



# **MISSIOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION**

**MADE BY WOMEN IN SHIFTING STRUCTURES**

**OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN EAST KIMBERLEY, W.A.**

**1884-1990**

**BRIGIDA NAILON CSB**

**MISSIOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION  
MADE BY WOMEN IN SHIFTING STRUCTURES  
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN EAST KIMBERLEY, W.A.**

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From *Western Australia, An Atlas of Human Endeavour 1829-1979*

Produced for the Education Committee, WAY '79 by the Education and lands and Surveys Departments of Western Australia, 1979.p. 34.

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Map 2 Aboriginal Languages and Dialects of the Kimberley

From *Western Australia: An Atlas of Human Endeavour 1829-1979*

Produced for the Education Committee, WAY '79 by the Education and lands and Surveys

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From *Community Social Impact Assessment: East Kimberley Working Paper*, no. 27.

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## Summary

### **Description of the encounter between Catholicism and Aboriginal Peoples in the Kimberley region of Western Australia with special emphasis on the role of women on both sides of the encounter, 1884-1990**

The purpose of this document is to recount a history of the contact between Catholicism and Aborigines in the Kimberley. Catholic missionaries were sent to the Kimberley because of the Church's concern for the well being, evangelisation and education of Aborigines, as well as to minister to the settlers of the region. The thematic focus of this thesis is that the vitality of indigenous Catholic communities rested on the extent to which both female and male persons shared in roles of leadership decision making and service on both sides of the encounter.

In the Kimberley the social pattern of the Church acquired an Aboriginal and Asian majority. Its population was always the subject of debate as to how it should be subjugated, exploited, controlled, protected, bred out, or developed. The nationality of those missionaries who served the Church in the Kimberley was mixed; among them were Scottish, Aboriginal, Irish, French, Australian, Spanish, Asian, German, and Italian. German missionaries persevered through two world wars, often only able to continue their work through the generosity of benefactors from their country.

A multicultural Catholic Church brought diversity to some Aboriginal communities thus introducing a leaven of ideas which helped create a new social fabric based on communion rather than on power. 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. There was always a shortage of 'men, women and money'. Women were seen as essential to nurture human relationships, but the absence of women's voices in Catholic Church policy making presented a serious gap for the implementation of women's agendas.

Women contributed to missiological theories which gradually adapted to accommodate some Aboriginal customs within local Catholic Church liturgy. It was always hoped that Aborigines would exercise pastoral care among their own peoples so that other Church workers could become redundant. Kinship patterns provided such pastoral care in an Aboriginal manner, but members of some Aboriginal communities lost kinship ties within the Church institution. Aboriginal agency was essential to the establishment of centres of care and concern as some of the emerging indigenous churches accepted the leadership roles of women.



### **‘Statement of Authorship’**

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Since my framework of reference is that of the Catholic Church, I have collaborated with Catholic Bishops for access to Church Records held in Broome, in Perth, in Propaganda Fide in Rome, in Sept Fons Monastery in Lyons France, in Pallottine Archives in Limburg, Germany, in Salesian Archives in Turin, Italy. I have collaborated with the Sisters of St John of God, and other religious orders whose members have worked beside Aborigines in the Kimberley.

All the interviews used were for another project and are in the Broome Diocese archives. People interviewed by Fr F. Huegal *sac* knew they were helping tell the Church story.

This document contains the names of some Aboriginal people who have died. This could cause distress if read by close relatives of these people. Therefore care should be taken when sharing this work among Aboriginal communities. Relatives of those whose stories were told in *This is your Place: Beagle Bay Mission 1890-1990*, agreed that all names might be used.<sup>1</sup>

Neither do I wish to cause any offence by the use of certain terms, especially those dealing with racial and cultural descriptions. These are used only in historical context and only in quotations as indicated. This is an historical document and there were times when these terms were in common usage.

.....

(Signature) 24 December 1997

---

<sup>1</sup> Sr Joan Mansfield sjg and Sr Frances Crowe fm made the necessary contacts for these permissions.

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For the opportunity to write this history, I acknowledge my indebtedness

to all those religious women who offered me loving hospitality and deep friendship during my time in the Kimberley, in Subiaco Perth, and in Victoria.

to Bishop J. Jobst, who gave me access to his archives and continued hospitality;

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and to members of my Brigidine family.



# Introduction

## Focus

Consolidation of Catholic mission to Aborigines in the Kimberley of Western Australia and the position of women on both sides of the encounter from 1884-1990 form the thematic focus of this thesis. The overall hypothesis is that a multi-cultured Catholic society enabled a communal spirit of a universal faith communion to develop, although limitations of the early missions were apparent when women had no place in decision making bodies. In early years only male agendas were implemented in a society deprived of feminine perspectives, feminine values and a feminine voice. In this early social context white males were politically dominant and establishment of a new strata of society for Aborigines made progress very slowly, a situation apparent in the reports of the Roth and Moseley Royal Commissions, in 1904 and 1934 respectively. National movements to improve society for Aborigines were initiated through the ideas of Elkin and Hasluck. Aborigines never surrendered their right to land, and only on recognition of this fact could just and mutually recognised agreements be made with political good will. Within the Catholic Church ideas began to change. 'Divino Afflante Spiritu' (1943), the Second Vatican Council documents, and post 1962 writings opened ecumenical doors. On a new creative wave of thinking Sisters of St Joseph, Mercy Sisters, Franciscan Missionary Sisters and Canossian Sisters came to East Kimberley and its surrounding areas to build on women's work in education begun by Sisters of St John of God and consolidated by female lay missionaries like Alice Evans, Eileen Nihill, Barbara Shea and Cecily Barker.

## Changing Missiologies

An earlier Church had seen itself as a sanctuary in which the world and worldliness had no place, but the missiology of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5) was of a Church in the world and a sign of hope to the world. Ideas outlined in the documents of Vatican II<sup>2</sup> were an expression of new thinking in Church and society.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council: The Complete Text of the Constitutions, Documents and Declarations, with an Introduction by G. Baum* osa, Maryland, Newman Press, 1966.

The council had a revitalising effect on missionary attitudes and some Religious Orders of Sisters took the option of moving out of church owned enterprises to work with marginalised peoples by offering their expertise and services in a different manner. Women were not ordained so they were more reliant on personal skills in relating with others. Women's concept of Church tended to be different and their missiology was more exciting with changing ministries. Usually women did not work in an administrative capacity and this enabled them to be closer to grass roots Church. Some made lifelong friends and formed close relationships with Aboriginal women who had an on-going contact with Church workers.<sup>3</sup>

### **Historical Background to Missions**

Historical conditions made the missions necessary. The Aborigines had lost their land and their livelihood. They were placed under special legislation, under the Aborigines Act, in a position where they could not help themselves, being continuously relocated for different reasons. Oral and anecdotal evidence bears witness to the struggles of individual Aborigines and their families to survive as colonists encroached upon the land with pastoral holdings. Effects of Government policies on local mission endeavours during the early years becomes evident in the thesis. It was particularly evident in the ill effects caused by Government side stepping of mission administration.

Historically the Catholic Church's involvement with Aborigines in most states was minimal<sup>4</sup> but in the Kimberley of North West Australia there was opportunity to help with missionaries and resources provided from France, Germany, Ireland and Italy. Until 1907 when the Sisters of St. John of God joined the mission the Church team was composed of non English speaking Europeans, who supported themselves and their dependents as best as they could on mission enterprise or on funds sent from Europe. Like pastoralists, the Church workers were dependent on Aboriginal and Asian labour for survival with cattle stations and gardens. As time passed paternalistic relationships deepened. For some Aborigines, their appropriation of Catholicism was

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<sup>3</sup> Sr Therese Doolan spoke to the author in Perth in 1981 of a remark made to her by a dying Aboriginal woman who had been one of the Native Sisters in Beagle Bay. She said, "Once you have been close to Jesus nothing else matters".

<sup>4</sup> Hilton Deakin, 'The Aborigines and the Church: A Study of the Relationship between the Aboriginal People and the Catholic Church in Australia, Research commissioned by the Episcopal Commission for Development and Peace in Australia'. Private publication, 1975.

a way of expressing their own agency and power, <sup>5</sup>. in both accepting and resisting Christianity. Conflict between Aboriginal Law and Catholicism was not unknown.

From the beginning of Catholicism/Aboriginal contact in the North West, Asian Filipino influence was of significance. In 1896 membership of the Catholic Church in Broome consisted of unmarried Filipino sailors, between the ages of 26-36 years.<sup>6</sup> Most early Church marriages were between these men and Aboriginal women.<sup>7</sup> With close geographical proximity to Asia, trade with coastal Aborigines had been a practice for hundreds of years. In Australia itself, trade was an important means of contact between Aboriginal groups, pearl shells from the Kimberley coast were traded into South Australia and Cape York.<sup>8</sup> Business time for Aborigines was a sacred and often secret time. It gave an opportunity for information to be exchanged across boundaries of difference.

### **Five Catholic Missions Established in the Kimberley**

Five Catholic missions were established in the Kimberley. They were Beagle Bay Mission (1890-1975, Drysdale River/Kalumburu Mission (1908-1985), Lombadina Mission (1910-1985), Balgo Hills Mission (1940-1985), La Grange Mission (1957-1985). By 1990 they were no longer administered by the Church but have chosen to keep a Church presence. These Communities with Aboriginal Councils which have chosen different names are Ngarlen Community (Beagle Bay); Kalumburu (Drysdale River Mission); Djarindjin Community (Lombadina); Wirrumanu Community (Balgo Hills); and Bidyadanga Community (La Grange). Other places with a Church presence are Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Gibb River, Mulan Community (Lake Gregory), Minidbungu Community (Bililuna), Wyndham, Kununurra, Halls Creek, Warrmarn Community (Turkey Creek), Yaruman Community (Ringers Soak) and Lunja Community (Red Hill). The Pallottine missionaries who did so much to establish these

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<sup>5</sup> Peggy Brock, *Outback Ghettos, Aborigines, Institutionalisation, A History of Aboriginal Institutionalism and Survival*, Oakleigh, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p3.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Emo, 'Animarum of Souls', 1896 Archives of the Diocese of Broome.

<sup>7</sup> At the turn of the century Fr Nicholas Emo assisted them in buying land in Broome for their homes. These families became the nucleus of the future Catholic community of Broome. ADB.

<sup>8</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, *Hidden Histories: Black Stories from the Victoria Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations*, Canberra: AIATSIS, 1991, p. 8.

communities have not owned any land in the Kimberley, but the Catholic Church owned and leased land in order to give security to its workers and its education system.

The encounter falls into three periods, in the west Kimberley region from 1884, in the east from 1930 to the post-war period, then the period of development which took place after the granting of citizenship in 1967. Although Wyndham had been a port of call by the early missionaries, Fr Otto Raible *sac* brought Catholic presence to the East Kimberley travelling around the pastoral stations. Beagle Bay became the seat of his diocese during the Second World War, where a model devotional Church not unlike that established by Benedictines at New Norcia flourished because of its isolation from white centres. From this secure base at Beagle Bay, Pallottines, Aborigines and Native Sisters moved into the desert to establish Balgo Mission. At the 1983 pilgrimage to Beagle Bay, when the East Kimberley people came to join in the celebrations, the West Kimberley believers were confronted with wide cultural difference in the local Catholic Church.

### **Sources**

Primary material was made available from the Archives of the Diocese of Broome. Bishop Raible had carefully preserved official letters with the answers often typed on the back by the use of carbon. Since the Batty Library in Perth could not produce material appropriated by the Aboriginal planning Department, this correspondence was particularly valuable. It provided information about government/church relationships.<sup>9</sup> Documents from the Abbey of Sept Fons in France were made available. Baptismal registers and chronicles of all missions were available. Extensive German correspondence preserved information about the supply of wheat for bread from the Beagle Bay farm in Tardun and about the labour force provided by the lay brothers. Access to archives from the Pallottine Head house in Limburg, Germany, the Archdiocese of Perth, the Salesian Archives of Turin, Italy and Chadstone, Propaganda Fide in Rome and the Jesuits in Hawthorn were provided on request from Bishop John Jobst, who carefully preserved all early documents.

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<sup>9</sup> In 1981, the Batty Archival Library in Perth could not produce archival material appropriated by the Aboriginal Planning Department from the 1930's on, this correspondence was particularly valuable to the author.

Beagle Bay Mission was called the ‘cradle of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley’, and its history up to 1928 was recorded by George Walter’s *Australien*,<sup>10</sup> published in 1928 when Rome returned the mission mandate to the Pallottines, and Mary Durack’s *The Rock and the Sand*,<sup>11</sup> was written after access to diocesan records up to 1969. Anecdotal references recorded by Fr Francis Huegel were published in *This is your Place: Beagle Bay Mission 1890-1990*.<sup>12</sup> Eugene Perez *osb* in *Kalumburu 1908-1875*<sup>13</sup> recorded history of the Benedictine Mission which developed somewhat in isolation<sup>14</sup> when it came under the jurisdiction of the Broome Diocese in 1891. Brigida Nailon researched ‘Duncan McNab, Pioneer Priest of the Kimberley’.<sup>15</sup> and later had access to Church archives for to write ‘Land of Wait and Wonder’<sup>16</sup>. A more comprehensive book *From Patrons to Partners*, by Margaret Zucker<sup>17</sup> brought the Catholic Church story up to the 1990’s. Two works from Kimberley East Kimberley Catholic sisters brought a particular focus on Aboriginal women and the Sisters of St. Joseph’s awareness of ‘new missiology’, ‘Aboriginal Women in the Face of Change’ by Veronica Mary Ryan *rsj*,<sup>18</sup> and ‘Widening the

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<sup>10</sup>George Walter, *Australia, Land Mission*, Limburg/Lahn, Bishop of Broome, 1982, translated by Inge Danaher from the German, *Australien*, Limburg/Lahn, 1928. At the time it was not known that Mrs Dymphna Clarke had already translated this for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. In the ‘80’s she came with her husband specifically to see the place on the Beagle Bay beach where the greying missionaries sang ‘Ave Maris Stella’ as the Apostolic Delegate’s party rowed across the bay in the light of the setting sun after his official visit to the mission in 1924.

<sup>11</sup>Mary Durack, *The Rock and the Sand*, London, Transworld Publishers, (1969), 1979.

<sup>12</sup> F. Huegel, *sac*, and Brigida Nailon, *csb*, (eds.) *This is Your Place: Beagle Bay Mission 1890-1990*, Published by the Beagle Bay Community with assistance from Broome, Magabala Books. 1st Edition released to celebrate the centenary of Beagle Bay 1890-1990.

<sup>13</sup>Eugene Perez, *Kalumburu, The Benedictine Mission and the Aborigines 1908-1975*, New Norcia, Kalumburu Benedictine Mission, 1977.

<sup>14</sup> In this thesis, the ‘Church’ is used to refer to the Catholic Church.

<sup>15</sup> Brigida Nailon, ‘Duncan McNab, Pioneer Priest of the Kimberley’, Part requirement for Church History, Bachelor of Theology, Catholic College Clayton, 1980.

<sup>16</sup> Brigida Nailon, ‘Land of Wait and Wonder’, unpublished manuscript, 1985. Archives of the Diocese of Broome.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret Zucker, *From Patrons to Partners A History of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley 1884 - 1984*, Fremantle, University of Notre Dame Australia Press, 1994.

<sup>18</sup> Veronica Mary Ryan, ‘Aboriginal Women in the Face of Change: “We Gottem Two -Way Right Through Now”’, A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Education at the University of New England, 1991.



John Scally's *To Speed on Angel's Wings: The Story of the Sisters of St John of God* published in 1995 described the corporate spirit of the sisters in their efforts to work with the disempowered.<sup>20</sup> Documents written by Cistercian missionaries provided insights into the diversity, dedication and motivation of the older missiological school revealing aspects of ecology, and relationships within the communities. W. Schuetzeichel's 'Die Pallottiner en Australien' *Familienbrief*,<sup>21</sup> presents biographies of early Pallottines who worked in Australia 1901 and revealing the extraordinarily hard work of lay brothers. W. S. Davidson's *Havens of Refuge*,<sup>22</sup> gives details of the spread of leprosy in the Kimberley and the role of carers; it was particularly relevant for the role of the Catholic Church workers. Works on Catholic mission history for the Kimberley included many articles in *Nelen Yubu*, a missiology magazine aimed at mutual enrichment of traditions held by Aborigines and Christians.<sup>23</sup> Its articles have become an important source for discussion on missiological change in the Australian Church. V. J. Donovan's *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai*,<sup>24</sup> explored freedom of faith within an African culture and challenged missionaries with the need to hand leadership to indigenous peoples. D. Bosch's *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* provided international studies in missiology.<sup>25</sup> Ecumenical issues facing churches in the Australia were raised in *The Cultural Pearl: Australian Readings in Cross Cultural Theology and Mission* edited by J. Houston.<sup>26</sup> John Harris's *One*

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<sup>19</sup> Colleen Malone, 'Widening the Track: The Josephite Journey towards an Eclectic Missiology', a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy, School of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney, 1991.

<sup>20</sup> John Scally, *To Speed on Angel's Wings The Story of the Sisters of St John of God*, Dublin, The Columba Press, 1995. They were founded in 1871 to cater for the needy in Wexford. The congregation turned international in 1895 with the decision to answer the call to serve half the world away, in Australia. Scally says that the defining characteristic of its members down through the years has been an attempt to enrich the lives of the disadvantaged.

<sup>21</sup> W. Schuetzeichel, 'Die Pallottiner in Australien' *Familienbrief*, no. 5, vol. 6, 1986.

<sup>22</sup> W. S. Davidson, *Havens of Refuge*, Nedlands, Univ. of Western Australia, 1978.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Wilson, (ed.), *Nelen Yubu*, Missiological Unit, MSC Province, 4/17 Jersey Avenue, Leura. NSW, 2780.

<sup>24</sup> V. J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai*, London, SCM Press Ltd. (1978), 1982.

<sup>25</sup> D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series, no 16, New York, Orbis Books, 1991.

<sup>26</sup> J. Houston, (ed.) *The Cultural Pearl: Australian Readings in Cross Cultural Theology and Mission*, Melbourne, Victorian Council of Churches, 1988.

*Blood*,<sup>27</sup> and various authors in *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies* edited by T. Swain and Deborah Bird Rose,<sup>28</sup> have encapsulated current attitudes towards mission enterprises in Australia. For example, P. Willis in 'Patrons and Riders Conflicting Roles and Hidden Objectives' objectively described an Aboriginal development programme at Kununurra.<sup>29</sup>

Some accounts which have approached the history of Aboriginal-missionary encounter<sup>30</sup> have ignored or stereotyped the missions as oppressive.<sup>31</sup> Broome<sup>32</sup>, Attwood<sup>33</sup>, Harris,<sup>34</sup> and Burridge<sup>35</sup> showed different perspectives. This thesis offers an exploration of positive contributions made by Catholic missions in the Kimberley. Though missionaries brought their culture with them, they saw themselves as a leavening agent for change in the colonial process. The mission of the Gospel was to help the poor,<sup>36</sup> to teach and to heal.<sup>37</sup> Themes of 'conscientization' and 'liberation' as expressed in Paulo Freire's *Education for the Oppressed*,<sup>38</sup> became popular among

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<sup>27</sup> John Harris, *One Blood, 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: a Story of Hope*, Sutherland, Albatross, 1990.

<sup>28</sup> T. Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (eds.) *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies*, Bedford Park, The Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1988.

<sup>29</sup> P. Willis, 'Patrons and Riders Conflicting Roles and Hidden Objectives in an Aboriginal Development programme at Kununurra', M.A Thesis in Anthropology, A.N.U., Canberra, 1980.

<sup>30</sup> Henry Reynolds (ed.) *Dispossession, Black Australians and White Invaders*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1989, explored the affect of missions on indigenous values in Chapter 6 to 'Missionaries: Saviours or Destroyers?' pp. 155-181.

<sup>31</sup> Christine Choo argued that the politics of race, gender and class in the colonising process affected Aboriginal women through the governments' and the missions' attempts to control the sexuality and reproduction of Aboriginal women, in 'Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900-1950', Thesis for Ph D, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, 1995.

<sup>32</sup> R. Broome, *Aboriginal Australians The Australian Experience Black Response to White Dominance 1788-1980*., Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1982, reprint edition 1994, pp. 100-119.

<sup>33</sup> B. Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989.

<sup>34</sup> Harris, John, *One Blood, 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: a story of Hope*, Sutherland, Albatross, 1990.

<sup>35</sup> K. Burridge, *In the Way: A Study of Christian Missionary Endeavours*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 1991 and 'Aborigines and Christianity: An Overview, in T. Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (eds.) *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Mission*, pp. 18-29.

<sup>36</sup> David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon, (eds) *Catholic Social Thought The Documentary Heritage*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1992.

<sup>37</sup> Luke 9:2

<sup>38</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for the Oppressed*, (Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos), London, Sheed and Ward, 1970 and *Education for Critical Consciousness*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1973.

Church workers in the 1970's, and a seminal approach for more recent times, for 'action research', a means of critical analysis for social change. This thesis accepted a Biblical message of 'liberation for the oppressed' and 'an option for the poor' so that an opportunity for a new historical focus will become available in preparation for the new millennium when opportunity to solicit women's input and to honour their agendas will hopefully occur.



## **Part 1**

### **The Catholic Church Vicariate in West Kimberley**

#### **Chapter 1**

#### **Social Context of Aboriginal Peoples and Catholicism**

#### **1829-1928**

##### **Land**

‘Land’ was the reason for the tight control of Aborigines exercised by colonists, and consequent governments in the whole of Australia. Every piece of land throughout the State was traditionally occupied and used by Aborigines. Within a larger named area, regions had their own local names and different mythological associations. Each was linked with others so they formed an intricate criss-crossing of tracks extending all over the country. Once the legal machinery of colonisation entrapped Aborigines with external regulations beyond their control a shift in their historical experience created dependency and a need for assistance. Social organisation in Aboriginal tribes was formerly controlled by ‘skin’ or ‘kinship systems’ where there were distinct female and male cultural roles. Throughout the whole of human history on the continent, Aborigines had relied on hunting, gathering and fishing as their basic subsistence activities ranging through known and owned country. Geographic and cultural knowledge was their major tool in occupying and managing the land. To speak of owning country was to speak to this understanding, that country was known and cared for by the women and men whose rights and responsibilities were inalienably bound to it. An important part of ownership was learning and teaching because people belonged to and had rights of ownership to their mother’s and father’s countries. This identification with the land was an integral part of Aboriginal identity and removal from the indigenous environment because of displacement or imprisonment brought deep inner conflict.

Aborigines recognised the whole countryside as being rich in meaning and significance and kept within a certain range, defining their distinctive linguistic, social

and cultural identity in relation to one another. Trade had been a matter of individual persons or groups of persons exchanging commodities and passing them on to others. In the Western Desert, most peoples moved no further than about 240 to 320 km from their local descent-group. The basic pattern of social organisation consisted of two kinds of unit, a local-descent group, and the land-owning unit and an economic food-collecting unit. Each person belonged to both kinds of unit.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to European conquest, Aborigines in Western Australia, excluding the Western Desert could have totalled 47,000,<sup>2</sup> but it was impossible to give accurate population figures for Aborigines because until 1966, those living 'beyond settled areas' were not regularly counted in any annual census. Estimates of population provided by Aboriginal welfare gave the broad indication that Aboriginal population declined to its lowest levels during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Aborigines were not included in official counts of the Australian population until the 1971 Census which followed the repeal in 1967 of Section 127 of the Commonwealth Constitution.<sup>4</sup> Lack of specific knowledge about Aboriginal population prevented sound Government policies being implemented and Aborigines had been deprived of basic rights as citizens of Australia.

Although by the 1830's humanitarians in both Britain and the colonies were convinced that the methods of colonisation were wrong in principle and pernicious in practice, basic issues of justice to Aborigines were ignored by Australian colonial governments, including West Australia, and legislation was largely 'protective'. After the Federal Government Constitution was implemented in 1901 the Aboriginal questions were left to State Governments.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Western Australia An Atlas of Human Endeavour 1829-1979*, Produced for the Education Committee, WAY '79 by the Education and lands and Surveys Departments of Western Australia, p.33..

<sup>2</sup> This population is calculated on the basis of an average of 500 persons per 'tribal units' cut to 250 in the case of eight similarly constituted units which spread across State boundaries.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Estimates by L. R. Smith *The Aboriginal Population of Australia*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1980 (for the years before 1901), Census estimates (simultaneous census of Australian colonies (1901), national censuses (1921 and 1947), Census counts 1966 and 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Ian Castles, *Census 86 - Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Census of Population and Housing*, 30 June 1986. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Catalogue No. 2503.0, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, Melbourne, Penguin, 1987, pp. 94-5.

## **West Australian Settlement 1829**

In June 1829, when Lieutenant Governor James Stirling read the Royal Proclamation founding the Swan River colony, Aborigines had no way of knowing the degree of permanence of white settlement nor the drastic effect it would have upon their society. Settlers increasingly encroached upon Aboriginal land, forcing them out of their hunting grounds and depriving them of their natural food sources. Even the most kindly disposed of the whites presumed the Aborigines to be free to roam further afield at will to seek food, not grasping the complex reality of tribal territory. Few believed that Aboriginal society was capable of detailed group and land arrangements or of inter-tribal law.<sup>6</sup>

As British subjects, Aborigines should have had rights which could be defended. Captain Frederick Chidley Irwin, Stirling's second-in-command, wrote:

It was impossible for a moment to maintain or vindicate the abstract right of civilised nations to establish themselves in the territories of savage tribes, without at least acknowledging that such intrusions involve the settlers and the nations to which they belong in deep and lasting responsibilities,<sup>7</sup>

but subsequent history showed that it happened in Western Australia. Among Aboriginal groups, disease and disillusionment led to a high death rate and a low birth rate. Aboriginal women were particularly at risk. The Perth Gazette reported that Aboriginal men were being given alcohol so that the women could be sexually exploited. The government found it was extremely difficult to maintain any kind of institution which could deal with the ensuing predicament of Aboriginal society. The Mt Eliza Institution on the river bank below Kings Park was financed by the Government but it was closed in 1838. Nine years after the foundation of Western Australia, loss of land had totally corrupted Aboriginal life in the settled region.<sup>8</sup>

## **Occupation of the Land**

By the 1840's temporary occupation leases and licenses to depasture had made it possible for settlers to run their livestock in the bush. These had been replaced in 1851 by a system of pastoral leases of one year's duration in settled areas and near the coast, and of eight years' duration farther inland. Pastoralists paid an annual rent of 10

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<sup>6</sup> Harris, *One Blood*, p. 255.

<sup>7</sup> F. C. Irwin, *The State and Position of Western Australia*, London, Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1835, pp. 27-28, cited in Harris, *One Blood*, pp. 259-260.

<sup>8</sup> Harris, *One Blood*, p. 259

shillings for every 1000 acres leased. After the introduction of convict transportation in 1851, the availability of ticket-of-leave and expirée labour for shepherding encouraged the expansion of the pastoral industry. Some Aborigines tried to establish their own farms. There had been avenues of land ownership open to them by special provision for grants of land in the 1887 Lands Regulations. The government appeared to have had no clear-cut policy on the role of Aborigines in land development. It certainly had no intention of granting Aborigines full ownership of these blocks. Under the 1898 Lands Act any 'aboriginal native or descendant of any aboriginal native' could be granted leases up to 200 acres of land under terms and conditions laid down by the Governor. There were no legal impediments to Aborigines being granted free 'Homestead Blocks' of up to 160 acres. or 'Conditional Purchase Blocks' but discrimination was a barrier. John Forrest stated publicly that it was not intended that Aborigines should hold land under the regulations.<sup>9</sup> As a former Premier of Western Australia and its representative in the Federal Parliament in 1901 he knew the power of the pastoralist lobby. By 1910 the settlers had become a permanent rural population which perceived itself as the 'pioneers' and rightful owners of the land. The area chosen for development had been inhabited by Aborigines whose new lifestyle revolved around employment on the pastoral stations and hunting and camping on vast tracts of uncleared land. With the development of the wheat belt further south Aborigines became trapped in a life of poverty in small camps on its fringes. By 1914 most of the farming blocks granted to Aborigines had been resumed by the Government for soldier settlements.

### **Exploration of the Kimberley**

The 1860's had seen the first major push into the eastern districts and the North-West. At La Grange, in the Kimberley, explorers looking for land in 1864 murdered 20 Aboriginal women, children and old people in an unprovoked attack. The whites were well-armed and equipped and none of their party was killed or wounded<sup>10</sup> The major rush for pastoral land in the Kimberley came in the early 1880s. In 1879, Alexander Forrest, another explorer, had travelled from the De Grey to Roebuck Bay and

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<sup>9</sup>Anna Haebich, 'European and Aboriginal Farmers' in Bob Reece and Tom Stannage, (eds), *European-Aboriginal Relations in Western Australian History: Studies in Western Australian History VIII*, Nedlands, University of Western Australia, December 1984, p.61.

<sup>10</sup> A plaque, paid for by the Fremantle City Council commemorates the Aborigines who died. 'Walking Together: Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation', Issue 2, p. 16.



discovered good pastoral land on the well-grassed alluvial flats of the Fitzroy. These discoveries brought pastoralists like Durack and Emanuel to the Kimberley. F. H. Hann's discoveries brought a second wave of pastoralists when between 1898 - 1900 Hann located five new pastoral areas in his extensive exploration of the rugged Kimberley and extended frontier of discovered land.<sup>11</sup> Western Australian sheepmen and Queensland cattlemen were attracted to the pastoral potential of the Ord and Fitzroy river valleys. Sheep-stations were established a few years later on the river mouths in King Sound, although they were subsequently moved farther up the Fitzroy Valley. For a half a century after 1840 it was pastoralism on land leased from the Crown rather than crop-farming on privately owned land that dominated land utilisation in Western Australia.<sup>12</sup>

### **Colonialism**

By 1880, British colonialism had established in Australia a society which legitimised taking land from Aborigines. By 1890, the settlers saw North West Kimberley as a vast land with potential wealth to be exploited. A minority of a white population became the dominant political society in the Kimberley in North Western Australia. This small group of pastoralists, prospectors and adventurers encouraged by the colonial Government to take up the land created power structures in the Parliaments and claimed ownership of all land as 'crown land'. Income was generated by selling land as freehold, or allocating land by lease as it pleased. The Forrest legislation of the 1890's, such as the Homestead Act (1893) and the Act creating an Agricultural Bank, was amended to make the land more accessible to the 'little man' and to liberalise the government's system of agricultural credit. Aboriginal resistance to white colonisation was effectively crushed by an alternate set of laws which affected only Aborigines.

A combination of factors prevented Aborigines from establishing any kind of independent livelihood once colonisation established itself. Aborigines were not given the rights of British subjects. Aboriginal lives were cheap. Aboriginal men were removed to prisons or roamed as outlaws in fringe territories if they did not find unpaid work with the whites. Aboriginal women were forced into the hard role of domestic help on the stations in the homes of squatters and pastoralists who leased

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<sup>11</sup> Harris, 'One Blood', p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p.45.

their land from the Government, bought land, sold land and were given the right to establish themselves in tribal territories, without acknowledging that these were intrusions. Colonial law supported these moves by colonists. Therefore colonialism disrupted the social organisation of Aboriginal tribes when land was appropriated by squatters and subsequently legalised by the Government. An example of injustice took place in 1834:

Stirling led an attack in 'the battle of Pinjarra'. His troops surrounded the Murray River people and shot a large number. His actions helped Thomas Peel, who had been seeking title to land around the Murray. Within a month, Peel received title to 250,000 acres. By December he was negotiating the sale of 100,000 acres.<sup>13</sup>

Aboriginal claim to 'Native Title' was denied and feared by the colonists. In the collective memory of Aborigines bitterness of past injustice ran deep. Women were confined to and died in Lock hospitals for venereal disease. Some of these were located on islands far from their homes. Near Cossack an island was set aside for leprosy patients who never came back to their tribal lands.

Australia was in a state of political change in 1901 when the Constitution of the Commonwealth was adopted. Though the Constitution of the United States of America and the Constitution of the Dominion of Canada had been consulted for guidance, they had not affected legislation with regard to the care of the indigenous population of Australia. In the former, this was an issue which would come under Federal legislation. In Australia, Section 51 precluded the Federal Parliament from legislating on behalf of the Aboriginal race and Section 127 excluded Aborigines from being counted in the population figures of the Commonwealth or of a State.<sup>14</sup>

### **Dr Roth and the Royal Commission of 1904**

The society of the new Commonwealth was quickly shown as tarnished. To investigate conditions of West Australian Aborigines north of the 30th parallel a Royal Commission was held. Dr Roth was appointed Royal Commissioner in 1904.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Cited in Harris *One Blood*, p.260, Christine Fletcher, 'The Battle for Pinjarra- a Revisionist View' in Bob Reece and Tom Stannage, (eds), *European-Aboriginal Relations in Western Australian History: Studies in Western Australian History VIII*, Nedlands, University of Western Australia, December 1984, pp. 1-5.

<sup>14</sup> P. Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia, 1898-1954*. St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1973. p.52.

<sup>15</sup> Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens*, p.59.

In his Report<sup>16</sup> he reported that the impact of colonialism had placed Kimberley Aborigines in an inhuman situation. Ninety per cent of Aboriginal prisoners were brought in for cattle stealing. They could be arrested with instructions, authority, or information received from the pastoralist whose cattle were alleged to have been killed.

Not knowing beforehand how many blacks he was going to arrest, the policeman only took chains sufficient for about fifteen natives.” Aboriginal children of from 14 to 16 were neck chained. Chains were used for female natives not only at night, but sometimes during the day. These women were unwilling witnesses arrested illegally for the Crown. The actual arrest usually took place in the morning when the Aboriginal camp was surrounded. No precautions were taken at night to prevent the assisting stockmen and trackers having sexual intercourse with the chained-up female witnesses who were usually young. The larger the number of prisoners and witnesses, the better, pecuniarily, for the police. One witness who had brought about 100 natives into court did not remember any who were found ‘not guilty’. Except in times of sickness the prisoners were neck-chained from the day they went into goal until the day they left, sometimes for two to three years or more, according to the sentences. Roth recorded specific examples of harsh sentences at Halls Creek where a child of ten years of age was sentenced to six months hard labour for “that he did, on or about 10 September 1904, near Cartridge Springs unlawfully kill and carry away one head of cattle, the property of S. Muggleton.

The same magistrate had sentenced a youth of fifteen years to 9 months for killing a goat and given sentences of two years’ hard labour for alleged cattle killing to at least eight other youths between 14 and 16 years of age. Throughout the State, in 1904, there were approximately 300 Aboriginal prisoners in the gaols,<sup>17</sup> and the death toll in the prison at Rottnest Island near Perth was particularly high for Aborigines.

### **Protective Legislation and Institutionalism of Children of Mixed Descent**

Mobility for hunting and cultural purposes was no longer an option for many Aborigines. ‘protective legislation’ removed the majority of Aborigines from

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<sup>16</sup> W. E. Roth, ‘Report of the Royal Commission on the Commission on the Condition of the Natives’, Perth, Western Australia, 1905.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 13-21.

mainstream Australian society. By 1902 West Australian Government policy institutionalised Aboriginal children of mixed descent. It was easy to implement this policy when 1905 legislation made state wards of the Aborigines in Western Australia. Decisions made ostensibly for the good of Aborigines legally displaced and institutionalised them at the will of the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Perth.

By 1928 Australia was heading for economic deprivation. It had been through a world war, swept by a deadly post war flu and was in the throes of a world depression. Colonial land control and forced inequality caused deprivation of homelands and subsequent poverty of Aborigines in the Kimberley of West Australia. The pastoralists had taken up land on leases for peppercorn rentals. They had introduced sheep and cattle which had destroyed the native vegetation on which Aborigines depended for food and they made sure that they had possession of all available springs and water holes.<sup>18</sup> A law had been passed that Aborigines were not allowed to camp within three miles of a creek near the sea in the Northwest. Some Aboriginal men worked on the stations as stockmen for food and keep. Many were prisoners working the roads in chain gangs in Wyndham or elsewhere in the Kimberley; they were prison inmates on Rottnest Island or in Fremantle prison. Otherwise they were fringe dwellers. If not employed by whites for domestic chores, women and children were left to survive on 'rations'. Women had no social place, were diseased by the newcomers and cast aside. The environment had become sick. Protection policies did not help the Aborigines for the laws were made by the white man for the white man, in the language of the white men. The whites benefited but Aborigines knew a great sickness had come over their people.<sup>19</sup>

### **Education for Aborigines**

With colonialism came loss of land, the introduction of another language and another administrative structure, but matters did not improve when in 1897 the control of Aborigines was handed over to the West Australian Government. The Colonial

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<sup>18</sup> To keep the land secure for the Aborigines on the Beagle Bay Mission Bishop Gibney had made sure that there was water on the lease of 100,000 acres for which he paid £25 in Derby in 1890. Bishop Gibney had written a diary in a little sixpenny notebook, commencing 17 May 1890. Ms Daisy Bates edited it 'Mission Work in West Australia: Notes from a Bishop's Diary - With Aborigines in the North', *Sunday Times*, Perth, 27 November 1927; *Sunday Times*, Perth, 4 December 1927; *Sunday Times*, Perth, 11 December 1927.

<sup>19</sup> Video: *The Exile and the Kingdom*, ABC, 1993.

Government had arranged that 1% of revenue was to be set aside to provide for the needs of Aboriginal peoples. At the time this meant nearly £30,000. The new Government changed the amount to £5,000 per annum and any such other amount as parliament might choose to vote. A sub-department was set up to administer Aboriginal affairs.<sup>20</sup> The money set aside was to prove inadequate. For example, section 70 of the Government's Bill in 1889 was removed because it diverted funds from economic growth.<sup>21</sup>

Because Aboriginal education became the responsibility of the Aborigines Department at this stage, by the wording of paragraph 7,

it shall be the duty of the Aborigines Department ... to provide for the custody, maintenance and education of the children of the Aborigines,<sup>22</sup>

the Aborigines Act of 1897 removed equity in educational opportunities for Aborigines as compared with other Australians in West Australia and later Education Departments were able to evade responsibility for Aboriginal children. There are cases when this legislation enabled white parents to have Aborigines and half-castes removed from State Schools. It had long term effects. The general trend of the 1930's would be 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 the problem group of part-Aboriginal descent within the scope of the special legislation.<sup>23</sup>

### **Catholicism**

'Catholicism' as a word meaning 'universal', encapsulates all kinds of historical connotations such as 'of the Roman Church', or 'Papal'. To talk of encounters between an 'ism' and Aboriginal Peoples is an abstract idea to be elaborated by analysing encounters with individuals. The nineteenth century began and ended amid European hostility toward the Roman Catholic Church. Emerging nationalism led the way to conflict with the Church in many countries. The Church internationally was in such a weakened position that the First Vatican Council was

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<sup>20</sup> P. Hasluck *Black Australians, A Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia, 1829-1897*, M. U. P., Melbourne, 1942.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Goddard and Tom Stannage, 'John Forrest and the Aborigines' in Bob Reece and Tom Stannage, (eds), *European-Aboriginal Relations in Western Australian History*, p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> The Aborigines Act. West Australian Acts and Statutes 1897, Act 5, para. 7. B.L.

<sup>23</sup> Charles D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, Canberra, ANU, 1970, p. 104.

called from 1869-1870. The outcome was to centralise the energies of the Church in the person of the Pope in Rome. Before the Council ended the loss of the Papal States in Italy was a further blow. Pope Pius IX was signalling that the age-old claims, that the religion of Christ was a thing *sui juris*, independent of all earthly power, was not to be controlled by the state, whether royal and absolutist or democratic and republican. In 1870, after the Italian capture of the Papal States, Pius IX suspended the council.<sup>24</sup> The Catholic Church at this time was in a vulnerable position. Less than a decade later, in 1878, Fr Nab, a Scottish priest working with Aborigines in Queensland had written to Propaganda Fide in Rome about the predicament of Aboriginal peoples in Australia.<sup>25</sup> In 1888, Pope Leo XI asked for missionaries to go to Australia as a direct consequence of the activities of Fr McNab in Rome in 1880 and because of a personal request by Cardinal Moran and Bishop Gibney.

For Aborigines nationalistic goals being implemented by the new society were destructive for the groups and the hope that was offered by altruistic bodies such as the Catholic Church was in the context of displacement of peoples as outlined above. It was possible for a group such as the Catholic Church to be motivated other than by the power of materialism. In *Rerum Novarum* Pope Leo XIII attempted to persuade Catholics to concentrate more on 'social questions'.<sup>26</sup>

### **An Option for Aboriginal Society**

The preaching of the Gospel was seen as a gift rather than an imposition. It was an offer to become part of an international group. Catholic faith in Australia was generally seen as coming from Ireland<sup>27</sup> but the early Catholic Church in the Kimberley was more Asian than European. It was in union with Rome and a Church of its times. In the Kimberley missionaries came from the four corners of the earth.<sup>28</sup>

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*sui juris*<sup>24</sup> Philip Hughes, *The Church in Crisis: The Twenty Great Councils*, London, Burns & Oates, 1961, pp. 295, 323.

<sup>25</sup> Duncan McNab, 'Memoir to Propaganda Fide Rome on the Mission to the Blacks', APF, 1878.

<sup>26</sup> 'Rerum Novarum', par. 23, p. 25.1891, p. 13 in D. O' Brien and T. Shannon, (eds) *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1992. See also J. Wilcken sj, 'The Teaching On Poverty In Rerum Novarum', *The Australian Catholic Record*, vol.lxix, no.1, (January 1992), pp.96-104.

<sup>27</sup> In Perth the first Bishop was Irish, John Brady. A Spanish Bishop sent Scottish Fr McNab to the Kimberley. An Irishman succeeded him, and the Sisters who came in 1907 were predominantly Irish,

<sup>28</sup> Griver to McNab, 11 November 1884, ACAP.

In Ireland, under penal laws, Catholics had been denied Religious freedom because of the prevalent belief at the time throughout Europe that in Church-State relations you proved your loyalty to the king by being part of the established religion. It was not until 1829 that Catholic Emancipation was won. The Land Acts of 1870 and 1881 began the process by which Ireland was transformed from a nation of peasants to a nation of landowners.<sup>29</sup> The Irish had empathy with Aborigines. In the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church in Ireland had become an important agent of social change, establishing schools, hospitals, asylums, temperance agency for the purpose of 'evangelising and civilising the poor'. Throughout this period Irish women entered convents in great numbers. Traditionally the life of woman Religious was one of contemplation and the cloister but this changed with the Counter-Reformation when congregations of women Religious were established to participate in more active works of charity, chiefly in teaching and nursing. There was a need in Ireland to provide education for the poor, and to work for the poor in the workhouses. In Ireland the one ally ordinary people had was their faith.

The Catholic faith was like a six-inch nail: the harder it was struck, the deeper it got embedded into the timber.<sup>30</sup>

This was the background of the first women missionaries who would work in the Kimberley Catholic Church from 1907 onwards. They needed strength and resilience for this tough mission field.<sup>31</sup> Catholic people in Australia were a minority group and often Irish members of the Roman Catholic Church. Pain still rankled from injustice from the British government's penal laws which had meant that ownership of much of the land in Ireland had passed from Irish landowners to English settlers.

So, ideally, the mission of the Church was to better society. In congregations of religious, the authority which is proper to the Catholic Church is seen as a religious authority to save, to make disciples, to preach the gospel and to bring all to the Father. Such was the authority which was exercised in the recognition of religious institutes by the Church as a microcosm of her own reality. In the Church's teaching, religious congregations have an ecclesial authority and not just one which meets functional or organisational needs. Orders exist only because of Church recognition and approval.

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<sup>29</sup> Scally, *To Speed on Angels Wings*, p.34.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, Scally, p.32, 29-31. The founder of the Sisters of St. John of God, Thomas Furlong, became Bishop of Ferns in 1857. It is believed that he founded the Sisters of St John of God as a nursing Congregation because of his concern for sick clergy in his diocese.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 36.

Religious authority is not absolute, but mediated through persons and structures as necessary for a life of vowed obedience.<sup>32</sup> Given this theory of Church life and religious life, a communion of peoples' in practice on the missions should mean a real sharing of goods and power. The acquisition of mission property, of mission land, ownership of 'mission cattle', and of mission boats, so necessary for building up the mission and its ventures, would have to be held in trust. Would this be possible without having problems of 'power'? It would have been difficult, if not impossible for Aborigines to feel comfortable in an authoritarian structure. They were used to elders giving leadership but authority was exercised within the kinship system. The missionary group administered government funds without consultation and had the power to do so.

Would there be traces of discrimination or racism in the keeping of records? Marriage certificates written in Emo's meticulous hand in Broome were usually signed with a cross, signifying illiteracy on the part of the contracting parties, whether Manilamen or Aborigines. Literacy was in the hands of the religious group.

What would be the motive for Baptisms? It was a sign of belonging to the Church. When the Cistercians had their first big communal Baptism in 1896, there were no women included. It could have been gender inequality or a result of the lack of female missionaries. Later, among the children brought into the mission in large numbers and baptised, sometimes there was no attempt to record names or parentage, only their new Baptismal names. Their past lineage was thus lost to them as if it did not matter.

Issues raised above demonstrate that it was not easy to establish a new society in which 'communion' replaced power. If the primary concern in a 'mission' community was the pastoral needs of the world beyond the community, then the shape and structure of the community was determined by these needs. If timetables for community meals and prayers were not highly flexible and adaptable, because of the 'rule' or the 'constitutions', then missionaries could not function. (In Europe, the Cistercians, for example, might show their concern in praying for the world, not by direct involvement in the pastoral needs of people outside their monasteries.) Sometimes those who acted in mission-model congregations ran the danger of becoming so absorbed with their work of evangelisation that they may neglect to support one another. And those who tried to be apostolically creative are sometimes

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<sup>32</sup> Mary Linscott, *snd*, 'The Service of Religious Authority: Reflections on Government in the Revision of the Constitutions', *Review for Religious*, vol. 42, no. 2, March/April, 1963, pp. 201-202.



unsupported by their communities.<sup>33</sup> All these problems would affect the new missions.

### **Encounter between Catholicism and Aborigines**

Encounter between Catholicism and Aborigines can only be elaborated by analysing encounters between individuals. Matthew Gibney, Bishop of Perth from 1887-1910, was personally concerned and outspoken about the injustices meted out to Aborigines in West Australia.<sup>34</sup> His concern for the welfare of the Aborigines was expressed in a letter to Sir John Forrest urging him to exert his influence before he left for his post in the newly formed Federal Government, asking him to fix an equal capitation grant for all children under 14 years of age born of Aboriginal women who were kept at any mission institution for the purposes of civilisation.”<sup>35</sup> The letter was ignored. After John Forrest had resigned the Premiership of West Australia in 1901 to take up his seat in the Federal Parliament there was political instability in West Australia. Four different ministries followed in rapid succession. The Ministers responsible for Aborigines were in office for such a short time that the Administration of Aborigines matters through the State was dominated by the role of the Chief Protector. This was filled first by H. C. Prinsep, who had never visited the North-West, but exercised his office through the Magistrates and the Police. 1898-1907; C. F. Gale held the position 1907-1915; and A. O. Neville exercised his prerogatives 1915-1940. The position was changed to the Commissioner of Native Affairs after 1936.<sup>36</sup> A. P. Elkin, an Anglican anthropologist, doubted if A. O. Neville really got beyond the frontier attitude because he had no preparation for his responsibilities and his visits to the far north did not enable him to penetrate beneath the surface, nor to examine critically the views of pastoralists, but thought Elkin, with his meagre staff and budget and within limitations imposed by ministers Neville served the state and

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<sup>33</sup> Gerald A. Arbuckle, ‘Suffocating Religious Life A New Type Emerges’ *The Way Supplement: Religious Life in Transition*, no. 65, Summer 1989, pp. 30-33.

<sup>34</sup> When Bishop Gibney asked for volunteers from among his priests to help Fr McNab in his mission at Goodenough Bay, there were only nine diocesan priests and each of them volunteered Fr Treacy was sent in 1887, but became sick and had to return to Perth.

<sup>35</sup> Gibney to Forrest, 31 January 1901. ACAP.

<sup>36</sup> Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia, 1898-1954*, pp. 67-70. There was no great change of policy until S. G. Middleton took charge of Aboriginal Affairs in 1947. Until then, most matters of social welfare and education of Aborigines were referred to the minor Government official known as the Chief Protector who implemented current Government Policy.

its 'coloured minority' well for 25 years.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, Catholic missionaries found Neville unfriendly and even deliberately malevolent towards their efforts to expand the field of their mission.

Since Catholic missions were usually staffed by religious orders, an attempt is made here to set the Catholic scene by describing Church structure and authority and how Religious orders fit into this context so that underlying assumptions may be better understood. 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 Propaganda Fide.<sup>38</sup> Subsequently these individuals or groups are accountable for their missionary activity to this Sacred Congregation and through it to the Pope.<sup>39</sup> 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. 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 was called the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelisation of Nations. Mission territories were under its jurisdiction. In their ascending order of rank, they were: Prefectures Apostolic, headed by Prefects Apostolic, who were Priests;<sup>40</sup> Vicariates Apostolic, headed by Vicars Apostolic, who were Bishops; Dioceses<sup>41</sup> which were headed by Diocesan Bishops; and

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<sup>37</sup> A. P. Elkin, in 'Aboriginal-European Relations' from R. M. Berndt and Catherine H. Berndt, *Aborigines of the West, Their Past and Their Present*. Nedlands, 1979, p.308-9.

<sup>38</sup> Now known as the Sacred Congregation for Evangelisation.

<sup>39</sup> This mandate as passed on by Bishops and Religious Superiors is currently being questioned by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council who want Aboriginal Communities to be consulted about appointments of religious to positions in Catholic Aboriginal ministry.

<sup>40</sup> Fr Duncan Mc Nab wrote M. A. (Missionary Apostolic) after his name. He had been sent officially to the Aboriginal mission by Cardinal Simeoni in Rome, as well as by Bishop Griver of Perth.

<sup>41</sup> The Catholic Church in the Kimberley became a diocese in 1966.

Archdioceses, headed by Archbishops.<sup>42</sup> The visible principle of unity in a particular Church, a Bishop, was a link in the communion between that Church and the universal Church. This episcopal office was called 'diakonia' or 'ministry'.<sup>43</sup> In it was enshrined the mystery of Christ's presence in his Church, for it was believed that it was "Christ himself who presides in the pilgrim Church through the ministry of his Apostles and successors. It was therefore the Bishop who was the living sign of Christ present in the Church and of the Church present in the world."<sup>44</sup> It can easily be observed that women are not mentioned in these structures. They have no official place.

The Greek phrase "panta ta ethne" was taken as the original mandate of Christ to preach the gospel to "all the nations".<sup>45</sup> Mission was that work undertaken by a gospel oriented community, to carry the gospel to the nations of the world with a view to establishing the church of Christ.<sup>46</sup> An older view was to see the process as reproducing the Christian Community, as a catalyst or a midwife seeking to assist in the birth of something to be produced by others. A missionary, for effective mission, was in a contact situation where serious dialogue had to take place. Only in an interchange between what the missionary brought and what the indigenous traditions already possessed, could a new Church result as a product of the interchange. This was such a complex process that a structure of knowledge about missiology could not be a single unified discipline. It stood at the crossroads between many different specialities including, theology, cultural anthropology and comparative religion.<sup>47</sup>

By 1880, in Australia British colonialism had established a society which legitimised taking land from Aborigines. By 1890, the settlers saw North West Kimberley as a vast land with potential wealth to be exploited. By 1930, it had been through a world war, swept by a deadly post war flu and was in the throes of a world depression. Colonial land control and forced inequality caused deprivation of homelands and subsequent poverty of Aborigines in the Kimberley of West Australia. The pastoralists had taken up land on leases for peppercorn rentals. They had introduced sheep and cattle which had

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<sup>42</sup> R. Wiltgen, *The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania 1825-1850*, Canberra, Australia National University Press, 1979, p. xxi.

<sup>43</sup> Abbot, Documents of the Second Vatican Council 'Constitution of the Church', para. 24.

<sup>44</sup> Wiltgen, *The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania*, 1979, p. xxi.

<sup>45</sup> Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai*, p.29.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p.194.

<sup>47</sup> A. Dulles 'Current Trends in Mission Theology' *Studies in The International Apostolate of Jesuits*, vol. 1, no. 1, (January 1972), pp. 21-37.

destroyed the native vegetation on which Aborigines depended for food and they had possession of all springs and water holes. Aborigines worked on the stations as stockmen for food and keep, or on the roads in chain gangs in Wyndham, or in the prison on Rottnest Island or in Fremantle. Otherwise they were fringe dwellers. Aboriginal women and children had been left to survive on 'rations'. They had no place, were diseased by the newcomers and cast aside. The environment had become sick. Protection policies were not helping Aborigines for the laws were made by the white man for the white man, in the language of the white men. The whites benefited but Aborigines knew a great sickness had come over their people.

A 'dole and control' mentality exhibited by the colonists as they acquired 'land' for their purposes resulted in the dislocation of individual Aborigines. With the opening up of land to squatters and pastoralists, Aboriginal society had been severely disrupted and subsequent impoverishment of Aborigines which led to the establishment of the missions resulting in land tenure by the Church for stability. Because of its mission to teach and heal, the Catholic Church, though vulnerable itself, had become and involved in trying to alleviate Aboriginal needs and gradually extended its relationships to the wider community. In later chapters the personal experiences of Aborigines outline reasons why the establishment of missions provided a desirable option to living in the wider community of the Kimberley.



## Chapter 2

### Establishment and History of Catholic Kimberley Missions 1884-1928

By the 1880's an indiscriminate extermination of Aborigines was well under way in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Catholic missions for Aborigines were established on the Dampier peninsula in 1884 at Goodenough Bay, in 1890 in Beagle Bay, in 1895 in Broome, in 1898 in Disaster Bay, in 1910 at Lombadina. These missions were sustained by Cistercian and Pallottine Fathers, and from 1907 by Sisters of St John of God. In 1908 Benedictine Fathers established a mission at Drysdale River, and in 1928 a Beagle Bay Farm was established at Tardun, near Geraldton.

#### **Fr Duncan McNab: Advocate for Aboriginal Rights**

It had been Aboriginal need which motivated the pioneer Fr Duncan Mc Nab. He was Scottish and had arrived in Melbourne aboard the *Chariot of Fame* 29 July 1867 with Archbishop John Bede Polding.<sup>86</sup> In the late 1870's, he had gone to work with Aborigines in Queensland intending to give Bishop James Quinn reasonable obedience while he remained in his Diocese but only if he were allowed to devote himself exclusively to the Blacks.<sup>87</sup> Mother Mary MacKillop, his cousin, saw his mission as painful and dangerous.<sup>88</sup> McNab began raising money to support his work among tribes at Gympie, Kilcoy, Durundur and Bribie Island and was appointed a Commissioner for Aborigines. His campaign for individual homesteads rather than reserves made him unpopular. And the two resolutions about land grants which were passed in 1876 to alleviate Aboriginal conditions were never implemented. McNab claimed that the first Aboriginal Commission was called for the purpose of shelving

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<sup>86</sup> Mark Cryle, 'Duncan McNab's Mission to the Queensland Aborigines, 1875-1880', B. A. Honours Thesis, Department of History, Brisbane University, 1989.

<sup>87</sup> McNab to Vaughan,, 'Memoir to Propaganda on the Mission to Australian Blacks, 1875-1878'. Archives of Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. He concluded one of these letters with the words, "Now that I have stated to the Sacred Congregation what I ought to say on this matter, I am going to England to seek for these poor Aborigines of Australia the protection of the laws and their civil rights".

<sup>88</sup> MacKillop, from Bowen, to Grant, Rome, 13 May 1878. Mary MacKillop Archives, North Sydney. Mother Mary McKillop *rsj*, visited her cousin's mission in Maryborough, Queensland.

the question of responsibility for the Aborigines and to serve as a blind to the home Government.<sup>89</sup> The basis of his fight for ‘civil rights’ for Aborigines was that every person had a right to social space.<sup>90</sup> He was not in favour of limiting their freedom to move between the two worlds, that of the Aborigines and that of the Settlers, but saw clearly that Australian Aborigines needed permanent settlement, the means of support and the protection of the laws. McNab said, “we must take men as we find them and try to fortify them against error and temptation as best we can. After instruction, they could lead Christian lives in their normal state.”<sup>91</sup>

The urgency of Aboriginal need motivated McNab to write letters to authority figures in the Church and in the Government. These demonstrated his radical commitment to the rights of Australian Aborigines. Copies of these are found in both church and state archives.<sup>92</sup> Memoranda to Rome told of the plight of Aborigines in Australia and their urgent need for compassionate help.

To raise awareness of and money for his work through the Catholic ecclesiastical network in Europe and the Colonial Office in London to bring pressure on Queensland's administrators to give basic rights he sailed from Melbourne in “The Kent” August 1879, on a trip which took him through Egypt, Southern Europe, the British Isles and the United States.<sup>93</sup> When he called at the Colonial Office in London, he was told that the men he wished to see were in conference with each other. They refused to see him.<sup>94</sup> He travelled to America looking for a missionary order to come to Australia. When he returned to Australia he was invited to Perth by Bishop Griver to do something to help in Western Australia. As a chaplain to Aboriginal prisoners, he took up residence in the prison on Rottneest Island, near Perth

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<sup>89</sup> McNab to Colonial Office, London, 24 October 1879, B.L.

<sup>90</sup> McNab to Colonial Office London from Paris, 16 January 1880, B.L.; McNab to Colonial Office London from Rome, 30 January 1880, APF.;

<sup>91</sup> McNab to Moran, 29 August 1887. Ms. MSA P. J. O’Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 1969 pp. 127-8.

<sup>92</sup> Brigida Nailon, ‘Champion of the Aborigines: Duncan McNab, 1820-1896’, *Footprints*, vol. 4, no. 6, (Feb. 1982), pp. 12-16.; vol. 4, no. 7, (May 1982), pp. 25-29.; vol. 4, no. 8 (August 1982) pp. 5-8; vol. 4, no. 9 (Nov. 1982), pp. 9-11.

<sup>93</sup> Gould to Simeoni, 22 June 1879, *Scritti Riferiti ai Congressi, Oceania*, vol. 13, 1880-1881, fol. 167.

<sup>94</sup> Minutes of Meeting, 4 and 5, Colonial Office, London. 18 February 1880, B.L. There is a memo on record of a cryptic note, “I do not think it necessary that Mr. McNab call on me.”

and began to learn the language of the Kimberley from one of the prisoners 1882-1883.

### **First Catholic Mission in the Kimberley: Goodenough Bay Mission, 1884-1887**

When Fr Duncan McNab began his ministry in Goodenough Bay in 1884, he was convinced that “colonists might be justly reproached with having had in their midst for a long time a people in want of the necessaries of life, without the benefit or protection of a Government and without human instruction sufficient to preserve them.” McNab had come through Derby to establish the mission across the King Sound on the East of the Dampier Peninsula. He was assisted by the Derby police and the local magistrate to set up his camp, using a boat to land on the isolated beach. By letter he advised Bishop Griver that future attempts should be made by land, and rather than a single person a community effort was needed.<sup>95</sup> Fr. W. Treacy, successor to McNab as chaplain at the Rottneest prison, was sent to help McNab in the Kimberley for an indefinite term.<sup>96</sup> He arrived at Goodenough Bay with a small boat, a quantity of stores, a spring cart and some building and farm equipment. The two priests, with help from a young Aborigine called Knife,<sup>97</sup> and a few others quickly erected a small church and a house of timber with spinifex thatch. They fenced and ploughed a garden plot and sowed some seed. The Aborigines began to camp around the Mission but when gold discoveries were made in the remote region in 1885 McNab went to minister in East Kimberley. Miners came in through Wyndham at first, then through Derby. At first there were hundreds and within a year there were 2000 miners. A new port called Wyndham was established on Cambridge Gulf.<sup>98</sup>

When McNab returned to his mission, the buildings had been burned to the ground and the equipment destroyed. His companion was gone. Some said that the local Nimanburu ransacked the store and set it alight. Others said it was a bushfire and others insisted that ‘lugger blacks’ had done the damage at the instigation of their boss. At this point McNab fell ill. According to the older Aborigines, Knife heard McNab calling out and found him lying weak and ill. A letter from McNab to Bishop

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<sup>95</sup> McNab to Griver, 4 April 1885, ACAP.

<sup>96</sup> *The Catholic Record*, 18 February 1886, p. 3d. and Gibney’s handwritten draft of a letter, 30 March 1886, ACAP.

<sup>97</sup> Spelt ‘Naib’ in Beagle Bay and Lombadina records.

<sup>98</sup> P. M. Durack, ‘Pioneering the East Kimberley’, *The West Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, 2, 1933, XIV, p. 28.



Salvado at New Norcia thanking him for seeds,<sup>99</sup> and Mary Durack's account of 'The Priest Who Rode Away' are evidence of an heroic personal effort.<sup>100</sup> A letter from Bishop Griver to Cardinal Simeoni in Rome expressed the need for some Religious Order for the Mission in the North West.<sup>101</sup> Goodenough Bay Mission was in existence 1884-1887. There was no record of McNab having baptised anyone in the Kimberley but when Bishop Gibney's party came to look for a better place for a mission they introduced themselves as McNab's brothers.

### **Beagle Bay Mission, 1890 - 1990 - Cistercians and Pallottines.**

In 1887, after Bishop Gibney was consecrated and all of Western Australia came under his jurisdiction, he requested Propaganda Fide in Rome to have Benedictine monks sent to the Kimberley. Cardinal Moran from Sydney personally placed the request in Rome. In 1888, Pope Leo XIII asked for missionaries from Sept Fons Abbey in Lyons, France, to go to Australia. This could be seen as a direct consequence of the activities of Fr McNab in Rome as well as the personal requests by Cardinal Moran and Bishop Gibney who informed the Government that Cardinal Moran had been in touch with Rome and had the support of an experienced mission order. His hopes were strong that these missionaries would administer a Mission if the Government would allow them to use the Aboriginal Reserve at Beagle Bay. When the Government agreed that the mission was to have access to the 600,000 acres which had been set aside as an Aboriginal Reserve there was negative comment in the media that the papacy was to have control of this land.

### **Cistercians**

Sent from Sept Fons monastery in Lyons, France, Abbot Ambrose Janny and Fr Alphonse Tachon arrived with Bishop Gibney in Derby, on 30 May 1990, having travelled from Italy via Sydney and Perth. McNab's advice was followed. The attempt to find a more suitable place for a mission was made by land, and a community was provided.<sup>102</sup> Bishop Gibney recorded the journey in his diary.<sup>103</sup> Five months later

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<sup>99</sup> McNab to Salvado, 27 December 1886. ADB.

<sup>100</sup> Mary Durack, 'The Priest Who Rode Away', *Westerly*, November 1962. ADB.

<sup>101</sup> Griver to Simeoni, 5 July 1886. ACAP.

<sup>102</sup> McNab to Griver, 4 April 1885, ACAP. "It is difficult to get a native here to remain with a settler. The young can do so only with the consent of the old and the adult married natives must spend some time with their wives and families. It is only

while in Derby Bishop Gibney <sup>104</sup> paid £25 to lease 100,000 acres of land with water, which he had selected over his long journey on horseback. He later negotiated to have this land added to the Aboriginal Reserve on the Dampier Peninsula. He also negotiated to have 10,000 acres to be given to the mission as ‘fee simple’ when £5000 worth of improvements to the lease had been made. Since this land had the springs, the securing of it gave the mission a chance of survival. This did not stop neighbours from casting envious eyes on the land controlled by the mission..Only a few of the Cistercian monks were capable of meeting Aborigines at a point of culture which would enable ‘incarnation of the word’ to take place. They did not have the knowledge, that is, the culturally appropriate evangelical principles which were needed to evangelise traditionally oriented Aborigines. A missionary needed to be aware of the multitude of rules about language, law, ceremony, land and the kinship system which regulated to whom people may speak, with whom they had to share and with whom there was avoidance behaviour.

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now that they are beginning to have their families at the stations. Even one or more of those with the police had to be run down at first and caught in the bed of a river.

I told Cardinal Simeoni I was not able then to do any mission duty among the Australian natives, yet he insisted on my returning to give the benefit of my experience to any missionaries that might come.

I also told Father Gibney that I was not fit to carry on the mission alone and I understood from him that another priest might be sent to the district within three months. Of course no one has come.”

<sup>103</sup> The Bishop wrote the diary in a little sixpenny notebook, commencing 17 May 1890. from Daisy Bates op. cit., “4 June 1890 one Trappist Father, a policeman, an Aboriginal guide and I set out from the little town of Derby at the mouth of the Fitzroy River to search for a suitable mission site. We were all on horseback and headed off in a South Easterly direction

6 June: We arrived at the Fitzroy River which we could not ford because we had missed the only crossing and we were forced to camp without a drop of water (the river water was undrinkable), in the open without any protection from the heavy rainstorm which came during the night. 9 June: We arrived at the Fraser River which we followed for two days. Again we had to camp in the open without drinking water. We had met no Aborigines. 18 June: Continuing our journey to the West we arrived at a small cattle station belonging to two white settlers who employed many Aborigines. After another two days ride we arrived at Beagle Bay where we met many shy but not hostile Blacks. For several days we stayed there searching for a spot for the future Mission. Because we ran out of supplies we had to return. 4 July: We were pleased to reach Derby.”

<sup>104</sup> Bishop Gibney became known as the ‘Father of Beagle Bay Mission’ and was remembered as a legendary figure in anecdotal records.

Abbot Ambrose went back to France to get reinforcements<sup>105</sup> of Cistercians from Sept Fons in Lyons, France, leaving Alphonse Tachon with Br Xavier Daly for nearly a year. A group came back with him in 1892. Another group came in 1895, among whom was Fr Nicholas Emo. This more permanent group established the monastery at Beagle Bay known as ‘Notre Dame Du Sacre Coeur’. Some of these monks valued only the cloistered life.

An Australian novice, Br Xavier (Cornelius) Daly spoke English and could liaise with the Government through correspondence.<sup>106</sup> There may have been only three of the priests working as missionaries. Fr Alphonse Tachon, Fr Nicholas Emo, and Fr Jean Marie Janny. Fr Alphonse Tachon had the required competencies. He had remained in Derby to learn the Nyul Nyul language while Bishop Gibney, Abbot Ambrose Janny and Cornelius Daly made the exploratory trip. Fr Nicholas Emo’s zeal led him to nearly every place where the Church developed a presence in later times. Fr Jean Marie Janny spent difficult years in Disaster Bay and Lombadina.

Tachon’s relationship with Felix Gnobodnor, the traditional elder and song man of the Dampier Peninsula enabled them together to explore their languages for religious concepts in the early 1890’s at the Beagle Bay Mission.<sup>107</sup> The lasting faith relationships between the tribal group and the members of the Catholic Church were formed as a result of these in depth encounters between Felix Gnobodnor and Alphonse Tachon.

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<sup>105</sup> The following table lists the Cistercians who came after 1892, their place of birth, and the dates of arrival and departure. See Appendices, p. 271 ff.

Br Etienne Pidat	France	1892	1900
Br Bonaventure Holthurin	Holland	1892	1900
Fr Felicien Chuzeville	France	1892	1900
Br Francis of Assissi	Jorcin France	1892	1893
Fr Jean Marie Janny	France	1892	1906
Fr Nicholas Emo	Patagonia	1895	1915
Fr Ermenfroi Nachin	France	1895	1899
Fr Bernard Le Louarn	France	1895	1899
Fr Marie-Joseph Delamasure	France	1895	1896
Fr Narcisse Janne	France	1895	1900
Br Antoine Boetens	Holland	1895	1900
Br Francis Bootsveld	Holland	1895	1900
Br Bernard Joosten	Holland	1895	1900
Br Jean Chaleron	France	1895	-
Br Placide Leobal	France	1895	1900
Fr Anselm Lenegre	France	1896	1900

<sup>106</sup> He had been a policemen in Derby, and formerly had come from Dunolly in Victoria to make his fortune with cattle. His herd was given to the monastery.

<sup>107</sup> Nailon, ‘Land of Wait and Wonder’, Unpublished. Chapter 3. ADB.

## **Fr Emo's School in Broome in 1897**

Encounters between Aborigines and Fr Nicholas Emo are documented from all around the Kimberley. In his boat, 'San Salvador', he touched every known community around the coast from Broome to Wyndham between the years 1895-1915. From Patagonia in South America to Sept Fons Monastery, to Broome in 1895 with Abbot Ambrose his presence made Broome an extension of Beagle Bay mission. Fr Nicholas Emo was left in Broome because he spoke Spanish and was already ordained. Although still a novice in the Cistercian Order, he was delegated to look after the Catholic Filipinos in Broome.<sup>108</sup> By 1897, he had established a home for orphans in Broome. When he closed this he sent the boys to Beagle Bay for schooling. Fr Emo made a report in Spanish from Broome dated 1 August 1897. It emphasised the cross cultural nature of his Mission.<sup>109</sup>

## **Pious Society of Missions - Pallottines**

Before the Pious Society of Missions (Pallottines) took over administration of the mission, for a short time Fr Alphonse Tachon and Fr Nicholas Emo were both in charge of the Beagle Bay Mission. The focal point of the community for Tachon was the monastery, where he was elected superior in 1898, but Emo had a wider community with the Filipino sailors and the Aborigines in Broome and around the

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<sup>108</sup> The group consisted of Fathers Ermenfroi, Bernard, Marie Joseph, Narcisse, Nicholas Emo, Brothers Antoine, Joseph, Francisque, Placide, Jean. Marie-Joseph, 'Notre Dame du Sacre Coeur a Beagle Bay', 15 May 1895, TASF. Also in *L'Union Cistercienne*, 2, 16, October 1895, pp. 315-355.

<sup>109</sup> Nicholas Maria Emo, Report in Spanish from Broome. 1 August 1897. ACAP. "Aborigines on land and sea, about 250. At certain times of the year the number is bigger. *Baptisms*: The following have received Baptism, 3 men, 6 women, 4 boys, 6 girls. Total of 19. (Three girls and one boy are due for Baptism on 15th of this month... the number of Christian Aborigines will be 23). *Marriages*: Aboriginal woman, Manilaman, 1. Aboriginal woman and a Christian American Negro, 1. Aborigines, 2. Total 4. There are boarding in this poor orphanage, 3 boys, 8 girls. Total 11. (Among these are four half-caste girls). *Note*: One gentleman, one of our neighbours, has sought admission for five half-castes of both sexes. I have been promised three more Aboriginal boys when there will be more room available. Then, a great number of Aboriginal boys and girls who are roaming about will be able to attend to school and classes...The girls know how to cook, wash, iron and mend the clothes - although in the last item they are not yet perfect! Manilamen of reputable character are willing to marry two of the grown-up girls, as soon as they are of marriageable age. The principal aim of this orphanage has been to correct their vices, inculcate moral behaviour and to accustom them to live a social life. It can almost be said that they have achieved a good standard of education."

coast. Early in 1901, Emo, who was made the superior of the Beagle Bay Mission when Tachon was removed from this position, endeavoured to keep up the number of Church workers demanded as one of the conditions for the 'fee simple' concessions. Of the brothers, he still had John and Xavier (Cornelius Daly) and Sebastian, a Filipino who was aspiring to be a brother. He also had at least a couple of families working as lay helpers for board, food and clothes only. Their womenfolk were working in the garden.<sup>110</sup> It was because this team was operative that the 'fee simple' was eventually granted. Most of the Cistercians had left before the inspection was made by the Government inspector.

### **Church policy with regard to marriage**

Church policy with regard to marriage of Aborigines went counter to Government policy which expressed two of the strongest prejudices of the day. Media coverage snapped up cliches to describe negative public feelings about the Beagle Bay Mission, such as: "Monks marry Manilamen to Aboriginal women!" Mission policy was not in accordance with public opinion.<sup>111</sup> Another heading "Plot to lease land to Manilamen!" involved legislation prohibiting land ownership by temporary indentured coloured workers. The caption "Mixed settlement of Manilamen and native women!", was a deliberate caricature, but managed to combine both prejudice against Aborigines and against Asian migration.<sup>112</sup> In 1901, there *were* two camps on the mission, one for Aborigines, and one for Filipinos. Bishop Gibney hoped that Aboriginal Christian families would be given land.<sup>113</sup>, but public opinion was against it and he failed in his attempts.<sup>114</sup> Bishop Gibney also had to withstand pressure from those who did their utmost to prevent legalisation of marriages for mixed races.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Emo to Chautard. A continuation of a lengthy letter dated 23 November 1900. The date of this part of the letter from internal evidence was probably 6 January 1901. The original was in French. TASF.

<sup>111</sup> White men cohabited with Aboriginal women but such liaisons rarely resulted in marriage.

<sup>112</sup> 'The Beagle Bay Mission: The Question of Asiatic Population: Interview with Bishop Gibney', 4 February 1901. 8.23, 27/1. *The West Australian* Archives Catholic Archdiocese Perth.

<sup>113</sup> Clifton to Gibney, 13 March 1901. ACAP.

<sup>114</sup> Thomas Puertollano an Asian, and his Aboriginal wife and family eventually did gain the lease of Lombadina.

<sup>115</sup> Nicholas Emo bought land in Broome so that families of mixed descent could have the security of owning their own houses. Baptismal and marriage records were

Some title to land was needed to secure the right to use and occupy the land and to enable missionaries to work without fear of disturbance. The government was reluctant to give a title to the 10,000 acres promised to the Church for providing twelve church workers, and for making £5000 worth of improvement to the land. Bishop Gibney refused defeat and went to the mission with Daisy Bates in 1901 and personally measured out the land with great difficulty. He was prepared to accept the title in his own name in trust for the Aborigines and their descendants to guarantee the land grant against future manipulation of the concession. The church had fulfilled its side of the bargain. He applied for 8000 acres near the Mission site, and 2000 acres at Disaster Bay, taking in the springs which stretched across the Dampier Peninsula. It took some years before the selected land was actually granted as fee simple for the work of the Beagle Bay Mission 1890-1901.

### **Missiology at Beagle Bay Mission**

The formal theory relating to the work of missionaries is called 'missiology', which can vary even in the same order. Tachon and Emo both wrote long letters to their Abbot in Sept Fons when the closure of the Beagle Bay Mission became imminent. Two different approaches to missiology were evident among the Cistercians. Fr. Alphonse Tachon, more attached to the monastic style pleaded emotionally with his order not to desert the Aborigines.<sup>116</sup> Fr. Nicholas Emo stated simply that the Australian missionary needed to be sufficient in himself for often there would be no one for him to consult. He wrote, "There are 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 temperament, three types of life, Contemplative, Active and Mixed, 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."<sup>117</sup> In a contemplative life religious follow a 'rule' which governs the order of the day. Monks take solemn vows of stability and obedience to the Abbot. In an active religious life the monk may live

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carefully kept. Later these records were sources by which Aborigines could prove they qualified for old age pensions.

<sup>116</sup> Alphonse Tachon, 'Beagle Bay Mission Defence', Translation of Document 21, p. 20, no. 6, ADB, TASF. 1901. "I see these dear souls, still marked with the blood of Jesus Christ, I see them hold out their arms, I hear them shout to me in the agony of their despair, "Father, Father, why are you abandoning us?"

<sup>117</sup> Emo to Chautard, 6 January 1901, ADB., TASF.

outside enclosure to serve in an apostolate. Usually these religious take simple vows of poverty, obedience and chastity, but no vow of stability. Pope Leo XIII had asked the Cistercians to take up the missionary life. To accommodate this changes needed to be made in the rule. Some monks who came to Beagle Bay wanted a contemplative life along traditional Benedictine lines, an apostolate of prayer and labour, but not the active life of serving people outside the monastery which upset their times for prayer. Emo's understanding was that the Order should not undertake Missions if it were not prepared to give the required formation to the men it sent. Not only should it supply the right kind of men, but it should relax its contemplative rule for the missionary. Because the order had done neither of those things there was not much hope for the survival of the missionary work by the Cistercians.

### **The Issue of Property**

The issue of property in this new communion of peoples became a major concern when, 12 January 1901, through decree, Propaganda Fide, transferred the Beagle Bay Mission to the Pious Society of Missions.<sup>118</sup> Their General, Fr Whitmee *psm*, intended to entrust it to the Irish Province,<sup>119</sup> but this was not done. 15 January 1901 the group sailed from Naples. They were Fathers George Walter *psm*<sup>120</sup> and Patrick White *psm*,<sup>121</sup> with Brothers Matthias Kasparek *psm*<sup>122</sup> and Augustine Sixt *psm*.<sup>123</sup> By this time the pastoral nature of the land had changed. There were only

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<sup>118</sup> Today this order is popularly known as the Pallottines. The latter term is used throughout this document. When St Vincent Pallotti founded the Society, he wanted to call it the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, because of his ideas about the laity taking an active part in the work of the Church, but Rome frowned upon the name and suggested rather, 'The Pious Society of Missions'. After the war, the name of the society was changed to 'Societas Apostolatus Catholici' and is abbreviated as *sac*. This 'Pallottine Family' of secular priests and laity is open to the action of Christ on society at all levels.

<sup>119</sup> Schuetzeichel, *Familienbrief*, p.305.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*, Fr Walter had been in the Cameroons. He took over the administration of the BBM and administered it 1901-1908. Later he was superior in London, Ehrenbreitstein and Olpe. (Fathers Huegel and Worms visited Fr Walter when they were coming to Australia in 1930. His book *Australien* was the main source of information available to the many German missionaries who followed him.)

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, Fr White was born in Limerick Ireland. He was in Australia for 11 years.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, Bro. Matthias died in 1930 at the age of 59. He was buried in the Beagle Bay cemetery.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*, Bro. Augustine applied for a dispensation from his promises in 1908. Until his death in 1954 he had a garden some miles from the mission. Fr J. Jobst sat by his bed holding his hand as the life ebbed from him. He was 87. He had donated the

seven sheep-stations left and cattle-stations occupied most of the Kimberley landscape. Fr George Walter judged that the mission needed 'men and money' and he saw as essential the support of large numbers of brothers, inspired with the same zeal as priests. The order procured material means and in every way supported education. Walter looked forward to the time when religious women would join the mission, so that Brothers and Sisters would make up a large proportion of mission staff. He saw this as guaranteeing the success and fruitfulness of the priests' efforts.<sup>124</sup> Sr Felicitas, *psm*, wrote to Fr Walter saying that they were ready to take on work in the Beagle Bay mission and did not mind the sacrifices entailed in this work She had written to the Bishop.<sup>125</sup>

### **Children of Mixed Descent at Beagle Bay Mission**

In 1901, the travelling inspector, Mr. Olivey inspected the Beagle Bay Mission and its subsidiary, the Disaster Bay Mission.<sup>126</sup> In 1902, he had reported that there were about 136 children of mixed descent at various stations visited in the North West.<sup>127</sup>

Fr Rensmann *psm*,<sup>128</sup> Bro Graf *psm*,<sup>129</sup> and Bro Bernard Hoffman *psm*,<sup>130</sup> came to join the staff at the end of 1902. Three more brothers, Albert Labonte *psm*,<sup>131</sup> Matthias Wollseifer *psm*,<sup>132</sup> and Raimund Wesely *psm*,<sup>133</sup> joined the Mission staff in

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money for the native Sisters convent chapel anonymously in the 1940's. He left his garden and house to the Sisters.

<sup>124</sup> Walter, *Australia, Land People Mission*, p. 123.

<sup>125</sup> Felicitas to Walter, 28 February 1903, ADB.

<sup>126</sup> G. S. Olivey, Travelling Inspector, Broome, to Chief Protector, 5 June 1901. BL.

<sup>127</sup> Some of the fathers had sent their children to the Swan Mission where each child was charged the rate of 12/6 per week payable by the parents.

<sup>128</sup> Rensmann drowned in January 1904, 28 years old, ordained 2 years.

<sup>129</sup> Graf worked on the B.B.M. for 48 years. A carpenter by trade, all the woodwork became his responsibility. He taught the trade. He helped construct the Church, using only local timbers, he did the carpentry and joinery. He was in charge of the large garden that supplied the mission with fresh fruit and vegetables.

<sup>130</sup> Schuetzeichel, *Familienbrief*, Hoffman was at B.B.M. 1902-1906.

<sup>131</sup> Labonte worked in Australia 1903-1912. He had worked for 12 years in the Cameroons and in South Africa. He died in Limburg in 1939 at the age of 67.

<sup>132</sup> 'Pallottine Book of the Dead'. Br. Matthias Wollseifer of Frechen in the Archdiocese of Cologne, Germany He worked for 49 years in the Australian Mission with only a short break. When he died at Beagle Bay in 1952, he was the last survivor of those Brothers who carried the burdens during the period covering the two world wars.

<sup>133</sup> Schuetzeichel, *Familienbrief*, Wesely worked at B.B.M. 1903-1906.



1903. Fr Walter laboured over the administration of the Beagle Bay Mission and bore the burden of financial problems. He asked Bishop Gibney for help.<sup>134</sup> The mission owned a herd of cattle, extensive gardens and two boats, one of which was used for pearling.

The reason Walter had financial difficulty was that he had promised to buy these assets, to pay £3,740 to the Cistercians in three different instalments, 1901, 1903 and 1905 for two lots of land in Broome, the cattle, horses and the material of the monastery and of Beagle Bay and its dependencies.<sup>135</sup> The issue was whether Fr Walter made a mistake in his assessment of the situation? Was the ownership and power held internationally by the Order, or nationally by the Bishop in Perth, or locally, by the mission, in the Kimberley? Where did the new Aboriginal Catholics stand on this issue? Different points of view were expressed by the two Bishops, Gibney in Perth, and Kelly, in Geraldton, from those held by the Abbot of Sept Fons and enunciated by the local Cistercian priests, Janny and Emo. Bishop Kelly had written to Fr Walter about incurring this debt, saying that in his view all the profits and increments of the mission from the beginning belonged to the mission and not to the Cistercians. He saw it as a matter of justice. If the Cistercians came to Beagle Bay to labour for the profit of the Blackfellows then the increments belonged to the mission. There was at least a tacit agreement that the resources contributed should be administered for the benefit of the Blackfellows.<sup>136</sup>

Bishop Kelly wrote to Bishop Gibney regarding the embargo by the Cistercians on the Beagle Bay mission sale of cattle. He discussed in what name the title deeds of the 10,000 acres should be made, according to the decrees of the Plenary Council of Sydney, or in the names of the Bishop of the Diocese and of the Superior of the Order, but perhaps the title should be forwarded to Propaganda Fide. Bishop Kelly did not anticipate the failure of the new Fathers to make the mission an ultimate success. They were hampered for the present by lack of men and owing to the unreasonableness of the Cistercians, by want of means. Fr Walter intended to go to Europe to get both men and money in Germany. Fr Walter kept to his agreement with

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<sup>134</sup> Walter to Gibney, 7 July 1901. ACAP. "Ever since my arrival, the financial state of the Mission has caused me a good deal of worry and I have been turning over in my mind what would be the best plan to put it on a better footing. I see the resources under my eyes, but for want of a little ready money, am tied hand and foot."

<sup>135</sup> Memorandum of agreement between Janny and Walter, 28 March 1901. TASF.

<sup>136</sup> Kelly to Walter, 28 April 1901, ADB.

the Cistercians, which in hindsight can be seen as a tactical mistake. By 1906, Fr Walter was forced to go on a fund raising trip to help pay mission debts and to finance the bringing of Sisters to the Mission. This was a success, but when he returned to Limburg in 1908 he resigned his position of leadership because Limburg would not give him the resources he believed were essential, men and money.

In 1914 the three German priests were able to report to the Government that their staff was sheltering, clothing, feeding and educating 143 children, 65 boys and 78 girls.<sup>137</sup> The older children were instructed but the younger children were often baptised immediately. In the baptismal records there seemed to be no attempt to record the names of parents or to indicate from where the children had come. The children were also given Baptismal names, by which they were to be known in the future. In this way many lost their Aboriginal names. This practice would seem to have implications of 'paternalism', but was probably motivated by notions of the newness of Christian life acquired by baptism and symbolised by a 'Christian' name.. The motive for baptism was to give the Catholic Community responsibility for the welfare of the individual and to extend the community. It was a reciprocal relationship through which a new community was coming into being at a cost to the old. On the mission there had not been a question of an equal sharing of goods with the Aborigines, for the business enterprise of the mission was seen as keeping the whole together. Neither was there equal sharing of power with the Aborigines, as the mission superior held the authority over all mission enterprise. The 1905 legislation had directly affected the newly baptised Aboriginal Catholics of the Kimberley. They had been baptised into a Church whose adherents were mainly Filipinos or Aborigines. The former like Thomas Puertollano were considered aliens, and the latter, like his wife Agnes were not counted as citizens, yet both were pillars of the Catholic Church.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Bachmair to Gale, 1 October 1914, 2387, BL.

<sup>138</sup> When Thomas Puertollano died in 1942 he was still registered as an alien. His grandson still had his certificate in 1980. He was registered as an alien resident in Commonwealth and as an alien passenger entering the Commonwealth in an overseas vessel. His date of entry into Australia was 1888. The date of issue was 19 October 1939.

## Property and Jurisdiction

Friction had arisen between Fr Emo and Fr Walter over property and jurisdiction, especially over the 'Point' in Broome and other land which Emo had been given by the Government. Emo decided to leave the Church in Broome to devote his time and work to looking after coastal tribes and the Manilamen working on the boats, and asked Bishop Gibney for funds.<sup>139</sup> 9 September 1907 he notified Bishop Gibney that he had settled at Cygnet Bay, King Sound.<sup>140</sup> Though administration of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley was transferred to the Salesian Order in 1922, after being administered by a caretaker Redemptorist during the war, the Pallottines remained at the Beagle Bay mission. The care of the region was returned to the Pallottines in 1928.

Bishop Kelly wrote to Bishop Gibney that in the Northern Territory the Jesuits had left behind them their mission and 300 native Christians. The Benedictines had the means and could easily find work to do for the glory of God and the salvation of souls in any of the places mentioned below, places in the Geraldton diocese and the dependent vicariate where there was more scope for missionary zeal than Beagle Bay; at La Grange Bay, there were 450 Aborigines; at Cygnet Bay, 200 Aborigines; at Broome, 300 Aborigines; while in Beagle Bay there were only 150 Aborigines. Then there was all the splendid country lying between King Sound and Cambridge Gulf, pierced by fine rivers in which natives were very numerous.. Bishop Kelly would

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<sup>139</sup> Emo to Gibney, 17 May 1905. ADB.

"I propose to make a small garden somewhere on the coast to be my head quarters and sail thence to any part of the pearling grounds or coast I may wish to visit. For this it will be necessary to have a boat and it is in this, my Lord, I beg your assistance. I have now an opportunity of buying an excellent 12 ton lugger, 40 feet long and not yet 12 months old. She is in perfect order and would suit me splendidly. I could obtain her for £300. I am already promised £100 and would ask you the greatest possible favour to lend me the remaining £200... My Lord my intention is to leave anday\* in Australia for the poor blacks and to help the Manilamen of the nations. You are now my Providence and my unique hope. Kindly let me have this boat, strong, new and very good for any purposes. With him, by and by shall go moore clausep\*\* to the cannibals of Collier Bay. God will provide. And Your Lordship will be allways the gratest Protector of the Aborigines of Australia. Nicholas Emo." (Editor's Note: Original spelling left as written. \*Live and die. \*\*more close up).

<sup>140</sup> Emo to Gibney, 9 September 1907. ACAP.

MY LORD NEW CHAPEL ERECTED IN THE TOP OF THE HILL AT CYGNET BAY KING SOUND CONSECRATED TO 'OUR LADY OF THE ABORIGINES' WITH INSCRIPTION 'NIGRA SUM ET FORMOSA' THE BEAUTIFUL IMAGE OF THE MOTHER AND CHILD CROWNED AS QUEEN AND KING OF THE BLACKS GOT BLACK FACE AND SEEMS TO ASK YOUR LORDSHIP A LITTLE WINE FOR MASS AT THEIR ALTAR ON SUNDAYS. AM POSTING NOW EXPLANATIVE LETTER WHICH WILL BE SOON IN YOUR LORDSHIP'S HANDS. KIND REGARDS TO FRIENDS.

have been delighted with the permission of Propaganda to give missionaries charge in one or more of the places mentioned.<sup>141</sup>

### **Drysdale River Mission - Founded 1908**

Trying to bring means of assistance into a very bad social situation Bishop Kelly asked the Benedictines if they could see their way to taking up the cause of the peoples of mixed descent.<sup>142</sup> Fr Emo had been to see Abbot Torres in New Norcia in 1905 and appeared to be the main instigator in founding a new Benedictine mission.. With the help of Torres he secured full ownership of his schooner, the 'San Salvador', and an experienced sailor, Captain Johnson, with four Manilamen as crew. In 1906, Abbot Torres travelled from Fremantle to choose the spot for a new mission in Wyndham. Bishop Kelly, as episcopal administrator of the Vicariate, boarded the ship in Geraldton. Abbot Torres met Fr Nicholas Emo in Broome and spent two days on Sunday Island from where he obtained two local Aborigines as guides. The night of 24 May 1906 was spent at anchor near Governor Island, just within the entrance of Napier Broome Bay. On many of the islands on the way there were little fires burning which showed the presence of groups of Aborigines. Wyndham was in sight 15 June and the next day the 'San Salvador' made for the jetty. Torres visited Wyndham's prison where he found 87 Aborigines neck chained for work on the roads 'still in pristine nakedness'. He wrote in his diary, "All but two, were young, tall and well built." Rather than Wyndham as the site for the mission, the Abbot chose the Barton Plain, where the Barton met the Drysdale River. He had found it extremely difficult and precarious to found a mission. When he returned sick and exhausted to New Norcia, he said that, "Only the honour of God and the welfare of souls forced me to make this dangerous journey and not for all the money in the world would I like to risk it a second time." It took him more than two years to clear the canonical status of the mission with Church authorities and to obtain the desired reserve for the mission settlement from government officials. It was also necessary to make long-term arrangements for the transportation of provisions to an accessible landmark, as close as possible to the bay where the mission would be established. This was for regular supplies, at first every four months and then twice yearly. The founding party

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<sup>141</sup> Kelly to Gibney, 14 April 1902, ACAP.

<sup>142</sup> Kelly to Gibney, 1 May 1902. ACAP.

consisted of Abbot Fulgentius Torres *osb*,<sup>143</sup> Fathers E. Planas *osb* and I. Alcalde *osb*, Bro Vincent *osb* from New Norcia, Fr N. Emo, one Aboriginal couple, five boys and Leandro, the Manilaman with his Timorese wife and their 12-year-old adopted daughter from Broome.<sup>144</sup>

The Drysdale River Mission challenged the Benedictines who believed that Aborigines unspoilt by contact with Asians or Whites probably had a better chance. Tribal law was in force and under this, strangers entering tribal territory were regarded with suspicion.<sup>145</sup> In 1913, it was recorded that visiting Aborigines were mostly well built men, all circumcised and occasionally some youths and a few women with, on rare occasions, one or two children, boys or girls.<sup>146</sup>

### **Lombadina Mission - Founded 1910**

Lombadina Station was acquired in the name of the Beagle Bay Mission by Bishop Gibney from Harry Hunter in the early 1890's. It was not regarded as a mission in its own right until 1910 when Fr Droste *psm.* changed its status, but at a Council meeting held at Beagle Bay, 9 October 1910, it was decided that Thomas's place in Lombadina would not be purchased. In reply to the Government's request that the Mission care for the Blacks at Lombadina, the mission would ask that the government grant a place with a landing jetty and at least 5000 acres grant for small farming purposes. The Mission would pay for this.<sup>147</sup> The community of Bard people were located around from Pender Bay to Disaster Bay. Situated slightly north-east of the plain of Chile Creek, with the huts of the Aboriginal camp sited to the west on the sand dunes of Thomas Bay, the mission became home to the Bard tribe which extended from Pender Bay Creek, Lombadina, Boolgin, Malombo and right down to Disaster Bay. Thomas Puertollano settled there with his family after he left Disaster Bay where he had been helping with the mission enterprise. Thomas offered his three roomed house to 'a Priest' to live in and to use as a temporary chapel. He built a small house for himself to the west which later became the Presbytery. He also supported

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<sup>143</sup> By decree 4 May 1910, Abbot Torres was consecrated Bishop and Administrator of the Kimberley and the Drysdale River Mission was given the canonical status of 'Mission Sui Juris'.

<sup>144</sup> Eugene Perez, *Kalumburu The Benedictine Mission and the Aborigines 1908-1975*, Kalumburu Benedictine Mission, New Norcia, 1977, pp. 7-8.

<sup>145</sup> Walter, *Australia, Land People Mission*, p.121.

<sup>146</sup> Perez, *Kulumburu*, p.16.

<sup>147</sup> Minutes of Council Meetings, Beagle Bay mission in German. 1910. ADB.

the Mission as best as he could. Those encounters made by the Asian, Thomas Puertollano and his Aboriginal wife Agnes, who were both Catholics can easily be traced through Baptismal and marriage registers and the entries in “Mission Chronicles” kept by Church administrators. Fr Droste and Brother Anton Helmprecht erected a small building at Chile Point which was destroyed in the same year by a willy-willy.<sup>148</sup> Fr Nicholas Emo administered the Lombadina Mission from the beginning of 1911, but he had been working with the Bard people at Disaster Bay and other centres along the coast for some years prior to this by using his boat ‘San Salvador’. The Lombadina school was opened by Emo, 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. At the mission, a total of fifty-five Aborigines, consisting of the children and the sick, old and infirm were fed daily. The number of Aborigines in the camp varied from 60 to 100, usually about 70. The Sisters came in 1913. They were Mother John Walker, Mother Bernardine Greene and Sister Joseph McCaffery. During the early years, until 1915, while Mr Gale was the Chief Protector of the Aborigines, much was done for them by the government<sup>149</sup> but his successor, Mr. Neville, stopped all funding to Lombadina Mission and tried to force it to amalgamate with Beagle Bay Mission.

## **World War 1**

A great deal of insecurity took place as a result of the First World War. Negative feelings were whipped up against the German missionaries. There was jealousy because the mission had the labour of the Aborigines at the mission. Fr Bischofs wrote in 1915 after Fr: Nicholas died, “It is absolutely necessary to have Lombadina or the country higher up so that no other people may interfere with the natives around Beagle Bay. O’Grady’s station at the present has about 1600 sheep and 30 miles fencing. It can be put on the market at any time now. If we could offer 20 to 30,000 lire we could get the money back on the sale, if Beagle Bay was to be closed down after the war. If we owned O’Grady’s station, then Lombadina Mission would be moved 10 miles north. Our main income at the beginning of this year was from contract work amounting to 20,000 lire. The local contract is sure and does not involve so much work. The people fetch the cattle at our boundary and present us with

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<sup>148</sup> “Lombadina Chronicle”. ADB.

<sup>149</sup> “Lombadina Chronicle”, 1928. (No page numbers), ADB.

a cheque when the sale is completed".<sup>150</sup> Bischofs had some inkling that unseen forces were at work against the Missions. A copy of an unsigned Broome letter was addressed to the Hon. Rufus Underwood MLA, Perth.

During the past week, I have had conversations with two very fine white bushmen as to the methods under which Beagle Bay Mission and Lombadina Mission are carried on and how much might be done to save the Government money.

He stated that the Lombadina Mission was on a pastoral lease owned by a Manilaman named Puertollano, who had a half-caste wife and some 300 or 400 head of cattle and who got the benefit of the native labour who are fed by the Government, while a poor struggling white man on the King's Sound side was unable to get any native assistance. This man had been struggling for a long time with about 1500 sheep under very adverse circumstances. The letter suggested that the Lombadina Mission be closed and the natives removed to Beagle Bay Mission where the staff consisted of all German Fathers.<sup>151</sup> In the general atmosphere of fervent patriotism and anti-German feeling in Australia, the Chief Protector reflected public opinion in feeling the Germans should be interned or otherwise removed from the unprotected coast of north-west Australia.<sup>152</sup>

The Aboriginal Missions of the North West had hardly been a major preoccupation for Church authorities in Australia. Their foundation and maintenance owed more to Bishop M. Gibney than to any other individual. He was affectionately remembered as 'The Father of Beagle Bay Mission'. But now, as in 1916, when the expedience of World War impinged on the missions, it was to be Archbishop Clune who diplomatically arranged affairs to suit all parties. In the beginning, Beagle Bay was most concerned at the loss of support from Europe, both in funds and personal. Rumour had become busy to such an extent that the superior, Fr Bischofs had made the long journey to Perth.<sup>153</sup> The grant to Beagle Bay Mission had been reduced to £400 per annum.<sup>154</sup> Archbishop Clune had been approached by Army Intelligence

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<sup>150</sup> Bischofs to the Fathers, 24 March 1915, SACR.

<sup>151</sup> Copy of an unsigned letter to Underwood, ACAP.

<sup>152</sup> Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville, A Biography by Pat Jacobs*, Perth, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1990, p. 76.

<sup>153</sup> S. J. Boland, 'Fr John Creagh, C.ss.R. in the Kimberley, W. A. 1916-1923'. Unpublished manuscript, p. 4. ADB.

<sup>154</sup> Bischofs to General, January 1916. AGP.

about having Germans in charge of the Mission in the North West.<sup>155</sup> A telegram in Italian from Valentino Marino, Rome, to Rev. Gissler, Einsiedeln Kloster, Switzerland, 5 April 1916 suggested that Fr White, who was English would be a suitable superior.<sup>156</sup> The Stations around were turning against the Mission claiming that it took away too many of their natives. The station managers were putting pressure on the Minister to remove the mission.<sup>157</sup> Another cause for alarm was that there were German ships stationed in Java where the German cause had many sympathisers. There was a fear that the Mission would provision them with their beef cattle.<sup>158</sup>

### **Redemptorist Administration**

In 1916 Fr Creagh *cssr* was appointed by Archbishop Clune to administer the Catholic Church in the Kimberley.<sup>159</sup> Fr Joseph Bischofs, the German Superior, was forced to leave the mission under suspicion of espionage. He was taken prisoner in 1916 by a visiting ship and sent to Armidale for the duration of the war. For the community at the mission, the day he left was like Good Friday.<sup>160</sup> The building project for the Beagle Bay Church during the war, had been Fr Bachmair's idea. He died at Beagle Bay Mission in 1918 during the festivities for the opening of the Church. Fr Droste was now the only priest of the Order in the Kimberley. Fr Bischofs

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<sup>155</sup> Corbett to Clune, 24 February. ADB.

“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 organisation, 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.”

<sup>156</sup> Marino to Gissler, 5 April 1916. APG.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT THREATENS TO INTERN OUR GERMAN FATHERS. THE APOSTOLIC DELEGATE SEEKS THE URGENT DISPATCH OF A SUPERIOR WITH BRITISH NATIONALITY ACCEPTABLE PERSON WOULD BE FR WHITE. (Translation)

<sup>157</sup> Bischofs to General, 9 April 1916, APG.

<sup>158</sup> Gleeson to Murray, 20 June 1916, ADB.

“It was feared by the Minister of Defence that the steamers would escape and that they would be provisioned with the immense number of beef cattle the PSM Fathers have and so raid these seas again.”

<sup>159</sup> Clune to Creagh, 9 May 1916, ADB.

“In virtue of the powers conferred on me by the Holy See, through His Excellency, the Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Cerretti, I hereby appoint you Superior of the whole Kimberley, until such time as the Holy See releases you from your charge.”

<sup>160</sup> Walter, *Australia*, pp. 179-193.



had expressed his regret that the Order had not secured property at Lombadina when there was a chance to do so for a few hundred pounds.

A. O. Neville CPA, planned to shut Lombadina Mission down and replace it with a Government cattle station run on similar grounds to 'Moola Bulla'. Neville described the Church as an 'arm' of the government and in 1917 reported on the Beagle Bay Mission, "as virtually a Government department run by a religious body."<sup>161</sup> Neville had his own ideas. He wrote:

hundreds of youngsters were gathered up in due course and sent to newly established Government settlements. Some of the missions, as they improved their conditions, were also employed.<sup>162</sup>

But the missionaries did not see themselves as employees of the government, let alone of Neville, and his plans to assume full control of missions and Aborigines of the Dampierland Peninsula were doomed to failure. Policies of miscegenation and the rhetoric of race and racial science with which his name was associated would disappear after World War 2, when Science would discard this preoccupation with racial semantics which it had maintained since the nineteenth century.<sup>163</sup>

Fr Creagh was notified 12 September 1917 that it had been decided to close Lombadina Mission at the end of the month and to remove the indigents and children to Beagle Bay Mission.<sup>164</sup> By 10 December a memo in Departmental records read, "The closing of Lombadina and Beagle Bay Mission a matter for the cabinet." Archbishop Clune interviewed the Premier in protest and the latter asked that the matter be held in abeyance.<sup>165</sup> All funding was withdrawn.<sup>166</sup> The only reason that the

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<sup>161</sup> Neville to Colonial Secretary, 11 October 1917. B.L.

<sup>162</sup> A. O. Neville, *Australia's Coloured Minority*, Sydney, Currawong Publishing, no date, p. 77.

<sup>163</sup> Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville, A Biography by Pat Jacobs*, Perth, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1990, p. 292.

<sup>164</sup> Correspondence re closing of Lombadina Mission 31 August 1917 - 12 November 1917. B.L.

<sup>165</sup> Correspondence re the closing of Lombadina, 5 December 1917 - 10 December 1917. B.L.

<sup>166</sup> "Lombadina Chronicle" ADB., succinctly summed up the events of 1917 in a few sentences which were translated from the German by Bishop J. Jobst: "Mother Patrick was recalled to Beagle Bay and Mother Matthew was Superior. In the same year Mother Therese and Mother Clement came to Lombadina. In September Mr. Neville, accompanied by a policeman, Mr. Watson, arrived in Lombadina and announced that the Government support for Lombadina had to cease. He announced this publicly. This was a big blow to Lombadina."

mission did not close was because Fr Creagh arranged to secure the land for the Catholic Church privately through his brother and a friend in 1918.<sup>167</sup>

Many Lombadina children continued to attend school at Beagle Bay Mission, and worked in the stock or some other areas. Some of them migrated to Broome. The Mission was unable to do what it wanted because it was destitute and Mr Neville not only would not give a single penny but even worked against it. Unless they were brought to Lombadina by their parents, the children of school age from Boolgin and Mr. O'Grady's place 'Madana' were taken by the police to Sunday Island where they received support from Mr. Neville. There were 18 school children in Lombadina and food supplies were short.<sup>168</sup> Animosity between A. O. Neville and Catholic Mission Staff which arose at this time continued to the end of his career.

Fr Creagh had been asked by the Archbishop to build a church for the Catholics in Wyndham. His first request for land was referred to the Department of Agriculture, which informed him that the land he wanted was situated on the cattle track. A further application for an abandoned explosives dump remained unanswered.<sup>169</sup>

The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cattaneo, visited the Beagle Bay Mission in 1920. It was after this that the Salesian Order was commissioned. Fr Droste was the only Pallottine priest left after the war. Visas were not being given for German priests to come. Decisions had to be made regarding reinforcements. He left for Broome in the mission lugger.<sup>170</sup> In Rome, Propaganda decided to entrust the Kimberley Church to an Italian religious institute, the Salesians. Fr Ernesto Coppo *sdb*, stationed in New

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<sup>167</sup> Correspondence re closing of Lombadina Mission, August 1917 - 12 November 1917. BL., Correspondence re the closing of Lombadina, 5 December 1917 - 10 December 1917. BL. Fr Creagh wrote "Thomas Puertollano's land on which the Lombadina Mission is situated was recently bought by Mr. Frenez and my brother and they have made over the land to me for the Vicariate of the Kimberley. The land contains 190,000 acres. The lease is at present in the office of the Lands Department. I enclose a letter from Thomas Puertollano".

<sup>168</sup> "Lombadina Chronicle" ADB.

<sup>169</sup> S. J. Boland, 'Fr. John Creagh, C.ss.R. in the Kimberleys, W. A. 1916-1923', ADB. p. 31.

<sup>170</sup> Walter, pp. 182-3. When he left from the sandy banks of Beagle Bay, the scene was 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.

York was summoned to Rome to be appointed Vicar Apostolic.<sup>171</sup> 28 November 1922 the Decree was issued and was approved by Pope Pius XI.<sup>172</sup> Fr Coppo, was consecrated Bishop in Turin. He had chosen for his motto 'Deus Providebit'. Bishop Coppo was 52 years of age, his staff consisted of Frs Setaro *sdb*, (Italian), Siara *sdb*, (Polish), Rossetti *sdb* and Lopez *sdb*, (Spanish) and three Brothers. After his consecration, Bishop Coppo and Fr Setaro went to the USA to say goodbye and collect money for the mission.<sup>173</sup> Once again the ownership of property was raised. Fr Droste did not know what to do, but he had no intention of handing over the Beagle Bay Mission to the Salesians.<sup>174</sup> But the Father General, Fr Laqua indicated that to sell the mission property in Broome to Bishop Coppo was illegal by Church Law. The matter must be handled by the Provincial Council and the General Council.<sup>175</sup> The need for English speaking priests became more apparent. In 1924 Fr Droste wrote to his Provincial that it was important that missionaries who came out mastered the English language and were recruited from annexed areas, Alsace, Lothringen, Silesia, so that they would be classified as Frenchmen and Poles.<sup>176</sup>

Bishop Coppo tried to alleviate the tension and to expand the presence of the Church by moving into new territory. La Grange was nearest to hand. He asked if the State would allow the Salesians to open a mission on the ground already reserved for Aborigines.<sup>177</sup> When A. O. Neville was consulted he gave no encouragement and advised against the move.<sup>178</sup> He later blocked the application from being given an affirmative by the Government.

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<sup>171</sup> Boland, p. 33.

<sup>172</sup> S. Congregation de Prop. Fide. G. M. Cardinal Van Rossum, Prefect. *Australasian Catholic Record*, 1, 1, January 1924, p. 15.

<sup>173</sup> Pro Memoria on the handing over of the Vicariate to the Salesians. 6411/1. SAO.

<sup>174</sup> Droste to Resch, 4 November 1923. ADB.

<sup>175</sup> Laqua to Droste, 23 February 1924. ADB.

<sup>176</sup> Droste to Provincial, 15 December 1924, AGP.

<sup>177</sup> Durack to Ewing, 11 February 1924; Ewing to Durack 12 February 1924, Acc 653 82/24.

<sup>178</sup> Neville, to Ewing, 23 March 1924. BL. "The Aboriginal Reserve was leased to a pastoralist, Mr Frank Biddles, subject to the condition that no claim for any improvements will be allowed at the date of resumption and that natives shall have free access to the waters on the reserve. This is the reserve on which our La Grange Bay Depot should really stand and I have not yet discovered why the building was put up where it is now. I do not think it would be wise to allow anyone the permanent use of this Reserve, as we may want it in the near future as a site for a Native settlement."

Because of this experience and others, Bishop Coppo came to believe that there was insufficient work for two Orders in the Kimberley. He evidently decided that it would have been better for the Pallottines to stay, and that the Salesians would have more scope in Victoria where he had made a foundation at Diamond Creek. In 1925 Bishop Coppo wrote from Melbourne that he did not see any future for Salesian work in the Kimberley. He claimed that Propaganda Fide had entrusted the work to the Italians only because the Australian Government had restricted the movements of the German Missionaries and wanted only those missionaries in charge who belonged to nations which had been allies of Australia in the 1914-1918 war.<sup>179</sup> Visas had been refused to German priests who applied and Coppo negotiated to obtain them. Thanks to his efforts, visas to German priests were granted and two gained entry to Australia in 1925. When he resigned in 1927, the Salesians had been giving pastoral care in ten places: Derby, Wyndham, Halls Creek, Port Hedland, Roebourne, Marble Bar, Nullagine, Sandy Creek, Bodinga and Condon. Coppo had also bought a house in Wyndham. Four places with regular pastoral care were Broome, Beagle Bay, Carnarvon and Lombadina, with a combined population of 19,000 Aborigines, Coloureds, Europeans and Asians.

In 1928 when Fr Droste was in Adelaide collecting funds for the mission and later in Perth, Archbishop Clune offered him 10,000 acres for the Beagle Bay Mission in the Geraldton Diocese. The land would cost 1 shilling an acre. There would be 30 years to pay it off. Fr Droste, on behalf of his order accepted the challenge. It would become known as the Beagle Bay Farm. The eventual success of Tardun would owe everything to the labours of the German brothers.<sup>180</sup>

In this chapter a history of foundations on the Dampier Peninsula, at Drysdale River and at Tardun describes the birth of a 'faith communion' of peoples. The conflict with State authorities kept the church from being regarded as part of the establishment. Neville's hostility to Church expansion was evident and he resented church resistance to his agendas. His opposition continued so strongly into the future, especially to the Lombadina Mission, that missionaries came to regard him as the 'bête noire' of the missions. After his retirement in 1940, Neville summed up his

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<sup>179</sup> Coppo to Ricaldone, 14 April 1925, ASO.

<sup>180</sup> Droste to Resch, 18 January 1927, AGP.

attitude to the missions as a ‘hands-off’ approach.<sup>181</sup> But this would have been far too mild for the missionaries who saw Neville’s policy towards them as malevolent.

Catholic Missions came to the Kimberley with different missiologies and agendas. There was the individual missionary, the Scottish Duncan McNab who believed in working with the Government to implement his agenda. There were the Cistercians from Sept Fons France who thought of a monastery in the Australian wilderness; There were German Pallottines who laboured extremely to build up resources so the missions might be independent and self supporting. There were the Spanish Benedictines who also laboured with similar aims. And there were the Italian Salesians who thought they were coming to evangelize thousands of Aboriginal peoples. Each group of missionaries brought with them their own cultural traditions, liturgies and languages. Beagle Bay Mission was always an educational institution whose influence touched all parts of the Kimberley and reached to those Aborigines living on pastoral stations over the Northern Territory border. Until recent times it operated on Benedictine lines, an apostolate of prayer and labour, of liturgy and the plough, similar to the same process that marked the Christianisation of Germany and all Northern Europe.<sup>182</sup>

### **The Nature of Mission**

Nineteenth century church strategies which were preoccupied with problems of stewardship, how best to use the personnel and money at its disposal, were not much help to those who were called to the frontiers to serve in the establishment of the kingdom of the gospel. They had to survive as best as they could. Mission history is different from missiology. Historians each take an individual stance according to

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<sup>181</sup> Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p.88.

“In the course of his official life, a Public servant is occasionally warned off the grass, so to speak and given more or less direct hints not to proceed in certain directions, however reasonable it may seem to him to do so in the interests of his duty and the charges. In the early days of my administration, it was ‘hands off the missions’ and so the work was not strictly supervised or interfered with, neither was it greatly encouraged.”

<sup>182</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Waters of Siloe*, Sheldon Press, London, 1976. pp. 147-153. Merton was talking about Europe, but there were similarities with the approach in the Kimberley. “Each mission post was a small monastery with several priests and a half dozen or more brothers. Joined to it was a small community of Sisters. The beauty of the life was not simply in its material productiveness but in the fact that all this was centred on the Church and found its fullest culminating expression in the great liturgical feasts.”

personal bias. Henry Reynolds, for example sometimes takes incidents from different mission histories and critically analyses them in a way which would seem to negate most missionary efforts,<sup>183</sup> whereas John Harris described what happened in missions across Australia as a story of hope.<sup>184</sup> Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Baumann of Daly River, described the mission process by using a bougainvillea plant as metaphor.<sup>185</sup> The straggly plant stood for the nomadic lifestyle which demanded so much labour and effort by Aborigines to provide themselves with food.

Segregation practised by Aboriginal tribes also increased the difficulty of mission when an Aboriginal hunter, dependent on the game and plants of his territory, regarded a stranger in his country as a poacher. This territorial concern for land may have been based on religious grounds where increase ceremonies were regularly practised. Where natural resources of food were denied because of advancing settlement, poverty and hunger became inevitable. Finding employment with settlers often resulted in diseases: influenza, measles, small pox, or venereal disease. Missionaries could provide the stability needed for a sedentary lifestyle. In practice, the Christians of Beagle Bay Mission practically all belonged to the Nyul Nyul tribe in the early days because Christians belonging to Disaster Bay and Lombadina avoided the area. 'Ethnocentricity' assumed that it would be good to make the Aborigines into Catholics like the missionaries with similar work habits and a European lifestyle. If the new communities were to survive it was necessary to set up gardens and provide food. This created an expectancy that the missionary would feed, clothe and shelter new Christians which led ultimately to a dangerous dependency, and an increasing burden for the missionaries. And this mission effort, a voluntary donating of personnel and money supplemented by some Government aid, was never fully appreciated by Australians. It was a seed with its own inherent dynamism which would take root in the Kimberley.

The answer to the question "What would communion mean in practice on the missions?" had to be worked out by each successive community at each mission. Individuals had to work at the practical implications. Some communities succeeded

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<sup>183</sup> Reynolds, *Dispossession*, Ch. 6., Saviours or Destroyers?

<sup>184</sup> Harris, *One Blood*.

<sup>185</sup> Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Baumann, 'Teaching (And Being Taught)', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 9, (1981), pp. 37-38. "The missionaries were the three and a half foot fence, the Aborigines were the plant. Aboriginal people don't work to set programmes, but they work steadily and get their jobs done when they have understanding guidance."

better than others.. Until there was gender equality it was possible to have only a partial communion. The daily celebration of Eucharist began with a proclamation of the person and message of Jesus in the Scriptures, for the practice of the gospel is based on self denial by each member of the community. Perhaps this question can relate only to a 'faith communion' rather than a 'communion of peoples'.

In 1891 consciousness of social issues arising out of the industrial revolution inspired Pope Leo XIII's encyclical on social questions, 'Rerum Novarum'.<sup>186</sup> It attempted to persuade Catholics to concentrate more on social issues. Pope Leo claimed "the Church intervened directly in the interest of the poor, by setting on foot and keeping up many things which it sees to be efficacious in the relief of poverty. It had established congregations of religious and other institutions for help and mercy, so that there might be hardly any kind of suffering which was not visited and relieved."<sup>187</sup> This ideology was the thrust of his patronage of the missions, especially that of Beagle Bay. He had personally requested the Cistercians from Sept Fons Monastery in Lyons, France to staff it.

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<sup>186</sup> Catholic social teaching begins with the person and message of Jesus who offered no specific economic message but proclaimed the advent of the kingdom of God and the redemption of people from sin.

<sup>187</sup> O' Brien and Shannon, (eds) op. cit., 'Rerum Novarum', par. 23, p. 25.





## **Chapter 3**

# **Experiences of Women Church Workers in the Kimberley Missions 1884-1928**

### **Aboriginal and Filipino Women**

In early missionary endeavours Aboriginal and Filipino women were seen by the missionary as being there to help the priest, or to help the institution. Women gave consistent support to the pastors and workers of the infant Catholic Church by teaching, working in the garden, cooking, washing and ironing. After the Cistercian group from Sept Fons Monastery in Lyons, had left in 1900, the Filipinos worked with Fr Nicholas Emo at Beagle Bay Mission as Church workers, to make up the numbers demanded by the Government as a condition for a land grant of fee simple. Some of the Filipinos had married Aboriginal women. The Puertollano family would eventually become the backbone of the fragile Catholic presence in the area. The Filipino families worked as lay helpers for board, food and clothing. Their women folk assisted other Aboriginal women in keeping the garden going and doing chores. The families of these men and their wives became part of the new social fabric of the Kimberley.

### **Corporate Experience of white Female Religious**

The corporate experience of white female religious began in the context of Beagle Bay Mission in 1907 when the Sisters of St John of God volunteered to work in the Kimberley after being requested to do so by Bishop M. Gibney. To analyse the role played by female church workers, especially the unique contribution by women religious, the account makes use of oral as well as written sources. Two of the Aboriginal men who witnessed the advent of the nuns, Lawrence Clarke and Paddy Djiagween shared their memories about the coming of the sisters. Remarks made by early sisters, Margaret Carmody, Ignatius Murnane and Gabriel Greene give insights into relationships with the Filipino community in Broome. In addition stories told by three Aboriginal women, Topsy O'Meara, Senanus Yulugut and Philippina Fraser add to the picture. Insights have been gathered from archival material from comments about women religious made by Bishops Kelly and Coppo, and Fathers Emo and Bischofs. Information about life as a Sister of St John of God has been made available

by an Australian Sister, Sister Ignatius Murnane who entered in 1912. After 14 years she left in 1926 to found the Our Lady Help of Christians Order in Sydney. She returned to Broome in 1945 and eventually she went to Derby where she founded Our Lady of the Rosary School.

### **Aboriginal ways of Imparting Knowledge**

Aboriginal ways of imparting knowledge were traditionally *gender separated*. This aspect of culture made the presence of women in the infant church of great importance. Before the Sisters came female church workers were Aboriginal and Asian women who were sometimes married to the Filipinos who worked with the missionaries. A significant part of society in the north-west, especially in Broome, became part of a wider 'communion of peoples'.

### **New level of Relationships Between Peoples**

When Beagle Bay Mission became the cradle of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley it signalled a new level of relationships between peoples. In Broome, Beagle Bay and Lombadina, names of Christians listed in baptismal registers were accompanied by names of godparents to record the new spiritual relationships. As early as 1899, the administrator of the Kimberley Church, Bishop W. B. Kelly of Geraldton contacted Fr Nicholas Emo, who wanted women religious on the Broome mission. The Bishop wrote: "Sisters of your order may arrive at any time and no Community of less than three Sisters could be established in Broome. Could you guarantee them fitting support, a house suited to this climate? There are not many I think who could keep their health if compelled to live in a simple roofed galvanised iron house in the tropics. Besides two rooms would not afford them sufficient accommodation, can you obtain from the people who have promised to contribute to the support of the nuns a written guarantee to do so, stating the amounts they are willing to give? Would the people of Broome contribute towards the expense of bringing the nuns to that place? Would the Mission help the nuns if their income from other sources proved inadequate to their proper maintenance?" He was anxious that a project to have women working in the Church be successful. He saw no difficulty in procuring the Sisters if the conditions were satisfactory. He pointed out to Fr Emo that while in the Eastern colonies several members of different communities declared themselves ready and anxious to labour among the Aborigines in the Kimberley,

before their offer could be accepted it would be absolutely necessary to obtain some definite information with regard to the instructions of the Sisters of Nicholas's order who had been invited.<sup>1</sup> Until then, the female workers would be the Aboriginal women of the mission and wives of the Filipino workers.

### **Religious Women Share the Missionary venture**

When the Pious Society of Missions had founded their mission in 1901, the idea of inviting Religious women to share the missionary venture was revived.<sup>2</sup> In 1903, Sr Felicitas *psm* wrote to Fr Walter saying that they were ready to take on work in the Beagle Bay Mission, and did not mind the sacrifices entailed in this work. She had written to the Bishop.<sup>3</sup> A few months later she wrote again in German thanking Fr Walter for his letters saying if Bishop Kelly approved, she would send two Sisters in the beginning and then two more later. Then she decided to send the four together since they had never made such a trip. Meanwhile they were studying English.<sup>4</sup> These sisters did not come, but an Irish order did, the Sisters of St John of God, at the request of Bishop Gibney.<sup>5</sup> When Bishop Gibney advised Fr Walter that they were ready to come to the missions, the latter wrote to Fr Bischofs, "I ask you to travel to Perth as soon as possible to accompany the Sisters to the North and Beagle Bay. You must arrange with Mr. Clarke about the money for their fares. If you delay we miss our chance to get Sisters. Bishop Gibney has promised them they can go to Greenbush, if they cannot go soon to Beagle Bay."<sup>6</sup>

Religious women dedicated to a multicultural Catholic Church enriched the Kimberley society through their vocation as carers. To follow this vocation required great dedication and unremitting effort in a tropical climate with little comfort. Early sisters who had their youth with them died in old age still in service to the Church working with Aborigines. Their leaven of new ideas created a network based on communion rather than on power. As far as Fr Emo was concerned, the women were there as helpers for his mission, not to initiate policy or change. His experience of negative social attitudes to his female teacher of mixed descent forced him to look for

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1 Kelly to Emo, 14 April 1899, Archives Diocese Broome.

2 Missionary Correspondence, Archives Diocese Broome.

3 Felicitas to Walter, 28 February 1903, ADB.

4 Felicitas to Walter, 7 July 1903. ADB.

<sup>5</sup> Eight Sisters of St. John of God had come to Perth in 1895, three Sisters went to Coolgardie in 1896 and another six Sisters went to Kalgoorlie in 1897.

<sup>6</sup> Walter to Bischofs, 9 April 1907. ADB.

female staff who would be beyond reproach, but in the first Broome school in 1897, he was so dependent on the services of the wife of his sacristan, that when she was judged unsuitable by the government inspector, he closed the school and asked Beagle Bay Mission to look after some of boys. The girls received no further schooling until the sisters came to Broome. Catholic religious sisters worked within limited parameters. By entering convents, Sisters indirectly identified with a patriarchal power structure which severely limited their capacity to campaign for social change. Their position on the bottom rung of the Church's hierarchical ladder did not encourage them to be a critical, even a confident voice, because they were dependent on the institution and the social system for their position and property. It would not have served their short-term interests to be seen as critical of the rich, on whom they were dependent.<sup>7</sup>

Historical marginalisation was the fate of these women. One noteworthy feature of Irish historical records is that there is no central or even diocesan register of all the women who took Religious vows in a particular period. In marked contrast, all the regular and secular clergy in the country are listed on a diocesan basis in the Catholic directories of the time. Therefore in this peripheral status to which sisters were relegated, their contribution was valued to the extent to which they were an assistance to the clergy.<sup>8</sup>

Their names were not listed on official diocesan lists, but then neither were non-clerical male Religious listed, in earlier times because religious were controlled by their own superiors whereas a priest had to get 'faculties' from the bishop and was therefore on the diocesan list which was the basis for the national directory.

The beginning of the growth of a new corporate culture which bonded this particular group of Sisters because of their common dedication, their lifestyle, daily routine and dress began when the Australian novice, Blanche McCaffery, was chosen to stand at the rail as the boat pulled away to announce "We go, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."<sup>9</sup> A faithful commitment to the cause of Aborigines would be lifelong.<sup>10</sup> The nuns arrived at Beagle Bay on the eve of the

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<sup>7</sup> Scally, *To Speed on Angels' Wings, The Story of the Sisters of St John of God*, p. 59.

<sup>8</sup> Scally, *To Speed on Angels' Wings*, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Trinitarian devotion is a mark of Irish spirituality and its harmony with the dynamism of nature. cf. Andrew Greeley in *The Deer Song of St Patrick*, Seabury Press, New York, 1975.

<sup>10</sup> Sr Raphael Sullivan *sjg* spoke of her experience from 1943. "And then began the years of bonding." Oral Sources, ADB.

Feast of the Sacred Heart, in June 1907.<sup>11</sup> There was great excitement, tea and damper on the beach, a 14 km drive to the mission on the back of a bullock dray, a procession, benediction under bowers of flowers and a corroboree in which Fr J. Bischofs danced with the Aboriginal men.<sup>12</sup> Paddy Djiagween remembered, “Big corroboree, dancing, for the Sisters. Fr Bischofs make me after dark 144 horse power engine, pitch dark. Cockatoo feathers on head. Twenty to thirty men out dancing. Fr Bischofs was amongst them. When I spot Fr Bischofs, cos I spot the shorts see, I tell Mother Antonio, “See that man with the white cockatoo feathers on his head, well, that’s Rev. Fr Joseph Bischofs. She make the Sign of the Cross!” An Aboriginal dance of welcome such as this would have been a social occurrence to honour the newcomers. Fr Bischofs dancing with cockatoo feathers and Mother Antonio making the sign of the cross indicates the continuum of respective attitudes towards Aboriginal culture. The women’s group consisted of Antonio O’Brien, Bernardine Greene, Benedict Courtney and six novices, Patrick O’Neill, Margaret Carmody, Michael Power, John Walker, Joseph McCaffery and Brigid Greene.<sup>13</sup>

With these women came a changed social scene. They worked in a manner different from the male mission administrators. The presence of these women changed the social structure of the community.<sup>14</sup> They did not merge into the Aboriginal culture and system of skin relationships of the local Aborigines. They expected the Aborigines to adapt to the mission culture. The fact that the Nyul Nyul tribe had been joined by individuals from many displaced tribes, and that many of the old ways had been already shattered the life experience of tribal kinship difficult. They showed little concern for social reform in the political arena, they were simply too busy with their apostolic work to engage in social analysis.

Each of these women worked according to her own special charism. It was difficult work. Living conditions were primitive, the climate was taxing and there was

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11 In 1901 the name was changed from ‘Notre Dame du Sacre Coeur’ to ‘Sacred Heart Mission’.

12 Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p. 52.

13 Names of male saints were often given to sisters as patrons. This was another example of the patriarchal mind set within which women operated.

14 Lawrence Clarke later remembered with wonder, “Womankind all closed in and years of hospitality. When the Sisters arrived, we all thought it was something different, of a womanhood which they thought it was hard to explain. All the Sisters were as friendly as could be. They attended to quite a lot of sick life such as going into camp, bringing some medicine, washing the sick and bringing food to the sick and infirm.”

Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p.48.

the major difficulty in developing rapport with the Aborigines particularly as the Sisters were culturally conditioned to think of various aspects of Aboriginal life, like nakedness as a natural state, as lacking in 'civilisation'.<sup>15</sup> Benedict Courtney had contributed to the foundation in Broome as community bursar.<sup>16</sup> Sister Michael became Matron of the district hospital for long periods on two different occasions.<sup>17</sup> Sr John Walker worked in the Japanese hospital. In Lombadina she cared for the sick and the camp people.<sup>18</sup> Sr Joseph taught music in Broome, and worked in Beagle Bay and Lombadina. Sr Matthew Greene taught in the Broome school and spent some time in the Japanese hospital. Most of her working life was devoted to Beagle Bay and Lombadina.<sup>19</sup> Her sister, Brigid Greene, became one of the founders of the Leprosarium.

Sr Margaret Carmody became Provincial and administered the region for many years. Her notes on Beagle Bay were written in pencil, in an old red and blue lined exercise book. They are significant because they demonstrate the combination of European education of a high standard and the pursuit of bush tucker on Sundays and holidays - training to live in two worlds, with similarities to later 'Two ways learning'. "When the Sisters arrived in Beagle Bay in 1907, there were 24 boys and 7 girls attending the school conducted by Fr Russell who was an Englishman who had trained at Kensington, England, before he became a priest.

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. The junior classes were taught by a black girl of 15, Leonie. School hours were from 7.30 am to 9.30 am for the Juniors, who did off jobs, cleaning, raking and picking up rubbish until dinner at 11.30 am. A small

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<sup>15</sup> Scally, *To Speed on Angels' wings*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>16</sup> She taught a few pupils and took some Asians for English lessons and in the first days she did 'home nursing'. The Manilamen had great regard for her and many cases of tinned meat and fruit found their way to her tiny store room.

<sup>17</sup> Murnane, 'Character Sketches' "She had 'three joyful mysteries' (Sisters) there already." She became affectionately known as 'the mighty atom' as Jack of all trades' on the mission and as she displayed a talent for caring for the sick. In 1913, Mother Antonio had sent her to Cork Mercy hospital for training.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, "She 'scrounged' anything possible for them. She used the eggs for 'Rub Medicine' which the old people were always craving for their aches and pains."

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, "She was the last of the pioneer band to die, aged 91. She was a courageous woman with a terrific will".

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 am, the senior boys who were learning trades, came to school and remained until 11 am. At 1.30 pm there was Religious Instruction and at 2 pm. the boys went home again. At 4 pm they were back to school until 5.30 pm. This programme which looked like a University prospectus was abandoned after a few years and the school hours then lasted from 8.15 am to 3 pm with 2 hours rest. The later school was built of bricks made by the boys and girls after school. The Chief Protector of Natives, Mr. Gale, a very fine type of man, often visited the Mission. He seemed very pleased with the improvement in the children and each time he returned, he brought in children, mostly little girls. In about a year, the number of girls had grown to 70. They were brought 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 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.<sup>20</sup>

The Sisters were helped greatly by benefactors. Tom Clarke was the donor of the shack and land near the Church.<sup>21</sup> Bro. Frank Stuetting psm came to Broome and worked mainly for the Sisters as carpenter from the beginning of November 1908, till 20 February 1909. The mission supplied the Sisters with fowls, firewood and fence posts.<sup>22</sup>

When the first group of Australian postulants came to Broome, June 1912, Mother Antonio was in Ireland, recruiting Irish postulants. Sr Ignatius noted the interference of the Apostolic Delegate in convent customs:

During these times it was customary for Sisters to change their names when they entered the convent. The Sisters were used to meditating on the 15 mysteries of the Rosary and on the 7 dolours of Our Lady, while praying. For naming, Sr Antonio named Sr Visitation after the second Joyful mystery of the Rosary. The Australian postulants were to be the 7 dolours, the Irish the 15

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<sup>20</sup> Margaret Carmody, 'Notes', ASJG, Derby.

<sup>21</sup> Sr. Margaret Carmody, 'The Broome Foundation', ASJG.

<sup>22</sup> German Document dated 30 September 1909. ADB.

decades of the Rosary. There were 7 dolours and 5 joyful mysteries. When the Apostolic Delegate was visiting Broome from Rome he thought their names unbecoming and changed them to personal names.<sup>23</sup>

Sr Ignatius also wrote of years of hardship, hard work and uncertainty for Sr Antonio as she carried the burden of administration. Her determined, independent manner and blunt speech didn't make friends easily but "friends she had in Broome, stalwart and faithful." Bonding between the Sisters and the broader Broome community were quickly established and interrelationships continued to grow. By 1913 the Beagle Bay administration of Lombadina was placing increasing reliance on the support of the Sisters. Fr Bischofs who was in charge at Beagle Bay at the time, wrote:

We can easily cope with work at Lombadina mission. There are three Sisters and they do most of the work. There is no doubt that they can continue to do so in future. If one of our priests can spend four or five weeks every second month at the mission then work would progress speedily and the sisters would be happy.<sup>24</sup>

Newcomers came in 1916. They were Sr. Gabriel Greene, Sr. Philip King, Sr. Elizabeth Cremen, Sr. Evangelist Doyle, Sr. Augustine Mc Carthy and Sr. Basil Creedon.<sup>25</sup>

The first result of the Sisters making themselves available was that the work multiplied. When they came to the Beagle Bay mission the numbers of children increased to 90 within 12 months. Mission records show that school numbers grew from about 20 to 114 over the years between 1907 and 1914. The sisters cared for children who came with little or nothing materially, often without a stitch of clothing, but capable of speaking many Australian languages, and each already with a specific place in an Aboriginal clan. The tragedy was that these two gifts were usually lost. It is a shame that little effort was made to retain the language skills of the people by the Sisters. There were so many different languages among the intake of children from different areas. The use of English as a common language seemed to be the only solution. Nevertheless in retrospect, more should have been done. The sisters' lack of

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<sup>23</sup> Murnane, 'Character Sketches'.

<sup>24</sup> Bischofs to the Fathers, 24 March 1915, SACR.

<sup>25</sup> Sr. Gabriel (Sr Annunciata) had entered in Ireland for the Mission in 1912. Sr Philip came as a professed nun. Sr Elizabeth served in the Kimberley until she left with Bishop Coppo's group of Sisters for the East. She returned in 1949 and died in Broome. Sr Evangelist served the Kimberley Church for many years. S Raphael was still a novice when she went back to Ireland because of ill health. She died as a novice. Sr Basil served many years in the Kimberley. ASJG, Broome.



appreciation of individual gifts of language and culture was offset by some of the Germans, who as non-English speakers seemed to be more sensitive to this. It was hard for the children to adjust, and hard for the Sisters, to be responsible for so much life which was regarded as so cheap on the frontier at this period of history.

For most children, like Topsy O'Meara from Ord Station, life opportunities changed forever. Topsy depicted a community life that was explicitly Catholic, assimilation not to mainstream Australian life but assimilation nonetheless (and before that became official policy) to a Catholic sub-culture. Yet it was a community replacing the fragmented traditional communities and a vital culture which was a substitute, if an inadequate one, for traditional cultures. She reminisced:

When we went to the convent we met Flora Hunter, and Elizabeth Djiagween, that's my Aunty, and then she talked to us in the language, and she escorted us on a little boat called the 'Namban'. Rev. Mother Antonio said, "Flora, you will escort these children to the Beagle Bay Mission." There was a beautiful priest there called Fr Droste to meet us at the Bay when we arrived, and that was my home for five or six years, and we knew how to talk with them. We were educated. The Irish nuns, the Australian nuns, they were good, very good. Then as soon as we got all mixed up with the other children we were all right. We had a good schooling. Sr Raymond was the teacher. ...The new Church was not built. it was not like 'KabaKaba'. We had to be educated first to understand Church, like Catechism and things, and tell us all about everything. The nuns taught us. We used to all sing in Latin, of course. I miss that. And then this Fr Droste used to teach us how to sing in German too, little bit.<sup>26</sup>

### **Sisters come to Broome**

Though Mother Antonio did not believe that utter dependency on male support at the mission had to be endured the work was there to be done no matter the cost. The sister's lack of autonomy was noted by Sr Ignatius:

When Mother Antonio realised that the Sisters were at a disadvantage in depending on the Mission Superiors for everything, food, clothing, postage, medicine and transport, she sailed out to Broome to find a footing.

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<sup>26</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p.88.

There she founded a convent and a school for white and Asian children. Aborigines at that time were not permitted to live in town. Most of the shops were owned by Chinese. The Broome school grew, and the church was used as a classroom. Many of the children were non Catholics. Some were Chinese or Japanese. Students paid two shillings a week school fees. The Sisters taught music and book keeping in the afternoons to support their venture. A house in Ireland, left to Mother Antonio by her father, was sold for £100. The nuns sent her the money and this enabled two timber rooms to be finished the end of 1911. The teaching apostolate of the Sisters had always been supported financially by the wider community as well as by the Mission.

“When Sr Bernardine Greene died, a fortnight after Mother Antonio, friends came forward to arrange her funeral also. There was a small group calling themselves the ‘Irish Brigade’ who often subscribed money to help her pay the bills, Mr. and Mrs Pat Percy, Sergeant Byrne, and Captain Pentony. This group undertook the costs.”<sup>27</sup>

### **Sisters come to Lombadina**

While the Sisters were making their foundation in Broome, in 1908, Fr Nicholas was using his boat to make contact with other Aborigines, the pearlers and the settlers about the coast <sup>28</sup> He began to administer the Lombadina mission at the beginning of 1911. He opened the school 20 January 1911 with 15 children. <sup>29</sup>This was increased by six children brought in by Constable Johnston, in February. It decreased by six when they ran away some weeks later. Attempted control of Aboriginal people by police is shown by incidents such as this. If parents did not stay nearby, they wanted the children with them. 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 and the sick, old, and infirm were fed daily. Aborigines in the camp varied from 60 to 100, usually about 70. Together with Thomas Puertollano and a Manilaman called Sebastian, Fr Nicholas and the Aborigines prepared everything for the Sisters to come to Lombadina. Fr Nicholas wrote from Lombadina to the Chief Protector of Aborigines (spelling left as in the original)<sup>30</sup> of his trust in the Sisters, and his need to be dependent on their skills. The

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<sup>27</sup> Murnane, ‘Character Sketches’, ASJG, Derby.

<sup>28</sup> Archives, SJG, Derby.

<sup>29</sup> Fr Nicholas was the teacher in the beginning.

<sup>30</sup> Emo to CPA. Battye Library..

following extract shows Emo's deficiencies as an administrator, but also his priorities. It illustrates the problems that were to arise as missions became the channel for government welfare and were obliged to spend more effort on accounting and reporting.

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 doubt...So I preferred(sic) not to put nothing than to state anything I considered a lie. I apologise to you Sir, for this omission which will not occur (sic) 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.

The Lombadina Chronicle recorded that 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. When Fr Nicholas had appealed for nuns for the mission, Mother Antonio had sent Mother Bernardine Greene and Sister Xavier O'Sullivan 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 came from the Eastern states.<sup>31</sup> Fr Nicholas died in 1915 leaving his boat to the Sisters in Lombadina. The following year Sr Ignatius was posted to Lombadina early in 1916, before the end of the cyclone season. The induction of the Aborigines into European practices of hygiene became a constant chore. One wonders what they made of the emphasis on washing! Much of it was made necessary by excessive and unsuitable clothing. Sr Ignatius recorded:

School was a big shady tree; there were some desks and a portable small harmonium. Sr Laurence was a splendid worker and companion. I was cook, wash-lady, etc. There was a big open hearth with two iron bars across it, the

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<sup>31</sup> Margaret Carmody, 'Arrival of Sister Dolores and Sister Xavier', ASJG, ADB.

kettle hung by a chain from the chimney, and there also hung a boiler for 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. Sisters washed in hand basins, girls were taken to the sea a few times weekly, faces and hands washed at the well.<sup>32</sup>

### **Provision of Different Services to the Wider Community**

As the Sisters continued to cross social barriers and provide a different service to the wider community, relationships with the Aborigines continued to deepen. Despite some contemporary romanticism about traditional birthing some Aboriginal mothers at least appreciated trained nurses. Senanus Yulugut, an Aboriginal woman from Carnot Bay told how her son Joseph was born in the Convent and cared for by the Sisters:

Two of them stay with me. I'm sick. They went to Sr Visitation (Sr Phillip). These two girls went up, found little man, put 'em in a man's shoes box, rang mother I was all right. Joseph had to stay in that oven, near the fire. When he used to cry, bring him out, feed him, but nobody used to touch him., only Sister. He grew up. We went back to Beagle Bay overland.<sup>33</sup>

Appeals to Children of Mary across Australia for volunteer staff, specified Aborigines as their major work. The Sisters were joined by more Irish and Australian Sisters between 1912 and 1924. When Fr Nicholas was appealing for nuns for Lombadina, Mother Antonio sent Mother Bernardine and Sister Xavier to the Eastern States, where they secured seven young postulants, one of whom was Sr Ignatius Murnane. Mother Antonio 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. The human cost the Sisters paid because of their ongoing involvement with Aboriginal people should not be underestimated. Sr Gabriel Greene entered in Wexford Ireland. She was 96 years of age in the John of God Hospital in Perth when she told the story of her vocation and the work in which she and her colleagues became involved:

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<sup>32</sup> Murnane, 'My Life as a Sister of St John of God'. pp. 16-17. ADB. The Sisters' clothing was totally unsuitable for the climate.

<sup>33</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p. 24.

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, Bernardine, 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!" I didn't go home to say goodbye. Mother Antonio came home and got us, Sr Philip, Sr Elizabeth and me. The real starter of the Leprosarium at Derby was my Sister, Sr Gertrude Greene, 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, saying 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. 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, an Australian, died in 1946. 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 Ita*, 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>34</sup>

The Sisters of St John of God brought something new, original, and implicitly subversive of the old policies. They were not discouraged by the immensity of the task but were prepared to start in small and hidden ways. Many of the laity came to their aid, and gave support. They were determined. When those in charge of the Sisters of St John of God in Subiaco, Perth, were loath to give consent to the mission work, because they had enough work with the Perth hospital, undaunted, with the Bishop's blessing, and purse, Mother Antonio had gone to their Head House in Wexford in Ireland. The Subiaco community regarded the community for the

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<sup>34</sup> Sr Gertrude Greene, interviewed by Sr. Brigida Nailon, 1982. ADB.

Kimberley with scepticism, and as a radical group. It was only after years of discussion with Church authorities that they allowed them to amalgamate with the Perth community without giving up their native work. The later impact of years of service given by Sisters of St John in the Kimberley permeated all levels of society.

### **Sisters during Wartime**

The influence of the sisters was of great importance during the war and it was probably their presence which saved the mission from closure. They were a support to the priests and brothers, many of whom were interned, and were generally under the cloud of being aliens. The Irish and Australian sisters felt bereft when the German missionaries were imprisoned during the Second World War, leaving them at the isolated Beagle Bay Mission, in danger of invasion from the Germans and the Japanese with only one naturalised German, Bro. Matthias Wollseifer to protect them.<sup>35</sup> He was to serve the mission faithfully for nearly 50 years. Four more trained nursing Sisters became available for the Broome ministry in 1916. Fr Creagh C<sup>ss</sup>R, the administrator at the time, had them signed on at the Government and Japanese hospitals at salaries that were a godsend to the Broome community. They continued in these positions for many years. By 1918 nursing in the Japanese and Government hospitals gave more financial independence to the sisters. The General House in Wexford had blessed their mission and Mother Antonio had been given local responsibility for their mission. But after Mother Antonio and Mother Bernardine had died in 1923, a desire to forge closer links with the Sisters of St John at the Hospital in Subiaco, Perth began to take shape. The Kimberley sisters had become an isolated group, far from Ireland. But the Perth group had never wanted the mission to the Aborigines. They regarded the group as renegades and it was some years before amalgamation took place.

### **Sisters to Sydney**

Some Sisters accepted the authority of the Church without question. In 1924, Bishop Coppo *sdb* had encouraged the Sisters to make an appeal for funds in Eastern Australia.<sup>36</sup> The Sisters wrote to the groups of Children of Mary.<sup>37</sup> The appeal was a

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<sup>35</sup> Sr Madeleine Lynch, interviewed by Sr Brigida Nailon, 1984, B. B. M.

<sup>36</sup> Murnane, *My Life as a Sister of St John of God*, pp. 22-23. ADB.

<sup>37</sup> Sisters of St. John of God, St. Joseph's Providence, Albert Street, East Melbourne, to Every Child of Mary. nd. ADB.

success. The Sisters bought adjoining sites on three sides of the house. While in Sydney Sr Ignatius had taken tuition in management and method of a Kindergarten. In 1924 the Sisters began the first kindergarten in Broome. They had also brought back the architect's plan and specifications for a new building which was undertaken by a Japanese contractor, who designed it to resist cyclones. It was begun in 1925. Bishop Coppo also arranged for some of the Sisters to go to Sydney.<sup>38</sup> He had hoped the Kimberley Sisters would amalgamate with the Salesian 'Daughters of Our Lady Help of Christians' and although this did not happen, Sr Ignatius Murnane and Sr Magdalen Cashen followed the Bishop's advice and went to Sydney in 1926 to work in Archbishop Kelly's seminary. They founded a new order named 'Our Lady Help of Christians' and took up residence in a small cottage in Manly and worked at the seminary.<sup>39</sup>

When Fr Raible<sup>40</sup> arrived the Kimberley in 1928, there were twenty-two Sisters of St John of God in Beagle Bay, in Broome, and Lombadina. They continued to discern future directions for their group and were eventually amalgamated with the Province in Subiaco, Perth.. In the social and ethical dimension which deals with human relations and spiritual values, society owes much to the "genius of women" who have the ability in an inconspicuous way through daily relationships between people, to change the social fabric of society. Progress tends to be measured according to the criteria of science and technology. But women as a corporate group are sometimes enabled to implement innovative practices in the institution of the Church. Women missionaries were essential to the mission but that was not always recognised. Sr Magdalene wrote to the Sisters, 2 July 1924, regarding issues arising from their work, such as: the relations between the mission authorities and Sisters on the mission-food, clothing, sickness and the noviceship. She wrote, "This has been a source of complaint from time to time so you are now asked to put all in writing."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Murnane, 'My Life as a Sister of St John of God'. Sr. Ignatius wrote of the Sisters who went to the East, "We left Broome for Springwood, Sydney, on January 6 1926, four of us, Sr. Mary Elizabeth, two novices who had completed their preparatory year and were specially sent by Dr Coppo and myself."

<sup>39</sup> 'Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Our Lady Help of Christians Congregation', *Catholic Weekly*, September, 1981, ADB.

<sup>40</sup> Schuetzeichel, 'Familienbrief', p.307, also, Walter, *Australia.*, p. 205. Fr Raible was appointed Apostolic Vicar of the Kimberley, in 1928, and consecrated Bishop in Limburg, 18 June 1935. By opening a Missionary College in Melbourne in 1937, he made the way clear for the establishment of Pallottines in Australia.

<sup>41</sup> Magdalene to the Sisters in the Kimberley, 2 July 1924. ADB.

As the sisters were always conscious that they could be threatened with dismissal that they needed to justify their actions. Their presence was permitted only by the authority of whoever in charge of the mission. A Canonical Visitor of the mission laid down some ground rules.<sup>42</sup> The Sisters were to be allowed to remain on the mission on the terms of the verbal agreement with Fr Walter as a trial. Mother Antonio had promised to abide by that for another two years at least, when a formal agreement between the Sisters and the Society would be made. She also stated that their house in Broome was in no wise dependent on the fathers in Beagle Bay and was indifferent as to whether the Fathers were in the former place or not.<sup>43</sup> For the Mission Administrator, the Visitor laid stress on the necessity of not hindering or interfering with the Sisters in their relations with the Bishop, with friends, or others. In minutes of meetings about mission policy, the priests in charge of the mission discussed what duties should be allocated to workers, including the women religious.

### **Theories about Women's Work**

The experience of women religious in the Kimberley mission raises questions about the directions in which social justice tradition needs to develop to better take into account women's experience of work. In Catholic social justice tradition' as outlined by Leo XIII, Pius XI,<sup>44</sup> John XXIII,<sup>45</sup> Vatican II<sup>46</sup>, Post-Conciliar Catholic Social Teaching,<sup>47</sup> Paul VI,<sup>48</sup> Pope John Paul II. Little or nothing is said about justice for women or recognition of women's work<sup>49</sup> although Pope Leo XIII had written *Rerum Novarum: The Condition of Labour* as 1891. It initiated modern Catholic discussion of human rights in the economic order, and brought the Church closer to

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<sup>42</sup> This person was appointed to make a report to Church authorities.

<sup>43</sup> Notes of Canonical Visitation of Beagle Bay Mission, 13 March 1909, ADB.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, *Quadragesimo Anno: After Forty Years*, 1931.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, *Mater et Magistra: Christianity and Social Progress*, 1961, p. 82, *Pacem in Terris: Peace on Earth*, 1963, p. 129.

<sup>46</sup> Abbot, *Teaching of the Second Vatican Council*, 'Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World', 1965.

<sup>47</sup> O'Brien and Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought*, "Justice in the World", Synod of Bishops, 1971, p. 287.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, *Catholic Social Thought*, 'Populorum Progressio: On the Development of Peoples', 1967, p. 238, *Octogesima Adveniens: A Call to Action on the Eightieth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, 1971, p. 263, and *Evangelii Nuntiani: Evangelization in the Modern World*, 1975, p. 301.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, *Laborem Exercens: On Human Work* (1981), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: On Social Concern* (1987) and *Centesimus Annus: On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum* (1991). pp. 347-437.



the suffering poor.<sup>50</sup> on work, religious women's experiences of work and centres of work on missions was largely ignored.<sup>51</sup> Although in *Laborem Exercens*, work was seen not only as a right, but a duty and vocation for humans to care for and exercise stewardship over the earth. Work was also seen as communal, for the benefit of the whole community, for it brought people into relationship with one another.<sup>52</sup>

In the Catholic tradition work is perceived as being a valuable means of self-expression, growth and self-actualisation. Through work humans are seen as expressing themselves and growing as persons, developing their capacities, projecting their dignity, and in a sense becoming more human. Work should not be reduced to mere employment. Much work takes place outside the market, and in a non-agricultural money economy bears no direct relationship to acquiring the necessities of life. *Laborem Exercens*, published in 1981, affirmed a broad definition of work by including women working in the home and raising children in a list of workers who know the toil of work.<sup>53</sup> The Sisters knew the toil of work and did plenty of unpaid work making the lives of many Kimberley women became part of the warp and weft of a new pattern of living. Many religious women were involved in the upbringing of a whole generation of women who later found a place in Kimberley society.<sup>54</sup>

### **Motivation of Female Missionaries**

Mother Antonio, the congregational leader of the Kimberley group, died in 1923. During her lifetime she had been motivated by memories of the lot of Irish peasants. The situation of Australian Aborigines, oppressed and dispossessed of their lands was not so different. There was a profound irony in the historical fact that the 1890's saw Irish Catholic Sisters come into a predominantly British Protestant colony to start hospitals and schools for all. Mother Antonio often reminded her colleagues "Remember the Aborigines did not ask us to come. We are here of our own choice and

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<sup>50</sup> O'Brien and Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought*, p. 41, Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum: The Condition of Labour*, in 1891.

<sup>51</sup> Women's experiences in 1907, 1908, 1913, and 1926 when religious women had gone to Beagle Bay, to Broome, to Lombadina, to Springwood in New South Wales, and from there to Palm Island in Queensland were pioneering and unique and were not given the recognition it deserved.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, n 10 and n 16.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, *Laborem Exercens*, n 9.

<sup>54</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p. 29.

Phillippena Frazer said, "At a later time we met girls we got to know. There was Kitty Clark, Suzanna Gentle, Suzannah Clark. There was Mother John, Mother Margaret, Mother Patrick, Sister Dolores, and Sr Brigid."

we can remain only by their goodwill and the grace of God.”<sup>55</sup> But the sisters not only worked with Aborigines but with the wider community. For example, the Japanese in Broome were mostly pearl divers. They approached the sisters to work in their hospital when the trained nurse they were expecting had been lost at sea. They had their own Japanese Doctor, who had been taking English lessons at the Convent.. A 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. Sr Immaculate Leahy’s first assignment was to care for a small pox patient put ashore from a passing steamer. He was housed in a quickly erected shelter on the beach. A shelter was provided also for his nurse. The man died in a couple of days but Sister had to do her quarantine period there on the beach. A huge marble Celtic cross was erected by the Japanese of Broome in her memory when she died from a disease contracted from nursing. Most of the Japanese 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. The sisters volunteered for the onerous work of child care and care of the sick, and there should be recognition of their humanitarian work.

Australian Catholicism owes a deep debt to European mission bodies, especially to the German Church which generously provided resources of personnel and money to help missionaries give their lives to work with Aborigines. But it was the Irish and Spanish Church which provided most of the female religious. In 1930 when it was said that there was no Australian born priest working on the Kimberley mission<sup>56</sup> the researcher did not notice that there were Australian women who had taken up missionary work. Australian sisters who were working in the Kimberley in 1930 were Mother Joseph McCaffery from Perth worked in the Kimberley 1907-

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<sup>55</sup> Scally, *To Speed on Angels’ wings*, p. 72.

<sup>56</sup> Michael John Horsley ssg, ‘Dreaming of an Australian Catholicism: A Search for Identity’, Parts 1 and 2, *Compass*, Australian Province Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Chevalier Press, Kensington, no. 26, (Summer 1992), pp. 6-9, no. 27, (Autumn 1993), pp. 31-37. Horsely was right in quoting the 1930 source Fr J. J. McGovern of Sydney, but he was unfair in not including the Australian women who joined the Sisters of St John of God from the beginning in 1907, and continued to do so, that the Pallottines set up a house in Kew in 1937 to train Australian missionaries, that many of the European missionaries became naturalised, that Bishop Raible founded a native convent in Beagle Bay to train Aboriginal Sisters for the mission, and that there were thirty-eight Aboriginal girls who tried this way of life between 1940-1951.

1956; Sr Teresa Nugent who came in 1912 and died there in 1969; Mother Alphonsus Daly who came from Collingwood and worked there 1912 until 1980; Sr Gerard Gath 1913-1946; Sr Basil Creedon 1916-1953; Sr Therese Doolan 1930 and Sr Madeleine Lynch from 1931. Drysdale River Mission had no Sisters in the beginning, and it took longer to establish relationships with the wider community.

In a very real sense, the personalities and vitality of women contributed to the health of the Kimberley mission. Pat Jacobs wrote of an accommodation between ancient European Catholicism and Aboriginal spirituality which had evolved in Dampierland, where Filipino pearlers who had merged with coastal Aboriginal tribes lived alongside foreign priests and unworldly nuns. It was a unique synthesis evolving its own harmonies and rhythms of life. The Filipino-Aboriginal families had the comfort of the Church and their children had the benefit of education and training. As tribal Aboriginal life continued alongside the devoted practice of Catholicism, there was an easy coexistence.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p. 292.





## Chapter 4

### Experiences of Aboriginal women and men in Beagle Bay, Lombadina and Drysdale Missions 1890-1928

#### **The Keeper of the Songs**

Both female and male Aborigines shared in community building in the Catholic mission experience. Especially prominent was the voice and agency of Felix Gnobodnor and women of his family who kept his songs and his traditions close to their hearts. A Kimberley culture evolved from relationships made through those Aborigines who availed themselves of the option of an alternative way of life on the missions. In this way, some were able to express individual agency.<sup>245</sup> Beagle Bay Mission had the name of welcoming any Aborigine looking for a refuge. But some individuals brought by police were given little choice as to whether they wanted to stay or not. It was an unenviable lot which fell to many individual Aboriginal children in 1909. Isdell reported from the East Kimberley to the Chief Protector Aborigines in Perth that a refuge was available at Beagle Bay Mission.<sup>246</sup> There is evidence in police reports that some of these people did not stay willingly.<sup>247</sup> A policeman who arrested four men brought with them seven women and a small boy and handed the women and child over to Fr Thomas at the Beagle Bay mission: they were Emma, Louisa, Mary, Bridget, Magdaline, Annie, Lally, and young Ambrose. After making

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<sup>245</sup> cf. Jose Miranda, *Marx and the Bible A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression*. Orbis Books, 1974, p.25, on indigenous agency.

<sup>246</sup> Telegrams and memos about the Removal of Aboriginal Children in the Kimberley, 4 May - 24 May 1909, ACC 652 BL.

<sup>247</sup> Johnston, 'Police Journal', 16 July 1909 - 30 August 1909. BL. "Four women report at Police Camp at 12.45 am. that an old woman, five little girls, and one boy had run away From the mission and were making their way back to Roe's station. The Rev Mother wished them brought back to the Mission.

Left camp at 1 am walking in company with Native tracker found the tracks of the women and children near Ryan's well. Followed them through the pindan between Bullaman and Kallbracken brought them back to police camp. Arrived in camp at 9.15 am. The four women left police camp at 12 noon escorting the women and children back to the Mission. Also Native boy Arson whom I had brought down from Mission for stealing."

other arrests he walked the male prisoners to Broome where they were charged with “Breach of Aborigines Act”.<sup>248</sup>

Other reports of encounter were more positive.<sup>249</sup> They were made by members of Felix Gnobodnor’s family who described Felix’s role in bringing his people to the mission. Remi Balagai, gave most of the information about his uncle Felix, who died in 1930.<sup>250</sup> As an Aboriginal leader, it was appropriate for Felix to seek to increase his participation in, and his ownership of new rituals. Since the culture did not separate religious beliefs from other social domains, Felix did not change his world view, but he chose to encourage the Nyul Nyul and the Djabber Djabber tribes to come with him to share the Church presence.<sup>251</sup> As a major elder, Felix, while himself retaining the old way for a time, urged his family into the new way. He eventually made a decision to accept the new way of life and to finish with old ways. Not all the men agreed, but they also allowed the boys to go the new way.

At Beagle Bay Mission, Felix was the keeper of the songs and the corroboree maker. In the early days, he brought in a big bag of game every day. Sometimes there was a kangaroo in the morning and two emus in the evening. In the beginning he had at least two wives to help him in this task, but this was incompatible with Christianity. Although Fr Alphonse wanted to avoid destroying the Aboriginal culture, he believed some of the customs had to go. Despite this, a deep spiritual relationship formed between himself and Felix. Because of this contact it was possible for both to extend the Aboriginal and the imposed infrastructure of the community. A dialogue was taking place, a reciprocal process to promote Aboriginal welfare and to provide a bridge between the two cultures. The permanent religious change which occurred at Beagle Bay can be traced to this cultural exchange between Felix and the elders of the Aboriginal community and Fr Alphonse, the representative of Catholic presence.

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<sup>248</sup> Johnston, ‘Police Journal’, 3 May 1909 - 20 September 1909, BL. This infringement was incurred because of so-called ‘protective legislation’. Many pearling boats with their crews laid up in the creeks during the ‘wet’, and to prevent contact between the Asian crews and Aboriginal women, camping within three miles of a creek had been made an offence for Aborigines. It is recorded in the Journal that those arrested for this by Johnston were taken to Broome and all were convicted.

<sup>249</sup> These were made to Fr Francis Huegel by Remi Balagai, Leonie Widjie, and Fidelis Victor, and to Sr Brigida Nailon by Magdalen Williams.

<sup>250</sup> Remi was born in 1883, baptised in 1896, and did not pass away until 1972. The collection of 47 Aboriginal oral sources in the book, *This is Your Place: Beagle Bay Mission, 1890-1990* records the stories of Aborigines over a hundred year period.

<sup>251</sup> *ibid.*, pp.6-11.

Although Aboriginal religious practice allowed for the exchange of ideas and ceremonies, some cultural practices were lost in the exchange with Christianity for example, polygamy. When religious conversion occurred, Alphonse Tachon did not see that 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 however did not prevent conflict, and this is discerned in the oral testimony given by Felix's nephew, Remi Balagai. "Everybody told me, "You follow our Law. Proper we finish you Malulu, you can go back to the mission. You must be man like first man and you will follow our Law." Fr Alphonse preached in the church "Stop that Malulu!" They said, "That is our Law, we old fellows we keep to our Law, we got to stick to that Law till we're dead, but all them boys can follow Christian." <sup>252</sup>

### **Come and See**

Some of Felix's female relations followed his advice to "Come and See". They chose the new and found a way of coping with both old and new. His nieces, Leonie Widjie, and Fidelis Victor, and his grand-daughter, Magdalen Williams agreed that Felix had made a decision to accept the new way of life and to finish with old ways. Their stories demonstrate that the Aboriginal women had their own mission culture, and treasured the tribal songs.

### **Leonie Widjie**

Leonie Widjie's story covered about 70 years of mission life. Her godmother was Agnes Guilwil (Agnes Puertollano). Leonie was baptised before the turn of the century. She said, "My parents take me to Fr Alphonse "Take these two, my little ones, to stop here in school." Paperbark Church, little one, belong us. Garden: hoeing, cleaning up the onions and the rock melons; morning we take flowers and we pollinate the pumpkins all round the way we go, we girls, and women too, big mob women. Before plenty men and women. Not plough, men and women, big garden and coconuts, and lemon trees. Morning we go to school. Evening, we go there. Then I went working with Mary and Brother, and Agnes Puertollano in the kitchen. We cooked sweet potato, onions, pumpkin, we cooking cabbage, talk about cabbage!

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<sup>252</sup> Remi Balagai from Sandy Point, interviewed by Fr Huegel at Beagle Bay Mission. Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p. 9



beetroot, carrots, we cook ‘em. We take ‘em put ‘em on plate.”<sup>253</sup> The emphasis in her story was on cooperation in the building of a new community. Other sources record that Leonie was an assistant teacher for many years. Her influence in supporting the mission was fourfold. She worked (i) in the garden, (ii) cooking in the kitchen, (iii) keeping alive the songs of her uncle Felix and (iv) teaching in the school.

### **Elizabeth Fidelis Victor**

Elizabeth Fidelis Victor was born in Beagle Bay and her father, Victor Tieldiel belonged to the Nyul Nyul tribe and was Felix’s brother. Her mother was Remi’s sister, formerly one of Felix’s wives. Fidelis mentioned three tribes in contact with the early missionaries, Nyul Nyul, Nyikina, Bardi. Her Grandfather had many sons, and she was born in 1905. She related how women continued working together as in traditional society, but on new tasks. Sometimes they lived at home with their mothers, and sometimes they lived in the dormitories.

At Beagle Bay we had dormitories. St. John of God nuns were mothers to us. Mother Margaret Alacoque taught me. The first to get sick (leprosy) was Alice, then Mary and Aunty Cassie. Matthias and I went to the Leprosarium in 1935. At first the patients were in the bush at Beagle Bay and Sr Brigid used to look after them. We went 3 miles to school. We used to work for the Fathers, cooking, one from the community, Sr Aloysius. Sr Margaret used to give the orders. Some girls used to work from the Novitiate. We used to have our own garden. Mother Margaret did it.<sup>254</sup>

### **Magdalen Williams**

Two generations later, Felix's grand-daughter, Magdalen Williamscherished and passed on her family traditions. Some of them demonstrated that the new Law was like the second horse in the buggy<sup>255</sup> which was to pull a small remnant of the Aboriginal people to a new life very different from the old ways, “It was like 2 horses

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<sup>253</sup> Leonie Widjie to Fr Huegel at Beagle Bay Mission, 13 April 1967, Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p.12.

<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*, p.17. Elizabeth Fidelis Victor, born in Beagle Bay, to Brigida Nailon at Beagle Bay Mission, 3 January 1984.

<sup>255</sup> K. McKelson, *The Bidyadanga Catechism*, Pallottine Fathers, Perth, 1991, p. 1. “The idea of the catechism was to help people to stop and think about their life. As Catholic Christians, the people of Bidyadanga realise that their faith in Jesus, and the remembering of their stories, go hand in hand.

pulling a single buggy.” In 1984, Magdalen spoke of her personal attitudes to tribal law and practices of the past, and of her experiences with her peer group at the mission.

We, Vera Dan, Teresa and myself were colony girls. I was born 1921 and went into the dormitory when 6 or 7 years old. Bella and Fidelis looked after me. Mum died 1928, don't know what, no doctors or anything. Teresa born 1918 (big flu 1919) - her mum died 1960's. My Grandfather Felix told us: “I got nothing to give you but -I give you this land. This is your place.” Felix said, “Ibal Galbogjar (Heavenly Father) is there to look after you when I go.” There were two groups of Nyul Nyul tribe at Beagle Bay - one group was from the bush (inland), one was from the coastal people, for example, Fidelis was from the bush people, Remi was from the coastal people.

Carnot Bay was a place that the Nyul Nyul tribe would meet together because Grandfather Felix was the one they would go to for Corroborees from all round, Nimambor people. When those people would come, that was before the Christians came, and Grandfather would lay his rules for them, then they would come. Felix's corroborees always had a meaning the people would understand. When the first missionaries came, they taught them about one God. Before that they knew there was a mighty spirit over them. They would sit on the beach and sing and pray for a catch. They had a trust in the ‘Galjobin Ibal’ and they would chant as soon as the tide would go out, and they would find the fish and turtles. So when Christianity came out it wasn't hard to believe. Felix said to the people, “Finish now - end of old tribal law.” That was forgotten. My father didn't go through with it or Flora's. ‘Gunju place’, sacred place, but our people didn't know to say. Along where those houses were built, they used to have camps. When Christianity came out - Felix said to his people, “We must have one law and not other law: tribal way of running away with woman (spearing in leg), we finish with that.

Magdalen made four important contributions to supporting past mission contact, (i) she went with her husband and children to Balgo to work with the missionaries for 6 months, (ii) She did the cooking, and the cleaning at La Grange Mission, (iii) She worked as a member of a lay missionary team, (iv) She made an

important contribution to oral tradition in the Catholic Church in Broome.<sup>256</sup> But, as this extract has shown she also helped mediate between her tradition and the new law, making sure that the one did not destroy the other.

### **Remi Balagai**

Information about early contact is found in missionary letters written home to relatives, and to the members of the Abbey at Sept Fons in Lyons, France. In 1896, Remi Balagai and Emmanuel were among the first twelve men baptised. Both had become involved in Church Life with permission and support of the tribal elders. During 1897 the second big baptism took place in Beagle Bay when 28 people were baptised. Thomas Puertollano captain of 'The Jessie', the mission boat, was Godfather to many of the new Christians.<sup>257</sup> The lives of his family were destined to be closely tied to the Kimberley Catholic Church.<sup>258</sup> This Filipino element was a support to the three missions, Beagle Bay, Disaster Bay, Lombadina, and eventually Broome.

### **The Filipino community in Broome and Beagle Bay**

At the beginning of the century the Federal Constitution of Australia was being written and in the attempt to define national identity, elements of racism meant that the contribution made by Asians, Germans and Aborigines became a matter of controversy. The Filipino community in Broome was a most extraordinary case of a group developing their own customs and culture as distinct from a number of others and preserving it against all outside pressures. They were in fact the core around which the Catholic society in Broome developed. The first Baptisms recorded in Broome were from the Rodriguez family. Pearlers like Rodriguez and George Francis had taken their pearling fleets from brought their families from Manila to Thursday Island and round to Cossack about 1886, and Broome had often been a port of call.<sup>259</sup> The first Catholic Church built in Broome was erected by Filipinos. Filipino men at

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<sup>256</sup> Interview between Magdalen Williams and Brigida Nailon, in Broome, 1984 as recorded in Huegel and Nailon.

<sup>257</sup> Baptismal Registers of Beagle Bay and Disaster Bay Missions, 1897. ADB.

<sup>258</sup> Howe to Miller, 5 December 1969. ACAP.

H. V. Howe, a pearler who used to spend the summer months at Cygnet Bay, Boolgin, and Sunday Island, wrote of the Puertollano couple in the context of their care of the itinerant missionary, Fr Nicholas, saying that, "his domestic affairs were usually taken care of by Thomas Puertollano, or 'binghis' trained by Agnes Puertollano to 'cookem tucker, washem clothes, diggem garden and milkem nanny goat.'"

<sup>259</sup> 'Howe to Durack Correspondence'. ACAP.

Beagle Bay Mission and Drysdale River Mission worked as lay helpers for board, food and clothing. Their women folk assisted the other Aboriginal women keeping the garden going and doing chores. Before the sisters came, there were two camps on the mission, one for Aborigines, and one for Filipino families. These latter families were regarded as church workers and were counted as such to fulfil the conditions needed for the grant of land as 'fee simple'.<sup>260</sup> When Fr George Walter took charge of the mission, in 1901, a contract of work was drawn up 5 May 1907 with two Filipinos working on the Mission, Thomas Puertollano and Catalino Torres. Their wives were mentioned as recipients of mission support also.

I engage myself to work on the property of the Mission for the term of twelve months on the following conditions: 1. My salary to be £1.10.0 monthly. 2. To be allowed to keep any number of fowls up to forty, but no more, at the expense of the Mission. 3. To receive sufficient clothing for myself and wife and one pair of boots. This contract to be renewed at the end of one year from this day if both parties are satisfied.<sup>261</sup>

The Puertollano family would eventually become the backbone of the fragile Catholic presence in the area. The Filipino families worked as lay helpers for board, food and clothing. Their women folk assisted Aboriginal women in keeping the garden going and doing chores. The families of these men and their wives became part of the new social fabric of the Kimberley

In early missionary endeavours Aboriginal and Filipino women were seen by the missionary as being there to help the priest, or to help the institution. After the Cistercians from Sept Fons Monastery in Lyons, had left in 1900, the Filipinos worked with Fr Nicholas Emo at Beagle Bay Mission as Church workers, to make up the numbers demanded by the Government as a condition for a land grant. When Bishop Gibney came to measure the 10,000 acres of land which he was claiming as 'fee simple' he brought Daisy Bates with him. She worked with Aboriginal and Filipino women to tidy up the gardens and the wells..

Descriptions used later in this text<sup>262</sup> were made by Rosie Victor, Philippina Fraser, Martha Hughes, Nancy Leo, Emmanuel, Lawrence Clarke, Bernard Bundok, Charlie Norman, and Paddy Merandjin gave insights into experiences known to them.

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<sup>260</sup> Contracts between Thomas Puertollano, Catalino Torres, and G. Walter, 5 April 1907. ADB.

<sup>261</sup> Archives Diocese of Broome.

<sup>262</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*.

Parents of large families, Lena Cox, Joseph Dugal, Martin Sibosado and Amy Sampi had found a secure refuge with the missions. Cassie Drummond had come to the mission for education. Telegrams between Esau, father of children at the mission, and Father Bischofs help clarify the situation of individual children.

Some of the boys who came to the Beagle Bay Mission in 1904 remained in close contact for the rest of their lives, for example, Lawrence Clarke, Bernard Bundok, Charlie Norman, Paddy Merandjin and Martin Sibosado.

### **Lawrence Clarke**

Lawrence Clarke, born in Broome, left with Fr Nicholas on the schooner 'Pio' 3.00 pm 10 August 1904 and was baptised on the way. Lawrence really appreciated mission life.

I liked the mission. We had really come up here on the pleasure of being here, to be in the matter of trade, see we loved the trade. We went to school. My teacher was Randle. He was an Englishman, a fine teacher. We rose early, about 5 o' clock. All go to work to the butcher's shop and so forth. There were six tradesmen once the Brothers, who were all tradesmen, arrived. In the morning some students went to the church first and served mass, some went to get bullocks, cart bullocks, horses, and some of the boys would go to the kitchen to help those there. There always were six boys in the kitchen. I think they were all apprentices, including myself. The cooks were Bro Antony, and Bro Sixt, who was the chief cook. Then we had a baker's shop too , all trades. Each one had a trade. Most of us, about nine, turned into tradesmen. My trade was cook, butcher and shoemaker. Bro Labonte was teaching me. He was in charge of the butcher's shop. We had tinsmiths, sheet metal. All the machineries came From Europe for them. Professor Klaatch introduced what we called a 'Native Herb Collection' which he turned into medicines. Years afterwards they got the prescriptions from Germany to turn those herbs into medicines. I used sometimes help Bro Albert Labonte to help make these medicines.”<sup>263</sup>

It was a good education for an outback station, and Lawrence was still coming back to visit when he was an old man. Fr Nicholas also took a reluctant Bernard Bundok to the mission from Broome. At first Bernard did not want to stay at the mission, but it

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<sup>263</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is your place*, p. 48

was too far to walk to Broome. His other options were not too good. He married and stayed for a time as an adult.<sup>264</sup>

### **Charlie Norman and Paddy Merandjin**

Charlie Norman and Paddy Merandjin, came to the mission from the East Kimberley about 1908. They remained to work for the missions for many years making the mission their home. They were still there decades later. Charlie Norman was born in Flora Valley about the turn of the century on a cattle station. The police sent them with a mailman by the name of Bill Boyce who brought a group to the Mission. Charlie Norman did not know his father, who had died at the station, and he could not remember his mother's name. He had stayed with his mother and step father in Halls Creek because his mother had to get rations from the 'Government Feeding Station at Halls Creek'. He was still living at Beagle Bay Mission in the eighties.

There were 6 boys, old Paddy, two native boys and Richard, Dick Smith, Daisy Fitzgerald (Tony Ozie's mother) and three girls, Berti Esau, and myself. Old Martin Sibosado was here. He was baker. Rudolph did not come till 1910. Rudolph became baker when he left school and kept the job for more than 30 years. My trade was butcher's shop. Lawrence Clarke was in charge. We had a Brother there. Bro Albert was a butcher. We killed twice a week. After I worked on stock mustering, Bone's well. Some boys came from Broome with Fr Droste. Willy Wright was in charge of the road making. We worked with mule team. The first road was more along the coast but we couldn't make it across the creek, so we were working further inland. Sometimes we came in for tucker, but otherwise we used to have Sundays out. We had old people, old Jimmy, a tracker, for direction, but Bro John from the garden with the mule team was first. It took us a good few months. The old Jumbo Lee mob worked From Broome, Solon boys too. When he went back with Bishop Raible to the East Kimberley, he was the father of five children, but on his return, he was

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<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58. His father was a South Sea Islander from New Guinea. His mother was Lisa. He remembered that Mrs Podibun picked him up and brought him up. She was to take him south but he heard his mother call and went bush with her. After walkabout to La Grange and back again to Broome, Fr Nicholas picked him up and took him to Sisters' Point. Bernard said, "We were sorry to be here, too far to walk back, we settled down. I worked bullock team with Bro Rudolph. Picked up all the cargo to bring to Beagle Bay. We ploughed here, west farm too, that was Bro Henry's farm. I picked Senanus to marry. After marriage I worked in the stock with Bro Henry."

met by the sad news that his wife had died in childbirth.<sup>265</sup> His extract depicts Beagle Bay mission as an educational establishment with a mixed race Catholic community, learning skills and trades. There was opportunity for intermarriage between people from different parts of the Kimberley with security for their children whose births, baptisms and marriages were carefully recorded.

Paddy Merandjin had come with Charlie in 1908. His memories of life before mission days were not pleasant. Paddy Merandjin's father was a stockman west of Halls Creek. His mother died soon after he was born. A teamster brought him to an uncle at Halls Creek:

No tucker. No feed much at Shepherd Yard. When my father worked with the stock he got meat and flour, but the stock boys got meat in a special place. They were not allowed take things into camp. So we went into town to see if we could get tucker... The police would come in our camp when someone gets troublesome, spearing cattle, put them in lock up. A good lot of boys. prisoners from there. We saw a good lot from Wyndham. Take 'em to Cossack. Some days they used to get those boys, might be from station, right ones, or might be wrong ones. They get 'em, put them in the prison, and take them away. Might be anyones (sic) get taken away too, might be other boys who never do anything, they get taken away too.

For Paddy, the mission was a place where he could satisfy the pangs of hunger. It was a refuge from brutality of cattle stations and police. A boy of mixed descent had little security in the wider community and no opportunity for education. Paddy became a firm supporter of mission life and later went with his wife and family into the desert to help staff the new mission at Balgo in the 1940's.<sup>266</sup>

### **The Gathering of Children**

About 1908 a pattern could be discerned emerging with the population increase at Beagle Bay mission. Some of the children being brought into the Mission would have little or no opportunity to return to their people until they had completed their schooling, and by then would have lost contact, or would have taken on work elsewhere if there was an opportunity to do so. Mission administration was

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<sup>265</sup> Nailon and Huegel, *This is your place*, p. 104.

<sup>266</sup> *ibid.*, p. 82.

cooperating with the wishes of white fathers if they were still around or living on the stations. It was also keeping in line with Government policies. Sometimes the Aboriginal mothers accompanied the children and helped the sisters to take care of them. A list of names enclosed with a report to the Chief Protector of Aborigines showed the trends between 1906 and 1908.

Thanks to the energetic work of Mr. Isdell, Inspector of Aborigines, and the corresponding efforts of Inspector McCarthy, Derby, Corporal Stewart, Broome, 23 children have been sent from the different districts to our institute. Eleven of these children were of mixed descent and twelve Aborigines of full descent. Four of them were sent from Broome; nine of them from stations, South Broome and La Grange Bay, five from Derby, five from Cygnet Bay, educated for a time on Fr Nicholas' station. Mr. Isdell, (the Aboriginal Inspector, working for the Chief Protector of Aborigines) sent six children from Cygnet Bay but the smallest was taken away by some Cygnet Bay people.<sup>267</sup>

It is assumed that the nine who were sent from stations were sent with the permission and approval of the station managers and parents, and those from Cygnet Bay would have come with the consent and encouragement of Fr Nicholas Emo and the parents, although one was taken back.

The mission incurred debt in providing for the influx of children. In 1908 it owed of £3400 with the banks and had a debt of £1000 elsewhere. The missionaries hoped to realise £600 per annum From the sale of cattle.<sup>268</sup> Fr Bischofs wrote to Mr. Isdell that if the stations would agree to pay something like £15 or so a year for a child's education the mission would only be too willing to send such children back to them after having been educated and having been taught useful things for their future lives.<sup>269</sup> It was an opportunity for fathers to have their children educated. Some fathers took advantage of this arrangement. Telegrams concerned with Halls Creek children show differences in status of students where Beagle Bay was provider of education. Mr Button paid for his children to be educated at Beagle Bay.

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

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<sup>267</sup> J. Bischofs, 'Number of Children taken at Beagle By Mission, July 1906 - 1908', 5 August 1908, B.L.

<sup>268</sup> Bischofs to Prinsep, 7 August 1908, ADB.

<sup>269</sup> Bischofs to Isdell, 14 August 1908, ADB.



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... If I can raise the money I will send £50 at once.<sup>270</sup>

Other fathers also sent their children. There were two telegrams from Esau to Fr Bischofs about his children's education for which he was paying.<sup>271</sup> This would have been the father of Bertie Esau who came in the group with Charlie Norman. A cooperative effort was needed for the transport of the children, with police, teamsters, captains of steamers. Because it was for the education of their children the parents saw it as a worthwhile venture and some fathers were prepared to pay for the opportunity. Before Mr Button died in 1911, he had tried very hard to have his children exempted from under the Aboriginal Act of 1905, but like many of the men who had children of mixed descent he had not married their mother and the Government controlled the children.<sup>272</sup>

In October 1909, There were 111 children at Beagle Bay Mission, 55 boys (of whom 29 were of full descent), 56 girls, 19 of whom were of full descent).<sup>273</sup> There were 7 - 10 boys aged 15-16 years of age working at the mission and earning their own living. A similar number of girls who were taken to the Mission when they were about 15 years of age were already married. Ten children of very young age had been entered in the children's return. The mothers of these children were either old or did not care much about their children, so the mission was maintaining the mothers as well as the children in a kindergarten.<sup>274</sup> In 1910 there were 45 boys and 60 girls under 16 years of age being educated and maintained at the Mission. About 30 men and 30 women were regularly employed in the work shops and with the cattle, farming and gardening.<sup>275</sup> In October 1913, out of the 63 boys, (30 of full descent,

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<sup>270</sup> Button to Bischofs, 5 June 1909, Acc. 255. AN 1/2. Battye Library.

<sup>271</sup> 21 July 1910, Esau, Halls Creek, to J. Bischof:

SORRY HEAR NO STEAMER TO WYNDHAM TILL AUGUST WILL THERE BE ANY EXPENSE DETAINING BERTIE THANKS TELEGRAM HOW ARE WILLIE AND ANDY REPLY PAID M. ESAU.

Bischofs to Esau, Halls Creek:

JUST RETURNED SORRY FOR BERTIE NOT FINISHING HIS EDUCATION OUR USUAL CHARGE IS 30/- PER MONTH. BERTIE AND OTHER CHILDREN DOING WELL. REGARDS BISCHOF.

Esau, Halls Creek to J. Bischofs:

SORRY ABOUT EDUCATION, THEY WILL PROBABLY BENEFIT IN MY STORE REQUIRE THEIR HELP. AM

UNEDUCATED MYSELF LET ME KNOW TOTAL COST. Telegrams between Esau and Bischofs, 21

July 1910. BL.

<sup>272</sup> Button Correspondence, Acc. 255, A/N 1/2, Battye Library, Copies in ADB

<sup>273</sup> J. Bischofs, 'Returns of Admissions 1895 - 1909', 26 October 1909, 1436/09. BL.

<sup>274</sup> Bischofs to Gale, 17 October 1909. BL.

<sup>275</sup> Bischofs to Gale, 11 August 1910. 900/10. BL.

and 33 of mixed descent), 11 of the boys stayed in the camp with their mothers at night. There were 84 girls (28 of full descent, and 56 of mixed descent.).

Difficulties faced by female missionaries in raising the undernourished and homeless children are outlined in an annual report by Fr Bachmair. Some mothers had followed their children from the East Kimberley and worked alongside the sisters in caring for their children and those of others. As the boys became older they were needed to work on the stations from which they had come. Occasionally some stayed to assist the brothers. Training in different workshops had given them skills and without their assistance it would have been difficult to run the institution.<sup>276</sup> Given the increased security at the missions, large families were common. Lena Cox who had gone from Disaster Bay to Lombadina, said that all Bardi people started the garden at Lombadina.<sup>277</sup>

### **Joseph Dugal**

Joseph Dugal's experience was probably typical. He was father of a large family and was born in Gullen near Lombadina:

There were no missionaries when I grew up. Fr Nicholas came behind me. I met him when full grown - big boy. Mr. Hunter send me with flour because Fr Nicholas run out. He little bit old, good Father too, no cheeky. He got plenty children school. He got plenty talk. His place called mission and he had church already, iron, Manilaman help him. We come to the mission, woman and man, young people, school. Father teach himself, no sister. Fr Traub makem mission on the point but it was wrong place. We worked for the Priest making house at Lombadina Point. Theodore Traub was there first. We put up a house and a well. I stayed with the Father, cut mangrove. When finished house then come 'Salvador'. Fr Nicholas to Dajarra Creek. I had to give up 'Blackfellow Law', Fr Benedict said we had to give up, to stop, no initiation. I felt sorry for my boys. The others used to go to Boolgin. My boys had it the short way at Lombadina. I am Captain of the mission boat at one stage. Cargo to Broome and Beagle Bay. With boat, right up east for timber for house with Bro Joseph. Five tons flour, sugar to Lombadina point. From there by donkey

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<sup>276</sup> Bachmair to Gale, 15 August 1913. ADB. The children had been suffering very severely from colds, owing to damp and frosty nights. Five of them had been laid up at the mission hospital for a few months.

<sup>277</sup> Nailon and Huegel, op.cit., *This is your place*, p. 23.

to Lombadina. Two bags flour each side. Fr John Herold pay every Saturday in kind from store. Extra rations!

Joseph, then, both appreciated what he had gained from the mission and regretted his children's loss of traditional culture and religion. But there is also a note of resignation, acceptance of the inevitability of the changes brought first of all by colonisation and secondly by the mission.<sup>278</sup>

### **Martha Hughes**

Martha Hughes' mother had been one of the early girls brought to the mission from the East Kimberley. She told how they used to cook the shells, make lime and whitewash the houses.

I was a junior girl when Fidelis was a senior and Sr Matthew Greene was in charge of the dormitory girls. Little girls, middle girls, big girls, happiest days for the girls, good life. We would do it again. Our mothers were brought here. They lived in the colony in the married quarters.<sup>279</sup>

Martha has made the significant comment that while children lived in dormitories, some of their mothers were nearby.

### **Nancy Leo**

Nancy Leo was among the many girls who were brought from the East Kimberley from 1908 to 1911. When Fr Droste baptised Nancy's group, no details were written about parentage into the baptismal register, but Nancy still had a photograph taken in 1911 and she described each girl and her subsequent role in Kimberley social life. She was conscious of the influence of her peer group in the wider community. As a grandmother in 1984 she could still name each girl and her personal history.

### **Policy Decisions**

Meetings were held by the clergy to make policy decisions. There were no representatives of the tribal people or of the women workers at the mission at these meetings. The work at Beagle Bay mission was regulated by mission administration, for example: At a Council Meeting it was unanimously decided that the cook be

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<sup>278</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, pp. 142-145.

<sup>279</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41.

changed and a new dormitory built for the boys. There was a discussion about whether Lawrence Hunter was to be trained for work at the saw mill under the supervision of a Brother so that Franz could be relieved of some of his work, in order to concentrate on his job as a carpenter.<sup>280</sup> It was decided that Fr Traub and Bro Anton would take charge of the new dormitory and all that concerned the boys. The Father Visitor's<sup>281</sup> suggestion to build a fowl house for the sisters was to be carried out as soon as possible; there was to be a new milk yard in the horse paddock; the present school was to be converted into a Church, and the saddlery was to be enlarged according to the original plan of the new building.<sup>282</sup> Bro Albert Labonte was to take over the medical care, label all bottles of medicine and hand an explanation of these to the Superior. He was to sleep in the room where the medicines were kept. A special dormitory was to be built for widows and orphans, they were to be accommodated in the old boys' dormitory until the new house was finished, and Joseph Mary and Polly were to marry as soon as their home was built. Other duties were allocated.<sup>283</sup> The practice as outlined above about the allocation of work may have added to the efficiency of the mission but there was no sign of consultation or discussion at the period of time. The model was that of religious obedience, perhaps appropriate for a religious order but not for a developing largely lay community. It was an example not so much of paternalism as clericalism.

### **The Mud Brick Church of Beagle Bay**

In 1926 Fr Droste made a report to the Secretary of the Australian Bishops, Dr. McCarthy, about Beagle Bay. The mission was trying to be self supporting, but he pointed out that there were more dependents than workers to support them.<sup>284</sup> Because of the struggle to meet bills for maintenance of the mission, support continually sought from the Australian Church was usually not forthcoming. Fr

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<sup>280</sup> Minutes of Council Meeting, Beagle Bay Mission, 14 May 1909, ADB.

<sup>281</sup> Canon Law provided that members of a religious community have access to an official 'Visitor' at certain intervals of time.

<sup>282</sup> Minutes of Council Meeting, Beagle Bay Mission, 24 July 1909. ADB.

<sup>283</sup> Minutes of Council Meeting, Beagle Bay Mission, 24 August 1909, ADB.

<sup>284</sup> Droste to McCarthy, 1926, ADB.

Unfit for work 90 babies and schoolchildren; 30 young mothers with 2 or more babies; 40 old people; Total 160.

About 70 left for work:: 20 girls and women for cooking, washing, etc.; 12 boys for stock work; 6 crew for sailing boat; 10 boys in the different trades; 15 boys in 2 gardens and farm; 6 boys for carting firewood, provisions.

Droste died in 1929 at Wasserfall in Westphalia a few months after returning to his home on a holiday. He was 55. *Australia Land People Mission* portrays his gentle character and his love for the people quoting him as saying, “The Aboriginal child is a child of the sun and the sand.” As a monument to the workmanship of all at the mission, Fr Droste had decorated the mud brick church of Beagle Bay with pearl shell. This became a tangible representation of the Catholic doctrine of his missionary message.<sup>285</sup>

### **Women at Drysdale River Mission**

From the beginning at Drysdale River Mission there were women among the missionaries for with Fr Nicholas Emo, came an Aboriginal couple, five labourers, the Filipino, Leandro with his Timorese wife and their 12 year old adopted daughter from Broome.. The Benedictine missionary party consisted of Abbot Fulgentius Torres, Fathers E. Planas, I. Alcalde, Br Vincent, from New Norcia.<sup>286</sup> When ‘Dickie’, the new mission schooner was wrecked, 12 August 1912, Leandro,<sup>287</sup> 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.<sup>288</sup> Eight boys of mixed descent had been sent to Drysdale Mission by the Government. They were educated and occupied in the garden.<sup>289</sup> Later, when they were looking for wives, they came to Beagle Bay to meet some girls. Philippina, had been brought to the mission as a little girl. She had been

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<sup>285</sup> There are three inset mosaics in the altar: The Lamb of God, a Greek cross with a snake; and a Roman cross. The tabernacle has inset shell work, a carved chalice with the words IHS, the work of Fr Droste. A pattern of squares makes the floor of the sanctuary, between which are illustrations of bush fruits, and animals which are symbols of the whole bush before the Blessed Sacrament . Beside them lie symbols of weapons. A cross of ebony is decorated with shell work and was carved by Fr Droste. It tops the arch. Bro Frank Hanke made the communion rail from red gum with designs in pearl shell. The altar of Our Lady is framed with shell and decorated with the five decades of the Rosary with beads made from bush food. Sr Raymond made the bouquet of flowers. Around the shrine are the words, ‘Tota pulchra es Maria, et macula non est in te’. St. Joseph’s altar has ear shells as decoration and in the middle is a boat, symbol of the Church. Around it is printed in pearl shell, ‘St. Josef (sic) Patronus Ecclesiae OPN’. Nailon and Huegel, *This is Your Place*, pp. 34-37.

<sup>286</sup> Perez, op.cit., *Kalumburu* pp.7-12.

<sup>287</sup> Emo, op.cit., *Animarum, Broome*, 1896. ADB. (Fr Nicholas had made a pencil note beside entry no. 157 in his Broome Census Book of 1896, “This is Leandro Loreda, husband of Matilda (Aboriginal) living at the Point but nobody knows (but me) the true name.”).

<sup>288</sup> Perez, op.cit., *Kalumburu* p.15.

<sup>289</sup> Torres to CPA., 30 June 1911, B.L.

born at Yeeda Station,<sup>290</sup> and her father, Jimmy Kassim was an Indian who was born there. Her mother was an Aborigine of full descent. Her father had come to Yeeda to work for himself. When she was taken by the police her name was Sarah, she was seven, her sister Gypsy was five. Fr Droste changed her name when he baptised her in 1909, so in a way she lost her identity. The life she was offered by her situation in life was hard, but at the time it was believed that her other options were worse. Philippina told how she and Gypsy were locked in the Derby jail.

The ship must have come in the night. The tram pulled up in the morning and took us to the water. We went past my mother. She hit herself, bleeding all over. That was the last I saw of her.<sup>291</sup>

The anguish of her mother who lost her children, and the crisis of identity for the children in subsequent years was somehow lost in the urgent need to provide food and clothing for the indigent children. Fr Droste married her to Fulgentius Fraser, and in 1924 they sailed up to Drysdale Mission for a year. .<sup>292</sup> A few decades later, a group of boys who had been reared at Beagle Bay found wives from among the girls who had been brought in from Moola Bulla for schooling at Beagle Bay. Those girls and boys who had found partners for marriage had done so, but only with the permission of the Chief Protector in Perth, the missionaries sometimes had to wait some months for these permits to come through. Sometimes permission was refused since the mission's multi racial policies were frowned on by the government.

### **A New Mission Sub-culture**

By 1925 there had been a lapse of 25 years since the 1913 report written by Fr Bachmair, and a new mission sub-culture comprising the Sisters, Aboriginal, and Filipino women had been formed. It had been seeded by daily contact and service. Centres in Beagle Bay, Broome and Lombadina were well established. It was the policy of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, A. O. Neville, not to send children to Beagle Bay but to Government Settlements, Moola Bulla in the north and Moore River in the south. These settlements became destinations for displaced families, food

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<sup>290</sup> Copies of a series of telegrams are found in the Battye Library, Acc 255, AN 1/2 between the manager of Yeeda, the Chief Protector of Aborigines and the Derby Police Station revealed the urgent need of Aborigines at Yeeda Station. It did not seem fair to Clifton that a station should be called on to provide for its aged natives. 19 February 1900, 2 July 1900, 10 August 1900.

<sup>291</sup> *ibid.*, Huegel and Nailon, *This is your Place*, p.29.

<sup>292</sup> *ibid.*, Huegel and Nailon, *This is your Place*, p. 31.

was provided, and Moola Bulla was the first station to introduce payment for work. By 1928 many of the original girls from Beagle Bay had married and a new generation had been born, like Martha and Petronella Gregory. Some of the original girls who had not married were still living at the mission and were helping with the children. Others were working in the wider community as domestic servants. A mission sub-culture evolved from relationships formed among the Nyul Nyul and those persons who were brought to the Beagle Bay Mission as children. They were educated to the best of the ability of the staff. The German lay brothers trained many young men to work as cattlemen, and taught their trades. As adults, some stayed as

permanent residents, and others moved into the wider community for work to support their families. The Catholic missions had enabled a remnant of Aborigine peoples to survive, those who accepted the Catholic faith had mobility in the Church community. Those who welcomed the support of the mission structures felt secure enough to have large families which were encouraged and prospered, for example, the Cox family in Beagle Bay and the Sampey, Sibosado, and Dugal families in Lombadina.

The missions helped not only Aboriginal children, but white children and Asian children like Martin Sibosado, some of whom were orphans. The anecdotal references in this chapter have been used to give the opinions of people like Charlie Norman, Paddy Merringam, and Topsy Clarke, who were grateful for the security and education offered by the mission. Some Nyul Nyul people like Fidelis Victor lived their entire life on their own land in security because the land had been secured by the missionaries. A majority of women had joined in the charitable enterprise of the Catholic missions, in the spirit of the Chinese proverb which says, “In case of great darkness, light a candle”.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> While Brigida Nailon was working in Beagle Bay, in the 1980's, one old man's family brought his body back from Queensland to be buried in the cemetery there, at his request, as it was the only home which he had ever known. His family was unchurched.



## **Part 2**

# **Beginnings of the Catholic Church in the East and Consolidation in the West 1928-1946**

## **Chapter 5**

### **Context of Kimberley Catholic Missions 1928-1946**

#### **Social attitudes Reinforced by Legislation**

Social attitudes in the white dominant society during the period 1928 - 1946 had been reinforced by the legislation passed in 1905 and they remained prevalent through to the next legislation in 1936, and for at least another decade. According to Biskup those who drew up the 1905 Aboriginal Act had two precepts for the solution of the part-Aboriginal problem:

1. Tutored assimilation which permeated all provisions of the Act and insofar as they applied to part-aborigines, was meant to uplift them, by force if necessary, to the level of our civilisation.
2. Assimilation by the breeding out of colour.

Other names of this policy were, 'Physical or Ethnic Assimilation', 'Absorption', or 'Amalgamation'. It was based on the assumption that there were 'no strictly biological reasons for the non-acceptance in the white community of a people with a dilute strain of Australian Aboriginal blood, and the popular catch-phrase was 'black blood breeds out in three generations'.<sup>294</sup> But not everyone had gone along with the accepted attitudes. Fr Nicholas Emo, who had died in 1915 had been described as a person who, "happily tended his mixed flock, baptising and marrying without worrying

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<sup>294</sup> Peter Biskup *Not Slaves not Citizens*, pp. 187 - 191. Refer also to A. O. Neville, *Australia's Coloured Minority: Its Place in the Community*, Sydney, Currawong, 1947, p. 75, " And so it was that we began to breed white natives, because the grandchildren of the full-blood women were often nearly white and, in most cases, separated from their relations, could be taken as European."

about racial or cultural distinctions”, it seemed that an easy co-existence had been the theme of life in the Dampier peninsula.<sup>295</sup>

In this chapter these attitudes will be explored through experiences submitted to the Moseley Royal Commission in 1934. Aboriginal women who were deprived and victimised in the Broome area moved against discrimination by a statement which they presented to the Moseley Royal Commission into Aboriginal conditions in 1934. As women who had been educated at Beagle Bay Mission, they united to get basic human rights and to better their conditions. Religious women continued to play a significant but hidden role in the consolidation of mission in the Catholic Church and in building communion in the wider social scene of the Kimberley, especially when Religious women volunteered their services to alleviate the suffering of leprosy patients at the Derby Leprosarium. Across the Kimberley, there continued to be inadequate access to bush foods because of pastoralist rights. During the depression, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, A. O. Neville, reported:

the physical well being of Aborigines was deteriorating, particularly that of the children. The ration foodstuffs supplied did not provide for the special requirements needed by children. In most cases Aborigines were eking out an existence on Government rations, designed some years previously to be an aid when bush foods had been available. The inadequate ration had become practically the sole diet of the Aboriginal people. An increasing number of escapees from the Moore River native settlement was of concern. Also, deaths due to influenza and pulmonary causes were steadily on the increase. Clothing was insufficient. Garments were issued once a year only, at the beginning of winter. Hospital accommodation was urgently needed at Wyndham.<sup>296</sup>

In this and following chapters, the opportunities for paid employment of Aborigines being blocked because of racist attitudes in the Unions will be discussed.

In the Kimberley in the 1930's most of the 2000 whites lived in the towns of Broome, Derby and Wyndham. There were only about 100 white people living inland. Fewer than a dozen white women were resident between Wyndham and Derby. A typical situation in the outback were where two or three white men or a single white man, lived alone on a cattle station, settlement, police station or outcamp. Hall's Creek had a white population of 14, and Fitzroy Crossing had a white population of

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<sup>295</sup> Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p. 76.

<sup>296</sup> A. O. Neville, *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines*, West Australia, 30 June 1932.

only six white people, the pub-keeper, the policeman, the postmaster and staff. Nearly all Aborigines, approximately 15,000, including 2000 workers, still lived tribally, that is, on stations or in Aboriginal bush camps.<sup>297</sup>

Public roles for making new Aboriginal policy continued to be played by white men. A. P. Elkin, H. D. Moseley<sup>298</sup>, A. O. Neville<sup>299</sup> and Paul Hasluck became leading figures in controversies about policies to bring about change as the idea of eventual assimilation of the Aborigines into the white mainstream was debated publicly. There was a need for policies to be designed to ensure Aboriginal welfare and development. Bishop Otto Raible fought for the rights of those of mixed descent to have paid employment. A.P. Elkin, an anthropologist and an Anglican priest, had accepted an Australian National Research Fellowship to make a survey of the Aborigines of the Kimberley Division. His work exposed the weaknesses of government policies to keep Aborigines in their allocated place. He became aware of the attitudes of many settlers, pastoralists and other ‘employers’ of Aboriginal labour to ‘their blacks’. An example of abuse was that of a government officer, ‘a protector of Aborigines’ who had contributed to the costs of a punitive expedition in 1926. He justified his actions that Aborigines had to be given a lesson from time to time. In this incident, at least 20 Aborigines had been killed and their bodies burned in ‘revenge’ for a white man having been speared. No significance had been attached to the general opinion that the victim’s negative behaviour towards Aborigines and their customs had brought about his sudden death. The punitive party consisted of two police constables, four other whites, and seven ‘blacks’, with 400 to 500 rounds of ammunition and 42 horses and mules. The two constables were charged with murder but freed of the charge and transferred south.<sup>300</sup>

Elkin later claimed that his academic discipline of anthropology 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

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<sup>297</sup> Paul Hasluck, *Mucking About: An Autobiography*, (Original edition MUP Carlton, 1977), University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1994, p. 265.

<sup>298</sup> Moseley Commission, *Report of the Royal Commissioner appointed to investigate, report, and advise upon matters in relation to the condition and treatment of Aborigines: H. D. Moseley, W. A. Parliamentary Votes and proceedings*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1935.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, See Chapter 1, under the heading, Colonialism, p. 17.

<sup>300</sup> cf. Neville J. Green, *Forest River Massacres*, Fremantle Arts Press, Fremantle, 1995.

be aware.<sup>301</sup> In 1938 he published *The Australian Aborigines*.<sup>302</sup> He hoped that with new understandings of the Aborigines and the problems of contact and clash, governments, administrative officers and missionaries would at least be qualified to formulate ways and means of helping Aborigines to adjust themselves to the changes which had come upon them. He proposed the importance of knowing languages used by Aborigines and warned that ‘Winning the children’ caused a dichotomy in Aboriginal social life. Since the custodians of native law and custom were the old men, all problems which arose through racial and cultural contact should be approached and settled through them. If the old men were won, the social cohesion of the tribe could be maintained, but the first step was a grip of the language.<sup>303</sup>

### **Argument for Aboriginal Leadership**

A. P. Elkin argued for administrative arrangements to enable Aboriginal leadership to operate with an essential minimum of autonomy, within which the traditional society could make progressive adjustments to rapidly changing conditions. He argued that 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. He hoped for the kind of administration in tribal areas which would cushion the impact of the encroaching economy. In 1934, in one article ‘The Aborigines, Our National Responsibility’ he described the Aboriginal economic life as ordered on a principle of reciprocity, the decision making role of elders, and the religious sanction for their authority, and in a second article, the same year, ‘Anthropology and the future of the Australian Aborigine’, he wrote that it was obvious that in this time of transition which our presence has forced on the Aborigines, we should pay due respect to their secret

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<sup>301</sup> A monograph on totemism (1933); a summary analysis of social organisation (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 1938/74 and 1945/77. A detailed study of kinship systems and of economic data was made. Elkin was unable to visit Drysdale River Mission but T. Hernandez, one of the monks, described the social organisation of the local people.

<sup>302</sup> A. P. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines*, Angus and Robertson, West Melbourne, (1938), Reprinted, 1974.

<sup>303</sup> A. P. Elkin, *Understanding the Australian Aborigine, A lecture delivered at a meeting arranged by the Association for the Protection of Native Races*, Science House, Sydney, 23 June 1931. pp. 8-9,

religious life. Especially should we take care to undermine as little as possible the authority of the elders and the respect of the rising generation for those beliefs on which this authority is based.<sup>304</sup> The national Missionary Council organised conferences in Sydney in 1933 and 1937, with representatives of humanitarian and missionary organisations. State governments as well as the Commonwealth government were urged to develop a Civil Service to provide trained officers for service amongst the Aborigines. These conferences were important expressions of informed public opinion, which from 1933 onward was turned toward Aboriginal affairs as never before. All Governments, except Tasmania, responded in some way.

### **Assimilation**

The biggest issue facing Australia was the status of persons in what was supposed to be a classless society. Elkin pointed out that Aborigines of mixed descent were expected to conform to the general community's economic, legal and social requirements and had been, with few exceptions, thus forced to be 'fringe-dwellers' in that community.<sup>305</sup>

### **Increase in numbers of children of mixed descent**

In the 1933 report from the Aborigines Department a significant increase in numbers of children of mixed descent was noted. Despite the relatively small number of white residents in the Kimberley, (about 2000) there were 666 children of mixed descent of whom 327 were under 14 years of age. More than 50% of these were located in the Broome police district. About one third living in the town of Broome, another third at Beagle Bay and Lombadina to which children had been gathered over 20 years or more, and the remaining third made up of various twos and threes scattered at stations or living in bush camps with the Aborigines. In the other police districts, Derby had 72 children of mixed descent, more than half of whom were settled respectably in the town; Wyndham had a total of 124 children of mixed descent and about one-third of these had been gathered into the Forrest River Mission; Halls Creek had a total of 34, nearly half of whom were those who had been sent to the Government station at

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<sup>304</sup> C. D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, ANU, 1970. See also Elkin, *Understanding the Australian Aborigine*. pp. 8-9. "Win the children, as some urge and you cause a dichotomy in social life."

<sup>305</sup> Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines*, p. 379.

Moola Bulla; Fitzroy Crossing had 42, and Turkey Creek had six. It was not known how many were in the bush. .<sup>306</sup>

Among those who were thought to be liberal and enlightened in their views, the prevailing opinion about the future of peoples of mixed descent was that they should merge into the white majority, that is, be assimilated. This was considered to be the fair way of treating them. This favoured their separation from Aborigines of full descent and measures to give them opportunity and acceptance by the Australian community were advocated. Hasluck found that the racial prejudice was stronger in Broome than elsewhere in the North. Broome a the base for the pearling fleet had a seasonal incursion of Kupangers for boat crews and Japanese divers. It had a permanent Chinatown. The master pearlers, officials and other functionaries lived in a separate part of the town with little or no association with coloured people except to have them as servants, or boat crews. In contrast, at Derby, tolerance was easier. White children and coloured children sat together in school. Some of the chief business people and many of the householders dwelling in the town were of mixed race. White and coloured joined in sport and civic activities. The only outsiders were the Aborigines.<sup>307</sup>

### **Evidence given before H. D. Moseley**

The West Australian Government set up a Royal Commission under H. D. Moseley in 1934<sup>308</sup> partly in response to media reports of maltreatment of Aborigines during the 1930s, and in anticipation of the general need for legislative reform of

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<sup>306</sup> 'The Half-Caste Problem' Royal Commission re Aborigines, *West Australian*, 25 July 1934. ADB.

<sup>307</sup> Hasluck, *Mucking About*, pp. 257, 255-256.

<sup>308</sup> Elkin, 'Aboriginal-European Relations', in Berndt, *Aborigines of the West*, pp. 304-5. Elkin wrote, "I became president of the Association in 1933, turned its activity in a positive direction, and wrote and spoke incessantly on the need for all governments to draw up and implement through special staff, appropriate policies of health, education and employment. I also worked through the Australian Board of missions and the National missionary Council, whose membership and activities were continent-wide. The campaign was directed particularly toward the Commonwealth government because an Australia-wide policy planned and implemented on a national basis seemed at the time the best, if not the only, way of bringing about the desired changes everywhere."

Aboriginal affairs. Moseley was a magistrate and the Commission was credited with leading directly to the 1936 Native Administration Act.<sup>309</sup>

### **Ernest Charles Mitchell**

A variety of views about people of mixed descent were recorded by the Royal Commission: Ernest Charles Mitchell had been an Inspector of Aborigines. He stated:

The Aborigines Department is controlled by civil servants who are without any practical experience of the Aborigines; they really try to protect the natives and I admit that their intentions are good, but sometimes their intentions meet with an unhappy fate. The great mistake made with the half-castes was to have made them outcasts. When the first half-caste child was born in this State it should have been given the full rights of white citizenship, and these rights should have been maintained for all half-castes born thenceforward. The forcible removal of Natives from their own country to territory which they regarded as a foreign country should not be permitted, and the provision of the Act which permitted such removals was an unjust one.

### **Violet May Landon**

Others like Violet May Landon supported the assimilation of children of mixed descent:

Native girls, if they had any white blood in their veins should have the right to vote, should be allowed to seek employment through the licensed registry offices, should not be hunted by the police if they took a position outside the knowledge of the department, should be the 'owners of their own person' and of their children, if these were born out of wedlock, should have control of their own financial affairs after the age of 21 years, and should be free to marry a white man 'without supervision'.

### **Victor Webster**

Victor Webster, the Resident Medical Officer at Wyndham whose district extended west to Drysdale River, east to the border, and south to Halls Creek., pointed out the striking figures concerning the prevalence of venereal disease, one form of it being

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<sup>309</sup> Susan Tod Woenne, 'The True State of Affairs': Commissions of Inquiry, in Berndt, *Aborigines of the West*. p. 337.

almost universal in the Kimberley. He told the commission that he could see little hope of any real benefit arising from measures directed primarily at the black population.<sup>310</sup>

What gripped the popular imagination was not the injustice but the contrast between white and Aboriginal societies. For example, the Aborigines Commissioner, H. D. Moseley, had noticed at La Grange feeding station

a fair-haired light skinned girl of about eleven years with very pleasant English features who looked more like a sunburnt Perth schoolgirl than a native, and who had already been allotted by the Aboriginal marriage laws to an old man who already had two wives, and she was very near the age when he would be able to claim her. 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.<sup>311</sup>

Some of the evidence given to the commission pleaded that persons of mixed descent be given a chance to be classed other than Aborigines. To be able to 'live like whites' was the ambition of some who were associating with the white community.<sup>312</sup>

### **Discrimination against Aboriginal women 'under the Act'**

Explicit examples of discrimination against Aboriginal women 'under the Act' were given to the Royal Commission by middle aged, educated Aboriginal women who worked for white people in Broome. Being classed as natives, their employment was restricted. Their employers were obliged to obtain a 12 month permit from the police to enable them to work. This permit cost employers 5 shillings, but restricted the workers. Because of it they could not char (work) for different people in any one week. With regard to marriage status the white men or educated Asiatics who had to ask permission to marry them from the Chief Protector in Perth were usually refused, resulting in fatherless children. Most of those children were 'three quarter caste' and by the Aboriginal Act, such children were classed as Octoroons and were not under the Act. But a Halfcaste mother under the Act was treated as a native and her Octoroon children too. This was another reason for asking for freedom. The women

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<sup>310</sup> Mitchell, Landon and Webster to Moseley, Royal Commission, 6 April 1934, 14 July 1934 and 31 July 1934. B.L.

<sup>311</sup> 'Natives at La Grange-The Half Caste Problem', Royal Commission, *West Australian*, 14 July 1934. ADB.

<sup>312</sup> Hasluck, *Mucking About*, p. 255.



asked for a paid Lady Protector so that they could be in a position to be counselled and guided until the elders had properly gained the knowledge of the 'whiteman's law', and that protection be taken out of the hands of the police who knew that they were helpless and too frightened to retaliate. They asked for a better shelter at the ration camp for their old and infirm natives. They justified their appeal saying:

We are educated halfcastes who have been sent to the Missions. We have been taken from either our fathers or our mothers when we were children by the advice of the Department and by so doing that has been the end of father and mother to us. Do you not realise the cruelty of this, would you white people like to think when you send your children to school that you would never see them again. That is one more reason why we want our freedom. Another farce: we are told if we are good we could be granted a Certificate. Again under the recommendation of the police. And some of us have no hope of ever getting those papers because in past years we have refused favours to some of those police. Finally many of us own our own houses and land and many more of us could do so. We who do own our homes pay the rates when the rate time comes along. We can read, write, sew, crochet, laundry also make our own clothes and for other people too, also other domestic work. So that Sir, on that qualification alone we think we should not be classed as natives and kept in bondage by the Act. Again Sir we the Half-caste-population of Broome ask you to give us our freedom and release us from the stigma of a native and make us happy subjects of this our country.<sup>313</sup>

These women were far in advance of others in awareness of their social environment. They argued from an inner knowledge of what was right, and that the human rights of women included their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. The women knew that beatings were not the only kind of violence that they suffered. As women for whom jobs were scarce to begin with, always lower paying than those held by whites, and who were most vulnerable with regard to tenure, because they knew that at any moment they may be expected to keep the few jobs they obtained only if they were prepared to pay

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<sup>313</sup> Submission to the Moseley Royal Commission from the half-castes of Broome, January 1935. PRO, Aboriginal Affairs, AN 1/7 Acc 993 55/35: Petition by Half-castes and Quadroons in Broome Regarding Exempting Them from the Aborigines Act.

sexual favours for them. The Aboriginal Women of Broome gave examples of sexual harassment which they had experienced.<sup>314</sup>

When the Moseley Report was presented in 1935, the major issue of concern at the time was the increase in the number of people of mixed descent, 1905 - 900, 1934 - 3,891. An article in the *West Australian* July 1935 stated that the State needed to make its plans for a large body of coloured people, many of whom had grown up with little education or training. The first question was whether these people were to be assimilated by the white community or segregated from it forever.<sup>315</sup> It was decided that any attempt to remove the 2000 Aborigines employed on 70 or 80 stations in the Kimberley for more thorough training would be not only cruel but productive of no good result. The Native Administration Act gave the commissioner of Native Affairs more right to object to the celebration of marriages involving a 'native', and widened the grounds on which consent could be withheld. But the assimilation policy was destined to fail (i) because some of those exempted from the Act objected to produce upon demand what they called 'dog licences'; (ii) because of economic reasons, that the Act tightened provisions regarding employment permits, the Aborigines were an economically underprivileged group, eking out a precarious existence on casual work and government rations, (iii) because of racial prejudice, particularly in the field of education.<sup>316</sup>

## **Education**

In Western Australia, from 1829, when the Swan River was settled, until 1897, control of the Aborigines was nominally under the Imperial British Government.<sup>317</sup> The 1897 Act had given the responsibility of Aboriginal education to the Chief Protector of Aborigines. There had been little money to spare for education in the Aboriginal Department as most of the money went on rations and Lock Hospitals,

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<sup>314</sup> Joan Chittester, *Beyond Beijing: The Next Step for Women*, Sheed & Ward, Kansas, 1996, p. 145. Many of the needs listed by the Aboriginal Women of Broome were similar to those outlined in 1995 by other indigenous women. "The Beijing Document requires governments provide shelters for battered women, punishment for perpetrators, research and therapy to curb that kind of disorder, and strict penalties for sexual harassment." p. 146.

<sup>315</sup> Extracts from a series of articles in the *West Australian*, July 1935.

<sup>316</sup> Regulations enforced by Circular no. 135, 10 June 1935 had been made under the Aborigines Act, 1905.

<sup>317</sup> Paul Hasluck, *Black Australians: A Survey of Native Policy in West Australia, 1829-1897*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1942.

which had been established for sufferers from venereal disease. If Aboriginal parents had any educational aspirations for their children, these were thwarted by legislation. Aboriginal education was not only compulsory it was often just not available. As time went on, the Education Department strengthened its opposition to the enrolment of Aboriginal children in state schools. An amendment to the Education Act in 1928 reiterated the right of the Minister to expel any child whose presence was ‘injurious to the health, welfare and morality of other children’. Subsequent regulations empowered teachers to suspend children temporarily, either on their own initiative, or on the basis of complaints from parents of other children. In practice, a single parent could cause the suspension of Aboriginal pupils while objections from several parents automatically led to expulsion.

According to the Chief Protector, A. O. Neville, only one per cent of children of Aboriginal descent in the state were receiving a state school education. The Education Department simply responded that it was obliged to retain ‘discretionary powers’ as some of the children were ‘quite unsuited to receive their education in ordinary schools’. Neville proposed that circulars be sent around the state inquiring about numbers of school age children of Aboriginal descent and seeking details on the attitudes of local white parents to enrolments and expulsions of Aboriginal children. The under Secretary of the chief Secretary’s Department supported Neville’s proposal but the Minister in charge of the Aborigines Department, W. H. Kitson, stated

“it was out of the question to compel admission of half-castes to State schools ... education would be given in schools especially provided for that purpose. In the present state of the finances it was a difficult problem.”<sup>318</sup>

## **Legislation**

Aborigines continued to face disadvantages before the Law. Elkin’s research enabled Hasluck to gain an insight into the Aboriginal disadvantage. He gave examples of adverse effects government measures had on their legal and social advancement. As the leading advocate of enlightened approach to Aboriginal administration Elkin influenced Hasluck’s book, *Black Australians*<sup>319</sup> which revealed

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<sup>318</sup> Anna Haebich, *For Their Own Good, Aborigines and Government in the Southwest of Western Australia, 1900 - 1940*, Nedlands, Charles and Jay Staples South West Region Publication Fund Committee, 1988, pp. 260 - 61.

<sup>319</sup> Paul Hasluck, *Black Australians: A Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia, 1827-1897*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1942.

a gap between the intent of policy and its actual impact upon Aboriginal people. It traced the abandonment of policies intended to ‘civilise’ Aborigines and provide them with the status and legal rights of British subjects and exposed the neglect of practical actions necessary to advance physical well-being. When Hasluck later became a Commonwealth Minister with responsibility for the direction and implementation of Aboriginal policy his academic grounding in Aboriginal administrative policy combined with his experiences with Moseley’s field trips on the Royal Commission in Western Australia generated a political commitment to initiate a new approach to Aboriginal policy in Australia.<sup>320</sup> As Chief Protector of Aborigines and Commissioner for Native Affairs, A. O. Neville exercised an all pervasive influence.

### **Influence of A. O. Neville as Chief Protector of Aborigines and Commissioner for Native Affairs**

At a conference convened for Chief Protectors and Boards controlling Aborigines in the states and the Northern Territory held in Canberra in 1937, Western Australia was represented by Neville. He maintained that his state had gone further than any other in the development of a long-range policy for ‘the native race’, based on the view ‘that ultimately the natives must be absorbed into the white population’, that is, through miscegenation. At the conference a resolution moved by Neville was adopted. It affirmed:

- (1) That children of detribalised Aborigines should be educated to white standards and then placed in employment in ‘lucrative occupations which will not bring them into economic or social conflict with the white community’.
- (2) That the semi-civilised should be kept under benevolent supervision in their own tribal areas, particularly in small reserves from which they would go out to employment and where they would live ‘as nearly as possible a normal tribal life’, when unemployed, though ultimately they also would become detribalised and
- (3) That the uncivilised Aborigines should be preserved as far as possible in their normal tribal state in inviolable reserves.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Robert Porter, *Paul Hasluck: A Political Biography*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1956. p. 194.

<sup>321</sup> This was motivated by a fear expressed by Dr C. E. Cook, that ‘unless the black man (of full descent) is speedily absorbed into the white, the process will soon be reversed, and in 50 years, or a little later, the white population of the Northern

These policies caused much suffering for the Aborigines for many years.

### **Aboriginal Employment**

Fr Otto Raible, the new administrator of the Catholic Vicariate retained his personal integrity and followed his own judgement on all matters. He sprang to the defence of those who had been educated at Beagle Bay when they were refused employment, writing to A. Coverley, MLA, that if those of mixed descent were to have any self respect, it was necessary that they be enabled to attain to a certain social status which was bound up with the burning question of employment. In February 1940 he pointed out that for the coming season there was a great deal of contract work on hand, extension of the aerodrome, and road building. Here was an opportunity to give the local Aborigines paid employment, if the Minister were to exert his influence to secure a share in the work. There were about a dozen 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 like the idea of going abroad droving or for other work while their wives and children had to remain as they felt this was not a sound proposition.<sup>322</sup> A Coverley replied by letter that he had given instructions that where any of these people were 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>323</sup> The trouble began when the local secretary of the Australian Workers Union not only seemed to be very slow in granting a union ticket, but in fact said that half castes and quadroons could not get one. They were advised to write south to headquarters if they were not satisfied. In one case, a quadroon, named Willie Roe, after having been refused a ticket locally, did write for one and headquarters advised the local Union to give him a ticket. But the local executive was unwilling to give it. The local branch members were afraid that too many Aborigines might apply and they created difficulties to induce them to give up the idea of joining. Bishop Raible argued that

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Territory will be absorbed into the black', but in Neville's opinion, the many full-bloods in Western Australia who were living 'their own natural lives', 'were not, for the most part, getting enough food, and they were, in fact, being decimated by their own tribal practices' therefore, no matter what was done, they would die out. (See *Aboriginal welfare: initial conference of Commonwealth and state Aboriginal authorities*, 1937, Government Printer, Canberra; quotations in this section are from this report,) cited A. P. Elkin, in 'Aboriginal-European Relations' from Berndt, *Aborigines of the West*, p. 307-8.

<sup>322</sup> Raible to Coverley, 2 February 1940. ADB.

<sup>323</sup> Coverley to Raible, 14 February 1940. ADB.

this was unjust and asked the Minister to investigate the situation in order to help in establishing Aboriginal families on a sound basis.<sup>324</sup> Local Aboriginal men were of mixed descent were still refused union tickets but strangers who had come up from south with tickets were given jobs. This stirred the local people who wanted to see something practical done to keep them from drifting into despair.<sup>325</sup> A. Coverley explained that he was unable to pursue the matter of Government employment for half castes any further, because Union rules which would soon be the Union's Constitution, were registered with the Arbitration Courts of Australia. The Constitution debarred persons of Asiatic or Aboriginal descent from becoming members. Coverley stated that where it had happened in the past it had been through some unforeseen circumstances which was apart from any legal aspects.<sup>326</sup>

Burgmann wrote that the 'Industrial Workers of the World' as a group was particularly hostile to the Australian Workers' Union was partly because the Australian Workers Union was racist. It deplored the fact that the it "refuses to enrol within the ranks all Asiatic workers and natives of the South Sea islands." As early as 1915 Tom Barker had outlined the role of the Australian Workers Union in the Northern Territory. The 600-700 white workers were organised in the White Australian Workers Union and the 2500 coloured workers were not allowed to join:

The Australian Workers Union stands for the white man alone, and treats all coloured workers with unconcealed contempt. The man of colour, although working for the same skinner and exploiter as the white, is denied the right of organisation, in order to make the demands of his class more effective.<sup>327</sup>

Though coloured workers were being exploited, the Australian Workers Union refused to organise them against the employers.

In Australia the Industrial Workers of the World convinced many militant workers and most socialist groups of the need for combating racial ideas in the labour movement. In so doing the Industrial Workers of the World issued the first effective challenge ever to working-class racism in Australia.<sup>328</sup>

Burgmann gave an example of how racist the Australian Workers Union could be:

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<sup>324</sup> Raible to Coverley, 18 February 1940, ADB.

<sup>325</sup> Raible to Coverley, 20 March 1940, ADB.

<sup>326</sup> Coverley to Raible, 29 March 1940. ADB.

<sup>327</sup> Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Oakleigh, 1995, p. 89.

<sup>328</sup> *ibid.*, p. 91.

In a recent strike of whites, the coloured workers had consistently refused to scab in spite of tempting proposals made to them by the employers, but were still refused Australian Workers Union tickets after the strike was over.<sup>329</sup>

But the Aboriginal person continued to be entangled in a network of legislation. The pastoral industry paid Aborigines wages which fell well below unemployment or sickness benefit. Yet unemployment benefits could not be paid to an Aborigine who refused to work for this wage well below the award wage, or to an Aborigine who moved into a town or settled area and needed the benefit while seeking employment.<sup>330</sup>

Elkin had exposed the low ebb of relations between Aboriginal and white Australians from the mid-1920's to the mid-1930's. The period was marked by clashes; by atrocities; by inquiries into such incidents; by court trials in which the procedure and assumptions seemed likely to deny justice to the Aborigines concerned. Commissions set up by governments made recommendations for better methods of Aboriginal administration; and meetings and conferences held by humanitarian and missionary societies protested against wrongs and advocated new policies. The Moseley Commission exposed the conditions of Aborigines and Bishop Raible fought a losing battle against the Unions to stop them discriminating on the basis of colour. With regard to legislation, though many laws omitted reference to Aborigines they were applied to them with excessive vigour by police and lower courts, for example charges such as being drunk and disorderly, using unseemly words, and vagrancy."<sup>331</sup> The term 'state wards' was the legal identity given to Aborigines who were 'under the Act' and they continued to be moved from their land at the will of the government. Only a few of these people were placed on missions but all missionaries were affected by reliance on Government permissions, and were regarded as an arm of the administration.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> *ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>330</sup> Annual Report, West Australia, 1972. ADB, and Biskup, *Not Slaves not Citizens*, pp. 230-2, 236-37, 340.

<sup>331</sup> Colin Tatz, *Race politics in Australia: Aborigines, Politics and Law*, University of New England Publishing Unit, 1979, p. 52.

<sup>332</sup> The 1936 Act obliged missionaries to get permission from A. O. Neville, the Chief Protector of Aborigines to be licensed.

## **Citizenship Rights**

There had been an attempt to ameliorate its effects through the Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act of 1944 when a magistrate was empowered to provide a certificate of citizenship to a successful Aboriginal applicant, 'deemed to be no longer an Aborigine for the purpose of the Native Administration Act, or any other Act' and thereby forbidden to associate with his own people. The overwhelming fact remained that one could be an Aboriginal or a citizen, but not both. Without a certificate, an Aboriginal person had been debarred from voting in both state and federal elections. This was the context within which the Kimberley missions operated and it is obvious that their room for manoeuvre was very limited by law, by administrative practice, and by endemic racism. How they adapted to overcome this is the subject of the next chapter.





## Chapter 6

# Establishment and History of Kimberley Catholic Missions

## 1928-1946

### Mandate for Catholic Missions

In the Catholic Church a set procedure established authority in mission territories. Women played no part in the male domain of consultation. The Holy See in Rome commissioned an Order/Religious Congregation to take full responsibility for the evangelisation of a particular territory under the jurisdiction of a Vicar Apostolic<sup>333</sup> subject to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide in Rome. This was known as '*Ius Commissionis*'. The head of a missionary diocese having consulted with the National Bishops' Conference enters into a temporary contract with a Religious Order to carry out a specific work, in other words the bishop gives a mandate to a particular religious congregation. This is called '*Ius Mandati*'. *Ius Commissionis* applies where there is no diocesan authority, *Ius Mandati* where there is a diocese. A major religious superior would be responsible for the discipline of the religious group. When Bishop E. Coppo resigned in 1927, the Salesian Order no longer had jurisdiction and Rome asked the Pallottines to take over the administration of the Kimberley Vicariate.

By decree, 18 January 1928, Fr Otto Raible was appointed to the Kimberley as Apostolic Administrator in 1928, while also being the Australian Religious Superior for the Pallottines Order, and he held both positions until 1946.<sup>334</sup> With his appointment began his systematic building up of the resources of the Church in the Kimberley. In his missionary team he had men belonging to the Pious Society of Missions.<sup>335</sup> As long as he was the Regional Superior of the 'Pious Society of

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<sup>333</sup> Prefect Apostolic in the case of a Prefecture.

<sup>334</sup> Otto Raible belonged to the Pious Society of Missions. Born in Stuttgart in 1887, he was ordained in 1911. He went to the Cameroons, Africa in 1912 in charge of a missionary school in Jaounde. With French occupation of the colony in 1914, he was forced to leave and he became an army chaplain. He later worked in Freising, and then in Czechoslovakia.

<sup>335</sup> Later known as the Pallottine Fathers.

Missions', he could move them around Australia, with permission of the local Bishops.<sup>336</sup> His staff consisted of three German priests, and seven German brothers. As well as the men, there were Irish and Australian Sisters of St John of God, in Beagle Bay there were eight sisters, in Broome there were eleven, and in Lombadina there were three. The five Sisters who had gone to Sydney to live in Manly were no longer under his jurisdiction.<sup>337</sup>

### **Displacement of Aboriginal Peoples**

In the Kimberley by 1928, much crown land north of the King Leopold Range and west of the Durack River and range had been set aside for Aboriginal Reserves. The contact situation was described by A. P. Elkin who spent almost 12 months (1927 - 1928) in the Kimberley. Elkin's intensive survey included the Karadjeri, at La Grange; the Nyul Nyul at Beagle Bay; the Bardi (Badi) at Lombadina, Cape Leveque and Sunday Island; the Ungarinyin at the head of Walcott Inlet; and the Yeidji at Forrest River. While travelling from Wyndham to Derby, He also made notes on the Worora during a short stay at Port George IV, as well as on Eastern Kimberley 'tribes' and various 'tribal' remnants in the Broome district.

### **Missions in the Kimberley**

Of the Catholic missions, Elkin recorded that by 1928 traditional ritual had gone from Lombadina and Beagle Bay, not because of repression but because of the combined effect of over 40 years of alien contact. This had included the long absences of young men engaged in pearling, and in more recent years involved concentration on the socio-economic life at the missions. For a generation too, young and old had been exposed to Church ritual, with its colourful forms, processions and chanting. Finally, the children, many of whom were of mixed Aboriginal descent, had learnt new ways and values at the schools run by the mission sisters.

Not counting the Catholic missions on the Dampier Peninsula, at Beagle Bay, Lombadina, and Broome, there were three other Aboriginal missions which had been working in the Kimberley region for about two decades:

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<sup>336</sup> While Fr Raible had ecclesial authority only in the Kimberley, as Superior of the Pious Society of Missions in the region, he had authority over members of his order throughout the whole of Australia until 1946 when his authority as regional superior went to another.

<sup>337</sup> 'Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Our Lady Help of Christians Congregation', *Catholic Weekly*, September, '81, ADB.

1. Since 1908, the Benedictine Order had a Mission on a Reserve of 121,500 ha. in the Drysdale River district;
2. From 1910, Presbyterians had been at Kunmunya (Port George IV) on a Reserve of 96,390 ha.;
3. Since 1913, the Church of England had a special Mission Reserve of 40,500 ha at Forest River in the East Kimberley.

There were 5 other Reserves:

1. Munja, a government Aboriginal station at the head of Walcott Inlet, was formed about 1918 as a private venture by F. S. and W. R. Easton. Seven years later it was bought by the government for the benefit of Aborigines. Those who worked received training, clothes and plenty of food. A bullock was killed each week for those who lived in the bush-camp, or visited. Its purpose was to keep the Ungarinyin tribe in their own territory. In 1949, Munja was handed over to Kunmunya Presbyterian mission, because of staff and other difficulties. Shortly after this, because of diminishing numbers and isolation, the Mission authorities with the consent of S. G. Middleton, moved (i) the Worora from Kunmunya, and (ii) the Ungarinyin from Munja, to Wotjulum near Yamip, but still in Worora territory. Toward the end of 1956 another move was made to Mowanjum near Derby where school, hospital facilities and employment opportunities were available.
2. 'Moola Bulla' had been established in 1910 in the south-east of the northern Kimberley Reserve, 445,500 ha.: (I) to cater for unsophisticated and unemployable Aborigines, (ii) to prevent cattle killing by uncivilised Natives who were roaming at large on other stations. By 1928 it was run by a manager and staff of seven white men and a number of Aborigines. A bullock was killed each day to provide meat. It was just paying its way as a cattle station, and with subsidies from the Government.
3. Violet Valley, 145 kilometres was north of Moola Bulla on the eastern border of the Reserve. When Elkin visited it in 1928, it was staffed by a manager and a cook, assisted by Aborigines. The idea was that up to 100 Aborigines from the Reserve visited this outpost. They received beef, other rations and tobacco.
4. Smaller, but economically useful reserves were gazetted to help later missions on the inland frontier, particularly at Balgo Hills, 290 kilometres south of Halls Creek.
5. La Grange, in 1928, was a government Aboriginal 'Feeding Depot'. In 1955 it became a Catholic Mission. Although La Grange was on the coast, it was also near

the western extension of the great Sandy Desert, and ‘fringe area’. Aborigines arrived there at intervals up to 1966.

### **Report on Six Christian Missions by the Royal Commission<sup>338</sup>**

The United Aborigines mission had two young missionaries working in the interior. Their goals were described as, 1. Making the Blacks Christians, 2. Looking after and relieving the distress of a people who are represented to be neglected, 3. Providing a refuge and protecting a primitive people from the unfortunate consequences of contact with civilisation. All the missions except Lombadina received small Government subsidies, calculated at between £5 and £6 per head for care and feeding of ‘indigents’, that is, those unable to work in return for their food, or to gather it in the bush. In 1933, Beagle Bay received £247, Lombadina received nothing, Sunday Island received £235, Kunmunya received £117 and Drysdale River received £145. In addition the missions provided for a large number of other Blacks. This ability of the missions to develop their properties in order to give employment and training to the Aborigines was admired by the 1935 report of the Royal Commission. Besides the religious teaching, and the care, feeding and the employment of the blacks, the only extensive attempt to educate either those of full-descent or those of mixed descent anywhere in the State was being made by the missions. The Kimberley mission figures for education in 1934 as presented to the Royal Commission were:

	Full Descent	Mixed Descent	Total	
Beagle Bay	42	43	85	
Lombadina	24	6	30	
Forrest River	38	14	52	
Sunday Island	16	7	23	
Kunmunya	9	5	14	339

The education represented by those figures meant at its best an ability to read and write simple English and some training in simple arithmetic.

<sup>338</sup> In 1935 the Royal Commission reported on six Christian missions in the Kimberley which were all situated on the north and west coast of the region. Beagle Bay, Lombadina, and Drysdale River were conducted by Roman Catholic Orders, Forrest River by the Church of England, Kunmunya by the Presbyterian Church and Sunday Island by the United Aborigines Mission, an interdenominational body.

<sup>339</sup> Documents of Royal Commission, 1934. B.L.

The State School at Moola Bulla taught 19 children. 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 mixed children of mixed descent who would otherwise be given a poor chance in the critical outside world. With Government grants they had secured for the Aborigines of the country additional reserves totalling nearly five million acres.<sup>340</sup>

In his report for the Royal Commission, Moseley had stated that beyond doubt the missionaries amongst the Aborigines were doing, without exception, a work of great self-sacrifice, but A. O. Neville had urged that missionaries should be licensed, or given a permit, that they should be married as the psychology of the Aborigines made this imperative.<sup>341</sup> Since it was only the Catholic missionaries who were not married, Fr Raible saw A. O. Neville's recommendation as 'No Catholic Missionaries'! He wrote to Abbot Catalan that Neville

did not desire to throw stones at the missions. He just gently ties a millstone around our necks and chucks us overboard for good.

He vigorously objected to any standard method of imparting the tenets of the Christian faith, particularly when it had to be approved by the Government, and advised Dr Prendiville, the coadjutor archbishop of Perth to intervene as this challenge to the Catholic Church in Western Australia was made by the head of a Government Department.<sup>342</sup> Fr Raible told Dr Prendiville that this attitude denied the right of the Catholic Church to conduct missions for the Aborigines and he requested him to take necessary steps.<sup>343</sup> A deterioration of relationships between the Aboriginal Department and the Catholic Church was evident in the letter from Mons. Raible to Bishop O'Collins where he stated that he hoped that the Royal Commission investigating the treatment of Aborigines would result in the discharge of A. O. Neville and that Bishop O'Collins let the Commissioner know of his experience of Mr. Neville's hostility towards the Catholic Missions, particularly the case of L. Carpio's two boys from Mullewa who were to be sent to Moore River Settlement against the will of their father.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> 'The Missions', Royal Commission, *West Australian*, 6 September 1934, ADB.

<sup>341</sup> Neville to Moseley, *Royal Commission re Aborigines*, 13 March 1934. B.L.

<sup>342</sup> Raible to Catalan, 26 March 1934, ADB.

<sup>343</sup> Raible to Prendiville, 26 March 1934, ADB.

<sup>344</sup> Raible to O'Collins, 27 March 1934. ADB.

As the region struggled through the years of Depression, the three established Catholic mission stations along the west coast of Dampier Land worked hard to expand with little result. Monseignor Raible had made a long statement to the Royal Commission stating:

It must be borne in mind that the Aborigines' question originated, when the white man came into the country, 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 exemption 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.<sup>345</sup>

Between 1931 - 1934 Fr Otto Raible made several East Kimberley trips to minister to people on the pastoral stations. In 1935 he was consecrated Apostolic Vicar of the Vicariate of the Kimberley in Limburg, Germany. In his new role Bishop Raible became motivated by a belief that "nothing is wasted in the kingdom of God". By

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<sup>345</sup> Extracts of statement made by Bishop Raible to the Royal Commission in 1934.

opening a Pallottine Missionary College in Melbourne in 1937, he made the way clear for attracting Australian priests and brothers to the Pallottine order.<sup>346</sup> As Bishop he would extend the group and lead them further afield. In the south at the Beagle Bay Mission Farm at Tardun the brothers would grow wheat for the missions. The bishop would bring out German doctors in an attempt to found a hospital in the East Kimberley where it was most needed. He would send a group into the desert of Balgo Hills during war time. He would found a congregation of Native Sisters to help their people.<sup>347</sup>

### **Bob Hutchinson's encounter with Bishop Raible**

Bishop Raible's advent into the East Kimberley was graphically described by Bob Hutchinson:

Bishop Raible came with Willie Wright. He was the first one we saw at Fitzroy. He went out on donkey from Brooking Springs. We walked beside him. Boys were mustering at the stock camp. He taught us about God, 'Ngarburin', 'Father', Fitzroy Crossing, 'God', in Bunaba language, Nabo language. Bishop, we were O. K. with him. We listened to him in the bush, when he finished we were little bit on the 'munyam side'. Bishop Raible understood. When service finished we all say 'Amen' and clap and thank. he tells us, "You think of God always, who loves you."<sup>348</sup>

That Bob stayed at the Leprosarium is relevant because for many Aborigines the experience of leprosy meant prolonged contact with Catholic patients from Beagle Bay and their nurses, among whom were the Sisters of St John of God. Many East Kimberley people received the faith at this institution because of their contact with the Beagle Bay people and consequently took this faith back to their own people.

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<sup>346</sup> W. Schuetzeichel, 'Die Pallottiner in Australien', p.307, Walter, *Australia*, p. 205.

<sup>347</sup> Merton, *The Waters of Siloe*, pp. 189-90, p. 154, pp. 146-7. Merton analysed the conditions for the success of a religious order. Under Raible the Pallottines in the Kimberley seemed to follow this model: "The strength and health of an Order is proved by its internal unity, cohesion, and consistency. When men love one another and live together, willing to see things in the same light, to sacrifice their own limited views, to share and enjoy the same poverty and the same hardships in eagerness to give up their own interests out of love for one another, then the Spirit of God is working among them."

<sup>348</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, pp. 98-9.



## Tardun Farm

Tardun Farm near Geraldton became an important resource for the Kimberley Church. Francis Byrne traced the hard work which brought this place into productive mode for the Kimberley Mission effort in *A Hard Road: Brother Frank Nissl, 1888-1980, A Life of Service to the Aborigines of the Kimberley*,<sup>349</sup> Brother Henry Krallman psm with other brothers and occasional help from Aborigines from the North West had begun the pioneering work to produce wheat which would be used for mission bread for many years.<sup>350</sup> Bishop Raible's correspondence dealt with the day to day running of the farm.<sup>351</sup> Kimberley staff members were interchanged by the Bishop as if Tardun was in the Vicariate, and also Aboriginal people from the Kimberley. Richard (Dick Smith), Tom, and Willy Roe travelled the long distance to help. Willy Wright, the motor mechanic and driver was also sent to Tardun when he could be spared.<sup>352</sup> By April 1929 there were 400 acres sown, and 650 more were to be seeded. Four more men besides those from Beagle Bay were employed, 12 altogether. A seeding machine, superphosphate, groceries, and seed-wheat were bought, and the team worked day and night. Brother Joseph Schuengel had come to Australia in 1930.<sup>353</sup> During the war, in 1940 he was asked to go back to Tardun West Australia, because he was naturalised.<sup>354</sup> In 1938, the German Consul General in Sydney informed the bishop that priests and missionaries who were not naturalised could be called up to do their military training in Germany. Bishop Raible, who was a naturalised Australian citizen warned the Superior-General that the majority of

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<sup>349</sup> Byrne, *A Hard Road: Brother Frank Nissl*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>350</sup> Krallman to Raible, 20 April 1929, ADB.

<sup>351</sup> In the Broome Archives the large correspondence is written in German.

<sup>352</sup> Raible to Krallmann, 21 January 1929, ADB.

<sup>353</sup> He had met Fr Droste in Limburg in 1929 and had been at his funeral which was attended by the miners with whom Droste had worked before he was ordained.

<sup>354</sup> Bro Joseph Schuengel to Brigida Nailon, Interview in Millgrove, 1987.

“There were Aborigines from Beagle Bay, Jim Roe, Dick Smith, and Dora Smith. I worked on the farm. We had a tin shed. It was hot in summer and cold in winter. In Tardun ploughing, sowing and harvesting were the chief jobs. We had a team of horses and Bro F.Nissl and I looked after the team. Only one of us went out into the paddock with the horses. 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 the Church at Mullewa, Fr John Hawes, made the plan for the first Monastery at Tardun.”

Germans living in Australia were Protestants with strong Nazi sympathies. He was very much aware of the imminent threat to mission stability. .<sup>355</sup>

### **Slow Progress in establishing New Mission Stations**

Annual reports of the state of the Vicariate to Propaganda Fide in Rome continued to indicate slow progress. The establishment of new mission stations was difficult and would entail heavy financial commitments. Each year Bishop Raible expressed hope for expansion of missionary activities further inland, and each year some obstacle would prevent it. The missionary drive to extend the sphere of activity was always a matter of prolonged correspondence with the Department and aloof constraint on Neville's part.<sup>356</sup> There were other problems. When W. H. Kitson, Minister for Native Affairs, made vague charges of misconduct at 'some of the missions', Bishop Raible demanded that it be made clear that these charges did not apply to Catholic missions. This controversy raised the issue as to whether a Mission was a Government institution or a Church institution. Bishop Raible argued that since most of the missions were situated on freehold property given to them as a Crown grant 'for the benefit of the Natives', this indicated that the ultimate aim of the government was to make the missions independent institutions, even though the 10,000 acres at Beagle Bay and 500 acres of Lombadina were surrounded by a Native Reserve, over which the government had complete control.<sup>357</sup> But the counter argument was that Aborigines were at all times the responsibility of the State. Direct care might be delegated, but the government retained 'the duty to ensure that the job was efficiently undertaken by those best qualified to do it'.<sup>358</sup> In 1936 the new law obliged missionaries to appeal for licences to work on missions. Neville was firm that missions should be subject to Departmental supervision, making annual reports. If not operating efficiently and to the benefit of Aborigines, the reserves on which they operated should be cancelled.<sup>359</sup> Bishop Raible bitterly resented this intrusion but he made the annual application for a permit for each of his male workers, and continued to submit reports..

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<sup>355</sup> Raible to Superior-General, 27 April 1938. ADB

<sup>356</sup> Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, p. 236.

<sup>357</sup> Raible to Prendiville, 1 December 1938. ACAP

<sup>358</sup> Biskup, *Not Slaves not Citizens*, p. 185.

<sup>359</sup> Pat Jacobs, Mr Neville, p. 224.

## **A Missionary College in Melbourne**

Bishop Raible obtained support from Archbishop Mannix in Melbourne to attract Australians to the order. He approached the Archbishop at Raheen about establishing a Missionary College in Melbourne and the Archbishop pointed to an empty house vacated by another order. 12 January 1937, Bishop Raible wrote to Fr Hoffmann asking for approval for a new foundation in the East, and 2 February 1937 the Procurator General asked for permission from Archbishop Mannix in writing so that they could obtain the permission of the Holy See. 2 April 1937 Bishop Raible asked for a Prefect of Studies. He queried whether the ordination of students could take place in a mission instead of Melbourne, and asked who was going to pay for the studies of the students. He attached a notice of Dr. Mannix's approval for the new foundation, in which students were to be trained for the Missions.<sup>360</sup> The Pallottine Missionary College was bought from the Carmelite Fathers for £7000, and was blessed and opened in January 1938.<sup>361</sup>

## **Rockhole, Foundation for a Hospital**

Bishop Raible managed to secure a place for a community 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, Paddy Merindjam with his wife Bertha, George Kelly with his wife, Maggie and two sons, and Philip Cox were chosen to open the new Missionary venture. There was opposition and Bishop Raible wrote about it:

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

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<sup>360</sup> Correspondence between Pallottines, Broome, and Rome, 1937. AGP.

<sup>361</sup> Zucker, *From Patrons to Partners*, p. 91.

Mission have been granted a certain area of freehold property when they were established. Thus there are already two cases of precedence at least...<sup>362</sup>

Rockhole, the pre war foundation did not come to fruition, partly at least, because of the problem of volunteer doctors from Germany lacking certificates to practice. To establish a hospital near Halls Creek where there was need for Aboriginal health care Bishop Raible chose Fr Francis Huegel four years Prefect of the boys at Beagle Bay Mission.<sup>363</sup> Bro Joseph Schuengel from Tardun was on his staff.<sup>364</sup>

### **Attitude of A.O.Neville**

Part of Neville's overall plan encompassing Western Australia was that Moola Bulla and Violet Valley as subsidiary feeding depots would be the major Government establishment in the east Kimberley. He had also intended to close the Lock Hospitals on Dorre and Bernier Islans and place a Lock Hospital on the reserve in Wyndham with a medical man experienced in bacteriology.<sup>365</sup> But Mr Neville was not pleased with the private transaction of the sale of Rockhole Station between Francis Castles and the Pious Society of Missions. Mary Durack pointed out:

Mr Neville clearly regarded this encouragement of his least favoured missionary body into the heart of the Kimberley as a further shock to his plans for greater control of the situation.

She described him as "a thorn in the side of all missionaries except a few of the more amenable." Mission plans for expansion of influence also represented what Neville saw as a threat to the proper working out of the assimilation policy that had been

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<sup>362</sup> Raible Correspondence, ADB

<sup>363</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, pp. 98-9.

<sup>364</sup> Bro Joseph Schuengel to Brigida Nailon, Interview in Millgrove, 1987: "I went to Rockhole in 1934. It was a sheep station. Mr Frank Castles and Tim Moore were there. Mr Castles, a carting contractor with a team of donkeys, became sick and decided to sell. Bishop Raible bought the property. The intention was to build a hospital at Rockhole Station and bring in the sick Aboriginal people from that area. The problem was that the Doctors who came from Germany to us did not have English certificates for 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 used as a chapel and the other was used as a store. We were glad to have a roof on top. Bro Joseph Tautz came and built with mud bricks. Jingle Jangles (Paddy Merandjin) from Beagle Bay was there. He was a good man."

<sup>365</sup> Pat Jacobs, *Mister Neville*, pp. 77-78.

given formal sanction in 1936 when a Department of Native Affairs was established with more power for control:

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.

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 1950.<sup>366</sup> Although missionaries generally kept their activities within the parameters set by the government, at Beagle Bay there was permanent settlement of married couples secure enough to have large families which did not have to be assimilated into the wider community, and which tried to have some measure of independence. The ideal of the Pallottines was not assimilation but separate development and independence of the different stations which they endeavoured to make self supporting. Their goals were not based on notions of blood, and 'breeding out the colour' as were those of Neville.<sup>367</sup>

With the closure of Rockhole, Bishop Raible looked for other opportunities to expand the mission enterprise. Balgo Hills was one of the small economically useful Reserves which had been gazetted to help later Missions on the inland frontier. It was 290 km south of Halls Creek.

### **The Effect of the War on the Missions**

In 1939 Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz, Brother Frank Nissl and others, moved from Rockhole into the desert to found a mission at Balgo.<sup>368</sup> It was quite extraordinary

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<sup>366</sup> Synopsis of Aboriginal Policies 1934 - 1950, Annual Report from Department, 1972, ADB.

<sup>367</sup> Neville, *Australia's Coloured Minority*, p. 68. "It is because the success of our plan of assimilation is so allied with the question of who shall marry whom, and because colour plays so great a part in the scheme of things, that we must encourage approach towards the white rather than the black, through marriage."

<sup>368</sup> Byrne, *A Hard Road: Brother Frank Nissl*, pp. 50-51. cf. Bro Joseph Schuengel to Brigida Nailon, in Millgrove, 1987, "Later on Bishop Raible and Fr Worms went to the Gregory Salt Lakes more than 100 miles away. They went some way by car and the rest on horseback to found the Balgo Mission. Fr Worms was collecting Aboriginal artefacts in the caves around Rockhole. There were a few Aborigines who did not come from Beagle Bay, for example, a black lady who helped Fr Worms to study the

that although World War II was declared, three Germans were setting off with Beagle Bay Aborigines into the Australian desert to found a Mission.<sup>369</sup> 1 October 1939 was the day of the takeover of Rockhole Mission. Failure of the Rockhole hospital project had cut a deep wound in the heart of the Bishop, as occasional remarks revealed in the years to come. The whole scheme of the Bishop for medical and educational care of the Aborigines in the East Kimberley had totally collapsed, as his ideas for expansion had in the West Kimberley.<sup>370</sup> But the Balgo Hills venture was to flourish. England had declared war on Germany, 3 September 1939. To realise what this meant to the German missionaries, one needs to remember what happened in Australia during the first World War. Bishop Otto Raible, who was now an Australian citizen had seen his Order lose their mission in the Cameroons and had to leave the country. Yet at this time he had arranged for a German Pallottine, Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz to lead an expedition into the desert to found another mission to the Aborigines. The date chosen to leave Rockhole was 8 September. "All was going well, nobody dreamed of what was to come, World War 11. Bro Tautz and myself listened to the radio. The only station we could get on our set was Batavia. We heard it clearly, War in Europe is on! Next morning, when people in the street passed the presbytery in Broome, they raised their voices for the Bishop and us to hear about the outbreak of war. 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 and of his priests and brothers working in the mission, with only two of them naturalised? Subsequent events proved to the full his fears had not been dreams. Because of his experience in Broome he felt betrayed and remained in Beagle Bay when the world conflict had come to an end. He had to carry the mission through the opposition and turmoil.<sup>371</sup>

Bishop Raible wrote of his attitude regarding the war to A. Coverley, M. L. A: 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

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Aboriginal languages. She said, "My whitefella name Dinah, blackfella name Lackay."

<sup>369</sup> Prendiville to Raible, 3 January 1939. ADB.

<sup>370</sup> Alphonse Bleischwitz *sac*, 'Rain on Arid Land' ADB.

"His saying 'In the household of God nothing is wasted!' was his anchor. This gave him strength in all the years of mission work."

<sup>371</sup> A. Bleischwitz, 'The Pre-History of Balgo', 1983, ADB.

in the Kimberley are German, only a few being naturalised Australians. I wish to express on my own behalf and on behalf 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.<sup>372</sup>

The Minister for the Interior wrote to another member of parliament of two priests expected by Bishop Raible. They were two young Germans, Fr Augustine Soemer and Fr Wiilliam Weiske.<sup>373</sup> They were not allowed to come. This prevention of new missionaries from coming was to have its effect after the war, when the missionary staff had no replacements to give relief to those who had been bearing the burdens of the missionary work. The event accentuated the need for Australian priests.

### **The Extension of Beagle Bay Activities**

Beagle Bay became the base camp for all activities further afield. Bishop Raible had moved from Broome to make Beagle Bay Mission the seat of his Diocese. Here he was surrounded by his staff, the students, and the new group of Native Sisters whose story will be told in Chapter 8, but the effects of war could not be avoided. Early in 1940 Bishop Raible started negotiating with Archbishop Prendiville<sup>374</sup> for further education of girls from the North in Perth. It was hoped to gain scholarships from people in the East for the girls who were quadroons within the meaning of the Aborigines Act. Bishop Raible doubted that the Department would bear the cost. He began sending these young people to Perth for secondary education as he believed that the growing population of mixed descent called for workers from their own ranks and the sooner the necessary steps are taken to secure a thorough training of these workers the better it is.<sup>375</sup> But this concern did not go unnoticed in the wider community. Fr E. Worms *sac*, in Melbourne, received a letter from W. E. Thomas,

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<sup>372</sup> Raible to Coverley, 12 September 1939. ADB.

<sup>373</sup> Foll to Green, 30 November 1939. ADB.

<sup>374</sup> Raible to Prendiville, 1 January 1940; Jackson to Raible, 9 January 1940, ADB.

<sup>375</sup> Raible to Jackson, re Rosy Clarke, 19 January 1940. ADB.

Perth which concerned debates within the teachers' union with overtones of the apartheid and segregation of South Africa and Queensland.<sup>376</sup>

In the Kimberley there were requests from people who were prepared to pay Beagle Bay Mission for educating their children. Some wrote to the Department of Native Affairs. Bishop Raible received a letter from the Chief Commissioner.<sup>377</sup> Charlie McAdam, who told his version of his life to Elizabeth Tregenza in *Boundary Lines*<sup>378</sup> did not appear to know of his father's efforts to provide an education for him. This could be an example of how some of the children at Beagle Bay Mission may not have known the true story of arrangements made between their parents, the government and the mission authorities. For example, it is not likely that police removed Aboriginal children from Stations without reference to the white men in charge of these Stations. Since a good education of the coloured children would tend to make such children assets rather than liabilities to the State, it would have seemed advisable for the Education Department to assume control, but this situation was not to be clarified until 1942, and it would not happen in the interior of the Kimberley until 1951.<sup>379</sup> In 1946, the Catholic Church was a major provider of education for Aborigines in the Kimberley.

The celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Foundation at Beagle Bay 20 June 1940, brought many visitors. Four months after the Jubilee Celebrations, 21

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<sup>376</sup> Thomas to Worms, 13 March 1940, ADB: "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, and the establishment in such settlements of schools for coloured children, with provision for continued education, principally along vocational lines and further, with provision for gifted children to proceed academically with a view to future training as school teachers, nurses, etc., for Aboriginal children.

At the Conference, exception was taken to the inclusion of all degrees of colour in the suggested segregation, and a resolution was adopted that the question of the segregation of children of mixed descent be referred back for further investigation. This is a matter of interest to all sections of the population and I have, therefore, been asked to obtain the views of leading people, particularly in regard to the question of segregating mixed bloods. My Executive would greatly appreciate an expression of your views on the subject."

<sup>377</sup> Bray to Raible, 21 May 1946. ADB.

<sup>378</sup> Charlie McAdam, *Boundary Lines*, Ringwood, McPhee Gribble Publishers, 1995.

<sup>379</sup> Votes and Proceedings, 1940: 13 cf. C. F Mounsey, 'Aboriginal Education-A New Dawning' in R. M. Berndt and Catherine H. Berndt, *Aborigines of the West, Their Past and Their Present*. Nedlands, 1979.



October 1940, Fr George Vill and Bro Joseph Schuengel were arrested and gaoled in Broome.<sup>380</sup> The following day police arrested five priests and seven brothers at the mission. They were taken straight to the gaol in Broome where they were locked in, three to a cell, with no furniture. Bro Matthias Wollseifer took command for the time being until the Bishop returned from Port Hedland. Bishop Raible wrote about the imprisonment of the missionaries to the Commander of Military Headquarters in Perth, to A. A. Coverley, to Archbishop Mannix and Archbishop Prendiville. Archbishop Mannix brought the matter to the attention of the Prime Minister who negotiated the release of the missionaries on parole. Frs Herold, Hornung and Vill and Bros Belderman and Mueller were removed from the mission and kept confined to an institution in Melbourne in the custody of the Catholic Church. The other priests and brothers were placed on parole in Beagle Bay.

The arrest of the missionaries triggered a sequence of events, of which the first was that a Control Officer was sent to the mission in March 1941. In 1942 the foundation of a new mission at La Grange seemed to be moving ahead. Dr Herman Nekes with Brother Henry Krallmann had been appointed.<sup>381</sup> Bishop Raible had made all preparations to shift cargo and the two missionaries to La Grange, but heavy rains lasting for over a week made the roads impassable for heavy traffic.<sup>382</sup> Then the military authorities cancelled the arrangements made with the Commissioner of Native Affairs in Perth.<sup>383</sup> The La Grange venture was stopped.

Two military chaplains, Fr William Flynn *msc* and Fr Gregory Abbot *msc* were appointed to take some control of Beagle Bay with the senior chaplain in Broome acting as the link between the military authorities and the mission. They were replaced in 1944 by Fr Cyril Stinson, *CssR*, a RAAF chaplain from Perth. When Broome became a military defence station within the war zone, Beagle Bay was made the refuge for two hundred Aboriginal people from Broome. There were serious consequences when the population of Beagle Bay doubled. The staff had been halved by the removal of the German missionaries. Overcrowded conditions led to unsatisfactory health and sanitary arrangements. Hookworm infection was so widespread that closure of the mission was threatened unless the situation was promptly rectified. It did not help when later in the year five children tested positive

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<sup>380</sup> 'Beagle Bay Chronicle', ADB.

<sup>381</sup> Bray to Raible, 2 January 1942, ADB.

<sup>382</sup> Raible to Commissioner of Native Affairs, 10 January 1942. Re 820/37. ADB.

<sup>383</sup> Bray to Raible, 16 February 1942. ADB.

for leprosy. Since the Broome evacuees were supported by the government, they could spend their days gossiping, playing cards and gambling. The local community was unwilling to work when the visitors did not have to do so. Also the mission herd was decimated as the Broome authorities expected to be supplied with meat at a reduced price. It was a relief for the mission when the evacuee colony was officially dissolved in 1946.<sup>384</sup>

### **The Effect of the War on the Drysdale mission**

E. Perez, in *Kulumburu War Diary* described in detail the effect of the war on the Drysdale mission.<sup>385</sup> In 1943 under the 'Moultrie Plan' the war consisted of raid and counter raid by aircraft with no ground contact. The 6 Australian squadrons, one British squadron, and one Dutch squadron, which defended the Darwin area flew from nine operational base units, including No. 58 at Drysdale Mission. 18 April 1943, when thirteen Hudsons and nine Mitchell bombers attacked Penfui, the important base near Koepang on Timor, the Hudsons had to land at Drysdale to take on fuel. Some damaged Liberator planes landed at or near Kalumburu attracted Japanese attention, and resulted in an attack 27 September 1943. The description in the *Diary* reads:

As I approached the mission there was nobody in sight, only desolation. The convent, garage and workshop were in flames. There was a fire in the monastery also, and I found a huge crater in the trench near the fowl yard. Looking into it I saw, in the bottom, Fr Thomas, half buried. Digging with my hands I touched the head of little Dominic next to Father, and nearby the face of Veronica who had one arm broken and was clasping her child with the other.<sup>386</sup>

The situation changed after the war both for Aborigines and missionaries. Contact between army personnel and the Aborigines alleviated some racial prejudices. A more positive attitude became evident towards the missionaries efforts and it helped morale when F. I. Bray, Commissioner of Native Affairs wrote to Bishop O. Raible, Broome, asking to admit students to the Beagle Bay school:

Due to a difficulty about obtaining a teacher for Moola Bulla Native Station, I should be pleased to learn whether arrangements could be made for the

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<sup>384</sup> *ibid.*, Zucker, pp. 109-112.

<sup>385</sup> Perez, E. *osb Kulumburu War Diary*, Perth, 1981.

<sup>386</sup> E. Perez, *Kulumburu War Diary*, Perth, 1981, pp. 129-139, 260-264.

admission of (names and ages of 13 girls, and of 12 boys were given) for education at Beagle Bay and the Holy Child Orphanage.<sup>387</sup>

Derby was officially founded as a parish in 1946.<sup>388</sup>

### **Aboriginal Employment**

In the Pilbara, just after the war, Don McLeod led a strike against unjust conditions in the pastoral industry. The issue was that Aborigines were still being paid wages which fell well below unemployment or sickness benefits and below those paid for others, especially in the pastoral industry. Unemployment benefits could not be paid to an Aboriginal who refused to work for a wage well below the award wage, or to an Aboriginal who moved into a town to a settled area and needed the benefit while seeking employment.<sup>389</sup> The day of the Aboriginal Strike in the Pilbara was 1 April 1946. It was well into its third year when S. G. Middleton took office as Commissioner of Native Affairs and was a crucial test for the new administration. More importantly, the strike had by then affected the frame of mind of many Aborigines outside the Pilbara. Early in 1948 there were rumours of a planned strike at Derby, and even further inland, Aboriginal station hands wanted to know exactly what wages they were getting.<sup>390</sup> In June 1943 Don McLeod had gone to Perth to have a discussion with the Commissioner for Native Affairs. At the time he applied for a pastoral lease not far out of Port Hedland, but it was not granted, rather, Dooley, Clancy and McLeod all served goal terms for enticing Aborigines from their place of employment.

### **Post war policies in the Pallottine Order**

Post war policies in the Pallottine Order would have an impact on the missions in the Kimberley. In 1946, Bishop Raible had written to the Father General in Rome that he wanted to be relieved of the office of Provincial Delegate as the business of the Society took him away too much from his Vicariate. New ways would be implemented by the new administration of the Pallottines in Australia.<sup>391</sup> Bishop

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<sup>387</sup> Bray to Raible, 25 November 1946. ADB.

<sup>388</sup> "Derby Chronicle". ADB. 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 Sister's Convent.

<sup>389</sup> Rowley, *Outcasts*, p. 394.

<sup>390</sup> Biskup, *Not Slaves not Citizens*, pp. 230-2, 236-37, 340.

<sup>391</sup> Raible to General, 22 February 1946. ADB.

Raible had reservations about the new ideas and expressed them, “In this connection I feel that priests imbued with the ideas of the Schoenstatt movement<sup>392</sup> may wish to transplant it as it is, and this would be a disaster.” He wondered if the Apostolate should be diversified as suggested.<sup>393</sup> In this context, the move to do so was supported by many of the priests.<sup>394</sup> After consultation with the Australian Pallottines, the Procurator General wrote to Rome asking that a new Pallottine Region be erected in Australia. The reply came from Propaganda in the affirmative, and the Regio was promulgated by the Pallottines, 9 November 1946.<sup>395</sup> This topic of this chapter concentrated on the male workforce of the Kimberley Catholic Church 1928-1946. The encounter between Aboriginal peoples and Catholic missionaries and the

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<sup>392</sup> Schoenstatt and Pallottines: St Vincent Pallotti envisaged and founded a worldwide apostolic movement, with membership open to every walk of life and status. The Jesuits urged the Holy See to restrict it to the Society of priests and brothers, they argued that Catholic Apostolate was a misnomer and that only the Pope has the right to use this title. The name ‘Society of the Catholic Apostolate’ was changed to ‘Pious Society of Missions’ four years after Pallotti’s death in 1854. The name SAC was restored in 1948, and the movement was restored by Fr Josef Kentencich, a Pallottine by the apostolic movement originating from Schoenstatt and centred in the Shrine of the Mother Thrice Admirable. In 1948 Fr Kentencich offered the movement which had spread all over the world and which he had regarded as the revival of Pallotti’s original idea to the SAC, provided Schoenstatt became the central organisation and the Pallottines shared in the government of that movement. The Pallottines refused to accept this concept and by separating themselves from Schoenstatt group lost the apostolic worldwide movement for the SAC. The order split into two parts so that some of the religious became members of the Schoenstatt religious. In recent years the Pallottines have tried to form the UAC, Union Catholic Apostolic, consisting of the Pallottine Fathers, Brothers and Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate (Pallottine Sisters) and associates. Both groups claimed the same founder, St Vincent Pallotti, and his charism of uniting all in the Apostolate. This ideology influenced future development of the order although the two groups took separate paths.

<sup>393</sup> Raible to General, 27 September 1946. ADB.

<sup>394</sup> Scherzinger to General, 10 October 1946. AGP.

“It is very necessary that our students should be well trained. The Novice master should be well trained in the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt. As Fr George Vill is the only one who is well trained in that way, I strongly advise that in the case Fr Vill cannot get this important office, from which will depend our future, that a Father from Limburg, well trained in the Apostolic way, should be appointed, even if the Father cannot speak English so well. He will soon learn that.”

<sup>395</sup> Procurator to Pope, 22 October 1946, AGP; Hoffman and Weber, 9 November 1946. ADB.

eventual establishment of Balgo Mission had been the crowning achievement of the period.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Church presence at Balgo was first initiated in 1939 and Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz *sac* worked there for nineteen years.



## **Chapter 7**

# **Experiences of Women in Kimberley Catholic Missions**

## **and the Derby Leprosarium 1928-1946**

### **Experiences of Church women**

This chapter gives an outline of the experiences of Church women in the fields of education and nursing in the Kimberley over a period of almost three decades. It is about women crossing borders, political, personal, or cultural which was not easy or to be taken for granted. Images of dusty roads, donkey carts, isolation, dependence, and the heat of the day accentuate the openness, fearlessness, and dedication of feminine hearts for this venture of women who were prepared to go so far with so little clear promise of gain, such minimal resources, such slender security. Their experiences were of importance to Aboriginal/white relationships. To illustrate how this could come about some short excerpts of their stories follow.

### **Sr Therese Mountney-Doolan**

In 1930, Sr Therese Doolan joined the Sisters of St John of God in Broome. She was fifteen years of age when she made her commitment.

For my novitiate, I was in Broome for 12 months, and then at Beagle Bay. For 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. 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.

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 the 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 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 Nyul Nyul 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.<sup>397</sup>

In 1931, Sr Madeleine Lynch, and Sr Angela Moroney also came to Broome to enter with the order.

### **Sr Madeleine Lynch**

Sr Madeleine worked continuously in the Kimberley except for three years when she worked on an Aboriginal Mission in Wandering. She worked as a teacher, or in charge of the girls training them for their future lives away from the mission.

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.

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<sup>397</sup> Sr Therese Doolan-Mountney, Sr Madeleine Lynch, and Sr Angela Maroney to Sr Brigida Nailon, Oral Sources, ADB.



## **Sr Angela Moroney**

I did my novitiate in Beagle Bay and when I was 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 Dr Musso and Mother Alphonsus. Mother Margaret sent me to Balgo with Sr Winifride Mc Bride.<sup>398</sup>

## **Sisters of St John of God and their Corporate Life**

In July 1932 Sr Cecelia Kelly, a Victorian from Quambatook entered the new novitiate in Beagle Bay. It had been built by donations from an appeal to the clergy in Ireland and Australia. Sr Josepha May entered in 1935. In the 1940's Sr Ita Prendegast and Sr Bernadette O'Connor came from Ireland. Sr Ita survived the hardships only a few months. Sr Peter (Alice Evans)<sup>399</sup>, and Sr Alphonsus Daly had laid her body out on the verandah of the old novitiate. Her grave is in the Beagle Bay cemetery<sup>400</sup> Sr Raphael Sullivan came from Ballarat in 1943. Like Sr Cecelia Kelly, she would have liked to go to the missions in China but, because of the war she was advised to go to Beagle Bay. She taught in the Kimberley for more than 50 years. In 1943 two more women came, Sr Damian Brannigan from Flemington and Sr Frances Dunne, from Sheep Hills, in Victoria.<sup>401</sup> Reinforcements of Australian and Irish women identified themselves with the mission to the Aborigines where they had their spiritual formation.

Mother Margaret Carmody<sup>402</sup> held the office of Provincial Superior of the North West. During her time of administration teaching and nursing were the main activities of the sisters. The Derby Leprosarium (1937), the Holy Child Orphanage in Broome (1942), the Native Hospital in Derby (1946) and a Sisters school in Derby

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<sup>398</sup> Moroney to Nailon, Perth, 1982. Oral Sources, ADB. Sr Angela Moroney recalled the time when she was a postulant in Broome, "Every Saturday and Sunday we went with Sr John Walker or Sr Xavier Sullivan to visit the hospital, gaol, camps, homes, the foreshore, the rich, the poor, Aborigines, people of nearly all nations, the backsliders, the side-steppers. We met 'John of God' one day at the foreshore. He was the Sisters' first convert - hence the name."

<sup>399</sup> Sr Peter was professed in 1941 and her parents were present in Beagle Bay for the ceremony. Oral Sources, ADB.

<sup>400</sup> The memorial stone of Sr Ita Prendegast is in the Beagle Bay cemetery is simply marked 'R.I.P. 1940'.

<sup>401</sup> 'Beagle Bay Chronicle'. ADB.

<sup>402</sup> Mother Margaret had come from Ireland as a novice with Mother Antonio in 1907.

(1946/47) were established..<sup>403</sup> A £500 legacy from a benefactor in new South Wales enabled the Sisters to found a home in Broome for Aboriginal children 11 October 1940. A local carpenter erected it for £120. When the Orphanage opened 25 March 1941 the Sisters were caring for twenty-three children. During the war, they were evacuated to Beagle Bay in trucks at the end of February, 1942.<sup>404</sup> The airforce took over the orphanage in Broome. At the end of 1945 when the Sisters and children returned to Broome numbers had increased. F. I. Bray had collected a number of small girls and sent them to the care of the Sisters, and at his direction also, two babies born at the Derby leprosarium in 1945 were sent from the Native hospital to Beagle Bay.<sup>405</sup>

## Leprosy

Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease of skin and nerves causing mutilations and deformities. Consciousness of its reality in the Kimberley was apparent long before the concept of 'holistic care' had been articulated in medical journals. The sisters were living that approach in an environment of people in pain or distress. A 'hands-on' approach won them the hearts of those vulnerable and needy patients. As agents of evangelisation their nonviolent reaction to the reality in their midst became their strength. The Sisters had been nursing lepers at the mission at Beagle Bay Mission. In their poverty there was little medicine available. Sr Brigid used to take down kerosene to the old police station to dab on the sores. Bush medicines were used.<sup>406</sup>

The name given to leprosy by the Aborigines was the 'big sick'. There was a difference between European and Aboriginal perceptions about leprosy. Grant Ngabidj explained that with leprosy, one man gets it in the body from the ground, and the spirit remains hidden in the one tin of tea or water for perhaps a month or a year.

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<sup>403</sup> Murnane, 'My Life as a Sister of St John of God', Archives of the Diocese of Broome. "Of all the Sisters Margaret Carmody was probably the one most remembered by the Aborigines. 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>404</sup> Sr Margaret Carmody, *sjg*, 'Orphanage Founding', ABC Broadcast, 27 July 1962, SJG Derby Archives.

<sup>405</sup> Zucker, From *Patrons to Partners*, p. 112.

<sup>406</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p.48.

In this way a man who had leprosy gave it to another person.<sup>407</sup> The incidence of leprosy in the Kimberley had been ignored by the authorities. Fr Nicholas Emo isolated lepers in 1897, cared for them and when they died he buried them himself in an isolated spot and set fire to their camps. In 1908, advanced cases of leprosy were diagnosed along the shores of King Sound, two at Cygnet Bay and one at Point Torment. They died soon after diagnosis.

In 1912 the Wilsons had founded Port George Mission, and they moved it a few miles to Kunmunya in 1914. They observed that now and then a group of strange natives came to the area and often included people suffering from a disease thought to be leprosy. A tidal island at Cossack became a place of isolation for lepers 1914-1931. It was recorded in 1916 that because of the impenetrable nature of the country north of Derby, and the absence of white settlers, infection was hidden for years. Three related tribes centred on Port George: (i) the Worora, (ii) the Ngaringin tribe and (iii) the Wanambal tribe. In 1920 a new hospital was built for Derby and the old became a native hospital with its residency as a lazaret. By 1922 police were obliged to apprehend lepers, but they refused to transport them between hospitals. There were problems with leper cases who absconded; with matrons who refused to have them in the hospitals; and with the townspeople. For example, the Derby Road Board demanded the removal of Broome lepers. 86 inhabitants signed a petition to the Minister for the north-West who forwarded it to the Colonial Secretary, 1 July 1923.<sup>408</sup> In 1930, the Prime Minister suggested that the West Australian Government provide transport to Darwin and pay for each patient per annum. Fr Raible offered to open a Lazaretto at Swan Point with the Sisters of St. John of God in charge, but the offer was rejected.<sup>409</sup> While Fr Raible was in Perth in 1934 he spoke to a reporter about the problem of leprosy,

The trouble with leprosy is that you cannot get hold of any accurate figures, and it is difficult to get the afflicted persons themselves even when they are known. The Natives seem now to realise that they are not merely taken to the leper compound at Derby but are then taken to Darwin, which of course is like a foreign land to them. The natives would sooner remain sick and die than

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<sup>407</sup> Grant Ngabidj, 1904-1977, East Kimberley, interviewed by Bruce Shaw, *My Country of the Pelican Dreaming*, p. 19.

<sup>408</sup> W. S. Davidson, *Havens of Refuge*, Nedlands, 1978, p. 19.

<sup>409</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 30 - 38. Many letters recording Church involvement are found in this book, and there are other letters in the Archives Diocese of Broome.

leave their own country and I feel that if a properly equipped compound were erected at Derby, to which these people could be taken and be looked after in their own country, some good might be done.<sup>410</sup>

By 1933 cases of leprosy started to come in at epidemic proportions. 65 cases of leprosy had been transferred to Darwin and still there was an accumulation of patients at Derby and Beagle Bay in temporary leper camps. From 1931-1935 one hundred and 61 cases of leprosy were reported in the north of Western Australia. There were thirty to forty cases in Derby by the end of the year. Believing there was little need to worry, the State authorities had arranged for the transfer to an leprosarium at Darwin of any lepers who might be found. Piteous stories of banishment were told. The Aborigines became frightened of 'the big sick' because of their dread of being sent away for ever from their kin. It was better to die at home. So lepers fled and hid themselves when there was any rumour of inspection.

Hasluck stated that during the late 1920's and early 1930's the Department openly refused to fulfil its duties in providing for sick and injured Aborigines and he attributes this directly to the 'neglect and indifference' of its senior officers. This contributed to the shocking health conditions observed by Hasluck in 1934 when, as a reporter for the *West Australian*, he accompanied members of the Moseley Royal Commission on its tour of the north and in 1936 when he visited camps in the south to collect information for a series of articles later published in the *West Australian*.<sup>411</sup> Hasluck wrote:

In a paddock just outside Derby we saw about eighty lepers, some in an advanced stage of the disease, who had been discovered and were awaiting shipment to Darwin. most of these had been found almost by accident. For example while the commission was at Derby a police patrol came in with a dozen or so natives 'on the chain', brought in either as accused or witnesses in a case of cattle spearing. it was found that some of them were lepers and in due course they were drafted into the lepers' paddock. I am not using picturesque language. They were put into a paddock where there was no accommodation of any kind except a locked galvanised iron shed where official supplies were kept.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> O. Raible, Interview reported in a Perth Newspaper, 27 November 1934. See 'Broome Chronicle'. ADB.

<sup>411</sup> Hasluck, *Mucking About*, p. 260.

<sup>412</sup> *ibid.*, p. 250.

From 1935-1945 there was an incidence of 76 cases of leprosy per thousand head of Aboriginal population in the East and West Kimberley, including Broome. In 1933, there were 30 - 40 cases in Derby. None of the lepers transported to Cossack returned. Some were taken to Channel Island in the Northern Territory.<sup>413</sup> The Derby leprosarium began 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. In 1931 it had taken 18 months to negotiate the transfer of patients from Cossack and from the North West to Darwin. In 1933, cases of leprosy started to come in at epidemic proportions. 65 cases of leprosy had been transferred to Darwin and still there was an accumulation of patients at Derby and Beagle Bay (in temporary leper camps). In 1937 the Sisters applied for government position in the Derby leprosarium and were there until its closure in 1986. Their tenure saw a steady improvement in conditions. In 1938, if admitted to the leprosarium, there was only a 45% chance of being discharged alive, but for those admitted for the first time in 1965, there was an 88% chance of being discharged alive.<sup>414</sup>

The leprosarium became a centre of evangelisation. Whenever leper patients who were cured in Derby prepared to return to their homes in the East Kimberley, Fr Francis Huegel *sac* commissioned them to continue the spread of the good news which they had received. Sister Bernadette O'Connor was appointed to the leprosarium immediately after Profession in 1942. She was there for 12 months and left to take one of the little babies to the Broome Orphanage. Sr Alphonse Daly, described the reaction of the Aborigines to pain, as 'deep silence'.<sup>415</sup> When a telephone call from the Chief Officer informed that invasion was imminent, and all white women and Sisters were to evacuate to Perth, leaving by 3 am. on a Qantas plane, the Sisters refused to leave. They were then asked to evacuate three miles out

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<sup>413</sup> Survivors were brought to Derby from Channel Island.

<sup>414</sup> W. S. Davidson, *Havens of Refuge*, Nedlands, 1978.

<sup>415</sup> M. Alphonse Daly, *Healing Hands*, SJG Sisters, Derby Printing Press, 1980. pp. 19-20. "She was closely associated with the Derby leprosarium, and had joined the Congregation in 1912. Transferred to the Derby leprosarium in 1944, for her work she was honoured with the M. B. E. in 1957 and received an honorary Fellowship of the College of Nursing in Australia in 1962. One of the last four residents at the leprosarium was Teresa Puertollano who had become a patient when she was 13. The introduction of multi drug therapy for leprosy patients in 1970, and a follow-up surveillance out in the field, led to the closing of the leprosarium in 1986." ADB.

into the bush with the patients.<sup>416</sup> Sr Peter (Alice Evans) with Sr Bernadette, Sr Gabriel, Sr Gertrude and Sr Aloysius, helped in the evacuation and stayed in a bough shed constructed in the bush. After a few weeks, they returned to the leprosarium.

### **Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians**

In 1929 a second group of Sisters left Broome to join the Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians, to work at the Manly Seminary. At the same time they founded a leprosarium on Fantome Island in Queensland worked at the Palm Island Mission. They left Sydney in 1945<sup>417</sup> when Cardinal Gilroy wanted them to devote all their time to the seminary. Sr Ignatius Murnane, and Sr Magdalen Cashen returned from the East and six young women, Sisters Veronica McCarthy, Philomena Hocking, Winifride Mc Bride, Esme Coghlan, Victoria Bennett and Gloria Ring, followed them to Broome.<sup>418</sup> In this case the effect of a male decision did not prevent the sisters from making a decision. Difference in status between priests, religious Sisters and lay people does not remove moral agency from an individual.<sup>419</sup>

### **Alice Evans**

Alice Evans' made a transition from an apostolate based in a women's religious owned institute to one in a male field as a lay missionary. A religious vocation as a nun had offered her freedom to work with Sisters in the field of their apostolate without obligation to family or husband, but the cost as she saw it was to

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<sup>416</sup> Descriptions of 'Wartime' at the leprosarium'. Archives of the Sisters of SJG, Subiaco, 1942. "All drugs, dressings, equipment and patient's records were buried, and names of lethal poisons painted on bottles. Aboriginal patients. 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. Three patients died a few days later. Routine treatments were carried out every day and night. The sick were attended by lantern light covered. No fires were to be lit."

<sup>417</sup> Murnane, 'My Life as a Sister of St John of God'. "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 began negotiations with Bishop McGuire of Townsville for a Mission to the Aborigines to be staffed by 'his Sisters'. The result was the Catholic mission at Palm Island, near Townsville."

<sup>418</sup> Interview with Sr Philomena Hocking, *sjg*, Broome, 1984.

<sup>419</sup> Fr Duncan McNab was an exception, he had signed MA, 'Missionary Apostolic', after his name. This is a technical and canon law term. No one assumes the privilege, it is granted - and gives certain exemptions from bishops for faculties. McNab had been commissioned by Cardinal Simeoni in Rome.

engage herself in non-professional work.<sup>420</sup> She returned to Melbourne,<sup>421</sup> trained as a nurse, and found an alternative religious community with the ‘Pallottine Family’,<sup>422</sup> where community was a component of Apostolic Ministry.<sup>423</sup> In 1951 Bishop Raible invited her to Balgo Mission near the Canning Stock Route which wound almost a thousand miles across the Great Sandy Desert of Western Australia.<sup>424</sup> Alice looked after twenty-eight children in the dormitory set up an infirmary. She began teaching the children:<sup>425</sup>

The bathroom for the adults was made of mud brick, seven feet six inches high, and roofed with galvanised iron, while the bathroom for the children had a roof but no walls. There was no school, only an old house with a lean-to verandah. The children were shy, intelligent and eager to learn. Alice wanted to learn their language so that learning would be easier for them. For some time, she was also doing all the cooking, making clothes for the children, and the sick were in her charge. Once a week a bullock was killed, and there was always tea, lots of tea, and milk from the mission’s seventy goats.<sup>426</sup>

This chapter compared the role of a Religious Sister with the role of a Lay Missionary woman. Although Alice Evans had lost the companionship of other

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<sup>420</sup> Interview by Brigida Nailon with Alice Evans at Echuca 21 February 1992.

“A favoured few were given the opportunity to train as nurses. She said: “Mother Margaret didn’t believe in sending the young ones to train. Neither did *Sister Brigid* or the old ones. But *Sr Gertrude* went down to Perth to train. *Sr Alphonse Daly* went down and stayed to train. I trained at St Vincent’s after I left the order in 1945.”

<sup>421</sup> At a personal interview with Alice Evans, Echuca, 21 February 1992, she said, “If I had my time again, I’d still be there.” She stayed in Perth for 6 weeks intending to join the Navy, but was in Melbourne for VE. day. When she then applied to train as a nurse at St. Vincent’s Hospital, there were no vacancies, until Bishop Raible spoke for her.

<sup>422</sup> The original Kimberley Lay Apostolate was closely connected to the ideology of St. Vincent Pallotti, who founded the union of the Catholic Apostolate as early as 1835, originally for lay people. He later founded groups for Brothers, Priests and Sisters.

<sup>423</sup> Eugene Weber, *Vincent Pallotti An Apostle and Mystic*, Alba House, New York, 1963, p.23. When the society came to the Kimberley in 1901 it was known as the Pious Society of Missions.

<sup>424</sup> Eleanor Smith, *The Beckoning West*, St George Books, Perth, 1966.

<sup>425</sup> . ‘God’s Rouseabout’ *The Advocate*, Melbourne, February 12 1953, p. 15.

<sup>426</sup> Personal interview with Alice Evans, 21 February 1992.

“I was schoolteacher, seamstress, gardener and general rouseabout as well as nurse. Alice was in Balgo for 15 months and had not seen a white woman for 15 months until she took a patient into Wyndham. At the mission they had a kerosene refrigerator which was always breaking down. When I went on a holiday to Melbourne I raised money for a refrigerator and a truck.

women, her new role gave her greater freedom, more professional status, and a chance to develop independently of the constraints of religious life and its inherent authority. Her experience demonstrated both the continuing need for women in the work of the Church in the Kimberley and the possibility of new roles for them outside the old structures. In the Catholic Church women missionaries generally accepted an inequality on the mission field, grateful for whatever opportunities they had for meaningful ministry, although it was said that, “when a field was found too difficult for a man, a woman should be sent.”<sup>427</sup>

Women’s agendas in the fields of nursing became paramount at the institution of the leprosarium. Here the truth and vitality of the Gospel was brought to help heal the sick very often through the evangelisation of Beagle Bay Mission Aborigines. Firm foundations for indigenous churches in Catholicism were laid in this place. If the role women played in the Catholic Church was held in high esteem it was at a cost. By entering convents, Sisters indirectly identified with a patriarchal power structure. In this structure, dedication to education, care for the sick, and social work was seen as having a supernatural and redemptive value which was regarded as intrinsically ‘apostolic’.<sup>428</sup> But in some cases the fruit of undemanding service could result in a passive acceptance of second class status within the ministry.

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<sup>427</sup> F. B. Hoyt, ““When a Field Was Found Too Difficult for a Man, a Woman Should Be Sent” Adele M. Fields in Asia, 1865-1890” ’ *The Historian*, vol. XLIV, 1982, pp. 314-334, quoted by Ruth Tucker, ‘Female Mission Strategists: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective’, *Missiology: An International Review*, vol. xv, no.3, July 1987, p.74.

<sup>428</sup> The word ‘apostolic’ may also be used in the ‘missionary’ sense of making the gospel penetrate deeper into all human social activity.





## **Chapter 8**

### **Experiences of Aboriginal women and men on Catholic**

### **Missions, 1928-1946, and Women in the Leprosarium**

#### **Effects of Displacement of Aborigines**

By the use of oral sources, this chapter investigates experiences of some Aborigines who preferred to live on the Missions, and those who were forced to live at the leprosarium. Some were descendants of those gathered from around the Kimberley after the implementation of the 1902 Government policy to take impoverished children of mixed descent into care. By 1928, the little girls and boys brought in about 1908 at the age of 5-10 years were aged 25-28. They had lost their languages and tribal practices, some were married. The rate of intake of mixed descent children by the Beagle Bay Mission between 1907 and 1914 changed when the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Mr Gale, was replaced by Mr A. O. Neville who administered Aboriginal Affairs until the 1940's. His policy was not to send children to Beagle Bay Mission but to send the children to government stations, to Moola Bulla in the Kimberley, or south to Moore River or other institutions. The mission continued to educate those who had been sent earlier and those who were sent by their parents or by the managers of some cattle stations, training the boys in trades and the girls for service. Some had married and lived in the colony at the mission. Both men and women were employed by the mission. The women who were unmarried or widowed remained in the dormitories and helped with laundry, gardening, cooking, minding children and doing the myriad of other chores which fall to the lot of women. The Sisters of St John of God worked alongside them, living their own religious life. The Aboriginal way of life was spiritual, supported by their song cycles, and their dancing. The women had their own ceremonies for life events such as birth, deaths and celebrations.

## **Aboriginal Agency**

Displacement of Aborigines put some of them into situations of dependence for survival on the services of white people and institutions such as the Catholic Church in the Kimberley. Aboriginal social roles became stereotyped by legislation. But there were signs that Aboriginal agency was becoming a positive force in the Kimberley as early as 1935 when the petition of 'Mission educated' women was published by the Royal Commission the issues raised included racism, employment, marriage, private life and exemption from the Aboriginal Act. They had also lobbied unsuccessfully for the employment of a 'Lady Aboriginal Protector'.<sup>429</sup> The experiences related by these women gave some insights into their situation in Broome. Nevertheless the outcome of the 1936 legislation did not seem to be influenced by their voice.<sup>430</sup>

### **Leprosy: Oral Sources - Petronella Atwood**

Petronella Atwood experienced the difference between the apparent security of a woman married to a white man, and her vulnerability as an Aboriginal woman, especially one with leprosy.<sup>431</sup> As an Aboriginal widow of a white man, Petronella would have been displaced and helpless with no property rights. She would not have been able to buy land even if she had the money to do so. Without land as collateral, she could not borrow money. She could not inherit money because of legislation. Because she applied for citizenship papers she obtained the right to marry as she wished, and removed herself from protective administration.

Some Aboriginal people like Petronella had experience of employment.<sup>432</sup> Her first experience had been at the mission with the two doctors brought out from Germany to staff Rockhole hospital. Later she experienced racial discrimination in the town where she worked.

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<sup>429</sup> 'Petition by Half-castes and Quadroons in Broome Regarding Exempting them from the Aborigines Act, Submission to the Moseley Royal Commission, Jan. 1935. Source: PRO, Aboriginal Affairs, AN 1/7, Acc 993 55/35, cited in Christine Choo's thesis 'Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions'.

<sup>430</sup> See chapter 7, footnote 34, re 1936 Act.

<sup>431</sup> Petronella's mother was Lily McCarthy brought from East Kimberley as a little girl.

<sup>432</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p.38-39.

After 1941, another Matron in Port Hedland wanted a girl to help and they sent me. The whites there were prejudiced. We had to live a mile outside the town. We had to wear a tag around our neck to say who we were, like a dog tag. We were barred from the bars, and from the white hospital. There was a half caste ward down the end of the yard - our kids were born there.<sup>433</sup>

Afflicted with leprosy, Petronella had to spend time at the leprosarium, away from her children and husband but she absconded when she could. In her later years, she retired to Beagle Bay.

The stories of Teresa Puertollano and Rita Patrick demonstrate the devastating effect of this disease on the families of those afflicted.

### **Teresa Puertollano**

Teresa Puertollano was diagnosed as a leper at 13 years of age and had to leave the New Norcia school to become an inmate of the leper colony at Beagle Bay.

In my family there were six children, Alphonse, Philomena, Maria, Joe, Tommy and myself, the youngest. Before we settled in Broome we lived in Lombadina where my father had cattle. We often said the Rosary with our next door neighbours, the Ozies. I was taught by Sr Evangelist, and later on by Sr Raymond and Sr Augustine. As a girl I knew Fr Albert, Fr Heady, Bishop Coppo, Fr John, Fr Raible and Fr Worms.

In 1931 my parents sent me to school at New Norcia, but I got double pneumonia and had to come back to Broome. I went back in 1932, the only girl from Broome, and came home in December. In January 1933 I had sore ears and went to see Dr Haynes a week before going back to school. I did not

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<sup>433</sup> “When Don McLeod came out with this citizenship thing, I had met my husband in Marble Bar. He was Ronald Thornton Attwood, a white man. I wasn’t allowed to marry him, him being a white person, and me being a half-caste. Don McLeod was there in Marble Bar. At the time he got the citizenship cards for the people and I applied for one. I had to go to the Police Station with a photograph of myself to identify myself. We had to pay 10 shillings for the citizenship card. The policeman pasted my photograph on it. I still have it. After I got married to my husband he said, “What do you want to get a citizenship card for? You married to a white man!” I said, “Yes, it is all right for you to talk. If you die tomorrow I will be thrown back to the Government. I’m free now. I’ve got the card.” He shut up like a book. He understood what I meant. We were married in Marble Bar and went to live in Port Hedland.” Oral Sources, ADB.

know I had leprosy. At the time I thought I was just going away to look after my sister Mary who had been working for Captain Gregory and had a burned leg. 2 February 1933, I came to Beagle Bay with Maria living in a little hut for a year and a half. I continued my studies with Maria. Sr Brigid nursed us. She came down every day. She also went to the old police station to visit the other people there north of Beagle Bay. Fr Francis used to visit too. I can remember the beautiful procession for the Feast of Corpus Christi. We used to join in. We used to come to the sacristy for Mass. It was lonely. My family used to come and visit us. Mum, Joe, Tomboy used to come when they could. Then we had to leave Beagle Bay...<sup>434</sup>

### **Rita Patrick**

Rita Patrick was born in Beagle Bay, her father was a Nyul Nyul man, her mother was Rosie from Roebourne:

They came and took my mother from here for Darwin. She was living down in the old police station. She went with the first lot. I be in school then, I be in the dormitory. I cried when my mother left. I felt sorry. Two of my family left with my mother and 15 - 20 people.

I was in my teens, just come out from school when I was told I had to go to Derby leprosarium. Matthias Sebastian was just a little boy. We went together. Frank Dolby, Uncle Stanny, Victor and Olam. Alex, father of Henry, he ran away from Police Station, he was afraid to go on the boat. There were two girls from Derby. They were sick too. Uncle Bernard Ning was on the boat. The trip was safe, it took only two nights. There were two white people at the leprosarium, the Manager was one. We didn't have Sisters yet (when I come). After, Mother Gertrude was there and Mother Angela, and we had a tall doctor, I forget his name. My mother was still in Derby leprosarium, my uncle. I was lonely for home. By and by I settled down. I went to school when I went to the leprosarium. Theresa Puertollano taught us when she came from

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<sup>434</sup> Oral Sources, ADB. For the rest of Therese's story see Appendices at the end of this thesis. In 1984, Therese Puertollano was still living at the leprosarium in Derby. She had been blind for some years. When the newly confirmed Christians from Turkey Creek were at Beagle Bay for the Pilgrimage in 1983, they referred to Therese as 'Teacher'.

the Darwin leprosarium. We started to go to school then. She was teaching us.<sup>435</sup>

Such experiences as related above were the beginning of years of exile and pain for hundreds of individuals in the Kimberley. The Sisters of St John of God tried to alleviate the suffering in different ways. Anecdotal references are possibly the only way to enable the reader to have some empathy with those suffering from the disease in the leprosarium, which for some, like Therese, lasted the rest of their lives.

### **Maudie Anastasia Rango**

In Beagle Bay Mission, Maudie Anastasia Rango a blind woman, found a refuge.

I remember my mother, her name Jenny. I don't remember my dad, white man. I never go mission. I go Derby, only little girl, about 8. I go wagon, my cousin Mary took me. Mrs Shaddock, white lady took me. I mind the baby. I never went to school. I work for this lady, house work, cooking. I change my place with boy, young man, native. I never got married to him, 'just living'. I had one, Judy born there from Jackie. Jackie found another woman. I found Micky in Derby. He died. I had a holiday here at the mission when Judy, my daughter grew up. She came to here. Somebody brought her.

When the Japanese were bombing Broome I came here with the other people. I was baptised 15 August 1941, Bishop Raible confirmed me. I had an eye sickness that made me go blind.<sup>436</sup>

So Maudie was lucky to find a niche particularly with her blindness disability.

### **Sandy Paddy**

The story of Sandy Paddy has been included because Sandy Paddy and Peter Angus kept the tribal songs of the Bard people in Lombadina. Sandy, an elder who taught culture in the Lombadina school, had different roles which brought together the threads of his life on the mission. Sandy explained how the road from Beagle Bay to Lombadina had been put in by Tony Faber with James and how he had worked in the garden at Lombadina years ago with Bro Celestine, one of the Salesians. When Sandy

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<sup>435</sup> Oral Sources, ADB, and Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p.19. For the rest of Rita's story see Appendices at the end of this thesis.

<sup>436</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, pp. 102-3.

left school he worked mustering with Martin Sibosado, he worked on Hunter's boats until late in 1920, he worked with Bro Joseph who was carpenter for the Lombadina Church in the 1930's. The floor wood was all hand sawn, mangrove bark was boiled to get the stain. Before the war Fr Benedict had married him to Esther. During the war he was in Lombadina for a while but went to Broome and worked for Kennedy for 12 months.

Kennedy had a cargo boat and a pearling boat same as Streeter. We used to go out for 3 months and used to work in Kennedy's shed. We had the boys' camp. The sick boys were brought back and another lot would go out. The pay was 10 shillings a week. I worked with Kennedy's store. I was still under the Tribal Law so was not allowed to go out with girls. I have always been under the law. The Law is a good thing, something God gives to us, put out into the world for the people. It is good. Except for this Law, the people wouldn't know who made the trees, how to catch fish.<sup>437</sup>

### **Native Sisters**

Sisters had been authority figures in the female world of the mission as teachers, nurses, and carers of a third generation of Christians growing up in Beagle Bay Mission. Young Aboriginal women had been participating in Catholic devotions and witnessing the corporate nature of religious life. Bishop Raible found willing volunteers among the women. It was his idea that a new congregation might be more amenable than the Sisters already working on the mission.<sup>438</sup> His's idea corresponded with that of Bishop Vesters from New Guinea<sup>439</sup> who had successfully founded a Sisters' congregation for the indigenous population. In Beagle Bay there was no problem with regard to marriage promises in Beagle Bay as the young women had not been leading tribal lives, but had been brought up by the Sisters of St John of God. They were used to living a communal life and to the religious devotions of the Children of Mary. There would be a sensible adaptation of rule and habit. Under the guidance of Fr F. Huegel sac, and Sr Augustine sjg, and with the approval of the Apostolic Delegate the idea became a reality.

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<sup>437</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*.

<sup>438</sup> Oral sources at Beagle Bay in the 1980s/

<sup>439</sup> See Raible/Vesters correspondence in ADB.

The date of the foundation of the Native Sisters was January 1939. Bishop Raible was careful to have each sister exempted from 'The Act'.<sup>440</sup> Negotiations were made through Perth for certificates of exemption.<sup>441</sup> But the apostolate chosen for the Sisters the staffing the new mission at Balgo was extremely hard. Some of them were still novices without adequate training. To be sent into the desert, to tribes which had no clothing, with camp living of the roughest kind, without the support structures of the Beagle Bay Mission, was too much for the young women.

### **Aboriginal Agency at Balgo**

Several men from Balgo at Comet windmill on Billiluna Station, when Father Alphonse came down from Halls Creek in 1939. Sunfly, Jimmy Djaiandjanu, Bill Larry, Mick Djakamara and Alan Weinduru mentioned events and people and told how Aborigines were involved in bringing Catholic presence to Balgo.

At the first sight of sheep moving across the plain the Aborigines had sent two men to find out what was causing the dust, they thought it was spinifex moving. Mick Djakamara met Bishop Raible who was travelling by camel at the Lake. A lot of Walmajarri and Wangkajunga people came from the Canning Stock Route. Sunfly and the other men helped push those sheep down to 'Tjaluwan' where the visitors first settled. Bill Larry remembered starting to dig a well there. He 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). Also there was a man called Jimmy with his wife Judy from Beagle Bay/Lombadina way. The people didn't remember any reason why some went to the Mission, and others to the Station. If there was trouble at the Station, they came to the Mission later. When Fr J. Kearney sac was there, Fr Alphonse started dormitories for

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<sup>440</sup> Bray to Raible, 5 March 1943. "I wish to inform you that the Hon. Minister for the North West has approved of the Certificates of Exemption to the following members of the native Sisterhood at Beagle Bay Mission, Elizabeth Dan, Frances Kelly, and Anne Albert. In the case of Agnes Fraser she was issued with such a document on the 6th January 1942."

<sup>441</sup> Raible to Bray, 16 August 1943. "Re Sr M. Agnes Fraser I wish to state that she has not received a certificate of exemption. She was, before entering the Convent, Miss Katie Fraser. It is her younger Sister, Agnes Fraser, now married to Mr. Tom Puertollano who was exempted."



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.<sup>442</sup>

The stories of Ambrose Cox, , and Magdalen Williams are examples of Aborigines who generously served for many years as Aboriginal members of Catholic missionary teams in Balgo and La Grange. Aboriginal women were in the forefront of this evangelical thrust into the desert to found the Balgo Mission. With their menfolk, they went with the missionaries to assist with the mission work. Ambrose Cox from Beagle Bay, worked for nine years in Balgo. His Sister Barbara Cox, went to Balgo as a Novice of the Native Sisters about 1947.<sup>443</sup> She had the supporting presence of her brother, her sister-in-law, Nancy, and their family.

### **Ambrose Cox**

Ambrose had been born in Beagle Bay, son of David Cox from Noonkanbah Station and Lena Manado from Disaster Bay. Ambrose told his story:

One of my grandfathers was Willie Manado, a Filipino who died during the Second World War. The other was Billy Cox, a Scotchman who died in Louisa Downs and left the station to his Sister. I was 9 years on the Balgo Mission. I went with Bishop Raible to look over the place. I started my work in Rockhole with Fr John Herold. There was trouble with Welfare, too close to Moola Bulla. We shifted. I was on my own with Fr Alphonse. I came back and married Nancy O'Grady who was brought up in Lombadina Mission, and went back for a couple of years. I worked for myself in Broome, at the meatworks, at the powerhouse with Bernard Strake, with the Shire.<sup>444</sup>

The Sisters spoke of the many kind deeds Ambrose did for them at the Mission.

### **Magdalen Williams**

Magdalen worked with her husband at Balgo and La Grange Missions:

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<sup>442</sup> Fr Ray Hevern sac at the Broome Assembly 1984. ADB.

<sup>443</sup> "Native Sisters Chronicle". ADB

<sup>444</sup> Oral Sources, Archives Diocese Broome.

My husband, Lawrence Williams and myself, Magdalen and my five children, Johanna, Albert, Cecilia, Philomena and David, went to Balgo for six months with Fr Alphonse and two St. John of God nuns, Sr Angela and Sr Winifride.

We came back, then years later we went to La Grange. Fr Francis Huegel was there already. I stayed there doing the cooking for Fr Francis and cleaning.

Magdalen also mentioned lay missionary workers on La Grange Mission,

Vera Dan was there helping too, she taught. We had four lay people who helped. Betty Prendegast, Margaret Elliot, Joan Newing and Joy Hopf, Joy left soon, she was first.

Missionaries at Balgo mission, with the exception of Fr Huegel, were Australian born.<sup>445</sup> Many of the Church workers were Aboriginal.<sup>446</sup>

### **Purpose and practice of Early Missions**

That there were positive aspects of mission life was recognised by Hasluck travelling with the Moseley Commission in 1934 gave him a chance to see the far North of Western Australia at a time when the Aboriginal cause was a matter for concern. As a result of this experience, Hasluck decided that the reputation of missions had unfortunately been judged mostly from their difficulties in responding to the problems that beset both missionary and Aboriginal in later years, rather than from their ministry in the earlier period of simplicity both of purpose and of practice. Hasluck's last memory was of the missions - of Beagle Bay and Kunmunya (on the Glenelg River), and Drysdale River. Admittedly writing in retrospect, from a distance, Hasluck judged that the best period for these missions, and perhaps the happiest outcome of their labours, was in the period of their isolation before white 'progress', had infected them. He claimed that at Beagle Bay, before the other world had started to push hard against its seclusion, he had experienced holiness and beauty while attending a service before the beautiful altar decorated with pearl-shell, hearing the

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<sup>445</sup> Many missionaries became naturalised Australians.

<sup>446</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p.42. Vera Dan was there helping too, she taught.

responses of the people, and seeing their devout awe at a spiritual experience akin to their own mysteries.<sup>447</sup> But for many tribes it was too late.<sup>448</sup>

For some individuals, the experience of separation from family stayed with them forever. There is much oral testimony to the reactions of displaced women in the Kimberley. Some felt deeply the erosion of cultural diversity when as children they were placed in Beagle Bay Mission and lost contact with their families.

### **Topsy O'Meara**

Topsy O'Meara carried with her the sad memory of a mother she did not see again as a child:

The police took us from the station. My mother only came along as far as Turkey Creek. She didn't want to see us off. She had a broken heart.<sup>449</sup>

### **Nancy Leo**

Nancy Leo was taken to the mission about 1910 and it was not until 1970 when she went back to the Ord River that she found out the name of her father. She had forgotten nothing of the pain of being taken:

I was with my mother and half a dozen sisters around Turkey Creek playing with Zita and those. When the police came I must have been about 5. I was still on the mission when I was married 20 February 1929.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Hasluck, *Mucking About*, p. 276-7. "Each was out of touch with any European settlement. There was the charm of simplicity and devotion in the daily life of these religious villages where the church, the school, the gardens, the farmyard buildings and a few houses clustered. When the bell rang for service or for mealtimes the sight of the people, neatly clad, drifting towards the place of meeting and then the sound of the singing of a hymn, or 'grace before meals', or the murmured responses had a Sabbath calm. Each was a little world of its own, isolated, in harmony with the setting. They seemed to sleep in meditation in the way Aboriginal men sat around a pattern in the ground."

<sup>448</sup> Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines*, Preface. (1938), 1974. "When an old native at Beagle Bay, north of Broome, asked me in 1927 why I wanted to know so much about his tribe's customs and beliefs, I answered: "In order to understand native life and thought, and to pass my understanding on to Government men, missionaries and employers in the hope that they would appreciate your people and their ways." The old man thought for a while and then said, "That is good, but you have come too late." I replied, "Yes, too late for your tribe, but perhaps not too late to help some other tribes not so far away."

<sup>449</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p. 89.

So about twenty years passed on the Beagle Bay Mission for Nancy. Such a life had its limitations, waited many years before she renewed her kinship with living relatives in the East Kimberley.

### **Philippena Fraser**

Philippena Fraser's name was changed. Her identity was taken away.

I was about seven years when I was taken by police. My name was Sarah then, my sister was Gypsy, she was only five. A native boy spoke in language to Gypsy and I to come with him for a ride. We jumped in the cart. One boy named Albert saw us get into the cart and Albert ran away because he knew we were going to be taken to the Police Station. Gypsy and I were too young to know. My mother, named Lucy, started calling for her two children and did not get any answer. They told her the police took them for a ride. So Lucy called in language. Gypsy and I could hear Mum calling. They locked us in, we were there for the night. Only we two. The tram pulled up in the morning and took us to the water. We went past there to see my mother. That was last I seen. She hit herself, bleeding all over. That was the last I saw of her. The police hung on to me and Gypsy. It hurts like. They took us to the ship. We cried and cried and went off to sleep on the ship.<sup>451</sup>

The deep hurt suffered by these children left scars in the adults who voiced them when they were interviewed by Fr Francis Huegel decades later. Attitudes of Aboriginal Catholics in the Kimberley and other places in Australia to their treatment are very different, it has been said that there is not so much bitterness in the Kimberley as there is elsewhere.

### **Education as an Agent of Change**

If life circumstances are a major determinant of educational progress, then Aborigines require a knowledge of educational opportunities available in the past, and how much education systems discharged their responsibilities.<sup>452</sup> Such knowledge could assist them in future choices. When women lack an identity, when they do not

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<sup>450</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p. 94-95.

<sup>451</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p. 29.

<sup>452</sup> Betty Watts, *Aboriginal Futures*. ERDC Report, No. 33. Canberra, AGPS. 1982.

have a voice and a choice in their destiny, this presents a serious gap in the human condition and steps need to be taken for reconciliation between the dominant and subdominant society of Australia. Aboriginal women demonstrated tenacity and courage enabling an expansion of Aboriginal tribal linkages with white communities. Some worked to maintain their support of pastoral communities, Beagle Bay Mission, its ancillaries in Broome, Lombadina, the Leprosarium, the outreach into the desert at Balgo Hills, and La Grange Mission.

In this chapter there was an exploration of what happened when Aborigines, with their associated cultures and values were moved and transplanted whether voluntarily or forcibly. By the stories of Topsy O'Meara, Nancy Leo, and Philippina Fraser an attempt was made to recognise the pain of separation from parents as a scar on the psyche of individuals who would carry it throughout their lives. The policies of 1902, the spread of leprosy, the economic depression of the 1930's, and the second world war, were among the causes of dispersal in the Kimberley. Government administration made ad hoc decisions which continued the ongoing displacement of Aborigines.



## Part 3

### Emergence of Indigenous Leadership 1946-1990

#### Chapter 9

#### Changing Context of Aboriginal Society

During the post war period there were marked changes in Australian attitudes to Aborigines. Servicemen in the outback had made friends in the army and in Aboriginal Communities. There was still plenty of evidence of Aboriginal need.

##### Government Administration of Aborigines

The 1905-1947 Native Administration Acts were amended in 1951, 1958, and 1964. In July 1947 the first increase in subsidy for approved missions since 1917 was made. It rose from 26 cents a week to 30 cents in addition to free drugs, clothing, and blankets, and by 1951 the infra-structure of “Development and Services for Aborigines” was almost in place. The Department promised an annual review of subsidies based on the variation in the cost of living.<sup>453</sup> In 1948, S. G. Middleton, the new Commissioner of Native Affairs, made a determined effort to have the Native Administration Acts, 1905-1947, drastically amended to reduce more than 70 restrictions on personal freedom. Except for the Departments of Health and Education, government departments were unenthusiastic. Some police were openly hostile. Middleton decided to work initially through missions catering for Aboriginal children.<sup>454</sup> It was difficult for public servants not to continue to stereotype Aborigines no matter what legislation was passed. Only time would change the thinking and directives of the Department of Native Affairs. An officer of the Registrar General’s Department pointed out that forms in respect to the registration of births and deaths of natives did not have sufficient information as to the actual caste of the parents of the children born. Missionaries were told that when they were completing forms for deceased natives it would be appreciated if the caste of the

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<sup>453</sup> T. Long, ‘The development of Government Aboriginal policy: the effect of Administrative Changes, 1829-1977’ *Aborigines of the West*. pp. 357 ff.

<sup>454</sup> Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens*, p.41.

deceased was also recorded on the form. The letters F. B. or H. C.. would be sufficient for the Registrar General's requirements.<sup>455</sup>

In 1950, P. M. C. Hasluck, MHR., advocated that the Commonwealth Government should cooperate with the State Governments in measures for the social advancement as well as the protection of people of the Aboriginal race throughout the Australian mainland, and to pay attention to the principles of State administration of Native Affairs and cooperation with the Christian Missions. The neglect of the social problem of the conditions of the Aborigines had been neglect by the Australian Community as a whole, and the Community as a whole must therefore bear the blame. Hasluck outlined the context of missions in Australia when he said,

When we enter into international discussions, and raise our voice, as we should raise it, in defence of human rights and the protection of human welfare, our very words are mocked by the thousands of degraded and depressed people who crouch on rubbish heaps throughout the whole of this continent. Let us cleanse this stain from our forehead. A total of approximately 72,000 Aborigines living in an expanding community of approximately 8,000,000 whites is so small it is manageable. We have on our hands a serious, but not a frightening problem The total number of Aborigines constitutes a social group within but not of the white community.<sup>456</sup>

## **Education**

In 1948, when F. I. Bray retired, a Perth Magistrate, F. E. Bateman was appointed to undertake a survey of the Aboriginal problem and to make appropriate recommendations to the Government. Appalled by the conditions prevailing in the settlements and on the reserves, he recommended major changes in administration and a call to abandon the negative measures of the past. New policies were inaugurated. From 1948 onwards the role of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs moved away from total responsibility to that of a supportive agent. Since that date the Education Department has had full control of Aboriginal primary and secondary education in Western Australia.<sup>457</sup> The first pastoral station school in the Kimberley was opened at Gogo Station, Fitzroy Crossing, in 1957. The station provided the teachers' quarters

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<sup>455</sup> Dept. of Native Affairs to Superintendent, B. B. M., 10 October 1947.

<sup>456</sup> P. M. C. Hasluck, MHR., 'Aborigines' *Parliamentary Debates*, 8 June 1950. ADB.

<sup>457</sup> 'Annual Report of the Department', 1972. ADB.



and the Education Department provided teachers.<sup>458</sup> Until 1952 the main provision of education for Aborigines in the Kimberley was made by mission schools. Unlike other states, Western Australia did not give control of Aboriginal education to its Education Department until the 1950's. When G. F. Thornbury was appointed to the position of Superintendent of Native Education he stated that the Department would support the establishment of schools in Native Reserves in the North-West. It would prepare a special Curriculum for Native Schools. It took until 1952 for this positive action to be taken to incorporate children of Aboriginal descent within the State education system.<sup>459</sup>

After the 1951 Conference there were advances in the area of social services but the 'nomadic or primitive' were still excluded from pensions and maternity allowances.<sup>460</sup> From Perth came a letter bearing the Native Welfare letterhead for Alice Augustine, Beagle Bay Mission to inform her that she had no entitlement to Social Services:

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>461</sup>

But things began to change. The Department of public Health now supplied to mission hospitals, all drugs and medicaments, but not including medical and surgical appliances and dressing.<sup>462</sup> In 1953 there was an increase in inmate subsidy to missions for children to 22 shillings and sixpence per week, payable in cash as from 1 July. At the time Middleton took office, subsidy payments stood at 3 shillings per week, and had been increased by several stages since then to the figure above mentioned. Pressure was still being maintained to reach parity with the Child Welfare subsidy payable to white children.<sup>463</sup> By 1954 the bulk of restrictive legislation had

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<sup>458</sup> 'Annual Report', West Australia, 1957. ADB.

<sup>459</sup> R. McKeich, 'Part-Aboriginal Education', Unpublished Manuscript for Thesis. Nedlands, University of WA, 1972.

<sup>460</sup> Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia*, pp. 397, 398, 402.

<sup>461</sup> Humphreys to Augustine, nd. ADB.

<sup>462</sup> Undersecretary to Superintendent, Lombadina mission, 28 December 1951. ADB.

<sup>463</sup> Annual Report for the Department, 1953.

been amended. Equality with Child Welfare payments in subsidised institutions for Native Children was achieved.<sup>464</sup> These increases in subsidies removed money worries another step away from mission administration.

With the exception of the Department of Public Health and the Department of Education, government departments were unenthusiastic about the changes, while some police were openly hostile. Middleton decided to work initially through missions catering for Aboriginal children. In 1951 he said: "I regard Missions as being valuable and important administrative adjuncts of the Department and missionaries as being vitally essential to the welfare of the Native race."<sup>465</sup> Middleton's recognition was appreciated by the missionaries after the previous neglect and hostility, but it also implicated the missions in administering the policy of assimilation. Middleton endeavoured to use the Catholic Church against Don McLeod who had encouraged, perhaps even instigated the Aboriginal Pilbara strike. An attempt to make White Springs a Catholic Mission was aborted by the non cooperation of the Pallottine Fathers.

C. D. Rowley observed that missions, settlements, and pastoral properties were still treated as pensioners' institutions for these payments, and for child endowment. He claimed that one effect of this must have been to maintain and even increase the administrative intervention between the Aboriginal and his pension, create a vested interest in managing it, and emphasise controlled welfare at the expense of free movement and of the chance of making mistakes to learn how to manage one's own resources.<sup>466</sup> In 1957 there was a new commission under F. E. Gare to ascertain the cost of 'adequate provision' for natives and what degree of Commonwealth assistance was required. It found that the majority of natives did not work under awards. The range of wages in the Kimberley was from 2 shillings and sixpence to £3 per week. Some part-Aborigines in this area received the basic wage in the towns and the award wage on stations, but only a small portion. Nothing was altered in the pastoral industry.<sup>467</sup> In 1958, in the Annual Report, the Commissioner of Native Welfare wrote at length on the policy of assimilation:

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<sup>464</sup> Annual Report for the Department, 1959.

<sup>465</sup> Porter, p.198, Hasluck believed many Aborigines required the continuation of protective measures, particularly those who could not be expected to live alongside white Australians; Also see, Biskup, p. 241.

<sup>466</sup> Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia*, pp. 398, 402, 397.

<sup>467</sup> Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines*, p. 262.

The policy and the term assimilation postulates a state of mind, our mind, in regard to natives being a people apart - it appears therefore to be aligned with the policy referred to elsewhere as 'apartheid'<sup>468</sup>. It has caused legislation to be passed which specifically denies them citizenship rights. The whole concept therefore is wrong; legislation which is based on false assumption should not be permitted to remain on the statutes, and it should not be necessary for us to wait until the victims of such legislation have to put it to the test of a court of Appeal, that is, if they had the right to appeal. As it happens, at the moment, they have not, because of the power entrusted to the State in respect to Aborigines by the Commonwealth constitution of 1901.<sup>469</sup>

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.

### **Assimilation**

In his work, *Assimilation Problems: The Aboriginal Viewpoint*, T. G. H. Strehlow tried to show how deeply the viewpoint of the Aboriginal Australians themselves affected the many issues involved in the process of assimilation. He found it impossible to advocate an "assimilation" concept which involved the complete cultural and physical annihilation of the original inhabitants of Australia.

Just as the koala, the possum, the platypus, the kangaroo, and the emu deserve to be protected so that they can continue to exist in their own original habitat, so too the Australian Aboriginal deserved to be given a chance to work out a destiny within the general framework of Australian society without being forced to give up completely every element of cultural and racial identity.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> The words 'assimilation' and 'apartheid' do not have a similar meaning. The first meant to absorb or take up into the current population whereas the second means to keep apart from the ordinary population.

<sup>469</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner*, Department of Native Welfare. 1958.

<sup>470</sup> T. G. H. Strehlow, *Assimilation Problems: The Aboriginal Viewpoint*, Aborigines Advancement League Inc. of South Australia, Adelaide, 1964. p. 3.

Colin Tatz, in *Race Politics in Australia: Aborigines, Politics and Law*, pointed that the WA *Electoral Act*, could be manipulated to allow exclusion. Aborigines were excluded from social service benefits, then included: only to find their monies paid to government, mission societies and pastoralists as an alleged offset against their maintenance. Parity of esteem in paid employment and membership of Labour unions would not be available until after 1967 when the Government assimilation policy was replaced by a self-determination policy. There were changes in funding especially for Community Administration in the 1970's.

### **The Referendum of 1967**

Aboriginal agency and political power for Aborigines were actually not recognised in 1967. The referendum empowered (but did not require) the Commonwealth to enact 'special laws' for members of 'the Aboriginal race' and provided for Aboriginal people to be counted in the national census. The right to vote was determined not by the Constitution but by legislation enacted by the state and federal parliaments.

When the statement is made that Aboriginal people 'got the vote' or 'citizenship' as a result of the referendum, the words 'vote' and 'citizenship' need to be understood in terms of a code which has both literal and symbolic meaning. For the lawyer the issue is a question of law; for an Aboriginal person, it may be a statement about lived experience, about when he or she was allowed (by, for example, local officials) to enrol, or felt disposed to enrol, or was encouraged to enrol to vote. At the symbolic level, these are statements about inclusion, acceptance, good-will, and the future, and the meanings conveyed in the words 'vote' and citizenship' speak both about the past and the present circumstances of the narrator.<sup>471</sup>

An effect of the 1967 Referendum was that the Federal Government established the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and, in Western Australia, there developed an unwritten policy of side-stepping mission administrations with new

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<sup>471</sup> Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus in collaboration with Dale Edwards and Kath Shilling, *The 1967 Referendum, or when Aborigines Didn't Get the Vote*, Canberra Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1997. Preface pp. x, xi.

direct funding for community administration.<sup>472</sup> Major changes in traditional roles led to a maze of complex issues for people, church and government to struggle through. The perennial problems which had accompanied the spread of the Church's mission in the Kimberley, distance, harsh conditions, financial worries, shortage of personnel, would prove straightforward compared with new developments after the 1967 Referendum. The 'Yes Vote' wiped out two sections of the Australian constitution concerning Aborigines, one had excluded Aborigines from the census, and the other prevented the Federal Government from making laws specially for Aborigines.<sup>473</sup>

There had been little interest at either State or Federal levels of Government in the welfare of Aboriginal communities and even less money available to fund programmes for development. For example, in 1968 the Minister of Native Welfare had rejected a proposed station skills training program at Forrest River Mission. Its population which was ill-prepared for town life was transferred to Wyndham. A few men gained employment. Most were forced into a lifestyle stigmatised by poverty and shame. When the Kimberley Aborigines were granted drinking rights in 1970, some of the Forrest River refugees slipped into chronic alcoholism. Wyndham's Aboriginal Reserve was a rock-strewn compound with a series of corrugated iron buildings with poor ventilation and few amenities. Built for 96 people it housed up to 200 when the Forest River mission closed. Neville J. Green, in 'European Education at Oombulgurri, an Aboriginal Settlement in Western Australia', pointed out that the public expectation that Aborigines would find adequate accommodation at the Wyndham Reserve moved Mr A. Ridge, MLA for the Kimberley, to publicly denounce the unfair decision to house the Aborigines on the reserve.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Conversation between a member of the department of social services and the author in 1991 in Broome: "We thought that if we got rid of the Church we could clean up the operation within three to five years." "Did you?" "No, things are in much more of a mess now than before!"

<sup>473</sup> Chicka Dixon, 'I want to be a Human Being', Sun-Herald [the Sunday edition of the Sydney Morning Herald], 21 May 1967, in Attwood, and Markus, *The 1967 Referendum or when Aborigines Didn't Get the Vote*, p. 115.

<sup>474</sup> Neville J. Green, 'European Education at Oombulgurri, an Aboriginal Settlement in Western Australia.' M. A. Thesis, Univ. of W. A. 1986. The exact date of this speech by Mr A Ridge was made probably in the early 1970's and most likely in Parliament because of his position as MLA for the Kimberley.

"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."

## **Aboriginal Working Conditions**

Legislation brought far reaching changes to Aboriginal working conditions. Prior to 1967 the Catholic Church had assumed responsibility in response to Christian teaching on care for the underprivileged. It had trained people for the field and had slowly established a strong administrative structure at each Mission and throughout the region. After the Referendum, this structure remained but new forces within the State of Western Australia became apparent. Changes had to be made to enable Aborigines to be eligible for wages. The Federal Pastoral Award then embraced all cattle and sheep stations and some farms. The Award applied only to an employee who was a member of the Australian Workers' Union from which Aborigines had been excluded. Some Aborigines found themselves in a period of rapid transition and under stress in adjusting to an alien way of life. Many Aboriginal people were uprooted from a more or less stable life on cattle station when wages were raised.<sup>475</sup> Occupations in Western Australia became covered by appropriate industrial awards, either State or Federal and Industrial unions policed these awards on behalf of their members. As from 9 October 1967, the Award applied to a native who was less than full descent (or to a full descent if he or she had a Certificate of Citizenship) and was a member of the Australian Workers' Union. The classification involving Aborigines of full descent was covered by the Award on and after 1 December 1968, subject to the native being a member of the Australian Workers' Union.<sup>476</sup> Confusion and consequent apathy led to indifference to the future of their children and as in the past, missionary organisations accepted this as inevitable and took over the education of the children.

## **Notions of integration and cultural plurality**

By 1970 notions of integration and cultural plurality replaced the one way process of assimilation which had been the official policy for social change. Assimilation had implied a two-way interaction of minority groups with the dominant society. Cultural plurality regarded Australia as a mosaic of cultural groups forming a modern Australian society. In 1971, when citizenship was extended to Aborigines in

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<sup>475</sup> P. Willis, 'Riders in the Chariot', in Swain, T., and Rose, Deborah Bird, eds, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Mission*, Adelaide, Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Bedford Park, 1988. p.310.

<sup>476</sup> Circular from Perth to all Field Officers: 'Employment - Industrial Awards' Department of Native Welfare Circular 244/65 - 10 November 1967.

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 December 1972, a change in Federal Government brought about a change in National and State policies for Aboriginal education and welfare. The process of 'self-determination' had been set in motion. Gordon Bryant, the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, implemented the policy which took shape in 1973. It sought to transfer major decisions into the hands of the Aboriginal communities, including the decision to select their own advisers.<sup>477</sup>

In those communities which did take over from Church administration, Church personnel were powerless. The Aborigines called in white advisers such as administrators, store keepers, book keepers, accountants, health workers and state school teachers while they allowed themselves to be subjected to paternalism of all kinds. Laziness, cards and alcohol began to destroy the moral fibre of the people.<sup>478</sup> Extensive grants to encourage community development among Aboriginal communities gave them opportunities to determine their futures if they chose to do so. Money for the administration of missions began to pass through community advisers employed through the communities. At this time the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Aborigines revealed conflict between search for a Catholic identity and the persistence of regional loyalties and prejudices. Like the Government, the administration of the Church and ministry within in the Church was still heavily reliant on the services of professional white people. Because of the changing status of Missions in the 1980's, a consultancy was provided to review the Catholic church situation.<sup>479</sup> After visiting the Catholic Mission settlements of the Kimberley region, the Review Team was struck by the Aborigines' creative method of adapting to European authority, its standards and institutions, to solve problems of the entire changed environment. They were forced to question the validity of their basic conceptions. Instead of a dying culture, it was not only surviving, but thriving. The consultants therefore revised their basic assumptions, and it was with these that their report was written.

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<sup>477</sup> Neville J. Green, 'European Education at Oombulgurri, an Aboriginal Settlement in Western Australia.' M. A. Thesis, Univ. of W. A. 1986.

<sup>478</sup> Jobst to O'Donovan, 17 September 1992, Merrilinki Spirituality Centre, Turkey Creek.

<sup>479</sup> Helen Mac Farlane and John Foley, 'Kimberley Mission Review Analysis and Evaluation of Church and Government involvement in the Catholic Missions of the Kimberley', Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Diocese of Broome 1981. ADB.

The camp-ethic had its basis in the semi-nomadic lifestyle, one which gave little value to material things and great value to social contracts and relationships. A process of 'Aboriginalisation' took place in the new environment. Being dynamic, Aboriginal culture was actively and continuously able to absorb, modify and interpret European cultural influences and expressions so that they could be absorbed and encompassed as integral parts of itself. This made self-management for Aboriginal communities far more demanding of the individuals and the Councils than is expected for other Australians. This was because the means and processes being demanded for the achievement of the objectives of self management were European and foreign to Aboriginal culture. Communities became accountable to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in a performance manner - reward and punishment - to become eligible for more or less funds.<sup>480</sup>

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs introduced an implied policy of integrative development, with a stated policy of self-management, self-sufficiency, or separate development, which it delivered in a manner reflecting a policy of paternalism and protectionism, or dependent and conditional development.<sup>481</sup> The consultants recommended that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs make its policy toward individual Aboriginals and communities unambiguous in the context of self-management, and that it develop program delivery guidelines that were consistent with the policy.<sup>482</sup> The Federal Government began to demonstrate its new responsibility for Aboriginal people by establishing the Department of Aboriginal Affairs<sup>483</sup> and to fund programmes for the benefit of Aborigines through this department. In 1973, the first developmental funds were made available through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, conditional upon the legal incorporation of Aboriginals into separate all-Aboriginal organisations. Funding was directed to these bodies. Skills required to function as incorporated bodies were not available within the Aboriginal community. Rather than using the existing skills in Mission administrations the appointment of European accountants and community advisers was encouraged, and a skeleton field operation of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established to liaise with the Aborigines through the employed white

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<sup>480</sup> Mac Farlane and Foley, 'Kimberley Mission Review Analysis', pp. 2, 3, 5.

<sup>481</sup> Mac Farlane and Foley, 'Kimberley Mission Review Analysis', Recommendation re DAA policy- Section 18 (a); Section 24 (a); Section 24(c).

<sup>482</sup> Mac Farlane and Foley, 'Kimberley Mission Review Analysis', p.6.

<sup>483</sup> This department no longer exists, but has been encompassed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC).



staff. In this manner Mission administrations in the Kimberley were effectively side-stepped. This unwritten policy remained in the Perth Regional Office and field offices of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, unlike the Northern Territory where Mission administrations were seen as the basis for policy and programme delivery.<sup>484</sup> Programming guidelines 1980/81 constituted a description of the means to deliver funds to Aboriginal communities, the bulk of which were bureaucratic procedures and expectations. They also indicated the level of dependence and accountability required of Aboriginal communities.

While the Church had some freehold titled land, most was conditionally leased for the use and benefit of Aboriginal people. The nature of use and expenditure of the income derived from enterprises operated by missionaries (usually with full cooperation and employment of Aboriginal people) had been the decision of each superintendent. Expenditure included Aboriginal housing, water systems, power generators, roads, plant, clothing and food, education in addition to accommodation and other domestic facilities for the missionaries. Since its inception in Western Australia the Department of Aboriginal Affairs appeared to have regarded the Church's continued involvement with the Aboriginal communities with suspicion and concern, possibly seeing it as a competitor rather than as a colleague or partner. The Church exacerbated this mistrust by remaining aloof from politics and consequent bureaucratic changes. This attitude governments found difficult to accept. There was a problem with delineation of Mission land/Community land, Mission buildings/Community buildings. Prior to this a Mission settlement was seen to be a total entity, not divided between Mission and Community. Ownership of services and facilities were among issues identified by Community Councils which agreed to the separation of their settlements into two entities in response to Departmental definition and criteria for eligibility for funds. An extension of this conflict lay in the issue of ownership of services and infrastructure like power, water and sewerage, and of facilities such as the store, bakery and butchery.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs initiated a process involving the acquisition of land and improvements, services, facilities and infrastructure from the Church in Mission settlements. The Bishop of Broome stated that the Church only used land and improvements for the benefit of Aboriginal people. It could not sell or exchange or use land and improvements for any other purpose than those stated in the

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<sup>484</sup> Mac Farlane and Foley, 'Kimberley Mission Review Analysis', p.12.

conditions of tenure. If the Church decided to withdraw from the Missions, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' policy on compensation denied the Church any rights to a cash settlement resulting from the transfer of land or capital improvements made on behalf of the Aboriginal people. The Church was in a 'no-win' situation if it continued as an active participant in the development of Aboriginal communities it did so at its own expense, paying for services, staff and, use of infrastructure, (charged at commercial rates) as the government financed the transfer of land and improvements to Aboriginal community incorporation. If the Church was not in a financial position to support its continued involvement in the Missions, it must withdraw without financial acknowledgment or compensation for the significant contribution it would leave in the Missions.

Church administration countered that it was actually paying to be involved in the settlements through capital depreciation and transfer of capital items in lieu of rents and service charges, in addition to its 'surrender' of salaries and wages for the work of the missionaries. An attempt was made to arrest this pattern by prolonging negotiations for the transfer of capital equipment, and by arguing the case that the Church provided a service to Aboriginal people, so should not be charged commercial rates for its domestic use of community services. In monetary terms, using the Lombadina example, the Church was saving the Community (government) approximately \$600,000 per annum. The Church was being 'charged' a fee (through depreciation and transfers in lieu of fees and rentals) to save the Community this sum, yet received no reimbursement from any source to perform the administrative and other functions. There was no other example of an organisation which had to raise the revenue, deliver the service and pay the recipient a fee for the opportunity to deliver that service. The consultants recommended that the level of funding to Mission settlements specifically in the areas of the delivery of municipal services, and the payment to the mission administrations for their services should be reviewed.<sup>485</sup>

### **ATSIC Regions**

In the 1990's the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council divided the Kimberley into three areas, using new regional council boundaries, for the Aboriginal

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<sup>485</sup> Mac Farlane and Foley, 'Kimberley Mission Review Analysis', pp. 13, 16, 26, 33.

component of the population.<sup>486</sup> Catholic Church presence was concentrated in certain ATSIC localities.<sup>487</sup> The Federal Government listened to the increasingly loud voices of the Aboriginal people and their supporters demanding justice. Their cause entered a new phase as Governments attempted to address the issues. Progression of policies from assimilation and integration, to self-determination and self management meant that the Government found that it had to deal, not with passive, submissive Aborigines of the Reserve era, but with peoples who were gaining international support. The 'Mabo' decision of the High Court with a 'Native Title Act', accepted that Aborigines had prior ownership of the land before colonisation and reconciliation processes were set in process.

From 1884-1990 the multi-cultured character of Catholic society in the Kimberley had not changed greatly, but the status of different elements of the population had for leases of pastoralist holdings had passed to Aboriginal people. There were no longer missions in the Kimberley, but rather Catholic centres where the communal spirit remained but clustered around the community school, or other educational establishments. The financial limitations of the early missions have gone and the Church now has a more itinerant work force, some of whom earn salaries from the government as in the case of school teachers, (stipends in the case of religious teachers, or pocket money as in the case of lay missionaries whose salaries went into a common fund to support other lay missionaries.

Historical conditions which made the missions necessary disappeared and Aborigines placed in a position to utilise the policy of self-determination. But sometimes in the outback though no longer under special legislation, Aborigines were still sometimes in a position of subservience to the white administrators, even where Tribal Councils employed people and exercised control. On the other hand, respect for the person holding the office of service could be lacking. Tribal councils often have no positions for women, and basic changes with regard housing, supplies, and the control of alcohol in the communities sometimes had low priority because of this.

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<sup>486</sup> The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission was elected. Information is drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the electoral areas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. For administrative purposes. A.1 Broome, A.2 Outer Areas of Broome, B.3 Bandarel, Ngadu, B.4 Jayuida Bun, C.5 Kutjungka, C.6 Wunan, C.7 Yarleyel.

<sup>487</sup> *Questions and Answers on the 1993 Regional Council Elections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission*, Office of Public Affairs, ATSIC, Canberra, 1993.

## A New Role for Missionaries?

In his book, *Dispossession*, Henry Reynolds asked whether missionaries were saviours or destroyers. He acknowledged that Christianity was a major aspect of the transplanted culture, it had played a central role in the history of white-Aboriginal relations and continued to be a major influence in Aboriginal society. But he claimed that they were more intrusive and interfering than other Europeans, often seeking to disrupt ceremonies and beliefs at the heart of Aboriginal society.<sup>488</sup> This idea was supported in 1981 by a World Council of Churches team reporting on the Aboriginal situation and considering the role of Christianity in the history of black Australia. It accepted that the some groups were saved from total extinction by the missionaries but severely criticised the imposition of uniformity on a diversity of cultures, to force them to become part of and like the Anglo-Saxon church in this country.<sup>489</sup> But was 'force' an accurate description? In the 1990's some Aborigines aligned themselves with each other as believers in Jesus. Djinyihi Gondarra of the Uniting Church from Galinwinku' could write "We no longer see God as a white man's God or a God that the missionaries brought to us, but as our God who has lived with us in history."<sup>490</sup> Sometimes the role of Government bureaucrats in the dispersal of funds can be even more paternalistic than administrative roles on the former missions.

New national federal legislation that defined and protected the rights of indigenous children and their families could ensure that practices which take away the rights of individuals never occur again.<sup>491</sup> Women and their dependents constituted most of the refugees who came to missions for protection but they should never have had to stay there in a situation of trauma. It seemed to be the best option at the time. But literally thousands of Aboriginal adults lived with the trauma caused by removal policies. Many of the mothers and fathers who had their children taken away were guilt and grief stricken while their children were traumatised by the thought that they were unwanted. Identity conflicts occurred in these children, now adults, who had

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<sup>488</sup> Reynolds, *Dispossession*, p.155.

<sup>489</sup> *ibid.*, cited by Reynolds, p. 180 from 'Justice for Aboriginal Australians', Australian Council of Churches, Sydney, 1981, pp. 8-10.

<sup>490</sup> *ibid.*, cited by Reynolds, p. 181 from Djinyihi Gondarra, 'Aboriginal and Christian - Developing an Indigenous Theology', *National Outlook*, February 1984, pp. 11-12.

<sup>491</sup> The Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNACK), has called for national public enquires into past government policies of removing Aboriginal and Islander children from their families.

lived their lives as non Aboriginal people.<sup>492</sup> The landmark of the referendum of 1967 means many things to many people and in the area of reconciliation it should be remembered that

A study of the referendum and its commemoration can serve the purpose of allowing us to reflect on the relations between Aboriginal and white Australians at end of one epoch - and the beginning of another.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> Brian Butler, Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Newsletter, 17 July 1995. p.3.

<sup>493</sup> Attwood and Markus, *The 1967 Referendum, or when Aborigines didn't Get the Vote*, p. xi



## Chapter 10

### Establishment of Changed Church Initiatives 1946-1990

#### The Pallottine Family

During the period 1946 to 1990 there were changes in Catholic Church administration and policy. This was seen first of all in the changes in Pallottine administration. The main issue facing the Pallottines for the future became promoting collaboration between all members of the Church in the work of the Church, which included encounter with Aborigines. The Union of the Catholic Apostolate, known by its Latin initials UAC, embraced priests, brothers and laity in a wider communion of peoples in what became called “the Pallottine family”.<sup>494</sup> At this time the Pallottine missionaries chose to follow more closely their founder’s charism which involved many other ministries besides Aboriginal missions. They set up a new Region in Australia in 1946 which left Bishop Raible with his episcopal power in the Kimberley but removed him as Regional Superior of the Pallottine Order throughout Australia. Bishop Raible’s resignation as Episcopal authority in the diocese was accepted by Rome in 1959

#### Lay Missionary Movement

Another major change was the introduction of lay missionary volunteers to replace the native sisters. When Bishop Raible asked Alice Evans to come to Balgo, he had already dissolved the Native Sisters’ institution, burying his dearest hopes with it. Later when she became matron at the Broome Hospital, she was difficult to replace at La Grange Mission. Bishop Raible was aware that a new lay helper would need to be warned of the loneliness of the place, where the girl would have no congenial company and no entertainment except wireless. Also only rarely an opportunity to go

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<sup>494</sup> M. Brolly, *Kairos*, 30 November - 7 December 1997, wrote how Fr Seamus, General of the Order reminded the congregation of St Vincent’s and all Christians that they were to be apostles of the Good News 5 October 1997. Fr Seamus told assembly members and 350 people associated with the Pallottines from around WA at Rossmoyne, “I really have a conviction that our future depends on this, our future as an institute and how we react to what we call the Pallottine family, the UAC, and the whole concept of collaboration,”

to town. For any girl who had had no experience of the life of a religious it would not be easy to make life at La Grange bearable. Elizabeth Dann, one of the former Native Sisters, was prepared to come. She was paid £3 to look after the girls, do the necessary sewing and conduct the kitchen. She was also capable of teaching elementary things.<sup>495</sup> After Elizabeth, lay missionaries volunteered. There was little effort made to recruit more Aboriginal missionaries as in the past.

A new appointment was made for the Kimberley Vicariate, Bishop J. Jobst, who had been in charge of the boys at Beagle Bay Mission in the early 1950's and had later worked in Springwood, Sydney as Spiritual Director in the Pallottine seminary. Immediately after his consecration in Sydney, Bishop Jobst *sac*, Fr Silvester *sac*, and Fr Muenz *sac* met at the Pallottine centre in Kew, Victoria, to discuss the inauguration of a new type of Lay Missionary involvement in which they would call on skilled help from the Pallottines and the laity across Australia to augment the help already being given by Religious and Aborigines in the work of the missions. Volunteers for the new lay missionary movement were told that a year or two given to missionary work would have a profound effect on their personal faith, and three women came with the bishop in April 1959, Kathie Curtain,<sup>496</sup> Joy Trantor, and Carmel Hodgkinson.

At La Grange mission, four young women were already working among the elderly Aborigines, caring for them, and helping them to know the faith. One of them, Carmel Hodgkinson, who completed 18 months' service at La Grange Mission went to Riverton, to help run the Aboriginal hostel. She 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." Another group of Lay Missionaries welcomed in Perth, 2 May 1962 by Mons. McKeon and Fr John Luemmen, had a completed a three month spiritual formation course at the Pallottine Centre in Melbourne, but of these, only one, Mary Blackshaw, went to the Kimberley.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Raible to Huegel, 14 May 1956. ADB.

<sup>496</sup> Kathie was a member of the newly formed Marian Secular Institute in Kew, and Barbara Shea, the president, came up to the Kimberley mission to help organise the group. Others followed. In the 1990's a nurse belonging to this secular institute was working at Balgo mission.

<sup>497</sup> Extracts from Newspaper Cuttings, ADB



Lay missionaries also staffed other ventures: 1. St Joseph's Hostel in Derby; 2. The new Balgo Mission, 3. A new nursery and kindergarten for destitute children in Broome, 4. Lombadina and Kulumburu missions. In 1960, a married couple from West Australia, Mr and Mrs Rykens, had gone to manage St Joseph's Hostel in Derby. The bishop saw a need existed in Derby and Broome for at least another three people (preferably trained as teachers, nurses, or social workers). Although a skilled trade was desirable, applicants of any age from 18 years onwards could be accepted. Bishop Jobst later 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."

But there continued to be a problem with insufficient 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." In later years, of thirty Lay Missionaries who were working throughout the Diocese, five were at Balgo Mission.<sup>498</sup> It had been customary for babies born in the leprosarium at Derby to be removed from their mothers within six days to prevent them getting leprosy. The orphanage in Broome closed in 1961 due to lack of religious staff.<sup>499</sup> On its site, a new Nursery and Kindergarten for destitute babies and children was opened by lay missionaries.<sup>500</sup> In 1969, thirty-five Lay Missionaries met as a group in Broome for the first time and formed an association to coordinate 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.<sup>501</sup> In 1970, it was decided that Mrs Barker make her private residence in New South Wales available for

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<sup>498</sup> Mrs Kersh helped the Sisters to maintain the clothing for the 330 residents. Mr Kersh was in charge of the newly commenced beef cattle and horse breeding industries which provided additional employment and training. The other three were Mr Carrol, Mr Frank McNamara, and Mr Tesselir. ADB.

<sup>499</sup> Four of Stan Costello's staff came from Perth to remodel and rebuild the four old buildings. ADB.

<sup>500</sup> Using converted premises attached to the 'Maria Goretti Home for children', the matron, Mrs C. Barker, a double-certificated nurse, established the new venture. Christina Harding, Joan Gabbedy, Anne Woods, Nita Vinci, Carol Jones, Deborah Jones, Rose Denehey, Carol Mahy, Kerry Guilfoyle and Jeannine Bamford and others staffed the facility. Some were trained mothercraft nurses.

<sup>501</sup> Officers elected at the meeting were Mrs C. Barker, Miss M. Tuohey, Miss H. Prentiss and Mr W. Keen. Mrs Barker had said that she was so sad at the plight of the people, so ashamed to think so little had been done for them that her conscience would not let her walk away from them. ADB.

orientation courses for work on the Kimberley Mission. With years of lay missionary experience behind her, training of others was the new task. Future presentation of Mission Crosses to Kimberley Missionaries would take place at 'Santo Spirito', Mittagong. In 1975 the 7th Annual Meeting of the Lay Missionary Association 40 lay missionaries from different parts of the diocese of Broome were represented. Lay missionaries staffed the stores at Lombadina and Kalumburu for many years.

A commitment as a lay missionary was made was for two years, but for some, it became a permanent way of life. Some joined religious orders to carry on with their apostolate. Some married and continued to live in the Kimberley. A significant number of those involved as lay missionaries were married couples.<sup>502</sup> Lay Missionaries worked with the girls in Nulungu College in Broome in cooperation with Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions.

### **More Liberal Approach to Mission Policy**

Bishop Jobst's goal for the Church was expressed in his motto 'ut omnes unum sint', that 'all may be one'. He assumed that the people should now feel responsible for the proclamation of the gospel and the growth of the Church in the Region. This would mean training the people to run and control their own affairs. The official policy laid down 25 August 1959 and at subsequent clergy meetings such as 9 February 1960 involved establishing a training school for catechists and apostolic ministries to be established in Beagle Bay. Missions were to become independent parish communities with responsibilities for administration, government, health, education, pastoral care and industries being gradually transferred to the communities. But the ideas proposed by the new bishop were not fully embraced or implemented by the priests, or by the Aboriginal communities.

An anthropologist, Helmut Petri, a Professor from the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, Cologne university, Germany, and his wife had carried out anthropological field work at La Grange Mission in 1963. They reviewed the effects of this more liberal approach to mission policy. In Petri's opinion, the new approach had created an atmosphere of mutual understanding between the Church and the Aborigines. He assessed the new mission policy followed by the Bishop and Fr K. McKelson *sac*, as enabling an "inner" and deep encounter between the mentality and culture of missionaries and Aborigines.

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<sup>502</sup> See Appendix for list of Lay Missionaries from 1970.

During the last two or three years several 'jona' (circumcision ceremonies) have been held which the mission supported, for instance providing food supplies. Contrary to previous mission policy, boys are now circumcised and put through all stages of tribal initiation ceremonies. This removed the stigma of 'school boys' or 'mission boys', who could not acquire full status in tribal society being put in the same category as women and non-initiated adolescents. Last but not least, LaGrange being regarded as a 'big place' the Aborigines feel that the missionaries understand and respect their ancient traditions and customs and treat them as human beings unlike their employer bosses.<sup>503</sup>

### **Education**

Parents worried that they had to send their children south for education. Representatives for the Christian Brothers, Bro Loftus and Bro Lavander, came for a meeting in 1969 and planned that a College could be expanded to include facilities for the education of girls. The College was established in 1971, ostensibly for the secondary education of young Aboriginal men. The name 'Nulungu' incorporated the idea of gaining new knowledge and recreation while relaxing before setting out as a group on a journey. It also meant 'traditional groups gathering in the shade of the watering hole'. The students came from different backgrounds, but their shared experiences, fishing, hunting and camping adventures and their living communally soon established a common base. Its curriculum encouraged the expression of cultural characteristics and students from a non-literary culture were respected.<sup>504</sup>

### **Balgo Mission**

In 1959, when Bishop Jobst had met the new owner of Billiluna Station, Ms Margaret Doman, told him that the Balgo Mission was seven miles from the Eastern Boundary of the Station, and five miles from the Southern Boundary, on her land. He asked for an excision of 17,000 acres from the property of two million acres, but she replied, "Not an acre!" A new Balgo Mission was therefore sited in 1964, and officially opened, 15 May 1965. Two reasons given for moving the mission from its original

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<sup>503</sup> Helmut Petri, 'Native Law and Mission Policy in the Diocese of Broome', Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, Cologne University, 1964. ADB

<sup>504</sup> The first Principal was Bro T.S.Roberts and he was assisted by Brothers N. J. Billich, and P. R. Hardiman.

site were that the old mission had been isolated for four to five months of the year by an impassible creek and it was dependent on a Billiluna beef supply and resulting social relationships made with Billiluna stockboys were disruptive. When the mission moved to higher ground closer to Halls Creek nothing was done about shifting the Aborigines, but they drifted in.<sup>505</sup> The mission in the Balgo Hills area 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 where their children could receive education and training.<sup>506</sup>

### **Catholic Church presence in East Kimberley**

East Kimberley Aborigines accepted Catholic Church presence which continued to deepen. In 1959 the first Catholic church foundation at Wyndham had been made by Bishop J. Jobst. Fr Leo Hornung, *sac* became the first resident priest, then Fr J. Kearney *sac* took up residence June 1960 - April 1961. During this time a new multi-purpose church building erected at Wyndham East was named 'Queen of the Apostles'. Its site was on the eastern side of the Great Northern Highway, within view of the hills. By 1962, Wyndham was 80% Catholic and the Church could hardly hold the congregation. A State School had provided education in the early sixties. The Josephite Sisters came in 1963 when the new social changes were in process and in 1964, St Joseph's School commenced.

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<sup>505</sup> Fr Mc Guire, the administrator, intended to make the mission self-supporting by breeding horses and cattle. Several bores were sunk, and one yielded plenty of water.

<sup>506</sup> In a 'Survey of the Balgo Hills Area' in March 1960, two anthropologists, Mr and Mrs Berndt assessed the value of the mission. ADB. By August 1960, a Catholic State School teacher, Mr G. Brown, 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 Mc Guire *sac* continued to direct the work of the Balgo mission. Fr P. Willis *sac* cared for the boys.

## **East Kimberley - Wyndham**

Cohesion of the Forest River Mission in East Kimberley, 'Oombulgurri', <sup>507</sup> had been weakened by the Government practice of transferring unrelated Aborigines of part descent and full descent from other parts of the Kimberley to the mission. These were generally Aborigines who were considered socially disruptive by local white settlers. The mission had continued until 1966 when it was recommended that the church close it and transfer the people to Wyndham and Kununurra in 1968. It was a mixed group of people who found themselves suddenly transferred from the security and orderliness of Forrest River Mission to the barren unregulated environment of Wyndham Reserve 27020.<sup>508</sup> When they 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. 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.

### **Kununurra**

Huge rocks were the outstanding geographical feature of Kununurra, close to the river and surrounded by hilly mountains. With the completion of the Ord River Irrigation Scheme Kununurra began to expand as it became the Government town for administration. The Church of St Vincent Pallotti was founded in 1962 at Kununurra.

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<sup>507</sup> In 1886 the first white settlers landed on the shores of the Cambridge Gulf with many horses and 2000 sheep. The company decided to abandon its holding after two years and the Church of England was offered it in 1896 for a mission. The Church of England also abandoned it a few months after their arrival. In 1913, another attempt was made to establish the mission. The Rev. E. B. Gribble, who had been a missionary in Queensland helping to establish the Mitchell River and Yarrabah Missions took charge. When he left in 1928 there were 24 buildings, fifty seven pupils in the school and a permanent population of one hundred and seventy.

<sup>508</sup> Stan Davey, 'Oombulgurri Reclaimed', Unpublished manuscript. Stan and his wife, Jan were transferred to Fitzroy Crossing at the end of 1975. In 1978 the Uniting Church Aboriginal Advisory Development Services (AADS) with a policy of "Free to Decide" took over after the 'El Program' collapsed. In 1985 AADS withdrew and the community felt it could stand on its own feet. Recently 8 outstations were established. In 1983 its population was said to be between 300 and 450 comprising approximately 250 residents at the settlement. The women had formed their own organisation and had established a resource centre. pp. 1-3, of Addendum: p. 101. Stan was secretary to the Oombulgurri Association, D.O., D.C.W., and was assigned to the Oombulgurri project in 1993.

In East Kimberley pastoral stations had always been important for Catholic Presence. As resident priest, Fr Lorenz kept contact. Sr Maureen and Sr Angela, Sisters of St Joseph, travelled with him to the Catholics from Ivanhoe Station. Three weeks out of the month Fr Lorenz did station trips, to Auverne, Nicholson, Gordon Downs and Jubilee Creek near Fitzroy Crossing. The people did his garden and minded the house when he was away. Where the pastoralists were active Catholics, a 'station Mass' was celebrated, attended by virtually the entire station population. Fr Lorenz remembered that at his first Sunday Mass, the congregation was all European, but after three years, there were two Masses filled with European and Aboriginal people. Although the Catholic School was a Parish School, gradually the majority of white children went to the State school and Catechist volunteers taught religion there.

Several significant social changes took place over the years. First was the forming of the Mirama Council in 1971 under the joint leadership of Yilngali-Miriwung elders and Fr P. Willis *sac.* who 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.

With the down turn 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. With support from the Kununurra Community and an honorary builder, a new Catholic Church was completed and blessed by Bishop J. Jobst in 1971.

Fr Willis was concerned about patronage and initiated camp fire discussions to inhibit paternalistic relationships developing between Aborigines and the Catholic Church in Kununurra. 'Patronage' as a concept is a type of permanent and reciprocal exchange relationship between two parties. By accepting gifts, the recipient was placed in a permanent state of indebtedness. 'Paternalism' was the name used for this state of affairs.<sup>509</sup> The bestower of the favours might express a benevolent

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<sup>509</sup> Peter Willis, 'Patrons and Riders Conflicting Roles and Hidden Objectives in an Aboriginal Development programme at Kununurra', M. A. Thesis in Anthropology, A. N. U., 1980. See also the published summary in Swain and Rose, *Aboriginal Australians and Christians Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies*.

possessiveness, for example using terms such as, “Our Aborigines!” The people 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 one transcendent God roused no problems and there were no polygamous marriages. Fr Willis judged that the Aboriginal 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.

The Sisters of St Joseph felt obliged to offer some form of assistance to neglected Aboriginal children in the form of child care and set up St Martin’s Hostel, later to be part of ‘Moongoong Darwing’ settlement. by putting old caravans in the Kununurra schoolyard. Sr Angela Morrison *rsj.* lived there in charge. The hostel side of St Martins provided an impetus for Aborigines to move. Anxious to safeguard the interests of the Aboriginal community, Fr Willis encouraged the camp-fire discussions as a central function of St Martins establishment.<sup>510</sup> The Sisters and Fr Willis were concerned that the authority and influence of the parents and relations of the children be safeguarded and that the children did not become permanently disabled through delinquency and consequent admission to some remote corrective institution.

In the light of changed thinking about paternalism, it was seen as a danger that St Martin’s, as the caravans for accommodation had come to be called, would become yet another place where white people looked after Aboriginal children. To avoid this, attempts were made to initiate Aboriginal involvement in management leading to the formation of St Martin’s Aboriginal Council and increased access to St Martin’s by Aborigines through round table discussions and a shared pre-occupation in issues concerning the Aboriginal community. This led directly to an Aboriginal elder, Bulla Billinking, becoming involved in talks and excursions with the Aboriginal children. He took them to tribal sites when he taught Miriwung and spoke of the old legends and place names. In 1973, numbers dropped and it became difficult to judge the value of St Martin’s in the eyes of the Aboriginal community.

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<sup>510</sup> Peter Willis, ‘St Martins Aboriginal Centre’ Unpublished Document. ADB.

Children were withdrawn from Beagle Bay School because of an undercurrent of feeling against education of people from East Kimberley and Northern Territory at Beagle Bay. They were spending long periods away from their families.<sup>511</sup> By the end of 1973 the Ngaringman people at Newry Station had shown themselves reluctant to continue sending their children to school at Beagle Bay. At the beginning of 1974 eighteen children were enrolled at St Martins. The Ngaringman people at Auvergne Station were anxious to use the same services in 1975.

The 'Mabel Downs People' moved in at 'Nine Mile' when the children came back from Beagle Bay in 1973-1974 so that the children could go to school in Kununurra. The idea came to establish a new Aboriginal community settlement. Grants were applied for in 1974. By 1975 the settlement was established. The land granted was 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. This was not a Church project. It was Church personnel working with an Aboriginal group to enable them to take responsibility for their own children. The movement was in response to the potential of the 'self determination policy'. The Bishop was interested in the movement towards 'Moongoong Darwing', but no Church money went into it. Aboriginal personnel were drawn from Mirima Village and some of the fringe camps. People of Miriwung, Jaminjung and Kajirrawung background were included. A few were members of the Mirima Council. When the Aboriginal Community got their land, St Martin's became known as 'Moongoong Darwing'. 'Moongoong Darwing' became a well established and dynamic community, run predominantly by the Aborigines themselves. It had a European book keeper and occasionally a European adviser. Some of the middle-aged men were employed by the community as drivers and work organisers for the elders who retained considerable power.

As other adults gradually moved on to the land, 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 when Lizzie Ward 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. 'Bethel Incorporated', a mission oriented group also, which was headed by a

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<sup>511</sup> Oral communication with Fr Francis Huegel at Beagle Bay Mission in the 1980s.



husband and wife team became a viable Aboriginal community which grew independently at the same time. After a period of almost seven years of effort, one elder and several family clusters supporting him succeeded in acquiring a tract of land which they called 'Yardungarll' or 'Dingo Springs' This Miriwung group had comprised the core of the former Mirima Council and acquired the land lease-hold vested in the Aboriginal Lands Trust, Perth for 18 years. But the setting up of this modest outstation north of Lake Argyle as a leasehold was not secure for the land could be alienated at virtually any time.

### **Halls Creek**

Halls Creek was a little township set in cattle country close to a river. Fr Nicholas Dehe *sac*, had been sent to Halls Creek 3 June 1960, to make the 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. Fr Nicholas was present in 1961 for the first Baptism. He came between 1959-1965 and left at the beginning of 1966, during which time there were 29 Baptisms altogether. Bishop Jobst celebrated two and Fr Anthony Peile *sac*, celebrated thirty from April 1966 - 1973. It had been difficult to buy a block of land in Halls Creek for Church buildings. The bishop mentioned his problem to Charles Lewis McBeath, the Road Board Secretary and 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 which was called 'St Mary's. The Government School was established in 1962. Employment was provided mainly in part-time community jobs and seasonal station work. The main areas of employment were the Shire, the Main Road and the Beef Industry (cattle stations). For many years, political power in the town was held by a white shire council. There is now an Aboriginal Advisory Council. Over 350 children attended the State School which had a white curriculum. When the Cannossian Sisters left Halls Creek, the Sisters of St Joseph continued the work of education in the Schools.

According to Fr Kriener the important events in the Church history of Halls Creek were the 'outstation movement', the Wyndham Meeting, the Kununurra

Meeting and the Rockhole Meeting.<sup>512</sup> After the pilgrimage experience in Wyndham, in which the Kalumburu people took part, they prepared hymns in Aboriginal language. The Turkey Creek people catechised their own people and asked Father to visit. 'Ringer's Soak' prepared for a group Baptism.

Only ten per cent of Halls Creek Catholics practised their faith, but in Red Hill, three km away the Church was always full on Sundays. Fr W. Kriener, the Parish Priest said, "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." When Sr Veronica rsj. came to Turkey Creek in 1975, there were a lot of old men there. Fr Kriener *sac* prepared the people for reception into the Church. He said, "If the creek is up when I come next, I'll stay on the Halls Creek side, and you swim over." In 1976, in September, Fr Kriener had started adult instructions in Turkey Creek where the only white person was a postman. Father stayed in Mabel Downs, and began 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 and established a Mass Centre. 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 a certain number, they were not confirmed. By 1984, there were records of 352 baptisms recorded in the Halls Creek baptismal register.

The people in Turkey Creek wanted Sisters for their school, but the Bishop said if they had the sisters it would hav to be a Catholic school. The community advisers, Tom Stevens and Michael Dillon were anti-Catholic School. In December 1978 the Warrmarn Aboriginal community of Turkey Creek formally asked the

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<sup>512</sup> Interview between Brigida Nailon and Fr W. Kriener at Halls Creek in 1984. "I came to Halls Creek April 1973. There was a big white wedding. It was that of Sean Murphy, 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 Nicholas Dehe. Some of them spoke Jaru and came from Balgo. In three Aboriginal Communities Turkey Creek, Red Hill and Ringers Soak, there was readiness for Baptism, and development of Aboriginal Rites in each place with a Spirit Dance and an Offertory Dance with a new development of Jumbas or Songs in Jaru, and so on. In 1980 I baptised in Sturt Creek (3 babies), Turkey Creek(2), Halls Creek (4), Turkey Creek (3). In December, I baptised in Turkey Creek (8 adults)."

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 West Australian Aboriginal Lands Trust said that the State Lands Department recommended that a temporary lease be arranged to protect the building and facilities provided by and maintained by the Church. The lease was chosen from a former pastoral lease. The Church went ahead in good faith. The Catholic School, called the 'Ngalanganpum School', was established in 1979.. There were then no long term employed but 19 people worked around the school as teachers and gardeners. There were 10 people working on building houses from May to October. In 1979 the Sisters of St Joseph at Turkey Creek began to teach in a 'bough shed' that is a shed made of tree trunks with a spinifex roof. The Church gave \$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. Both he and the Community wanted the school to go ahead.<sup>513</sup>

The Catholic Community School was founded on 27 May 1979, Sr Clare Ahern, *rsj*, who had been three years in Kununurra, came to Turkey Creek until the end of April 1982. Sr Theresa Morrellini<sup>514</sup> was there and Sr Kathleen came in 1981. Sr Veronica was the new Principal in 1982. Some years previously, in 1980 Sr Clare Ahern and Sr Theresa Morrellini had organised a group to go to the Daly River Centre with Fr W. Kriener. From this encounter, a local man, Hector, emerged as a Church leader for his people and Sr Clare became convinced of the need for a place where faith development on an adult level could be offered to the Aboriginal people. In the east Kimberley, at Turkey Creek, the Mirrilingki Spirituality Centre was established. A small property (three acres) had come up for sale near the Turkey Creek roadhouse. Since Warrmarn Community decided not to buy it the Sisters had a quick consultation with Bishop Jobst who provided the \$240,000. It had a four-year old homestead, a mobile home (two bedrooms, kitchen, living room), and a large machinery shed. Through the good-will of the Argyle Mine manager, the Sisters

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<sup>513</sup> The Bishop wanted a minimum of land to allow the Church to continue its mission work. The media gave the impression that Aborigines wanted the Church to withdraw. The Aborigines assured the Bishop they wanted the missionaries to stay.

<sup>514</sup> In Moora WA 1968-1971, 1973 in Wyndham, 1974-1975 in Kununurra, 1976-1978 in Moora and then to Turkey Creek.

bought enough ATCO demountables to set up accommodation for some 24 persons. The priority request of Bishop Jobst was to train Aborigines for leadership and community building positions.

### **Jurisdiction of Catholic Missions**

Catholic Mission territories are under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Nations. 'Vicariates Apostolic' are headed by Vicars Apostolic who are Bishops. In 1966 the status of the Vicariate changed to that of a Diocese signifying different lines of authority. The Church in the Kimberley had come of age. In 1970 the 'ius commissionis' was changed to the 'ius mandati' which meant that any religious society hitherto committed to staffing missions entrusted to them under the old law must come to new arrangements with the bishop. The Bishops' Conference approached the Pallottines in the Broome Diocese and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in the Darwin diocese re accepting responsibility for the missions. Though the Pallottines remained working in the diocese they declined the 'ius mandati', but in Darwin it was accepted by the other order.

### **Kalumburu Mission**

During 1981, the Holy See placed Kalumburu Mission within the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Broome. Formerly it 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.<sup>515</sup> Kalumburu's beautiful fruit orchard and garden is its most striking feature. Kalumburu had developed in isolation from the Vicariate and from the Diocese until 1981 when Carson River Station hit the headlines, and the Aborigines from the mission disputed Church leadership. This is now a large multilingual community on Aboriginal Reserve land in place of the Benedictine Mission with the languages of Kwini, Kulari and Wunambal. The Government State School replaced the Catholic School established in 1931. When Fr Noseda *osb* left the Kalumburu Mission in 1982, a

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<sup>515</sup> After more than 40 years of residence there, Fr Sanz *osb* decided to return to the Benedictine monastery at New Norcia WA. His Benedictine successors were Fr Basil Nosedo, Fr Matthew Kelly and Dom Joseph Argus. In June 1981, a group of Aborigines were 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.

seventy-four years' relationship with New Norcia was severed. Fr C. Saunders, a diocesan priest, arrived at the mission to minister to the Kalumburu Aborigines. Four Benedictine Missionary Sisters stayed. In 1984, 200 people were living there, 180 of whom were Aboriginal.<sup>516</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter there has been a description of the expansion of Catholic Church Presence into the East Kimberley and of the contribution made by Lay Missionary work<sup>517</sup> in the new Bishop's systematic consolidation of contact with Aborigines. The contribution made by Lay Missionary work helped consolidate contact with Aborigines in the East Kimberley. Lay people widened their areas of ministry and many women volunteered from within the communion of the Church as emancipation of women became more acceptable. The Church concentrated on efforts to train and educate the young people to take their future into their own hands, and to train lay ministers.<sup>518</sup> In the west Kimberley, in Broome,<sup>519</sup> a secondary school, and a spirituality centre was established, the Kalam-Warjil Layibaboor.<sup>520</sup> In the east Kimberley, in Turkey Creek, a spirituality centre 'Merrilinki' was established. Two Jesuits in Balgo Hills began further training programs. Catholic Church presence at Wyndham, Kununurra, Halls Creek and regions nearby enabled basic indigenous

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<sup>516</sup> Church Personnel consisted of a priest, some Sisters, some Lay Missionaries and a Brother. Employment was related to local economy, garden, garbage clearance, occasional building, maintenance, store, office, baking, road making and the outstation, cattle, fencing, and mustering. There were forty to fifty positions for long term employment.

<sup>517</sup> See Appendices for list of dates and description of buildings erected during this period.

<sup>518</sup> By 1984, there were records of 352 baptisms recorded in the Halls Creek baptismal register.

<sup>519</sup> In 1989, some of the Catholic Church personnel in Broome were Bishop J. Jobst, Fr C. Saunders, PP., Christian Brothers, Sisters, and Lay Missionaries. Loreto Sisters were in charge of the Primary School, and Our Lady of Mission Sisters were at Nulungu College, with lay missionaries and the Christian Brothers. Fr McMahan *sac*, Sr Stella Bryant *sjg* and lay people occupied the Spirituality Centre in the old convent. The Faithful Companions of Jesus Sisters were working with Sr Pat Rhatigan at the new Catholic Education Office.

<sup>520</sup> During 1984, Fr M. McMahan *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 in the Broome parish with the idea of working towards basic Christian communities. The name means, 'Come and See - good place'.

kinship groups to provide local leadership because of a greater acceptance of Aboriginal languages, symbols and dances in the liturgy. For the Aborigines, there was an increase of educational opportunities at local Catholic community schools and a Catholic Education Office established in the region assisted in communication between the new centres.

As time passed relationships, often paternalistic but amicable, deepened. For some Aborigines, their appropriation of Catholicism was a way of expressing their own agency and power. Different missiologies motivated missionaries. The Church in the early part of the century was seen as a sanctuary in which the world and worldliness had no place. In the missiology of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5) the Church was seen as a sign of hope to the world. This council had a revitalising effect on Missionary attitudes and brought in fresh recruits from other religious orders. Since these tended not to stay for long periods a constant change of personnel with new ideas stimulated new ministries. Some Religious took the option of moving out of church controlled enterprises to begin working with marginalised peoples and offered their expertise and services in a different manner, without immediate support from their orders but reliant on the Government. In Kalumburu a dual system of services were made available to the people where both Church and Community provided a shop and schooling.

Up to now, few anthropologists have troubled to analyse Christianity as it has evolved in Australia.<sup>521</sup> In academic circles there has been much talk of missionization as an external factor which played havoc with traditional society. But this approach does not regard Christianity as a living factor inside the social structure, as being in many ways an entirely new phenomena where there is a reinterpretation of traditional religious ideas and structures by people who have chosen to make use of them as their own.<sup>522</sup> A policy of self determination enabled Aborigines to make their

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<sup>521</sup> H. C. Coombs, H. McCann, H. Ross, and N. M. Williams, Eds) *Aborigines and Development in the East Kimberley, Land of Promises*, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, Canberra, ANU, and A.I.A.S., 1989. There were twenty-five Project Working Papers, 1985-1988 listed in Appendix B of the book, and at least nine others were compiled afterwards. None of these attempted to assess the impact of encounter with missionaries.

<sup>522</sup> In the opening paragraph of an article on Solomon Island Christianity, Nicholas Peterson (1966;214) quoted J. Guiart on inculturation. This was used by Robert Bos, in 'Christian Ritual and the Yolngu Domain', A paper prepared for a Symposium on Aboriginal Religious movements organised by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 5 and 6 June 1981. *Nungalinya Occasional Bulletins*. Nungalinya College,

own decisions. The role of the Church changed. Missionaries became redundant to administration and were forced to rethink their roles.<sup>523</sup> A restatement of the Jesus event in the lives of indigenous peoples helped contextualise the faith.<sup>524</sup> When ideas were expressed as vital to life, the gospel and the culture met, clashed and tested each other mutually, like gold and fire in the crucible. This ‘encounter-confrontation-test’ brought about a cultural ‘new creation’ in which the gospel is appropriated.<sup>525</sup> Such a theory was very different to that of Kay Evans, who regarded “‘Missionary activity’ as another agent<sup>526</sup> which the dominant European culture employed to destroy traditional forms of Aboriginal life.<sup>527</sup>

So where does an individual missionary stand in relation to such contradictions? Henry Reynolds saw missionaries as philanthropic individuals, often lonely figures, attracting derision as they stood out against colonial opinion, and concluded that humanitarian opposition to the destruction of Aboriginal society has yet to receive the attention that it deserves.<sup>528</sup> So historians may become aware of other perspectives about missionaries. By their research they have opened up another dimension of reality. If it could be argued that “Colonisation was both destructive and creative of peoples” then it could also be argued that “complex human relations and

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Casuarina. 1981. In 1989, the project called *East Kimberley Impact Assessment Project*, a joint project of the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, ANU, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, the Anthropology Department of the University of Western Australia and the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia did not succeed in producing a study on Christianity as an aspect for research.

<sup>523</sup> Metena M’nteba, ‘Inculturation in the ‘Third Church’: God’s Pentecost or Cultural Revenge?’ in G. Alberigo and A. Ngindu Mushete, (eds.), ‘Towards the African Synod’, *Concilium*, SCM Press, London, (1972-1991), p.135.

<sup>524</sup> Metena M’nteba, ‘Inculturation in the ‘Third Church’ p.135.

<sup>525</sup> Metena M’nteba, ‘Inculturation in the ‘Third Church’ p. 142.

<sup>526</sup> See also M. J. Alroe, ‘A Pygmalion Complex Among Missionaries: The Catholic Case in the Kimberley’, in T Swain, and Deborah Bird Rose, (eds), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies*, pp. 20-35. M. Alroe looked on missionary activity as specifically aimed at the eradication of Aboriginal Culture, and control of the Community. Speaking of change, he said, “Whatever the outcome, whether the Aborigines were assimilated by the system into white society or whether they insisted on self-management in a more traditional social system - the missionaries lose control.” p. 41.

<sup>527</sup> Kay Evans, ‘Marie Yamba, Boomfield and Hope Vale: the Lutheran Missions to the North Queensland Aborigines, 1886-1905’, *Queensland Heritage*, vol. 2, no. 6, (May 1972) p.33.

<sup>528</sup> Henry Reynolds, *Frontier*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1987. p.83.

historical forces re-made indigenous people into the Aborigines.”<sup>529</sup> Conceding that missionaries were men and women whom historians belittled and condemned more than they attempted to understand, Bain Attwood noted the lack of scholars who examined patterns of acculturation and accommodation between Aborigines and Europeans. He did not extend his definition of missionaries much beyond the prevailing model,<sup>530</sup> but explored the difficulty of surveying general historical forces to give a personal slant to a larger impersonal whole.<sup>531</sup> In some cases, bonds of loyalty and affection developed and kinship reciprocity uncovered a dual consciousness.

The impulse to mission does not spring from the intellect within a rationalised world. Kenelm Burridge argued that it was only by dedication and love, and by ignoring the given in reasonable possibility, that "mission" could be effected. He probed the motivation of the missionary: “Pioneers in the potentials of human being, move today as they have moved in the past into those realms of endeavour that experience born of the purely socio-cultural tells them are futile, dangerous, impolitic, or even impossible. That is why they are missionaries.”<sup>532</sup> Their lives of sacrifice bear fruit both in projects of social justice, and in the realm of meaning brought about by Christian belief. That they were Christians who pioneered all or most of the social services now in secular hands is not wholly irrelevant. Christian missionaries have been and to some extent remain, founders of development programmes. Yet although Christians in whatever sect or denomination have to suffer passing or more persistent scepticism which develops into secularisation or even secularism, Christianity itself has a resilience and indeed, an attraction which, if not wholly immune to socio-cultural analysis, ultimately escapes secular rationalisation.<sup>533</sup>

Education, health services and pastoral care were means by which both Government and Church could be supportive of self management and self reliance in a community. Efforts had been made to train and educate young people to take their

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<sup>529</sup> R. Broome in B. Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1989 (Cover).

<sup>530</sup> Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, p. x.

<sup>531</sup> Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, p.138.

<sup>532</sup> K. Burridge, *In the Way: A Study of Christian Missionary Endeavours*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 1991. p.232

<sup>533</sup> K. Burridge ‘Aborigines and Christianity An Overview’, in T. Swain and Deborah Bird Rose *Aboriginal Australians and Christians*, The Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Bedford Park, 1988. p.24.



future into their own hands.<sup>534</sup> By 1990 there were no missions in the Kimberley, but Aboriginal Communities where Catholic Church presence was maintained where the Aborigines requested. New parishes were established in Wyndham, Kununurra and Halls Creek, East Kimberley.

Reynolds was influenced by Locke's argument that the inhabitants of any Country, who are descended, and derive a title to their Estates from those who are subdued, and had a Government forced upon them against their free consents, retain a Right to the Possessions of their Ancestors.<sup>535</sup> He saw the process of reconciliation as a manifestly worthy objective but it was not completely clear who was to be reconciled to what or to whom. In *Aboriginal Sovereignty* he suggested that what might be expected was an acceptance of the existence and validity of indigenous nationalism and a commitment to seek ways in which it could be accommodated beneath the overarching roof of the Australian state.<sup>536</sup> Whether Australians would ever come to accept, as Canadian authorities had done, that indigenous people had an inherent right to self-government stemming from their prior occupation of the continent and whether current developments were aspects of the global process of decolonisation working its way out, seem unanswerable in the present climate.

When Kulumburu did not qualify for Aboriginal housing grants which were only given within a declared town area Bishop Jobst proposed that three of the Missions, Beagle Bay, Lombadina, and La Grange, excise the property on which Aboriginal homes were built and give titles to the Aborigines, to qualify the Aboriginal occupants to receive grants. 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. The Commonwealth Government could then loan money to extend the pastoral industry at Beagle Bay and the market gardening industry at La Grange. The proposal was successfully implemented and by 1990 there were no longer Catholic missions in the Kimberley, but they had all become Aboriginal communities with Aboriginal names.

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<sup>534</sup> The spirituality centre in Turkey Creek and the Jesuits in Balgo have worked towards this end.

<sup>535</sup> H.Reynolds., *Fate of a Free People*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1995, p. 213 quotes J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 386, 394.

<sup>536</sup> Henry Reynolds, *Aboriginal Sovereignty Three Nations, one Australia*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1996, pp. 184 - 185.

## Introduction of Law

Reynolds' use of an Aboriginal story about the introduction of law to the Worora people in the central Kimberley region was relevant in the light of historical facts presented about this people near Kulumburu

mission in this history of encounter. "Missionaries have played an extremely important role in the development of White-Aboriginal relations," writes Henry Reynolds, "Their activities have been subject to both uncritical praise and ill-informed animadversion, yet balanced historical assessment has scarcely begun."<sup>537</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Henry Reynolds, *Aborigines and Settlers The Australian Experience*, Cassell Australia, Melbourne, 1972, p. 132.

<sup>538</sup> Henry Reynolds, *Aborigines and Settlers*, pp. xv-xviii. Between the Glenelg and Prince Regent rivers

<sup>539</sup> Henry Reynolds, *Aborigines and Settlers The Australian Experience*, Cassell Australia, Melbourne, 1972, p. 132.



## **Chapter 11**

### **Experiences of Women in Catholic Social Context 1946-1990**

#### **Catholic Social Context**

By 1946 there was a solid Catholic population in the Kimberley and in this groups of women made their own social spaces, in which contexts they were free to work in education, nursing and other social work. One of the places in which the sisters worked was situated on the mud beach outside of Derby where they had made their home among the lepers.

#### **Leprosarium**

Altogether, 1898-1976, notifications of cases of leprosy in the Kimberley numbered 1,348. From 1929-1975 some 400 cases of leprosy were admitted to the leprosarium from the Worora, Ngarinyin, and Wanambal tribal group. How many didn't get there prior to 1950 and died in their homelands, no-one will ever know. Up to 1975, Derby had provided a total of 72 cases, Broome had contributed 72 and Beagle Bay 92. The disease spread up the Fitzroy Valley and down through the Ranges so that stations became infected along the Fitzroy and its tributaries and the number of cases from that area approached 300. Then lastly there was the meeting up along the border with the disease brought in from Queensland and the northern Territory, with numbers again approaching 300. There were patients who had come from Beagle Bay via Channel Island in Darwin.

#### **Native Sisters**

By 1950 there had been only one professed Sister left with the Native Sisters,<sup>1</sup> and the order was officially disbanded by Bishop Raible in 1951.<sup>2</sup> There had been 38 Aboriginal women who had tried religious life as founded by Bishop Raible 1940-1951. Some stayed only a short time, others for years and worked in all areas of the

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<sup>1</sup> Archives of the Diocese of Broome.

<sup>2</sup> Interview between Sr Brigida Nailon and Sr Therese Doolan, 1984.

When the last woman to leave the Native Sisters was dying in Derby, she said, "Therese, once you have given your heart to Jesus nothing else matters!"

Missionary Field at that time. Bishop Raible had seen in the simple desert nomads at Balgo an opportunity for his Native Sisters to help with the foundation of the East Kimberley Mission. But these educated part Aboriginal girls whom the Bishop had hoped to fire with zeal towards 'their own people' did not persevere. Kinship ties were strong and they did not persevere in religious life. After the Order was disbanded by the Bishop, some of the women continued their Apostolic Work as laity and made a unique contribution to Catholic life in the region. Their exit from the missionary staff left places for other women in the church environment.

### **La Grange Mission**

It was regarded as providential when Alice Evans came from Balgo to La Grange:

in March 1957, due to the initiative of Sr Alice Evans, the children's kitchen and dining room were opened, using the hut and bough shed. Melba and Bennet were the cooks under her supervision. For the first time the children received meals with fresh milk, eggs, vegetables, and bread. The Nissan-hut hospital was painted inside. Sr Evans was the trained nurse in charge of the make-shift nursing outpost and the mission school with twenty children. Measles in La Grange became an epidemic with complications of colds, pneumonia, and sore ears. The old people in the Karajarri camp were not infected, they had the measles before, but everyone in the Udialla camp went down with them, including the babies, likewise the dormitory boys and girls. Some cases were fatal."<sup>3</sup>

The diet would have been different from that of a bush camp, but there was evidence that it was difficult to collect enough bush food in a more sedentary lifestyle. There was a great need for a woman but her life was not easy. A nissan hut was partly dispensary, partly workshop. It had no windows, neither on the eastern nor the western side, also no lining. The building was unbearably hot and it had to serve at the same time as dormitory for the girls.<sup>4</sup> Alice stayed at La Grange Mission for 2 years.<sup>5</sup> When Bishop Raible had asked Alice Evans <sup>6</sup> to come to Balgo, he had already

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<sup>3</sup> "La Grange Chronicle". ADB.

<sup>4</sup> Huegel to Raible, 7 August 1955. ADB.

<sup>5</sup> "La Grange Chronicle". ADB.

<sup>6</sup> Alice Evans worked with the Pallottines and Aborigines in Balgo for 4 years. See Chapter 7.

dissolved the Native Sisters' institution, burying his dearest hopes with it. When Alice left Balgo she became part of the staff at La Grange Mission. Later when she became matron at the Broome Hospital, she was difficult to replace at La Grange. Bishop Raible was aware that a new lay helper would need to be warned of the loneliness of the place, where the girl would have no congenial company and no entertainment except wireless. Also only rarely was there an opportunity to go to town. For any girl who had had no experience of the life of a religious it would not be easy to make life at La Grange bearable. Elizabeth Dann, one of the former Native Sisters, was prepared to come. She was paid £3 to look after the girls, do the necessary sewing and conduct the kitchen. She was also capable of teaching elementary things.<sup>7</sup> After Elizabeth, lay missionaries volunteered. There was little effort made to recruit more Aboriginal missionaries as in the past. Volunteers came from other parts of Australia. In the 1980's the Sisters of St John of God would play an important collaborative role in La Grange (now known as Bidyadanga) where Catholicism is still young. Until this time, ministry in this area had been the province of the Lay Missionaries. Since becoming involved in the area, the small community of Sisters, sometimes only one Sister, had been at the forefront of self and community development programmes, though always in collaboration with locals.

### **Lay Missionaries**

In 1959 the shortage of Pallottine Brothers to work at Beagle Bay and Balgo forced Bishop Raible to ask Fr George Vill, the Regional Kimberley Superior to try to find suitable lay missionaries who would be prepared to come to the Kimberley missions for a year. A few lay volunteers were already working in the area. Three young women who had contacted Bishop Raible in January 1957 had begun work at La Grange in April, nursing, teaching and looking after the kitchen and dormitory. Early in 1959 the Bishop found a married couple<sup>8</sup> who had travelled from England in order to look after the new St. Joseph's hostel in Derby. This would cater for youngsters who were coming to school from outlying stations.

Through experience as a lay missionary women, Eileen Nihill revealed unwavering dedication: Before joining the Church group her prior experience of cultural segregation came from nursing in Cooktown where there was a colour bar,

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<sup>7</sup> Raible to Huegel, 14 May 1956. ADB.

<sup>8</sup> Mr and Mrs James Jordan. "Derby Chronicle".

and again when she was employed as a nurse at the hospital in Pingelly in West Australia 1957-1960. At Pingelly most of the children from the reserve were chest infected, and in summer they suffered from dehydration and diarrhoea. But even when she was on call, she was not allowed to visit the reserves. She had also observed conflict at the Health Centre at Robinvale. Here 1 day a week was allocated for Aborigines and 1 day a week for the white community. In 1960 she read of Bishop Jobst's call for lay missionaries and began training in 1961 in Millgrove Victoria, from February to Easter in 1961 for 6-8 weeks. As one of the second group of lay missionaries to be trained by Fr Silvester *sac* and Barbara Shea of the Mariana Institute<sup>9</sup>, she joined the team when Faith Meehan took over the leadership of the group from Kathy Curtain at La Grange. The rest of the group was Denise Wilson, Heather Milne and Laurel McInerney.<sup>10</sup>

Aborigines at La Grange were tribally oriented. Eileen looked after the hospital, the girls in the dormitory and the laundry. To show the diversity of their work, and the dedication which was required of Lay Missionaries, these oral sources have been used to demonstrate how they did their best to alleviate the sufferings of their Aboriginal friends. Eileen Nihill had gone back in 1964 as Charge nurse at St Vincent's, in Melbourne and when Sr Gertrude was killed in an accident, she returned to the Kimberley at the beginning of 1965 to replace her when requested to do so by Bishop Jobst. Sr Regina came out from Ireland to work with her.<sup>11</sup> When a new native hospital was part of the Derby district hospital the nuns, who were employed by the Government, moved from Nissan huts with concrete floors on the marsh to a new Government hospital where they were the only staff with Eileen apart from the domestic staff.

### **Balgo Mission**

Bishop Raible invited the Sisters of St John of God to form a community, when Alice left Balgo.. Sr Angela Moroney was the first Sister Superior of the

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<sup>9</sup> This was also known as the 'Vers Sacrum Mariae' which was a secular institute joined by lay women who wished to serve the Catholic Church unified by a common bond, and who made annual promises towards this end.

<sup>10</sup> In Derby, Fr. Joe Butcher was in charge of the Hostel and Clare Bowler, Marg Touhey, and a third person went to work with him. Bill Keene was at training and he came to La Grange to manage the station. His wife came later. Bob Doyle and Paul Van Zust and others trained with them. Another group had gone to Tardun.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Eileen Nihill in Melbourne in 1995.

Community. Bishop Raible reminded her that whereas a congregation of priests was given a pontifical mandate for missionary work, Sisters on a mission worked under a mandate received from the Bishop, who entrusted it to the rector of the mission station. He cautioned her against letting her spiritual life feed on her emotions instead of on the grace of God. Sr Angela let him know that such a criticism was unfair, the Sisters did not complain about the rough conditions of Balgo but she added:

it was reasonable to ask for one room for them to sleep in during the wet season and the winter, a chapel and some water, as they had not been able to have a bath for three weeks although they had been promised ample household water.<sup>12</sup>

A month later, in January 1957, she was flown to hospital after being bitten by a red-back spider and did not return. Sr Madeleine Lynch had gone to Balgo before the advent of paid teachers. As a seamstress she made sure that each child had adequate changes of clothing. In 1956 the Sisters had established a food-centre and hospital at Balgo where they cared for the children in dormitories and for the Adult Aboriginals in camps. The closure of this work by the Sisters was a sharp reminder of the rapidly dwindling numbers of active Sisters in the Congregation.

In 1961, Bishop Jobst asked for Mercy Sisters to staff schools at Wyndham and Halls Creek and for admission of “Native Girls” to the Mercy Novitiate. Nothing came of this. But a Mercy ministry was facilitated in the Kimberley. For at least a decade, Sisters of Mercy from Adelaide spent their holidays working in the Balgo Hills area where the Aborigines changed the name to the ‘Wirrumanu community’. Sisters of Mercy from Singleton took up permanent residence in the mid-1970’s. In response to another appeal by Bishop Jobst, members from Perth and Adelaide joined them and the Kimberley apostolate became a national project of the Institute, in which Sisters worked as teachers, pastoral workers and nurses at Balgo, Billiluna, and Mulan at Lake Gregory. The contribution made by the West Australian Sisters of Mercy to Kimberley education was more significant for the Sisters because of the way it helped enrich their home groups. From the people of the Aboriginal communities and from the harsh but beautiful country surrounding the communities these Mercy women claimed to have learnt a different way of looking at reality. For some of the Sisters, their understanding of their ministry changed. They felt Aboriginal people needed to be challenged to be responsible for their own schools. To

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<sup>12</sup> Correspondence, Raible and Moroney, ADB.



do otherwise was to do them a disservice. This view gained some confirmation from the decreasing vitality of the Aboriginal people and the increasing violence that seemed to be apparent within the communities. The Sisters asked for a critical appraisal of the value of a Mercy mission in the Kimberley.<sup>13</sup>

Because of the outstation movement, about 200 people moved from Balgo in the late 1970's to Lake Gregory and became known as the Mulan community. They were the original people who were encountered when Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz took his little expedition into the desert in 1939. Others were moving into Balgo Hills from Yuendumu. Sr Colleen Kleinschaffer *rsm* had been involved in Adult Education in Balgo and went with them to continue her role. Later Sr Bernadette joined her to help with the school. The two Sisters lived in Caravans near the school. The Billiluna station became known as the Mindibungu Aboriginal community which now runs its own station. The languages are Jaru and Walmajarri. It has the Billiluna Catholic School with Mercy Sisters in residence.

Balgo people linked socially to Alice Springs, Yuendumu, Papunya and Lajamanu in the Northern Territory. The language was Kukatja. In 1989, the School at Balgo Hills in the Kimberley was again part of the Catholic Education System in the Kimberley. Formerly managed by the Sisters of St John of God, it had been ceded to the Government in 1962 when the Order withdrew from the school. In 1982, community members approached Bishop Jobst about administering 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 'Lurrnpa Catholic School'. Br. Leo Scollen, a De La Salle brother became principal of the school and Sr Carmel Heagerty *rsm* became deputy principal.

### **The Vatican Council**

The Vatican Council had a revitalising effect on Missionary vocations. There was an awakening of missionary fervour among some women's Orders, which began sending personnel to marginalised groups. Affected by the women's movement and no longer happy to accept being confined to the domestic church some women religious updated. When government money became available to pay teachers in city

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<sup>13</sup> McLay, Anne, *Women Out of their Sphere: A History of the Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia*, Northbridge, Vanguard Press, 1992, pp. 423-4.

and urban schools, religious women found themselves free to move out of parish schools into other areas where there was a need. They moved into social work, community development, and parish ministry. As they took their place amongst the most educated group in the Church some chafed under the restraints of clericalism. 'Evangelii Nuntiandi' became an inspirational text for all missionaries, and dialogue with other religious denominations became mandatory. Many women responded generously and heroically to the call of a people in need. Australian women who came to join the Kimberley mission in the North travelled several thousand miles to join and Irish women travelled further. It did not occur to anyone that the situation would change, but the number joining Congregations of Religious Women dropped from the late sixties. Reduced numbers meant that established ministries could no longer be maintained and the need for some of these ministries was no longer there.

### **Aboriginal Culture**

The political climate after 1967 was ripe for the subject of 'land rights' and other basic rights. Into this new milieu came more Sisters. The significance of women's contribution to Catholic Church presence in the Kimberley, 1946-1990 was found in their generous labour which provided assistance where they worked with marginalised peoples by offering their expertise and services in a creative manner. Administrating local schools and teaching in them gave scope to means of reconciliation and renewal.

Aboriginal elders were welcomed as the Teachers of Aboriginal Culture in the schools, the healing was reciprocal on both sides of the encounter. Women continued to contribute much to the welfare of Aborigines especially in the East Kimberley where there was positive, mutual cultural enrichment of two traditions, Aboriginal and Christian. Some of the Church women found inner values changed by the innate spirituality of the people they had come to serve. Sr Clare Ahern *rsj* wrote in thanksgiving for the life of a leader of the Warrmarn Community,

We may have been missioned to bring the good news to the poor but we received it many times from the poor with compassion, love, freedom, and simplicity...It was too incredible to believe that ... the Lawman, head teacher, Christian leader, well-known artist, great entertainer and good friend to all was dead. No one said his name, so that his Spirit could rest in peace. "Dad is

dead,” his son said, “but we will be all right. He is a Ngapung man, a man who believed in God and followed Jesus.

He had travelled with the community to various celebrations of initiations, along the back roads of the Kimberley. The need to be at the “Law” was so great that he would allow no obstacles to prevent him from going.

We assembled as a little Christian Community, outside the school to remember our good friend. Young and old watched, realising that in the casket was the man who was responsible for starting their community school, the one who attended that school every morning to teach the children their language, culture and customs, the one who cheerfully greeted each teacher daily and took delight in entertaining the whole school and the one who was a Ngapung man as well as a lawman. His boomerangs were the symbols of his song making and Law and his art work symbolised his gifts and myths and his ability to pass this knowledge on to others.

We recalled that even though we had come as teachers or pastoral workers to minister in this community, the reverse had also happened. We had been ministered to as well. Daily we had entered into the mysteries of another culture and felt privileged for that opportunity.<sup>14</sup>

Aboriginal spirituality shared emphasis on the sacredness of the land and nature. In this environment, the Sisters were challenged by the locals to reassess their own faith and priorities, and have come to a much heightened appreciation of what is really important in life. True ministry was a reciprocal process.

During these decades an Aboriginal demand for ‘Western’ education to be delivered in their East Kimberley communities by the Catholic Sisters came because of their long association. A ‘Two Ways’ curriculum was devised with which Aboriginal teachers felt more comfortable and which contributed to reconciliation between the two cultures.

### **Sisters of St John of God**

There was no fixed income for the Broome Sisters who supported those in other parts of the Kimberley. Nor were there any resources to maintain and train novices for the mission or for the aged Sisters when they had to retire from the missions to the convent in Broome. The Mother General of the St. John of God Sisters

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<sup>14</sup> Clare Ahern, Warrmarn Community, 27 January 1991, ‘Merrilinki Diary’.

wrote from Ireland to Bishop Raible, asking for a small salary for the fourteen Sisters who were engaged in general duties and teaching in the missions at Beagle Bay, Lombadina and Balgo and in the schools in Broome and Derby The bishop agreed to pay the Sisters a stipend.<sup>15</sup>

Winds of change espoused by Pope John II when he opened the Second Vatican Council in 1963, were felt by religious institutions. 'Perfectae Caritatis' (Decree on the appropriate Renewal of Religious Life) instructed religious to assess their relevance to the modern world, to re-awaken the charism of their founders, to respond to the signs of the times and to be poor in fact as well as in spirit. Sisters became more aware as individual persons. In general the Sisters of St John of God were less affected by the new patterns of religious life in the aftermath of Vatican II than other Sisters. By the nature of their work and their simple lifestyle they had already created many changes from a traditional convent style of life and work. A corporate spirit motivated these Sisters in their efforts to work with the disempowered. That the policy of asimilation had a long term effect on Church strategies is seen in a document articulating a philosophy of mission for the Sisters of St John of God Provincial Chapter in 1971. For many Sisters, an extensive discussion on changes was like a painful surgery which dissected the soul of the Congregation.<sup>16</sup> It was a vision of a future in a society which was fragile and contradictory.<sup>17</sup> Religious Sisters carried much of the responsibility for change.

### **Sisters of St Joseph in the East Kimberley**

Nearly 15 years of education and missionary work in the East Kimberley took place before the first Baptisms. Evangelisation was intensified in the East Kimberley by the appointment of a priest in Wyndham who travelled around the stations regularly visiting four times a year and meeting 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 in West Kimberley and gradually faith

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<sup>15</sup> Zucker, *From Patrons to Partners*, p. 131.

<sup>16</sup> For old sisters like Mother Margaret Carmody nothing had changed, she was still keeping her lists of names for her catechetical classes in Broome, 1958 - 1963. The places she listed were One Mile, the State School, Kennedy's Hill, the Convent, Four Mile and Fisherman's Bend. It would be difficult to evaluate what this valiant woman had done during her life in her humble way to build up the faith of people in Broome.

<sup>17</sup> Scally, *To Speed on Angels' Wings, The Story of the Sisters of St John of God*, pp. 219-220.

communities were formed in the East Kimberley. The coming of the Sisters of St Joseph in 1963 had been a catalyst in this story of faith development. As early as 1959 Bishop Jobst approached the Australian Sisters of St Joseph to access their services in setting up Catholic Schools in the East Kimberley.<sup>18</sup> The immediate reaction of Mother Adrian, the Sister in Charge, was to reply “No!”, with regret because existing schools and institutions belonging to the Order needed to be staffed.<sup>19</sup> The Bishop repeated the request in 1961 and was again refused. Not discouraged, he enlisted help from Rome.

Cardinal Agagianian<sup>20</sup> wrote to Mother Adrian suggesting that, “the acceptance of the Bishop’s offer should be given every consideration for it presents the classic missionary challenge of giving to others without any thought of return.”<sup>21</sup> When Bishop Jobst wrote again, he asked that Sisters be sent to staff the new foundation of the Church in Western Australia which was and always would be, ‘a mission’ in the true sense for ‘our people’ in the outback both Natives and white.<sup>22</sup> The Sisters of St Joseph opened the school in Wyndham 31 March 1964 with an enrolment of forty, two-thirds white and the rest Aboriginal children. Some of the latter had been baptised by the Anglican Priest. The proportion of Aboriginal children increased over the years as more Aboriginal parents brought their children to be educated by the Sisters who made frequent visits to the Aboriginal camps. By the second year the numbers had increased to 68.

In 1967 the Sisters were again approached by Bishop Jobst requesting that they begin a school in Kununurra. Remembering the intervention from the Vatican, the Sisters acquiesced with the comment, “even though we are desperately short of Sisters we have to answer the call of the Holy See.”<sup>23</sup> In the initial stages of foundation there was conflict with members of the United Aboriginal Mission who did not want the children to attend the Catholic school. The sisters’ innovative curriculum incorporated aspects of Aboriginal culture into the schools, elders were

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<sup>18</sup> Jobst to Ryan, 3 May 1959, St. Joseph’s Generalate Files

<sup>19</sup> Ryan to Jobst, no date, 1959?, SJGF.

<sup>20</sup> *Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.*

<sup>21</sup> Agagianian to Ryan, 28 October 1963, SJGF.

<sup>22</sup> Jobst to Ryan, 19 November 1963, 1 December 1963, SJGF.

<sup>23</sup> Ryan, ‘Circular to the Order’, 24 November 1966, SJGF.

invited to give lessons in dance, art and language. Festivities were organised around traditional ways of celebrating.<sup>24</sup>

### **Missiology**

Philosophy and missiology went hand in hand with experience. Sisters of St Joseph suffered from heat, isolation and lack of facilities. Racism in the towns and ugly denominational conflicts did not help as they struggled with the philosophy of their undertakings. They recognised the role of the missionary in work with peoples of another culture and the pressing need for structures of religious life to be accommodating. Those Sisters working with Aboriginal communities became increasingly disaffected with their life and methods. They realised they were still operating from older and inefficient models of church, evangelisation and education. While the administrative body of the Order was cautious in allowing them to undertake a more radical approach, the small group in the Kimberley was geographically far away from official control. Sisters studied other modes of mission. Their efforts to work in more appropriate ways were frustrated by lack of understanding. The Bishop had his ideas about what they should be doing, and the administration of their Order was entrenched in a former mode of operation,<sup>25</sup> and made it difficult for them to be fully effective in ministry.<sup>26</sup> The documents of Vatican II held that

The specific purpose of missionary activity is evangelisation and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where she has not yet taken root. Thus from the seed which is the Word of God, particularly native Churches can be adequately established and flourish the world over, endowed with their own vitality and maturity”.<sup>27</sup>

The Sisters were happy to use these ideas from ‘Ad Gentes’ as a basis for change. The Kununurra Sisters set out a document outlining their aims and the parameters of their apostolates aligned with these ideas. Employing Aboriginal persons in the

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<sup>24</sup> Lang, *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, 1976. “Three times a week the children gather around for singing, dancing and story time with an Aboriginal woman called Ruby. She tells the old legends in the local Miriwung language, later in the classroom the children rewrite the story in their own words, in English.”

<sup>25</sup> Colleen Malone, ‘Widening the Track: The Josephite Journey towards an Eclectic Missiology’, p. 95.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>27</sup> Abbot, *The Documents of Vatican II*, p. 591.

schools as teaching assistants, in training to become teachers, became an effective means of giving eventual control of the schools to the people.<sup>28</sup>

In 1986 when Kay Thies undertook research for a survey of Aboriginal viewpoints on Education in the East Kimberley she was impressed with the work of the Josephites. In her study, *Aboriginal Viewpoints on Education. A Survey in the East Kimberley Region*, she crossed the boundaries between Catholic and State Schools and discovered that Catholic schools in general were perceived by the Aboriginal people as showing a greater interest in and respect for the culture of the people. Aboriginal parents were involved with school boards and had close access to the administration of the schools through an Aboriginal person liaison officer on the staff. She recognised the creative role of the missionary in her work with the peoples of another culture. For example, after a little more than ten years after coming to Wyndham to teach, there was school education within which framework the Sisters had begun to experiment with the concept of combining the traditional Aboriginal forms of education and Western forms; recognition of the need to meet people where they were, rather than expect them to come to the school meant a mobile kindergarten visiting the cattle stations on which many Aboriginal people worked and lived; constant pastoral visitation; association with the 'Moongoong Darwung' Hostel, which had grown out of parental need on surrounding cattle stations for accommodation to attend the town school;<sup>29</sup> and the development of Aboriginal liturgy.<sup>30</sup>

When the Sisters of St Joseph first entered the field of the Aboriginal Apostolate, it was because they had been told to do so by the Holy See. They responded to specific requests, not from the Aboriginal people but from the Bishop of the diocese. With the beginning of their association with the Warrmarn Community of Turkey Creek, the Sisters made an independent decision to support the people. Turkey Creek was not a town but an Aboriginal community of about two hundred people. It was in 1975 the people began to settle there. First came the pensioners, then the

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<sup>28</sup> Kaye Thies, *Aboriginal Viewpoints on Education. A Survey in the East Kimberley Region*, Research Series No. 5. National Centre for Research on Rural Education. University of Western Australia, Perth, 1987.

<sup>29</sup> Cross Reference with 'Moongoong Darwung, which meant 'Camp of Red Stones' and had begun as a loosely federated group of Aborigines with three whites, one of whom was Fr Peter Willis working towards the care and education of themselves and especially of the children committed to their care. Videos recorded methods.

<sup>30</sup> Malone, 'Widening the Track: The Josephite Journey towards an Eclectic Missiology', pp. 78-80.

unemployed. They came from Texas Downs station where there had been a small chapel made for the people by a visiting Priest. One of the Warrmarn elders, Winnie , arranged for a space at Turkey Creek to be set aside for a chapel. The community was incorporated in 1977. Most funds from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs were used to provide essential community services like running water and vehicles.

Most of the people had lost their jobs on surrounding stations and were living on unemployment benefits or family allowance schemes. Their children were living away from their families at Guda Guda just outside Wyndham, when one of them was killed in a tragic accident. Because of this, the people decided that a closer school was necessary for their children. The community adviser, Michael Dillon, suggested an independent community school, along the lines of those at Strelley or Noonkanbah. The people wanted to have a school similar to that at Wyndham, but one that incorporated more Aboriginal language and culture. Bishop Jobst wanted a Catholic Community School if the Sisters were to be responsible for it.<sup>31</sup> Ironically, Dillon, as resident book-keeper, controlled the community finances and in a sense, was denying to the people access to real economic independence. He believed that the Church was making an attempt to infiltrate the community, via a school, and that in the end, power would be wrested from the people.<sup>32</sup> In response to the predicament, a Columban missiologist, Cyril Hally, suggested that Dillon had assumed that all church personnel were right-wing conservative reactionaries. He pointed out that The Sisters were fully aware of being caught in the patron-client situation, endemic to all Western schooling, but not so easy to overcome.<sup>33</sup> The situation became a power struggle between the Catholic Church and the community over the question of title to the land on which school and convent was to be built. 'Church policy' was the province of the Bishop. The issue attested to the power of the Church in internal church affairs as well as to the tension between Church authorities and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The outcome was finalised when the Sisters' option of chose as the Aborigines wished by staffing the school at Turkey Creek. Bishop Jobst donated buildings transported from Beagle Bay to the Aboriginal community for the school and Sisters residence. In this

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<sup>31</sup> Jobst to Superior General, 29 May 1978, SJGF.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Dillon, 'A Case Study: Kadia Power in an Aboriginal Community', Australian Council for Overseas Aid Research and Information Service, Canberra, 1979.

<sup>33</sup> Cyril Hally, 'The Case Study: Kadia Power in an Aboriginal Community, Reconsidered'. Unpublished paper, 24 April 1979.



school, 'Two Ways' Education had pride of place and Aboriginal Elders had a say in the curriculum and were consulted at every opportunity.

### **Other Religious Sisters**

Loreto Sisters came in 1973. Sr Myrene *ibvm* and Sr Mary Ellen *ibvm* 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." For some years the Sisters administered the primary school in Broome. Sr Pauline Prince *ibvm* began working in the field of nutrition in 1981 with Looma Aboriginal Community. There she counselled mainly in the area of nutrition for diabetic patients. In 1989 she began working in the Derby parish as a Pastoral Associate.

Spanish Sisters from New Norcia had been at Kalumburu since 1931. They kept the domestic side of the mission running smoothly as well as working in the educational field. Policies changed in 1972.

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 Tutzin, a German Order in the Philippines. Propaganda Fide said to defer the decision until 1984. We would lose our link with Spain, we would be linked with Manila.<sup>34</sup>

Many other Sisters made an option for the poor and the marginalised in society. They made themselves available to work in the arduous conditions of the outback where the link with the outside world was only by radio, or by phone if they

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<sup>34</sup> Sr Josephine Montero to Sr Brigida Nailon, Beach House, Broome. 1984. "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 be in Spain for two and a half years."

happened to be visiting Broome. For example, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition took charge of the Beagle Bay School and the hostel where there were about 90 children. Their duties were extremely demanding as they were expected to teach in the school as well as to care for the children in the hostel who came from elsewhere in the Kimberley to board. Some children were flown from the East Kimberley and the Northern Territory. They stayed three years. The Grey Sisters came after them to staff the school. They stayed a few years and when they left, Sisters of the Infant Jesus who had been missionaries in Malaysia during the war, and working in Victoria for a short time replaced them. There were usually 3 - 5 Sisters of the Infant Jesus staffing Beagle Bay and Lombadina Schools.<sup>35</sup> Two Sisters of St John of God still ministered to the community in Beagle Bay and after teaching in Holy Rosary School for a year, A Brigidine Sister, Sr Brigida Nailon *csb* lived with them and the Sisters of St John of God in Beagle Bay while doing research for the history of the Church in the Kimberley. Some years later the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions came to staff Beagle Bay. The elders of a small Aboriginal community on Gibb River Station who spoke Ngarinyin approached Bishop Jobst for a school in 1989, and a sister from Our Lady of the Mission Sisters went to teach there. These women endured the harsh loneliness, and the rigours of the tropical heat to give what assistance they could in the field of education.

In August 1986, the Faithful Companions of Jesus explored 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.<sup>36</sup> There was a commitment to social welfare when Sr Michael Kelly of the Good Shepherd Order came to Broome. She established an Aboriginal hostel for children, a home for the needy in Broome.

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<sup>35</sup> Sr Anne Marie and Sr Brid, came up in the Bishop's plane to see Beagle Bay in November 1976, and returned to take charge of the school 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.

<sup>36</sup> Sisters Rosemary Crowe and Maryrose Dennehy arrived 12 February 1988. Sr Peter Wilson and Sr Helen Mary Langlands joined the group.

In 1978 two Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception arrived in Fitzroy Crossing.<sup>37</sup> They brought the presence of the Catholic Church to the town. 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 of that year. The Sisters ministered to Aborigines at Junjuwa Village, a large multilingual town community in Fitzroy Crossing on Aboriginal Reserve land traditionally owned by the Bunuba people; Windmill Reserve, the town community in Fitzroy Crossing on Aboriginal Reserve land, traditionally owned by the Bunuba people and called by a Bunuba name 'Mindirardi'; Bayulu Village, a large community on land excised from GoGo Station; Muludga Camp, an outstation on Fossil Downs Station. Other places the Franciscan Sisters visited were: Christmas Creek Village, GoGo Station, Cheerabun Station, Christmas Creek School, Cheerabun School, Fitzroy Crossing School, and a road camp, Citra.

The original Muludga people who had been instructed and baptised by Fr Kriener moved around Bedford Station and the Tablelands and Landsdowne Stations. They then moved in with others on the banks of the Margaret River. In 1984, the Emmanuel Brothers had the lease for GoGo, Christmas Creek, and Cherubim stations, a combined area of about 3,000,000 acres, for which the long pastoral leases would not be renewed. Franciscan Sisters had gone to GoGo as voluntary help and took literacy, laundry, sewing and home making classes. Travel was 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 Camp 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.

### **Cannossian Sisters**

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<sup>37</sup> The foundation Sisters were Sr Mary Rita and Sr Catherine Dower. When they arrived, the Bishop had a very comfortable dwelling ready for them. They were there 1978-1980; then the second community formed, Sr Lucy Wooden, and Sr Catherine Dower were there from 1980 - August 1981. The third community was Sr Miriam Donnelly and Sr Catherine Dower. In June '84, Sr Frances Crowe joined the others.

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 of petition were offered and then they came. Leadership roles in new Aboriginal communities such as Red Hill and Ringer Soak gradually evolved. The Canossian Sisters came to Halls Creek in November 1977. Sr Antoinette Crippa spoke about the 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, 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, keeping in mind that we were here for evangelisation and human promotion (betterment of the people), we were looking for opportunities for catechising and adult education opportunities. For three to four months, places were 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.<sup>38</sup>

In the Halls Creek area the Canossian Sisters made the way for the social establishment of the whole town with their welfare work and then began a Catholic Primary School. It took about seven years for the situation to improve between the Catholic Church leaders, the Baptist leaders, and the United Aboriginal Mission.<sup>39</sup> The Sisters had begun with social work. They helped the Aboriginal people to participate more directly in the decision-making process so that local needs would be articulated and met.

### **Economic and Political Context of the Shire of Halls Creek**

There was no logic in the view that local ratepayers should necessarily control local councils in shires such as Halls Creek and Wyndham where the Aboriginal population was relatively large. Aboriginal enterprise needed a supportive environment. Since the majority of Aboriginal people occupied reserves which were non-rateable crown land, Aboriginal participation in local government was minimal. This was challenged in the 1980's since locally derived rates generated only 12.8% of total revenue for the period 1982/3 to 1985/6. By far the greatest percentage of its

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Sr Brigida Nailon *csb* in Halls Creek in 1984.

<sup>39</sup> Interview between Fr W. Kriener and Brigida Nailon in 1984 in the Halls Creek presbytery, ADB.

revenue was derived externally in the form of Government grants which were attracted to the Shire by the very nature of local infrastructure and population composition. Once Aborigines had representation on the Council, Aboriginal Communities were no longer ignored, neglected, segregated, excluded or restricted, and municipal services became available to them.<sup>40</sup>

## **Education**

Considerable advances in developing and tailoring education for the Aborigines in the Kimberley were made by the Catholic education system. Classes in language, law and culture with active participation of the Aboriginal people were available in all Catholic schools and a creative ministry continued. In Derby, in 1979, five Aborigines had 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. To help Aboriginal people improve their educational opportunities and become eligible for entrance into professional training courses course graduates were working as teaching assistants in Catholic schools in the Kimberley ranging from young people to mature women with grown-up families. Four of the first graduates were women, Verna Lockyer, Agnes Albert, Rosita Lovell, Selina King and one man, Christopher 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 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, Verna Lockyer, and Annette O'Connor. At the same time, six former Teacher assistants were part way through Teacher Training at Holy Rosary School. Lombadina Aboriginal community requested that the Catholic system be reintroduced after several years of having State education. Lake Gregory Community when given a choice preferred the Sisters to teach their children.<sup>41</sup> Through the Catholic Education Office, Sr Patricia Rhatigan *sjg* facilitated many courses for training assistant teachers across the Kimberley. She was seconded from the Catholic Education Office by the University of Notre Dame to organise tertiary education at all

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<sup>40</sup> East Kimberley Impact Assessment Project. Working Paper, No. 25. 'Aboriginal and Local Government, East Kimberley,' Nedlands, University of West Australia. p.16.

levels at the Kimberley Education Centre which has taken over part of the campus of Nulungu College.

A school is a vehicle for the transmission of culture. But for Aborigines schooling may be alien to their learning patterns. If students were separated from adults in the hope that they would develop a western approach to life this made schools agents of assimilation. For missionaries, schools could present a controlled mechanism for education in faith but it could be argued that the involvement of the Church in the formal educational process impeded the transmission of faith. If the Church did not have the schools, it would be faced with the task of hastening the process of indigenisation of its structures thereby opening the way to a conversion process that is more personal.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, others like Paulo Freire maintain that education was the critical factor in the conscientisation of marginalised peoples.<sup>43</sup> Whichever way the matter is argued, the Catholic Church in the Kimberley embraced the idea of education as an important contribution to the future of Aborigines.

### **Changing Context of Church Administration**

A movement towards having Pastoral Associates in the Diocese began when the Major Women Superiors' Conference wished to extend pastoral care to Religious Sisters in isolated areas. Sr Stella Bryant *sfg* played a leading role in organising meetings in Broome in 1980. The sisters decided to come together as a Diocesan group, to provide for mutual support in their apostolic endeavours in the Kimberley. In August 1981, at the conclusion of talks on missiology by Fr Cyril Halley, the decision was made to extend invitations to include Priests, Brothers, Representatives from the Lay Missionary Association and from the Laity, especially Aboriginal people. The Conference of 1982 was attended by members of all the above groups. In 1983, at the first Conference Committee meeting held in Broome,<sup>44</sup> Bishop Jobst

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<sup>41</sup> Abbot, 'Documents of Vatican 2', p.20.

<sup>42</sup> Brendan Carmody, 'Mission Primary Schools and Conversion: Help or Hindrance to Church Growth?', *Missiology: An International Review*, vol. 2, no. 17, pp. 177-192. The close association between the Church and the primary school in the Monza diocese was seen as retarding the church's attempt to forge its own identity and independence.

<sup>43</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

<sup>44</sup> Bishop Jobst attended, Fr R. Hevern was Chairman. and newly elected members were Paul Whitla as Lay Missionary Representative, Hector Sundarman and George

agreed that in keeping with Vatican II policy, Diocesan Assemblies were the hope for the future to meet the needs of the future Church in the Kimberley. A Diocesan Pastoral Council was to 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. The diversity of the people promised a richness of development. The fluctuating pattern of Kimberley society caused by the mobility of the people would help spread the 'Word'.

In April, 1983, the concept of the coming together of a large number of Catholic people was formally initiated at a pastoral meeting held in Broome.<sup>45</sup> The theme of 1984 for the Diocese was 'Community is built on the memory of shared events' emphasising that an historical consciousness was important when building a community. Fr W. Kinne *ssc* was invited to be the facilitator for the main thrust of the Assembly, the formation of basic communities. He proposed that these 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. In such communities the idea was that there would be a degree of permanence, with mutual caring, sharing and support. When the community strove for common goals and concerns there would be 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 would ensure quality and a praying and worshipping together centre in celebration of Eucharist was assumed. These communities witnessed to each other and served each other, through their own emerging leadership. There would be 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

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Pinlarie as Aboriginal Representatives and Monica Finegan as Parish Councils' Representative. Sr. Colleen Malone retained her position as Secretary.

<sup>45</sup> Present: Bishop Jobst, Broome; Sr. Anne Boland *rsj*, Kununurra; Sr. Stella Bryant *sjg*, Derby; Sr. Johanna Klep *sjg*, 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.

would prevail. To arouse a group awareness of the region, descriptive profiles of areas of Catholic presence were compiled by Church personnel in preparation for the Diocesan Assembly, that is, 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. At the Assembly, Sr. Angela Slattery, *ibvm* delineated the concept of Ministry in which clergy need not be involved.

Facts presented through this chapter demonstrated that women offered an enriching variety of creative ministries in the Church. Holding the Diocesan Assembly of 1984 resulted from women lobbying for the support of Bishop and clergy at a conference for Pastoral Associates. Case studies or profiles such as those of Eileen Nihill and Alice Evans demonstrated dedication and love inherent in lay missionaries caring for the sick at la Grange. They reinforced the significance of women's ministry in this new field. Aboriginal women were in the forefront of training to be teachers in the schools. The position of women on both sides of the contact situation became different with women taking more administrative positions. For the religious, this was formerly only a possibility in the hospitals with matrons, but in recent years women have had more influence in the Catholic Education Offices, becoming mentors for Aboriginal Principals and thus leading to redundancy for themselves. Women's concept of Church differed from that of men and missiology became exciting with changing ministries. Usually because women were not working in an administrative capacity but closer to the grass roots of the Church it was easier to make lifelong friends and form close relationships with those Aboriginal women who worked in close contact with Church educational facilities. The agendas and the voices of women gave life and vitality to the Catholic Church when they were heard.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> This leadership was further reinforced in the 1990s in the Kimberley when Sr Pat Sealy was appointed as Chairperson of the Diocesan Committee 'Towards 2000'.





## Chapter 12

### Changes in the role and understandings of Aboriginal women and men in Catholic Social Context to 1990

#### Aboriginal World View

Aborigines had their own world view which was essentially religious. In the old tribal society, religion was at the centre of activities such as fishing and dancing. Fr E. Worms, *sac* a Pallottine missionary anthropologist recorded songs chanted by the people in camp before they went fishing to bring about a catch, and wrote many articles about the local religion of the Nyul Nyul people, and other tribal groups.<sup>1</sup> World views of Aborigines and of the dominant Australian society<sup>2</sup> could be illustrated by patterns of song and dance. Aboriginal theories of knowledge were strikingly different from those of white Australians. As a group they used stories to demonstrate cultural moralities. Uniqueness and diversity among animals and plants indicated the autonomy of species which each had its own “Law”, a theory which sustains difference and diversity.<sup>3</sup> Since a complex web of relationships nurtured life in its totality, morality lay in enhancing all life and was part of the Aboriginal sense

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<sup>1</sup> E. A., Worms, ‘The Poetry of the Yaoro and Bad,’ North-Western Australia’, *Anthropos*, 45, 1950; E. A., Worms, ‘Djamar and his Relation to other Culture Heroes,’ *Anthropos*, 47, 1952; E. A., Worms, ‘H. Nekes and E.A.Worms, Australian Languages’ *Anthropos*, 48, 1953; E. A., Worms, ‘Language of the Garadjari at Lagrange, WA,’ Excerpt from Hermann Nekes *sac*, and Ernest A. Worms *sac*, *Australian Languages* in Micro Bibliotheca Anthropos, Posieux, Cte, Fribourg, Switzerland, 1953; E. A., Worms, ‘Australian mythological Terms: their Etymology and Dispersion’, *Anthropos*, 52, 1957; E. A., Worms, ‘Aboriginal Place Names in the Kimberley, W.A.,’ An Etymological and Mythological Study, *Australasian Medical*, 1944; E. A., Worms, ‘The Aboriginal Concept of the Soul’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 37, 2, 1960; E. A., Worms, ‘Cultural Change Amongst the Australian Aborigines’ Observations on the Mission Field of the Pallottine Fathers in W. Australia’, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Brigida Nailon and L. Wilson, *Aboriginal Learning Styles*, Darwin, Department of Education, Employment and Training, and Nungalinga College, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, ‘Consciousness and Responsibility in an Australian Aboriginal Religion’, *Nelen Yubu*, no. 23, (1985),p.9. “It was not necessary for Aborigines to know brolga culture in detail; it was sufficient to know that brolgas had their own culture.”

of responsibility for it.<sup>4</sup> The lives of all Australian people were inextricably bound together, as were the soils, water systems and the lives of plants and animals.<sup>5</sup> Because of this complexity, contextualisation of the gospel by adaptation to its cultural context can only be done by a cooperative project. Knowledge of both cultures is essential.<sup>6</sup>

Lay Missionaries built up the material buildings or administered local stores. The women helped in the stores but worked mainly in the area of teaching, nursing, caring for children, or cooking and doing the laundry, but they continued to bring the foreignness of their own culture with them. They could not provide the self-theologising that could only be done by the Aboriginal people but they could give witness by their own living faith and by cooperating with different liturgies. Missionary culture seen as 'good', 'advanced', or 'normative' could become an ethnocentric view which judged Aboriginal cultures and religion by its own standards and found it wanting while assuming its own ways were right. Religious practice as it evolved in European countries could be questioned as an appropriate institution for Aboriginal women, but the opportunity to try it was made available through the Native Sisters.

In 1951 Bishop Raible was encouraged to find that Catholic Aborigines had started to instruct their fellow workers in the faith.<sup>7</sup> Probably his greatest disappointment in the Apostolate occurred when he dissolved the Society of Native Sisters.<sup>8</sup> Before leaving the Kimberley in 1959, he invested four local Aboriginal people, Teresa Puertollano, Frank Rodriguez, Philip Cox and Rosa Mamud with the papal decoration, 'Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice', in recognition of their services to the Church.

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<sup>4</sup> In Ngarinman/Ngaliwurru cosmology, the Absolute was the oneness of the whole cosmos.

<sup>5</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes us Human: Life and land in an Australian Aboriginal Culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p.6. "Yarralin people were born and educated to this sense of oneness, regarding it as their rightful heritage as living, conscious beings. All responsible acts were acts which placed the individual in a state of harmony with the cosmos. Both daily and ceremonial life were expressive of this sense of oneness and responsibility was an act of will, taken by conscious beings, deriving from and producing self-interest, reverence, morality and mysticism."

<sup>6</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, 'Critical Contextualization,' *Notes on Anthropology*, no 12 (December 1987) p. 164. Reprinted by permission from *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research* vol. 11, no. 3, (July, 1987): 104-112.

<sup>7</sup> Raible to Biondi, 15 September 1951, ADB.

<sup>8</sup> "Chronicle of the Native Sisters", ADB.

## **Education**

Significant changes took place in the field of education after 1948. Unlike other states, Western Australia did not give control of Aboriginal education to its Education Department until the 1950's. From 1948 onwards the role of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs moved away from total responsibility of Aboriginal education to that of a supportive agent. Since that date the Education Department has had full control of Aboriginal primary and secondary education in Western Australia.<sup>9</sup> The first pastoral station school in the Kimberley was opened at Gogo Station, Fitzroy Crossing, in 1957. The station provided the teachers' quarters and the Education Department provided teachers.<sup>10</sup> Until 1952 the main provision of education for Aborigines in the Kimberley was made by mission schools. When G. F. Thornbury was appointed to the position of Superintendent of Native Education he stated that the Department would support the establishment of schools in Native Reserves in the North-West. It would prepare a special Curriculum for Native Schools. It took until 1952 for this positive action to be taken to incorporate children of Aboriginal descent within the State education system.<sup>11</sup> Once money became available for community schools the situation with Catholic education changed.

## **Sharing of Memories**

Collective memories were consolidated in the 1980's by three pilgrimages in 1983 to Beagle Bay Mission, To Tjaluwan, to Disaster Bay and by the Diocesan Assembly in 1984. The centenary of 1990 celebrated these memories. When Bishop J. Jobst circulated an invitation to Catholics in the Kimberley and their relatives who had moved to places like Port Hedland and Darwin, to make a Pilgrimage to Beagle Bay on 24-25 September 1983, to give thanks and praise for their gift of faith, in union with Mary, Aborigines numbering about 1000 came from East and West Kimberley to celebrate.<sup>12</sup> Different cultural backgrounds were evident because from the East Kimberley came a vibrant young church and from the West Kimberley an older church with evidence of stability brought by several generations of Catholics.

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<sup>9</sup> 'Annual Report of the Department', 1972. ADB.

<sup>10</sup> 'Annual Report', West Australia, 1957. ADB.

<sup>11</sup> R. McKeich, 'Part-Aboriginal Education', Unpublished Manuscript for Thesis. Nedlands, University of WA, 1972.

<sup>12</sup> The pilgrimages were to celebrate the Holy Year of Redemption proclaimed by Pope John Paul 11, 25 March 1983.

The Beagle Bay Aboriginal Council appointed families historically linked by birth and kinship to welcome and care for incoming groups.

Other pilgrimages were to Tjaluwan in the desert near Balgo and to Disaster Bay.

The first pilgrimage to Tjaluwan was organised by Fr Ray Hevern SAC and the staff members at Balgo Mission. It led the Aboriginal communities of Billiluna, Lake Gregory and Balgo to the place where the first Mass was celebrated.<sup>13</sup>

The Disaster Bay Pilgrimage 1984 to commemorate the coming of Fr Duncan McNab to Goodenough Bay was organised and funded by the Beagle Bay Community. It was a weekend of camping at the site. At the Mass of celebration Jerome Manado recalled that as a child he used to see Fr Nicholas Emo's boat, the 'San Salvador', anchored out in the bay.

Memories of unique occurrences which had happened in different environments were shared at the Diocesan Assembly in 1984 by parish and mission groups. Parish groups came from Broome, Derby, Wyndham, Kununurra, and Halls Creek. Mission groups came from Beagle Bay, Lombadina, La Grange and Kulumburu.

### **Diocesan Assembly of 1984**

Pilgrimages to places of spiritual birth preceded the Assembly of 1984. In Broome, Philip Cox was asked to be coordinator of the pilgrimage to Beagle Bay. The bishop specifically stated that the event was 'to be what the people wanted and how they wanted it'. To clarify people's perceptions of regional reality, in 1983 and 1984 the study of small regional areas from their historical origins to the present day, was a method of interpreting local histories. Strong stories offered internally

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<sup>13</sup> Extract from Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz, SAC, 'Rain on Arid Sand'. Unpublished Document. ADB: "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 pilgrimage. 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."

displaced peoples a different future as they determined a future growing out of past experiences. .<sup>14</sup> The Universal Church's relationship to the local indigenous church and missionary needs to work to enable a people/community to realise the Gospel for themselves, as a people true to their own culture,<sup>15</sup> with their own spiritual leadership and ministry.<sup>16</sup>

### **Broome Parish**

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'.<sup>17</sup> The project was discontinued because it made no difference to those who had not been worshipping before. One of the most memorable incidents shared by the people of Broome happened in 1975 when there was a great influx of visitors to Broome for the ordination of Fr Patrick Dodson *msc* 17 May 1975.<sup>18</sup>

Mallingbar was a town community in Broome on Aboriginal Reserve land, commonly called 'Kennedy Hill' by Yawuru, Bardi, and Nyul Nyul tribal peoples where all power in the Local Government was exercised by white Government employees. But people did have a voice in the Church. Fr McMahon, *sac* the parish priest of Broome at that time summed up the experience of his parishioners, most of whom were Aboriginal, who had been placed at an economic disadvantage whereas in 1984 land in Broome was expensive, when it was cheap, Aborigines were not allowed to own land.

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<sup>14</sup> Bird Rose, *The Dingo makes us Human*, p.234.

<sup>15</sup> Bird Rose, *Nelen Yubu*, no. 23, She contends that Yarralin people use principles derived from the past as guides to action in the present, in order to produce a certain kind of future. The future to be produced is one in which the same principles will still be applicable, and in which life will continue, p.14.

<sup>16</sup> Clare Ahern, 'A Kimberley Response' p.10.

<sup>17</sup> In 1966, Fr V. Finnegan 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 unsuccessful. The Aborigines who had gone to the Parish Church, now went past it to the other Church.

<sup>18</sup> Nailon and Huegel, *This is Your Place*, p. 52.

His grandfather, Mr. P. Djagween was a member of the Yawuru tribe in Broome.

Most people in the Parish Community of Broome are coloured. From the Christian point of view the influence of the Filipinos had been great. Some of the customs still practised in the town are Filipino, particularly the custom after a death, of nine nights of Rosary, followed by a feast. If 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 do the bulk of the reading, are the backbone of the Legion of Mary, and do the bulk of the work for raising money in the parish.<sup>19</sup>

Mission Groups such as those at Beagle Bay, Lombadina, La Grange and

### **The Ngarlen community at Beagle Bay**

The Ngarlen community at Beagle Bay became the first independent Catholic community in 1974. 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 and Mr E. Dunn. The meeting was a success. The committee formed an independent community. In future they would look after their own affairs, in the areas of economy, housing and education. The Councillors unanimously agreed that the Church and priest should stay in the community and that those who simply got 'sit-down money'<sup>20</sup> should move elsewhere. Beagle Bay continued to be a large community surrounded by Aboriginal Reserve land. The official language of the Beagle Bay Mission was Nyul Nyul, but English was used. In the 1960's, there was a strong move to self sufficiency for the Mission.<sup>21</sup> In 1961, an Aboriginal, Gregory Howard, had begun instructions to working men and boys, on how to teach 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. The Missions were in a similar situation to the stations. They could employ fewer people at a time

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<sup>19</sup> Michael McMahon, parish priest of Broome, at the Diocesan Assembly, 1984.

<sup>20</sup> 'sit-down money' is an Aboriginal term for unemployment benefits.

<sup>21</sup> Fr J. Kearney *sac* helped organise 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 meatworks was another enterprise.

when more were looking for work.<sup>22</sup> In the ‘Sacred Heart School’ secondary education was offered.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Djarindjin community at Lombadina**

The Djarindjin community at Lombadina, surrounded by extensive bush on one side with a great expanse of sand dunes on the other, was situated on the marsh of Chilli Creek, with its most spectacular feature, the extensive sand dunes. In the 1960s, the beef cattle herd was built up again.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Peter Angus**

Peter Angus and Sandy Paddy, a Bardi elder had life experiences from living in the Djarindjin community and on Sunday Island where they were ‘Keepers of the Law’. Bishop Jobst had been approached by ‘Welfare’, about the possibility of looking after the pensioners who were stranded on Sunday Island. Fr Kriener went across to Sunday Island in a two masted eighteen foot schooner, of which Loci Bin Sail was the Captain. There were two trips with five pensioners altogether and luggage.. Peter Angus put the event into the context of his own life, when he was living at Lombadina 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 67, 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 Nyul Nyul have good Law. I have the

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, Both Fr Rausch *sac*, and Fr Lorenz *sac* visited Beagle Bay in 1964. They were work 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.

<sup>23</sup> Sr M. Dolores *sjg*, Sr Callista *sjg* sent children for secondary education scholarships. The Home Economics class was taught by Sr Madeleine Lynch *sjg*. Sr. Andrew *sjg* had twenty children in the Kindergarten.

<sup>24</sup> “Lombadina Chronicle”, ADB. Mr. Thomas, an Agricultural adviser from the Commonwealth Government, went with Mr. Weber, who was rebuilding the stock in Beagle Bay to inspect the cattle in Lombadina. He decided that the cattle project was not worthwhile. 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 John, Alphonse, Douglas and Myrrh doing the mustering, also Benedict and Victor helped for nearly two weeks during their holidays. Base Intelligence had asked the community for a message notifying them when foreign boats came offshore.



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. Harry Hunter, 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 Boolgin 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 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.

As an elder Peter Angus played a prominent role in Aboriginal ceremonies held by the community at Lombadina, he had chosen to have his home there as he grew older.<sup>25</sup>

### **Sandy Paddy**

Sandy had been born at Bulgin and his mother died when he was a baby. He taught culture and language in the Catholic school.

For a little while I went to school in Lombadina, Fr Droste brought me in. Sisters Benedict, Antonia and Patrick taught me. After school I worked in the garden with Brother Celestine (Salesian). When I left school I went to work mustering with Martin Sibosado. Then in the 1930's I worked with Brother Joseph who was carpenter for the Church...

Sunday Island couldn't get money, working trochus shell, ran out of it. The mission there owned the lugger and when the mission closed there was no more lugger. I helped build six houses for the old people from Sunday Island here at Lombadina. Bishop Jobst sent Fr Kriener to get them. Bishop Jobst asked the Government for the money for the houses. The people were glad to come. They were happy here. They died here. In school here at Lombadina I

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<sup>25</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, p.122 ff.

have taught Bardi, the children here pick it up quickly. From Swan Point to Cunningham Bay , Bard, from Cunningham Point to Derby, Nimambur, Sunday Island is Dwal.<sup>26</sup>

The history of Sandy Paddy and that of Lombadina demonstrate how open to change the social group had become. In 1984, the 140 people who lived in Lombadina consisted of 130 of full descent, 20 persons of part descent, and about 10 others. Languages were English and Bardi, and there was no language barrier. Church personnel consisted of a Priest, two Loreto sisters and four lay missionaries. For employment, people were working under the Commonwealth Development and Employment Programs (C.D.E.P.) A variety of jobs were undertaken for stockmen, mechanics, butcher, baker, office work, teacher assistant and shop assistant. There was some confusion because people were uncertain as to where power could be exercised, but political power was with old women and old men. The Aboriginal Council and chairman made all decisions about community affairs. In 1989, the school became the 'Djarindjin Lombadina Catholic School'. It had been first established in 1915, taken over as a Government school much later, but became a Catholic School in 1980. In 1989 Sr. Francine *ibvm* began taking secondary students.

### **The Bidyadanga community at Lagrange**

Near the Bidyadanga community at Lagrange<sup>27</sup> gum trees grew along the beaches of the coastal strip which fronted the Indian Ocean. It had its all weather roads and an airstrip. The languages spoken were Nyangumarta, Mangala, Yulparija, Karajarri, and Juwaliny. A Government school was established in 1960. In 1984, the population consisted of 400 Aborigines, all except about 40 were of full descent. There was a language barrier for the older people but not for the young. By 1989 Bidyadanga community was a large multilingual community on Aboriginal Reserve land surrounding the Church Land and buildings. An insight into the past of La Grange Mission was provided by Fr McKelson *sac*, who had learnt the languages and shared the life of the community for many years.

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

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<sup>26</sup> Huegel and Nailon, *This is Your Place*, pp. 140 - 141.

<sup>27</sup> 'La Grange Chronicle' ADB: Because of its position, this area was often subject to cyclones. 'Cyclone Sally' struck La Grange mission in December 1971, causing at least \$30,000 damage.

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 was 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.

Some indication of how Fr McKelson saw the faith as not destroying the Old Law is provided in his comments:

"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 had no basic objection to their law, in particular, to the initiation ceremony. Without the members of the Ver Sacrum Mariae, the mission would have just ceased 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. Twenty-seven desert nomads had come into the La Grange mission. 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 have been deposited in the 'Darogo', the secret place nearby, where no women, children, or young people may visit.<sup>28</sup>

In 1989 employment was controlled by the Bidyadanga Community using Commonwealth Development and Employment Programs. Political power was held by the Aboriginal men and the white project officer. There was some confusion because people were uncertain as to where power was. Church personnel consisted of Fr McKelson *sac*, Br Richard Besenfelder *sac*, Sr Veronica McCarthy *sjg*, and Sr Johanna Klep *sjg*. Fr Matthew Digges, a Diocesan priest was appointed in 1990 and immediately began to learn the languages from Fr Mc Kelson. A teaching assistant at the local school spoke of the influence exercised by the local sisters of St John of God.

### **Madelene Jadai**

"When the St John of God Sisters came to work at La Grange they were taken in to be part of our Aboriginal family. We were able to share with them our culture and way of life. They were then able to help us learn about God more easily. Because of the Sisters being with us, I have learned that we are all important and special to God. The Sisters have really made me feel I belong to the Church and that I have the right to do things in Church to encourage others to be involved in the life of the Church. We are beginning to feel that the Church is the people of God and that we are in charge and can be responsible for our life in God. Now we are beginning to know that Aboriginal culture and the Catholic way go together. Many people have come to help us over the years - but most also go away again. The Sisters have stayed with us and shared everything with us - our happy times and sad times."<sup>29</sup>

Her last comment about the sisters staying with the group was most important for the women especially wanted their presence. Madelene Jadai later began a degree course in the Broome campus of Notre Dame University.

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<sup>28</sup> Fr Kevin McKelson, 'Letter to the Pallottine Fathers' sharing his vision. ADB.

<sup>29</sup> Scally, *To Speed on Angels' Wings, The Story of the Sisters of St John of God*, p.85.

## **Derby Parish**

In the Derby Parish <sup>30</sup> Catholic presence was maintained at Fitzroy Crossing, Looma, Pandanus Park, Imintji and Mowanjum by visitation and liturgy. In 1984, 40% of Derby's 3300 population was Aboriginal. English, Kriol, Nyikina, Worrier, Walmajarri, Bardi and Bunuba were spoken in the flat barren marsh environment of Derby. Many Aborigines lived on the Reserve. Catholic presence was maintained in Fitzroy Crossing, Looma, Pandanus Park, Imintji, Mowanjum, Gibb River, Koolan and Cockatoo Islands and outlying cattle stations.

### **Fitzroy Crossing**

The presence of Franciscan Sisters established the Church at Fitzroy Crossing. They took steps to form an active Catholic Community in both the town community and the bush communities, and to catechise Aborigines. Languages spoken were English, Kriol, Walmajarri, Bunaba, Gooniyandi and Wangkatjunga. Within a 100 km radius was a population of 2039, of which 1534 were of full descent and 100 were of part descent. Other residents totalled about 400. Many people from the United Aboriginal Mission in Fitzroy Crossing were related to people living at La Grange which was strategically situated at a point of transition of tribal movement from the Kimberley to the Pilbara and vice-versa.<sup>31</sup> Much Scripture translation had been done in Walmajarri, the lingua-franca of the area. The Walmajarri were around Balgo area when it was established as a Catholic Mission. The Kukatja took their place and the Walmajarri migrated to the Fitzroy area. Political power was with white Australians and Government workers.

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<sup>30</sup> Because of its position, the La Grange area was often subject to cyclones. 'Cyclone Sally' struck the mission in December 1971, causing at least \$30,000 damage. Lombadina Chronicle. ADB.

<sup>31</sup> Bayulu Village was near Blue Bush creek in the GoGo hills. When the Franciscan Sisters asked about coming into the GoGo school for Scripture, the head man and members of the Parents' Committee objected with three other families. The head man 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 three Sisters working there in 1984 regarded it as a pre-evangelisation area because the majority of the 50 Catholics were transient whites. 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 took seasonal work on stations, but not many. 'Karrayiyili', an Adult group in Fitzroy Crossing was established as 'Full Time Tertiary Education' in 1984.

## **Looma**

Early Catholic presence in Looma was nurtured by Fulgentius Frazer and his wife. <sup>32</sup> Among the 300 Aborigines at Looma, Mangala, Walmajarri, Nyikina, Wangkajunga, and Bunaba were spoken, and there was a language barrier. The community was situated on Aboriginal Reserve land excised from Liveringa Station. A mountain range formed the background, and it was an isolated and barren settlement where political power was with the Aboriginal men.

## **Pandanus Park**

There were about 20 Catholics living among other denominations in Pandanus Park. The small community on an Aboriginal Reserve near Willare Bridge was close to the river. As a bush community it was flat and isolated but with lush gardens of mangoes. The all Aboriginal population spoke Nyikina, Mangala, and Walmajarri but there was no language barrier. Employment was provided by the garden and maintenance work. Political power was with the young men and the government workers.

## **Imintji**

Imintji, an outstation where people spoke Kija, Nyikina, Ngarinyin, Gooniyandi and Jaru was also linked to Derby parish. About 1978 the river flooded at Fossil Downs Station, and an old person was drowned. The baptised group moved out to Imintji outstation, up the Gibb River Road. Mowanjum a dusty flat terrain, approximately 10 km from Derby had speakers of Ngarinyin, Worrorra, and Wunambal but there was no language barrier among the all Aboriginal population which had about 20 Catholics.

## **Wyndham Parish**

In the small but vibrant Aboriginal towns of the North Eastern Kimberley the people retained their own unique Aboriginal character with their own languages,

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<sup>32</sup> Fulgentius had been sent to Drysdale River Mission about 1909. He had married and lived with his wife at Beagle Bay, for eight to nine years. When they moved to Liveringa, he taught the Catholic faith to the people. His daughter, Agnes Puertollano, said, "When Dad was away mustering cattle, Mum used to call the people together for Rosary." Oral Sources. ADB.

Miriwun, Djamanjun, Moornbata, Djaaru, and Kija, still used for ceremonial life. By 1984, the population of Wyndham was 2000, consisting of about 600 Aborigines and the rest were Filipinos, Spaniards, Italians, French, Maltese, Malaysians, and Europeans. In Wyndham the number of baptised Aboriginal Catholics in the area had grown from a handful in 1959 to between two and three hundred by 1990. Though there was a language barrier English, Kija, and Kriol were spoken. The Catholic religious life both in doctrine, personal piety and ritual was expressed in largely Irish/Australian forms but efforts were being made to Aboriginalise some of the religious forms.

### **Kununurra Parish**

By 1984, Kununurra had a population of approximately 3000 non Aborigines among whom were a few Italians, Yugoslavs, Filipinos, and others. About 600 - 700 of the population were Aboriginal. There were approximately 400 Catholic Aborigines living in Kununurra and speaking their own languages including Miriwung and Murrinh-patha. There was sometimes a language barrier. 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. Political power was with the Aboriginal men, the young white Australians, the Government workers and the C.R.A. mining company.

### **The Warrmarn community at Turkey Creek**

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. Some of the people at Turkey Creek had come from Violet Valley. Stories from the past linked them together:

‘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.<sup>33</sup>

By 1984 there were five camp areas of people from different stations, Texas, Bedford, Mabel Downs, Lissadell and Springvale. When the wage award came, the old age pensioners came back and Ruby Yalanger was housekeeping at the Post Office which was now the Community Adviser's house. 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 were on stations working. Some had gone to Bow River Station. Some, like Jacko, who was the first to become a Catholic originally belonged to A United Aboriginal Mission Church.

The Warrmarn Community at Turkey Creek was a quite large community on Aboriginal Reserve land where the natural beauty of the surrounding mountains was close to a creek which was dry most of the year but subject to floods in the wet. At a distance of 200 km from town, roads were cut off at times in the wet. The languages were Kija, Mirwung, Jaru, Kriol and English languages. Among the population of about 250 Aborigines and 10 others comprising 2 Sisters, a community adviser, his wife and children, there could be a language barrier at times. It was the Texas Station Catholics who started the development of faith in Turkey Creek. Fr Nicholas Dehe sac encouraged Queenie and her mother Dinah to lead the rosary. The church made contact with Aboriginal people at the leprosarium.

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.

<sup>34</sup>

Winnie of Turkey Creek worked as a Catechist for some of the people. Both Winnie and Queenie were from Texas Station. Winnie was influential in Turkey Creek. She gave lessons in language, in Kija. Her brother Hector often acted as the lay minister and presided at the Communion Services. Catholic Church personnel was made up of the Sisters in the school and a pastoral associate. It was part of the Halls Creek Parish. Approximately 60 people had short term employment building houses, as shop assistants, at station work, office work and teaching. Political power was with the

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<sup>33</sup> This was one of the many stories told at the 1984 Diocesan Assembly. Ruby, the Chairman's wife, was a little girl when this happened.

<sup>34</sup> Queenie, an elder, told the people at the 1984 Diocesan Assembly.



Aboriginal women and men and with white Australians to a limited degree. At times there was confusion as to where power could be exercised.

### **The Kundat Djaru community of Ringers' Soak**

With the changing attitude of the Government to Aboriginal communities, it became easier for a tribal group to gain a small area of land. The lease gave the Kundat Djaru community of Ringers' Soak, 168 kilometres south of Halls Creek, a chance to exercise self determination for their future. Kundat Djaru community at Ringers' Soak (Yaruman) was an outstation South East of Halls Creek partly on land excised from Gordon Downs Station and partly on vacant crown land. The languages were Jaru, Ngarti, Nyuininy. This little community of about eighty had experienced the trauma of being evicted from Gordon Downs Station. After living a precarious existence in Hall's Creek for some time, they returned to Yaruman where they experienced more trouble from the manager of Gordon Downs. Because of a media campaign, the Government gave them land, a lease of 3500 hectares of Crown Land south of Gordon Downs. During their sojourn in Hall's Creek, the community had made contact with the Church through the kindness, concern and service of Fr Kriener and the Cannossian Sisters, who continued to visit the community and instruct them in the faith when they returned to Yaruman. Three kilometres from Gordon Downs, the forty square kilometres, had 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 the community had started to settle. They began to talk of the possibility of a school, "Maybe the year after, Sisters. Maybe a school in 1986."<sup>35</sup> Previous requests had been made to the Bishop by the Chairman of the Community, but a written letter was presented requesting him to provide a Catholic School for their children when he visited the Community 12 October 1983. The children had been lined up to meet the Bishop, and members of the community promised to be involved in the education of their children. The Bishop asked the Sisters of St Joseph to send two Sisters. These arrived 8 May 1985 accompanied by the Bishop and a Lay Missionary team to build generator sheds and shelters. The main thrust 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

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<sup>35</sup> Shared memory at the 1984 Diocesan Assembly.

November 1985 to join the community in celebrating their Baptism. In the five years since the Sisters arrived, the community had shown their strength as a small Christian community which had provided teachers for the children, continued instructions in their faith, and taken an active part in being a truly Christian people. The School was the 'Bilir Ngawiwu Catholic School'.

### **Lunja community or Red Hill**

Lunja community or Red Hill was a town community on Aboriginal Reserve land in Halls Creek where the Jaru language was spoken. The houses were up by 1980. At Christmas, Fr Kriener baptised 14 Aborigines in Red Hill, only three km. away from Halls Creek, but unlike Halls Creek, the Church was always full on Sundays.<sup>36</sup> The Catholic School was called the 'Warlawurru School' and was founded in 1988.

### **Women and Missiology**

For practical application of theological principles in missiological theories, women were searching together for their way to participate in the current cultural transformation taking place. Recognition was being made of current roles of leadership of Aboriginal women in ministry. Among those writing about the theory and practice of this paradigm shift was Sr Clare Ahern whose involvement in the women's affairs and acceptance of responsibilities, was made with the realisation that the Aboriginal women involved the Sisters in making an unwritten contract. There was to be no deviating from the position the sisters had taken.<sup>37</sup> Sr Clare wrote about the women who lived in the community where she worked.

Our country is blessed with the unsung songs of Australian women, untold stories of Aboriginal women leaders who have had to lead without the support of their menfolk. Those of us who have walked alongside them have seen and felt the strength, wisdom and humour in their leadership. They wear it lightly, leading when it is necessary and taking the fringe benefits as they come.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Brigida Nailon at Halls Creek, 1984.

<sup>37</sup> Clare Ahern, 'A Religious Contract with the Kundat Djaru Community', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 24, (1985), pp.3-8.

Leadership is not seen as limiting but as part of life, mixed with pain and pleasure. We have so much to learn from them.<sup>38</sup>

She described herself as a younger missionary conscious that older missionaries had paved the way for her. Her reaction to Fr Eugene Stockton's "view of the mission scene through the eyes of mission personnel"<sup>39</sup> was a rejection of having the same perceptions for she saw different scenes.<sup>40</sup> 'With her colleagues', she met regularly to discuss, plan and evaluate the mission work. Sometimes these meetings took place in non-mission places, where non Aboriginals and Church-Workers discussed community issues. Their interest was not confined to the 'spiritual'. They were aware of the principle that the sacred and profane were not separated in Aboriginal society.<sup>41</sup> Aboriginal women from different places had names for their communities. So many had the names of trees that there was a hope that the life of the Spirit would blossom in those Aboriginal trees and that missionaries should look to the new shoots and receive life from them and not worry too much about or trip over the older branches that made way for the new.<sup>42</sup>

Another Sister of St Joseph, Veronica Mary Ryan, appointed to work in the East Kimberley, found the appointment in keeping with the spirit of her Australian order which had such a humble beginning in 1866.<sup>43</sup> Her research, 'Aboriginal Women in the Face of Change: "We Gottem Two-Way Right Through Now"' presented the view that new ideas were acceptable to Aboriginal women only insofar as they enhanced the value of beliefs, customs and practices already held.<sup>44</sup> Through their stories she demonstrated how the Aboriginal women of Turkey Creek understood their gender role within society according to the way older women educated them to understand it. Access to gender knowledge gave direction to the women's actions in social, cultural and political contexts. For example, control of land did not only belong to men, the women were responsible for their own sacred

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<sup>38</sup> Clare Ahern *rsj*, 'Biblical and Aboriginal Women of Note', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 46, (Autumn, 1991), p.11.

<sup>39</sup> E.Stockton, *Nelen Yubu*, no. 27, (Winter 1986).p.24.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>41</sup> Clare Ahern *rsj*, 'A Kimberley Response to Eugene Stockton' *Nelen Yubu*, no. 29, (1986/7), p.1-11.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>43</sup> Veronica Mary Ryan 'Aboriginal Women in the Face of Change: "We Gottem Two-Way Right Through Now"', A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Education at the University of New England, March 1991, p.vii.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. xxii.

sites.<sup>45</sup> In the East Kimberley, incidents of cultural contact by female Catholic Missionaries exposed them to a diversity of situations. In the light of the ideas being expressed by women in the field, avenues for action are being explored in the changed structures of society.

### **The ‘stolen generation’**

It is difficult to analyse comments from the children of the ‘stolen generation’ with hindsight, that is, the historian’s task is to understand attitudes at the time.. Though one can distinguish between government policy and church policy, it was difficult to separate them. Missions acquiesced in being the receivers of children taken by the police or Aboriginal Inspectors. At other times white fathers or Aboriginal parents sent their children to the missions to be cared for and educated. Sometimes children were cared for in dormitories but lived with their parents in the camp during the holidays.

In later years there has been resentment when Religious Orders started on a program of white involvement in Aboriginal communities without consultation with the Aboriginal community elders about the individual people to do the work.<sup>46</sup> It is

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<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>46</sup> The Aborigines took a ‘no change’ position in 1993, when the Sisters came together with Aborigines from various communities with which they worked, Warrmarn, Yaruman, Broome, Kununurra, Halls Creek and Mirrilingki. The Aboriginal people spoke about the sister’s ministry and the Sisters shared their vision of ministry.

Comments recorded from Yaruman people:

We teach in school - the Sisters keep on helping us to be teachers. We want to keep on doing Ngawi stories. We want the Sisters to learn the language so we can write it down. We want the Sisters to do what we tell them. Everything good.

Comments recorded from Warrmarn people:

Teach our children-religion and education. To train the people to set up for Mass, funeral services etc. helping to solve community problems eg. grog (Mirrilingki), good to communicate with open mind, encourage us in what we do, young and old. Sisters must listen to the people and what they want.

Comments recorded from Wyndham people:

Sister a happy person, welcomes us to her home, good listener, available. Pentecost - good time to meet others, mass and prayer leadership, funerals, sale of clothes, we have learned to order, do banking, do the books, write the cheques, car available for lifts. Give more time for jail visitation. Comments recorded from Kununurra people: Worried about drunks who do not look after their kids. Dreaming story, pray for everyone - drunks, school, teaching language and kardija way, Sisters with us praying - one way road to Ngapuny.

Comments recorded from Halls Creek people:

What is good?: If there were no Sisters we would look for a good principal -look for a good sister who will teach us about Ngawi, school, language workers.

too easy for a white person to assume control and to make decisions because those who provide the financial support do not have confidence in the Aboriginal appointees to administer.<sup>47</sup> Negative reports have been made about this across Australia to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council. The fact that this was done in good faith by Church people for many years was now seen as an aspect of paternalism.<sup>48</sup> There was strong resistance to assimilation in the remnants of what was known as ‘The Stolen Generation’ who formed a strong identity among themselves because of their institutionalism.

### **‘The Aboriginal Anawim’**

In ‘The Aboriginal Anawim’<sup>49</sup>, Cletus Read *fms* explored the concept of ‘equality of persons’ in the context that with Australians, a mindset inherited from Europe entailed a conviction that an essential element in a concept of church was location, a church was a community which worshipped God in a particular building; which sent its children to a particular school; and which entrusted the health care of its sick to a particular hospital. It worried him that Church resource people seemed to direct their efforts toward the more advantaged Aboriginal families who had attained a state of stability. He saw that the most disadvantaged families of Aborigines were the dispossessed of the agricultural region and those whose country had been taken over by pastoralists for cattle stations. They lived in fringe camps bordering towns or in communities associated with cattle stations, or in isolated camps scattered through the outback. Mabo offered no hope for these families because the law had cancelled all native rights to their land. Their forebears were semi-nomadic and had to travel a wide range to survive in the dry interior and many of them still move from settlement to fringe camp, from fringe camp to pastoral excision, from pastoral excision to visit distant relatives and so on in a never-ending cycle.

### **Decision-making about their own affairs belongs to Aborigines.**

The principle of self determination was not limited to the case of whites empowering Aborigines to make decisions about their own lives. Churches and Governments have been criticised for setting up councils of advantaged Aboriginal

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<sup>47</sup> Comments made by NATSICC representatives in discussions.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Vicki Walker in Beijing, 6 September 1995.

<sup>49</sup> ‘anawim’ is a biblical concept meaning ‘God’s poor’, a term which encapsulates the beatitude, “Blessed are the poor, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of God”.

people and leaving those councils to make decisions for the Aboriginal 'anawim', even though the Aboriginal members of the councils were just as ignorant of the circumstances and life of the 'anawim' as were the whites who delegated authority to them. This often happened where the 'anawim' were women who had no representative on the local Aboriginal Council, and were ignored by the Kimberley Land Council, both of which usually were completely male, or had a majority of males. Church administration needs to listen to the voice of the Aboriginal 'anawim' and give them power to make decisions about ways of improving the quality of their own lives.<sup>50</sup>

The theme of this chapter was the deepening of Church Communion between all groups baptised into the Catholic Church. This was successfully achieved by pilgrimages, assemblies, establishment of spirituality centres and educational facilities by church workers in collaboration with Aboriginal communities. One of the most cohesive elements in this deepening of Communion was the social force of women's creative spirit. Song cycles and ceremonies attached to land and kinship groups throughout the changing seasons were personally owned by the people belonging to that land and though Aborigines now have more freedom to visit their spiritual land the significance of ceremonies integral to their Aboriginality may be lost if there has been no ongoing maintenance of the land. The common story of dispossession of the lost generations was the hurt carried in the hearts of the people by the events in their lives. Dislocation from their spiritual land affected individuals. In an indigenous community people ask, who are you? where you come from? who your mother was? who your father was? what country you belonged to? Loss of opportunities to fulfil cultural entitlements, to grow up speaking a particular language that belonged to a certain customary law tradition with responsibilities for certain tracts of lands and obligations for the care of the people was a personal loss of identity.

An argument has been presented to show the necessity of reconciliation. Unfortunately, colonisation in Australia was approached on a materialistic base which cared little for the rights of workers. A concept of 'structures

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<sup>50</sup> Cletus Read *fms*, 'The Aboriginal Anawim', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 56, 1994/1, pp. 5-10. "Church resource people seem to turn up information relating to the well adjusted families; diocese and parish councils and programs are tailored to meet the needs of the more advantaged Aboriginal families; and training centres such as Nungalinga seem to me to have the same focus."

of sin' could help to analyse issues concerning 'Aborigines and work'. This was identified by John Paul II in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: On Social Concern*,<sup>51</sup> in 1987:

On the one hand, the all-consuming desire for profit, and on the other, the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one's will upon others" are two negative attitudes stemming from such structures.<sup>52</sup>

### **Aboriginal Experiences of Work**

The life story of Wadjularbinna, a member of the Gungalidda tribe of the Gulf of Carpentaria showed the complexity of issues faced by individual workers among Aboriginal people in Australia:

I am a stolen child, taken from my mother when I was three or four. What I lost was something most white Australians take for granted: having two parents and being able to speak their language and inherit their culture. My marriage was arranged by missionaries. For 18 years, as a station manager's wife, I was forced to live a lie. It was 30 years before I went home again and felt free to be myself. White Australia lacks our spiritual connection to the land and to creation, our sense of responsibility towards one another, our spirit of community. Our society has never been founded on money.<sup>53</sup>

Aboriginal labour in the north of Australia was a necessity for the survival of the white pioneers who took up land in the north west. Experiences of work on cattle stations were hard and unrequited. Queenie McKensie of the Turkey Creek area recalled that:

When I went back to the station after the muster I used to do all the cooking there too for the kartiya (whites) and sometimes I used to help other women checking and fixing fences, flood-gates and troughs. All this was real hard work. Nearly all my life on the station, my job was cooking breakfast, dinner supper and smoko. Also washing up the dishes afterwards.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: On Social Concern*, 1987, n 37.

<sup>52</sup> Sandie Cornish, 'Women and Work in the Catholic Social Justice Tradition: A workshop prepared for 'Beijing in Melbourne', Catholic Social Services Women's Conference, Presentation College, 187 Dandenong Road, Windsor, 2 June 1995. n 18. Pope John Paul II used the term 'indirect employer' to refer to 'all the agents at the national and international level that are responsible for the whole orientation of labour policy'.

<sup>53</sup> 'Voices that shatter our reconciliation', *The Age*, 11 October 1966, p. A15.

<sup>54</sup> Sr Pat Sealey, *rsj* 'Mirrilingki Centre Newsletter, Warmun', 14 July 1992. See Zucker, *From Patrons to Partners*.

Many work experiences were involved with mission enterprises, where Aborigines became skilled and competent working beside the missionaries. In a speech about Aboriginal Welfare in the Legislative Assembly J. Rhatigan MLA said:

The pearling boats being constructed in Broome today (1954) are being built with the assistance of native labour. These fellows learnt their trade at the Beagle Bay Mission from the German Brothers. They are capable of adding to buildings as families increase.<sup>55</sup>

Major works and maintenance of the missions and church properties, between 1951 to 1959 were recorded in the Chronicles of Derby, La Grange, Balgo, Lombadina and Broome. Under the auspices of the Church, Churches were built at the leprosarium and in Derby. La Grange, Balgo, Lombadina and Beagle Bay Missions were in constant need of cartage of goods. Buildings were erected at all these places. In August 1951, at the leprosarium Aboriginal patients and Bro Hanke built a Church. Another Church was built in Derby and other work was finished. In January 1959 Four men from Beagle Bay Mission who were working in Derby at the Presbytery till the rain cleared, left for Alice Springs to work for a year on a station.<sup>56</sup>

At La Grange Mission, food was provided, buildings were erected, school was conducted and medical attention was provided.<sup>57</sup> Constant cyclones caused much

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<sup>55</sup> "Broome Chronicle", 1954, ADB. Copy of *Hansard*, No. 18, 1953, p. 2112.

<sup>56</sup> "Derby Chronicle", January 1959. ADB. 3 July 1953, Brother William and his team brought four loads of stones from Liveringa Station for the foundations;

26 August 1953, Brother Joseph Tautz had made eight stained glass windows which were brought from Beagle Bay by Richard Cox and Jack Sahanna

6 September 1953, Richard Cox, Jack Sahanna and Vincent Victor worked for a week to finish half the roof;

13 September 1953, Frank Rodriguez came into town to build the new foundation wall with stones.

29 December 1954, Fr F. Huegel, with Albert Dan and Paul Howard, left Broome in a new Ford B8 truck which Fr Worms, Fr Regional, with Bro Besenfelder from Tardun had driven overland from Perth

<sup>57</sup> "Broome Chronicle", 1955, ADB. March Albert Dan with his team enlarged the garage. Paul Howard with others began to build three more houses, 2 in the Udialla camp and one in the Garady camp. At the initiative of Sr Evans the children's kitchen with a big new stove was opened. Melba and Bennet were the cooks under the her supervision. During the same week the Nissan-hut hospital was painted inside. Albert Dan's truck was broken down on his way out from Broome. July Albert came with Nellie, his bride and his Sister Vera. October Jimmy Howard from B.B.M. supplied for Albert by driving the big load of building material. 9 September 1955 Albert Dan, the driver of the La Grange truck arrived from Beagle Bay Mission with two elderly natives who would guard the bulls on Four Mile Plain.



damage and consequent rebuilding was needed.<sup>58</sup> Transport of goods required constant work.<sup>59</sup> A team of Aboriginal persons gave constant support. The Williams family,<sup>60</sup> and the Dann Family were among them.<sup>61</sup> In Balgo ovens were built and bread was cooked daily.<sup>62</sup> At Lombadina and other missions, missionaries worked to keep a constant supply of power for electricity.<sup>63</sup>

The work outlined above shows the dependency of Church authority on Aboriginal agency and represents work by Aborigines associated with Beagle Bay Mission for a long time. They worked alongside the lay brothers. In the chronicles, the only wages mentioned was the £3 to be paid to Elizabeth Dann whose job description would make the stoutest heart quail.<sup>64</sup> To what end was the work listed above being done? It was for quality of life for members of the communities. In the performance of the work Aborigines were being trained. There is no evidence of Aboriginal ownership, but it was to the advantage of the communities which were to use the facilities, and in the end, most came into the possession of the new community councils. Much voluntary work was needed for maintaining the missions and

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<sup>58</sup> "Lombadina Chronicle", 1955, ADB. 19 February 1955 Cyclone: 3 windmills blown down and damaged beyond repair, others partly damaged. Workshop demolished. Paperbark roofs partly blown off. Native huts blown away.

April 1955 All the men busy erecting windmills, opening mud blocked wells, and making a cemented stone path around the windmill troughs.

August/ September A workshop, saddle shop and Sister's kitchen were built.

<sup>59</sup> "La Grange Chronicle", 1955, ADB. November 1955, Paul Howard returned from Balgo. From Broome he brought about 1 and a half tons of a shipment of about 30 tons. Tom Edgar brought another load of building material.

<sup>60</sup> "Balgo Chronicle", 1956, ADB. 26 January 1956 Lawrence Williams who was sent by Bishop Raible to Balgo arrived with his whole family by car. Paul Cox and J. Sahanna left for Beagle Bay. 21 June 1956 Lawrence Williams with family back to Beagle Bay. September Lawrence Williams took over from Albert Dann the job of driving the Ford. He brought his wife and two youngest children.

<sup>61</sup> "La Grange Chronicle", 1956, ADB. May Vera Dann, Sister of Albert, arrived as a lay helper. 14 May 1956, Bishop Raible wrote to Fr Francis, "Elizabeth Dann will be ready any time you want her. I think we should pay her £3, if she looks after the girls, does the necessary sewing and conducts the kitchen. She is also capable of teaching elementary things."

<sup>62</sup> "Balgo Chronicle", 1955, ADB. 6 November 1955 Richard and Paul Cox arrived to do odd jobs here. Richard built a bakery - a dough mixer was installed.

<sup>63</sup> "Lombadina Chronicle", 1956, ADB. December 1955, Bro Joseph Tautz to put up the generator and bring with him 2 tons flour and groceries. The generator did not work, taken to A. B. M., then to Broome by Paul Cox. Percy Shadforth and Joe Roche brought it back.

<sup>64</sup> The author does not know of the economic basis on which this work was carried out, but much work was done. See Appendix with list of buildings erected after 1959.

Aboriginal women and men supported this work White lay missionary staff worked for pocket money and keep.

Hilton Deakin in 'The Aborigines and the Church: A Study of the Relationship between the Aboriginal People and the Catholic Church in Australia', researched the contact situation for Catholicism and Aborigines.<sup>65</sup> It demonstrated that the Kimberley missionaries had done a great deal. But what had been done, and what was being done had alleviated only some of the need. One hundred years after the first Baptisms in Beagle Bay, Sir William Deane, the Governor General of Australia, at a charity function in Sydney, singled out Aborigines as particularly worthy of compassion He said "Australia's standard of care for the needy and social support for the disadvantaged was undoubtedly the most important problem facing our nation."<sup>66</sup>

A sad note crept into the hypothesis that the Catholic Missions of the Kimberley had contributed something unique and beautiful for the wider community of Australia, with the consideration of the 'stolen generation' but there was always diversity in the status of the children at the Beagle Bay Mission: some were genuine orphans; some the result of liaisons between itinerant white men and Aboriginal women; some were from stations where the white overseer or stockman wanted to see his child, or children educated; and was prepared to pay for it;<sup>67</sup> some were from tribal camps where a white skinned child was unwanted, sometimes killed at birth. Some Asian children were orphaned. White children were also placed at the mission parents for care and education.<sup>68</sup>

When the phrase "internally displaced"<sup>69</sup> is applied to Aborigines, there are four other issues of concern which are related to the main hypothesis of the thesis:

1. The basic European orientation of the prevailing education and health systems;<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Hilton Deakin, 'The Aborigines and the Church: A Study of the Relationship between the Aboriginal People and the Catholic Church in Australia', Research commissioned by the Episcopal Commission for Development and Peace in Australia. Private publication, 1975.

<sup>66</sup> Gervase Greene, 'G-G blasts lack of care for the poor', The Age, 5 Oct. 1966, p.A3.

<sup>67</sup> For example, the Button family. References found in correspondence, ADB.

<sup>68</sup> Of the forty-eight recorded stories in *This is Your Place*, twenty-seven of those interviewed had been sent to the mission by their parents, or guardians; or had come voluntarily for education; eight had been brought by the police; two had lost their mothers; some who had been born on the Mission had been sent to the Leprosarium; others lived in camps nearby.

<sup>69</sup> *Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women*, NGO Forum, United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, 30 August-8 September 1995, Huairou. par 37.

2. The role of European media, education, and religion in eroding the cultural diversity which exists among indigenous peoples;<sup>71</sup>

The majority of Australian Catholics do not fit easily into the context of a Roman, or a Western church, let alone one of the British Empire. Major changes in English culture leading to modern democracy, urbanisation and capitalism, did not require religious legitimisation. They were the result of revolutions, industrial, as well as national like the French and American revolutions. Christendom, as it existed in historical Europe, never existed in Australia and it is questionable whether the values of Western Society ever fully become true Australian concepts. Modern Australia was probably therefore the first secular nation. None of the major components of our social structure have been sacralised. They are conceived of as human constructs, precisely what culture is.<sup>72</sup> This concept of human constructs is explored by David Tacey. He wrote of the way in which a split between the spiritual and the secular in Australian experience along racial lines is apparent where black Aboriginal Australians are frequently depicted as possessing sacred values, truths, and visions, and as inhabiting sacred space. But because of this split other Australians are denied access to the sacredness of the land, and black Australians are denied access to material wealth and economic security.<sup>73</sup>

3. the violence and sexual trafficking of indigenous women; Many of the women and the children of mixed descent who were brought into Beagle Bay Mission in the early days after 1907 had experienced violence and sexual trafficking among a lawless generation which permitted or condoned white atrocities. Where Church presence had taken root, women's agency on both sides of the contact, created and supported a 'communion of peoples'. In both Beagle Bay and Lombadina women were given

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<sup>70</sup> Through a systematic review of the cross-cultural content of course materials by collaborative scholarship a group of academics came to the conclusion that their 'History and Philosophy of Science Discipline,' was guilty of a high degree of European ethnocentrism. For Australian students, a tacitly imperialist stance dominating scholarship and teaching was judged intellectually unsound. At Deakin University *Singing the Land, Signing the Land* is one of six portfolios of knowledge and graphic illustrations compiled from research on "world view" and its impact on conceptualisation. For a dialogue on sound educational principles with Aborigines, Western ideological bases for education need to be rethought. Through a comparison and contrast of a variety of knowledge and belief systems, a group of Australians academics recognised the stature of Aboriginal styles of social interaction.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, par 13.

<sup>72</sup> C. Halley, 'Inculturation and Poly-Ethnicity', in Houston, *The Cultural Pearl*, p.32. Cyril Halley is a Columban missionary, and a demographer.

<sup>73</sup> David J. Tacey, *Edge of the Sacred Transformation in Australia*, Harper Collins Publishers, North Blackburn, 1995, p. 8.

positions on the early tribal councils. To many people Beagle Bay had been a symbol of the sanctuary the Missions had given Aborigines. The shelter of the Mission had sometimes been different from what was known as 'Protection'. For some it was positive giving independence, work in cooperatives 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 came back to work in the garden, on light duties, but still working.

I come home, I was born here. I was schooled up here. 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.

The baptismal name of 'Baldanic' was 'Balthazar'. He was baptised by the Cistercians and mentioned in their records several times. His daughter, Mary, married Keith Kitchener who came from Moola Bulla when he was five years of age and later became the Chairman of the Council at Beagle Bay Community.<sup>74</sup> Trust in the missionaries allowed the development of industry, education<sup>75</sup> and housing.

4. The numbers of indigenous women used for menial labour as a result of psychological alienation and assimilation policies of colonisation.<sup>76</sup> For many women, the expectations of being employed were limited to domestic chores and the social injustice of being exploited in the ways described to Moseley in the 1930's. It was not until the 1990's that women had expectations. that all acts of discrimination against Indigenous Women could be considered and punished as a crime, and that all internally displaced indigenous peoples might be allowed to return to their own communities with necessary rehabilitation and support services provided.

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<sup>74</sup> Newspaper report from the Southern Cross, in files in ADB.

<sup>75</sup> "Beagle Bay Chronicle", ADB

<sup>76</sup> *Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women*, par 14.

## Indigenous Church Leadership

There are questions which may be answered only with great difficulty in the future: What is the future of the Church which apologised for its part in the occurrences of displaced persons? For generations, dispossession, unemployment, discrimination and loss of status prevented equality of person for Aborigines.<sup>77</sup> In what ways have the agendas and voices of women, especially indigenous women in the Catholic Church community been recognised or ignored? How do Aborigines, especially the women, fit into parish/diocese structures? Does the present divided Christian church become an obstacle to future evangelisation? Idealistic developments envisaged by John Paul II in his 1986 address to the Aboriginal people of Australia would be very difficult to implement within the norm of a diocese/parish system.<sup>78</sup> The model of the large parish base with top-down leadership is contrary to Aboriginal social patterns of small-scale kin-based groups and group leadership.<sup>79</sup> For the Catholic Church there has been empowering of lay pastoral teams in some places. A concept of Church, not as a community which worshipped God only in a particular building, but one which took into account the regions of influence of various Christian churches would take note of the fact that most outside marriages from a particular community in all probability were cross-church marriages, rather than Catholic/Catholic marriage. For Aboriginal people, visits to relatives were serious duties so that, when a Catholic married a Christian of another Church, the family would spend significant amounts of time in settlement of different denominations. It has been suggested that if the church went in search of the people instead of dropping anchor in one place, a rabbinical style basic church could avoid the delicate ground of Eucharistic practice where families had allegiance to two different Christian churches.<sup>80</sup> Do ideas such as these point to a future communion with Indigenous Aboriginal Churches connected with a kinship, tribal base? Or has the Catholic Church blessed ecumenism with tongue in cheek.

The emerging picture of indigenous churches struggling to find a *voice* and assume creative ownership of their Christian communities, points to a new phase in

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<sup>77</sup> Cletus Read, *fms*, 'Man is Born Equal', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 55, 1993/3, pp. 1-6.

<sup>78</sup> Martin Wilson, *msc*, 'A Voice from the Desert', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 61, (1995/3), pp. 10-11.

<sup>79</sup> David Thompson, 'Leadership and Aboriginal Churches', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 60, 1995/2, p. 11.

<sup>80</sup> Cletus Read, *fms*, 'Towards Aboriginal Church', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 54, 1993/2, pp. 1-7.

the historical journey of the Kimberley Church. Furthermore, the extent to which the mainstream Church accepts and listens to Indigenous leadership in the Kimberley, will determine its credibility and wholeness.<sup>81</sup> The voice of women had a place in 'Gender sensitivity', the notion that every single social action or piece of legislation in a country must first be tested for its effect on women and girls. 'Gender equity' means the removal of discrimination because of sex. The urgent need for Governments as well as Churches to analyse the effect of present economic policies on women, means to evaluate the effectiveness of anti-poverty programs and provide access to resources - to credit, property rights and social security - so that women can develop the economic independence that men take for granted. If all property went in the male name, because it is the role of the males to provide for his family, then how do women providers fare when men do not provide?

Closing the gender gap in primary and secondary school education would be a step toward well balanced communities. The majority of women are not offered equal opportunities for education and in some Aboriginal communities they have no place on community councils. Yet it takes an educated woman to be an agent of change, to maintain a quality home, to raise healthy well-nourished children because women are primary producers of food for the world, because they maintain domestic systems that enable all major economic systems of the world to use their labour, their experience, their opinions, or their ideas on the subject of resources should be valued. Both Church and Government bodies should end discrimination based on sex, to equalise wages, to see that women get access to capital and credit, to bring women into the decision-making arena of the economic order and end economic discrimination based on gender. Integrating women in decision-making in all departments and all levels would give gender balance on commissions, committees, public platforms, private boards and institutional planning programmes. Women need access to the courts and penal systems as interpreters to ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law. All planning for the future of communities should be evaluated from a female as well as a male perspective.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Heart of Pope Paul's address in Alice Springs, 29 November 1986. cf., Cletus Read, 'Inculturation or Assimilation', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 57, 1994/2, pp. 13-22.

<sup>82</sup> Chittester, *Beyond Beijing: The Next Step for Women*, p. 150 - 160.

## Conclusion

Both aspects of my hypothesis, firstly that the Catholic Church in the Kimberley changed the social components of society in a positive way by enabling a universal faith communion,<sup>1</sup> and secondly women's nurturing of relationships in social structure<sup>2</sup> became a positive creative force through the agency and by the support of Aborigines. Processes of cultural transmission, and ways in which collective memories and histories were invented, retained or lost, were analysed<sup>3</sup> to support the argument that the seed of faith planted in Beagle Bay in 1890 had an inherent dynamism which brought forth a new social life.

In the introduction of this thesis there was a presentation of oral and written sources listing both female and male contributors. Anecdotal interviews provided an overall hypothesis for the thesis. A creative appropriation of new ideas, especially among the women enabled them to substantially form a communion of peoples. Sub-themes to analyse and support this hypothesis were interpolated into different chapters of the thesis.

Chapters 1, 5, and 9 explored the context of contact demonstrating the need for non government humanitarian bodies like the missions to establish a new society for Aboriginal people. It took many years for the principles of non discrimination and negotiation<sup>4</sup> to be seen as essential so that just and mutually recognised agreements with regard to human rights were inclusively female as well as male. The development of detrimental effects of colonisation and protective legislation removed Aborigines from the mainstream so that resulting disempowerment continued through

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<sup>1</sup> Expressed by a thrust into the future to enable local leadership in the indigenous kinship groups in the manner of Warrmarn community.

<sup>2</sup> Especially through women with big families like Lena Cox, Bertha Sibosado, and Amy Sampey, from Beagle Bay and Lombadina and through strong leaders like Winnie, Queenie and Ruby from East Kimberley and Theresa Puertollano from the Leprosarium.

<sup>3</sup> 'Home and Away: Journeys Migrations Diasporas, *Humanities Recourse Centre Bulletin*, Humanities Resource Centre, Australia National University, Canberra, (June 1996) no. 82, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Brennan, *sj*, 'The Wik Judgement: Parliament's Opportunity to Restore Certainty and to Rectify a Significant Moral Shortcoming in Australian Land Laws. The Case for Non-Extinguishment, Non-Discrimination and negotiation', *Occasional Paper Number 97*, Uniya, Jesuit Social Justice Centre, Kings Cross, March 1997.

an assimilation policy until post 1967, when consequent self determination policies enabled them to take initiative for their own destiny.

Chapters 2, 6, and 10 explored the history of the establishment of Catholic Church Missions and Centres in response to Aboriginal need. The founding of a multi-cultured Catholic Church and the communal spirit of the missions assisted in establishing a communion of peoples within the social fabric of the Kimberley. It has been shown that through two world wars, and post war times, the plight of displaced Aborigines aroused the compassion of male and female Catholic Church missionaries who volunteered their services to maintain an infrastructure for services and pastoral care centres in the Kimberley.

Chapters 3,7, and 11 explored experiences of female Church Workers which showed that to hear women's voices, to have their input, and to honour their agendas was a necessity for decision-making bodies, and that women make their own space in which to operate. Where structures were deprived of feminine perspectives, feminine value systems and a feminine voice they were limited. and society benefited from only half of human experience. The inference that there was a gender gap within Government, Church, and Aboriginal communities where women were not taken into account at meetings, has been substantiated by the omission to fulfil the request of Moseley's Royal Commission to provide a female protector of Aborigines. To the present day this attitude is still found with male administrators,<sup>5</sup> but despite such incidents there continued to be mutual cultural enrichment of Aboriginal and Christian traditions.<sup>6</sup>

Chapters 4, 8. and 12 described the Aboriginal experiences presented from an Aboriginal perspective to demonstrate that opportunities for Aboriginal Gospel contextualization did occur in educational places where women were administrators, or had some input into liturgical celebration.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In 1991 at Bidadanga 10 women and myself had made an appointment with a member of the tribal council to talk about literacy courses. Members of the Kimberley Land Council visited the community. The men gathered with them. The women sat at a distance and watched them talk. The women's agenda was ignored as of no consequence and no woman took part in the land discussion.

<sup>6</sup> Clare Ahern, *rsj*, 'A Religious Contract with the Kundat Djaru Community', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 24, (1985), pp. 3-8.

<sup>7</sup> Noel Mc Master *cssr*, 'Inculturation: Faith at Work in Life and Rite', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 66, 1997/2. "A baptism rite for a ceremony at Doon Doon included a fire blessing, the liberal use of bush oils on the baby, the *bundawela* for the baby's forehead, and



Issues raised by indigenous women at the Beijing Women's Conference have also been voiced in the thesis through the experiences of Kimberley women, that is, the sexual trafficking of Aboriginal women resulted in so many children of mixed descent with no stable families to support them; the numbers of Aboriginal women used for menial labour as a result of colonisation policies; the question of a basic European orientation of prevailing education and health systems; and the danger that the role of European media, education, and religion could erode the cultural diversity which existed among the Aboriginal peoples.

In early chapters it was established that a multi-cultured Catholic Church and the communal spirit of the missions enabled a universal faith communion to come into being within the Kimberley society, and that women's nurturing of relationships with the support and agency of Aborigines created a strong positive social force. Men did not speak for women, they spoke for themselves and their own agendas. Where society was deprived of a feminine perspective, a feminine value system and a feminine voice there was imposition of male agendas over female agendas. To hear women's voices, to solicit their input, to honour their agendas women had to be present in decision-making bodies. The absence of women in the Church arena presented a serious gap in the human condition. The experiences of women on both sides of the encounter demonstrated their creative ability in accommodation with new opportunities.

Indicative and supportive of the argument of the significance of women's contribution to the region, especially in the field of education and health care is the situation that where Aboriginal communities asked for Catholic Community Schools to be established, they also asked for the sisters to teach and administer them. In the East Kimberley in particular since the 1960's there has been a special emphasis on 'Two Ways Education'.

Aboriginal participants played leading roles in sharing memories at pilgrimages and the Diocesan Assembly in 1984 to reclaim the past in order to liberate the present. It was an attempt to further adult faith development to meet Aboriginal Christians in a physical environment suited to cultural background, where people felt at home to discuss and pray about their lives as Aboriginal Christians. The inspiration for the Assembly grew from two sources, firstly the rich spiritual and communal experience West Kimberley people enjoyed when they went back to

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the mother baptised the baby as the traditional leader recognised that this is a mother's domain."

Beagle Bay for Fr Francis Huegel's Golden Jubilee of his priesthood and secondly a request from the Red Hill people of Halls Creek for the Catholic people to come together in faith, as did the various fundamental Christian groups throughout the East Kimberley.

All present at the meeting recognised the potential pastoral significance that such a coming together in faith could be for the Church in the Kimberley. It was the first big meeting of the East and West Kimberley Churches.

This history of encounter between Catholicism and Aboriginal peoples in the Kimberley of Western Australia 1884 - 1990 emphasised the Catholic Church's concern for the well being of Aboriginal peoples. The vitality of indigenous communities rested on the extent to which female persons on both sides of the encounter shared roles of leadership and service. A social context producing communion rather than power evolved where women were seen as essential to stable relationships. Absence of women's voices in making policy presented a serious gap for the implementation of women's agendas on gender issues but Aboriginal agency was always essential in establishing centres of pastoral care.

During different phases in the history of contact between Catholicism and Aborigines in the Kimberley women experienced different roles depending on which side of the encounter they were found. In the initial encounter during which missionaries sold "the whole package of Christianity" and the mission became the centre of welfare, education and spirituality women taught in the schools and worked hard in domestic roles. When, under the act of 1936 missionaries had to have a licence, only male names were listed. Some religious sisters lost their role in the schools when the opportunity came for missions to accept the State schools which were provided by the Government for La Grange, Kalumburu, and Lombadina.<sup>8</sup> While a mission community was organised like a monastery children and women were 'protected' from Aboriginal Law but the quasi-monastic pattern of church worker's lives in the community may not have been so suitable for the 'Native Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles'. whose order was founded at this time. Bishop Raible had made Beagle Bay the centre of Church Administration. When Broome became an administrative town for the armed forces, Broome Aborigines relocated to Beagle Bay

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<sup>8</sup> The Sisters of the Infant Jesus enabled this school to become a Catholic School again in the eighties, and the Loreto Sisters administered the school after them.

were funded differently to mission Aborigines. Card playing became a popular pastime with those who did not have to work.

Protection policies and assimilation policies gave way to an era of self-determination and self management. As isolated communities were given access to advisers, consultants, bookkeepers<sup>9</sup> Aborigines exercised a different independence. In some communities like Beagle Bay and Lombadina an Aboriginal woman was elected Chairman of the Tribal Council. Changes enabled by the different political climate and the implementation of the policy of 'self determination', gave Aboriginal agency more power to choose their own way. During this latest phase, the Catholic Church may have trailed behind other mainstream Christian Churches in terms of indigenous clergy<sup>10</sup> but both women and men were given opportunities for leadership roles in the Catholic Education system.

In this thesis I have argued that the Catholic Religion was empowering for Aborigines by enabling options for wider community. For those who appropriated Catholicism, a way was provided for expressing their own agency and power.

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<sup>9</sup> Colleen Malone, 'Widening the Track The Josephite Journey towards an Eclectic Missiology', a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy, School of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney, 1991, p.47-49. Quoted from a Video Clip, 'The History of the Missions in Northern Australia', Produced by Tuwei, a centre for Aboriginal Studies conducted by the Sisters of Saint Joseph, Leichardt, 1988.

<sup>10</sup> Colleen Malone, 'Widening the Track' pp. 47-49.





# Appendices

(In this list + in K, means died in the Kimberley)

## 1. Female Catholic Missionaries in the Kimberley 1884-1990

### Sisters of St John of God

<b>Name</b> <b>+ in K</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Arr.K.</b>	<b>Left K</b>
1. Mother Antonio O'Brien	Ireland	1907 ....	d.1923
2. Sr Bernardine Greene d.1923	Ireland		1907 ....
3. Mother Benedict Courtney	Ireland	1907 ....	d.1973
4. Sr Patrick O'Neil d.1970	Ireland		1907 ....
5. Sr Margaret Carmody	Ireland	1907 ....	d.1970
6. Sr John Walker d.1951	Ireland		1907 ....
7. Sr Brigid Cavanagh d.1908	Ireland		1907
8. Sr Michael Power d.1962	Ireland		1907 ....
9. Mother Joseph McCaffery	Australia	1907 ....	d.1956
10. Mother Matthew Greene d.1973	Ireland		1908
11. Sr Xavier O'Sullivan		1908 ....	d.1946
12. Sr Immaculata Leahy	Ireland	1908 ....	d.1912
13. Sr Ignatius Murnane	Australia	1912-1926	1945 d....
14. Sr Gertrude Greene	Ireland		d.1965
15. Sr Teresa Nugent	Australia	1912 ....	d.1969
16. Mother Alphonsus Daly	Collingwood	1912 ....	d.1980
17. Sr Agnes Irwin	Australia	1912 ....	d.1927
18. Sr Brigid Greene d.1968	Ireland		1912 ....
19. Sr Rose Mason	Australia	1912	
20. Mother Magdalen Cashen d.1970	Australia	1912 1926	1945
21. Sr Gerard Gath	Australia	1913 ....	d.1946
22. Sr Gabriel Greene d.1972	Ireland		1916
23. Sr Philip King d.1926	Ireland		1916 ....
24. Sr Elizabeth Cremen	Ireland	1916	
25. Sr Evangelist Doyle d.1968	Ireland		1916
26. Sr Basil Creedon	W.Australia	1916 ....	d.1953

27. Sr Augustine Mc Carthy		1916	
28. Sr Therese Doolan	Melbourne	1930	
29. Sr T eresa Mc Allen		1930	1942
30. Sr Madeleine Lynch	St.Kilda	1931	
31. Sr Angela Moroney	S.Australia	1931	R.I.P.
32. Sr Cecelia Kelly	Quambatook Vic.	1932	....d.1984
33. Sr Philomena Cleary		1934	.... d.1944
34. Sr Teresita Colbert		1935	1937
35. Sr Josepha May	Sydney	1935	d.1975
36. Sr Catherine Hayes		1937	d.1988
37. Sr Peter Evans (Alice)	Victoria	1938	
38. Sr Ita McPartland	Ireland	1940	.... d.1940
39. Sr Bernadette O'Connor	Ireland	1940	....
40. Sr Maris Stella Conlon		195?	1974
41. Sr Damien Brannigan,	Flemington,V.	1943	.... d.1973
42. Sr Frances Dunne,	Sheep Hills, V .		1943 ....
43. Sr Raphael Sullivan	Ballarat,Vic.	1944	
44. Sr Veronica McCarthy,	Tumut,NSW,	1949	
45. Sr Philomena Hockings,	Brisbane,Q.	1949	
46. Sr Joan Mansfield,	Bundaberg, Q.		1949
47. Sr Winifred Mc Bride		1949	.... d.1987
48. Sr Eliz.Marg.Mc Bride,	Brisbane,Q.	1950	d.1991
49. Sr Betty Kinsella (Claude)		1951	....
50. Sr Giovanni Williams,	Perth,W.A.	1952	1980
51. Sr Leone Collins,	Murumbeena, Vic.	1953	
52. Sr Cabrini Gleeson,	Wexford, Ire.	1953	1972 1980
1985			
53. Sr Canice Malone	....	1955	
54. Sr Maurus Flynn	....	1955	
55. Sr Stella Bryant,	Ungarie, NSW.	1956	
56. Sr Remedios Murphy,	Ireland	1956	.... d.1957
57. Sr Marcella Morris,	Warrnambool,V.		1956
58. Sr Antoinette Kelly, Clare,	Ireland.		1956
59. Sr Andrew Docherty,	Scotland	1956	1985
60. Sr Elizabeth McKenna (Josephine)		1957	
61. Sr Patricia Rhatigan,	Kimberley	1958	
62. Sr Raymond Flannery (+ on boat)			d.1959
63. Sr Glenys Yeoman		1960	1970
64. Sr Mary Kelly (Roberta)		1961	1971
65. Sr Josie Cutler (Lucy)	Qld.	1961	1978
66. Sr Dolores Tunnecliffe		1962	1985
67. Sr Germanus Kent,	Collie, W.A.		1963 ....
68. Sr Felicity Scales,	Sale. Vic	1963	
69. Sr Camille Poidevan	Goulburn, NSW		1964 ....
70. Sr Therese Finn ,	Ireland	1965	1969
71. Sr Patricia Allen,	Vic	1965	1975
72. Sr Regina Lambert,	Ireland	1965	
73. Sr Immaculata Taylor,	Joliment,W.A.	1965	

74. Sr Fedelma Francis,	Galway, Ire.	1966	1988
75. Sr Emmanuel Faye,	Ballarat,	1967	1971
76. Sr Pauline Stapleton,	Ballarat, V.	1970	1972
77. Sr Patricia Fitzmaurice	Morley, W.A.	1971-1978	
78. Sr Agatha Tighe		1972	1984
79. Sr Alicia , Ireland,		1972	1974
80. Sr Ann McGlinn,	Lake Grace, W.A.,	1972	
81. Sr Ita Prendergast	Ireland	1973	1983
82. Sr Mary Kiely,	Kilkenny, Ireland,	1974	1976 1986 1988
83. Sr Tarcisius Ryan		1974	1978
84. Sr Marietta Doran,	Carlow, Ire.	1974	....
85. Sr Fidelis Shannon,	Wexford, Ire.	1974	1977 1980
1988			
86. Sr Anne Collins,	Ireland,	1975	1975
87. Sr Pauline O'Connor,	Ireland	1975	1975
88. Sr Margaret Mary Phelan,	Kilkenny	1975	1975 1987 ....
89. Sr Angela Cox,	Ireland,	1975	1980
90. Sr Marg.Charleson,	Creswick, Vic.		1975 1985
91. Sr Johanna Klep,	Holland	1976	....
92. Sr Patricia Doyle,	Ireland	1977	1977
93. Sr Stephanie Blake,	Clare Ire.	1978	1979
94. Sr Natalie Fleming,	Ireland.	1978	1978
95. Sr Mel Howley,	Ireland	1978	1984
96. Sr Joan Grace,	Victoria	1980	1981
97. Sr Alice Dempsey,	Wexford, Ire.		1980 1987
98. Sr Antoinette Veale,	Bendigo, Vic.	1980	1984
99. Sr Mechtilde Crosbie,	Ireland	1987	....



### Benedictine Missionary Sisters at Kalumburu

The first three Sisters came to Kalumburu in 1931.

They were evacuated during 1939-1943. When the Benedictine Sisters from the mother house at New Norcia returned to Spain early in March 1975, the following Sisters remained in Australia to continue their missionary work in the Kalumburu Mission; Sisters Frances Pardo, Scholastica Carrilo, Visitation Ciudad and Josephine Montero. One Aboriginal woman from the Kimberley was professed in the Order in New Norcia and in the nineties was working with Indians in Canada.

Name	Place of Birth	Arr. K.	RIP
1. Sr Matilde de la Fuente	Spain	1939	RIP
2. Sr Maria Ciudad	Spain	1939	
3. Sr Gertrude Burke	Spain	1931	RIP
4. Sr Scholastica Martinez	Spain	1931-1939	RIP
5. Sr Hildegard Ruiz	Spain	1931-1939	RIP
6. Sr Liduvina Marcos	Spain	1939-1949	RIP
7. Sr Magdalene Ruiz	Spain	1939-1949	RIP
8. Sr Frances Pardo	Spain	.....-1978	
9. Sr Scholastica Carrillo	Spain	1950	
10. Sr Matilde Arroyo	Spain	1950-1953	
11. Sr Gemma Liroz	Spain	1953-1959	RIP
12. Sr Gertrude Diez	Spain	1955	RIP
13. Sr Dolores Vallejo	Spain	1955-1959	
14. Sr Araceli Herce	Spain	1957-1960	
15. Sr Teresa Gonzalez	Spain	1959-1961	
16. Sr Lucy Villano	Spain	1959-1964	
17. Sr Florentina Perez	Spain	1960-1972	
18. Sr Visitation Ciudad	Spain	1960	
19. Sr Carmen Ruiz	Spain	1972	
20. Sr Josephine Montero	Spain	1972	
21. Sr Philomena Roche	N.Z.	1978-1986	1990-
22. Sr Veronica Willaway	Aust.	1978-1982	
23. Sr Therese Bulalao	Philippines	1986-1987	
24. Sr Innes	Philippines	1991-	

### Sisters of St Joseph

Unlike the Sisters of St John of God and the Sisters at Kalumburu, most of the sisters of St Joseph retained a certain mobility regarding the length of their stay in each place. They openly assert that they are building on the foundation established by the Sisters of St John of God.

Name	Place of Birth	Arr.
1. Sr Maureen J.Meehan	S.Aust.	1964 - 69
2. Sr Margaret Lambert	Ireland	1964 - 67

3. Sr Angela Morrison	S.Aust.	1967 - 78	
4. Sr Ann Mills	Qld.	1967 - 69	
5. Sr Jean Guisy	Ireland	1967 - 69	
6. Sr Anne Boland	Ireland	1970 - 73	1980 - ..
7. Sr Maureen McGrath 76	N.S.W.	1970 - 73	1974 -
8. Sr Maureen Calvert(Luke)	S.A.	1970 - 73	
9. Sr Adrian Ryan	Vic.	1973 - 73	
10. Sr Anne Maree Ready	Qld.	1970 - ..	
11. Sr Denise Casey	W.A.	1972 - 79	1990 - ..
12. Sr Theresa Morellini	W.A.	1973 - 76	1979 - 81 1983 - ..
13. Sr Veronica Ryan 87	N.S.W.	1974 - 79	1982 -
14. Sr Antoinette	S.Aust.	1975 - 75	
15. Sr Patricia Guiney	Vic.	1976 - 78	
16. Sr Teresa Taggart	S.Aust.	1976 - 76	
17. Sr Clare Ahern	Ireland	1976 - 83	1985 - ..
18. Sr Marie Faulkner	S.Aust.	1977 - 78	
19. Sr Attracta Angland	Ireland	1978 - 78	
20. Sr June Barrett	N.S.W.	1978 - 78	1987 - ..
21. Sr Joan Goodwin	N.S.W.	1978 - 79	
22. Sr Maree Riddler 89	W.Aust.	1979 - 84	1987 -
23. Sr Naomi Smith	N.S.W.	1979 - 84	1988 - ..
24. Sr Kathleen Bissett	N.S.W.	1979 - 84	1988 - ..
25. Sr Carmel Channon	N.S.W.	1979 - 80	
26. Sr Zita Egan	N.S.W.	1980 - 81	
27. Sr Denise Brosnan	Qld.	1980 - 82	
28. Sr Angela Carroll	Qld	1981 - 83	
29. Sr Colleen Malone	N.S.W.	1981 - 85	
30. Sr Anne Houston	N.S.W.	1982 - 85	
31. Sr Rosemary Farrington	NSW.	1984 - 89	
32. Sr Betty Keane	Ireland	1985	
33. Sr Marie Marson	S.Aust.	1985 - 88	
34. Sr Cornelia Verstrys	Holl.	1985 - 87	1990 - ..
35. Sr Carmel Scanlon	Qld.	1986 - 88	
36. Sr Margaret Scott	Qld.	1986 - 86	
37. Sr Nola Goodwin	Qld.	1988 - ..	
38. Sr Marie Healy	N.S.W.	1988 - 89	
39. Sr Bernadette Doyle	Vic.	1989 - 89	
40. Sr Margaret Clancy	Ireland	1989 - 89	
41. Sr Sara Hegan	Ireland	1990 - ..	
42. Sr Frances Fleming	N.S.W.	1990 - ..	

**Loreto Sisters**

Name	Place of Birth	Arr.K..
Sr Myrene Erdman	Melbourne	1973-1977
Sr Mary-Ellen McCormack	Brisbane	1973-1981
Sr Angela Slattery	Melbourne	1975
Sr Mary Murray	Adelaide	1978-1985
Sr Mary Roarty	Sydney	1981
Sr Mary Prunty	Ballarat	1981-1990
Sr Pauline Prince	Cobar NSW.	1981-1991
Sr Clare Gardiner	Melbourne	1985-1990
Sr Francine Roberts	Katanning W.A.	1986
Sr Margaret Bourke	Australia	1988-1990
Sr Margaret Hill	Bendigo	1990-1991
Sr Maureen Bourke	Warrnambool	1990-1990
Sr Victor Wright	Ballarat	1991

**Religious of the Good Shepherd**

Name	Place of Birth	Arr.K.
Sr Michael Kelly	Leederville Perth,	1970

### **Our Lady of the Missions**

<b>Names</b>	<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Arr. K.</b>
Sr Patricia Hogan	Perth	1973-1974
Sr Pauline Pratthey	Perth	1974-1974
Sr Juliana Keane	Melbourne	1975-1978
Sr Marie Elliott	Perth	1975-1976
Sr Helena Brabender	Melbourne	1975-1977 1988
Sr Anthony Keilor	Perth	1976-1980
Sr Teresa McAuliffe	Narrogin	1977-1980
Sr Mary Doherty	North Ireland	1978-1978
Sr Margaret Spain	Inglewood	1979-1985
Sr Myrna de Silva	India	1979-1979

### **Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition**

<b>Names</b>	<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Arr.K.</b>
Sr Margaret Mary Gannon	Australia	1972-1975
Sr Fintan Casey	Ireland	1972-1973
Sr Emily Cattalini	Australia	1974-1975

### **Infant Jesus Sisters**

<b>Names</b>	<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Arr.K.</b>
Sr Anne Marie Murray	Ireland	1976-1985
Sr Brid de Courcy Mac Donnell,	Ireland	1976-1983
Sr Anne O'Neill	Ireland	1979-1985
Sr Dorothy	Ireland	1982-1983
Sr Aíne Ryan	Ireland	1980-1985
Sr Margaret Mary	Ireland	1983-1985

### **Congregation of St. Brigid**

Sr Brigida Nailon	Hopetown, Vic.	1981-1985
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### **Missionary Franciscan Sisters from Kedron - Queensland**

<b>Names</b>	<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Arr. K.</b>
Sr Rita Johnston	Sydney	1978-1979
Sr Catherine Dower	Ireland	1978-1983
Sr Lucy Wooden	Newcastle	1980-1981
Sr Miriam Donnelly	Brisbane	1981

Sr Frances Crowe

Melbourne

1982

### Canossian Sisters

Names	Place of Birth	Arr.K.
Sr Antoinette Crippa 15.12.1985	Province of Como, Italy	21.11.1977 -
Sr Natalie Scacchetti, 2.1984	Province of Rome, Italy	21.11.1977 -16. 27. 1.1989 - 31.12.1991
Sr Anne Bosio, 28.12.1983	Province of Brescias, Italy.	21 11.1977 -
Sr Antonietta Casarotti, 22. 4.1983	Province of Brescu, Italy.	18. 2.1983 -
Sr Bridget Foo Woon, 27.12.1988	Singapore	4. 2.1984 - 5. 2.1990 - 31.12.1991
Sr Regino Gasparolo, 9.1987	Pordenone, Italy,	26. 2.1984 - 30.
Sr Angelo (Giovaniy)Sambrisiolos,	Crema, Italy.	5. 2.1985 - 1. 1.1989
Sr Lucy Kert, Friest,	Italy,	8. 2.1986 -31-12.1991
Sr Marilia De Souza, 7.1989	Bombay, India.	30. 7.1988 -25.

### Sisters of Mercy

Name	Congregation	Place	Time
Sr Joan Gaskell	Adelaide	Derby	1974-1974
Sr Catherine Gililogly Singleton	Singleton	Derby	1975-1975
Sr Joan Adams	Singleton	Derby	1977-1978
Sr Colleen Kleinschafer	Singleton	Balgo	1977-1978
		Mulan	1979-1980
		Mulan	1982-1984
Sr Bernadette Mills	Singleton	Billiluna	1979-1980
		Mulan	1980-1982
		Billiluna	1991
Sr Dolores Coffey	Perth	Billiluna	1980-1982
Sr Margaret Adams	Adelaide	Billiluna	1980-1983
Sr Catherine Matthews	Singleton	Mulan	1981-1983
Sr Josephine Dillon	Perth	Billiluna	1983-1985
Sr Paula O'Connell	Melbourne	Mulan	1984-1986
Sr Michelle Farrugia	Bathurst	Balgo	1984-1990
Sr Janet Lowe	Adelaide	Balgo	1984-1988
Sr Margarita Duffy	Goulburn		1984-1987
Sr Kathryn O'Callaghan	West Perth	Mulan	1985-1990
		Balgo	1989
Sr Margaret McGrath	Wilcannia Forbes	Billiluna	1986
Sr Heather McBride	Goulburn	Derby	1986-1988

		Balgo	1990
Sr Carmel Arnold	Townsville	Mulan	1987-1988
Sr Margaret Broadbent	Melbourne	Billiluna	1988-1989
Sr Helen Nolen	Ballarat	East Balgo	1989
Sr Barbara Broad	Adelaide	Balgo	1989
Sr Rose Pelleri	Townsville	Mulan	1989
Sr Anne Priestley	Melbourne	Mulan	1990
Sr Marie Fitzgerald	Perth	Balgo	1991
Sr Elizabeth Jordan	Brisbane	Balgo	1991

The following is a list of people from the Adelaide Congregation of Sisters of Mercy who came to Balgo as voluntary workers over the Christmas Holiday period.

Sr Catherine Ahern 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1978, 1979, 1981.

Sr Cynthia Griffin 1972, 1973, 1974, 1976.	Sr Sheila Gibbons 1974.	Sr Joan Gaskell 1975.
Sr Janette Gray 1977.	SrPatsy Bowler 1974.	SrMargaret Adams 1975.
SrBarbara Broad 1977.	Sr Helen Densley 1978.	Sr Patricia Feehan 1980.
	SrTeresa Durka 1979.	SrPauline Button 1981.

#### Faithful Companions of Jesus

Names	Place of Birth	Arr.K.
Sr Maryrose Dennehy	Australia	1988-1988
Sr Rosemary Crowe	Australia	1988
Sr Helen Mary Langlands	Australia	1989
Sr Peter Wilson	Australia	1989

#### Kimberley Lay Missionary Association

The following missionaries served the Church in Aboriginal enterprises since 1970.

Ahern, Tricia Allen, Cathie Arbuthnot, Col.  
 Andrulis, Anna Amner, Ronnie Antenucci, Rosi  
 Auld, John Barker, Cecily Basten, Liz  
 Bates, Liz. Bavich, Vicky Becker, Rose  
 Benna, Hella Beauchat, M. Beauchat, Anne  
 Bennet, Cheryl Biffin, Sally Bignold, Marica  
 Blackman, Barb. Boland, Anne Booth, Michael  
 Borg, Lorraine Bourke, Audrey Bowler, Clare  
 Breitfeller, J. Brown, Veronica Brown, Honor  
 Bruseker, Mar. Buchli, Anna Mar Buck, Kevin  
 Bugitti, Marg. Byrne, Frank Callahan, Gerry  
 Carmody, Steven Carter, Wayne Charles, Ron  
 Chatelier, And. Chiffins, Kate Clohesy, Therese  
 Clozier, Therese Collins, Liz Collins, Owen  
 Collins, Reg Commerford, K. Condliffe, John  
 Condliffe, M. Conrad, Mathias Cook, Brendan  
 Cox, Brendan Crawtey, Pat. Crowe, Kevin  
 Crowley, Pat. D'Alterio, Anne Danaher, Dennis  
 Danaher, Inga De Beer, Tom De Beer, Nora

De Silva,Pat. De Souza,JulieDeven, Angela  
 Dickeson,Mich. Dickinson, Tom Donnelly, Gwen  
 Douglas, Kevin Dunne, Lynne Dunne, Ted  
 Dunmar, Kevin Dyndham,Marg. Eastmant, Leonie  
 Elliott, Joan Evans, Virginia Farrell, Carmel  
 Feehan, Mary Finnagan, Kathy Fitzpatrick,K.  
 Freeman, Pat Foale, Anne Fogarty, Monica  
 Fogarty,Ken Ford, Sally Fox, Kevin  
 Fox, Lorraine Fyfe, Danny Gallagher, Noel  
 Gallivan,Pauli Galton, Celeste Gannon, Therese  
 Gavin, Jess Gibson, Cheryl Gillies,Bern.  
 Gollash, Sue Graham,Kath. Grant, David  
 Grantham, Susan Gray, Sue Griffin, Peter  
 Griffin,Phyl. Hadley, Robert Hall, Ann-Maree  
 Hall, Terry Harding, Debbie Hart, Steve  
 Harris, Monica Harrison,Eliz Harvey,Marg  
 Hayes, Judy Hender, Jan Hender, Gordon  
 Henwood,Veron. Hickey, Claire Hingston,Mart.  
 Hobbs, Trish Hock, Judith Hoffmeyer, Bert  
 Hogan Lynne Hogan, Sue Hord, Mary  
 Howard, Denise Howard, Marilyn Howard, Vonny  
 Howatson, Peter Hughes, Nikki Hunt, John  
 Jackson, Andrew Jolley, Tom Jolley, Chris  
 Jones, Alan Kane, Chris Kavanah, Terry  
 Kazmorowski Keane, Michael Keen, Ronny  
 Keen, William Kempton, Anne Kersh, Norah  
 Kersh, John Killar, Ollie Kings, Theresa  
 Kinnane,MargaretKinnane, Michael Klep, Joanne  
 Knight, Patricia Lane, Paul Larkin, Jim  
 Lawson, Dennis Ledger, Cathy,Legg, Mary  
 LeGoullon,Fran. LeGrady,Chas LeGrady,Anne  
 LeQuartermaine,C.Little,Colleen Luke, Kevin  
 Luke, Marie Madden, AnneMalloy, Joe  
 Malloy, Rhonda Mardling, Anne Martin, Jan  
 May, Dorothy McAllister, Pat McCabe,Nicholas  
 McCabe, Terry McGlade, Clare McMahan, Alan  
 Meade, Frank Miller, Sharon Miscamble,Jenny  
 Molloy, Rhonda Mooney, Joan Moran, Betty  
 Morris,Marg. Morrison, Mark Murdoch,Melanie  
 Murphy, TerryMurray, Julie Normayle,Rich.  
 Nowicki, Wojtek O'Brien,Claire O'Brien, Elaine  
 O'Brien,Maur. O'Brien, Sue O'Brien, Sharon  
 O'Connor, Carol O'Connor,Mich. O'Donnell, Frank  
 O'Neill,Frances O'Rourke,Carmel Page, Betsy  
 Panasewycz,M. Pianta,Patricia Pitts, Giles  
 Pitts, Ellen Pini, Helen Pfefferle, Lot.  
 Phillips, Peter Phipps, Carolyn Pledger, Louise  
 Plowman,Michael Pratt, Patricia Rae, Ken



Rasmussen, Yvonne Re, Jeannette Reid, Pauline  
Reilly, Laurie Rich, Joy Richards, Frank  
Richards, Mary Robson, Sue Rooney, Cathy  
Rooney, Debbie Russell, Elizab. Runz, Werner  
Ryan, Judy Saunders, Mary Schmidt, Peter  
Sedgwick, Marg. Sellars, Peter Sharkey, Paul  
Sharpie, David Shaw, Janet Shears, Rosemary  
Shields, Nancy Simoni, Tino Smith, Damien  
Smith, Judy Sobb, Anthony Sorrenson, Trudy  
St. George, Chris Spiteri, Josie. Stankiewicz, Rich  
Stanton, Lee Stanton, Rosemary Steenbergen, Mary  
Steenbergen, Arny Strong, Frances Strong, Patricia  
Strudwick, David Surguy, Sue Sutherland, Carme  
Swadling, Marianne Swadling, Steven Swanson, Rosemary  
Talty, Carole Taylor, Maureen Tillhurst, Terry  
Tirlich, Robin Thompson, Terry Toohey, Margo  
Tray, Mary Anne Treacy, Tony Vagg, Cletus  
Vagg, Bill Van Klepman, Loy Wall, Noeline  
Walker, Evelyn Walsh, Margaret Wells, Marian  
Wellspring, Andras Williamson, Ellen Mary... Winner, Michael  
White, Ailsa Whitla, Paul Woodward, Judy  
Wyposki, Marie Yelland, Joan Young, Michael  
Zito, Mario Zuculzce, Tony

## Diocesan Clergy

Name	Place of Birth	Arr.K.	Left K.
Fr D.McNab	Scotland	1884	1887
Fr Treacy	Ireland	1886	1886
Bishop M. Gibney	Ireland	1890	....
Fr Russell ...		1904	1905?
Fr Collins	Ireland	1915	1923
Fr Crotty	Bathurst,NSW	1967	1972
Fr D.Donovan	Ireland	1974	
Bishop C.Saunders	Brisbane Q.	1975	
Fr N.McMaster	Melbourne	1978	1981 1989
Fr P.Boyers	Deniliquin,NSW.		1978
Fr P.McAtamney	Orange, NSW.	1982	
Fr S.Fernandez	Madras, India		1985
Fr B.Egan	Sydney	1991	
Fr M.Digges	Sydney	1990	

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.<sup>678</sup> 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 1972, Fr Philbert, a world famous nuclear scientist from Regensburg came to live in the deserted hermitage. He and his brother had been ordained in Rome 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. In 1996 he became the first Diocesan Bishop consecrated for the Diocese.

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.

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<sup>678</sup> 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.

### Cistercians

Name	Place of Birth	Arr.K.	Left K
1. Abbot Ambrose Janny	France	1890	1898
2. Fr Alphonse Tachon	France		1890 1900
3. Br Xavier Daly	Aust.		1890 1901
4. Br J.Montague	Aust.		1891 -
5. Br Etienne Pidat	France		1892 1900
6. Br Bonaventure Holthurin	Holl.		1892 1900
7. Fr Felicien Chuzeville	France		1892 1900
8. Br Francis of Assissi	Jorcin France		1892 1893
9. Fr Jean Marie Janny	France		1892 1906
10.Fr Nicholas Emo	Spain		1895 1915
11.Fr Ermenfroi Nachin	France		1895 1899
12.Fr Bernard Le Louarn	France	1895	1899
13.Fr Marie-Joseph Delamasure	France	1895	1896
14.Fr Narcisse Janne	France		1895 1900
15.Br Antoine Boetens	Holl.		1895 1900
16.Br Francis Bootsveld	Holl.		1895 1900
17.Br Bernard Joosten	Holl.		1895 1900
18.Br Jean Chaleron	France		1895 -
19.Br Placide Leobal	France		1895 1900
20.Fr Anselm Lenegre	France		1896 1900
21.Br Sebastian	Phillipines		

### Pallottines

Name	Place of Birth	Arr.-Left K.
1. Fr George Walter	Germany, Volkach,	1901-1908 +1939 G.
2. Fr Patrick White	Limerick, Ireland,	1901-1911 +1948 K
3. Br Matthias Kasperek,	Karlsruhe, Silesia,	1901-1930 +1930 K
4. Br Augustine Sixt,	Germany, Wuerzburg	1901-1906 +1954 K
5. Fr H.Rensmann,	Oberhausen, on the Rhine,	1902-1004 +1904 K.
6. Br John Graf, Soelb,	Germany,	1902 +1951 P.
7. Br Bernard Hoffman	Germany	1902-1906
8. Br Albert Labonte	Germany	1903-1912 +1939
9. Br Matthias Wollseifer	Frechen, Germany,	1903-1952 +1952 K.
10. Br Raimond Wesely,	Germany	1903-1906
11. Br Alfonse Hermann,	Germany	1904-1907
12. Br Franz Stuetting,	Guenne, Westphalia	1904-1909 +1962 G.
13. Br Anton Helmprecht,	Metten, Bavaria.	1904-1909 +1939 K.
14. Br Henri Krallman,	Dorsum, Germany.	1904-1951 +1951 K.
15. Fr Joseph Bischofs,	Germany	1905-1916
16. Fr Thomas Bachmair,	Gruenberg, Germany,	1906-1918 +1918 K.

17. Fr Wilhelm Droste, Bochum-Hofstede, Westphalia, 1909-1928 +1929 G.
18. Fr Theodor Traub, Bamm, Speyer, Germany, 1909-1912 +1947
19. Br Matthias Brinkmann, Pfortzheim, Germany, 1909-1925 +1934 G.
20. Fr Albert Scherzinger the Black Forest, 1925-1948 +1968
21. Fr Benedict Puesken Werpelch, Germany. 1925-1955 +1955 K.
22. Fr August Spangenberg Recklinghausen, Germany. 1927-1937 +1965 G
23. Br Stefan Contempree Rhineland, Germany, 1921-1931 +1964 G.
24. Br Franz Herholz Germany 1927-1933
25. Bishop O. Raible, Stuttgart, Germany, 1928-1959 +1966 G.
26. Br Joseph Wembling, Zell, Trier, Germany, 1929-1930 +1961 G.
27. Fr Ernest A. Worms, Bochun, Germany, 1930-1938 +1963 G.
28. Fr Francis Huegel, Leipzig, East Germany, 1930-1990 +1991 P.
29. Fr Joseph Tautz, Kunzendorf, Silesia, Germany, 1930-1985 +1985 K.
30. Br Joseph Schuengel, Liesen, Westphalia, 1930-1937
31. Br Anton Boetcher Germany 1930-1945
32. Br Francis Nissl, Altenkirchen, Kreis Freising, Bavaria, 1930-1959 +1980 M.
33. Br Paul Mueller of Duren, Germany, 1931-1940 +1967
35. Fr J. Herold, Worms, Germany, 1934-1960 +1973 G.
36. Br Francis Hanke, Radenberg, Germany, 1934-1949 +1957
37. Dr. Hermann Nekes, Germany 1935-1938 +1948 M.
38. Fr George Vill, Villenbach, Germany 1935-1939 +1958
39. Br Richard Besenfelder of Ettlingen, Germany, 1935
40. Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz of Zadel, Silesia, Germany 1937
41. Br Bernard Stracke Germany 1937-1952
42. Br Henry Schaefer, Germany, 1937-1952 +1964
43. Fr John Hennessy, Melbourne, 1946-1952
44. Fr Rutherford, Perth, 1947-1960
45. Fr Roger McGinley, Sydney 1947-1953
46. Fr Anton Omasmeier, Regensburg, -1961
47. Fr Joseph Kearney, Melbourne 1948-1970
48. Br Wilhem Schreiber of Danzig, Germany 1950
49. Br Joseph Kroen of Praukau, Germany 1950-1975
50. Br Wilhelm Engel, Schoenholthausen, Germany, 1950-1961 +1991
51. Fr Francis Kelly, Melbourne, 1950-1954 +1972
52. Bishop J. Jobst Frankenberg, Bavaria, 1951
53. Fr Leo Hornung, Eltmann, Germany, 1951-1960
54. Fr Wagenknecht 1958
55. Fr Kevin McKelson, Melbourne 1954
56. Fr John Maguire, Warrnambool 1955-1975
57. Fr Anthony Peile, Melbourne 1957-1988 +1989
58. Fr Werner Kriener, Muenster, Germany 1959
59. Fr Brian Murray, Sydney, 1960-1967
60. Fr Vincent Finnegan, Perth, 1960-1988
61. Fr Karl- Hermann Boes Koeln, Germany, 1961-1965
62. Fr Karl Beerstucher 1962-1963
63. Fr Wendelin Lorenz of Friesenheim, Germany 1963

64. Fr Nicholas Dehe,	Germany-	1969 +1975
65. Fr Benno Rausch,	Gronig, Germany	1963-1967
66. Fr Joseph Butscher,	Floders, Germany	1963-1967
67. Fr Don Brown,		1963-1966
68. Fr George Malina		1964-1965
69. Fr John Wagenknecht		1964-1965
70. Fr Michael McMahon,	Melbourne	1964-1991
71. Fr John Winson,	Bairnsdale	1964-1975
72. Fr Peter Willis,	Melbourne	1966-1975
73. Fr Ray Hevern,	Melbourne	1967-1984
74. Br R.Bradley		1961-1963
75. Fr Peter Murray,	Sydney	1970-1979

### **Ecclesiastical Superiors of Kalumburu Mission**

The Most Rev Bishop Fulgentius Torres 1908-1914  
The Right Rev Abbot Anselm Catalan 1915-1951  
The Right Rev Abbot Gregory Gomez 1951-1971  
The Right Rev Abbot Bernard Rooney 1971-1979

### **Benedictine Missionaries**

Name	Place of Birth	Arr.K.	Left K.
The Most Rev Fulgentius Torres, Founder		(July)1908	
Rev Nicholas de Emo (not Benedictine-but co-founder)		1895-1905	
1. Rev E.Planas	Spain		1908-1910
2. Rev Inigo Alcalde	Spain		1908-1914
3. Br Vincent Quindos	Spain		1908-1922
4. Rev Henry Altimira	Spain		1911-1920
5. Br Placid Gimenez	Spain		1914-1921
6. Rev Rosendo Sosa (died Kalumburu)			1914-1969
7. Rev Fulgentius Cubero (died Kalumburu)			1918-1950
8. Rev Raymond Salinas			1920-1925
9. Rev Augustine Murua (died Kalumburu)			1922-1927
10. Rev Boniface Gomez			1924-1934; 1946-1952
11. Rev Thomas Gil (killed by enemy action)			1926-1943
12. Rev Theodore Hernandez			1932-1940
13. Br Sylvester Lopez			1932-1935
14. Br Ildephonsus Martinez			1935-1953
15. Br Donatus Arce			1938-1939
16. Rev Seraphim Sanz			1939-1949; 1955-1981
17. Rev Basil Nosedá			1949-1955; 1966-1975
18. Rev Veremond Ubach			1952-1954; 1958-1959
19. Rev Maur Enjuames			1952-1957
20. Br Andrew Common			1952-1957; 1975-1979
21. Br Dominic Vallejo			1954-1976
22. Rev Michael Cave			1960-1961
23. Br Augustine Gozalo			1961-1966
24. John Richards (oblato)			1960
25. Rev Anscar McPhee			1982
26. Br Joseph Argus			1981-1982
27. Br Umberto Spadanuda			1979-1980
28. Rev Matthew Kelly			1981-1982
29. Rev Eugene Perez			1975-1981

### **Salesian Fathers**

Name	Place of Birth	Arrived
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Bishop Ernest Coppo	Italy	1923-1927
Fr John Setaro	Italy	1923-1928
Fr John Siara	Italy	1923-1925
Fr Erminio Rossetti	Italy	1923
Fr Filimon Lopez	Spain	1923
Br Caesar Asseli	Italy	1923
Br Emmanuel Gomez	Italy	1923
Br Celestine Acerni	Italy	1923

### **Redemptorist**

Name	Place of Birth	Arrived Left
Rev Fr John Creagh	Ireland	1916-1923

### **Missionaries of the Sacred Heart**

Fr G.Abbot  
Fr W.Hyland  
Fr J.Flynn

### **Christian Brothers**

Name	Place of Birth	Arr.K.Left K.
Br T.S.Roberts		1971-1974
Br N.G.Bilich		1971-1980
Br P.R.Hardiman		1971-1976
		1979-1987
Br W.I.Marchant		1973
Br B.O.Clery		1975-1977
Br K.P.Kent		1975-1975
Br T.P.Gee		1976-1977
Br D.M.Boulter		1977-1980
Br D.B,Howard		1977-1985
Br L.M.Negus		1978
Br M.J.Lalor		1978-1982
Br J.B.Paton		1983-1983
Br P.C.Mohen		1986-1987
Br G.D.Down		1986
Br D.H.Wedd		1986
Br K.Moore		1986-1986
Br T.H.Gibbons		1987
Br P.L.Negus		1988
Br J.N.O'Sullivan		1988-1989

### De La Salle Brothers

Names	Place of Birth	Arr.K. Left K.
Br Leo Scollen	Australia	1984
Br Justinian Thompson	Sri Lanka	1984-
Br Douglas O'Riely	Australia	1984-1984
Br Paul Kent	Australia	1985-1988
Br Joseph Gabel	Australia	1987
Br Martin Blattman	Australia	1989
Br Stanislaus Fagen	Australia	1991
Br Hilary Walsh	Australia	1989
Br Paul Kent	Australia	1989-1990
Br Gerald Barrett	Australia	1989
Br Gregory Kennedy	Australia	1989



### Buildings erected since 1959

Many buildings in the Kimberley originated from the need to provide facilities for those involved in education. Some were built by lay missionaries with money from donations, mainly Germany.

The first building grants from the Government came in 1970 for the Boys' Hostel at Nulungu College.

All other costs prior to this date were provided by the Catholic Church in the Kimberley, and planned by Bishop J.Jobst. Fitzhardinge has been the architect.

Year	Place	Building
1959	La Grange Mission	Lay Missionary Quarters.
1959	La Grange Mission	Hospital.
1959	Broome	The old St.Mary's School (Demolished 1988).
1959	Derby	St.Joseph's Hostel.
1960	Beagle Bay Mission	School on stilts near Church.
1961	Broome	Presbytery.
1961	Derby	Church.
1962	Beagle Bay Mission	Monastery.
1962	Kununurra	Church, priest's residence combined.
1962	Wyndham	Presbytery and First Church (Old Structure demolished).
1962/63	La Grange	Three buildings ex Talgano resited.
1963	Derby	Convent.
1963	Broome	Church.
1963	Balgo	Hospital.
1963	Halls Creek	First Presbytery built by Lay Missionaries.
1963	Halls Creek	Two blocks acquired with buildings for Parish Hall, and All Purpose Building.
1964	Wyndham	Church (new).
1964	Lombadina	Girls' Dormitory.
1964	Beagle Bay	Dormitory.
1964	Beagle Bay	Dining Room.
1964	Beagle Bay	Store.
1964	Beagle Bay	Domestic Science Block.
1964	Balgo	The whole of New Balgo Mission,
(Opened May 1965)		School Buildings; Girls' and Boys'dormitories; Sisters' Convent;
		School Teachers' residence.
1965	Broome	Lay Missionary Quarters; Residence.
1966	Broome	School (New).
1966	Kununurra	School.(1)
1966	Kununurra	Convent.
1970	La Grange	Church.
1971	Broome	Nulungu College; CBC Residence; Classroom building; Technical Block.

1972	Broome	Hangar.
1972/73	Derby	St.Joseph's Hostel; Amenities Block; Toilet.
1973	Kununurra	St.Martin's Church.
1973	Broome	Nulungu Girls' College; Hostel; Sisters' Residence; Classroom Buildings; Domestic Science Block.
1974	Broome	Art and Craft Centre; Holy Child Kindergarten.
1975	Kununurra	School (Stage 2).
1976	Wyndham	Teacher's Residence.
1976	Derby	New Presbytery incorporating the old one.
1977	Broome	Beach House.
1977	Derby	New Derby School Toilet Block.
1977	Derby	School in Loch Street.
1977	Derby	`Matt Furlong' Kindergarten.
1977	Broome	Teacher Residences.
1977	Broome	CBC Chapel at Nulungu College.
1977	Fitzroy Crossing	Convent.
1978	Halls Creek	Convent.
1978	Broome	St.Mary's Junior School.
1979	Derby	School Administration and Resource Centre.
1979	Billiluna	School.
1979	Lake Gregory	School.
1979/80	Turkey Creek	School (Beagle Bay Girls' Dormitory resited).
1981	Broome	St.Mary's Staff Building.
1981	Bililuna	New School.
1981	Lake Gregory	New School.
1981	Fitzroy Crossing	All purpose room.Church Centre. Priest's Quarters.
1981	Broome	OLM Convent.
1983	Derby	Two teacher houses.
1984	Broome	Church Extension.
1985	Derby	Teacher Residence.
1985	Broome	For College, 4 Teacher Houses.
1986	Kununurra	New Presbytery.
1985	Turkey Creek	Mirrlinki Spirituality Centre.
1985	Billiluna	Convent.
1985	Ringers Soak	School.
1986	Lake Gregory	Convent.
1986/7	Red Hill	School.
1987	Broome	St.Mary's School Dakas St., Stage 1.
1987	Broome	Regional Catholic Education Office.
1987	Broome	3 Teacher Residences Taiji Road.
1987	Kununurra	Teachers' House (Lot 1846).
1988	Kununurra	School. Extensions (Stage 3)
1988	Red Hill	School. Extensions (Stage 2)
1988	Broome	Retirement Cottage.
1988	Broome	St.Mary's School, Dakas St. (Stage 2).
1989	Turkey Creek	Teacher Residence.
1989	Turkey Creek	`Mirrilinki' Staff Duplex.

1989 Halls Creek  
1989 Broome

New Priest's House.  
Teacher House, 2 Dakas House.<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> Archives of the Diocese of Broome.

Stories of Theresa Puertollano and Rita Patrick, continued from Chapter 8.

(Theresa) ...We went by boat, my mother, and myself and Maria. Mum accompanied us on our trip to Darwin. When we called into Derby, the sick people from the police station, like Gregory Howard, they went before us. The trip was very rough. To Wyndham, from Cape Londonderry, we had to be battened down for four days. We went down below in the cabin, and they put the cover on us so no water could get in. We tossed and rolled for days.

We arrived in Channel Island, there were already people on the island, nearly one hundred. Matron Jenkins nursed us, there was only one nurse, the doctor would come once a week. The doctor would come once a week. The girls had very nice quarters, good food. I was very sad when I realised what I was there for. I didn't know until I arrived on the island and was seeing the other people and the other children. I was only 13 then, just turned 14. I saw the little children and the adults all with things.

When I was there about six months, I thought of these little children who had no schooling, so I tried to teach them. I forgot about myself. Fr Henschke used to come over for Mass every first Sunday of the month. He said it in the small clinic. I was seven years in Channel Island until the beginning of 1941. I was shifted from Channel Island to Derby, the newly built Leprosarium. The others came by truck. I came by a little moth plane to the new nine Mile Hall Creek. From there by truck overland.

The Sisters at Derby were Mother Gertrude, Sister Angela, Sister Gabriel. Dr Musso came. When I arrived he was staying out there for about 2 months and then he would go away again. Mr Walsh was the superintendent when I arrived there. I settled down. There were people from the Mission.

I took up teaching again. Mother Gertrude advised me. We had to use tea cases. The boys cut them out. We used that for slates, and we used white chalk. Later then Mother got slates and pencils. We had no desks, Mother got the boys to put up a little bough she. Then they did use vegetable boxes to make little desks for themselves. There was no Church when we went there and there was no priest in Derby in 1941. Once a month a priest would come up from Broome or Beagle Bay.

Bro Paul and Bro Frank Hanke arrived. Bro Frank built the old Church between the Convent and the Hospital out of bush timber with the boys. Later on Bro Frank built a proper Church out of asbestos.

There were about 160 Catholics there then, and about 100 of other denominations. Maria died October 1945, my mother died 27 July 1951, Joseph died April 1942, and Philomena died in 1972, all at the Leprosarium....

(Rita) ...Fr Albert was in Derby when I was there, then Fr Hennessy, then Fr McGinley, then, Fr Francis, and then Fr Kearney. Then the Brothers came, Bro Paul and Bro Frank. The Bishop gave me first communion before I left Beagle Bay. When I came to Derby the Church was just a bough shed, then Bro Frank built a new Church. Bishop Raible blessed the new Church. Fr Francis carried the Blessed from the old to the new. I played the violin. Other visitors came by boat, the guests were dancing and we were singing.

There were sad days when people died. Some people didn't have Father. Frank Dolby died, his parents came out. His mother was heartbroken. We went out for picnics, fishing and holidays., every Saturday for fishing. I was in Leprosarium when the Japanese attacked Derby. I was there when we went to the bush, Sr Aloysius and Mother

Alphonse. We had Mass on Sunday, Fr Albert, that was hard time, we camped out for a week.

I had one daughter, Rosemary. I tried to change my life, but I couldn't walk. Brian went away to station with another girl. I waited for hi but he didn't wait for me. I couldn't to ahead no more, so I stayed with myself. My boy, he down in Lombadina, Johnny. He is related to Paddy, Bertha Paddy's husband. He doesn't come to my Church. I try my best to bring him to our Church. He goes to other Church. I find out when I go back.



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TASF	Trappist Abbey of Sept Fons, Lyons, France
BL	Battye Library, Perth
ACAP	Catholic Archdiocese of Perth
APF	Propaganda Fide, Rome
SAO	Salesian Archives, Oakleigh
AGR	Generalate of the Redemptorists, Rome
AGP	Generalate of the Pallottines, Rome
AJH	Society of Jesuits, Hawthorn
JOL	John Oxley Library, Brisbane
MHC	Melbourne Historical Commission
ASJG	John of God Sisters, Subiaco, Broome, Derby, Perth
NN	New Norcia Abbey
ACAS	Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney
SACR	Pallottine Archives Rome

## Religious Orders

Benedictine Missionary Sistes	<i>csb</i> Brigidine Sisters
<i>fdcc</i> Canossian Sisters	<i>fcj</i> Faithful Companions of Jesus
<i>rgs</i> Good Shepherd Sisters	<i>jmj</i> Infant Jesus Sisters
<i>ibvm</i> Loreto Sisters	<i>rsm</i> Sisters of Mercy
<i>rndm</i> Our Lady of the Missions	<i>sjg</i> St John of God Sisters
<i>sja</i> Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition	<i>rsj</i> Sisters of St Joseph
<i>rsm</i> Sisters of Mercy	<i>osf</i> Missionary Franciscan Sisters
<i>osb</i> Benedictines - Subiaco Congregation	<i>osco</i> Cistercian Monks
<i>ssc</i> Columban Fathers	<i>cfc</i> Christian Brothers
<i>fsc</i> De La Salle Brothers	<i>psm</i> Pious Society of Missions
<i>sac</i> Pallottines (Society of the Catholic Apostolate)	<i>psm</i> Pious Society of Missions
<i>cssr</i> Redemptorists	<i>msc</i> Sacred Heart Fathers
<i>sdb</i> Salesians of Don Bosco	

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