



## A History of the Jesuits in Australia

To understand the Jesuits one must understand their context and their spirituality. Ignatius grew up in sixteenth century Europe, one of the “New Ages” of the world, the time of the Reformation and the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery. One of his brothers died in Mexico as a Conquistador, another brother died fighting the Turk. It was the era of great advances in new learning, the finding of new continents, and the move of Europe towards the East, an age of great minds and artists, and of major religious upheaval. Another part of the context of Ignatius was the University of Paris, where he drew around him a group of fellow students, and from the outset the Jesuits maintained an esteem for learning. His spirituality was partly but strongly expressed in a number of phrases, such as, “finding God in all things”; “love is found in deeds rather than words”; “for the greater glory of God”. It was a spirituality that said God is to be found in the world, not withdrawn from it, that all human endeavour could lead to God. It meant that Jesuits were soon involved in all types of activities, as missionaries, scholars, teachers, preachers and confessors, writers, artists, musicians and astronomers. Ignatius’ phrase “to love and to serve” sent them among the poorest of the poor, from African slaves to the Indians of South America. The esteem for learning made them tutors of the Emperor.

It was a spirituality that encouraged imagination and reflection, and this saw great missionary innovations in India, Japan, China and South America. Respect for learning led them to founding the first network of schools and colleges in Europe and the New World and earned them the description “the schoolmasters of Europe”. Large numbers of young men, some very talented and some very holy, were drawn to them, nurtured by a spirituality of companionship, first with Christ and then with each other as “friends in the Lord”.

Being involved in so many areas and wielding significant influence, the Jesuits were also seen as strong and competent defenders of the Church in a time when Nation States were growing more powerful and rejecting the notion

of the universal authority of the Church. For various reasons, but often to weaken the Church, the Jesuits were expelled from various countries, and when the Bourbon monarchs threatened schism from the Church unless the Jesuits were disbanded, the Pope ordered the suppression of the Society just before the French Revolution. Forty years later another Pope reconstituted the Jesuits and the Society of Jesus began again to grow, slowly and with a very strict and orthodox views, being “the Pope’s men”. This in turn brought them into trouble in the nineteenth century when the age of liberalism saw the Church as reactionary. To weaken the Church the Jesuits were again expelled from various European countries. One such expulsion occurred from the Austrian Empire in 1848. It was a time when German emigrants were being encouraged to settle in the new colony in South Australia, and two young and hastily ordained Jesuits set off with a group of Prussian Germans, arriving “at the other end of the earth” on 8 December 1848, commencing the Jesuit work in Australia. It was a young and burgeoning and primitive colony, with a small population of poorly educated Catholics scattered thinly across a vast land. The great needs were pastoral care for a moving pioneering population, for the provision of schooling and for the training of a local priesthood. These works, and a care for the aboriginal people, occupied the Australian Jesuits in the fifty-three years of their Mission in South Australia. They settled at Sevenhill out of poverty but there established a centre from which they undertook 1000-mile horseback journeys throughout the interior, built some thirty churches and a similar number of schools, established two schools of their own, a seminary, novitiate, mission centre and vineyards, and a twenty-year Mission to the aborigines of the Northern Territory.

The early Australian Church was an Irish Church, and after a number of petitions the Irish Jesuits arrived in Melbourne in 1865, where they found a population which had grown five times in ten years as a result of the Gold Rushes. Again the need was for pastoral organisation, the forming of parishes, the training of local priests, and most especially education for a Catholic population that was largely illiterate. Just as Fr Aloysius Kranewitter, the pioneer Jesuit at Sevenhill, put his thumbprint on that Mission, so the first Irish Superior, Fr Joseph Dalton, exercised a huge influence on the Irish Mission. He sent Jesuits



into St Patrick's College, formed the Richmond and Hawthorn parishes, purchased the land for Xavier College, established St Aloysius' College in Sydney, the North Sydney parish, and Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview, as well as another school in Dunedin.

The Australian Jesuits worked largely in rural districts, handling over parishes as diocesan priests became available. In Adelaide they were champions of the excommunicated Mary MacKillop. The Irish Jesuits included some figures of extraordinary calibre who became spokesmen for the Church in many areas. By 1901, when the Austrians and the Irish merged to form the Australian Mission, there were twelve Jesuit communities in Melbourne, Sydney, Sevenhill and Adelaide. Over the next fifty years, colleges, parishes, the giving of retreats, the training of diocesan priests, publications and University involvement became the main works of the Australian Mission.

1951 marked a great milestone when we became a Province in our own right and founded our own Mission in India. The decade after that was one of great expansion – new work in education, parishes, University, social apostolate, print media and our indigenous people again. With fewer but still a steady number of vocations and new realizations of the role of the laity, growth has taken new forms. There is a stronger sense of internationalism and substantial efforts to share leadership and our spirituality with committed lay colleagues, fellow workers with us. The Province now sees itself more broadly, as an entity of Jesuit and lay, endeavouring to better serve the Church and the world in this day and age, and to serve peoples that thirst and yearn and need to hear and know the word of life who is Jesus.

#### 1848

- Arrival at Port Adelaide on 8 December of Frs Kranewitter and Klinkowstroem as Chaplains to 150 Silesian immigrants.

#### 1851

- Sevenhill property acquired.
- Arrival of Brothers John Schreiner and George Sadler.
- Br Schreiner plants the first vines.

#### 1852

- Jesuits given spiritual charge for the area of the colony north of a line drawn from

Morgan across to Spencer's Gulf. (The size of France.)

- Beginning of month-long horseback missionary journeys, to stations 250 miles north of Sevenhill, and covering an area of 40,000 square kilometres.

#### 1853

- St Francis Xavier Church built at Bomburney, now an abandoned town. This was the first Jesuit church built in Australia.

#### 1854

- Start the building of the College at Sevenhill.

#### 1856-86

- St Aloysius College, Sevenhill functioned as a boys' secondary boarding school (c. 450 pupils), a Seminary, novitiate, mission centre, and 'mother house'. (Between 1848 and 1880, 27 churches and 26 schools were built from Sevenhill. By the nineties, the number of stone churches built was at least 30, besides those made of wood and iron, and the schools and halls. Sevenhill built the foundations of the Port Augusta diocese.)

#### 1864

- Start made to St Aloysius Church, Sevenhill.
- First of the Corpus Christi processions.
- Church built at Undalya.

#### 1865

- First death of a Jesuit in Australia (Br Sadler), and the first Australian enters the Society.

#### 1867

- Opening up of Port Lincoln area with missions from Sevenhill.

#### 1869

- New church at Saddleworth SA.
- Jesuits take over Norwood area, comprising Norwood, Burnside, Rose Park, Toorak Gardens, Stepney, St Peters, Kent Town, Hectorville, Magill, Tranmere and Athelstone.

#### 1870

- Fr Kranewitter transferred to Melbourne. The Austrian mission consisted of eight priests, three scholastics, eight brothers and two novices.



#### 1871

- Mother Mary MacKillop, excommunicated foundress of the Josephite Sisters, takes refuge in the St Ignatius Church, Norwood.

#### 1872

- New church and Jesuit residence at Manoora.
- New church at Pekina.
- New church and Jesuit residence at Georgetown.

#### 1873

- New church at Clare.
- Opening of the Collegiate school of St Francis Xavier in Franklin Street Adelaide staff: one priest, one scholastic and two lay teachers. Closed in 1874.

#### 1875

- New church at Burra.
- New church at Laura.
- New church at Redhill.
- New church at Narridy.
- New church at Port Pirie.
- New church at Yarcowie.
- New church at Jamestown.
- New church at Caltowie.

#### 1878

- Larger church built at Jamestown.

#### 1879

- New church at Crystal Brook.

#### 1880

- New church at Peterborough.

#### 1881

- New church at Gladstone.

#### 1882

- Larger church built Port Pirie.
- New church at Warnertown.
- New church at Terowie.

#### 1882-1889

- Mission to the Aborigines of the Northern Territory conducted by the Austrian Jesuits. Nineteen Jesuits, eight priests and eleven brothers, were to labour in four mission stations in the Territory. One of the stations was at Palmerston (Darwin) and the other three along the Daly River, where white men had not been seen before. Their missiology was based on that of the Jesuit Reductions in Paraguay, and they had contact with some hundreds of blacks. Their history is a thrilling one of great courage and tragedy.

#### 1886

- St Aloysius College Sevenhill closes as a secondary school.
- Second station opened in Northern Territory, on the Daly, 'Old Uniya'.

#### 1888

- New church built in Beulah Road, Norwood.

#### 1889

- Third station opened in Northern Territory at Serpentine Lagoon, twenty miles west of the Daly.

#### 1890

- The merger of the Austrian and Irish Missions decided upon. As a preliminary, all save two of the Jesuit parishes in South Australia to be handed over gradually to diocesan priests.

#### 1891

- Closing of three stations in the Northern Territory. Concentrated effort upon a new, fourth one (New Uniya) on the Daly.

#### 1894

- School commenced in Darwin NT for aboriginal and white children. (Closed in 1901.)

#### 1899

- Closing of the mission to the aborigines along the Daly River NT.

#### 1901

- Amalgamation of the Austrian and Irish missions under the Irish. (A total of 59 Austrians had worked in South Australia and the Northern Territory. Given the option of remaining in Australia or returning to Austria, 28 (13 priests and 15 brothers) remained, and 17 returned, including the first Australian to have entered.)

#### 1910

- New church built at Blyth as part of the Sevenhill parish.

#### 1916

- Church-school built at St Peters.

#### 1917

- Church-school built at Hectorville.

#### 1919

- Church-school built at Dulwich.



#### 1929

- Church-school built at Tranmere.

#### 1934

- St Peters, Dulwich and Hectorville become independent parishes conducted by the diocesan clergy.

#### 1950

- Archbishop Beovich asks the Society to conduct Aquinas College, Catholic Residential College at the University of Adelaide.

#### 1951

- **Opening of Saint Ignatius' College, Norwood.**

#### 1967

- **Opening of the Senior Campus at Athelstone.**

#### 1972

- Commencement of extra-presbytery ministry, Salisbury North SA.

#### 1976

- Sevenhill parish SA, extended to include five towns.

#### 1977

- Retreat house commenced at Sevenhill.

#### 1979

- Jesuit founding headmaster of St Thomas More College SA.

#### 1979

- Commencement of street ministry for homeless youth, St Kilda, Vic.
- Commencement of ministry to Vietnamese refugees, SA.
- Foundation of Townsville residence for Aboriginal apostolate.
- Rectorship of New Zealand seminary assumed by diocese.

#### 1982

- Foundation of Sydenham High School, Vic. Jesuit sponsored (withdrawn 1985).

#### 1983

- Commencement of Jesuit Refugee Service.

#### 1984

- Australian Province assumes responsibility for Pakistan mission, 4 priests and 2 brothers – university centre and parish.
- Withdrawal from Papua New Guinea.

#### 1985

- Former Captain of Riverview, Mark Raper,

appointed to head the South East Asia Jesuit Refugee Service.

#### 1988

- Commencement of University apostolate in New Zealand, 2 priests.

#### 1989

- (January) Assembly of the whole Jesuit Province at Riverview.
- (December) Father General of the Society of Jesus, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ, visits Riverview and other Australian Jesuit ministries. He opens 'Uniya' at Saint Canice's.

#### 1990

- Jesuits assume responsibility for Saint Canice's parish in Sydney's King Cross.
- (September 27) Beginning of Ignatian Year, celebrating throughout the international Society 500 years since the birth of Ignatius of Loyola in 1491 and 450 years since the official approval of the Society of Jesus by Pope Paul III in 1540.

#### 1992

- Opening of the new Jesuit Community residence 'Loyola' at Riverview.
- The blessing of the new school, Loyola College, at Mt Druitt, NSW. The College to receive its first students in 1993.

#### 1996

- Introduction of Junior Primary classes (R-2) at the Norwood campus.
- Year 7 shifted from Norwood to Athelstone to establish a Middle School (Years 7-10).
- Introduction of girls in all year levels.

#### 1997

- Commencement of Building Programme at the Athelstone campus. This programme saw the building of ten classrooms, specialised areas for Careers, Adaptive Education, Media Studies, staff preparation areas and offices.

#### 1998

- Opening of the Bellarmine Building at the Athelstone campus on 5th April.

#### 1999

- Celebration of Jesuit Sesquicentenary in Australia.

#### 2001

- Celebration of the 50th anniversary of Saint Ignatius' College, Adelaide.



**2002**

- Opening of the Holy Family Building at the Norwood Campus on 24th March.

**2006**

- Opening of the Chapel of the Holy Name at the Senior School, Athelstone.