attempt to define their mission to the Aborigines in their own terms. Their foundress, Mother Antonia, had died 10 February 1923, before he came, and a week later another of the original group had passed away. They told him, *"Pat Percy buried Mother Antonia O'Brien, our foundress; a week later Mother Bernardine Greene died, and John Byrne buried her. We had barely enough money for food, certainly nothing for coffins."* <sup>318</sup>

The Sisters came to him for guidance, and he felt sorry for the group of women suffering from the loss of the physical presence of their strong leader and her loyal supporter, as they tried to discern their future direction.

They told him that they were Diocesan Sisters, and under his jurisdiction, as they had been with Fr.Creagh, and that they had the idea of starting a Kindergarten in Broome, for many wealthy people were then residents of the town. He suggested that Sr.Ignatius Murnane and Sr.Magdalene go to the Eastern States to raise money to buy land around the convent, and to build a suitable house.

While in Sydney, Sr.Ignatius had visited a Government Kindergarten and took tuition in management and method. The quest was most successful. It lasted from late in October 1923 to May 1924. In Melbourne, letters had been sent out to every child of Mary. This bore a photograph of 29 Children of Mary from Beagle Bay, grouped around the Grotto, and bearing the caption 'Children of Mary and

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<sup>318</sup> op.cit., Bain, Mary Ignatius Murnane- Mary Albertus Bain. Interview at Broome, 5 August 1976, p.256 FN 46.

Real Australians'. Much help was given. All the Bishops had been helpful and sympathetic.

The Sisters were able to buy adjoining sites on three sides of the old house. The south side fronted the Church grounds. One of the houses bought (Hudson's Cottage), made a suitable setting, and in mid year, 1924, they began the first Kindergarten in Broome. They had brought back architects' plans and specifications for the new building. It was undertaken by a Japanese contractor - Garo Kichihoro. Timber was specially milled according to his specification. The verandah posts and other places, such as roof plates were all designed by him to resist cyclones.<sup>319</sup>

Unhappy letters were going home to the Generalate in Turin, Italy, from different Salesians.

One came from Br.Celestine Acerni, in Italian, 7 November 1924, and gives an insight into the situation. He had been finally professed in October 1924, in the presence of the Bishop, Fathers Rossetti and Setaro, and 20 Sisters and representatives of the town.

*"... I would like to tell you about our Mission but I cannot say anything because it does not exist.. I very willingly made a request to be sent to the Missions but it was not my intention to leave a very needy work as I was doing at Lombriasco to come here to do what the least of the blacks could do.... It is already twenty months since we arrived in Australia during which we lived a life cut off from human contact for seven months confined in a forest because of the malice of men (Lombadina).*

*Finally the Bishop arrived, full of enthusiasm. He would have liked to have been able to visit the whole continent of Australia, not 011/y the*

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<sup>319</sup> Ignatius Murnane, *My Life as a Sister of St. John of God.*

*Kimberley. Instead he barely managed to visit the Mission of the Pallottines and then ... he had to establish his own kingdom in Broome.*

Fr.Rosetti had written at the same time to say that nothing had changed , but: " *I feel that it is my duty to add that the state of health of our dearest Bishop is anything but good. He is a man who is deteriorating day by day.*" <sup>320</sup>

By the end of 1924 the Bishop had confided to Fr. Droste, that there was not enough work for two Congregations and that it should be unfair to deprive the Pallottines who had done the pioneering work. Broome was necessary to them as a base. He intended to go to Melbourne and Sydney in January and would apply for entry permits for the German Priests and Brothers who were prepared to come to Australia.

During 1924, in Perth, the Sisters of St.John of God had the approval of Dr.Clune to amalgamate their communities. The Sisters of the North West were told that their work had been undertaken against the wishes of the Subiaco community, and it was against the spirit of the Congregation. Those in Ireland agreed. The Subiaco community was willing to receive as part of their community, all the finally professed Sisters who would choose to leave the Northwest. Those remaining would be outside the Congregation.

In June, the North West Council members met to discuss amalgamation with Subiaco, Mothers Magdalene, Clement, Ignatius and Matthew were present. They decided that they would not give up the mission work, forwarded a letter to Subiaco stating this and

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<sup>320</sup> Salesian Correspondence. AGS.



informed Bishop Coppo of their decision. Later that afternoon, he said that the rules should be modified to suit the work. He wrote to the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cattaneo about the matter. The Sisters were asked to put their suggestions in writing regarding the amalgamation and the relations between the mission authorities and sisters on the mission re food, clothing, sickness and novitiate. At a special Community meeting held a few days later, the 14 Sisters present agreed not to give up the mission work. The Sisters who met in Beagle Bay came to the same decision.

Bishop Coppo suggested that the Sisters ask for amalgamation with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a very large Salesian Order. The move was approved by the Delegate and the sisters were asked about aggregation to this Order. Thirteen sisters signed the petition to be aggregated in Broome, and nine sisters signed in Beagle Bay and Lombadina, after they had been told they be Sisters of St. John of God no longer. Bishop Coppo hastened to get a copy of the new Rule, but only one, written in Italian, was forwarded. He took over the spiritual direction of the novices.<sup>321</sup>

In March 1925, Bishop Coppa went to Melbourne to assist in taking over a property at Diamond Creek. There he found F. Cerutti, Fr. Rossetti, Br. Gomez, Br. Verena and Br. Asseli. The Apostolic Delegate had asked him to look after the Italian migrants and to organize a Society for their assistance. He made contact with the Italian community in Melbourne, then went to Brisbane, Rockhampton, Ingham, Halifax, Seymour, Innisfail, Mourilyan, Cairns, Babinda, Townsville and Prosperine. He also obtained permission from the Commonwealth Government for two Pa!lottine priests to enter the mission of the Kimberley. He sent £250 for the

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<sup>321</sup> A. Moester, SDB. 'Bishop Earnest Coppo and the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians'. This unpublished article was written in Italian, translated orally to tape by A. Moester into English, and transcribed by Sr. Brigida Nailon, January 1983. ASO.

fares of the two Salesian Sisters he expected from Italy to govern the new Salesian Sisters when the Sisters of St.John of God joined the order.<sup>322</sup>

Fr.Siam, shortly before leaving for Macau, wrote from Lombadina to his General 15 July 1925:

*"...I'm really keen to repeat once again that the union of the Daughters of Mary with the Sisters of St John of God not be hurried up... There is time, but first let some time pass to clear up our own situation.. "*

From Carnarvon, the Bishop wrote to the Superior General that the Salesian Sisters were already wanted in Melbourne, in Sydney, and in Brisbane. As soon as the Sisters of St.John of God had been aggregated to the Salesian Sisters, and fanned in a spirit of the Venerable Don Bosco, they could also open some house, at least in Melbourne, because there were too many of them for the Kimberley. In September he wrote from Broome that the Salesian nuns would have a splendid future in Australia. In Broome they already possessed a valuable property and 24 aspirants. Bishop Cappo continued to prepare the Kimberley Sisters for the Aggregation and wrote many letters to Italy about the matter.<sup>323</sup>

Fr.Droste had reservations about this venture. Would Salesian sisters beg money for Beagle Bay mission? Who would pay the fares if they were transferred to Sydney? Two thirds of the Sisters did not want to join but had signed the petition because of P.ressure. If Bishop Cappo was going to stay it would be in order, but he was going.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> op.cit., E.Cooper and J.Ayers.

<sup>323</sup> Correspondence AGS.

<sup>324</sup> Correspondence ADB.

Four of the Sisters did go East, to the Blue Mountains near Sydney. Sr. Ignatius Murnane wrote:

*"We left Broome for Springwood, Sydney, on January 6 1926. There were four of us, Sr. Elizabeth, two novices who had completed their preparatory year, and were specially sent by Dr. Cappo, and myself*

*There were then no sisters in any Seminary in Australia, and Sisters en route who heard of our destination thought it a crazy or a dangerous undertaking. We were housed at Springwood in a neat two storied villa about 7 - 10 minute walk from St. Columba's College, where our work awaited us. The Blue Mountains scenery was superb.*

*The work that faced us was colossal. To prepare in a few weeks the Seminary buildings for 80 students and 8 Professors. There was a skeleton staff for the vacation, two girls on half pay. Domestic staff were procured from agencies in Sydney.*

*By 1 March, we were ready. Cooks and laundresses came and went, then the novices and I did the meals. By the end of the first year we had convinced Rector and Bursar that a modern kitchen and laundry were necessary ... a new era began.*

*The two novices were professed in the holidays, two postulants arrived. Students' health was well cared for by Sr. M. Elizabeth. The first year was really 'all work and no play', but the next year we had the whole afternoon from 2 - 5.45 at our disposal.*

*Up till 1931 there had been no Catholic Mission to the Aborigines in Queensland since the Passionist Mission at Moreton Bay failed. At our request Archbishop Kelly (Sydney), began negotiations with Bishop McGuire of Townsville (the first Australian born Bishop) for a Mission to the Aborigines to be staffed by 'his Sisters'. The result was the Catholic Mission at Palm Island, near Townsville. Archbishop Kelly built the Convent and paid for the living of the Sisters there*

*until the 'Help a/ Christians' withdrew in 1945.*

*Bishop McGuire had taken two of us to the Island to pick the site for the Convent, School, etc., so Sister Evangelist Dayle and I were the first religious to walk on Palm Island, Deo Gratias.*

*As long as I was in Springwood and Manly I spent a month at each island during the Students' three months vacation each year. 77th last year I was in the East I spent altogether on Palm Island.*

*The Leprosarium at Fantome Island was a purely Government institution, staffed by Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians, but needed no financial aid. These were the only Catholic Missions to Aborigines in Queensland for many years, the two island missions which we began. Leprosy was stamped out among the Queensland natives and Fantome became a home for homeless aged Aborigines.*

*At the beginning of January 1945, Sister Magdalene and I returned to Broome. It was wartime and travel very difficult.* <sup>325</sup>

In October 1926, Bishop Cappel wrote to the Sisters in the Kimberley that the Sisters were to keep and practise the old rules and regulations with the few changes approved by him, according to the proviso signed by the Most Rev Doctor Furlong, founder of the Sisters of St. John of God, 1873. Mother Magdalene was to act as Provincial for all the Sisters both in the Kimberley and in N.S. W.

According to the Rule of St. John of God Sisters, the main objectives are the poor, nursing the sick and teaching the ignorant and the Rule makes no distinction between black and white. Those of the North West wanted to be amalgamated with the others.

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<sup>325</sup> op.cit., M. Ignatius Murnane, *My Life as Sister of St. John of God.*

By mid 1927, the pot was ready to boil over. The Kimberley Sisters' refusal to join the new Congregation must have caused the Apostolic Delegate to raise his eyebrows. Bishop Coppo found himself caught between two groups. He could not take the Sisters away from Springwood.

Sr. Ignatius wrote from Springwood attempting to allay the grave misunderstandings which she thought had occurred between the two groups, explaining that the then existing Council of the community, Mothers Magdalene, Clement, Matthew and herself, with the Ecclesiastical Superior of the community, Dr. Coppo, had agreed to accept the foundation at Springwood expressly to have the Novitiate there. That was the consensus of the community when she left Broome in January 1926.<sup>326</sup>

Fr. Droste had summed up the amalgamation issue in 1927, saying, *"But then his Lordship got the brunt of it all. He had never dealt with Sisters before!"*

It was sad to see the gradual disintegration of the Salesian group. Fr. Siara left for Macau, 24 September 1925, Fr. Rossetti and Br. Gomez followed him 3 October 1925. Fr. Laqua wrote to Fr. Droste in German, 21 October 1925. He had heard that the two Fathers had arrived. Via Rome he had heard that the Salesians were leaving, and also Bishop Coppo, and accordingly they would take on the responsibility of the whole Vicariate. Fr. Walter had been commissioned to prepare a brochure for the Silver Jubilee of the Mission.

In March 1926, Fr. Droste was in Perth for an operation on a rupture.

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<sup>326</sup> Archives of Sisters of St. John of God, Perth.

Then he went to Adelaide collecting funds for the Mission, £900. Then he returned to hospital for a painful operation on his nose, Archbishop Clune visited him. The former Diocese of Geraldton was now under his jurisdiction because Bishop Ryan who was appointed refused to accept it. The Government offered him land. He took up 10,000 acres for Beagle Bay Mission, and 10,000 acres for the Christian Brother's Orphanage in Perth.

He said to Fr.Droste,

*"It is my wish, Fr.Droste, that you send me a priest for the Brothers, to celebrate Mass for them and to take pastoral care of the neighbouring settlements. Don refuse my request. Land is of the utmost importance for the Catholic Church in Geraldton."*<sup>327</sup>

Fr.Droste's Provincial Superior had written to him from Limburg 15 November 1926. The German Province was willing to help Beagle Bay as much as possible and would send a Priest and two Brothers to help the good, old Brothers. He had serious doubts about the feasibility of opening a farm 2000 km from the Mission. This would be equivalent to another foundation. For this, at least two Priests and several Brothers would be required. Then one must ensure that the farm would pay off, that it could assist Beagle Bay Mission, and not use up all its revenues for its own existence. What about costs of freight, in short, the question was, *"Would a farm be profitable?"* It was presumed the money for the purchase would be obtained in Australia, the Province could not do it. The land was to cost approximately 1/- an acre, and there were 30 years to pay it off .

Father Droste argued that failure would not mean shame for their Order. One priest and two Brothers were needed. An old Brother from Beagle Bay, a new one, and several mission boys from Beagle Bay.

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<sup>327</sup> Droste to Resch, 18 January 1927. AGP.

Brother Henry Krallmann had inspected the fann and was quite enthusiastic about it. There would be no need of financial assistance from Limburg. He also argued that Australia could not be managed from Germany forever. The distance was too great. If there were no English or Irish priest available in the Order, then efforts would have to be made to recruit Australian candidates. Fr. August Spangenberg, Br. Stefan Contempree, and Br. Franz Herholz had arrived in October 1927.

Bishop Coppo administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 14 people 8 June 1927. By the end of that year his resignation had been accepted in Rome. The Salesians had now officially moved from the Kimberley to other missions

## Part 3 1928-1959

### 'NOTHING IS WASTED IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD'

Bishop Otto Raible PSM  
 Vicariate of the Kimberley  
 Beagle Bay Fam at Tardun;  
 Death of Fr.W.Droste PSM;  
 Leprosy;  
 Anthropology, A.P.Elkin, Fr.E.A.Worms, SAC;  
 Kimberley Trips, 1931-1934;  
 Founding of Rockhole, 1934;  
 Vicar Apostolic, 1935;  
 The Native Administration Act 1936;  
 Sisters staff Leprosarium, 1937;  
 Founding of Convent for Native Sisten, 1939.  
 Into the desert to found Balgo;  
 War declared" 1939;  
 Internment of Missions;  
 Beagle Bay Mission, refuge for Broome people; Native Sisten sent to  
 Balgo; Separation of the Pallottine Jurisdiction from the Vicariate of  
 Kimberley, W.A., 1946.



## CHAPTER 7

"... then the full grain in the ear.." Mk.4:28

### BISHOP OTTO RAIBLE PSM

#### “NOTHING IS WASTED IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Trautenau in Czechoslovakia was a long way from Australia. This was the opinion of Fr.O.Raible as he read between the lines of his Superior General's Christmas letter.

He wrote in reply,

*"Much as I am prepared to accept whatever the Superiors may decide, nevertheless it would be in the best interests of the Mission if one would consider Fr.Droste who had been active there for 20 years and for whom it would mean no little sacrifice to be subject to a considerably younger and inexperienced man unfamiliar with Australian conditions."*

His General let him know that the decision for him had been made for him by the General Council. The next time he wrote, he accepted unequivocally,

"All I can say is Ecce adsum.." <sup>328</sup> By decree, 18 January 1928, Fr Otto Raible was named Apostolic Administrator, and with this appointment, a new era began for the Kimberley with a systematic building up of the resources of the Church. He arrived in the Kimberley in March 1928. Included in his Vicariate were ten settlements with a combined population of 19,000 Aborigines, Coloureds, Europeans, and Asians. The ten townships which had been regularly visited by the Salesian Priests, were Derby, Wyndham, Halls Creek, Port Hedland, Roebourne, Marble Bar, Nullagine, Sandy Creek, Bodingo and Condon. Only four places had

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<sup>328</sup> Archives, Pallottine Generalate, Rome.

regular pastoral care, Broome, Beagle Bay, Carnavon, and Lombadina.  
<sup>329</sup>

When he arrived, his staff consisted of three German priests, Fathers Puesken, Scherzinger, and Spangenberg, and seven other Germans, Brothers, Kasperek, Graf, Wollseifer, Helmprecht, Krallman, Contempree and Herholz. There were Sisters of St. John of God, 8 in Beagle Bay, 11 in Broome, and 3 in Lombadina.

The Sisters had been living heroic lives on the mission for many years. They were then grappling with discerning the will of God for the future direction of their apostolate, and this was one issue which confronted Fr. Raible when he accepted his authoritative post. Five Sisters had gone to live in a small cottage in Manly. A convent was built for them in 1934 in the grounds of St. Patrick's.  
<sup>330</sup>

The three established mission stations were all along the west coast of Dampier Land. The Eastern part of the Kimberley Vicariate had no special place for Catholic Church presence, except where an owner, or manager of a station made the priest welcome for Mass, or for the sacraments.

In 1931, 1932 and 1933 Fr. Raible journeyed through the whole of the Vicariate to administer to the spiritual wants of the Catholics and also to look for a suitable place in which to establish a centre for missionary activities.

He faced enormous difficulties to make the presence felt in the interior of the Kimberley. The territory extended over 450,000 sq.k4 with a sparse population. There were long distances between the cattle stations, with tracks rather than roads. The annual trip took him 6 to 8 weeks, and many

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<sup>329</sup> W.Schuetzeichel, 'Die Pallottiner in Australien' *Familienbrief* Nr.5, Reihe 6, Nov.1966 G Walter, *AllStralia, Land, People, Mission*, Lahn-Yerian, Limburg, 1982.

<sup>330</sup> 'Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Our Lady Help of Christians Congregation', *Catholic Weekly*, September, '81, ADB.

stations remained unattended. Some were inaccessible by car.<sup>331</sup>

Robert Hutchinson told the author of first meeting him:

*Bishop Raible came with Willie Wright. He was the-first one we saw at Fitzroy. We went out on a donkey from Brooking Spring. We walked beside him. Boys were mustering at the stock camp. He taught us about God, 'Ngarburin', 'Father', Fitzroy Crossing; 'God' in Bunabi language, 'Nabo'. We were O.K. with him. We listened to him in the bush. When he finished we were still a little bit on the 'munyam' side. Bishop Raible underslood. When service finish we all say 'Amen', and clap and thank. He tells us, "You think of God always. He loves you."*<sup>332</sup>

An anthropologist A.P.Elkin researched the Kimberley region 1927 - 1928.<sup>333</sup> Fr.Raible learned that much of the area North of the King Leopold Range and West of the Durack River and Range. It was crown land, of which a large proportion was set aside for Aboriginal Reserves. Three missions had been working there for about twenty years.

1. Since 1908, the Catholic Benedictine Monks in the Drysdale River district had their Mission on a Reserve of 121,500 ha.
2. During 1910-1911, the Presbyterians at Kunmunya (Port George I V) had a Mission on a Reserve of 96,390 ha.
3. For a short time, at the turn of the century, the Anglicans had a Mission Reserve of 40,500 ha. Forrest River, and again since 1913.

Other Reserves were:

- a. 'Munya' - A government Aboriginal station at Walcott Inlet, formed about 1918 as a private venture by F.S. and W.R.Easton, and seven years later, bought by the government. Those who worked

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<sup>331</sup> *Fr.Raible's Dimy, 1931 - 1934.* ADB.

<sup>332</sup> op.cit., Brigida Nailon, F.Huegel,(Eds.) *This is Your Place. Beagle Bay Mission. 1890 - 1990.* p.99.

<sup>333</sup> A.P.Elkin had accepted an Australian National Research Council Fellowship to make an anthropological survey of the Aborigines of the Kimberley Division.

there received training, clothes, and food. Each week a bullock was killed for those in the bush-camp, or visiting.

b. 'Moola Bulla', in the south-east of the northern Kimberley reserve, was established in 1910 to cater for 'unsophisticated and unemployable Aborigines', and to 'prevent cattle killing'. By 1928, Moola Bulla, covering 445,500 ha., was a cattle station, staffed by a manager, seven white men, and Aborigines. A bullock was killed daily to provide meat.

c. 'Violet Valley', a small Aboriginal buffer-outpost, on the eastern border of the reserve, associated with Moola Bulla and 145 km north of it. Staffed by a manager, and a cook assisted by Aborigines in 1928. Up to 100 Aborigines from inside the reserve visited this outpost. They received beef, rations and tobacco.

d. 'Balwina Native Reserve' - 290 km south of Halls Creek was an economically useful reserve which had been gazetted for an inland frontier.

e. 'La Grange' was a feeding depot.

While Elkin was recording genealogies at Forrest River Mission in 1928, a number of informants, when asked the name of such and such a relative, said: "He been finish along that place." <sup>334</sup>

This brought home to Elkin the 'finality' of the punitive expedition of 1926 which consisted of two police constables, <sup>335</sup> four other whites, <sup>336</sup> and seven 'blacks', with 400 to 500 rounds of ammunition and 42 horses and mules. <sup>337</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> The 20 or more Aborigines had not only been shot, but their bodies had been burnt so as to leave no identifiable evidence for a court of law, only blanks in genealogies.

<sup>335</sup> The two constables, being held solely responsible for the shooting of four victims, were charged with murder, but freed of the charge in a magistrate's court, and transferred south.

<sup>336</sup> One of whom had asked 'that the natives be dealt with drastically'.

<sup>337</sup> A Government officer, who was also a Protector of Aborigines, contributed to the costs arising from the expedition, explained that Aborigines had to be given a lesson from time to

Elkin heard employers branding Aborigines as unreliable and lazy: "You tell two men to work together on a job, such as digging a well, and when you look, only one is there, the other has gone somewhere." The fact was usually that the men concerned were in a tabu relationship, such as a man and his wife's mother's brother, and had to keep their distance. To the employer this was both nonsense and a nuisance.

The Nygina, like so many other tribes, normally used one reciprocal term for a relationship between two persons, not necessarily differentiating between the generations: father's father-son's son is an example, e.g., an old man introducing a little boy as his grandfather'. The Europeans got what work they could out of the Aborigines, and in turn the Aborigines got what they could out of the Europeans. "They are a queer people. We'll never understand them," was a current opinion.<sup>338</sup>

The Aborigines were still under the stringent control of the Government by being 'under the Aborigines Act'.<sup>339</sup> In the whole of West Australia the total number of persons exempted from it totaled 76. This was very few considering the great number of mixed blood Aborigines in the State. In 1928, there were seven applications for

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time. Apparently it was only incidental that this particular lesson involved killing and burning the bodies of 20 or more Aborigines in 'revenge' for the fatal spearing of one European. Apparently, too, no significance was attached to the general opinion that the European had brought his sudden end on himself by his behaviour towards Aborigines and his attitude toward their customs.

<sup>338</sup> A monograph on totemism (1933); a summary analysis of social organization (1932); articles on Bard initiation (1935), and on northern Kimberley cave paintings (1930, 1948) were published, while material from this project was used in Elkin 1938:174 and 1945:177. A detailed study of kinship systems and of economic data was made Elkin did not visit Drysdale River Mission. T. Hernandez, a missionary, described the social organization.

<sup>339</sup> A.O. Neville, *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year ended 30 June 1929*. BL.

exemption from the Aborigines Act under consideration, and 15 others were received. Of the total, one was granted, two were inadmissible, 12 were refused, two were withdrawn. There were seven still under consideration at 30 June 1929. One certificate was cancelled. Only those with a certificate of exemption had Australian Citizenship.<sup>340</sup>

At feeding depots such as La Grange, only the old and infirm Aborigines were fed twice daily and a small ration of tobacco was allowed once a week. Quite a number of Aborigines starved out in the back country were forced to drift to the coast for food. Some went back to the bush. They were a poor lot.<sup>341</sup>

Many settlers, pastoralists and other 'employers' of Aboriginal labour had a condescending attitude to 'their Blacks' but they were extremely dependent on them.<sup>342</sup> On the other hand, the near-futility of protection policies was self evident. There were only a handful of full-time protectors over half the continent. Protection was mainly in the hands of missionaries, busy with their own stations, and in the 'ambivalent hands' of policemen who protected Aborigines, and arrested them. Though often kindly disposed, they were public servants, and the 'public' included pastoralists and employers. Protection policies had failed to protect Aborigines or save them from extinction.

Elkin believed that the only hope of protecting and saving Aborigines was to get rid of protection policies, and to institute positive policies. These should be based on the belief that Aborigines would not die

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<sup>340</sup> Robert Hutchinson, Petronella Atwood, *This is Your Place...*

<sup>341</sup> op.cit., A.O. Neville.

<sup>342</sup> Although Elkin's fieldwork in 1927-28 and 1930 was not concerned with Aboriginal policies and problems of contact and clash, he observed situations in employment and missionary spheres, which indicated a hiatus between Aborigines and non-Aborigines, itself a sign of tension and ignorance.

out. They would be designed to ensure Aboriginal welfare and development.

He would later claim that his academic discipline had *'provided first the humanitarian societies, and then the governments, with systematised knowledge of the essentials of native social and cultural life, and of the principles operating in the contact situation, of which both missions and administrations should be aware* <sup>343</sup>

West Australia was celebrating the centenary of its foundation in 1929, and Fr. Raible looked in vain in *The Record* for references to the works of the Missions over the hundred years.

He wrote to Abbot Catalan of New Norcia:

*"..In spite of all the nice phrases which have been made about 'Our Glorious Land Australia', they never realised that the whole State is founded and built upon the bones of the Blacks, who are the real owners of that country, but have been shot down and poisoned like dogs only on account of not being willing to give up their own hunting grounds.*

*But this is simply robbery and puts the power before the right, a principle, which to my understanding is diametrically opposed to the true spirit of Christianity.*

*It is certainly one of the crimes, that cry for justice to heaven, and I can't see any bright outlook for the Catholic Church in Western Australia, unless the Catholics and their Bishops and Pastors acknowledge their sacred duty to do reparation to a down trodden*

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<sup>343</sup> A.P.Elkin, 'Aboriginal-European Relations', in R.M.Berndt, Catherine H.Berndt,(Eds.) *Aborigines of the West, Their Past and their Present*, University of Western Australia Press for the Education Committee of the 15th Anniversary celebrations 1979.

*race on whose land they are living...*” <sup>344</sup>

Fr. Raible had come at a time when the economy was going into a deep recession. He saw the Beagle Bay farm at Tardun in South Western Australia as an important resource for the future Kimberley Church. Br. Henry Krallmann had begun the pioneering work on the land. This would produce wheat to be used for Mission bread for many years. Richard, Tom, and Willy Roe, were only three of the young men from the Mission who spent time helping Br. Krallmann.

By April 1929, 400 acres were sown, and there were 650 more to be seeded. Four more men besides the Beagle Bay men were employed, i.e., 12 altogether. A seeding machine, super, groceries, and seed-wheat had been bought. Since March they had been working day and night in order to catch up. <sup>345</sup> But the Vicariate began to go into debt. It was the time of the Great Depression in Australia.

A great spiritual wealth came in the form of Church personnel. To start with, two Priests and three Brothers and a Sister in 1930. Two more Sisters came in 1931. <sup>346</sup> After his arrival, Fr. F. Huegel, spent four years in charge of the boys at Beagle Bay. He then went to Rockhole, to Beagle Bay, to Broome, to Derby, to La Grange, to Balgo, and to Beagle Bay, catechising and baptising.

Fr. E. A. Worms began his missionary career as the Parish Priest of Broome. He was both student and teacher. He enriched the Church with anthropological research, and left many gems of knowledge

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<sup>344</sup> Raible to Catalan, 6 June 1930, ADB.

<sup>345</sup> Tardun Correspondence, ADB.

<sup>346</sup> At the end of 1990 he retired to Rossmoynne in Perth, died there and his body was taken back for burial in Beagle Bay in January 1991. He had told the people, “I will come back, dead or alive.”



behind which could be used in the education of future missionaries by giving insights into the rich mythology of the Kimberley. He would make a unique contribution to the compilation of anthropological knowledge. He recorded Aboriginal chants which played an important part in their lives. He researched the Aboriginal concepts of God and of the 'soul'. He left records of the significance of Aboriginal place names in the Kimberley.

Fr.F.Huegel and Fr.E.Wonns had been given an opportunity by the Provincial, R.Laqua, to take part in an 8 week Training Course for medical skills and tropical diseases in the Institute for Mission Doctors in Wuerzburg. Dr.Hans Betz was a student there.

Brother Joseph Tautz had learned his trade as carpenter and cabinet maker before he entered. He was sent to Tardun to build the Monastery. In Beagle Bay he renewed the Church furniture, windows, doors, and alter rails, after building the Church Presbytery, and Convent in Lombadina with hand sawn logs. He installed the first motor saw and plane, the first electric power lines and lights. His modern carpenter shop built after the war was pulled down to be replaced by the new hospital. With his apprentices he built the first four modern houses at Beagle Bay and the Monastery there.

Br.Anton Boettcher worked with the stock at Beagle Bay, at Tardun and at Wandering. He was posted to old Balgo Mission in 1945. <sup>347</sup>

Br.Joseph Schungel shared some of his memories with the author about the time he worked with the Kimberley Pallottine Mission: <sup>348</sup>  
*I landed in Broome 17 December 1930 and we went to Beagle Bay*

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<sup>347</sup> Archives, Diocese of Broome.

<sup>348</sup> Interview with Joseph Schuengel by Brigida Nailon, at Pallotti College, Millgrove. 27 January 1987.

*and stayed there until after Christmas. I was with Father Francis Huegel, Fr. Worms and Brother Tautz. I was a few weeks in Beagle Bay. Then I sailed from Broome to Geraldton. I left Beagle Bay in the middle of January and went on the boat again to travel to Tardum. I remember old Thomas and Rudolf in Beagle Bay.*

*They called Tardun the Beagle Bay Farm. There were Aborigines from Beagle Bay, Jim Roe, Dick Smith, and Dora Smith. I worked on the farm in Tardun. We had a tin shed. It was hot in summer and cold in winter. In Tardum ploughing, sowing and harvesting were the chief jobs. We had a team of horse and Br.F.Nissl and I looked after the team. Only one of us went out into the paddock with the team. Sometimes Brother Frank and sometimes me.*

*Before I had come to Australia I had met Fr.Droste in Germany. He was in the motherhouse and I was in the Novitiate. He came and spoke to the novices. At the time I did not know I would be sent to Australia.*

*Fr.Droste talked a lot about the work of the brothers. He was a late vocation and had been working in a coal mine before he started studying. Fr.Droste died in Germany. For the funeral some people came from the coal mine. He was buried in the cemetery at the Mother House. Fr.Droste had started Tardum Farm. The idea was to have a place and send flour to the mission.*

*We sent the wheat to the flour mill and they sent it on to the missions.*

*I was in Tardum January '31 to October '33 and then the Bishop asked me to come and cook in Beagle Bay so I left the farm and went back to the mission. In Beagle Bay I cooked for the community of Priests and Brothers. Fr.Benedict Puesken was Director at the time while Fr.Francis Huegel looked after the boys. At the time it was a flourishing mission. The John of God nuns looked after the girls. .*

*The Brothers were Br.John Graf, Br.Anton Helmprecht, Br.Matthias*

*Wollseifer, Br. Stephenn Contempree and Br. Joseplz Tautz who was in Lombadina building the Clzurch. Br. Stephenn was stockman, Br. Matthias had a garden, Br. John Graf was the carpenter, Br. Anton was the baker and he had a team of donkeys. He did brickwork, getting the sea sheels from the sea shore and making lime out of the sea shells and then painting the buildings with the lime. He made bricks for the huts.*

*I had a little room in the dining room, a timber building. The others had the huts nearby. They would make the bricks and build the hutss. I didn't have so much to do with the people. Ambrose Cox was in the kitchen and later on Philipp Cox. I knew David Cox. Lena Cox would come to do cleaning at times. I met Mr. Sixt when I was at Beagle Bay on a visit. He was much liked. He supported the mission a lot. The Aborigines came to him and told him about it. He had a garden. When I was at Beagle Bay they had rice growing.*

*I went to Rockhole in 1934. It was a sheep station. Mr. Frank Castles and Jim Moore were there. Mr. Castles got sick. He was a carting contractor with a team of donkeys and used to travel to Wyndum with goods - he would call in at the different stations with goods. At this time thee donkeys were old, and Mr: Castles was too old to learn how to drive trucks and he had become sick so he decided to sell. Bishop Raible bought it.*

*The intention was to build a hospital at Rockhole Station and bring the sick Aboriginal people from that area to the Rockhole Station. The problem was that the Doctors who came from Germany to us did not have English certificates/or practice. Doctor Betz and his wife who was also a Doctor looked after the lepers at Beagle Bay. It was very disappointing.*

*The house at Rockhole was made by putting posts in the ground, corrugated iron at the sides and a bit of iron on top. There were two rooms with mud bricks. One was 11sed as a chapel and the other was*

*used as a store. We were glad to have a roof on top. Br. Joseph Tautz came and built it with mud bricks.*

*Jingle Jangles from Beagle Bay was there. He was a good man. Later on Bishop Raible and Fr. Worms went the Gregory Salt lakes more than 100 miles away. They went some way by car and the rest on horseback to find the Balgo Mission but I didn't go. Fr. Worms was collecting Aboriginal artefacts in the caves around Rockhole. There were a few Aborigines there who did not come from Beagle Bay, e.g., a black lady who helped Fr. Worms to study the Aboriginal languages. She says, "My whitefella name Dinah, blackfella name Lackay." She had a little dauglster ...*

*The Rockhole station didn't develop and the Bishop and Fr. Worms found a place at Ba/go Hills. After I left, Br. Frank went to start the mission. Br. Stephen was there and then he went to Tardun. When we were at Rockhole it was 22 miles from Halls Creek but they changed the town site so now it is close: Rockhole was the beginning of the East Kimberley Mission.*

*Bishop Raible met Dr: Mannix first at Raheen to ask if he could get a house in Melbourne. Dr: Mannix said, "Come to the window," then he said, "That house is for sale."*

*In 1937 the Bishop bought the house in Kew. He sent me a letter to go there and look after the house. When I came to Kew I was very lonely there. Mr. McCarthy was asked by the Bishop to meet me at the boat.*

*The house at Kew had belonged to the Carmelite Fathers who moved to Donvale.. When I came to Kew a Carmelite brother and priest were there but they left after the first night. Fr. Ernest Worms came one month later as Rector. I was there from 1937 till March 1940. Fr. Hennessy, and Fr. McGinley were there and Fr. Joseph Kearney entered the novitiate 19th Feb. 1940.*

*In 1940 because I was naturalized I was asked to go back to West Australia, to Tardun. I was freer because I was naturalized. It was Wartime. Dr.Mannix was our greatest protector. There were only brothers helping there at that time. The next 5 years I worked in the kitchen. It was a nice house then. The parish priest and architect of Mullewa, Fr.John Hawes, made the plan for the first Monastery at Tardun. I was at his Church at Mullewa on my first Easter in Australia, 1931.*

When Fr.Raible came, the Sisters of St.John of God were grappling with discerning the will of God for their future direction. This issue confronted Fr.Raible when he accepted his authoritative post.<sup>349</sup> Five of the Sisters had gone to Sydney and lived in a small cottage Manly until a convent was built for them in 1934 in the grounds of St.Patrick's.<sup>350</sup>

Then there were newcomers like Sr.Therese Doolan-Mountney who was only 15 years of age when she made her commitment. She told some of her Kimberley experiences:

*For my novitiate, I was in Broome for 12 months , and then at Beagle Bay. For 30 years I interchanged with Sr.Madeleine between Beagle Bay and Lombadina doing teaching theory by correspondence, and coming to Perth to train in teaching method.*

*Lombadina was a one teacher school with an average of 54 children.*

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<sup>349</sup> A religious institute has an ecclesial authority and not just one which meets functional or organizational needs. Religious institutes are the result of a gift of God and they depend on him for both their origin and their continuance. It is only in virtue of the Church's recognition and approval that they exist. Religious authority is never absolute. It is mediated through persons and structures and is necessary for a life of vowed obedience. ( Mary Linscott. "The Service of Religious Authority: Reflections on Government in the Revision of the Constitutions". pp. 201 - 202).

<sup>350</sup> Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Our Lady Help of Christians Congregation', *Catholic Weekly* . September, '81. ADB.

*It had a floor and roof, no sides, readers, slates. There were apple boxes for desks, and the children were very keen. The old families are now in Broome and Derby, the backbone of the Church. The Alberts had 10 children, the Sampeys had 10 children, the Sibosados had 10 children, the Hunter children were in and out, and the Dougals had a big family. I went to corroborees three or four times a week up the sand hills. Benedict Daylight dreamt up a corroboree for me when I was in my early 20's. During the dancing, all painted, with long things on his fingers, he stood over me. They told me it was my corroboree.*

*Gerard Albert was one of the finest men who walked the earth. He was one of the most honest men. When Fr. Benedict could not keep thing going, Gerard did the cattle and the windmills and was in charge of the boys.*

*Old Kitty said to me, "Sister, I can't mind these children, will you take them?" We kept them in the dormitory. The girls wanted to be there, they didn't want the old men.*

*I loved Lombadina, the people were wild, they would fight over anything. I stitched their heads with needle and cotton.*

*Bishop Raible asked Sr. Gerard Gath to take charge of the novices for the Native Sisters. She was too gentle for them. There was friction between the Bardi and the Nyulnyul girls. In those days it was not permitted to accept coloured girls into the John of God Order, otherwise they might have come to us. Sr Gerard was really beautiful, good to Aborigines. Baseball bat caught her in the chest, it was the beginning of the end. She had been a high school teacher from Victoria.*

*Mellie Sibosado was the last one to leave the convent. She had wanted to consecrate herse(f to God. Many years later, when she was dying, she said, "Therese, once you have given your heart to God,*

*nothing else matters."*

*I was sent to Balgo Mission. For 18 months I had my own school, the rejects from the other school. So keen they were they would be waiting for the school to open ... I could not get the kids out..*

Two more novices came for the St. John of God Sisters in 1931. They became Sr. Angela Moroney and Sr. Madeleine Lynch.

The first told a little of her missionary life:

*It was the toughest life, yet we loved it. I did my novitiate in Beagle Bay and when finally professed was sent to train as a nurse in Subiaco. I came back to Broome by boat and went to the Leprosarium where I worked with Di: Musso and Mother Alphonsus. I had spent some years at Balgo. Mother Margaret had called for volunteers and left a sheet of paper on the table. I did not put my name down but Mother Margaret sent me to Balgo with Sr: Winifride Mc.Bride.*

*Bishop Raible started the Native Sisters. He designed the habits, unbleached calico, scapular edged with blue, tan sandals, blue veil.*

Sr. Madeleine Lynch worked in the Kimberley continuously from 1931, except for three years when she was in Wandering on an Aboriginal Mission there. Most of the time she worked as a teacher, or in charge of the girls, training them for their future lives away from the Mission. She shared a little about her long years of service with the author:

*After First Profession I went to Lombadina. for ten years I alternated between Lombadina and Beagle Bay in three year periods. In Lombadina, every Friday afternoon we used to wet the earth floor and the children would smooth the mud lovely and flat - it would be*

*hard for Monday morning.*

*After Final Profession in 1937, I was sent to Beagle Bay to look after the girls. I did this for ten years, then I was sent to teach, then back again to the girls for 10-15 years, 1950, 1951, 1957.*

*I remember when Sr. Brigid told Fr. Benedict that she suspected that some of the people had leprosy. He threatened to send her away from the Mission if she said such things. Sr. Brigid used to go out each morning with a bucket and bandages, perhaps some kerosene, or whatever she could get, to dress the sores of the lepers.*

*I went to Wandering Mission for 3 years after the war. Then I was sent to Balgo, from 1957-1960 teaching in the school until it was handed over to the Government. Then I taught the children too small for the school, and the slower children in a bough shed.*

*I worked in Derby for a year, and was then teaching in the Broome School for some years. I came back to Beagle Bay the year the new school was built, 1960 and spent 5 years teaching there until the Domestic Science Block was set up. I took charge of it for about 5 years, 1965 - 1970. When Nulungu opened, the older children went there and I retired from teaching. "*

Sr. Madeleine did not mention her skill with sewing and the way in which she made sets of clothes for hundreds of boys and girls. When she retired, many of the chores which are part and parcel of keeping a group of people together fell to her loving care, and in her many duties she was helped by Daisy Leopold, who was deaf and dumb when she came from Moola Bulla in 1946. She lived in the Convent when the dormitories closed, since there was nowhere for her to go.

Sr. Cecelia Kelly, who entered in 1932, was to spend 52 years in the Kimberley. She received the Queen's Silver Jubilee medal in 1979.



She taught both the piano and violin and was also an organist. She died in Geelong 50 years to the day after she became a nun. She told the author her story:

*"I was born in Quambatook, and lived in Lalbert, in the Mallee, in North Victoria. I went to Ballarat East Mercy College to school. Because of reading The Far East I wanted to go to China, but the Columban priest to whom I applied, said that they weren't sending Australian girls. The OLSH Sisters told that the John of God Sisters were in Broome, and my local priest said, "That's where you go Mon.," and that's where I went and that's where I stayed.*

*I was 21. I was in Broome in June, a fortnight or so, when the Novitiate was opened on the feast of Mt. Carmel, 16 July 1932. It was the biggest Novitiate we ever had. I was up and down between Beagle Bay and Broome from 1947, when I was sent to Beagle Bay until 1967. Sr. Emmanuel was sent up from Subiaco as Regional Superior the year the new convent opened and that year I was sent to Balgo, where I had charge of 80 girls and my main job was to supervise the laundry. The poor old pioneers were so humble.*

*I went to Derby for about 3 years, then back to Balgo. Laundry again. After a year cooking in Beagle Bay, I was given the opportunity to spend a year in Perth preparing for old age, and I then returned to Derby." <sup>351</sup>*

Fr. Augustine Spangenberg supervised the work 1928 - 1937 in Lombadina when the Church, Presbytery, Convent, dormitories, dining hall and bakery were erected. Br. Joseph Tautz was responsible for the timber work, and Br. Anton Helmprecht for the mason work. <sup>352</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Interviews with Brigida Nailon, 1981-1985.ADB.

<sup>352</sup> *Lombadina Chronicle*.

While Fr.Raible had ecclesial authority only in the "Kimberley as Vicar Apostolic, as the Pallottine Superior he had authority over members of his Order throughout the whole of Australia until 1946.

Fr.Raible experienced the constraints of those who worked with Aborigines. The general trend of Government policy in the 1930's was to establish Aboriginal administration on the basis of even more rigid control, for their 'good' and for their education, and to include more and more of those of part-Aboriginal descent within the scope of the special legislation. The government effort was channeled into more extensive and more rigid control of individuals.

One effect of the great depression was pressure to remove Aborigines, some long established, off Reserves, and move others, who had never lived on Reserves, on to them.<sup>353</sup>

Three directives from A.O.Neville set the tone:

"1. You have recently been supplied with an amended copy of the Regulations made under the 'Aborigines Act, 1905, numbered 13A...Should persons securing photographs in accordance with the foregoing subsequently desire to use any of the prints for illustrative purposes, application must be made to me for authority to do so. In all other respects Regulation 13 A must be carried out in its entirety, and application must be made through me to the Minister as may be necessary.

2. Circular No.101

In future when marriages between aboriginal or half-caste couples

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<sup>353</sup> C.D.Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, (Canberra, 1970), p.104.

take place at your Mission according to the rites of the Church, will you be good enough to send me a copy of the marriage certificates for record purposes.

If no certificate is issued I shall be glad to receive full particulars concerning the contracting parties. Mission marriages having become more frequent in recent years such action is desirable, to avoid complications in the future.

In this connection I also take the opportunity of drawing your attention to Section 42 of the 'Aborigines Act, 1905', which reads as follows:

No marriage of a female aboriginal with any person other than an aboriginal shall be celebrated without the permission in writing of the Chief Protector. Half-castes, inmates of Missions are deemed to be aborigines within the meaning of Section 3 of the Act.

3. Half-castes were not allowed to control money left to them by their parents, such money was administered by the Department." <sup>354</sup>

Rudolph Newman, from Springvale Station was in this category. A.O.Neville wrote: <sup>355</sup>

I am in receipt of your communication of the 5th instant, in reference to monthly payments made to Rudolph Newman, known to us as Brickey Newman.

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<sup>354</sup> Neville to the Manager of Lombadina Mission, 7 March 1930, ADB.

<sup>355</sup> Rudolph Newman, from Springvale Station, interviewed by F.Huegel, SAC, at B.B.M., 26.7.1973 Rudolph's father had died on the Turkey Race Course in 1915. At the time of Neville's letter, Rudolph had been at the Mission for 20 years, and would have been 30 years of age. His father had been owner of Springvale Station in the East Kimberley. Since Aborigines were not allowed to own land, the station, or proceeds from the sale thereof, fell into the hands of A.O.Neville.

*The amount formerly paid to this boy, however, was not £4 a month, but £2, and I am quite agreeable to renew this allowance derivable from interest payable on his investments. I have, therefore, asked the Resident Magistrate, Broome, to arrange payment accordingly, dating from January next."* <sup>356</sup>

Much of Fr.Raible's personal correspondence in the 1930's had to do with the problem of leprosy and its dehumanising treatment. He quickly became aware of the anguish of lepers being captured and sent away from their country. They did not always succeed in absconding. He wanted to erect a leper station within the influence of the Beagle Bay Mission. He wrote in 1930 to a Member of Parliament asking him to exert all his influence to get the Government to allow them to do this. <sup>357</sup>

The Bishop was refused. It had been decided that the lepers would be transferred to Darwin where they would be cared for by the Commonwealth Authorities. <sup>358</sup>

Fr.Raible asked that the Minister be notified that the Catholic Church was prepared to take over the management of a Lazarette to be built at Swan Point, and two of the trained nurses of St. John of God would look after the lepers. <sup>359</sup> He was making arrangements to have a doctor to be in charge.

The Sisters would ask no salary, so the only expense for the Government would be the maintenance of the buildings, the

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<sup>356</sup> Neville to Raible, 18 December 1930. ADB

<sup>357</sup> Raible, to Coverley, 28 August 1930. ADB.

<sup>358</sup> Commissioner of Public health to Raible, 18 September 1930, ADB.

<sup>359</sup> Raible to Coverley, 28 August 1930, ADB.

provisions for the lepers and the medical supplies. <sup>360</sup>

Another suggestion made by Bishop Raible was that since the policeman was no longer stationed at Beagle Bay Mission, the house was unoccupied, but about to be destroyed by white ants. Fr. Raible asked if it could be given to the Mission to establish there some kind of a small hospital. <sup>361</sup> The reply was that it would cost the Mission £50.

Since the leprosy continued to worsen, in 1932, A.O. Neville requested that newly found lepers could be kept at Beagle Bay for the interim. <sup>362</sup>

By the end of the years 6 lepers were in residence. <sup>363</sup> Many families were broken up by the 'Big Sick', which was the name given to leprosy. The chance of being cured in the 1930's was less than 50%.

Financial Assistance to missions in Western Australia reached an all-time low as shown on the chart after Fr. Raible arrived. As Shown by P. Biskup, most of the money provided went to support the Lock hospitals provided for venereal diseases.

1928	£1,164	1929	£944	1930	£1,019
1931	£ 858	1932	£675	1933	£931 <sup>364</sup>

In 1930, the West Australian Government was granting a subsidy of

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<sup>360</sup> Raible to Green, 9 October 1930, ADB.

<sup>361</sup> Raible to Neville, 4 October 1930, ADB.

<sup>362</sup> Neville to Raible, 22 July 1932, ADB.

<sup>363</sup> Raible to Neville, 3 August 1932, ADB.

<sup>364</sup> P. Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens The Aboriginal Problem in West Australia 1898 - 1954*, (New York, 1973) Appendix 8. Financial Assistance to Missions, 1898 - 1954 pp.281-282.

£5 per head per year, that is, threepence a day for each person, i.e., 27 adults and 18 children. Lombadina mission was receiving nothing at all. When Fr. Raible was asked by the tax department to prove the missions were not making money, he challenged them to show how anybody could run two stations so that you could maintain, furnish and operate, two primary schools, carpenter shop, blacksmith shop, butcher shop, bakery, saddlery and tool making, tailoring, stock, kitchen garden, rice farm, and brick kiln; so that you could feed, besides the staff of 14 persons, 173 Aboriginal adults, and 114 children, and make a net profit of any kind. Two neighbouring stations had gone bankrupt.

Fr. Raible made tentative moves in 1931, to take over the Government stations of Moola Bulla and Munya.<sup>365</sup> The Aborigines there were deteriorating, particularly the children, as the foodstuffs supplied did not provide for the special requirements of children. They were eking out an existence on Government rations, designed years ago to be an aid in the days of plenty when bush foods had been available. The ration had become practically the sole diet of the people, and it was inadequate. An increasing number of escapes from the Moore River native Settlement was a matter for some concern. Clothing was insufficient. Garments were issued once a year only, at the beginning of winter. Deaths due to influenza and pulmonary causes were steadily on the increase. Hospital accommodation was almost unavailable. It was badly needed at Wyndham.<sup>366</sup>

At the request of Fr. Raible, two doctors arrived from the Medical Mission Institute in Wuerzburg to set up a hospital at Rockhole, near Halls Creek. They were the Doctors Betz, a married couple. Fr.

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<sup>365</sup> Raible to Clune, 18 December 1931, ADB.

<sup>366</sup> A.O. Neville, *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the year ended 30 June 1932*.

Raible had a conference with the Premier in the presence of Mr. Coverley and also with the Minister for the Aborigines, 7 November 1933. The Premier showed interest and said that it was the obligation of the Government to give the project financial assistance.

<sup>367</sup>

Affairs had become so serious by 1934 that another Royal Commission under H.D. Moseley was conducted. The Aboriginal population had changed. Part-Aboriginal population had grown from 500 in 1905 to almost 4000 in 1934. New legislation, the Native Administration Act, 1905 - 1936 was enacted. Unfortunately, its provisions were not much better than those they replaced. The emphasis was one of greater control and the removal of people from the public eye. The Aboriginal community had become an embarrassment to the Europeans.

Mons. O. Raible had been consecrated Bishop, 4 August 1935 in Limburg. When he returned to Australia he brought the following missionaries with him. Father Dr. Hermann Nekes, Brothers Richard Besenfelder, and Basil Halder. He was also accompanied by a married couple, both qualified doctors, Dr. Betz and his wife, to care for the Aborigines. Fr. Nekes was an anthropologist. He had come to work on linguistic and ethnological studies in Aborigines. Three of the newcomers were Pallottine seminarians, Anton Omasmeier, Bruno Kupke, George VIII and Karl Lortz.

Bishop Raible was anxious to establish a Pallottine House in some more populated and developed part of Australia in order to bring the needs of the Vicariate to the attention of the Catholic people and hopefully to open the way for Australian vocations to the Pallottines. He would open this house in Kew, Melbourne, in 1937.

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<sup>367</sup> *Broome Chronicle*. ADB.

Br. Richard Besenfelder was quickly thrown into mission life by being appointed to 'Rockhole' where his task was to help attend the horses, donkeys and sheep. He then went to Beagle Bay, scrubby and swampy coastal country. It was all saddle work, weeks and months out mustering, branding, drafting, and for meals damper and stew and tea. He was transferred to La Grange in the 1960's.

Br. Basil Halder was appointed to Tardun to which he gave nearly 30 years of his missionary life. The growth and consolidation of Tardun owed a great deal to his agricultural knowledge, technical skill and great perseverance under a personal handicap of deafness. <sup>368</sup>

Another sister came. Sr. Josepha May entered 17 October 1935. As a result of the Moseley Report, new legislation, the Native Administration Act, 1905 - 1936 was enacted, but unfortunately, the provisions of the Act were not much better than those they replaced, and the emphasis appeared to be one of greater control and the removal of people from the public eye, for the Aboriginal community had become an embarrassment to the Europeans.

The effect of the 1936 Act was soon felt: There was now a Department of Native Affairs. Aboriginal children became the wards of the Commissioner of Native Affairs; the Minister was given power to have Aborigines confined in settlements without trial or appeal; the Act empowered protectors to demolish camps; It prevented Aborigines entering prescribed areas or towns without permits; it required permits to be issued before they could be employed.

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<sup>368</sup> Pallottine Book of the Dead. ADB.



The only positive measure was the provision for the education of Aboriginal children, but this important measure was not properly implemented until 1948 and did not become effective until the 1950's.<sup>369</sup>

A.O.Neville had urged that missions should be subject to departmental supervision, and that the Missionaries should be licensed, or given a permit. He also argued that missionaries should be married people as the psychology of the Aborigines made this imperative.<sup>370</sup>

Fr.Raible objected to any standard method of imparting the tenets of the Christian faith, particularly when it had been approved by the Government, and since the Catholic Missionaries were not married, he saw A.O.Neville's recommendation as 'No Catholic Missionaries'!

He wrote that Neville :

*"...does not desire to throw stones at the missions. He just gently ties a millstone around our necks and chucks us overboard for good."*<sup>371</sup>

He hoped that the investigations of the Royal Commission would result in the discharge of A.O.Neville.<sup>372</sup>

The only positive measure was the provision for the education of Aboriginal children. This was not properly implemented until 1948 and did not become effective until about 1950.

At LaGrange Government feeding station, H.D.Mosely noticed a fair-

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<sup>369</sup> Synopsis 1934 - 1950, *Annual Report, 1972*, ADB.

<sup>370</sup> Royal Commission re Aborigines: Neville to Mosely, 13 March 1934.

<sup>371</sup> Raible to Catalan, 26 March 1934. ADB.

<sup>372</sup> Raible to O'Collins, 27 March 1934, ADB.

haired light skinned girl of about eleven years. She had been allotted by the Aboriginal marriage laws to an old man who already had two wives. Although she had passed all her life on the Government station, no attempt had been made to educate her or separate her or her mother from the blacks.

There were at the time, six hundred and sixty-six half-castes in the Kimberley. Three hundred and twenty-seven were children under 14 years of age. This was a third of the total population of the region.

A.P.Elkin argued for administrative arrangements to enable Aboriginal leadership to operate with an essential minimum of autonomy, within the traditional society progressive adjustments to rapidly changing conditions could be made. Aborigines had the same inherent capacity to adjust to change as other people, but, that adjustment, made by a process of decisions arrived at in ways which Aborigines recognised as valid, required a degree of autonomy for the society within which leadership and decision- making could operate.

Elkin hoped for the kind of administration in tribal areas which would cushion the impact of the encroaching economy. He described the Aboriginal economic life as ordered on a principle of reciprocity, the decision making role of elders, and the religious sanctions for their authority.

At last, Bishop O.Raible managed to secure a place in the vicinity of Halls Creek, the centre of East Kimberley. It would act as a base for missionary activities, and an Aboriginal hospital. Archbishop Clune was approached for security for the overdraft. Fr.Francis Huegel, Br.Henry Krallmann, Br.Joseph Schuengel, and Aborigines from Beagle Bay, Paddy Merindjam and his wife Bertha, George Kelly

with his wife, Maggie and two sons, and Philip Cox were chosen to open the new Missionary Station.

There was opposition, though the matter had been discussed with the Royal Commissioner, Mr.Moseley, and Mr.Kitson in Wyndham.

Bishop Raible wrote:

*"I do not know whether the Government has any legal power to stop a Society from purchasing a certain property, taking out a general permit to employ natives, feeding them or teaching them anything at all, as long as this is not detrimental to the State.*

*There is also an inconsistency in the attitude of the Government, when the Minister for Lands advised me that he could not accede to our request for 500 acres freehold at Pender Bay or Lombadina, as this would constitute a case of precedence for further applications.*

*He seems to be unaware of the fact, that both the Beagle Bay Mission and Forrest River Mission have been granted a certain area of freehold property, when they were established. Thus there are already two cases of precedence at least...*

Mons. O.Raible made a long statement to the Royal Commission members, stating:

*It must be borne in mind that the Aborigines' question originated, when the white man came into the county, took the land from the black man and declared this action to be legal.*

*Unfortunately the questioning was very much one sided and when the black man questioned the right of the white man to take his land he was in a good few instances answered with a bullet. It is a question of fundamental human rights. Whether or not the white man was entitled to take the land and develop it, this question may be open to discussion,*

*but we are certainly not entitled to take it without recompense...*

*The position here in Broome is difficult in so far as the interests of the half castes clash somehow with the interests of white labour...*

*A great number of half castes think themselves degraded by the application of the Aborigines Act..*

*The very fact that exemptions from this act are being granted after enquiries have been made about the trustworthiness of the half caste in question seems to imply that all the rest of them are not trustworthy and are classed as second rate people ...*

*This impression is intensified by the attitude which they behold in a large section of white society...*

*Is it any wonder that a man who is declared to be an outlaw by his very existence, comes to think that it is of no use to be otherwise...*

*Whenever we come across the word 'half caste' we should strike our breast and say "Through our most grievous fault ... "*

*Legislation should be reframed in a way that avoids regulations of a humiliating tenor such as the paragraph of exemption.*

*I must bring to your notice in the first place that our Lombadina Mission was never in receipt of a subsidy notwithstanding the fact that on several occasions the Department was notified of the existence of old and infirm natives on the place."*

When the report of the Royal Commissioner was presented in 1935, the major issue was the increase in the number of half castes, there were 900 in 1905, and there were 3,891 in 1934. Of the missions, he claimed that beyond doubt, the missionaries amongst the Aborigines

were doing, a work of great self-sacrifice.

The ability of the Missions to develop their properties in order to give employment and training to the Aborigines was obviously to be admired. Besides the religious teaching, and the care, feeding and the employment of the blacks, the only extensive attempt to educate either full-bloods or half-castes anywhere in the State was being made by the Missions. The State School at Moala Bulla taught only 19 children whereas the Kimberley mission figures in 1934 were:

	F/B	H/C	Total
Beagle Bay	42	43	85
Lombadina	24	6	30
Forest River	38	14	52
Sunday	16	7	23
Kunmunya	9	5	14

The education represented by those figures means at its best an ability to read and write simple English and some training in simple arithmetic. The problem of finding suitable forms of industry and of devising an education practice fitted to the needs of the children, were obvious practical worries for the missions.

Mosely paid tribute

*"...to the unselfish and patient service given by the missionaries at no personal benefit and often under conditions of great difficulty in following their ideal..."*

*The six Kimberley missions were supporting about 700 natives by their own means. They were supporting about another 180 with the aid of the*

*State subsidy. They were providing schools for over 200 children. They were sheltering several hundred half castes who would be given a poor chance in the critical outside world.. With Government grants they have secured for the blacks of the country additional reserves totaling nearly five million acres. The efforts of these private bodies had relieved the State of a good deal of cost - always assuming that the State would have done as much as they did - and has taken over a good deal of its worry.*

*The State owes them a debt of gratitude and respect for their opinions.*  
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Bishop Raible had made two separate and distinct offers to the Western Australian Government with the object of improving conditions for the Aborigines and dealing with leprosy patients . Both offers were rejected, but in the light of subsequent events, if either offer had been agreed to, it would have gone a long way to control the spread of leprosy.

Bishop Raible had just returned from the Beagle Bay Mission where 16 lepers had been discovered within 12 months. Beagle Bay had the two Doctors Betz. The wife had considerable experience in East Africa amongst the lepers, and both doctors were so concerned as to the spread of leprosy that they kept the children of the lepers separate from the other Mission children.

The Derby Leprosarium had begun to function in 1935. It had been regularly visited by the town doctor and the lay administration consisted of two married couples. A trained nurse was always available as she lived in the quarantine area with her husband. After a year or two the Administrator of Public Health placed an advertisement in the local paper appealing for nurses to work at the leprosarium. Their qualifications were to include double certificates.

The Sisters of St. John of God applied for the position though some were not in favour of women religious working in government departments. Sr. Gertrude Greene and Sr. Brigid Greene began the work in 1937. Sister Matthew Greene, and Sister Gabriel Greene came to help. Other Sisters came, e.g., Sister Bernadette O'Connor was appointed there immediately after Profession in 1942, and left 12 months later with one of the little babies born there, for the Broome Orphanage.

Sr. Alphonse Daly described the reaction of the Aborigines to pain, as 'deep silence'. She had come in 1944 and not only nursed, but organized the patients into a skilful and efficient orchestra, until there were no fewer than 40 violins, 6 banjos, 1 cello, and a cornet, all played by Aborigines. When Brother Francis Hanke was hospitalized in the Derby Leprosarium, with the help of the Aboriginal patients, he constructed a Church.

If the reforms had been introduced, Neville's position as Commissioner would have been reduced to that of a departmental Secretary. As it was, nothing was done to reduce the number of Protectors. Instead, in May 1940, the existing police districts were proclaimed 'native districts'. Thirty-six additional police officers were appointed as protectors.

Bishop Raible's correspondence has many letters from A.O. Neville who harassed the missionaries demanding details about individual Aborigines re marriages, deaths, property, employment, etc.

For example: Bishop O. Raible, to the Commissioner of Native Affairs, 19 May 1937:

*"On behalf of Rev.Father F.Huegel, of B.B.M , I hereby give notice of an intended marriage on the above Mission. The contracting parties are Raphael, son of Philip, a full-blood native of Broome (died 2 years ago) and Sophie, a three quarter native woman of Broome. Raphael is now 26 years of age. The intended wife is Angelina, daughter of Abel alias Kelly, of B.B.M , a full blood native, and Dorothy, a three quarter native woman.*

*Angelina is now 22 years of age. There is no impediment from a tribal point of view.*

*The Mission authorities are of the opinion, that Raphael and Angelina will make a good couple. We therefore ask your permission to perform the marriage ceremony at B.B.M."*

A.O.Neville, to Bishop O.Raible, 25 May 1937:

*"I acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 19th inst., in reference to the proposed marriage of Raphael and Angelina. In reply, and in compliance with Section 45 of the Native Administration Act, I desire to state that I formally object to the proposed marriage on the grounds that insufficient information has been supplied. I am now making further inquiries in the matter and no doubt I shall communicate with you in the near future."*

Bishop O.Raible, to the Commissioner of Native Affairs, Perth, 8 July 1937:

*"... I have noted your remarks with regard to the proposed marriage of Raphael and Angelina at B.B.M. and I take it from the tenor of your letter that you do not desire to have any further information from myself on this matter... "*

E.Worms, PSM, Broome to the Department of Native Affairs, Perth, 2 August 1937: *"... I thank you for the permission for the marriage of*



*Raphael and Angelina. I married them on the 27 July. The Marriage Certificate will be sent to you by the ordinary mail. Rev.Father Benedict in Lombadina would be very pleased when he could get the permission for the marriage of Bob and Josephine for which he asked you two months ago."*

In April 1938, the government gazetted 156 additional regulations covering all aspects of Aboriginal administration.

Bishop Raible wrote to the Superior General in Rome, 2 September 1938, saying that he had not as yet written anything about his intention to open a new Mission according to the style of Rockhole, which would be abandoned because of the unyielding attitude of the Government.

*"We have had this Vicariate for 10 years. What have we done to expand this for 10 years. I am ashamed that after what Fr. Gibney did to expand this mission, we 'Sons of Pallotti' are afraid. "*

The whole scheme of the Bishop for medical and educational care of the Aborigines in the East Kimberley totally collapsed, as it had done in the West Kimberley. Bishop Raible intended to take steps for the establishment of a new Aboriginal Mission South of the Great Salt Lake, about the 128 degrees east and 20 degrees South. He estimated it would take about three weeks to make a rough survey of the country with a view of the possibilities of cattle and sheep raising. He and Father Worms had spent about a fortnight around the Salt Lake the previous year.

When Balgo Mission Chronicle was started, the Bishop wrote: *"From 26 April 1937 till 6 January 1939, Rev.Fr.John Herold was in charge of Rockhole Station. "*

Fr.Alphonse Bleichwitz said that the failure of the Rockhole

hospital project had cut a deep wound which never healed completely in the heart of the Bishop. Occasional remarks revealed this in the years to come. His saying, "*In the household of God nothing is wasted!*", was his anchor.

Mr.E.Bridge of Koongie Park Station had made an undisclosed offer to the Bishop to purchase Rockhole. Cash was paid on the spot. I October 1939 was the day of the takeover, in some way the forerunner of a greater, though more difficult foundation, that of Balgo Mission.

The attention of the Bishop had been drawn to the plight of the little known tribes south of Halls Creek, nomads wandering over hundreds of Sand Ridges along the Canning Stock Route. So far nobody had bothered about them, they were unknown in No Man's Land. Billiluna was the last cattle station, 200 km south of Halls Creek.

Fr.E.Worms had explored this land on his expeditions and tried to contact the Aborigines.<sup>373</sup> His reports were favourable. Fr. Alphonse Bleischwitz had arrived in the Kimberley in 1937. In 1939 he was given the difficult task of moving all the live-stock and belongings from Rockhole Station, with Br.Frank Nissi.

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<sup>373</sup> Alphonse Bleischwitz, SAC, 'The Pre-History of Balgo' 1983 ADB *cf. Beagle Bay Chronicle* and F.Huegel, SAC, Oral Sources, 1984, ADB.

## CHAPTER 8

*"...And when the crop is ready, he loses no time ... "* Mk. 4:29

### EXPANSION DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

War was declared in September 1939. Unaware that the outbreak of the war was imminent, Bishop Raible had returned to Broome at the beginning of September, 1939. Fr. Alphonse Bleischwitz, accompanied him. He had been appointed to be responsible for the Balgo Mission. Brother Joseph Tautz was also in Broome. The three Germans were to experience the trauma of war.

Fr. Alphonse wrote:

*"I was in Broome, relaxing with Br Joseph Tautz in the presbytery, listening to the wireless. We did not dream of what was to come, World War II !*

*The only station we could get on our set was Batavia. We heard the news clearly, "War is on in Europe!"*

*Next morning people in the street outside the presbytery raised their voices for the Bishop and us to hear about the outbreak of war* <sup>374</sup>

*I cannot remember that the Bishop spoke to us even once about the war. He grew more silent. Did he have a premonition of the hazardous times in store for him as Bishop of the Vicariate? Of his priests and brothers working in the mission, only two were naturalised.*

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<sup>374</sup> There is a stone in the German War Cemetery in Tatura, Victoria, which commemorates the Germans who died in the two world wars and lie buried in Australian soil. It also records that there are 120 Catholic and 45 Protestant Missionaries buried in Australian soil.

*Subsequent events proved to the full his fears had not been dreams. He had to be brave to carry the mission through opposition and turmoil. Because of his sad war experiences in Broome he felt betrayed. He remained in Beagle Bay as much as he could.*

*Before I left for Rockhole the Bishop and myself never touched upon the question as to whether it would be better to abandon the new venture. The farewell of the Bishop was, "God's blessing, I am always thinking of you - it will be my mission as much as it will be yours." <sup>375</sup>  
Br. Frank and I never doubted his word."*

To continue to implement his plans was a brave move by Bishop Raible. His efforts were made in spite of the very inopportune time when the Second World War was to put the Missionaries under new stress.

Earlier in 1939, Brother Frank Niss! travelled in the old Diesel truck from Beagle Bay to Lower Liveringa with Bishop Raible and Br. Paul Rataiski. It had been rough, and the night on the hard ground had been uncomfortable. He had experienced difficult years in Tardun. Austerity, want, and work had never worried him. His father had been a logger in Bavaria, and he, himself, had worked hard from the day he left school. He had been called up in World War 1, but rarely talked about his war experiences. He had great peace in the life he had chosen. In the monasteries in Germany, he had always been in charge of the farms. They had given him a 'mission cross' in 1931, and sent him to Tardun. Then there had been a week's holiday at Beagle Bay before he left for the new foundation, Rockhole, near Halls Creek in the Kimberley.

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<sup>375</sup> Alphonse Bleischwitz, 'Shutting the Gates of Rockhole' December 1983, ADB.

On the feast of Queen of the Apostles, they had arrived. It was May 1939. He enjoyed the company of the others, Br.Stephen Contempree, Patrick and Bertha, Ambrose and Philip Cox. Br.Frank knew that the Bishop was thinking of the plight of the little known tribes South of Halls Creek, often seen on the Sand Ridges along the Canning Stock Route.

The owner of Billiluna Station had been present at Bishop Raible's Mass, and he lent horses for the group to ride to Banga Bitty, Lake Gregory and Bishops Dell. That day, the Aboriginal cooks had scrambled emu eggs for breakfast and when they returned to Billiluna, Br.Paul was waiting. Then over Banga. It was cold and rainy and Br.Frank felt quite sick on the uncomfortable truck.

They knew for sure now, that 'Bishops Dell' was unsuitable for the future mission, because the truck would have to go over 22 sand hills. Dick Smith and Ambrose Cox had then been sent to find a place. After two weeks on the road they found Tjaluwan. Everyone then went back to Rockhole.

Br. Frank later wrote of his experiences:

*"The time was at beginning of the Second World War. We started mustering sheep, horses and donkeys. We intended to start the journey to the new Mission 8 September 1969. Dick Smith said "Not on a Wednesday, because it is an unlucky day." I said, "It is a day of our Lady, we go with the blessing and protection of the Mother of God," and so we started on 8 September 1939.*

*We were droving 1000 sheep, 15 horses, about 20 donkeys and 20 goats. Dick Smith had 4 camels. We had a 4 wheel wagon left by Brother Henry Krallmann, and a two wheel cart which was used as a traitor:*

*Philip Cox looked after the donkeys that were used to pull the wagon, and he was also cook.*

*Pat and I drove the sheep. It was all new to me, but Dick and Pat were experienced stock men. I was the only white man in the team. We had to drive very slowly, because the sheep could not go fast. .*

*We travelled 4 weeks to do the journey of 100 miles from Rockhole to Ruby Plain. Time did not matter, and we did not want to lose any of the animals. We drove 4 days from Rockhole to Ruby Plain. One night we had no water for the animals, only for ourselves. By then we rested two days at Ruby Plain. Good Mr. Walter D'Arcy gave us plenty of salted beef*

*We continued droving, day after day. Each night we built brush fences to keep the sheep and goats together. Names of places we drove through were Kangaroo Creek, Rest Bank, the Wolf, the Myra, and Sturt Creek. Usually there was feed and water, but not from the Myra to Billiluna, 12 miles. We camped at Billiluna a few days, then drove on to Bill Pool and Ord Station. There we met with Jack Barry, who helped us along, and gave us plenty of beef*

*After giving the sheep a rest we travelled over Banga Bitti to the Comet Windmill. This is the last water well belonging to Billiluna. We camped at the Comet Well till the end of December.*

*When Fr. Alphonse Bleischwitz and Br. Stephen Contempree arrived with the truck, we made our lives more homely, but we had no house. Br. Stephen, Dick, and some of the Aboriginal men travelled on to Tjaluwan to find water and dig a well.*

*In November 1939, Fr. Alphonse and I travelled with the horses to Tjaluwan. On this day, the Feast of St. Cecelia, Fr. Alphonse celebrated the first Holy Mass.*

*We transported everything to Tjaluwan and we had our first Christmas in this large bush land. I think it could not have been poorer in the stable at Bethlehem.*

*We had a well with sufficient water, but how long would the water last?*

*The next year, there was no rain. We had not enough water for all our animals. First we intended to go to Bishops Dell, but we could not get over the 8 large sand hills with all our stock.*

*We drove 20 miles south to Derby Creek. But later we had to return to the Comet Well.*

*Br. Stephen and his helpers were trying to find water, but there was no good water for drinking. We lived at a place called Dummand Dora for two years, but the water there was no good for drinking either.*

*Br. Stephen left us in the spring 1941, transferred to Tardum. I remained at this mission during the war. We did not have Australian citizenship. A permit from the Police was needed for leaving the Mission. During this time I was trying to find water. I drilled many holes in the ground 20' to 100' deep. This was very hard work because it was all by hand, with no machinery.*

*At last we found good drinking water, near the Bargo Hill. From this came the name 'Bargo Mission'. We drove the sheep to different places to find feed and water, but could not do much during the war.*

*The truck from Beagle Bay came two or three times a year, to bring provisions, and to take the wool away.*

*The Aborigines were no longer frightened and had more confidence. But we were not able to give food to all the people. The Aborigines considered us as intruders in their country, and considered our sheep their property.*

*I had to learn a great deal, and it was difficult for me to understand and work with Aborigines. They do not know work, and live from hunting. The land was their property, and they wanted us to give them food and supplies in return for using it.*

*Here I learned to pray sincerely: "Lord, help me I am perishing." During the war we were very much alone in the desert at Balgo. It was a journey of 170 miles to the Post Office or Police Station at Halls Creek. We had no radio or rifle. The police had taken them from us.*

*We had to ride to Halls Creek when something was needed. There and back, took 3 weeks with horses or camels. Balgo was 180 miles south of Halls Creek.*

*God is good. I thank him for everything, also for the suffering. God protected me all my life, he will also support me in my old age."*

Fr. Alphonse Bleischwitz SAC was the founder of the Balgo Mission. He wandered around the deserts looking for water for the herd of horses, donkeys, sheep and goats until he settled at 'Old Balgo'. With the help of Br. Frank Hanke from Beagle Bay he would be responsible for putting up the first buildings made of mud-bricks and Desert Oak. He also cultivated a large garden while the Kukudja Aborigines camped nearby, in a camp, others coming in from the Desert all the time.

For the duration of the Second World War he would be practically an internee, but the Halls Creek Police were unable to negotiate the track past Billiluna to arrest him and put him in Broome jail with the other German missionaries in 1942.

Bishop Raible wrote to the Minister for the North West about his



personal attitude towards the War:

*"Having just returned from my annual trip through my Vicariate, I feel that I should write a few lines to you in connection with the peculiar situation created by the outbreak of the war.*

*As you know, most of our missionary staff in the Kimberley are German, only a few being naturalized Australians. But we are unanimous in deploring this outrage on humanity, which is turning Europe into a huge battlefield where millions of men, women and children will have to suffer for the unbridled greed and consequent madness of those responsible for the outbreak of the present war.*

*I wish to express on my own behalf and on behalf of every one of my missionaries, priests and brothers, our loyalty to the cause of justice, for which England has taken up arms. We hope and pray that God in his own good time will turn the hearts of men to sentiments of peace and harmony.*

*You know well that our work up here has a purely religious and charitable scope and does not enter politics in any shape or form. It may be called national only in so far as we have always tried to do our best for the uplift of the Australian Aborigines."*<sup>376</sup>

At the new station, a new windmill was erected, and the water supply in the well was about 2000 gallons a day. There had been no rain since December, 1939. Two months later, in March, there was still no rain, but a dreadful heat of an average of 105° in the shade from 10 a.m. till 5 p.m.<sup>377</sup>

As the priest, Fr. Alphonse Bleischwitz and the two Brothers were not

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<sup>376</sup> Raible to Coverley, 12 September 1939. ADB.

<sup>377</sup> Balgo Chronicle ADB

naturalized the Bishop applied to the Commissioner of Police for permission for them to have a rifle , which he saw as absolutely necessary to get beef.

The Commissioner flatly refused to give a permit. Bishop Raible commented that he evidently had not experienced life in the bush, where one rounded up a mob of cattle, then sat in a tree and shot a beast, or you starved.

He then approached the Minister for permission for them to have a .25 rifle and 100 rounds of ammunition. The Minister suggested that a naturalized priest be put in charge.<sup>378</sup>

But the two the Bishop had, were elsewhere, and could not be replaced.

Another matter which Bishop Raible took up with Mr. Coverley, at this time, was that if the half castes were to have any self respect, it was necessary that they be enabled to attain to a certain social status, and this was to a great extent bound up with the burning question of employment.

For the coming season there was a great deal of contract work on hand, extension of the aerodrome, and road building, which would absorb a good number of idle hands. Here was an opportunity to give the local half castes a fair deal and let them have a job , if the Minister were to exert all the influence at his command, to secure for them their share in the work. Here were about a dozen of able young men, single and married who would be only glad to take on a job. The married men particularly with their young families did not

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<sup>378</sup> Raible to Coverley, 16 August 1940. ADB.

like the idea of going abroad droving or on other work while their wives and children had to remain as they felt this was not a sound proposition.<sup>379</sup>

The Minister gave instructions that where any of these people are financial members of any union, they were to be employed on jobs whenever it was possible to fit them in, and this should meet requirements.<sup>380</sup>

There the trouble started. The local secretary of the union seemed to be very slow in granting a union ticket, in fact he just said that they could not get one, and advised to write south if they were not satisfied.

In one case, a quadroon, named Willie Roe, after having been refused a ticket locally, wrote down, whereupon headquarters advised that he was to be given a ticket. But even then the local executive was not very willing to give a ticket. It seemed that the local branch were afraid that too many half castes might apply for a ticket. Therefore their policy was to try to create difficulties in order to induce them to give up the idea of joining. As far as the Bishop was concerned, such a policy should not be justified.

The Minister was asked by the Bishop, to investigate the situation, in order to help to establish the half caste families on a sound basis<sup>381</sup>

Strangers continued to come up from south and be given jobs as they were in possession of union tickets. The local men were still refused

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<sup>379</sup> Raible to Coverley, 2 February 1940. ADB.

<sup>380</sup> Coverley to Raible, 14 February 1940. ADB.

<sup>381</sup> Raible to Coverley, 18 February 1940. ADB.

union tickets. Once more, the Bishop followed the matter up with the Minister.

Bishop Raible argued that the local people wanted to see something practical done. They were drifting into some sort of half despair.<sup>382</sup>

The Minister wrote that he was unable to pursue this any further. The rules of the Union, which were becoming the Union's Constitution, were registered with the Arbitration Courts of Australia. This Constitution debarred persons of Asiatic or Aboriginal blood from becoming members. Odd persons had been admitted in the past, only through some unforeseen circumstances, apart from any legal aspects.<sup>383</sup>

At the end of 1939 Bishop Raible had obtained the permission of the Apostolic Delegate to erect a 'Pious Union of Native Sisters'.<sup>384</sup> By the beginning of 1940, at Beagle Bay Mission, four girls under the direction of Mother Augustine, began the new life. The title of the Congregation was 'Sisters of Mary Queen of the Apostles'.<sup>385</sup> The following eight years saw 38 young women try the new life.<sup>386</sup>

The expectations for ministry from these young women were perhaps too great. The young Mission existed in a Spartan

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<sup>382</sup> Raible to Coverley, 20 March 1940. ADB.

<sup>383</sup> Coverley to Raible, 29 March 1940. ADB.

<sup>384</sup> Broome Chronicle ADB

<sup>385</sup> The money for their oratory, £300 was donated by Mr. Augustine Sixt (formerly Brother A. Sixt), who lived at 'Lungabat market garden supplying vegetables and goat meat to Japanese pearling luggers.

<sup>386</sup> Chronicle of the Regina Apostolorum Convent (Native Sisters) Beagle Bay Mission, November 1938 - 23 December 1951. ADB.

environment, very difficult for young women reared in comparative security in a Christian environment. When the first Sisters from the Native Convent had been sent to the Pallottine Mission at Balgo, there were ten Sisters at Beagle Bay.

When Barbara Cox was sent in 1947, she was a novice. With her went Vera Dann, one of the first group, and Josephine Sibosado, a postulant. Barbara's brother Ambrose and his wife Nancy were already working at the Balgo Mission.

It had been Bishop Raible's dearest wish to see the formation of a community equipped to help their own people and to fill the need for Church workers. The Bishop saw in the simple desert nomads at Balgo an opportunity for the Native Sisters to help with the evangelization of the East Kimberley Region.

The young Sisters tried, and certainly made a big contribution. But they did not have the support of experience. Unused though they were to luxury, they found conditions harder than anything they had imagined.

In 1940, Bishop Raible started to negotiate for further education in Perth for girls from the Kimberley. It was hoped to gain scholarships from people in the East for the girls who were quadroons within the meaning of the Aborigine Act.<sup>387</sup>

Education in West Australia was perpetuating racial differences. The 1897 Act had given the responsibility of Aboriginal education to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, so it was not the business of

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<sup>387</sup> Raible to Prendiville, 1 January 1940; Jackson to Raible, 9 January 1940; Raible to Jackson, re Rosy Clarke, 19 January 1940; Raible to Prendiville, 5 December 1940. ADB.

the Education Department. There had never been any money to spare for education in the Aboriginal Department. For Aborigines, education was not only not compulsory, as for whites, it was just not available. If Aboriginal parents had any educational aspirations for their children, these were thwarted by legislation.

Western Australia was the only state where the Education Department did not control education for Aborigines. Since a good education of the coloured children would tend to make such children assets rather than liabilities to the state, it was advisable for the Education Department to assume control, but this situation was not to be clarified until 1942.<sup>388</sup>

A letter to Fr.E. Worms gives some insight into the problem with regard to education of children of mixed blood. After obtaining information from the Commissioner of Native Affairs for Western Australia, the Queensland Department in Control of Aborigines, and the Provincial Government of South Africa, the Education Committee of this Union submitted to the last Annual Conference of Teachers a report dealing with the Education of Natives and coloured people in this State. The report recommended the segregation of coloured people in suitable areas.<sup>389</sup>

The date on the foundation stone of the Broome Orphanage is 11 October 1940. That year the Sisters had been left a legacy of £500 by a gentleman in NSW. The community agreed to spend this amount for a home for the orphans. The Road Board donated a block of land. A prefabricated building 60' by 30' was purchased for the £500. A local carpenter erected it for £120. The building consisted of a large

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<sup>388</sup> Votes and Proceedings, 1940:13 cf C.F.Mounsey 'Aboriginal Education-A New Dawning' in R.M.Berndt and Catherine H.Bemdt, *Aborigines of the West, 171eir Past and 771eir Present* (Perth, 1979).

<sup>389</sup> Thomas to Worms, 13 March 1940, ADB.

dormitory, dining room, three small rooms for sisters and a kitchen and store.

The Broome white population came to the rescue with a bazaar and a concert. This raised about £150. Appeals were made in the Eastern States, and enough money was obtained to buy second-hand beds, tables, and cupboards. The Lotteries Commission gave £50 for verandas in 1941. The Sisters evacuated the children from Broome to Beagle Bay Mission in trucks at the end of February, 1942. The Department of Child Endowment had just begun to function and each child was allowed 5/- a week. At the Mission, meat, milk and vegetables were supplied free. The Secretary of the Catholic Church in Perth, Mr. Jackson, had procured supplies of damaged soldiers' uniforms, which were made up into dresses for the children. By these means, the debt was paid off.<sup>390</sup>

After the war, when the Sisters and children returned, they found that the building had been used by the Air force. All the children's beds and the kitchen utensils had disappeared. The number of children had doubled as the Commissioner of Native Affairs had collected a number of small girls in the Kimberley and sent them to the Sisters.

A new wing was built for £1500, with £500 donation from the Lotteries Commission, and the rest by donations from the Eastern States. The Commissioner of Native Affairs arranged that groceries and vegetables were bought wholesale in Perth and sent the 1500 miles by boat. They also helped buy a truck. Child Endowment was £1.2.6 per week and a grant was made from the Department of Native Affairs for 30 of the 52 children.

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<sup>390</sup> Sr. Margaret Carmody, SJG, 'Orphanage Founding' ABC Broadcast 27 July 1962. SJG Derby Archives.

A girls' home was planned for Broome to be opened under the care of the Sisters.<sup>391</sup>

Warrants of Removal under Section 12 of the Native Administration , 1905-1940 for four Broome half-caste women and seven children, to remain in force indefinitely, unless cancelled by the Minister, were sent to the Superior of Beagle Bay Mission.<sup>392</sup>

Bishop O.Raible saw the 'indefinite time' as putting the Mission in a difficult position, for with the diminished missionary staff, it would not be possible to exercise the necessary supervision. He agreed to take them for the time being on condition that the home be built in Broome and at least six women or girls installed there, and that the women could be send back to Broome if they caused trouble of a serious nature at the Mission.<sup>393</sup>

Some of the earlier efforts made by Bishop Raible for expansion of the Catholic Church were also hampered by the War. Early in 1942, the foundation of a new Mission at La Grange seemed to be moving ahead. Bishop Raible appointed Dr.Hermann Nekes as Priest in Charge, and Br. Henry Krallmann as Assistant.<sup>394</sup>

But under war conditions all Government Departments were subservient to the Military Authorities who disapproved and cancelled all arrangements.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Raible to Coverley, 8 March 1941. ADB.

<sup>392</sup> Bray to Huegel, 15 May 1941. ADB.

<sup>393</sup> Raible to Commissioner of Native Affairs, 27 May 1941. ADB.

<sup>394</sup> Bray to Raible, 3 January 1942, ADB.

<sup>395</sup> Bray to Raible, 16 February 1942. ADB.



'The Leper Line' was a setback to the movement of the missionaries. It occurred when Parliament decided to prohibit the migration of Aborigines from the Kimberley over South Latitude 20 degrees, as a precaution against the spread of leprosy. The 20th parallel ran through Walla! Downs Station on the Eighty Mile Beach, and straight over to the Border, running through Billiluna Station en route. Balgo Mission was southwards of Billiluna, and if Bishop O.Raible permitted Aborigines on the Mission Station to proceed North of the 20th parallel, they must permanently stay there. If they came North, they were liable to a penalty of £50, and any person responsible for their transfer was also liable to a penalty of £100. Any migration of Aborigines across the 'Leper Line' was prohibited.<sup>396</sup>

Because Balgo Mission was on one side of the leper line, and Beagle Bay Mission was on the other, it was inevitable that complications would occur because of the life line of support which existed between them both.

The other missions, Beagle Bay and Lombadina, continued to operate. In 1941, at Beagle Bay Mission there were 44 boys and 51 girls.<sup>397</sup> In Lombadina there were 22 boys and 20 girls. They were all under 16 years of age.<sup>398</sup>

22 October 1940 - 31 October 1940: A warrant was issued from the military authorities that all the German Fathers and Brothers who were not naturalised were declared prisoners of war. That meant that all were to leave the mission except Brother Matthias Wollseifer who

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<sup>396</sup> Bray to Raible, 24 November 1941. cf. Bray, Circular No.199 Leprosy Precautions, 26 November 1941. ADB.

<sup>397</sup> Raible to Prendiville, 1 January 1940; Jackson to Raible, 9 January 1940; Raible to Jackson, re Rosy Clarke, 19 January 1940; Raible to Prendiville, 5 December 1940. ADB.

<sup>398</sup> Votes and Proceedings, 1940:13 cf. C.F.Mounsey 'Aboriginal Education-A New Dawning' in R.M.Berndt and Catherine H.Bemdt, *Aborigines of the West, 171eir Past and 771eir Present* (Perth, 1979).

had been naturalized. The Diesel truck which had left for Broome had to return. The Sergeant and two other police came in two cars to take them off. One car with Constable Taylor passed on to Lombadina to get Fr. John Herold. The following day at Mass, the Superior exhorted the people to hear the voice of God, who, when putting this heavy cross on our shoulders wished us to be still more faithful and steadfast in His holy service. The parting from the Sisters and the people, especially from the children was heart rending.<sup>399</sup>

Sr. Madeleine Lynch told the author her memories of the internment: *During the Second World War, the police commandeered Jimmy Chi's car (he was taking food from Broome to the lighthouse at Cape Leveque). They took the Priests and Brothers who were not naturalized and put them in the cars, Jimmy Chi's and the police cars.*

*The lepers from the clamp flocked to the long stone fence outside the convent, and as the cars drove off the women holding their babies started an ear piercing 'Keeeee - eeen' shrieking, to which the upset babies added their shrieks and cries, while the girls from the dormitory stood in stunned silence. This waiting continued until Br.Wollseifer put an end to it by calling them all to the Church to say the Rosary.*

*Overnight, the Mission became dead. It had always been such a busy place. Now it was silent, for there were none of the usual sounds of whirring of saws, or hammering, or calling of stock boys, ...just silence.*

*In Broome, people shouted derisively as the cars of Priests and Brothers passed on to the jail. .*

*The mms in Broome, poor as they were, went without, to ensure that the Priests and Brothers had luxuries, such as butter. Sr.Margaret Carmody of Broome complained bitterly to the authorities that*

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<sup>399</sup> Thomas to Worms, 13 March 1940, ADB.

*European women (the sisters) were left with only one elderly European (Brother Wollseifer) to protect them if the Japanese decided to land in Beagle Bay.*

Fathers Francis Huegel, Hermann Nekes, Leo Hornung, Benedict Puesken (who was awaiting a transfer to Tardun), and John Herold, with Brothers John Graf, Paul Rataiski, Frank Hanke, Paul Mueller, Henry Schaefer, Richard Besenfelder, and Hubert Beldennann were taken.

The Beagle Bay Chronicle recorded:

*When we arrived in Broome, we were taken straight to the jail. There, three in each cell, we were locked in. No arrangements were made, no furniture, not even beds. All utensils we got were lent by the Bishop. the Sisters and some friends who also provided us with extra provisions and visited us daily. Otherwise we were treated fairly.*

*A few white people such as Mr. Norman, Mrs McDaniel, and Mr. and Mrs Green showed their sympathy by sending presents or visiting us. The sympathy we received from the Aborigines was widespread. Many spent their few bobs to buy a few presents for us. .*

*In the scale, Archbishop Mannix put the whole weight of his public influence and succeeded in averting the great danger of having left the Vicariate without Missionaries. The Bishop brought Fr. Francis, Fr. Hermann, and the Brothers back to the Mission. The excitement and joy of the Sisters as well of our Mission people was beyond description. They nearly tore us to pieces. Sunday morning we sang a heartfelt Te Deum<sup>400</sup>. CD*

At Beagle Bay and Lombadina, four priests and ten brothers were

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<sup>400</sup> *Beagle Bay Chronicle ADB*

catering for over four hundred natives and half-castes. The boys, after leaving school which was conducted by the Sisters, were trained in different trades, viz. carpentry, blacksmithing, saddlery, tailoring, bakery, building, brick-making, gardening etc. The Brothers in charge of these trades were skilled tradesmen and had with in the last forty years turned out a great number of well-trained Aborigines that were an asset to the community. About 4000 head of cattle were run under the care of one brother with a number of boys and the twenty- two windmills with tanks and troughs, yards and fifty miles of fencing required constant supervision. <sup>401</sup>

What had happened was that when the Missionaries were arrested as aliens, Daniel Mannix, the Archbishop of Melbourne, had the matter immediately brought to the notice of the Prime Minister. He took steps to impress upon him that a very serious view was taken of the outrage perpetrated against the Mission.

31 October, 1940, the Prime Minister discussed aspects of the matter. The decision was that the Pallottine Missionaries should vacate the Kimberley Mission and be replaced by an Australian or some other Order. But when it was pointed out that the Cabinet's decision would mean the entire ruin of the Mission, the Prime Minister then called the Minister for the Army into the discussion. The result of the interview with the Prime Minister was that an order was telegraphed to Broome, releasing the thirteen Missionaries from the Broome gaol and allowing them to remain, on parole, at Broome, pending further enquiries. <sup>402</sup>

Subsequently some were deported to Melbourne where they were not allowed to move out of a five mile radius, and had to report to the

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<sup>401</sup> Raible to Military Headquarters, Perth, 23 October 1940. ADB.

<sup>402</sup> Dr.Lyons, Melbourne, to Bishop O.Raible, Broome. 6 November 1940, ADB.

local Police Station once a week.

The removal of some of the Missionaries was a great blow to the Kimberley. It was natural that their future lives would take a different course, and few returned. In Kew, the house of studies founded by Bishop Raible in 1937, there were four young Australians training for the mission field. They were H.Rutherford, J.Kearney, R.McGinley, and J.F.Hennessy.<sup>403</sup> With the internees, there were seven priests in the Kew House in 1941.<sup>404</sup>

During the course of the war, Broome and Kalumburu mission were bombed. Towards the end of February 1942, the Allied High Command considered that a Japanese attack on Java could be anticipated within a week to ten days, and ordered the evacuation of allied personnel and their families to the relative safety of Australia. During a two week period, some 8000 refugees from the Dutch East Indies passed through Broome. The Japanese air raid came to Broome 3 March 1942 when there were 23 aircraft in Broome. Sixteen flying boats, mainly Dutch military machines, were on Roebuck Bay. There were seven large bombers or transports on the town airstrip. Only one of these survived. An American bomber was brought down about seven miles off Cable Beach, and of the 33 persons on board, there was only one survivor.

After the Japanese planes headed north for their base at Koepang, en route, a DC.3 aircraft in flight was fired on, forcing it to crash in the vicinity of Carnot Bay, about 50 miles north of Broome. Aborigines brought the news to Beagle Bay Mission, and a rescue party composed of Brother Richard Besenfelder, Albert Kelly, Joe Bernard and Gus Clinch went to Carnot Bay to rescue the survivors.

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<sup>403</sup> Raible to Omasmeier, 9 October 1940. ADB.

<sup>404</sup> E.Worms, PSM, to Bishop O. Raible, 5.1.1941 ADB

Broome residents were told by the American military authorities that they should evacuate the town, as previous experience had shown that Japanese air raids were usually followed by landings. Broome became a military base within the war-zone.

Three Sacred Heart Fathers were sent as Military Chaplains to take a certain control of Beagle Bay Mission, and Fr. Hyland MSC, stayed in Broome in the capacity of the Senior Chaplain, the link between the Military Authorities and the Mission. All whites not needed had to go South, and all Blacks and half castes had to go to the Beagle Bay Mission.

Timar was close to the Australian coast, but squadron personnel located at Penfui deteriorated rapidly, and when the Japanese invasion of Timar was imminent, the squadron returned to Darwin, and then to Daly Waters after Darwin was bombed. The Kalumburu Mission became increasingly involved in the war. The news that Japanese planes had attacked Wyndham and Broome simultaneously was heard on the radio.<sup>405</sup>

The M.V. Koolama was bombed and beached approximately 50 miles E.N.E. of the Kalumburu Mission, which was asked to send a party to contact survivors. There were 200 of these, and the Mission was asked to give them hospitality. The evacuation of the survivors from the Koolama started 18 March 1942. By 1943 it was apparent that Japanese naval and air power were overextended for there were difficulties in replacing aircraft, and fuel was in short supply due to the sinking of Japanese tankers by British and American submarines.

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<sup>405</sup> E.Perez Editors: Rosemary Pratt and John Millington *Kalumburu War Diary* (Perth, 1981).

In the 'Moultrie Plan' the war consisted of raid and counter raid by aircraft with no ground contact. The six Australian squadrons, one British squadron, and one Dutch squadron, which were defending the Darwin area, flew from nine operational base units, including No.58, at Kalumburu Mission.<sup>406</sup> Six bombers at a time were known to leave the Mission for Timar on operational flights.

A lost American plane evacuating three women and a child from Java, found the Mission aerodrome by chance. The pilots from the crash landing in Vansittart Bay were sent provisions before they were rescued.

In September 1943, 22 planes bombed and strafed the Kalumburu mission. 27 September 1943, the Japanese again bombed the Mission. The bodies of Father Thomas, the boys, Benedict and Sylvester, and Veronica were wrapped in blankets. The two children were kept together. Six men dug the common grave, six by six by five feet deep in the cemetery.

Two trucks transported the mission belongings from the site, and two tents were pitched at Tingun for the mission personnel. Radio Tokyo claimed to have destroyed in a few minutes what Australia had taken two years to build, and all military installations were destroyed.

The truth was the military establishment had not suffered at all. The Kalumburu air strip was used for the last time 6 July 1944. The better all weather characteristics of Truscott resulted in it replacing Kalumburu as the forward base.<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> *ibid.*, Perez, Appendix pp.260 - 264.

<sup>407</sup> *E.Perez Kulumburu War Diary* (Perth, 1981), pp.129-138, p.264

Broome residents were told by the American military authorities that they should evacuate the town, as previous experience had shown that Japanese air raids were usually followed by landings, and such could be expected shortly in Broome. <sup>408</sup>

Broome became a military station of defence and was within the war-zone.

Three Sacred Heart Fathers were sent as Military Chaplains to take a certain control of Beagle Bay Mission, and Fr. Hyland stayed at Broome, in the capacity of the Senior Chaplain, the link between the Military Authorities and the Mission. Once it had been decided to evacuate Broome because the victorious Japanese army was approaching the Australian coast, all Europeans had to go South. All Aborigines and half castes had to go to the Beagle Bay Mission. The orphanage moved into the Sisters Novitiate. The people moved into the colony. Some housing was provided by the Government which also cared for the Broome people. <sup>409</sup>

A rescue party composed of Brother Richard Besenfelder, Albert Kelly, Joe Bernard and Gus Clinch went to Carnot Bay to find a plane shot down. It had Dutch refugees from Java. <sup>410</sup> There was also a consignment of diamonds, which disappeared mysteriously.

The evacuation of Broome people to the mission during the war years stretched its facilities to the limits. It changed overnight with the influx of refugees. Its numbers had doubled, and the staff had halved.

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<sup>408</sup> Mervyn Prime, *West Australia's 'Pearl Harbour'* Air Force Association, Aviation Historical Group. Unpublished. 1982. ADB.

<sup>409</sup> *Broome Chronicle*, ADB.

<sup>410</sup> *Beagle Bay Chronicle*. ADB. cdxi      *Beagle Bay Chronicle* ADB



The Broome evacuees had an unfavourable influence on the local people who performed their duties slowly and reluctantly in view of the evacuees that were unemployed, yet provided for well by the Government. The dangers of idleness, gossiping, and of gambling were apparent.

Infection of the people with Hookworm, increased at an unprecedented rate because of the inadequacy of sewerage arrangements. This brought criticism on the Mission authorities.<sup>411</sup> Another problem was that the mission cattle herd was depleted for food for the visitors, and Government reimbursement to the mission purse was very low indeed.

With the help of the men from Broome, the Refugee Sisters had a new school room built for the Broome children.<sup>412</sup> It was timber with a paperbark roof. It made a spacious airy and cool room. In each school three Sisters were teaching. Two Native Sisters gave valuable assistance. Three Fathers helped.

In 1943, Sr Damien Branigan from Flemington, Victoria, and Sr. Frances Dunne, from Sheep Hills, Victoria, joined the Sisters of St. John of God at Beagle Bay.

*In 1944, Sr. Raphael Sullivan from Ballarat, Victoria joined the Sisters of St. John of God in Beagle Bay.*<sup>413</sup>

The evacuee colony at Beagle Bay Mission was supposed to be

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<sup>411</sup> *Beagle Bay Chronicle* ADB

<sup>412</sup> Report on the Beagle Bay mission to the Commissioner of Native Affairs, 23 August 1943. ADB.

<sup>413</sup> "To become deeply rooted and bonded one to another as only isolation and sharing the drama of life can do." Sr. Raphael O'Sullivan, Derby, to Brigida Nailon, Beagle Bay, 29.4.1984.

dissolved at the end of 1946. The Bishop suggested to the authorities, that those who wanted to go back to Broome should be allowed to do so, while the others would be allowed to stay. He suggested that elderly or infirm people should be put on the subsidy.

In 1947. Bishop Raible was still trying to have the little colony wound up. Stores for the Evacuees were arriving only irregularly, and no clothes or blankets had been received for almost a year. <sup>414</sup>

When the Broome parish had been dissolved on account of the evacuation, a number of Catholics went to Derby.

The Broome military chaplain visited Derby and the Leprosarium, where there were some 250 patients. <sup>415</sup>

When the Sisters refused to leave, they were asked to evacuate three miles out into the bush with the patients. All drugs, dressings, equipment and patient's records were buried, and names of lethal poisons painted on bottles. Willie Wright, Cas Drummond, Stanny Victor and the Dolbys organised and encouraged patients not to abscond. Stretcher cases were placed in trucks. The lame led the blind on long sticks.

The C.O. sent out a truck with orders for the Sisters to board it and leave the patients in the bush. They refused. Routine treatments were carried out every day and night. The sick were attended by lantern light covered. <sup>416</sup> No fires were lit. Three patients died a few days later, and the group returned to the Leprosarium.

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<sup>414</sup> Unsigned copy of letter from Beagle Bay Mission to the Commissioner of Native Affairs, 28 November 1946, ADB.

<sup>415</sup> *Derby Chronicle*. ADB.

<sup>416</sup> Description of 'Wartime' at the Leprosarium. Archives of the Sisters of SJG, Subiaco. Unsigned February, 1942

There were about 30 children in the leper school. Dr.Musso, Dr.Roberts, Mr.Ross, and the five Sisters worked hard to counteract the disease.

Sr.Ignatius and Sr.Magdalen, who had left Broome to go to Springwood in 1926, had come back to Broome at the beginning of January 1945.

Sr.Magdalen was sent to the Leprosarium at Derby as Cook and housekeeper. After some time, 7 October 1945, two Sisters began to reside in Derby, intending to begin a school. There was no Church, and no resident priest living there.

Derby was officially founded as a parish in 1945, and Fr.Albert Scherzinger became the first resident priest. He slept at the Post Office Residence with the Post Master, J.McCann, and had his meals at the Convent.

Fr.Francis Huegel asked Sr.Margaret Cannody, the new Provincial Superior, to staff the school. The Parish School was opened 15 February 1954 with 21 children. Sr.Ignatius Murnane, the head teacher from Broome, began teaching in the Church. By June, one of Thomas Puertollano's boys and George Butcher had finished the roof, and the parishioners oiled the window frames and white-washed the front of the Church.

The separation of Pallottine and Ecclesiastical jurisdiction occurred in 1946. This resulted in a gradual decrease in support from the Tardun farm. There was an expansion of foundations outside the

Kimberley. <sup>417</sup>

*The Beagle Bay Farm at Tardun had been a means of financial support for the Mission. <sup>418</sup> It was estimated that about £400 - £500 per annum went to the Mission from Tardun, as well as about 500 bags of wheat. <sup>419</sup>*

When Bishop O'Collins of Geraldton diocese tried to impose a Seminary Tax on the missionaries there, Bishop Raible referred the matter to the Apostolic Delegate. He argued that all revenue derived from the farm actually belongs to the Vicariate, and apart from that there was still an amount of about £2300 which the Vicariate spent in establishing the farm and which had not been paid back. If the Apostolic should decide that the tax must be paid, it was not to exceed 5% of the net income which was left over after all necessary expenses and debts have been paid. <sup>420</sup>

Prior to 1946, Bishop O.Raible was the Religious Superior, as well as the Ecclesiastical Superior, and so controlled the movement and work of all Pallottine Priests and Brothers in Australia. He therefore moved the men where he thought they were most needed, and controlled the production of wheat and wool from the farm. <sup>421</sup> For many years it had paid the missions to grist wheat instead of buying flour, and it was sent up by the ton. <sup>422</sup>

Before the war, Fr.George Vill had been in Broome, but was interned in Melbourne for the duration of the war when he worked in

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<sup>417</sup> Interview Br.J.Schungel and Sr.Brigida Nailon, Millgrove. 27 January 1987.

<sup>418</sup> Scherzinger to Raible, 19 September 1940. ADB.

<sup>419</sup> Welles to Raible, 24 October 1941. ADB.

<sup>420</sup> Raible to Welles, 20 May 1941. ADB.

<sup>421</sup> Raible, to Scherzinger, 25 September 1940, ADB.

<sup>422</sup> Raible to Scherzinger, 17 October 1940. ADB.

Camberwell. He donations for a secondary school for Aborigines. When he was sent to Tardun, the money was used for the Aboriginal school there. He brought the old military barracks from Geraldton. Rossmoyne Hostel in Perth was founded from Tardun to enable students to do Secondary Schooling in Perth.<sup>423</sup>

Placements on the Missions were to become more difficult for the Bishop. The Bishop worried about new ministries at the house in Kew.<sup>424</sup> When he had met with Archbishop Mannix in 1937, the latter had stipulated that it was only to be used to educate Australians as missionaries among Australian Aborigines. The Bishop resented the attitude of the new Provincial.<sup>425</sup>

After consultation with the Australian Pallottines, the Procurator General had written to the Pope, asking that a new Pallottine Region be erected in Australia.<sup>426</sup> The reply came from Propaganda in the affirmative, the Regio was promulgated by the Pallottines, 9 November 1946.<sup>427</sup>

Prior to 1951, there had been no specific policy in Aboriginal education, implemented in Western Australia. Until 1940, three minor Government officials had exercised control over Aboriginal Education, under the authority of the changing Government Ministers. They were H.C.Prinsep, 1898-1907; C.F.Gale, 1907-1915; and A.O.Neville, 1915-1940.

In 1946, due to a difficulty about obtaining a teacher for Moola Bulla

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<sup>423</sup> Interview between Fr.F.Huegel and Sr.Brigida Nailon, Broome, 1985.

<sup>424</sup> Founded in 1937 by Bishop O. Raible, for the purpose that Australian young men may have the opportunity to train to do the missionary work among Australian Aborigines.

<sup>425</sup> Raible to Turowski, 28 May 1942. ADB.

<sup>426</sup> Procurator General, to His Holiness the Pope, 22 October 1946. AGP.

<sup>427</sup> Hoffman to Weber, 9 November 1946. ADB.

Native Station, arrangements were made for the admission of 13 girls, and 12 boys for education at Beagle Bay and the Holy Child Orphanage.<sup>428</sup> At this time, the only body making major provision for Aboriginal education in the Kimberley was the Catholic Church. Therefore there had been many requests from people who were prepared to pay Beagle Bay Mission for educating their children. Some people communicated through the Department of Native Affairs, but others had written directly to Bishop Raible.<sup>429</sup> Life circumstances are a major determinant of education progress and understanding the present educational situation of the Aboriginal peoples requires a knowledge of educational opportunities available in the past, and how much education systems discharged their responsibilities.<sup>430</sup>

After the 1939 - 1945 war, there was a marked change in overt attitudes to Aborigines. The spectacle of appalling Aboriginal poverty had become known on the international scene. What Australians had not noticed, or justified with stereotyped attitudes, shocked migrants and visitors. Australians in the armed forces had been ashamed of discrimination against Aboriginal soldiers, and the lower rates of pay. Soldiers posted to places like Lombadina had grown to love the people and wanted to help them. It became apparent that legal barriers preventing Aborigines from holding citizenship rights would have to be removed.<sup>431</sup> It was with great regret that Bishop Raible decided that his dream of an Aboriginal Sisterhood had been premature. 23 December 1951, the last remaining member of the native Sisters, Sr.M.Clare Sibosado was granted a dispensation from her promises. She took off her habit with a sad heart, for she had a real vocation.

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<sup>428</sup> Bray to Raible, 28 June 1946, ADB.

<sup>429</sup> Bray to Raible, 21 May 1946, ADB..

<sup>430</sup> *ibid.*,.

<sup>431</sup> C.D.Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia* (Canberra, 1971) pp. 388, 395.

Sr. Therese Doolan-Mountney told the author :

*Mellie Sibosado was the last one to leave the convent. She had wanted to consecrate herself to God. Many years later, when she was dying, she said, "Therese, once you have given your heart to God, nothing else matters."*

The Bishop declared the Society dissolved , and buried his most cherished hopes with it. But the strong spiritual formation given by the Bishop, Sister Augustine and Sister Gerard Gath, to the young women was not wasted. They became outstanding mothers and grandmothers. They founded good families. So it was a great educational venture which bore fruit in the quality of life in the Catholic communities of the Kimberley.

In 1949, Sisters Winifred McBride, Veronica McCarthy and Philomena Hockings, who had joined Our Lady Help of Christians Order in Springwood, in order to work on the Missions, entered the Sisters of St.John of God in Broome. Sr. Elizabeth McBride entered in 1950. These four vocations were the fruit of the foundation made in the Sydney Archdiocese by Sr.Ignatius Murnane SJG in 1926. Sr.Joan Mansfield entered about the same time. Sr.Giovanni Williams entered the Sisters in 1952. Sr.Leonie Collins made her Profession in the Derby Church, and her vows were received by Fr.F.Huegel SAC.

Five German Brothers came to Australia. They were Brothers Wilhelm Schreiber, Josef Kroen , Wilhelm Engle, Leonhard Donhauser, and Robert Brossman.

Br.Joseph Kroen told a little about his role at Beagle Bay Mission during the post war period:

*I was conscripted from Limburg into the German army 8 September 1939. After the war I was imprisoned with the three to five million*

*others of the German army. I was a prisoner for four years. Then when volunteers were called for, to work in a Uranium mine in East Germany, I was allowed to go. After working there for 10 days, we were given a break. I made contact with a Priest who helped me get over the border back to Limburg.*

*After the war our Provincial was looking for jive brothers lo come to Australia. Some of us volunteered and some didn't. I think I was the only one to volunteer. The others were sent.*

*I went to Beagle Bay straight for 25 years. They were a big mob. In the beginning I worked mostly with the women in the garden, and later on, with a few old men and young boys on and off The garden was the main job. There was Anna Marie Dann, an old lady, and Peter Bumba/a, an old man who had worked before with Brother Matthias' garden.*

*I took over Brother Matthias' garden in the bush, and Br. John Grafs garden in front of the convent. The six lo eight old women helped a lot, weeding and hoeing. Later on I got young boys. The children were in the dormitory at that time, forty to fifty, or more. One of the Priests had the boys and the Sisters had the girls. Fr. Jobst came a year later and took the boys. There were the Cox boys, the Augustine boys, and now and again a Lombadina boy who was sent for punishment to Beagle Bay.*

*The native sisters were finished. Two or three were still in Balgo, i.e., Biddy Kelly and one of the Sibosados from Lombadina .*

*At Beagle Bay at the time there was Bishop Raible, and Fr. Francis. I lived in a long building of mud bricks with five or six rooms. There was also a long store room built from mud bricks. Brother William now works in the mud brick house where Fr. Francis lived. The Bishop's house was there too.*



*When the boys left school some worked in the stock and some in the gardens. Some went collecting firewood for the baker's shop. They hung around there and later on they got married. When we arrived, there were some girls from Moola Bulla. Rita married Matthew Cox. Paul Cox got married. Daisy Leopold came from Moola Bulla.*<sup>432</sup>

In 1948, due to the difficulty in obtaining a teacher for Moola Bulla Native Station, arrangements were made for the admission of 13 girls and 12 boys for education at Beagle Bay Mission and the Holy Child Orphanage.

Some of the old Brothers found their way to eternity in the early 1950's.

Brother Henry Krallmann had come to Australia in 1904. As the stockman at Beagle Bay Mission for 20 years he had laid the foundation of the cattle industry which became the main source of support for the Mission. In 1928, when the farm at Tardun was opened, he went there and started from scratch. In 1934 he assisted with the opening of the new station at Rockhole. Later he worked at Lombadina Mission. He was a truly religious man with a deeply humble spirit. He died at the age of 77 in 1951.

Brother Matthias Wollseifer had come in 1902. His original trade was that of a carpenter, then he became an electrician, an iron worker, and then a bricklayer. His versatile nature enabled him to take charge of the blacksmith and tinsmith workshops, where he trained many Aborigines. He also established a market garden, and sank a number of bores. The building of the Beagle Bay Church constructed with locally made bricks was his crowning work. His labours were

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<sup>432</sup> Joseph Kroen interviewed by Brigida Nailon at Pallotti College, Millgrove, 27 January 1987. ADB.

sustained by his deeply religious spirit. With only a short break, he had been 49 years on the Australian Mission when he died at Beagle Bay in 1952. He had carried the burden of the Mission during the period covering the two World Wars.

Mr. Augustine Sixt had come in 1901 and left the Order in 1908. He had maintained contact with the Mission and its people until his death in 1954. He had a garden some miles from the Mission, and was helped by Mission people. When Brother William Schreiber brought him back to the Mission to die, the people stood in the doorways of their stone houses watching sadly. His presence had been with them for a long time. He had led a saintly and austere life. Lena Cox said, "*He bin finished, he not go back anymore.!*" Fr. Jobst sat by his bed and held his hand as life ebbed from the old 87 year old man.

The Aborigines would be held under bureaucratic controls for a couple more decades. Early in the 1950's, from the Department of Native Affairs, Derby, Northern District, the following letter was sent to the Superintendent, Beagle Bay Mission, via Broome:

Dear Sir,

*Notice of Intention to Marry*

*(1) In regard to the contemplated marriage between Monty Williams and Thecla Paddy, I would advise that this has now been forwarded on to the Commissioner of Native affairs with my recommendation for approval to the marriage.*

*(2) In regard to the contemplated marriage between Dick Charles and Mary Carmel Augustine, I would be pleased if you would advise in respect to Mary Carmel Augustine's previous marriage to*

*Augustine Narb in 1935. When you have supplied me with the details as to whether Augustine is deceased or any other additional information, the notice of intention to marry will be forwarded on to the Commissioner District Office.* <sup>433</sup>

*Yours faithfully,*

By the end of the 1950's the name of the Department had been changed to the Department of Native Welfare. From Perth, on official paper for Native Welfare, the following letter was sent from Perth, to Alice Augustine, Beagle Bay Mission:

*Dear Madam,*

*I have to inform you that it has been found necessary to reject your claim for a maternity allowance.*

*The reason for the rejection is that this Department has been advised that you possess a preponderance of aboriginal native blood and do not hold a Certificate of exemption from the Department of Native Welfare.*

*A maternity allowance may be paid to native people who are half caste (or lesser caste) or to those who hold a Certificate of Exemption but not otherwise.*

*Yours faithfully,*  
*F.W. Humphreys,*  
 Director. <sup>434</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> District Officer to Superintendent of BBM. 17 March 1952. ADB. \*The signature is illegible.

<sup>434</sup> Humphreys to Alice Augustine, 8 September 1959. ADB.

Education was still a major concern: Fr. McKelson, Broome, wrote to Bishop Raible:

*"The fact that six white children are attending the convent school in Broome is causing quite a bit of talk and is dispelling the illusion that white children were not accepted... However yesterday, on going to the State school, I found there would be 32 Catholic children there out of a total of about 76... This year we have children in the 7th standard for the first time. The total roll call there the other day was 139. Some of the little ones would however be really in the Kindergarten."* <sup>435</sup>

By 1956, the Regional Superior was putting to his members that, the support of the Region would require sacrifices.

11 April 1958, Bishop Raible wrote to Fr. Vill, pointing out that his statement about *'our rapidly developing region'* was true, but only for that section of the Region which was outside the Vicariate.

He stated:

*"Over the ten years since 1948, six new houses had been opened. There was Silverwater in 1951, Stratfield in 1953, Riverton in 1954, Manly in 1956, and Mi/grove in 1957, whereas the Vicariate had opened 011/y one, La Grange in 1955.*

*Where the personnel in the Vicariate remained stationary since 1948, except that there was one Brother less, there were now 20 Priests and 14 Brothers outside the Vicariate. In this connection it had to be borne in mind that quite a few of the Vicariate Priests were in indifferent health and needed either replacement, or less strenuous work.*

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<sup>435</sup> McKelson to Raible, 25 February 1956.ADB

An area of about 15,000 acres was set apart as a reserve near Balgo for the purpose of the 'Natives' in 1949.

Fr.Alphonse Bleischwitz remembered a Balgo scene a little later: *It was 5 June 1951. Bishop Raible spent a few days with in Balgo. We talked to Beagle Bay Mission tlroughr our transmitter. Our good old Brother Henry Krallmmm was near his end. On this morning Fr.Kearney gave the sad news that Br.Henry had died after a very painful illness.*

*I can still see the Bishop stumbling out of my office, putting his arms around a verandah post and leaning his head against it. Tears were running down his face. He struggled for words, words which would express his grief, his gratitude and hiss joy. He could not find words. After a while he uttered: "I can only say what the Lord will have said: Well done, good and faithful Brother. " The Lord's welcome had the only appropriate words he could find for Brother Henry, who had, as a Pallottine given himself to God, to the Church in the Mission."*

Brother Krallman's last hours had been rather special. Fathers Roger McGinley Fr.John Jobst were with him. Br.Krallman gave Fr.McGinley instructions to give to the other Brothers who were working in the gardens and on the cattle run. Then the people from the camp were invited to come to his bedside to say "Goodbye", and the queue stretched out from his door. <sup>436</sup>

Bishop Raible wrote to the Council of Catholic Missions in Sydney: *"Last year I stayed for about a month at our Desert Mission, Balgo. Fr.Alphonse , priest in charge for the last twelve years, was just about to build a dining hall for the children. He had carted a good deal of bush timber from a patch thirty miles away. I helped him to stick the*

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<sup>436</sup> R.McGinley to Brigida Nailon, 10 March 1991.

*'Foundation Post' into the ground. There was no ceremony attached to it. No record crowd attended the function and no collection was taken up. Yet the iron for the roof had to be shipped from Fremantle to Broome and then carted overland for 630 miles. The walls were built of sun-dried bricks and covered with cement plaster for protection against the rain.*

*This little incident may give you some idea of the work that is to be done in our missions. Throw in tire heat and the dust storms, and the flies and mosquitoes for good measure and you have a fair picture of the conditions under which our Priests, Brothers and Sisters are labouring in the quarry of our Lord." <sup>437</sup>*

A Lay Missionary, Sr. Alice Evans asked for a spinifex building where she could keep patients and look after them more easily. Fr. Frank Niss! put up a hut of that description. However, about 2 months later a child put a fire stick on the hut and it went up in smoke.

The *Balgo Chronicle* of 1954 is full of comings and goings, visits of missionaries, doctors, anthropologists, and government officials. Extracts from a letter written from Fr. A. Bleischwitz, the Superintendent, to the District Officer, Native Affairs, Derby, 26 June 1954, indicates his problems with a visiting patrol officer: *"...a comparison with other institutions is not justified ...Only recently these Natives have come to the Mission from the desert...! have been here for 15 years and I should be able to judge as to how much these Natives can take on education.*

*It is easy to tell them what to do and how to live, but it is different to make them do what you say. Any attempt to force upon this people a standard of life for which they are not yet prepared is but cruelty*

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<sup>437</sup> Raible to Council of Catholic Missions, 29 January 1952.

*and meets with failure. This applies also to children though I must admit that we can make quicker progress with them than with the old people ... The principle: little by little or step by step is sound and therefore adopted even if it should take a generation before the result is apparent..*

*Please advise me why the water which has been analyzed is not good, and why the diet for the children is not sufficient. Even if there were not enough variety in vegetables as the patrol officer believes, this does not necessarily mean that the food is not good.*

*The children don't like cooked vegetables and it is a waste if we give them too much of them for the beginning. They had rice, potatoes, macaroni, porridge, eggs, custards, fresh and dried fruit, and others items, and they seemed to be satisfied. There was sufficient meat for the children... We used twelve and a half tons of flour last year ... "*

Fr.J.Kearney SAC, arrived 16 July 1954 to take charge of Balgo Mission while Fr.Alphonse and Br.Niss!went on a holiday to Germany. Stephen Patrick and his family came to assist. Fr.Kearney had been visiting the cattle and sheep stations around the Kimberley, and had been pleased to find that the Catholics, with very few exceptions availed themselves of the opportunity to assist at Holy Mass and receive the Sacraments.

In August that year, a young husband and his wife, Djilari and Djargi, began receiving instructions prior to their entry in to the Church faith community, as the first married couple at Balgo to be baptised. Fr.Kearney took over teaching in the school when Sr. Evans and Sr.Shirley took sick leave in Perth for two months while they were absent.

In 1955, the Mother General from Wexford agreed for the Sisters of

St. John of God to go to Ba Igo. The two Sisters chosen by Mother Margaret to go to Balgo mission were Sr. Angela Moroney and Sr. Winifride McBride. A charter DC3 brought them to the mission. There was great excitement when the children saw the white sisters. A few months later, the Bishop and Sr. Philomena Hackings arrived at Halls Creek, proceeding overland to Balgo.

In 1953, Bishop Raible had written to the Minister for Native Affairs to advise that the Church was still interested in taking over La Grange. He was told that the Reserve of 450 acres was on Thangoo cattle station. There were 85 Aborigines, 28 of whom were children, and another 15 being rationed at Walla! would be transferred to La Grange. The Hon. J. Rhatigan, M.L.A. advised that the sooner they took over the place, the better it would be for the Aborigines and the community generally. He pledged his support.

The Bishop intended to put sheep on the land to give suitable employment to the able bodied natives, and then to make the mission pay its own way. The project would cost money. Knowing that the maintenance of La Grange cost the government a yearly sum of almost £6000, the Bishop asked for a yearly grant of £4000 for a period of four years for improvements, and in addition to the customary subsidy for children and infirm Aborigines.

29 December 1954, Fr. F. Huegel, with Albert Dan and Paul Howard, left Broome in a new Ford B.8 truck, which Fr. Worms, Fr. Regional, with Br. Besenfelder from Tardun had driven overland from Perth. In 1955 the La Grange Feeding Depot was handed over to the Pious Society of Missions (Beagle Bay), to be operated as a Mission.

Sr. Alice Evans came at Easter from Balgo. Her coming was providential, for the coming weeks brought serious illnesses and



deaths. There was an epidemic of measles in October with complications of colds, pneumonia and sore ears. The old people in the Garadyari camp were not infected, they had the measles before, but everyone in the Udialla camp went down with them, and there were some fatal cases. Following the suggestion of Fr.Worms, Dr.Helmut Petri and Dr.Gisela Odermann arrived for an ethnological expedition to the interior desert region East of Anna Plain Station, 14 miles SW of Broome.

In 1956, the Apostolic Delegate asked for a resident priest to be placed at Wyndham. Fr.McKelson finalized the purchasing of a building site for £150. After a careful survey of the situation he had found only three permanent resident Catholic families, of whom two were mixed marriages. All other Catholics were itinerant Government administrators who would move on after a short stay. It was not a very bright outlook for a resident priest in need of support.

Bishop Raible wrote from Beagle Bay Mission about his attitude to the motivation and the licensing of Missionaries:

*"I wish to make our position regarding native welfare as clear as possible. The catholic priest's main task is to continue the ministry of Christ who came into this world to save men from hell and lead them to their eternal destiny in heaven. This is in itself a supernatural work given to the priest by the grace of God. This must therefore be the priest's first and foremost concern in dealing with natives or anybody else for that matter. Now I am certain that very few of the officers of the Native Department will be able to even faintly grasp this point .*

In this connection I may add another point that concerns the missions to natives. Every year we are requested to send a list of mission workers to the Department that they may be licensed as mission workers. I hold that this procedure is unconstitutional insofar, as under the Constitution, the *Church is free.*" <sup>438</sup>

Mother Margaret Carmody, now a golden jubilarian , was keeping an old exercise book in which she kept the names of the various people to whom she taught catechism in preparation for receiving the sacraments. Some of these groups were:

*Catechism Class, Kennedy's Hill; Catechism Class at One Mile. Christians, Catechumens. April, 1958; Names of Catholic children at State School, Seniors, Juniors, 20 April 1958; People at Fisherman's Bend, Christians, Pagans. 12 May 1958; New Catechumens- Mon. and Wed., Convent, July 1958.*

Other groups are named up to 1963. Sr.Patricia Rhatigan entered the Sisters of St.John of God in Broome, 8 February 1958. 1 July 1958, Mother Alphonsus was invested with an M.B.E. by Governor Slim, for her ministry to the lepers at the Leprosarium in Derby. 10 July, 1958, Bishop Raible presented the medal Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice from the Holy Father, to T.Puertollano, and F.Rodriguez.

Bishop Raible wrote to Fr. Vilt. He believed that the position with regard to Lay Brothers was alarming and he requested him to do his best to secure the services of some lay helpers, both for Beagle Bay and for Balgo. He felt he might have to postpone his retirement.

Fr.W.Silvester SAC, came to give the lay helpers a short retreat

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<sup>438</sup> Raible to Hegney, 8 June 1956. ADB.

and some talks on the spiritual life at La Grange in 1958.

Mission correspondence showed that the need for more lay helpers was becoming urgent. Bishop Raible had given a letter of accreditation to a lady at Halls Creek to teach religion in the state school.<sup>439</sup>

Fr.Huegel had offers from three lay helpers. Margaret Elliot had given information re the need to a Miss Prendergast. Fr.Huegel suggested to the Bishop that the copies of the contract they had for Joy Hough would be adequate for newcomers.<sup>440</sup>

From Kew, Fr.Vill informed the Bishop that the Secular Institute girls were buying a house in Kew and Fr.Silvester would be freed for a few months to train them.

The Bishop announced his resignation at the Priests' Conference , 9 April 1958. There was much activity among the Pallottines. Fr. Silvester came from Kew to conduct the Annual Retreat for the priests and Brothers, 10 June 1958. Fr. Kearney presided over the Priests' Conference for a Regional Chapter, 19 June 1958. Fr. John Maguire left his 60 Beagle Bay boys, and was posted to Broome, 5 July 1958. Fr.W. Kriener took charge of the boys. Bay.Fr.Leo Hornung was posted to La Grange, and Fr. Huegel returned to Beagle Bay.<sup>441</sup> The sad message of the death of the Regional, Fr.George Viii, came 27 June 1958. The Bishop wrote to Fr.Girke in Kew to ask if Fr.Nicholas Dehe could come to the Mission, which would pay all his expenses.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Raible to Director of Education, 28 October 1958. ADB

<sup>440</sup> These later volunteers had not known any Pallottine Fathers in Melbourne.

<sup>441</sup> Beagle Bay Mission Chronicle. ADB.

<sup>442</sup> Raible to Girke, 27 July 1958. ADB.

Bishop O.Raible left Derby for Broome by plane, on the first stage of his journey to Limburg, Germany.

He had done great work under God in the Kimberley for thirty years.

## Part 4

### 1959-1990

BISHOP JOHN JOBST SAC

DIOCESE OF BROOME

Bishop John Jobst SAC.;

Vicariate Apostolic of the Kimberley; Consecration of Bishop J.Jobst, 1959; Australian appeal for the Kimberley Missions; Growth of the Kimberley Lay Missionary Association ; Foundations: Wyndham, 1959, Halls Creek and Kununurra, 1962. The Diocese of Broome, 1966; Changing structures in the Diocese; New Religious Orders come into the Broome Diocese; First Vocations to a Diocesan Priesthood; Kulumburu comes within Diocesan Administration; Rapid development of Catholic Education; The Holy Year of Pilgrimage, 1983; Conference 1984: 'Community is built on the Memory of Shared Events'; New Aboriginal Communities with their schools in the outback.

## CHAPTER 9

*"...he starts to reap..." Mk.4:29*

### CHANGING STRUCTURES IN THE KIMBERLEY

St.Mary's Cathedral in Sydney is far from the Kimberley. Under its beautiful tiled floors is the crypt, in which lies the earthly remains of Cardinal Moran, who played a role in the foundation of the Kimberley Aboriginal Mission.

Cardinal Gilroy presided in the Cathedral, 19 March 1959. The priest to be consecrated Bishop, was Fr.John Jobst. The consecrating prelate was Archbishop Carboni, with Bishop Raible and Bishop Carroll as co-consecrators. They would confer on him the fullness of the priesthood. By it he would be entrusted with the teaching, ruling and sanctifying of souls in union with, and under the jurisdiction of Pope John XXIII.

As Fr.Jobst waited, he remembered : *Frankenburg , Bavaria, and the date of his birth, 4 February 1920.*

*He had entered the Pallottine Novitiate in Olpe in 1939, and was professed 28 September 1941. Then followed conscription into the German army, his service with a tank corps on the Russian front, his internment in Russian and American prison camps. then home to his mother on crutches. He was ordained to the priesthood 9 July 1950, with nine others. Four of them volunteered for Australia. Fr.Luemmen SAC, Fr.Silvester SAC, and Fr.Muenz SAC were his companions. He had gone straight to Broome for his Kimberley mission experience. .The lovely Broome beaches and the social contact with the people of*

*God' in Broome, had all become part of his consciousness. He had enjoyed taking the Beagle Bay boys swimming in the beautiful wells and inlets. He had experienced poverty in his little mud hut which was open to wasps, mosquitos and snakes. All the time he had been dogged by sickness and war fatigue.*

*It had then been decided that his talents might be put to be put to better use in Strathfield, NSW He became spiritual director to the students preparing for the Missions. Then he was asked to take responsibility for the Kimberley Vicariate.*

After his consecration, he had Bishop Raible at his side. He was surrounded by his Pallottine Brothers and friends. Among others from the Kimberley, were Aboriginal friends, Paul Cox, Edith Little, Marianne Joseph, Madeleine Cox, Joseph Bin'Sali and Peter Clement.

As pan of the homily, Monsignor Thomas spoke to him directly:  
*"My Lord Bishop. by your consecration today, you do not succeed to a rich inheritance, nor do you inherit a See rich with the traditions of past triumphs. Today you become the poorer as you step out to labour for the scattered flock of the great north-west.*

*You do, however succeed to a charge which has few equals for the labours and toils of those who have struggled against almost insurmountable obstacles to bring Christ to the Aborigines."*

The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Carboni, spoke of younger hands taking over the control, pushing forward with vigour and putting into motion that, for which the ground had now been prepared. He spoke of the shortage of personnel for the rapidly developing centres, and for visitation of the scattered stations. There were the many problems facing the Kimberley Church, through

which only the contribution of the laity would enable a solution to be reached.

He spoke of how, through the Pallottine Fathers, the Church would witness the assistance that could be given to Australian missions by the personal work of generous, trained souls. Such an apostolate must be appealing to any Catholic, to any who understand Our Lord's command, "*Go teach all nations.*" <sup>443</sup>

## **GROWTH OF THE KIMBERLEY LAY MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION**

Once the missioning was over, the new Bishop's problem was now to water the Kimberley plant. In 1959, directly after his consecration in Sydney, Bishop Jobst had gone to Victoria, to the Pallottine centre in Kew, and there, in the garden, before the shrine of "Mother Thrice Admirable, he, Fr. Silvester, and Fr. Muenz had discussed the inauguration of a new type of Lay Missionary involvement.

They would call on skilled help from the Pallottines, and from the Laity across Australia, to augment the help already being given by Religious and Aborigines in the work of the missions.

He had asked Fr. Silvester to help in the initiation of this new thrust.

The whole experience had been a new manifestation of the work of the Spirit. As 'holder of God's warrant' he had the charism of authority to enable Lay Missionaries to function within the group of the 'People of God'. The enabling effect of his authority would make

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<sup>443</sup> Newspaper Reports of the ceremony. ADB.



the Kimberley richer. At a welcoming concen in Broome, he had spoken to the Mayor,

Mr.Male, and other assembled other guests about his motto, '*That all may be one*'.

Bishop Jobst had returned to the Kimberley in April 1959, accompanied by Fr.Huegel SAC, Misses Kathie Curtain, Joy Trantor, and Carmel Hodgkinson. He had arranged for three more Lay missionaries to follow in October, John Scammell, Kevin Brown, and Gustav Haffling.

Lay Missionaries were already at La Grange Mission. There was need for at least another three, preferably trained as teachers, nurses, or social workers, for Derby and Broome. At La Grange, the four young women were doing wonderful work among the old Aborigines there, caring for them, and helping them to know the faith.

The Bishop had appealed especially for people to give themselves for this mission field in their own State, promising that a year or two thus given to God would have a profound effect on personal faith. Some sort of training, especially in nursing (general or midwifery), teaching (Teachers' Training College Certificate), and a skilled trade was desirable. Applicants of any age from 18 years onwards could be accepted.

In October 1959, John Scammell, Kevin Brown and Gustov Holling arrived in Derby. They had driven a 1938 Dodge van from Melbourne accompanied by Fr.Murray. They intended to work erecting or extending building s without wages for a year. In November, Bishop Jobst returned from Wyndham, and left for La Grange taking the Lay Missionaries to erect the building s there.

In 1960, Mr. and Mrs Rykens , a married couple from West Australia, went to manage St.Joseph's Hostel in Derby as Lay Missionaries.

In April 1961, a group of 13 more Lay Missionaries for mission work in W.A. arrived in Perth. Some left for Tardun, near Geraldton.

The party included nurses, teachers, office workers , a telephone mechanic, an electrician, and a printer, with ages ranging from 18 - 35. They had just completed a two-month training course for Lay Missionaries at Millgrove Victoria . They had promised to observe the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience for their two year commitments. One of the men, Bruce Dixon (18) of Burwood, Victoria, was to help to finish a church near Wyndham . Carmel Hodgkinson, who had already completed 18 months' service at la Grange Mission was going to Riverton, to help run a hostel.

Carmel said:

*" I was impressed by the idea of service and I wanted to do something more with my life than add up figures. In this way I'm helping to raise the standards of less-privileged people, and show them the Christian way of life."*

A group of Lay Missionaries were welcomed in Perth 2 May 1962 by Mons. McKeon and Fr.John Luemmen. As a preparation for their apostolate among the Aborigines they had completed a three month spiritual formation course at the Pallottine Centre in Melbourne. Messrs Bob Bradley, Frank Hooper, Pat Mc Atamney and Carl Wieman were off to Halls Creek, Miss Mary Blackshaw to Derby, the others to Tardun.

Fr.Pat Mc Atamney told the author of his calling to be a Lay Missionary:

*"I did the Lay Missionary training there under Fr. Silvester, February - May 1962. In that time the Lay Missionary team, Bob Bradley, Carl Wieman, John Cooper and myself built additions to the Lay-Institute cottage at Millgrove, put in telephone posts and laid water pipes for the seminary to be built. We arrived in Western Australia in May and the next three months were spent sowing wheat at Tardun before leaving by land rover for Broome.*

*After a short time in Broome, we set out by truck to Hall's Creek where we began to build the presbytery for Fr. Nicolas Delle SAC. We lived in a corrugated iron shed near the present Church and had our meals at the local hotel where Fr. Nicolas stayed till the completion of the presbytery in November 1962. Fr. Nicolas stayed a few more years in the Kimberley before going to South Africa to work on the Pallottine Mission there, and he was drowned in the surf at Durban, not long afterwards.*

*We completed the presbytery as soon as possible so as to begin the next job at Kunamurra before the wet season. The township and the diversion dam were being built then. The Parish Priest, Fr. Carl Boess SAC. was living and saying Mass in very cramped quarters at the construction huts.*

*We hurriedly built a shed and lived there on the site and began to build the Church which we had hoped to have completed by 20 January 1963, the date set for the canonization of Vincent Pallotti.*

*Because of the heat and other difficulties, the Church was not completed till March, when it was blessed and opened by Bishop Jobst.*

*We then began to build the Kununurra presbytery and in the same year we also worked on the presbytery at Wyndum (repairs), and the school at Derby. The Kununurra presbytery was not completed till about November 1963.*

*September 1973, when I worked at Beagle Bay doing repairs to some of the buildings and also painting the newly constructed hall. Br. Joseph Tautz and Tom Dickenson were responsible for the work I also worked at the old house which Bishop Jobst bought from Mrs Miller in Broome fencing, concreting, and planting trees.*

*Later, I worked at the Derby Hostel planting several hundred citrus trees, most of which were later killed by a plague of grass-hoppers.*

*I went to the Kimberley again in November 1976 for 12 months, going first to Ba/go Mission, and in January 1977 to the cattle station where the main shed was to be built and I remained there till the work was almost completed.*

*I returned to Sydney and made plans to enter late vocation seminary in Kensington. I was unable to do so till February, 1979, so I returned to Beagle Bay mission in June 1978, to work and study in preparation for the seminary. I worked at La Grange mission in December '78 and January '79 before leaving for Sydney."<sup>444</sup>*

To take care of babies born in the leprosarium at Derby, who were removed from their mothers within six days, a new Nursery and Kindergarten for destitute babies and children was opened in Broome. Using converted premises attached to the 'Maria Goretti Home for children', the nursery would be staffed by Lay Missionaries. Some of these over the years were Christina Harding, Joan Gabbedy, Anne Woods, Nita Vinci, Carol Jones, Deborah Jones, Rose Denehy, Carol Mahy, Kerry Guilfoyle, and Jeannine Bamford.

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<sup>444</sup> Interviewed by Sr. Brigida Nailon, in Lombacina, January 1982, when he was serving in Lombadina as Deacon, in preparation for ordination as a priest for the Broome Diocese.

The matron would be Mrs C.Barker, a double-certificated nurse. Some of the girls were trained mothercraft nurses. Previously, on the same site, there had been an orphanage which closed in 1961 due to lack of religious staff. Four of Stan Costello's staff came from Perth to remodel and rebuild four old buildings.

In 1969 the thirty-five Lay Missionaries met as a group in Broome for the first time and formed an association to co-ordinate their activities and to look after their welfare. The association was to be responsible to the Bishop and former Lay Missionaries were eligible to join. Officers elected at the meeting were:

*President:* Mrs C. Barker, *Vice-President,* Miss M. Toohey, *Secretary - Treasurer,* Miss H.Prentiss, and *Counsellor,* Mr.W.Keen.

Bishop Jobst told a reporter:

*"Without Lay People the Missions would Collapse! I thought, if we could interest lay people in doing missionary work, they could do exactly the same work as dedicated priests and brothers and nuns were doing. After all, they have been baptised and confirmed.*

*it was in accordance with the latest development in the Church. Lay people were being reminded of their duties and responsibilities and privileges as members of the people of God. And I thought, there is so much idealism and generosity among young people that, if I put it to them, they would respond. They did."*

In 1970, it had been decided that Mrs Barker would not go back to the Kimberley, but make her private residence available for orientation courses to prepare Lay Missionaries for work in the Kimberley Mission.

She said, *"I was so sad at the plight of the people, so ashamed to think we had done so little for them. My conscience would not let me walk away from them."* Now with years of experience behind her,

she felt that this was now her call. The future presentation of Mission Crosses to Kimberley Missionaries by Bishop Jobst, would take place at 'Santo Spirito', Mittagong, NSW.

At the 7th Annual Meeting of the Lay Missionary Association meeting, 1975, Tom Dickinson, of Wollongong, was unanimously elected life member of the Association. For 16 years he has worked building up the missions, spending up to five months each year away from his business activities. With Mr.J.Scammell, he had helped build Broome's Cathedral in 1963. Mr.Bill Keen obtained his pilot's licence and a refrigeration engineering diploma, thus ensuring functioning freezers and cool-rooms for the future. There were now forty Lay Missionaries spread over the Broome Diocese, among whom were new members like Mr.Kerry Slattery, a solicitor from Sydney.

#### AUSTRALIAN APPEAL FOR THE KIMBERLEY MISSION

In January 1960, Bishop Jobst had presented a report on the state of the Kimberley Vicariate to the Australian Bishops. He had decided on his policy, *"Build up or get out!"*

A nation wide appeal was launched by the Catholic media to support the Kimberley Missions. It was called the 'Bob-In-Fund'. If every Catholic in Australia gave 1/-, it would amount to £100,000. By 1961, the 'save the Kimberleys Appeal' had a subscription list of \$131,000 <sup>445</sup>

A new Kimberley mission building campaign began.

Unsatisfactory mission buildings were renovated. Accommodation

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<sup>445</sup> See Appendices for new buildings, 1959 - 1990.

was improved at mission outposts for religious and lay Missionaries. Transport was provided by the purchase of five Land Rovers. Land was acquired. The Southern Portion of Thangoo Station comprising a half million acres of pastoral country was purchased.

When the Bishop had visited Pope John, later in 1960, he was given a gift of \$6000. Of the meeting, Bishop Jobst said:

*"He was wonderful. He knew a lot about the Missions among the Aborigines, both in Darwin and the Kimberley. I feel it was his encouragement, his blessing and his prayer that allowed me to go on. I wasn't really discouraged. Just bewildered. I had got this job. I was bewildered about it, about how I was going to face up to the responsibilities, about how I could do it. "* <sup>446</sup>

Other groups helped financially. There was the German Catholic Relief Agency, 'Miserior', which had been founded for self-help projects in underdeveloped countries. Then the West German Government helped rebuild La Grange in 1963 when it was destroyed by a cyclone. Australian Catholics paid for about 40% of the reconstruction , Germany gave about 60%

Two more valuable gifts came in 1965 and 1967. Relatives in the Bishop's homeland of Bavaria had given him a Mercedes Benz diesel station wagon.

In Perth there was a public appeal to buy him an aircraft so that he could visit his far flung Vicariate. The committee, formed of Perth business men, was under the patronage of the Hon.C.W.Court, Minister for the North-West. Vice-patrons were Sir Thomas Meagher,

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<sup>446</sup> Newspaper Reports. ADB.

the Hon.F.J.Wise , MLC, Mr.R.M.Rowell, JP, and Mr.E.H.Lee-Steere, CBE. Mr.D.Cullity was chairman.

The Cessna left Perth for Broome with Bishop Jobst as pilot, 8 September 1967. The following Monday he made the maiden flight within the Vicariate to visit Balgo Mission. The party was met at Halls Creek by Fr.A .Peile SAC.

In the early 1960's, a Convention was held to determine Diocesan Policy concerning the Kimberley Mission and the Pallottines. Bishop Jobst and Fr.Silvester, as the Provincial of the Society discussed the role of superiors; the administration of property, that of the Mission and that of the Society; the Missionaries , the works of the Mission, and the works of the Society.

With regard to staffing the missions, the Pallottine Society, as far as possible, intended to hand them over to indigenous clergy. At the same time, it aimed to develop activities more proper to itself for the good of the Mission, such as the formation of lay apostles, popular missions, and retreats for the dissemination of approved books and writings.

There had been Pallottine reinforcements from Limburg Germany for the Australian mission, Fathers Wendelin Lorenz, Josef Butscher, Benno Rausch, and Edmund Wehrmaker. They went first to the East, then they came to the Kimberley.

Some of the Mission Chronicles recorded details of other Pallottines working on the Missions. Fr.J.Keamey SAC, was making contact in the East Kimberley with the Stations. He made a trip to Camballin, Myroodah, and Liveringa to celebrate Mass of the Catholics and arrange for children coming to the Derby Hostel, the following year.



Fr. W. Kriener SAC, had brought 24 sacks of flour, school milk, and some fruit and medicine from Beagle Bay Mission.

Fr. John Herold SAC, had said goodbye to Lombadina. The whole population of Lombadina Mission had gathered at the aerodrome to farewell him. Fr. Murray SAC, arrived to take charge, accompanied by the Bishop and Fr. Karl Boes SAC, on a visit. Fr. N. Dehe SAC, went to la Grange to supply for Fr. Francis SAC, who had broken his arm while cranking a car.

In 1962, Bishop Jobst was among the five Pallottine missionary bishops who attended the Vatican Council. The founder of the Pallottine Order, St. Vincent Pallotti was canonized by Pope John, 21 January 1962. He was a Roman diocesan priest, and the 'Pioneer of Catholic Action'.

The Vatican Council had a revitalizing effect on Missionary vocations which was evidenced by an awakening of missionary fervour among some of the Orders, who responded by sending personnel to marginalized groups.

The Loreto Sisters came in 1973. Sr. Myrene and Sr. Mary Ellen the first two Loreto Sisters, wanted to work among Australian Aborigines. They began teaching at St. Mary's Broome. Sr. Myrene had said, "After school we hope to work with the people. We will go off to the camps and see what we can do there. It will depend on what the people themselves want us to do. ." Sr. Pauline Prince began working in the field of nutrition in 1981 with Looma Aboriginal Community. In 1989, she was working in the Derby parish as a Pastoral Associate.

Sr. Michael Kelly of the Good Shepherd Order came and took charge of an Aboriginal hostel and home for the needy in Broome. The Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions began in the Kimberley in February 1974. With Sister Patricia Rhatigan SJG, they made themselves available specifically to staff Nulungu girls' College, a boarding and day secondary school, primarily for Aboriginal girls from the Kimberley.

The Apparition Sisters and the Grey Sisters helped staff Beagle Bay School.

The Sisters of the Infant Jesus, Sr. Anne Marie, and Sr. Brid, came up in the Bishop's plane to see Beagle Bay in November 1976, and returned in January 1977. Sr. Aine came 26 October 1979. In April 1980, Sr. Brid went up to Lombadina, and in 1981, she and Sr. Anne staffed the Lombadina School. Sr. Dorothy and Sr. Fabian came in 1981, and Sr. Mary came February 1983. There were usually 3 - 5 Sisters staffing Beagle Bay and Lombadina Schools.

The Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception took up residence in Fitzroy Crossing. There had never been a resident Priest there. The foundation Sisters were Sr. Mary Rita and Sr. Catherine Dower. When they arrived, the Bishop had a very comfortable dwelling ready for them. The first community were there 1978-1980; the second community was Sr. Lucy Wooden, and Sr. Catherine Dower, 1980- August 1981; the third community was Sr. Miriam Donnelly and Sr. Catherine Dower. In June '84, Sr. Frances Crowe joined the others.

The Canossian Sisters came to Halls Creek in November 1977. In 1976 the Bishop had invited their Provincial Superior from Brisbane, and in 1977, when word was received that the nuns were not coming,

public prayers were offered, and then they came.

In 1979, the Sisters of St. Joseph came to Turkey Creek. At an Aboriginal Involvement Seminar at Baulkham Hills, in May 1978, the Sisters of St. Joseph discussed their goals. Sr. Elizabeth welcomed the Sisters, and told them, that as an Order, the Josephites had very little missionary experience. They were only beginners, and that is where their poverty lay. She saw the study of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* as basic to the understanding of Mission, emphasising the renewal of humanity and the evangelisation of the culture. She understood the principle value of witness as the proclamation of the Word, for St. Paul said, "*If no one preaches the Word of God, who is going to hear it?*" This entailed the living out of that word until finally the evangelised become the evangelisers.

By 1984, the population of Wyndham was 2000. There were about 600 Aborigines and the rest were Filipinos, Spaniards, Italians, French, Maltese, Malaysians, and Europeans. Though there was a language barrier, English was common to all, and English, Kija, and Kriol were spoken.

In 1984 Halls Creek had a population of 250 whites and 750 Aborigines. The languages spoken by the 450 Aborigines, the 400 part Aborigines, and the 350 other people, are Jaru, Kija, and English. There were approximately 230 Catholics. The Catholic Church personnel consisted of a parish priest and three sisters.

The Faithful Companions of Jesus Sisters in August 1986, began to explore the possibility of moving into a ministry for the marginalised in Australia. During 1987 it was decided that a small group be missioned to the Kimberley to work within the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia in the Broome Diocese. Sisters Rosemary

Crowe and Maryrose Dennehy arrived 12 February 1988. Sr.Peter Wilson and Sr.Helen Mary Langlands joined the group.

With the new Bishop at the helm, the Kimberley Catholic Church began to make foundations.

The first foundation was in the little town of Wyndham which is close to the river, on the marsh, with all weather roads and airstrip. It has extreme heat throughout the entire year.

Wyndham Catholic Church was founded in 1959 when Fr.Leo Hornung, SAC, was the resident priest.

Fr.J.Kearney SAC, took up residence from June 1960 - April 1961. During this time the new Multi purpose Church building was erected at Wyndham East and named 'Queen of the Apostles'. Its site was on the eastern side of the Great Northern Highway, within view of the hills. Bishop Jobst blessed it. Fr.Kearney thanked the lay missionaries, Mr.John Scammell and Mr.Kevin Brown. They had worked on the project for nearly 12 months. He gave recognition to the assistance rendered by the Gee family, Mr.Kerr, Mr.Humphries, the PWD, and the staff at the Meatworks.

When Fr.Kearney built the church in 1962, Wyndham was 80% Catholic and the Church could hardly hold the congregation. A State School had provided education in the early sixties. When the Sisters came in 1964, St.Joseph's School commenced. Fr.Karl Boess SAC, Fr.Benno Rausch SAC, worked at Wyndham for some time.

At the three-mile town site, Wyndham's Aboriginal Reserve was a rock-strewn compound. It had a series of corrugated iron buildings with

poor ventilation and few amenities. Built for 96 people it housed up to 200 when the Forrest River Mission closed.

Between 1964 and 1968, the Oombulgurri mission at Forest River had operated under a threat of closure. In 1968 the Minister of Native Welfare rejected a proposed station skills training program. The Forrest River population was transferred to Wyndham. It was ill- prepared for town life. A few men gained employment. Most were forced into a lifestyle stigmatized by poverty and shame. When the Kimberley Aborigines were granted drinking rights in 1970, some of the Forrest River refugees slipped into chronic alcoholism. <sup>447</sup> Mr.A.Ridge, MLA for the Kimberley, publicly stated:

*"It is totally unfair to dump Aborigines on a reserve and demand that from those conditions they drag themselves towards a style of life they either don't understand or don't want. It may be true that it works for some people, but it is obvious that its failure rate is immense and its injustice huge."*

When the Oombulgurri Aborigines settled in town, many sent their children to the Catholic school. The men had the power to make decisions, but they were confused by the white bureaucracies.

The second foundation made by Bishop Jobst was at Kununurra . The Catholic Church was founded in 1962, the Church of 'St.Vincent Pallotti'. The town of Kununurra is close to the river with mountainous surroundings. Its huge rocks are its outstanding feature.

As the most progressive town in the Kimberley, all Government Offices

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<sup>447</sup> Neville J.Green, European Education at Oombulgurri. An Aboriginal Settlement in Western Australia. M .A.Thesis. Univ. of W.A. 1986. (Unpublished).

have been moved there from Wyndham.

Ruby Toobalin summed up contact history at the Diocesan Assembly in 1984:

*"We knew about Ngapu before you katiya fellas ever came. We knew about Ngapu all the time. Ngapu was in our corroborees, our myths and legends, our smoking ceremonies and our water ceremonies.*

*That is why when we saw Bishop Raible baptising we knew that what he was doing was about Ngapu. The people used to live on the stations and Bishop Raible visited these places and some of them learned about Jesus there and were baptised. Some of the people became sick with leprosy and were taken to Derby to the Leprosarium. Here they learnt about the Catholic Faith and came back to their own people and spread the good news."*

Nearly 15 years of education and missionary work in the East Kimberley took place before the first Baptisms. A Pallottine priest had visited the East Kimberley four times a year. He met the people who were settled mainly on the cattle stations. Some of the parents from this first group, sent their children for schooling at the Beagle Bay Mission. The Mission work was intensified by the appointment of a priest in Wyndham who travelled around the stations regularly.

Fr.W.Lorenz SAC had come to the Kimberley in 1964. He was the first Parish Priest of Kununurra in 1966. A school and convent were built.As resident priest at Kununurra , he made many trips to the stations, and it was at this time that Watti and Joe returned from the Derby Leprosarium. While there, the men had been baptised and confirmed by Bishop Raible.

Watti and Joe assisted in promoting a greater interest and response to the Catholic faith by most of their tribe. Amongst those interested was Bungalduon, the head man. It was decided to prepare a group for Baptism and Confirmation. They had been attending church regularly for nearly three years.

With the Sisters of St. Joseph, Sr. Maureen and Sr. Angela, Fr. Lorenz made contact with the people and the children. There were Catholic children from Ivanhoe Station. At his first Sunday Mass, the congregation was all European, but after three years, there were two Masses filled with European and Aboriginal people.

In January 1967, the school had begun. Three weeks out of the month Fr. Lorenz did station trips to Auveme, Nicholson, Gordon Downs, and Jubilee Creek near Fitzroy Crossing. The people did his garden and minded the house when he was away at the Stations.

With the completion of the Ord River irrigation Scheme Kununurra began to expand. It became a Government town, with offices for the departments of Agriculture, K.R.S., Main Roads, S.E.C., R.R.A., and A.W.A..

Although the Catholic School was a Parish School, gradually most white parents sent their children to the State school and Catechist volunteers taught religion there. The Aborigines of the East Kimberley began to accept Catholic presence in their Aboriginal world.

Fr. P. Willis was made Parish Priest of Kununurra in 1968. He had visited and said Mass for the Miriwung, who lived out of town on cattle stations. Where the pastoralists were active Catholics, a 'station Mass' was celebrated, attended by virtually the entire station population. With the down tum of the cattle industry in the late 1960's and early 1970's

and the introduction of award wages for Aboriginal stockmen, an increasing number of unemployed Miriwung people came to live on the 'Native Reserve' in Kununurra,

This was a new and less protected environment for the Miriwung and they availed themselves of the support offered by the Catholic priest and nuns, They were some of the few people familiar to them from when they lived on cattle stations, The Sisters supported the parents with clothing, food and transport,

The Miriwung spoke their own language, sang their own songs and had an active ceremonial life to which the Sisters and the Priest were frequently invited, At the same time, they attended Mass and prayers, They had been promised baptism when they were ready, and when they knew more about the Catholic Faith,

Both men and women of the Miriwung leaders, continued to ask if their mob' could be baptised. They were considerably influenced in this by the two Aboriginal elders, Watti and Joe, who had been baptised while confined to the Leprosarium, and were the only ones able to take Holy Communion during Mass. The Christian focus on the one transcendent God roused no problems, and there were no polygamous marriages.

Fr. Willis judged that the ceremonies to which the Miriwung catechumens had invited him were compatible with Christianity. The baptised elders were the most active evangelising Christians, and were frequently in the group organising the Aboriginal ceremonies.

1 November 1969, the Aboriginal elder, Mr. Bungaloon Talmir, was confirmed by Bishop Jobst, assisted by Fr. P. Willis SAC, and Sr. Maureen RSJ. With him were more than sixty Aborigines from the



Kununurra Native Reserve, a camp at Lilly Creek, and from transitional houses. They had assembled at the Catholic Church for Baptisms, marriage blessings and First Holy Communions.

Biddy, a serious young mother, had known that her sisters had been married at Port Keats Mission, and she wanted to be married as soon as she became a Christian. Others asked. The two Sisters from the Kununurra convent, Sr.Maureen and Sr.Angela began collecting the necessary information for 18 marriages. The Sisters were helped by members of the church, who had been driving the Aborigines to Church for Mass. These acted as Godparents and Sponsors for Confirmation. The Bishop had flown to Kununurra for the final ceremony of Confirmation 2 November, when 250 assembled. A corroboree was held afterwards.

With much support from the Kununurra Community, and an honorary builder, the new Catholic Church was completed and blessed by Bishop J.Jobst in 1971.

The third foundation was at Halls Creek Church in 1962. Outside the shire Offices in Halls Creek, there is a statue of 'Russian Jack' who carried a sick friend more than 300 km in a bush-made wheelbarrow seeking medical aid over a track which existed in name only. His feat symbolized the mateship and endurance of the pioneers of a region then lacking all the amenities of civilization. There is also an enormous iron engine which originally provided power at the Poverty Mine, and was then moved to Ruby Station where it was used for pumping water. It had been transported by donkey team from Wyndham port. Both images are relevant for Halls Creek. The little township is set in cattle country close to the river. Its surrounding country is both mountainous and flat. It is isolated, with an airstrip, and has both a town community, and a bush community.

Fr.Nicholas Dehe SAC, had gone there 3 June 1960, to make a new foundation, and was accompanied by Joe Rock from Lombadina. They were offered the use of three tin sheds by Mr.Tom Quilty of Springvale Station. Father cleaned them, made an altar from the store counters, and had a church.

Bishop Jobst had found it difficult to buy a block of land in Halls Creek on which he could erect Church buildings. He mentioned his problem to Charles Lewis McBeath, the Road Board Secretary. Some time before 30 May 1962, Charles McBeath exchanged 2 blocks of land on the corner of Thomas Street and Roberta Avenue, for 12 horses from Balgo Mission. The blocks had been registered in McBeath's name, 17 January 1961.

With this affable arrangement, the land was acquired for the church. It was called the Church of 'St.Mary'.

The Government School was not established until 1962. Employment was provided mainly in part-time community jobs and seasonal station work. Main areas of employment were the Shire, the Main Road, and the Beef Industry (cattle stations). Political power in the town is held by a white shire council. In Aboriginal communities the power is with the old men.

Fr.McMahon described the Parish of Broome:

*The Parish Community of Broome is primarily coloured. From the Christian point of view the influence of the Filipinos has been great.*

*Some of the customs still practised in the town particularly the nine nights of Rosary, after a death, followed by a feast originated with that group.*

*The real aim of the Church in any district is to make the people aware that they are the Church*

*It is apparent that the people of Broome consider that they are the Church. They occupy the most important positions in the Church. They do the bulk of the reading. They are the backbone of the Legion of Mary, they do the bulk of the work for raising money in the parish.*

Sr. Josepha, after 25 years on the missions, at the request of the Medical Department introduced the first Child Welfare Clinic to the Kimberley in 1960. From Broome, she drove to mission outposts at Beagle Bay and Lombadina.

Mother Margaret Carmody SJG, was still keeping lists of names for her catechetical classes in Broome, 1958 - 1963. Places were, One Mile, State School, Kennedy's Hill, Convent, Four Mile, and Fisherman's Bend. It would be difficult to evaluate what this valiant woman did in her humble way to build up the faith of the people of Broome.

In the early 1960's, because of social differences, and the apparent reluctance for Aboriginal Catholics to worship in the Broome Church, it was suggested that the Church should go to the Aborigines rather than expect them to come to the Church. A property was bought at 'Morgan's Camp'. In 1966, Fr. V. Finne gan blessed a church-of-ease erected there. It was dedicated to St. Martin de Porres. The building of prefabricated steel was erected in December, and after some delays, the work on it recommenced in February.

The work of painting, furnishing and care of the grounds was handled by local labour, particularly by the efforts of Basil Tommy.

The result was not successful. The Aborigines who had gone to the Parish Church, now went past it to the other Church, and it made no difference to those who had not been worshipping before. It was discontinued. In 1967, the new St. John of God convent was blessed and opened by Bishop Jobst.

The bell tower from the first Catholic Church in Broome was rebuilt on the altar site of the original Church, in front of the Church built in 1963. The bronze bell has a tableau of the crucifixion and of Our Lady carved on the surface and was brought to Broome by Fr. Nicholas Emo. The reason for erecting it was to keep some relics of the Church's pioneering days.

The *Lady Queen of Peace Cathedral* has three electronically controlled bells which are called 'Faith', 'Hope' and 'Charity'. They were donated by friends of Bishop Jobst in Germany.

In 1969, Mary Durack published a history of the Church in the Kimberley *The Rock and the Sand*'.

For several years the Broome people had complained that they had to send their children to Perth for Secondary education. Some of the Parents approached the Bishop to ask if it would be possible to provide educational facilities for them.

The decision was made by Br. Loftus, the first Provincial Superior of the newly formed West Australia Province. Br. Loftus and Br. Lavander had a meeting with Broome parents in 1969. The Building was to start in 1970. It was planned that in the future the College might be expanded to include facilities for the education of girls, and would

become the first co-educational Catholic college in Western Australia.

*The Holy Child Kindergarten was completed. Adaptations to the local environment were designed by Bishop Jobst and Mr. WFitzhardinge, a Perth architect. It was built on the site of the orphanage erected more than 30 years ago."*

Mr. and Mrs. Berndt, anthropologists, made relevant comments in their 'Survey of the Balgo Hills Area' ( March 1960). They saw a need for Mission influence in the region, because it provided Aboriginal adults with a place to which they could return, on a relatively permanent basis, away from the squalid work camps of the stations. It was a place they could regard as their own, and moreover a place where their children could receive education and training.

By August 1960, a Catholic State School teacher, Mr. GBrown, had been brought into the Balgo Mission in order to get access to the better funding provided for Government schools. He taught the seniors in the school, and Sr. Madeleine SJG, moved into the spinifex bower shed with the Juniors. Fr. McGuire SAC, continued to direct the work of the Balgo mission. Fr. Willis SAC, cared for the boys.

Of the thirty Lay Missionaries who were working throughout the Diocese, five were at Balgo Mission. Mr. Kersh, was in charge of the newly commenced beef cattle and horse breeding industries which provided additional employment and training. His wife helped the Sisters to maintain the clothing for the 330 residents. The other three were Mr. Carrol, Mr. Frank McNamara, and Mr. Tesselir.

There were two reasons for moving the Mission from its original site.

1. The Mission was too dependent on a Billiluna beef supply. Ms.Doman asked that her stock boys have access to watering holes on the Mission. Social problems which consequently arose from the latter request, made matters difficult for Mission Administration.
2. The Mission was isolated for four to five months of the year by an impassible creek.

In 1959, when Bishop Jobst had met the new owner of Billiluna Station, Ms.Margaret Doman, she told him that an astrofix had been made that showed the Balgo Mission was seven miles from the Eastern Boundary of the Station, and five miles from the Southern Boundary, on her land.

The Bishop asked for an excision of 17,000 acres from the property of two million acres, but the owner decreed 'not an acre'! The Mission was moved to higher ground closer to Halls Creek. It was decided not to do anything about shifting the Aborigines, but when the Mission was built up, they drifted in.

Fr.McGuire, the Administrator, intended to make the mission self-supporting by breeding horses and cattle. Several bores were sunk, and one yielded plenty of water. The new Balgo Mission was sited in 1964, and officially opened, 15 May 1965.

Fr.Alphonse Bleischwitz SAC, had been in charge at Balgo for 19 years. Fr.John McGuire SAC, followed him and was in charge for 12 years.

Fr.Ray Hevern SAC, who had arrived in Balgo 31 October 1969 stayed in charge for 16 years. From talking to the Balgo men, he realised how much initiative had been taken by Aborigines in

bringing the faith to the Balgo community. Several men now at Balgo, were at Comet windmill, on Billiluna Station, when Father Alphonse came down - Sunfly, Jimmy Djaiandjanu, Bill Larry, Mick Djakamara, Alan Weinduru.

They remembered Bishop Raible travelling around on a camel when Mick Djakamara met him at the Lake; Brother Frank; a man called Jimmy with his wife Judy from Beagle Bay Lombadina way. They told him that at the first sight of sheep moving across the plain they had sent two men to find out what was causing the dust. They thought it was spinifix moving! Sunfly and the other men helped push those sheep down to Djaluwon where the visitors first settled. At 'Tjaluwan', Bill Larry remembered starting to dig a well there. Jimmy Djaiandjanu was only a young man then and had been brought in by his father from Walla Walla. A lot of Walmajarri and Wangkajunga people came from the Canning Stock Route.

Bill Larry went back and got other people to come in and meet Father at Narelli. These were grandparents of present day Balgo people - Bye Bye, Djaugi, and Mosquito. Ambrose Cox was with Fr.Alphonse, also an older man called Peter (now dead at Broome or Beagle Bay).

In the early years the Beagle Bay people brought them to Mass, and helped them to understand. The people didn't remember any reason why some went to the Mission, and others to the Stations. If there was trouble at the Station, they came to the Mission later.

A group of adults were baptised years later at the Old Mission. Fr.Francis Huegel SAC, helped them get ready. Also three families were married. Fr.Francis was at the old Mission for catechism.

It was Alice Evans, a Lay Missionary, who did the first schooling, the kindergarten and the nursing, when Fr.J.Kearney SAC, was there. Fr.Alphonse started dormitories for both boys and girls. The people say they did not mind this. They knew their children were being looked after. On Feast Days the old people would take the girls and boys back to the bush. They often used to walk back to their own country down south.

The official language of the Beagle Bay Mission is Nyulnyul, but English is the language used.

The Beagle Bay Mission is a symbol of the sanctuary the Missions have given

Aborigines. The shelter of the Missions is very different from what used to be known as protection. It is a positive thing. It gives independence, work in co-operatives, and a chance to be satisfyingly human.

One old man, Baldanic, told how he felt about it. He had helped establish the market gardens on the mission. Then he left. When he became old and nearly blind he was back working in the garden - on light duties, but still working.

*"I come home," he said, "I was born here. I was schooled up here. I come home. The old brothers taught me in this garden, too. And we built the church. I was only a boy on a bullock team. We got the shells, walking bare feet and picking them up. The tide went out and we could see them a proper long way. We carried them by sugar bag on our shoulders back to the donkey cart. My grandchildren settle on the mission now. This country belongs to us. Broome no good. They get into trouble there. That's why I got out and come home. My*



*grandchildren know this is their home. The mission will get more bigger, I reckon, "We'll get more land."*

It is this trust in the missionaries that has allowed the development of industry and education and housing and all that has gone in to making Beagle Bay a successful mission. Aborigines , part-Aborigines and missionaries have been working together for a long time.<sup>448</sup>

In the 1960's, there was a strong move to self sufficiency for the Mission.Fr.J.Keamey SAC, helped organize a soft drink industry. The Mission Commer truck took the first consignment of Beagle Bay soft drinks to Derby. Arrangements were made for an agent in Derby and for an advertisement to be shown regularly at the picture show. Carting beef cattle to Broome meat works was another enterprise for which the truck was used.

The 'Sacred Heart School' was sending children for scholarships for secondary education. Sr.M.Dolores SJG, Sr.Andrew SJG, with a roll call of about 20 in the Kindergarten, Sr. Callista SJG,from Ireland and the Home Economics class taught by Sr.Madeleine Lynch SJG, achieved high standards.

Both Fr.Rausch SAC, and Fr.Lorenz SAC, visited Beagle Bay in 1964. They were be working in the Vicariate. Fr.A.Peile SAC, arrived in April to be the assistant priest. In November, Fr.J.Winson SAC, arrived to take care of the boys.

The Beagle Bay Chronicle recorded that 22 May 1961, Gregory Howard began instructions to working men and boys, how to teach

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<sup>448</sup> The baptismal name of Baldanic was 'Balthazzar, baptised by the French Trappists. His daughter, Mary, married Keith Kitchener.

catechism to the station Aborigines. The stations were keeping the key men and sending the families bush. The combination of more dependants and less money coming in meant a cut in available funds. So the Missions could employ fewer people at a time when more were looking for work. There was lack of equal opportunities and for education and job training.

**Lombadina Mission** had extensive bush on one side and a great expanse of sand dunes on the other. It is near the sea and Base Intelligence has asked for a message to be given when foreign boats came to the sea shore.

It is situated on the marsh of Chilli Creek, isolated, but with an airstrip. Its most spectacular feature is the extensive sand dunes.

The beef cattle herd has been built up again and Mr. Thomas, an Agricultural advisor from the Commonwealth Government, went with Mr. Weber, who was rebuilding the stock in Beagle Bay. to inspect the cattle in Lombadina, promising to help the project if he considered it was worthwhile. He decided it was not. At Thomas Well the muster had a total of 206 (64 clean skin). The stock boys took all the cattle to Pender Bay. There were Johnny, Alphonse, Douglas, and Myrhan doing the mustering, also Benedict and Victor helped for nearly two weeks during their holidays.

In the 1960's Bishop Jobst had been approached by 'Welfare', about the possibility of taking over the pensioners from Sunday Island.

Fr. Kriener went across to Sunday Island in a 2 masted, 18 foot schooner. Lecky Bin Sali was the Captain. There were 2 trips with 5 pensioners altogether, and luggage.

Peter Angus told his story in 1982:

*I was born on Sunday Island - I am Jawi. My Mother was Bardi from Swan Point.*

*I was born in 1916, and am now in my 67th year, a pensioner in Lombadina. At present I am Chairman of the Lombadina Council and leader of the Tribal Law. I learned the law from my youth on Sunday Island. I have been asked for the Law in Derby at Mowanjum. They want the law from our people. Our Law is clean Law. The Bardi and the Nyulnyul have good Law. I have the Law at One Arm Point. I am Doctor for the circumcision.*

*Before my time people from Sunday Island and Beagle Bay with leprosy were taken to Cossack. No one came back. Hany Hunte: Harry O'Grady and Sydney Hadley came about the same time. I was born in Hadley's time.*

*In the 1920's, Mr. David Drysdale, a single man, picked people up from Derby and went back to Sunday Island, when I was a little boy, schooling there. The Law was never stopped on Sunday Island, so Sandy and I know all the songs. When Fr. Kriener was here in the 1960's we started the Law again with the boys.*

*I like the lay Missionaries. They help the people along.*

*When I was 17 or 18, I worked at Boo/gin with Harry Hunter's son, Robyn Hunter. When Robyn finished at the station I went with my parents to Cape Leveque. When I was 23, I was in Cape Leveque working with the Lighthouse keeper. After the war then I came to Lombadina and married Mercia in Beagle Bay. I was received into the Church there.*

*When Father John Herold was at Lombadina, a long time after the first war, I went and got my mother and father from Sunday Island and brought them to live at Cape Leveque first, and then at the mission.*

An insight into **La Grange Mission** was provided by Fr. McKelson SAC, the priest in charge:

*"One day in late July there was great excitement at the Mission ... a 'malolo', an initiation candidate, had arrived with his bodyguard. Straight away some women came asking for flour to make special damper to mark the occasion though they had fresh bread straight from the oven. The boy had relatives here who were very happy about the whole affair...*

*Every night there was a cobba cobba in the camp, the lay missionaries and children went to participate.*

*I wanted to show them by my presence there, the only white man among 250 of them, that the Church has no basic objection to their law, in particular, to the initiation ceremony. Without the members of the Ver Sacrum mariae, the mission would just cease to run like a broken down wind mill pump. Thanks be to Our Lady and to the Society for sponsoring this Institute. I for one am most grateful."*

Cyclones could be a hazard. Fr. McKelson wrote a long account of damage done to Bishop Jobst, 14 January 1964. The damage was estimated at \$95,000.

When twenty-seven desert nomads had come into the mission, Fr. McKelson said:

*"Because they were lonely and had found company among the members of their own and several other tribes who lived in the camp. It was*

*hoped that their health and well-being would improve. They had come almost naked, and had the option of remaining so, but they had all chosen to wear clothes. Probably they had brought their sticks and other sacred things with them, and if so, these would be deposited in the 'Darogo', the secret place nearby, where no women, children, or young people may visit."*...

*"One basic problem the people had in coming here was the matter of self preservation. That problem has been overcome for them by the Mission in that all have enough to eat.*

*Another problem which arose was their coming into contact with a group of people (the Mission staff), who were different from the station people. Station people in the main were solely concerned that the Aborigines were economically useful. The problem then for the Aborigines is to work out a "modus vivendi" with the Mission staff whose outlook on life is different to theirs.*

*The Mission staff's problem is to devise a means of implementing Christ's command "teach all nations". In the past the problem was solved on the basis of superior strength. Western ways and faith were more or less imposed. For the future, at least in my opinion, our approach should be more sympathetic and enlightened, sympathetic in the sense that we should respect and attempt to understand that the way of salvation for this people need not be the one we ourselves are treading.*

*We should try within the framework of this peoples' culture to find a path that will lead them to faith in Christ.*

*In my own particular situation, I would like to be helped by dedicated competent lay people who would share with me their ideas. Above all, these lay people would relieve me of direct involvement in their temporal affairs, thus allowing me time to discover the path of this people to Christ. "*

It was the Texas Station Catholics who started the development of faith for **Turkey Creek**.

Fr.Nicholas Dehe SAC had them saying the Rosary, Queenie and her mother Dinah. Queenie, now over 90, is a speaker for the women. Dinah is over 65.

The church first made contact with the Aboriginal people at the Leprosarium. Winnie of Turkey Creek is from Texas. She worked as a Catechist in Fr.Nicholas's time and in my time for some of the people. Both Winnie and Queenie were from Texas. Winnie is influential now in Turkey Creek. She gave lessons in language, in Kija. Hector is her brother.

The two post war decades had been a period of great social change. More progress in the advancement of Aboriginal Welfare had been made in the thirteen and a half years of administration by S.G.Middleton, Commissioner of Native Affairs 1948 - 1962, than in all the preceding one hundred and twenty years of the existence of West Australia.

In 1960, Government subsidisation for missions had been placed on the same basis as that of Government assisted institutions for white children under the Child Welfare Department. A free medical and health service, transport, and other incidental expenditure incurred by Missions was provided. By 1963, Aborigines who had been station dependants began to drift to outback townships.

As a direct consequence of the 1967 Referendum, when Australians voted to remove two specific references to Aborigines from the Australian Constitution, the Federal Government was given power to legislate for Aborigines in the States, and the Aboriginal population was included in official census figures.

Moves to dismantle the legal and administrative apparatus of bureaucratic control of Aborigines gathered force. Spending on programs of development and welfare continued to increase.

In 1969 an 'Equal Pay' decision for Aboriginal stockmen by the Arbitration Commission enabled Aboriginal stockmen to be paid cash wages. But by the 1970's this 'Equal Pay' decision had forced many Aboriginal groups off the stations where they had been living in station camps. Many groups moved into outback townships like Turkey Creek, and Halls Creek.

Contact by the Catholic Church up in the East Kimberley had been made by different missionaries through regular journeys around the stations, since those made by Bishop Raible in the early 1930's. Those who were allowed to return to their communities from the Leprosarium knew they had the gift of faith to share. In Derby, Fr. Huegel used to tell departing Aborigines to remember to share what they had received. Both these things prepared the way for a blossoming of the Faith in the East Kimberley.

Another factor for the rapid growth of the East Kimberley Church was the coming of the Sisters. Their nurture of these tiny seeds of faith sown in the previous generations was to bring about the growth of more basic faith communities.

## CHAPTER 10

*"...because the harvest is come. .." Mk.4:29*

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE KIMBERLEY

Pope Paul VI had raised the Vicariate Apostolic of the Kimberley to the rank of a diocese, and placed it in the Province of Perth, whose Metropolitan was Archbishop Prendiville. The news came on the day that word was received in Australia of the death of Bishop Raible. He died, aged 78 years, 18 June 1966 in his native city of Stuttgart.

In December 1970, the Pope's jet descended to 20,000 feet above the remote Ba Igo Mission. His last message in Australia on his return flight to Rome was made by radio, as his plane flew over Broome,

*"Holy Father grateful for gracious sentiments expressed; imparts most willingly to his beloved people of Broome special apostolic blessing. "*

At the beginning of the 1970's, there was the perennial problem of Church personnel. Bishop Jobst had been asked by a reporter, *"Why do missionaries stick it, out in the outback?"* He answered: *"We aren't dreamers, we regard our work as only a link in a long chain, and a link which must be forged before that chain can be made any longer."*

The Diocese had its first vocations to a Diocesan Priesthood. Fr.Chris Saunders, Fr.Paul Boyers, Fr. P. MacAtalmley, Fr.Dan Donovan, Fr.Sebastian Fernandez.



A secular priest, Fr.R.Crotty OSB, had arrived in Broome 8 December 1964, looking for a place where he could live as a hermit. Inspired by the story of the 'Hermit of Cat Island' (Mons. Hawes, who designed and built Churches in Western Australia), he had chosen to end his life following an eremitical lifestyle, to pray, to meditate and study, and by this to bring a blessing on the Mission where this life style had began in 1890.

After a period of three years he was excardinated from the Archdiocese of Melbourne and incardinated to the diocese of Broome. Eventually he settled at Gregory Well, Lombadina, where he lived for some years. The sandy dunes which stretched for miles around, and the picturesque bay provided solitude enough. He died 7 January 1972.

In October, Fr.Philbert , a world famous nuclear scientist from Regensburg came to live in the deserted hermitage. He and his brother had been ordained to build a bridge between science technology and theology. He loved the loneliness with God, but the climate was too harsh. He returned to the monastery in North Perth.

Fr.Daniel Donovan occupied the same hermitage at Gregory Well, Lombadina for some time as a hermit.

In the Adelaide Cathedral, 12 September 1975, Deacon Christopher Saunders was ordained to the Diaconate, by Archbishop Gleeson, for the Broome Diocese. He was the first Diocesan Priest ordained for the diocese was Father Chris Saunders.

Fr. Paul Boyers was the second diocesan priest to be ordained for the diocese of Broome, in his home parish of South Wagga 1 September 1979. He was not a stranger to the northern diocese, as he worked as

a Deacon in the Broome and Derby parishes in 1978.

The new diocese was still in a period of rapid social change. In 1971, when citizenship was extended to Aborigines in the Pilbara and the Kimberley, they were given an opportunity to use political power. For the Kimberley as a whole, the total population recorded by the 1971 Census was 14,602 persons, of whom 6,305 were Aborigines. In 1972, when ALP came to power after the Federal elections, extensive grants to encourage community development among Aboriginal communities gave them opportunities to determine their futures. In 1976 - 1977, the Federal Government purchased a number of station leases, among them Lake Gregory and Billiluna. Aborigines continued to move away from the towns to settlements and missions.<sup>449</sup>

The image of the seed falling into the ground and dying to bring forth much fruit is particularly apt when all the Catholic Missions of the Kimberley, within twenty years would become Aboriginal Communities exercising 'self determination' for their futures. Aboriginal languages began to be treated with more respect. Bi-lingual programs would be seen as a necessity in educational curriculum.

Broome has all weather roads and an airstrip is close to the sea with good beaches and dominated by the Indian Ocean. At the present time there is much planning being done for the future. In 1984 there was a population of 5400. It has increased. There is a cosmopolitan spirit with no language barrier among the 2000 Catholics. Education is provided for their children by 2 Catholic Schools, St. Mary's (350), established 1908, and Nulungu College (212), established 1972.

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<sup>449</sup> Yu, Sarah, & Hudson, Joyce, 'Resource Materials', *Kimberley: Past and Present*, (S.E.A. Code No 9114), 1988. p.19.

In 1971, members of the Christian Brothers Order started teaching at St.Mary's Primary School, Broome. Nulungu College was established in 1971 by the Christian Brothers for secondary education of young Aboriginal men from the Kimberley. The name was chosen by Professor James Petri. It carries the meaning of traditional groups of people gathering about the shade of the watering hole gaining new knowledge and recreation as they relax among themselves before the setting out as a group on a journey. The students come from different backgrounds, but their shared experiences, fishing, hunting and camping adventures, and their living communally soon establishes a common base.

Its curriculum encouraged the expression of cultural characteristics and students from a non-literary culture were respected. Their Aboriginality is recognized. It is open to all but has a predominantly Aboriginal enrolment. The first Principal was Br.T.S.Roberts and he was assisted by Brothers J.Billich, and P.R.Hardiman.

In 1974, Sisters of Our Lady of the Mission, assisted by Sr.Pat Rhatigan opened a girls' secondary school sharing facilities with the Boys' school at Nulungu College.

There was a great influx of visitors to Broome when Fr.Patrick Dodson M.S.C., was ordained in Broome, 17 May 1975. He was the first Aboriginal Catholic Priest in Australia. His grandfather, Mr.P. Djagween was one of the oldest surviving Aborigines of the Yawuru tribe in Broome.

Mallingbar is a town community in Broome on Aboriginal Reserve land. It is also called 'Kennedy Hill'. Yawuru, Bardi, and Nyu Inyul are spoken. The Government, the Meat Works, Service Industries, and Tourism give most of the employment. Power in the Local Government is with white Australians.

In 1989, the Catholic Church personnel consisted of Bishop J.Jobst, Fr.C.Saunders, PP., Christian Brothers, Sisters, and Lay Missionaries. The Loreto Sisters are in charge of the Primary School, and the Our Lady of Mission Sisters are at Nulungu College. Fr.McMahon SAC, Sr.Stella Bryant SJG, and others at the Spirituality Centre.

The parish of Derby covered a flat barren marsh environment. It is a long way from the sea when the tide is out, but when it is in, the sea is close. It has all weather roads and an airstrip. Its most striking feature is the boob trees.

Its population of 3,300, is 40% Aboriginal. There was no language barrier. English, Kriol, Nyikina, Worrorra, Walmajarri, Bardi, and Bunuba were spoken.

The first Catholic contact was made in 1884. There is development because of growth in industry, the RAAF base, and mining. The De La Salle Brothers started administering the school in 1989. Up to that time, the Sisters of St.John of God had been responsible. Those Sisters resident in the town are involved in Health. A Loreto Sister is a Pastoral Associate.

Employment is provided by Government Departments, Education, Health, Aboriginal Affairs, Welfare, Hotels, Motels, and Main Roads. Fr.W. Lorenz, SAC has been parish priest for some years. His housekeeper, Ms.Clare Bowler, is one of the longest serving Lay Missionaries in the Kimberley. Catholic presence is maintained in Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Looma, Pandanas, Imintji, Mowanjum, Gibb River, Koolan and Cockatoo Islands and outlying cattle stations.

The Derby Leprosarium is now closed. For many years it was staffed by Sisters. Mowanjum is approximately 10 km from Derby. It has all weather roads, and a dusty flat terrain. Ngarinyin, Worrorra, and Wunambal are spoken, but there is no language barrier among the all Aboriginal population. There are about 20 Catholics.

Power is with the old men and government workers.

Pandanus Park is a small community on Aboriginal Reserve land near Willare Bridge. It is close to the river but flat and isolated. There are all weather roads. It is a bush community with lush gardens of mangoes. The population is all Aboriginal and although Nyikina, Mangala, and Walmajarri are spoken there is no language barrier. There are about 20 Catholics among other denominations. Employment is provided by the garden, and maintenance work. Political power is with the young men and the government workers.

Looma is a large multilingual community on Aboriginal Reserve land excised from Liveringa Station. It is set in mountainous terrain with a mountain range forming the background. The isolated and barren settlement has a language barrier. Among the 300 Aborigines. Mangala, Walmajarri, Nyikina, Wangkajunga, and Bunaba are spoken. Political power is with the Aboriginal men.

Early Catholic presence was nurtured by Fulgentius Frazer who had been sent to Drysdale River Mission when a boy. He married Woolumbah and lived at Beagle Bay, for eight to nine years. When they moved to Liveringa, he taught the Catholic Faith to the people there. His daughter, Agnes Puertollano, said, that "When Dad was away mustering cattle, Mum used to call the people together for Rosary." Imintji is an Outstation on the Gibb River Road. Kija, Nyikina, and Ngarinyin are spoken.

The De La Salle Brothers came to Derby to be responsible for the Primary School which was handed over to them by the Sisters of St. John of God.

Gibb River is a small community on Gibb River Station where Ngarinyin is spoken. They approached Bishop Jobst for a school in 1989.

### **TERTIARY EDUCATION**

In Derby, in 1979, five Aborigines graduated from a course which recognised Aboriginal needs and had been taken through the Mt. Lawley College of Advanced Education. It had allowed adults to complete their studies by correspondence in their own community while providing local support for the student. The aim was to help Aboriginal people improve their education and become eligible for entrance into professional training courses. The course graduates were working as teaching assistants in Catholic schools in the Kimberley. They ranged from young people to mature women with grown-up families. The first graduates were Verna Lockyer, Agnes Albert, Rosita Lovell, Selina King and

Christophehr Bin Kali (the last two were from St. Mary's Broome). Sr. Leone Collins SJG, of Holy Rosary School, Derby, made arrangements for those who had completed the Advanced Entry Certificate to continue studying for teaching diplomas through special arrangements with Signadou College in Canberra. By the end of 1984, two former Teaching Assistants had completed their Teacher Training Course. They were Verna Lockyer, and Annette O'Connor. At the same time, six former Teacher assistants were part way through the Teacher Training at Holy Rosary School.

Once Aborigines were given citizenship rights, the subject of 'land rights' would become a major issue. There would be intensive development of Catholic Education ; Kalumburu would come within Diocesan jurisdiction in 1981. Aboriginal teachers would be to be trained in Derby. New faith communities would increase in East Kimberley; and there would be pilgrimages to celebrate that faith.

The status of Aboriginal Communities has been changing dramatically over the last two decades.

By 1970, the one-way process of assimilation has been discarded as an official policy of social change, to be replaced by less clearly defined notions of integration and cultural plurality. The former implied a two-way interaction of minority groups with the dominant society, while the other regarded Australia as a mosaic of cultural groups fanning a modern Australian society. In December 1972, a change in Federal Government brought about a dramatic change in National and State policies for Aboriginal education and welfare.

The policy of self-determination took shape in 1973, and reflected the attitude of the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gordon Bryant. It was a policy that sought to transfer major decisions into the hands of the communities, including the decision to select their own advisors.<sup>450</sup>

Changes continued in the town of **Kununurra**.

At the 'Nine Mile', *'Mabel Downs People'* moved in when the children came back from Beagle Bay in 1973-1974, so that the children could go to school in Kununurra. One reason why children were withdrawn from Beagle Bay School, was because of an undercurrent of feeling generated by Fr.P. Willis SAC, against

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<sup>450</sup> Neville J.Green, 'European Education at Oombulgurri, an Aboriginal Settlement in Western Australia.' M.A.Thesis, Univ.of WA. 1986. Unpublished.

education of people from East Kimberley and Northern Territory at Beagle Bay. St.Martin's Hostel was set up in the Kununurra schoolyard with old main roads' caravans, and Sr.Angela Morrison RSJ, went in charge of this and lived there.

Several significant social changes took place over the years. First was the forming of the Mirima Council in 1971 under the joint leadership of Yilngali-Miriwung elders and Fr.P. Willis SAC. In 1975, a second change came to Kununurra with the establishment of a new Aboriginal community settlement. The idea had been mooted and grants applied for in 1974. When they got their land, St.Martin's became known as 'Moongoong Darwing'.

Aboriginal personnel were drawn from Mirima Village and some of the fringe camps and included people of Miriwung, Jaminjung and Kajirrawung background. A few were members of the Mirima Council. It became a well established and dynamic community, run predominantly by the Aborigines themselves. It had a European book keeper and occasionally a European advisor. Some of the middle-aged men were employed by the community as drivers, and work organisers for the elders who retained considerable power. The caravan system had lasted twelve months.

The 'Moongoong Darwing' received a government grant and a grant of land next to the Kununurra Convent, and was set up like a hostel adjacent to the school for the Aboriginal children who had to travel long distances to school. A special circular outdoor Mass centre was built. As other adults gradually moved in, the original plan changed. It became a settlement something like the Reserve. Two Sisters worked full time in the school and one in the community, where Aboriginal and white people were involved in various programmes.

Aboriginal involvement grew. Lizzie Ward, a full blood Aborigine became matron with Sr.Angela as her assistant. Adults from Newry Station and Auvergne came in that year, so it was no longer a



dormitory system but functioned as family units. Fr. Willis was doing a 4 year study course but commuted between Kununurra and Canberra A.N.U. This whole movement was not a Church project. The Bishop was interested, but no Church money came into it. It was Church personnel working with an Aboriginal group to take responsibility for the care of their own children. Another viable Aboriginal community which grew independently at the same time was 'Bethel Incorporated.' It was a mission oriented group also, headed by a husband and wife team.

Near Kununurra, the setting up of a modest outstation north of Lake Argyle, at 'Yardungarll', or 'Dingo Springs', was especially noteworthy because after a period of almost seven years of 'fighting', one elder and several family clusters supporting him, succeeded in acquiring a tract of land. The Miriwung group comprised the core of the former Mirima Council. They acquired the land lease-hold for 18 years. The lease was vested in the Aboriginal Lands Trust, Perth. But this was only a small victory, because, as a leasehold, the land could be alienated at virtually any time.

By 1984, Kununurra had a population of approximately 3000 non Aborigines among whom were a few Italians, Yugoslavs, Filipinos, etc. About 600 - 700 of the population were Aboriginal. Political power was with the Aboriginal men, the young white Australians, the Government workers and the C.R.A. mining company. Approximately 400 Aborigines were Catholic. Languages included Miriwung and Murrinh-patha. There was sometimes a language barrier.

Leadership roles in new Aboriginal communities such as Red Hill and Ringer Soak is gradually evolving.

Fr.W.Kriener told a little of the parish history of Halls Creek, up to 1984:

*The important events in the Church history of Halls Creek were the 'outstation movement'; the Wyndham Meeting; the Kummurra Meeting; and the Rockhole Meeting.*

*I came to Halls Creek April 1973. There was a big white wedding. It was that of Sean MIlrphy, an Irishman who lives out of town and services helicopters and his bride.*

*I had to find my way. I made regular visits to all stations. Fr.P. Willis introduced me to the Eastern Stations. Gordon Downs and Nicholson.*

*November to December, 1973, I concentrated on Halls Creek. I baptised twelve Red Hill people of No.4 Reserve who had contact with Bishop Raible and Fr.N icholas Dehe. Some of them spoke Jaru and came from Ba/go.*

*In the three Aboriginal Communities of 'Turkey Creek', 'Red Hill', and 'Ringers Soak', there is readiness for Baptism, and development of Aboriginal Rites in each place. For example, the 'Spirit Dance', the 'Offertory Dance' with a new development of Jumbas, Songs in Jaru, and so on.*

*Fr.Nicholas Dehe SAC, was here 1961for the first Baptism. He came between 1959- 1965, and left at the beginning of 1966, during which time there were 29 Baptisms altogether, of which Bishop Jobst had done two.*

*Fr.Anthony Peile SAC. celebrated thirty Baptisms from April 1966 - 1973.*

*In 1980 I baptised in St11rt Creek (3 babies), Turkey Creek(2}, Halls Creek (4). Turkey Creek (3). In December, I baptised in Turkey Creek (8 adults).*

*Fr.Kriener SAC described his parish in 1984:*

*Halls Creek was originally a white town. But is now an Aboriginal town with the 80% Aboriginal non rate payers with no representative on the Town Council. There is an Aboriginal Advisory Council. Over 350 children attend the State School which has a white curriculum. Only ten per cent of Halls Creek Catholics practise but in Red Hill. three km away the Church is always full on Sundays.*

*The Bishop told me to make the Catholic Church present in town and stations. I was more free to have the communities of Turkey Creek, Red Hill, and Ringer Soak.*

*The Sisters made the way for social establishment of whole town and then began a Primary School. Since the Sisters came seven years ago, things have changed between the Church leaders. the Baptist leaders, and the U.A.M."*

Sr. Antoinette Crippa, a Canossian Sister, told a little about her Apostolate at Halls Creek:

*"I came from Timor. I left 31 August 1975 as a refugee to Australia when Civil War broke out in Timor*

*I came in 1977 to Halls Creek. Sr. Josephine Sala, Our Provincial Superior came also.*

*When better weather came we went in turn with Fr. Kriener to visit the stations to look at the possibility of a motor mission and keeping in mind that we were here for evangelization and human promotion (betterment of the people), we were looking for opportunities for catechising and adult education opportunities. For three to four months places are inaccessible because of the weather."*

When Turkey Creek was cut off by the rains, Fr. Kriener would be with the Aborigines, instructing them for Baptism or other

sacraments. By 1984, Fr.Kriener had baptised 352 Aborigines into the Catholic Church.

In 1978, another foundation was made by the Catholic Church at **Fitzroy Crossing**. The Fitzroy River rises in the Hann Ranges. Not far from it is Fitzroy Crossing, a place central to East and West Kimberley. Two Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception arrived there in February 1978. The ultimate aim of their presence was 'to establish the Church'. In an effort to do this, steps were taken to catechize the Aborigines, and thus form an active Catholic Community. The town community and the bush communities are isolated. There is an airstrip, and roads which are usually accessible. There is a language barrier. Those spoken are English, Kriol, Walmajarri, Bunaba, Gooniyandi, and Wangkatjunga. Within a 100 km radius is a population of 2039, of which 1534 are full blooded Aborigines and 100 are part Aboriginal. Other residents total about 400.

A new St.Francis Centre was blessed and opened on Christmas Day, 1978. During 1982, the Holy Week Ceremonies were held for the first time, and First Holy Communion was celebrated in October.

The Sisters minister to Aborigines at:

\* Junjuwa village, a large multilingual town community in Fitzroy Crossing on Aboriginal Reserve land traditionally owned by the Bunaba people. It used to be a Mission.

\* Windmill Reserve, the town community in Fitzroy Crossing on Aboriginal Reserve land. The land was traditionally owned by the unaba people and so has a Bunaba name 'Mindirardi'. Bayulu Village, a large community on land excised from GoGo Station.

Muludga Camp, an outstation on Fossil Downs Station.

Other places are: Christmas Creek Village, Gago station, Cheerabun Station, Christmas Creek School, Cheerabun School, Fitzroy Crossing School, and the road camps (e.g., Citra), and other places.

The original Muludga people were baptised in Landsdowne where they had been instructed. They moved around Bedford Station and the Tablelands and Landsdowne Stations. They had been baptised by Fr. W.Kriener when they were in the Tablelands in the East Kimberley. They moved in with others on the banks of the Margaret River.

About 1978, the Muledga Community moved off Fossil Downs. Some of them come from the desert. They speak Kija, Nyikina, Ngarinyin, Gooniyandi and Jaru. After the river flooded, and one of the old people was drowned, the baptised group moved out to Imintji, an outstation, in the direction of Mt. House, up the Gibb River Road. The remnant of people left at this camp are those who remained after the big flood.

In 1984, the Emmanuel Brothers had the lease for Gogo, Christmas Creek, and Cherubim. It was a combined area of about 3,000,000 acres. The 99 year lease agreements had run their term. Near Blue Bush creek in the Gogo hills is Bayulu Village. When the Sisters asked about coming into the Gogo school for Scripture, the head man and members of the Parents Committee objected with three other families. He told Sr. Frances, *"We'll accept the Sisters for 'Second Hands', and 'Sewing". Not for religion"*, so the Sisters moved to the others who wanted them.

The Franciscan Sisters had gone to Gogo as voluntary help, and took literacy, laundry, sewing, and home making classes.

Travel is part of the Franciscan Apostolate at Fitzroy Crossing. As well as commitments in the town, the Sisters were travelling along the Halls Creek Road, 25 km to Muludga, 110 km to Cherrabun Station, 100 km to Christmas Creek Station, 80 km or more to the Citra Road Camps and others. In the opposite direction the Sisters used to travel 100 km to Warrimbah Hill, an offshoot of Noonkanbah, where they taught the adults on Wednesdays, stayed overnight, and came home Thursday midday.

A good number of people who belong to the UAM in Fitzroy Crossing are related to people living at La Grange. La Grange is strategically situated at a point of transition of tribal movement from the Kimberley to the Pilbara and vice-versa.

A great deal of scripture translation has been done in Walmajarri, the lingua-franca of the area. The Walmajarri were around Balgo area when it was established as a Catholic Mission shortly before the Second World War. The Kukatja took their place and the Walmajarri migrated to the Fitzroy area. Most of the 50 Catholics are transient whites.

The three Sisters working there in 1984 regard it as a pre-evangelization area.

Political power is with white Australians and Government workers. Of the 30 Aboriginal people who had full time employment at Fitzroy Crossing in 1984, only 6 were men.

Since then, with new Government schemes, many more are employed. Others take seasonal work on stations, but not many. 'Karrayiyili', an Adult group in Fitzroy Crossing was established as 'Full Time Tertiary Education' in 1984.

## **SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

In 1980 the Major Superiors Conference expressed the need to extend more pastoral care to religious sisters in isolated areas. Sr. Stella Bryant, a St. John of God Sister was to play a leading role in organising meetings over the following years.

A meeting of Sisters was held in Broome in 1980. The majority expressed an interest in coming together as a Diocesan group, to provide for mutual support in their way of life apostolic endeavours in the Kimberley. In August 1981, at the conclusion of a series of talks on missiology given by Fr. Cyril Halley, the decision was made to extend the invitation to include Priests, Brothers, Representatives from the lay Missionary Association, and from the laity, especially Aboriginal people. Thus began the movement towards Pastoral Associates in the Diocese.

The Conference of 1982 was attended by members of all the above groups. In 1983, at the first Conference Committee meeting held in Broome, Bishop Jobst attended, Fr. R. Hevem was Chairman, and newly elected members were Paul Whitla, lay Missionary Representative, Hector Sundannan and George Pinlarie, Aboriginal Representatives, and Monica Finegan, Parish Councils Representative. Sr. Colleen Malone retained her position as Secretary.

During the meeting Bishop Jobst agreed that to meet the needs of the future Church in the Kimberley in keeping with Vatican II policy, such Diocesan Assemblies were the hope for the future.

The diversity of the people promised a richness of development. The fluctuating pattern caused by the mobility of the people would help spread the 'Word'.

A Diocesan Pastoral Council would be a separate body from the conference Committee, which was the group to inform people of new indications of the Spirit moving through the North. The Council would act as a consultative body to the Bishop to establish a strong line of communication between him and the people; to act as a means whereby the Bishop could more readily hear the voice of the people; and to be a valuable source for mutual inspiration and direction. Such a council, while new to the Kimberley, would be similar to those already functioning in many Dioceses of Australia.

To clarify people's perceptions of regional reality, in 1983 and 1984, an attempt was made to go back in history to share experiences. The study of small regional areas from their historical origins to the present day, is a way of learning local history. For historians the word 'local' usually refers to a field of study which is smaller than the State and larger than the individual.

This is how it was done:

- I. There were three pilgrimages, (i) to Beagle Bay, (ii) to Tjaluwan in the desert near Balgo, and (iii) to Disaster Bay.
2. There was a Diocesan Conference with the theme, 'Community is built on the memory of shared events'.

### **THE BEAGLE BAY PILGRIMAGE 1983**

To celebrate the Holy Year of Redemption proclaimed by Pope John Paul II, 25 March 1983, Bishop J. Jobst of the Broome Diocese sent out a pastoral letter at Easter, inviting the People of God of the Kimberley, and their relatives who had moved to faraway places like Port Hedland, and Darwin, to make a Pilgrimage to Beagle Bay on 24-25 September, to give thanks and praise for their gift of faith, in union with Mary.



When about 1000 people from East and West Kimberley met at Beagle Bay to celebrate, the different cultural backgrounds were evident. From the East Kimberley there was apparent a vibrant young church with all the potential of the early Christian communities after the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost Sunday, and from the West there was evidence of stability brought by several generations of Catholic families.

The concept of the coming together of a large number of Catholic people was formally initiated at a pastoral meeting held in Broome, in April, 1983. Present: Bishop Jobst, Broome; Sr. Anne Boland RSJ, Kununurra; Sr. Stella Bryant JOG, Derby; Sr. Johanna Klep JOG, Derby; Sr. Angela Carroll RSJ, Wyndham; Sr. Antoinette Crippa FDCC, Halls Creek; Sr. Catherine Dower OSF, Fitzroy Crossing; Sr. Philomena Hocking JOG, Broome; Sr. Angela Slattery IBVM, Broome.

The inspiration for such an event grew from two sources: firstly, the rich spiritual and communal experience many people enjoyed when they went back to Beagle Bay for Fr. Francis Huegel's Golden Jubilee of his priesthood. Most of those involved were coastal people from Broome, Lombadina and Derby; secondly, a request from the Red Hill people of Halls Creek for the Catholic people to come together in faith - as do the various fundamental Christian groups throughout the East Kimberley. All present at the meeting recognized the potential pastoral significance of such a coming together in faith could be for the Church in the Kimberley. It was to be the first meeting of the East and West Kimberley Churches. Philip Cox in Broome was asked by the Bishop to be co-ordinator, specifically stating that the event was 'to be what the people wanted and how they wanted it'.

The community at Beagle Bay knew how arduous it was to travel the long distances over unmade roads from the outback Kimberley. Therefore the Beagle Bay Aboriginal Council appointed people to

welcome and care for the incoming groups. Those chosen were historically linked by birth and kinship to that group.

## TO TJALUWAN IN THE DESERT

The pilgrim age which Fr. Ray Hevern SAC and the Balgo Mission staff organized, would lead the Aboriginal communities of Billiluna, Lake Gregory and Balgo to the place where the first Holy Mass was celebrated.

All that is left of the beginning is very little, next to nothing, a small heap of stones which had served as a fireplace for cooking, a few square feet of mud floor where the chapel had been, and some marks from an axe on an old tree. For the rest no change whatsoever from what we found when we arrived there just a day or two before Christmas 1939.

The land was still the same, a desert, dry, arid, dusty, the flies, the burning sun, the clear starry sky in the night.

And yet, there was a remarkable change. Here it was no longer arid and dry. 'Dew' or 'rain' had come down from heaven and given new life. People had changed and Tjaluwan now had a sacred meaning for them. They expressed this in a few words in their own tongue with rhythmic singing during the Eucharistic celebration.

It was a great reward to witness this pilgrim age. Despite the many years of hardship and grave difficulties during World War II, and at times extreme poverty and deprivations, failures, discouragement and droughts, nothing had been in vain. What were but dreams and hopes at the start had become realities. God was, and is, at work.<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> Extract from, Fr. Alphonse Bleischwitz, SAC, *'Rain on Arid Sand'*. Unpublished Document. ADE

## THE DISASTER BAY PILGRIMAGE 1984

*The Beagle Bay Council organized a pilgrimage to Disaster Bay to celebrate the coming of the first priest, Fr. McNab, 100 years previously. They worked hard to get ready for this. They had to cut a road through the bush to reach the place. They fixed the windmill, brought in a pump and a tank. They put up two toilets and two showers, and a bower shed for Mass. They brought out generators for electricity and put up shade for the sisters and brothers. They provided all the meat, bread and salad. They paid \$6000 for this big event. All this money came from the people."* <sup>452</sup>

The legend of Galalang on the Dampier Peninsula made Disaster Bay a sacred place well before the coming of the missionaries. 19 August 1984, about two hundred and fifty people were assembled. Many had come for the weekend.

Among them was Philip Cox, who as a boy of 14 had gone to the East Kimberley as a lay missionary. During the Mass, Bishop Jobst baptised Pablo Emmanuel Lane, the son of a former lay missionary, and the great grandson of Paddy Merandjin, and Bertha Tidlim. In 1934, Paddy had gone to Rockhole with Fr. Francis Huegel, and journeyed around the desert with Fr. Alphonse Bleischwitz for the founding of Balgo mission. <sup>453</sup>

As chairman of the Beagle Bay community in 1984, Keith Kitchener had been responsible for co-ordinating the preparation for the

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<sup>452</sup> Rosie Nunju of Beagle Bay, at the Diocesan Assembly, 1984. Unpublished Records, ADB.

<sup>453</sup> Paddy Merandjim came to Beagle Bay from Halls Creek for education and care, in 1908.

Bertha came from Carnarvon to Beagle Bay for education and care, about the same time, and married Paddy in 1923. At the time of the Pilgrimage to Disaster Bay, Paddy's brother, Alphonse Juggara, was living at Muludga on Gago station.

weekend of celebrations. <sup>454</sup>Cdliv

During the ceremony, Jerome Manado told the group that he remembered Fr.Nicholas Emo's boat anchored out in Disaster Bay. <sup>455</sup>

## **THE DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY 1984**

The Assembly theme was 'Community is built on the memory of shared events'. It emphasized that an historical consciousness is important when building a community. The main thrust of the Assembly, the formation of basic communities, had Fr.W.Kinne SSC, as facilitator. He proposed that basic communities began with primary groups of a couple of families, or sectional interest groups where the people really knew one another, met, related to one another and came together fairly frequently. There was a degree of permanence, with mutual caring, sharing, and support. When the community strove for common goals and concerns there was unity and togetherness.

A basic community became a Christian Community when its inspiration, model and centre was Jesus, the Risen Lord. Openness to charisms of the Holy Spirit was its quality, and a praying and worshipping together centre in celebration of Eucharist was its nature. These communities witnessed, worshipped, and served each other, with self governing through their own emerging leadership.

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<sup>454</sup> In 1946, Keith Kitchener had been sent from Moola Bulla for education at Beagle Bay. He was then 5 years of age.

<sup>455</sup> This place is the birthplace of two women from whom much life flowed, Lena Cox (nee Manado), and Bertha Sibosado. In their stories, both mention Agnes and Thomas Puertollano working with a Manilaman named Sebastian who helped Fr.Jean Marie Janny OCSO, at the Disaster Bay Mission, and later helped Fr.Nicholas Emo in Beagle Bay, Broome, and Lombadina. Jerome Manado linked Fr.Nicholas with this usually deserted spot.

There was a need for openness, and nourishment of their own group faith development with scriptural reflection. As self-sustaining groups independent of outside financial handouts, a concern about justice and peace would prevail.

Descriptive profiles of areas of Catholic Presence compiled by Church personnel had been made as a preparation for the Assembly, i.e., data about the geographical, social, political and demographic nature of each local area. Representatives from each place spoke of the history of local group as it was remembered in the community.

Sr. Angela Slattery, IBVM, introduced a concept of Ministry:

*A good work need not be a ministry. We are bound together by our Baptism. We follow Jesus by serving. Ministry is about serving that community, making it strong, building it up. Because we are baptised everyone has the ability and the responsibility. The group says to the person, we want you to teach, to preach. Not, "I want to go and do it."*

*Ministry Is to tell people to go in the name of the community, "We want you to do this for us."*

*For example, in Balgo, Matthew has an art ministry, Patricia Lee has a music ministry, and last Holy Thursday, John Lee and Tom Jackamarra were chosen to give Communion; in Turkey Creek, Queenie has a ministry; in Kununurra, Ruby has a ministry; in la Grange, Molly Smiler spoke of conflict and how it is better with the children; in Broome, the children come from Mass to prepare for the liturgy; Bro. Hardiman and the boys play music; there is the co-operative; six men from the parish give Communion to the sick; in*

*Fitzroy Crossing, when Father does not come for Mass Sr.Miriam cleans the hall, makes a graphic; Sr.Francis prepares the sermon, Clare Rae looks after the music and cassette player. Tony Rae reads the gospel, Fr.Francis interprets the Gospel, Sr.Miriam distributes Communion; after the service the small children collect the books. stack the chairs and take the flowers.”*

The significance of the Diocesan Assembly was that Aboriginal members played leading roles in its discussions and liturgies. It was an attempt to further adult faith development in the Kimberley.

Since then, two centres of adult faith have been established in the Diocese in another effort to meet Aboriginal Christians in a physical environment suited to cultural background, where people feel at home to discuss and pray about their lives as Aboriginal Christians.

In Broome is the 'Kalam-Warijal Layibaboor' ('Come and See' - good place'). During 1984, Fr.M.McMahon SAC, and Sr.Stella Bryant SJG, began a consultation process in the Diocese regarding the advisability of a training centre for ministry. In 1985 it was suggested that part of the St.John of God convent in Broome could house the 'college'. The Broome project was to concentrate on adult faith education and parish renewal starting with Broome parish with the idea of working towards basic Christian communities.

In Turkey Creek is the 'Mirrilingki Spirituality Centre'. Two Sisters of St.Joseph, Sr.Clare Ahern, and Sr.Theresa Moralini organised a group to go to the Daly River Centre with Fr. W.Kriener in 1980. From this encounter, a local man, Hector, emerged as a Church leader for his people. Sr.Clare became convinced of the need for a place where faith development on an adult level could be offered to the Aboriginal people.

A small property (three acres) came up for sale near the Turkey Creek roadhouse. The Warmun Community decided not to buy it.

The Sisters had a quick consultation , Bishop Jobst provided the \$240,000. It had a four-year old homestead, a mobile home (two bedrooms, kitchen, living room), and large machinery shed. Through the good-will of the Argyle Mine manager, the Sisters bought enough ATCO demountables to set up accommodation for some 24 persons. One of the priority requests of Bishop Jobst is to train Aborigines for Leadership and Community Building positions.

## **ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES**

### **1. BALGO, The WIRRUMANU COMMUNITY.**

Balgo is no longer a mission , but a large community on Aboriginal Reserve land. People link socially to Alice Springs, Yuendumu , Papunya and Lajamanu in the Northern Territory. The language is Kukatja.

In 1989, the School at Balgo Hills in the Kimberley is again part of the Catholic Education System in the Kimberley. At first managed by the Sisters of St.John of God, it was ceded to the Government in 1962 when the Order withdrew from the school. In 1982, community members approached Bishop Jobst about taking over the school again. He invited the De La Salle Brothers and the Sisters of Mercy from Victoria. The school was transferred from Government operation to Catholic at the beginning of the 1984 school year. It is called the 'Luernpa Catholic School'. Br.Leo Scollen became the Principal.

### **2 BEAGLE BAY OR NGARLEN COMMUNITY.**

In 1989 this was a large community on Aboriginal Reserve land.

Homes for town Aborigines were provided by the Government, but none were provided for those on Missions, which were not within a declared town area and therefore did not qualify for housing grants from the State and Commonwealth.

Bishop Jobst proposed to the Native Welfare Department that three of the Missions excise the property on which Aboriginal homes were built and give titles to the Aborigines. The Missions were La Grange, Beagle Bay and Lombadina. The excised areas could then be called a town area and qualify for the grants.

Title to the Church, school, hospital, dormitories, power house, workshop and Mission staff quarters would remain with the Mission. He hoped that the Commonwealth Government would loan money to extend the pastoral industry at Beagle Bay, and the market gardening industry at La Grange, to qualify the Aboriginal occupants of housing on the missions so that they could receive State and Commonwealth housing grants.

A meeting of the Tribal Council was held at Beagle Bay 18 April 1974. Present were Bishop J.Jobst, Fr.John McGuire, SAC, Miss Barbara Cox, Mr.R.Williams, Mr.R.Cox, Mr.K.Kitchener, Mr.P.Cox, Mr.E..Dunn. The general aim of the Church for Beagle Bay was to allow the Aborigines to form an independent Christian community. The people should look after their own affairs, economy, housing, and education. The Councillors unanimously agreed that the church and priest should stay on the Mission. They agreed that there should be no one who sits down and gets sit-down money.

### 3. LOMBAD!NA, OR DJARINDJIN COMMUNITY.

In 1984, the I40 people who lived there consisted of 130 full blood Aborigines , 20 part Aboriginal and about IO others.



Languages are English and Bardi, and there is no language barrier.

Church Personnel consists of a Priest, 2 Loreto Sisters, and 4 Lay Missionaries. For employment people were working under C.D.E.P. A variety of jobs are undertaken, stockmen, mechanics, butcher, baker, office work, teacher assistant and shop assistant. The political power is with old women, old men and the Aboriginal Council and Chairperson make all decisions. There is some confusion when people are uncertain as to where power is.

In 1989, Lombadina was a large community on Aboriginal Reserve land near the sea. The language is Bardi. The school is the 'Djarindjin Lombadina Catholic School established first in 1915. This was taken over as a Government school but again became a Catholic School in 1980. In 1989 Sr. Francine IBVM began taking secondary students.

#### 4. LA GRANGE or **BIDYADANGA COMMUNITY.**

Cyclone Sally struck La Grange mission in December 1971, causing at least \$30,000 damage. In 1989 this was a large multilingual community on Aboriginal Reserve land. The languages are Nyangumarta, Mangala, Yulparija, Karajarri, and Juwaliny. The school is the Bidyadanga Government School, established in 1960. La Grange has gum trees along the beaches of the coastal strip on the Indian Ocean. It has all weather roads and an airstrip.

In 1984, some 400 Aborigines, about 20 were part Aboriginal, and there were about 20 others. There was a language barrier for the older people but not for the young.

Employment is under control of the Bidyadanga Community using C.D.E.P. programs. Political power is held by the Aboriginal men and the white project officer. There is some confusion because people are uncertain as to where power is. In 1989, Church personnel consisted

of Fr. McKelson SAC, Br. Richard Besenfelder SAC, Sr. Veronica McCarthy SJG, and Sr. Johanna Klep SJG The school at La Grange is the Bidyadanga Government School, established in 1960.

## 5. KALUMBURU COMMUNITY

This is now a large multilingual community on Aboriginal Reserve land. It used to be a Benedictine Mission. The languages are Kwini, Kulari, and Wunambal. It has a Government State School which replaced the Catholic School established in 1931.

Kalumburu's beautiful fruit orchard and garden is its most striking feature. It is close to the river and sea and is mountainous. It is isolated and it has an airstrip. Of the 200 people living there , 180 are Aboriginal and 4 young children are part Aboriginal. Church Personnel consists of a priest, some Sisters, some Lay Missionaries, and a brother.

Employment is related to local economy, garden, garbage clearance, occasional building, maintenance, store, office, baking, road making, and the outstation, cattle, fencing, mustering, etc. There are 40 - 50 positions for long term employment.

One of the Benedictine Sisters, Sr. Josephine Montero, went to Kalumburu in 1972. She shared her story with the author:

*I was born in Castrieriz-Burgos, Spain, 9 September 1937. I came to Western Australia 1 June 1958 because the Abbot of New Norcia and Sr. Felicitas had gone to Spain for Vocations.*

*My Parish Priest had recommended me to come. I made my Novitiate in New Norcia and made my First Profession and Final Profession of Vows there. Then I went to Subiaco 5 April 1964 for five years to learn English and train as a nurse with the Sisters of St. John of God.*

*Five months later, I was called back from New Norcia, to Spain. for two and a half years. Then in 1972, after two or three weeks in New Norcia, I went to Kalumburu, 25 August 1972.*

*The policy of our Congregation changed, and some Spanish Sisters went home to Spain in 1974. Cardinal Knox had asked the Benedictine Sisters to go to Melbourne to work with Spanish speaking people, but they did not go then. Later, in 1977, I went with Abbot Gomez to Archbishop Little who was happy about it but did not want us to leave Kalumburu, and Abbot Rooney wanted the nuns back in New Norcia.*

*In 1980 there were talks about amalgamation with the Benedictine Mission Sisters of Tutzinn, a German Order in the Phillippines . Propaganda Fide said to defer the decision until 1984. We would lose our link with Spain, we would be linked with Manila. <sup>456</sup>*

During 1981, the Holy See placed Kalumburu Mission within the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Broome. Kalumburu had been 'sui juris' under New Norcia. Given the changing times, it was judged that the closer support of the Broome Diocese would be beneficial , and the Church boundaries were changed.

After more than 40 years of residence there, Fr.Sanz decided to return to the Benedictine monastery at New Norcia WA. His Benedictine successors were Fr.Basil Nosedá , Fr.Matthew Kelly, and Dom Joseph Argus.

In June 1981, a group of Aborigines was involved in a walk out at the mission which received wide press coverage. They said that they were seeking a greater share of responsibility in running their own affairs. The Carson River cattle station was bought on behalf of the Aborigines from the Benedictine Order for \$575,000.

When Fr.Nosedo left the Kalumburu Mission in 1982, a seventy-four years' relationship with New Norcia was severed. Fr.C.Saunders arrived at the mission to minister to the Kalumburu Aborigines. The four Benedictine missionary Sisters stayed on.

6. LAKE GREGORY or **MULAN COMMUNITY**, 1979:

This is an Aboriginal community which runs its own station. The languages are Walmajarri and Kukatja. The Catholic School is the 'John Pujajangka Piyirn School'. When about 200 Aborigines decided to move out to this outstation from Balgo Mission, Sr.Colleen Kleinschaefer, a Mercy Sister who was involved in Adult Education with them, went too. In the beginning, she lived by herself in a caravan and commenced a school. Eventually, when her Order committed themselves to the project, another Sister joined her, two more went to Billiluna, and several more moved into Balgo Mission.

7. **BILLILUNA OR MINDIBUNGU COMMUNITY**, 1979:

This is an Aboriginal community which now runs its own station. The languages are Jaru and Walmajarri. It has the Billiluna Catholic School. There are Mercy Sisters in residence.

8. **TURKEY CREEK or WARMUN COMMUNITY**, 1979/80:

This is a large community on Aboriginal Reserve land. The languages are Kija, Mirwung, and Jaru. The Catholic School is called the 'Ngalanganpum School', established in 1979 (70).

There are no long term employed but 19 people work around the school as teachers, gardeners , etc., and 10 work on building houses

from May to October.

Turkey Creek has the natural beauty of the surrounding mountains. It is close to the creek, which is dry most of the year. At a distance of 200 km from town, roads are cut off at times in the wet.

The languages are Kija , Kriol and English among the population of about 250 Aborigines and 10 others comprising 3 sisters, a community adviser and his wife and children. At times there can be a language barrier. In 1976, in September, Fr.Kriener SAC started adult instructions in Turkey Creek during the Wet. There was only a postman in Turkey Creek. He stayed in Mabel Downs, and did a lot of pastoral work which he completed in the wet when he could not cross the river. He taught between thunder storms morning and afternoons. 15 March 1976, He baptised twenty-five adults, then another adult and two babies.

A Mass centre was established in the !970's at Turkey Creek. The Catholic Church personnel is made up of the three sisters in the school. It is part of the Halls Creek Parish.

Approximately 60 people have short term employment building houses, as shop assistants, at station work, office work and teaching. Political power is with the women and men , and with white Australians to a limited degree. At times there is confusion as to where power is.

Queenie, an elder, told the people at the 1984 Diocesan Assembly, *"When my mother and Winnie came back from Leprosarium, they get ready for priest, we just sit there, they feel sorry for us, they take us out to teach us. Fr.Nicholas tell Winnie she got us ready, all of us from Texas. Ten of us baptised in shed. We good now."*

The big Baptism day in Turkey Creek came in 1976. There were

thirty Baptisms. When Sr. Veronica came in 1975, there were a lot of old men there. She remembered Fr. Kriener: *He said to them, "If the creek is up when I come next, I'll stay on the Halls Creek side, and you swim over."*

*There was another big baptism at the end of 1979. In 1983, there was Confirmation, about forty adults. It was like a renewal.*

*For three months, every Tuesday, Father held instructions. he marked the roll. If they missed so many, they were not confirmed.*

*Some of these people had come from Violet Valley. The story was told how 'Daylight' wanted to get to his woman in Violet Valley. He was caught, tied up, belted with pick handles. His friends came. They left Violet Valley as a group. Old Jacko Tinmaria was the leader of the group. Some of the people died on the way. They killed cattle to eat, as they went.*

*Jimmy Klyne, the manager of Texas Station, let them stay. He said to the police and to the Violet Valley people that they would not touch these people. He protected them. Ruby, the present Chairman's wife, was a little girl when this happened.*

*Originally Turkey Creek was like a holiday place, for when the people went on walkabout in the wet season, they met there and had initiation ceremonies.*

*In 1984 there were five camp areas of people from different stations. When the wage award came, the old age pensioners came back here, and Ruby Yalanger were working at the Post Office (housekeeping). The Post Office over the other side of the creek is now the Community Advisor's house. The stations from which most of the come are Texas, Bedford, Mabel Downs, Lissadell, Springvale.*

*Top Camp people were a mixed group. Middle Camp people were from Bedford and Springvale Stations, and Bottom Camp people were from Lissadell station. There were 250 - 300 people. The young people are on stations working. Some have gone to Bow River Station. Some, like Jacko, who was the first to become a Catholic was originally belonging to U.A.M. Church.*

*There is a link with the leprosarium in Derby, and the two Catechists. The Turkey Creek people catechised their own people and asked Father to visit. It is a different thing on this side of the Kimberley, for example 'Ringer's Soak' are now preparing or Baptism. There is a different social context now. After the pilgrimage experience in Wyndham, in which the Ka/umburu people took part, they prepared seven hymns, for example, the Annunciation, The Birth, The Flight into Egypt.*

*The people in Turkey Creek wanted Sisters. They wanted two schools. They could have one or the other. The advisors, Tom Stevens and Michael Dillon were anti-Catholic School.*

In December 1978, the Warmun Aboriginal community of Turkey Creek formally asked the Bishop to provide a Catholic school for their children. The community wanted the church to be given land for that purpose. In fact, they set land aside for it.

The WA Aboriginal Lands Trust said that the State Lands Department recommended that a temporary lease be arranged to protect the building and facilities provided and maintained by the Church. The lease was chosen from a former pastoral lease. The Church went ahead in good faith.

In 1979 the Sisters began to teach in a 'bough shed' - one made of tree trunks with a spinifex roof. The Church found \$82,000 from Church resources and a proper school and staff quarters were built. Then an Aboriginal Legal Service lawyer drew up an agreement between the

Community and the Church to cover conditions for running the school.

Various outsiders persuaded the Community to change its mind and the Church was denied any security of land tenure. The Bishop signed the document. He had no choice. Both he and the Community wanted the school to go ahead. Of course, they wanted very little land, only the absolute minimum to allow the Church to continue their mission work. For a hundred years the Catholic Church had provided services for all people, especially for Aborigines. From reading the new papers the impression was given that Aborigines wanted the church to withdraw. They did not. They assured the Bishop they wanted the Church to stay. They felt they were part of it.

The Catholic Community School came into being. 27 May 1979, Sr. Clare, who had been three years in Kununurra, came to Turkey Creek as Principal. She was in Turkey Creek until the end of April 1982. Sr. Theresa was in Moora WA 1968-1971, 1973 in Wyndham, 1974-1975 in Kununurra, 1976-1978 in Moora, and then came to Turkey Creek. Sr. Kathleen came as a third member of the community in 1981. Sr. Veronica came in 1982, as Principal."

## 9. **RINGER SOAK OR YARUMAN COMMUNITY,** 1985:

This is an outstation South East of Halls Creek partly on land excised from Gordon Downs Station and partly on vacant crown land. The languages are Jaru, Ngarti, Nyuininy. The School is the 'Bilir Ngawiwu Catholic School'.

This little community of about eighty had experienced the trauma of being evicted from Gordon Downs Station, and had lived a very precarious existence in Hall's Creek for some time. They had



experienced more trouble from the manager of Gordon Downs on their return to Yaruman. Because of the media, the Government had to give them land. The Government granted them a lease of 3500 hectares of Crown Land south of Gordon Downs.

The community made contact with the Church during their sojourn in Hall's Creek, through the kindness, concern, and service of Fr.Kriener and the Canossian Sisters, who continued to visit the community and instruct them when they returned to Yaruman.

Three kilometres from Gordon Downs, they got forty sq.km. Good bores, material for five houses, and three toilets. Fr.Kriener went there every fortnight. At the end of 1984 it was planned to have a Baptism of 35 adults, because they have started to settle. Maybe the year after, Sisters. Maybe a school in 1986."

The people of 'Yaruman' wrote a letter to Bishop Jobst asking him to provide a Catholic School for their children. Previous requests had been made to the Bishop by the Chairman of the Community, but a written letter was presented to him when he visited the Community 12 October 1983. The children had been lined up to meet the Bishop, and members of the community promised him that they would be involved in the education of their children.

The Bishop approached the Sisters of St.Joseph to send two Sisters to Yaruman. These arrived 8 May 1985 accompanied by the Bishop and a Lay Missionary team to build generator sheds, etc. The main thrust of that year was a feasibility study to ascertain what type of school met the needs of these people and to prepare the majority of the community for Baptism. It was a very happy occasion when many people came to Yaruman 9 November 1985 to join the community in celebrating their Baptism.

In the five years since the Sisters arrived, the community have shown their strength as a small Christian community. They provide teachers

for the children, have continued instructions in their faith, and take an active part in being a truly Christian people.

#### 10. RED HILL OR LUNJA COMMUNITY , 1986:

This is a town community on Aboriginal Reserve land in Halls Creek. The language is Jaru. The Catholic School is called the 'Warlawurru School'. It had come into existence in 1978. The Bishop had told Fr.W.Kriener SAC, to make the Catholic Church present in town and on the Stations. He felt more free to have the communities of Turkey Creek, Red Hill and Ringer Soak. The houses were up by 1980. At Christmas, Fr.Kriener baptised 14 Aborigines in Red Hill. It is only three km. away from Halls Creek, but unlike Halls Creek, the Church was always full on Sundays. The Catholic School at Red Hill near Halls Creek is called the 'Warlawurru School'. It had come into existence in 1988.

#### 11. GIBB RIVER

is a small community on Gibb River Station where Ngarinyin is spoken. The elders approached Bishop Jobst for a school in 1989.

Bishop Jobst celebrated his Silver Jubilee as Bishop in 1984. His role with the charism of authority had enabled the local Church to continue to function as a whole. His authority has been an enabling service to the 'People of God'. Such Church authority in the past enabled the Kimberley to have a Bishop Gibney, a Fr.Duncan McNab, a Fr. Alphonse Tachon, a Fr.Nicholas Emo, a Mother Antonia, and many other missionaries who enriched the region by their work and prayer.

In 1990, Beagle Bay celebrated its centenary with another pilgrimage. In preparation, faith discussions took place over a six week period .

Then people came from north, south and east to join in the festivities at Beagle Bay which had truly been the birthplace of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley.

A social analysis of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Aborigines may be a good thing. Any conflict between a search for a Church identity and the persistence of regional loyalties and prejudices, makes 'shared memories' important. Most of the members of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley are Aboriginal, so the non-verbal impact is, a Church that is coloured, poor, and powerless.

History is something essentially unfinished. It is necessary to 'move beyond' the past without repudiating it in the name of new levels of critical consciousness presently enjoyed. Each of the key figures who dominated this local history enjoyed a critical consciousness of his own generation. This enabled a mode of cultural emancipation as each one in turn created a new environment.

The identification, and critical exploration of assumptions about society, and the role of institutions and individuals in social processes, can help articulate the relationship between social, economic, and political environments. To locate the local issues in a broader state-wide, national, or international context, may help expose the constraints on the foundation of local structures.

An understanding of the ways in which the social structure is defined, maintained, transformed and articulated within the structures of race and class is a way to discover where a person's common humanity lies. This common humanity is where Jesus will be found. The dominant culture, is the one which 'names' things and places, for the sub-dominant culture.

The question, "How effectively have Catholic Church goals been realized in the Kimberley?" requires analysis, as the goals of the historical protagonists varied according to period, nationality and expectations, local and overseas. Agents of change could be from local Government structures, Aboriginal communities, Religious Orders, or from Religious Bodies overseas, such as Major Superiors, or Propaganda Fide in Rome.

All the time, throughout the 100 years, the land in which the 'Church Presence' was found, made its own demands, and the structure which grew out of the social relationships, came primarily from these demands. The environment moulded the missionaries with the rest of the 'people of God'.

Another question asked is "To what extent can the Church's interest, be identified as that of the Community's interest, tacitly or otherwise?" A dilemma is created by such a question. It is therefore necessary to carefully analyse the past and present situation with each community, and to ask other questions, "If this ... , then this ...", and the process becomes generative of conscious growth, and consequent maturity.

An examination of the way in which the Catholic Church was established, and its attempt to develop the area of its influence , may be viewed as a form of cultural domination. It may also be seen as a genuine dialogue with educator and pupil together being humanized in the act of transforming their world. Or, it may be a mixture of both.

Each situation needs to be explored on its own merits, for there is a continuum of experience. In an authentic dialogue, the person being

evangelized is always in the privileged position. This means that the effective missionary undergoes a process of change, and becomes more human, if it is true evangelization.

Take the roles of Felix and Fr. Alphonse Tachon. The latter was probably the most effective evangelizer who came to the Kimberley. What happened in Beagle Bay was an exchange of culture on a very deep level, dependent on the spiritual receptivity of each of the two men.

The results of this spiritual relationship then overflowed to the community. The result of this exchange on a spiritual level was the enfleshing of Christ in both men, and in other members of the group. It was expressed in Liturgy which evolved to celebrate this new phenomenon. Such a relationship is a fairly rare occurrence, for the spiritual dimension can lose its significance and symbolism.

The historical dynamics of change in the region were probably most influenced by the world wars which had an impact on the German administration of the Kimberley Church. But the social dynamics were influenced by legislation. All missionaries were affected by reliance on Government support, and occasionally were regarded as an arm of the administration. Some tried too hard to keep on side with Government policy.

Until this regime began to be alleviated during the administration of S. Middleton after the second world war, it was endured. National protection policies became assimilation policies, which were gradually changed to integration policies, and then to self determination policies. Currently the Government policy is that of self management for Aboriginal Communities. Basic rights of citizenship and education are accorded to Aborigines, and their

Communities are reassessing their potential areas of self management.

The cosmopolitan nature of missionary background brought about a diversity in education. Setting up development in terms of individual decision making within the elements of the society itself, allowed for a far more fluid evolvement of education.

The Western idea of a 'banking' concept of education where a store of knowledge is deposited into a person's mind and ipso facto moulds him into a good citizen, is at variance with the concept where a process of education is inherent in the living experience provided by the environment.

How does one approach the evidence of 'class' in the area? Its presence is so strong that it is tangible. One may deny its existence but empirical evidence thrusts it forward. It is still the warp and weft of the social fabric of being in the Kimberley. How did it come about that the indigenous population was placed in positions of utter dependency on the white population which took the land? Why is this remnant remnant today, still struggling for the right of self determination? These are issues with which later legislators have to grapple.

A perspective from the view of the people has been compiled with stories from oral sources, and it is available in another volume. It describes suffering caused by social change. A deep wound is left in the psyche of Aborigines who have had to cope with the loss of human kin, as well as the loss of land.

It may take generations for its society to cope with the emotional scars of the past. They may not be forgotten, but it is hoped that they

will be forgiven so that the creativity of ordinary people will be released with power to shape families, communities, and ultimately the personal lives of those with whom they came in contact.

The motor for change is lying in social relations, as against ideas. But the two interrelate. The family heritage and story element will enable genuine social theory to be derived from the confrontation rooted in the historical struggles of the past.

Exploration of the reality of the symbolic dimension, will be found in the myths, dreams, and visions in areas such as religion, music, and dance. This symbiosis between reflective action and critical theorizing will enable critical consciousness in the subdominant group to become a vehicle of education. Paulo Friere used this method in Brazil while he worked among the oppressed. He was influenced by Marx's theory that the environment is a formative force in developing ideas of reality, yet he proposed that a human being can choose to be other than that for which his environment conditioned him.

This story is of growth, from an idea handed on through the generations, to which each generation makes its contribution, and passes on. It is what grows out of the commitment of so many.

There are steps forward, as well as setbacks, in the building of a Diocese. Looking towards the future may we know that the Spirit of Jesus is in us, and may a feeling of hope and belief in the presence of the Church continue to grow.

Improvements for social change can come from the grass roots of a society which so desires it. The time is at hand for more permanent commitment to the Church from those who claim the Kimberley as their birthplace. Currently, only one Sister can claim that privilege,

Sr.Pat Rhatigan.SJG

There is a need for all members of the People of God who make up the Diocese of Broome, to analyse the current structures, and be willing to allow the Spirit to move through them to 'tear down', and 'to build up' so that there is freedom for continued growth.



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 BLBattye Library, Perth.  
 ACAPCatholic Archdiocese of Perth.  
 APFPropaganda Fide, Rome.  
 SAOSalesian Archives, Oakleigh.  
 AGRGeneralate of the Redemptorists, Rome.  
 AGP Generalate of the Pallottines, Rome.  
 AJHSociety of Jesuits, Hawthorn  
 JOLJohn Oxley Library. Brisbane.  
 MHCMelbourne Historical Commission.  
 ASJGJ.of G Sisters, Subiaco, Broome, Derby.  
 NNNNew Norcia Abbey.  
 ACASCatholic Archdiocese of Sydney.

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