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EDMUND VAUGHAN C.S.S.R. AND THE BEGINNINGS
OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER
IN AUSTRALIA

SUMMARIUM

Iam ab an. 1848 quaestio introducendi Redemptoristas in Australiam aliquoties mota est, sed an. 1882 tantum Congregatio in hanc orbis partem introducta est, quando p. Edmundus Vaughan, ex nota familia catholica anglica ortus, cum quinque confratribus, tribus sacerdotibus et duobus laicis, eo se contulit. Per duodecim annos p. Vaughan superior Congregatorum in Australia remansit, gubernium exercens modo suavi et forti, at semper cum magna humanitate et prudentia, usquedum an. 1894 in patriam rediit, superior Provinciae anglicae constitutus. Quia episcopi et clerus in Australia, sicut et ipsi fideles maxime ex Hibernia oriundi, superioribus anglicis quodammodo adversi erant, p. Vaughan plus aequo difficultates in munere suo exercendo obveniebant, quas tamen, pro intelligentia sua, feliciter superavit.

Prima Congregationis fundatio peracta est in Singleton, dioeceseos Maitlandensis (New South Wales), ubi patres etiam curam ordinariam paroeciae habebant. Hac de causa an. 1887 communitas translata est in Waratah, eiusdem dioeceseos. A cura paroeciali liberati, patres omnes ex tunc missionibus praedicandis unice se devoverunt. An. 1888 fundata est domus in Ballarat, dioeceseos eiusdem nominis (Victoria), quae mox centrum intensae activitatis apostolicae facta est.

Traditionem ab initio, inspirante p. Vaughan, stabilitam fideliter secuti, Redemptoristae in Australia quasi unice apostolatuum missionum paroecialium coluerunt.

Australia, 'the Quiet Continent', lay for centuries off the world's lanes of commerce. If it was spared much noise and upheaval as the rest of the world passed it by, it was also deprived of the Gospel, almost the very last of the nations to hear the good news of Salvation. The vast, empty Southland reported by Captain James Cook in 1770 was considered a dubious asset by the British government, until the loss of its American colonies forced authorities to look elsewhere for the place to dump the overflow of its hulks and goals.

Captain Cook's New South Wales was first settled as a penal colony.

And right from the arrival of the first fleet in January 1788 the Catholics of the new colony manifested what were to be for a long time their characteristics, truculent but staunch, always on the defensive yet much inclined to flamboyance, closely knit and yet suffering dreadfully from long isolation and neglect¹. The reason was not far to seek. An English penal system at that time was bound to include a large number of Irish. During sixty years of transportation the percentage of Irish convicts was always high, at times reaching almost a third of the total population. In time, as ticket-of-leave men, squatters and gold diggers the Irish always formed the great majority of the Catholics, and they even included a few public officials.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century things were more settled, of course. The Catholic Church had its hierarchy since 1842 and forty years later it was beginning to take stock of its achievements. The picture revealed in synods of the time was just a little bit gloomy as the Bishops spoke of their anxieties about leakage from the Church, the secular school system and the unending search for clergy and religious to care for the scattered people. Really, this last was the big problem. Nowadays we call it 'the tyranny of distance'. Sooner or later the Bishops were bound to think of the Redemptorists, becoming well known in England and Ireland, and after all they were for abandoned souls.

The Call to Australia

The earliest mention of Australia in Redemptorist records seems to be in a letter written by Father Smetana to Father von Held, then Superior in Belgium. The letter is dated 11th. March 1848 and it speaks of a suggested Australian mission as quite out of the question². March of 1848 was not a propitious date for superiors residing in Vienna, so one can hardly be surprised that the proposal was not accepted. One can wonder, though, who made the proposal. During 1847 two of the new Australian Bishops had been in England, and either of them could well have contacted Father Held. Bishop Willson of Hobart had gone to appeal for more humane treatment for the convicts³. A more likely person was Archbishop Polding of Sydney⁴.

¹ An excellent study of Catholic settlement has been furnished by James Waldersee, *Catholic Society in New South Wales, 1788-1868*, Sydney University Press, 1974. For the other States and for the latter part of the century one must still depend on Cardinal Moran. Patrick Francis Moran, *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*, Sydney, 1895.

² Smetana to Held, 11 III 1848; Archives of the Province of Cologne. The letter is among some papers referring to Father Passerat in whose name Smetana answered the query.

³ Moran, *op. cit.*, 273.

⁴ Moran, *op. cit.*, 445.

Polding was to appeal more than once for a Redemptorist foundation in his archdiocese.

There was a communication from him to Father Coffin in 1862⁵. The Archbishop spoke of his admiration for St. Alphonsus, and he asked for four Fathers to take charge of the district of Brisbane Water, now Gosford, about 50 miles north of Sydney⁶. His letter, perhaps, deserved a more favourable reception, as it had an adventurous passage, having been salvaged after the wreck of the mail steamer two days out from Colombo. Five years later Polding met Father Coffin at the home of his friends, the Sharples of Liverpool, and once more begged him to make a foundation in Sydney. It was hard for Father Coffin, now Provincial, to refuse, as the saintly old man was moved to tears as he pleaded for his flock⁷.

A note in the Book of Consultations under the date 2nd. January 1860 mentions that Father Mauron decided not to accept an offer to make a foundation in Brisbane⁸. A new name has appeared, that of James O'Quinn, first Bishop of Brisbane, then resident in the Irish College, Rome⁹. In 1865 Father Coffin received a letter from Brisbane that showed him just how persuasive an Irishman could be when he put his heart into it. It was signed Patrick Dunne C.C.¹⁰. Father Dunne had something substantial to offer, a property which is at the present time the entire bayside suburb of Brighton with the Brighton Hotel itself as residence. Father Coffin sent on the request to Rome, and within a few months was able to inform Dunne that Father General Mauron was himself providing for the foundation, since the recently established English Province could not spare the men¹¹. Unhappily, a few months later again he had to report that the men chosen by Father Mauron for Brisbane would probably have

⁵ Robert Aston Coffin was the first Provincial of the English Province and held that office for eighteen years before being named Bishop of Southwark. See B. Lubinski, *Mémoires sur la vie de Mgr. Robert Coffin C.S.S.R., évêque de Southwark*, undated manuscript in the Archives of the English Province. It seems to have been compiled about 1883.

⁶ Polding to Coffin, dated only 1862; Archives of the Australian Province, Episcopal. The text of the letter is also contained in T. Shearman C.S.S.R., *The Redemptorists in Australasia*, 1907, I, 2. Father Shearman compiled his careful account of the beginnings of the Congregation in Australia on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary. It is a duplicated work in six parts and copies are to be found in several of the Australian houses.

⁷ Lubinski, *op. cit.*, 76. The incident is also given by Shearman, *op. cit.*, I, 11.

⁸ General Archives C.S.S.R., hereafter AGR, *Liber Consultationum*, I, 76.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Dunne to Coffin, 18 X 1865. Archives of the Irish Province.

¹¹ Coffin to Dunne, 31 I 1866. Archives of the Irish Province.

to be diverted elsewhere, as the Pope had urgently requested a foundation in Surinam¹². Father Dunne in the course of the correspondence with Father Coffin had said that he intended to join the Congregation once it was established in Brisbane. Perhaps the Redemptorists have reason to be thankful they did not experience the turmoil that almost invariably followed the trail of Patrick Dunne, that zealous but incurable eccentric.

In the end the man who did succeed in bringing the Congregation to Australia was James Murray, Bishop of Maitland, a worthy pioneer Bishop who deserves much of the Church in his adopted country¹³. He was the first to rule the coalfields diocese, since his predecessor, Dr. Davis, had been Coadjutor to Polding and never got around to visiting Maitland. Apparently, before Murray's time the place was officially held to be 'in partibus infidelium'. From the episcopal city, about a hundred miles north of Sydney, the diocese spread north and west to embrace an area of roughly 130,000 square miles. Its complexion varied from the mines around Newcastle to the rich farms and vineyards of the Hunter Valley and the lonely grazing lands of the north west. In 1880 Murray came to Europe in the hope of recruiting priests and religious for Maitland.

He was introduced to the Redemptorists by Patrick Francis Moran, Bishop of Ossory and later Cardinal and Archbishop of Sydney. Late in 1880 both were in Rome and they called on Father Mauron in the hope of interesting him in a foundation in the Maitland diocese¹⁴. The interview gave them cause to be hopeful, and Murray was referred to the English Provincial for further negotiations. The Bishop was anxious that at least for a time the Fathers have charge of a parish, a condition which the Provincial, Father Coffin, viewed with suspicion. Bishop Murray, however, showed himself ready to make concessions, particularly since he was quick to appreciate the value of the missions to the isolated people of the outback. What he proposed in the end was most reasonable, if after a few years' trial the parish should prove incompatible with mission work, then the Fathers should be free to move to Newcastle or some other suitable place where it would be possible to have a monastery and church without parochial duties. These were the terms of the

¹² Coffin to Dunne, 1 X 1866. Archives of the Australian Province.

¹³ See Moran. *op. cit.*, 336-356; A. Bellesheim, *Patrick Francis Moran, Erzbischof von Sydney, als Oberhirt und Historiker*, in *Der Katholik*, Mainz, 3rd. Series, 15 (1897) 215-217.

¹⁴ Moran, *op. cit.*, 351.

agreement forwarded to Rome and accepted by Father Mauron¹⁵.

All that remained was to decide on the site of the foundation. Obviously, that had to be left to the Bishop, and he favoured Singleton, about half way along the Hunter Valley. Murray had been in residence at Clapham for most of 1881, always on hand for the negotiations, and in the end offering a willing pair of hands for the final preparations. It is well to say at once that Bishop Murray had earned his being given credit for carefully adhering to his agreement and for his unflinching support of the Redemptorists.

Father Vaughan and his Companions

Choice of the man who should lead the pioneer band was reserved to the Superior General, and Father Mauron summoned the English Provincial to Rome to advise him. The man they selected was Edmund Vaughan, and he received word in a letter from the Father General¹⁶.

The Vaughan name is one we meet at almost every turn of the page in the history of the English Church towards the end of last century. The family had been exiled for espousing the Stuart cause in 1745; and it was Edmund's father, William Vaughan, who returned from Spain to restore the family's estates in Courtfield, Herefordshire¹⁷. Through his mother Edmund was connected with another of the old Catholic families, the Welds of Lulworth in Dorsetshire. He was a nephew of Cardinal Thomas Weld and a cousin of Sir Frederick Weld who served as governor in both Tasmania and West Australia. Edmund was born in 1827, the youngest of nineteen children. Since he was still a child when both of his parents died, he naturally grew up in the household of his elder brother, Colonel John Vaughan, who became master of Courtfield. Snead-Cox has described the atmosphere of the family home in the time of John Vaughan, grave, scholarly, refined but warmly affectionate. Edmund was attrac-

¹⁵ Murray to Mauron 31 X 1881. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

¹⁶ Mauron to Vaughan 8 XII 1881. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

¹⁷ Information about the Vaughan family has been drawn mainly from J.G. Snead-Cox, *The Life of Cardinal Vaughan*, London, 1910. A brief biographical note on Edmund Vaughan has appeared in *Spic. hist.* 9 (1961) 78-79. Father William Packer devoted several enthusiastic pages to him in his *Necrology*. See William Packer, *Necrology of the Australasian Vice-province and of the Australasian Province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer* in manuscript, 1952. Father Packer was careful to check such things as dates and places, but he was inclined to be extremely subjective in assessing events and personalities.

ted most of all to Herbert who was closest to himself in age, and the bond between the two remained all their lives.

Like so many of the sons of the old Catholic aristocracy, Edmund spent his school years with the Jesuits at Stonyhurst. From there he went on to Oscott, a sort of combined Major and Minor Seminary; and he seems to have taken a little time to make up his mind, as he spent a year as science master in the secondary school before he began his studies for the priesthood. In 1849, as a deacon, he applied for admission into the Congregation. Since England then belonged to the Belgian Province, his novitiate was made in St.-Trond, where he had as companions Robert Aston Coffin¹⁸, Thomas Bridgett¹⁹, John Furniss²⁰ and William Plunkett²¹ who was later to join him in Australia. He took his vows on 2nd. February 1852, and three weeks later was ordained priest in Liège.

Father Vaughan never regarded himself a successful preacher, but just the same, like everybody else in those days he was constantly at work on the missions. At an early date his gifts as a founder were recognised. In 1867 he was sent with a few companions to begin a foundation in Scotland, the first religious community in that country since the Reformation²². After two years on the upper floor of a small house in Dundee, the community moved to Perth, where they survived slander and insult and even an occasional flash of violence from the indignant disciples of John Knox. Edmund Vaughan had clearly been well schooled for his task when the letter from Father Mauron told him that he had been chosen to establish the Congregation in Australia.

The other members of the pioneer band were selected by Father Coffin, two Irishmen, another Englishman and two Irish Brothers. Father Thomas O'Farrell had come to the Congregation as a priest of the diocese of Ardagh²³. He had been professed just over a year when he was appointed to Australia. His was an exuberant, optimistic personality, and he was gifted with a marvellous eloquence

¹⁸ Lubienski, *op. cit.*, is probably the best source of information.

¹⁹ A short biographical note on Father Bridgett can be found in Austin Berthe, *Life of St. Alphonsus Liguori*, English edition by Harold Castle, II, Dublin, 1905, 700-701. A very laudatory Life has been published by Cyril Ryder C.S.S.R., *Thomas Edward Bridgett*, London, 1906.

²⁰ Father Furniss was notable for his extraordinary success with children. There is information about him in Berthe-Castle, *op. cit.*, 699.

²¹ See Packer, *op. cit.*, I, 87-99.

²² See Berthe-Castle, *op. cit.*, 717.

²³ Packer, *op. cit.*, I, 100-105.

that even now can thrill one who reads his sermons. Father O'Farrell won a long-standing reputation as a preacher in every State of Australia and in New Zealand. Father James Hegarty, the second Irish Father, was known to his companions as 'Boanerges'²⁴. Big of frame, he had a big voice and a big heart as well. He had been in Scotland with his superior, and he just loved it when the going was hard. Father Henry Halson, the Englishman, was no stranger to Australia²⁵. He was a convert who had found himself compelled by his religious doubts to abandon his studies for the Anglican ministry, and with two of his brothers he came out to the Victorian diggings, spending a couple of years on the goldfields. He was introduced to St. Alphonsus by an Irish storekeeper near St. Arnaud, and in his writings he discovered the Eucharistic doctrine that put an end to his uncertainties. When he resumed his studies with the Catholic priesthood now his goal, he came under the influence of Father Edward Douglas who guided him to the Congregation. Brother Daniel Gleeson was a Tipperary man, one of three Redemptorist Brothers from his family²⁶. Brother Lawrence Waters, another Irishman, was the handyman of the party, who has left many a reminder of his skill and devotion in the church at Singleton and the house at Mayfield²⁷.

The travellers assembled in Clapham for the departure, which was to be on 9th. February 1882. The farewell dinner the day before was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Cardinal Manning²⁸. He had long been a close friend of Fathers Coffin and Vaughan, and had taken a keen interest in the mission to Australia. Bishop Murray knelt with the Singleton community to receive the Cardinal's blessing.

The long voyage began on the following afternoon. It lasted seven weeks, which Brother Lawrence spent on his bunk being wretchedly seasick and 'Boanerges' Hegarty doing his utmost to get the passengers ready for eternity as well as for Australia. At length on 30th. March Father Vaughan was able to report that they had reached « the magnificent Sydney Harbour, said by some to be among the most beautiful in the whole world »²⁹. No doubt Brother Lawrence would have echoed his superior's sentiments: after seven weeks any dry land must have seemed like paradise.

²⁴ Packer, *op. cit.*, I, 137-139.

²⁵ Packer, *op. cit.*, I, 140-146.

²⁶ Packer, *op. cit.*, I, 155-157.

²⁷ Packer, *op. cit.*, II, 13, 53.

²⁸ Lubienski to Douglas, 10 II 1882. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

²⁹ Vaughan to Mauron, 8 IV 1882. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

The Archbishop of Sydney, Roger Bede Vaughan, gave his uncle a warm welcome, which Edmund understood to speak volumes of his nephew's lonely existence among a clergy with little sympathy for Englishmen³⁰. The Archbishop was quite acutely chagrined that he had not been the one to offer the Redemptorists a home in Australia. He arranged a retreat for his clergy, a work his uncle thought it prudent to entrust to Father O'Farrell rather than do it himself as the Archbishop wanted. Bishop Murray, however, was in a hurry to get back to his diocese after so long an absence. The party travelled by sea to Newcastle and went on to Maitland, arriving in time for Holy Week in April.

Singleton

The date for taking over Singleton parish was to be 30th. April, but the Bishop took Father Vaughan to see his new home a couple of weeks before that date³¹. He was amused by the superior's insistence on knowing absolutely everything, jotting down copious notes all the while. The town was named after a member of a party which had explored the Hunter Valley in 1825. About fifty miles from Maitland, Singleton had come to be the centre of a rich farming district originally called St. Patrick's Plains but now known more familiarly as Paddy's Plains. Father Vaughan and his companions were pleasantly surprised to see vineyards and to discover the excellent quality of the Hunter Valley wines³².

The township numbered some 1800 inhabitants of whom 300 were Catholics with a further 700 or so scattered through the outlying parts of the parish. Father Vaughan found the people « very good and simple, and very innocent. Vice holds no sway here as in the cities of Europe »³³. He always looked at people, it has to be confessed, through rose-coloured spectacles. The church was small but adequate, and close by was a large convent of Sisters of Mercy, who conducted a boarding school for girls. The presbytery was quite a distance from the church. It would have been a comfortable home for the two priests for whom it had been intended, but for a community of six it was bound to be miserably overcrowded.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Murray to Coffin, 7 IV 1882. Domestic Archives, Clapham.

³² Vaughan to Mauron, 23 VI 1882. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

³³ Ibid.

The parish ministry was a new and somewhat exciting work for men used to the old countries. There were tiny country churches at Glennie's Creek nine miles away, Broke sixteen, Glendonbrook eighteen and the exotic sounding Goorangoola at a distance of twenty-eight miles. The furthest station was at Bolga, forty miles from Singleton, which received no more than an occasional visit³⁴. Parish work was to require the presence of two Fathers, rarely the same two for much more than a few weeks at a time, since the parish commitments had to be fitted into a busy schedule of missions.

The church was in poor shape, since it had to serve during the week as a boys' school. As soon as possible the boys and their master were transferred to a nearby hall; and the church now became the preserve of Brother Lawrence, who lavished on it much skill and devoted attention. His beautiful shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in hand carved cedar remained when the Redemptorists left Singleton. Father Vaughan's fastidious nature was offended by what he considered the drabness of the church services. To improve them he founded a Confraternity under the patronage of St. Cecilia for the becoming celebration of the Liturgy. He also compiled and published the first Catholic hymnal for Australia³⁵. The collection contained some of the most popular English hymns, a few of his own compositions and a number of his beautiful translations from St. Alphonsus.

A matter of acute embarrassment to the superior was the parish debt. Nowadays it must make us a little bit envious to learn that it amounted to £ 1900. An offer by the parishoners to assume responsibility only increased his anxiety lest it put too much strain on their incomes³⁶. As it turned out, the debt occasioned a high degree of understanding and cooperation between the Fathers and their parishoners, so that a quite extensive building programme became possible to repair and decorate the churches as well as extend the presbytery and schools. One can detect a trace of satisfaction (maybe smugness) in Father Vaughan's report that after five years he was able to leave the parish free of debt³⁷.

It must be confessed that from the start the parish work in Singleton was not very exciting. On the other hand, the community

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ The Australian Catholic Hymnal was published in Sydney in 1883. See Mayfield Chronicles, I, 53.

³⁶ Vaughan to Mauron, 23 VI 1882. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

³⁷ Vaughan to Ulrich, 15 VIII 1887. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

soon became most enthusiastic about the missions. Their first venture was in Lambton, a suburb of Newcastle, in April 1882, even before they had taken up residence in Singleton. Fathers O'Farrell, Hegarty and Halson formed the team, and they found so much to do that they could not get to Singleton in time for the opening of the foundation, and their superior explained to his new parishoners that the mission had proved successful so far beyond their expectations « both in the number of careless Catholics brought back to their duties and in the number of converts returning to the true fold, that it was necessary to prolong the mission beyond the time fixed »³⁸. Lambton attracted some comment in the Catholic papers³⁹. It also whetted the appetite of the Fathers for more of this sort of work, and they did not have long to wait.

In September of the same year the Bishop was in Singleton for a profession ceremony in the convent, and he suggested that Father O'Farrell accompany him on a tour of the remote northern and western parts of the diocese⁴⁰. The circuit began at Gunnedah, about 50 miles from Singleton, which was reached by train, the last civilised transport the two were to experience on their long journey. To Coonabarabran (inhabited by Coonabarabranigans as the irrepressible O'Farrell could not resist noting), to Baradine, to Coonamble, to Walgett and back to Coonamble and on to Dubbo they travelled mainly by coach, a primitive affair one gathers from the description of wild Jack O'Leary tearing branches off the gum trees as they passed and breaking them over the backs of his horses. Stages were of seventy or eighty miles, and the settlements were entirely lacking in either comfort or refinement. The whole took six weeks, and at its end Father Hegarty joined Father O'Farrell for what the latter described as « a smashing mission in Sydney, our first in the metropolis »⁴¹.

In October of 1882 Father Vaughan, yielding to the insistence of his nephew, agreed to preach during the solemn triduum for the dedication of St. Mary's Cathedral. To his astonishment, since he was always diffident about his preaching, he was simply deluged with requests for missions, including one for every parish in the diocese of Sandhurst, Victoria, and a similar application from Auckland, New

³⁸ Shearman, *op. cit.*, I, 21-22.

³⁹ *The Freeman's Journal*, Sydney, 21 IV 1882.

⁴⁰ The long and highly entertaining description is contained in a letter of O'Farrell to his Provincial Father Macdonald, 7 XII 1882. The letter is in the Archives of the Irish Province.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Zealand⁴². At that early stage it was hardly possible to promise anything but that the poor Father would appeal to the home Province for reinforcements.

Early in the following year the community was increased by three new arrivals. Father John Stokes, a Limerick man, was another of Father Vaughan's foundation community in Scotland⁴³. Father Eugene O'Neill from Tipperary was to spend thirty-eight years in Australia⁴⁴. Brother Joachim Kelly, in spite of his very Irish name, was a native of London, no less⁴⁵. The list of works for the year shows seventeen missions, which number included an extended campaign by Fathers Vaughan, O'Farrell and Hegarty in the New Zealand diocese of Dunedin⁴⁶. The Bishop of Dunedin, another Patrick Moran, had been a travelling companion of the foundation party in their journey from England.

The ranks were further swelled in 1885 by three arrivals. Father Henry Berghman was a Belgian who never lost his accent in speaking English, but he was to prove an invaluable addition to the team because of his unfailing appeal to the young⁴⁷. Father Dominic Mangan, an Irishman, was constantly dogged by bad health during his long service in Australia⁴⁸. The third member of the party was Father John Hearne, the first priest to join the Congregation in Australia, now returning after his novitiate in England⁴⁹.

By that time, 1885, it had become evident, painfully so, that Singleton was not a suitable home at all. The missions were clearly the principal occupation, and it was most inconvenient to be so far from the centres of population. Moreover, the presbytery, built for two priests, was strained beyond reasonable limits to accommodate a community of as many as sixteen men. The men newly arrived from England and Ireland found the summer months intolerable. This was one of the considerations that moved Father Vaughan to undertake campaigns in New Zealand during the months of December, January and February each year, because those left at home « would find it

⁴² Vaughan to Mauron, 23 X 1882. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

⁴³ Packer, *op. cit.*, I, 153-154.

⁴⁴ Packer, *op. cit.*, II, 26.

⁴⁵ Shearman, *op. cit.*, I, 26.

⁴⁶ Shearman, *op. cit.*, I, 30.

⁴⁷ Packer, *op. cit.*, II, 24-25.

⁴⁸ Shearman, *op. cit.*, I, 30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

more possible to breathe »⁵⁰. That further entailed that the missions continued without a break throughout the year.

Bishop Murray was sympathetic to the extent of assisting in the search for a new house. It was mainly through his efforts that the site at Waratah was acquired⁵¹. Work commenced there early in 1886, and after a few months there were usually three or four of the community in residence there. The work was completed in 1887, and it was decided that the parish in Singleton should be relinquished on the feast of the Most Holy Redeemer, 17th. July.

During its five years the Singleton foundation had a creditable record of work. The parish had not been neglected, as the Bishop reported to Father Mauron⁵². The missions had expanded into Victoria as well as New Zealand; and during a scorching February in 1886 they even crossed the South Australian border to Mt. Gambier and Millicent. The Bishop explained to the people of Singleton that the Fathers had been correct in deciding to devote themselves exclusively to the missions. Even though the good Sisters were moved to tears, everybody who had seen the comings and goings of the past five years knew that he spoke the truth. Two days later the new Pastor arrived, and the Redemptorists left their first Australian home⁵³.

Expansion

The site at Waratah was acquired principally through the efforts and good will of Bishop Murray, who deserves the utmost gratitude for his generosity towards the Congregation. As early as 1881 he had assured Father Mauron that if parish duties should be found inconvenient, he would at once arrange for an alternative foundation⁵⁴. When early in 1884 a desirable property in the suburb of Mereweather was not acquired because of the long delay in getting a reply from Rome, Father Vaughan suggested that the Father General delegate to the Bishop his right of approval of a future purchase of land⁵⁵. That is how the land was bought at Waratah. The place

⁵⁰ Vaughan to Mauron, 4 IX 1883. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

⁵¹ Shearman, *op. cit.*, I, 37-39.

⁵² Murray to Mauron, 6 II 1883. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

⁵³ Shearman, *op. cit.*, I, 36.

⁵⁴ Murray to Mauron, 31 X 1881. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

⁵⁵ Vaughan to Mauron 10 VI 1884, AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

had been known as Harbottle Hill, a name which Father Vaughan promptly changed to Mount Saint Alphonsus.

The Bishop arranged for a spectacular ceremony for laying the foundation stone on 3rd. December 1885. The occasion was most favourable, since it came at the close of a Plenary Council of the Bishops of Australia and New Zealand. The Bishop insisted that Father Vaughan attend the Council and invite the newly created Cardinal Moran to lay the foundation stone. The Cardinal's presence ensured the very large attendance of Bishops and clergy that the wily Bishop had expected, and this was a rare event in Australia where distance was always such a barrier. There is no record of how many people were present on the occasion, but Father Vaughan was able to report a collection of more than £ 4.000⁵⁶. The house was opened in 1887, the centenary year of the death of St. Alphonsus, and fittingly, on 2nd. August. There was once more a distinguished gathering, which this time included Archbishop Thomas Joseph Carr, recently appointed to Melbourne⁵⁷.

Now that the parish of Singleton no longer claimed every spare moment, it was possible to think about a house in Victoria. The southern State owed its rapid growth to the gold rushes of the fifties. Thirty years later most of the diggers had turned their attention to the rich grazing lands the explorer Major Mitchell had called « Australia Felix ». Melbourne, the capital of the new State, already had a population greater than that of Sydney. The people, now becoming settled after the excitement of the gold days, were, as the Fathers quickly discovered, eager for the missions.

In 1885 Father Vaughan with Fathers O'Farrell and Stokes conducted a mission in St. Kilda, a Melbourne suburb. In spite of its being held in the bleak winter months of June and July, it was a success far beyond anything the missionaries had yet known. Father O'Farrell sent a long account to Father Macdonald, the English Provincial, telling of the crowds that thronged the confessionals, the few hours' sleep the missionaries could snatch each night, the loud burst of applause that greeted news that the mission would be extended and the loud weeping and lamentation that accompanied Father Vaughan's closing sermon⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ Vaughan to Ulrich, 3 I 1886. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

⁵⁷ *The Freeman's Journal*, Sydney, 6 VIII 1887.

⁵⁸ O'Farrell to Macdonald, Feast of the Most Holy Redeemer 1885. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

That closing night was full of drama. In the highly emotional atmosphere the parish priest, Dr. Corbett, afterwards Bishop of Sale, announced that he intended to hand over his parish to the Redemptorists so that they might have a base in Victoria⁵⁹. Father O'Farrell was anxious to accept the offer, but the experience of Singleton proved enough to discourage the project. In any case, it was evident that other opportunities would soon be offering. In the following year there were missions in the Cathedrals of Melbourne, Bendigo and Ballarat. The Bishop of Ballarat, James Moore, made up his mind to bring the Redemptorists to his diocese, and he was a hard man to refuse.

Father Vaughan was literally rushed off his feet during the Ballarat mission. The Bishop was determined to settle the Fathers on a property of his own called Ebor; but the good Father does not seem to have had a chance to see it, and he thought it best to warn Father Macdonald to be careful of Bishop Moore⁶⁰. There was some exchange of letters between the Bishop and the Provincial, and Bishop Moore concluded his dealings when he called on Father Mauron during his 'ad limina' visit late in 1887⁶¹. Even though misgivings about Ebor remained, the Bishop had his way⁶².

The new community was given Father O'Farrell as superior. His companions were to be Father O'Neill, Father Halson, coming back to his goldfields and Father William Plunkett, whose appointment was greeted with delight by his friends in Australia. Father Plunkett travelled from England with the Bishop, and in Melbourne they were joined by the three Fathers from Waratah together with Brothers Lawrence and Joachim. Since the Bishop had also gathered a community of Holy Spirit Fathers as well as two communities of nuns, it was an impressive company that proceeded to the Cathedral in Ballarat to a welcoming peal of the City Hall bells. The Bishop had a flair for publicity⁶³.

Early next morning Father Halson who knew the country, set out from the Bishop's house to look at their new home. He reported glumly on his return that he had a four mile walk to get there and all he found was a two-roomed shanty⁶⁴. It was the middle of No-

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Vaughan to Macdonald, 10 XII 1886. Archives of the English Province.

⁶¹ Moore to Macdonald, 21 I 1888. Archives of the English Province.

⁶² Macdonald to Moore, 17 VIII 1888. Archives of the English Province.

⁶³ Shearman, *op. cit.*, II, 21-24.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

vember 1888, and Father O'Farrell decided to put off occupying the shanty, since there were missions to keep everybody busy until the end of the year. Finally he himself with the two Brothers went out to Ebor on New Year's Eve. It was far worse than they had expected. To their horror they discovered that no preparation had been made, neither furniture nor food, and no chance of finding shops open for a couple of days⁶⁵.

Father O'Farrell lost no time about letting the Bishop know that conditions at Ebor were simply insupportable. He was informed curtly that nothing could be done. For a year the community put up with impossible quarters, and then in desperation Father O'Farrell asked his superior to come with him to put his case to the Bishop. The meeting took place in Melbourne, and there was plenty of straight talk on both sides with the two Fathers making it plain that they would not agree to remaining in Ebor, and on that note the meeting ended. An hour later they were asked to come back, and Bishop Moore now offered them a much more suitable position in the suburb of Wendouree⁶⁶.

The blunt talking with the Bishop seems to have cleared the air. Once work began on the house at Wendouree, he showed himself more than generous⁶⁷. The community was able to leave Ebor in September 1893.

One reason why the Ballarat foundation was retained in spite of extreme discomfort was that its record of missions from the beginning outstripped that of Waratah. When Ballarat showed a report of fifty-two missions in 1890, Father Vaughan, who now had the title of Visitor, thought it well to restrain Father O'Farrell's exuberance⁶⁸. He had little success, and year by year the numbers mounted, until in 1894, the year of Father Vaughan's return to England, they numbered seventy-three with 365 converts, « one for every day », as Father Shearman gleefully comments⁶⁹.

From the start the missions were clearly the principal, and practically the sole work of the Redemptorists in Australia. This was a point stressed by Bishop Murray when he explained to the people of Singleton why the Fathers were leaving their parish⁷⁰. We can

⁶⁵ O'Farrell to Macdonald, 3 I 1889. Archives of the English Province.

⁶⁶ Vaughan to Macdonald, 29 I 1890. Archives of the Australian Province.

⁶⁷ Shearman, *op. cit.*, II, 44.

⁶⁸ Shearman, *op. cit.*, II, 47.

⁶⁹ Shearman, *op. cit.*, II, 63.

⁷⁰ Vaughan to Ulrich, 15 VIII 1887. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

form some assessment of the mission work by referring to the records of Apostolic Labours which were kept meticulously, but it is necessary to give some life to the statistics. An article on missions appeared in the *Australasian Catholic Record* in 1895 over the signature C.S.S.R.⁷¹. The author was Father John Burke of the Waratah community. It explained the various exercises of the mission in terms that are familiar enough to us, but which must have been enlightening to clergy in Australia where Redemptorist missions were still a novelty. More informative is a highly coloured account which appeared surprisingly enough in the French periodical *Le Correspondant*. The author was J. Lemire who used material supplied by his brother, Achille Lemire C.S.Sp., parish priest of Maryborough in Victoria⁷².

Of the first mission in Sydney, late in 1882, Father Shearman remarks that « it marked an era in the work »⁷³. That is a fair comment. Previously, the practice in Australia had been to have courses of sermons, usually lasting about a week and conducted by a priest, religious or diocesan, with some reputation for preaching. The Redemptorists caused some surprise, apparently, when they sent two men to tiny St. Michael's, Dawes Point, for a fortnight. In larger parishes like St. Kilda a month was usually devoted to the work. In those first years the missionaries for the most part, knowing little of the country, decided only after their arrival in the parish how long they would need to remain. When Cardinal Moran objected to the practice, Father Vaughan warmly declared that he would not dream of leaving a parish until consciences had been set at peace⁷⁴.

Seen in this light, the tally of missions and retreats to clergy and religious represents an apostolate that was practically uninterrupted. In 1883 Father Vaughan wrote: « Our missions and retreats follow one another as quickly as our numbers permit »⁷⁵. But numbers alone cannot give the real picture. Most of the work was in the thinly populated country parishes, like Wollombi in the Maitland

⁷¹ C.S.S.R., *On Missions*, in *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Sydney, 1st. series, 1 (1895) 321-336.

⁷² Abbé J. Lemire, *Le catholicisme en Australie*, in *Le Correspondant*, Paris, 66 (1894) 201-225, 684-708, 1001-1023. It was published also as a separate work in Paris in 1894. There is an excellent note on the author in Alec R. Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism*, London, 1964. Lemire, one of the so-called Liberal Catholics attracted to *Le Correspondant*, was a somewhat uncritical anglophile, author of a life of Cardinal Manning.

⁷³ Shearman, *op. cit.*, I, 31.

⁷⁴ Shearman, *op. cit.*, I, 78.

⁷⁵ Vaughan to Mauron, 4 IX 1883. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

diocese, where Father Hegarty travelled some hundreds of miles over appalling roads to visit the people, many of whom had never seen a priest in their lives. Not everybody could note like old 'Boanerges' that « all came to their duties except two or three »⁷⁶. Instances like that or like Father O'Farrell's wild ride to Coonamble and Walgett in 1882 give a glimpse of what the Australian missions were really like. Distance was as ever the biggest problem, so that it was necessary to undertake several works within easy reach of one another. Consequently, when a missionary left home, he could expect to be away for anything up to six months. During Father Vaughan's twelve years in the country the missions ranged from Cooktown to Adelaide. A look at the map of Australia will be enough to show that « the tyranny of distance » is more than just a clever turn of phrase.

Work in the confessional seems to have been particularly demanding. Descriptions like Father O'Farrell's account of St. Kilda with people waiting for hours outside the confessionals are not infrequent. What is more revealing is the experience of ignorance and muddled consciences. Of Dunedin evangelised on the first visit to New Zealand, Father Vaughan reported: « We could scarcely manage to hear twenty confessions in a day of eight or nine hours »⁷⁷. And this sort of thing was not a rare occurrence. What is surprising is that these protracted and involved confessions seem to have been just as frequent in the larger cities like Dunedin as they were in the outback.

Another surprising feature of the missions was one noted by Lemire, who considered them one of the principal sources of conversions to the Catholic Church⁷⁸. Mission reports regularly noted the number of converts, and they are impressive: sixty in Brisbane in 1889, fifty in Ballarat in 1892 and so on. The total for the twelve years Father Vaughan spent in Australia was just short of two thousand. There was no trace of proselytising in the missions, no apologetic or polemical preaching. At the most, there was usually a brief notice to announce that those who wished to know more about the Catholic religion could contact one of the missionaries or the priests of the parish. The Fathers did not undertake to instruct the candidates: it was scarcely possible with their eight or nine hours a day in the confessional. It appears that the conversions came about very much as Lemire put it: « Led by curiosity, he goes to hear a sermon by a

⁷⁶ Mayfield Domestic Archives, Apostolic Labours, December 1887.

⁷⁷ Vaughan to Ulrich, 15 I 1884. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

⁷⁸ Lemire, *op. cit.*, 216.

Redemptorist, and touched by his words, has himself received into the Church »⁷⁹. Really, the phenomenon of the conversions during the missions indicate, if anything, the quite extraordinary impact of the mission on the whole population, Catholics and others.

Profile of a Pioneer

Life for the first Redemptorists in Australia was busy and exciting; and at first sight Edmund Vaughan must appear as badly cast in the role of their leader. One of the Sydney dailies offered its readers a description of him on the occasion of his mission in St. Mary's Cathedral in 1884.

Father Vaughan who is, we understand, the head or superior of the Australian branch of the Redemptorist Order, is said to be a very learned theologian, and a man of wide and genuine scholarship. To the ordinary observer he presents the appearance of a venerable and cultured gentleman with a calm and unaffected manner. It is not hard to distinguish even in the intellectual, ascetic features of Father Vaughan a resemblance to those of the noble looking and accomplished man whose statuesque form was once so familiar in St. Mary's⁸⁰.

The comparison with the elegant good looks of Roger Bede is unduly flattering, but the rest of the picture is very likely accurate. It is the portrait of a scholar, a recluse, rather than of a man of action. His companions, however, had their own views. To Father O'Farrell he was usually « our grand old chief ». And Father Plunkett could find no better recommendation for Father O'Farrell than that he had « learnt from his superior his mode of acting and governing »⁸¹. His Provincial has left a report on him suggesting an amiable, naive character whom it would be hard to dislike. « He is inclined to see everything more as he would like it to be than as it really is »⁸². There is ample evidence in Father Vaughan's letters that the description is justified.

Regarding himself, however, he could be genuinely critical. He often spoke of himself as unsuccessful as a preacher. This hardly did

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ *The Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 3 III 1884.

⁸¹ Plunkett to Raus, 31 VIII 1894. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

⁸² Visitation Report, 1889. AGR, Provincia Anglica, Relationes Visitationum.

himself justice, as is clear from the scenes of emotion at his closing sermon in St. Kilda. In other matters he showed a similar diffidence, and he readily allowed Father O'Farrell to represent the Congregation on public occasions. It was certainly not weakness, since when there was occasion to speak strongly with Cardinal Moran and Bishop Moore, he did not hesitate.

The real difficulty, as he understood perfectly, was the hostility of the Irish clergy in Australia towards Englishmen. Bishop Murray spelled it out in a letter to Father O'Farrell⁸³. Father Vaughan himself was always painfully aware of the delicacy of his position: after all, he must have learnt something from his nephew, Roger Bede. This was the reason for allowing Father O'Farrell to take more than his share of the limelight, as he explained in a visitation report.

Regarding his relations to the founding of the Congregation in Australia, some explanation seems to be necessary, as your Paternity was not yet in Rome in 1882. The good Bishop of Maitland who obtained the foundation in 1882 was not at all pleased that I was appointed superior, but he was too loyal to complain of the nomination, and he has always been most friendly towards me. But from the beginning it was Father O'Farrell who won the popularity among Bishops, clergy and people. His good humour, his rich and sympathetic voice, his Irish accent have gained him a powerful influence. And since he was wholly loyal to me, I gladly used him for the most important missions. So it has come about that all the Bishops in Australia are devoted to him⁸⁴.

It is surprising that he should say that Bishop Murray was disappointed at his nomination. Certainly, the Bishop never gave the slightest sign of animosity. It was different with Cardinal Moran. A situation of particular delicacy was created by the Cardinal's refusal to arrange for the burial of his predecessor in St. Mary's Cathedral, with the result that the body of Roger Bede Vaughan lay unburied in a cellar for more than half a century. The Cardinal also wrote to Father O'Farrell and in much stronger terms than Bishop Murray, stressing that English superiors of any kind were simply not wanted in Australia⁸⁵.

Edmund Vaughan kept secret all his life something which would surely have made his relations with the Cardinal impossibly strained. The letter from his nephew, Herbert, telling of the Arch-

⁸³ Visitation Report 1894. AGR, Provincia Anglica, Relationes Visitationum.

⁸⁵ Moran to O'Farrell, 12 II 1894. AGR, Provincia Anglica, VI.

bishop's sudden death in England added that Cardinals Manning and Howard had determined to use their influence in Rome in order to have Edmund appointed to succeed him. Father Vaughan added a postscript to a letter he had just completed to Father Mauron, giving his reasons for wishing to avoid the responsibility, and among them he stressed one in particular.

All the older suffragan Bishops are Irish, as well as the majority of the priests and almost all the people. They desire and demand loudly and insistently a Bishop of their own nationality. Perhaps the Holy See will not agree with them — but if it does not, let it be somebody who is experienced in governing a diocese, who would have nothing to learn from suffragans hostile to him, and whose talents and reputation would enable him to bear with honour the dignity of a very high position⁸⁶.

He certainly put his finger on the real issue in the Sydney succession. The appointment of the Archbishop was the occasion for Rome's recognising the decidedly Irish character of the Church in Australia. It was also the occasion of controversy and intrigue that attracted the attention of the secular press to an extent that can only be called scandalous. Strong feelings were aroused. There was clearly justice in the demand for an Irish Archbishop reflecting the quality of the Catholic population, but on the other hand Archbishops Polding and Vaughan had more than enough experience of quarrelsome Irish clergy to make them fear what would come with an Irishman at the top. Matthew Quinn of Bathurst went to Rome to look after the Irish case. He was evidently puzzled by the activities of the English party, but could find no clue as to the identity of their candidate⁸⁷.

The Holy See appears to have favoured from the beginning the Irish cause. The nomination of Patrick Francis Moran of Ossory marked a new era both for Sydney and Australia. The half century of English and Benedictine influence was definitely over. One man who regretted the change was Cardinal Manning, who gave voice to his chagrin in a letter to Herbert Vaughan a fortnight after Moran's appointment. « There are great blackguards in Sydney. I have written to Father O'Sullivan fully confirming his statement: and returned Archbishop Polding's letter to him »⁸⁸.

⁸⁶ Vaughan to Mauron, 16 II 1884. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

⁸⁷ Quinn's letters to Bishop Murray may be seen in the Maitland diocesan archives.

⁸⁸ Manning to Herbert Vaughan 6 IV 1884. Archives of the Oblates of St. Charles, Bayswater, England.

Sooner or later English domination of Sydney had to be challenged by the Irish: it was just Edmund Vaughan's misfortune to be caught in the crossfire. Really, the incident of his candidacy has little more significance than that. It is worth mentioning, though, that it occasioned a revealing comment on Manning's intervention. It came in his letter to Father Mauron; and it is as close as the good man ever came to being caustic. « This sort of person, once they have made choice of an unfortunate, propose him on every occasion that offers for a Bishopric, whether in England, Scotland or Timbuctoo! »⁸⁹.

There was probably never any likelihood that Edmund Vaughan would become Archbishop of Sydney. Nor does Manning's advocacy prove that he had the qualities of leadership: it is no more than just another instance of the Cardinal's almost compulsive intriguing. Father Vaughan should be judged solely by the record of his twelve pioneering years in Australia. And it is more to his credit to quote what Lemire wrote in 1894, the year of his return to England.

The Order of the Redemptorists is of all the religious Orders in Australia, the most popular, the most useful, the most supernatural, if I may so express myself. Undoubtedly, other Orders work like them and side by side with them, but their success seems to me much less brilliant. Such is the opinion of priests whom I have consulted and who speak with knowledge of the facts⁹⁰.

That is altogether too fulsome, of course. The abbé, or rather his brother, had become a friend of the Australian Redemptorists. There is, though, some measure of truth in the eulogy. It is certainly very much to the credit of the superior that the Congregation in so short a time should have become known over so wide an area — from North Queensland to South Australia and across the Tasman. They were twelve fruitful years. Materially, there was not a great deal to show beyond the two quite imposing houses of Waratah and Ballarat. The true achievements were those of the missions. Again it is hard to resist the temptation to leave the description to the enthusiastic Lemire.

May God continue to bless the ministry of the Redemptorist Fathers. He seems to have made of them the most edifying models the better to secure the future of the young Australian Church. So long as is heard the

⁸⁹ Vaughan to Mauron, 16 II 1884. AGR, Provincia Hibernica, Australia, I.

⁹⁰ Lemire, *op. cit.*, 703.

preaching of this band of apostles, the Faith will live, and Catholic piety will be assured⁹¹.

The record of missions in Singleton, Waratah and Ballarat is all the commendation Edmund Vaughan needs to show that his twelve years had laid solid foundations on which others could build. In 1894 he received word that he had been appointed English Provincial. At once he wrote a personal letter to each of the confreres in Ballarat: parting always came hard to him. He set out for England leaving behind him a land he had himself evangelised from north to south, and which he had come to love.

⁹¹ Lemire, *op. cit.*, 707.