

**FROM QUINNSLAND
TO Q150**

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In choosing both the topic and structure of this Presentation, I am indebted to the contribution of our Premier, The Honourable Anna Bligh.¹ In a press release of 8 October last, launching the Q150 celebrations, the Premier called for Queensland's top 150 icons, further subdivided into 10 categories; under the headings *Our People, Our Places, Our Stories*. It seemed to me that the same outline might be applied to the history of the Catholic Church in this State, with particular reference to the last of the Premier's 10 categories "Typically Queensland." Consequently, the talk which follows does not propose to be a comprehensive "history" of anything. Rather, it will consist of a series of significant episodes in the history of our local church, drawn from what is typically Queensland.

I began with the State's announcement of the Q150 celebrations, for here at the very outset is something unusual. In Queensland, both Church and State share a common birth year, 1859. Today, one is more likely to speak of the Separation of Church and State – they did in 1859 as well, for such notions helped fuel the subsequent education debate – yet here we are, inescapably presented with a common date. Not only that, the common birth year is shared with our sisters and brothers of the Anglican Communion as well. Therefore, it should come as no surprise – despite movements towards sectarianism in both past and present – to find that a spirit of ecumenism has been a feature of Church life in Queensland from the very beginning.

Co-operativeness, not antagonism, proved to be the order of the day, even if that co-operation was not always well-placed. It is to be hoped, for instance, that Q150 celebrations will not repeat those of our centenary in 1959, when the Premier of the day (Frank Nicklin) and the Police Commissioner (Frank Bischof) promised to supply a police motorcycle escort for all the official movements of Cardinals Agaginian and Gilroy, and Apostolic Nuncio Carboni. Police were less than impressed when one of the visiting prelates – here unnamed – commandeered the motorcycles to take him from Government House to Rothwell's men's store in Edward St., for a hair cut!²

¹ <http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=60676> accessed 10 October 2008

² Report to Commissioner, 20 August 1959, Qld. State Archives; Col/2903M.sd., as cited in Megan E. Parry, *The Queensland Police and Political Interference during the 1950s*, Unpublished Thesis QUT, 2008, page 82

The desire of both Church and State to co-operate, in civic celebrations at least, reveals another feature of Queensland life. Systems of governmental and church authority were not developed locally; they were imposed on the new Colony from outside. The system of secular administration was that of the British Empire, the Westminster System. As time passed, this was adapted to meet local conditions. An example of this may be seen in the transition from a bicameral to a unicameral system of government, with the abolition of the Legislative Council in 1922. For all that, the Westminster System was to remain the basis of Public Administration in this State. What of the system of Church administration? To answer this question one must refer to the life and times of Queensland's first Bishop, James Quinn.

Bishop James Quinn arrived in his Diocese – the boundaries of which corresponded with those of the State – by coastal steamer, on the night of 10 May 1861 and took formal possession of his Diocese at St. Stephen's the following Sunday (May 12). One of his first comments, which has passed into folklore, was "Where is the city of Brisbane?"; and one of the first sights to greet him was that of a bullock team stuck in the mud of the town's principal street, 'glamorised by the title Queen Street'.³

The 'city' consisted of mainly wooden shanties, some of which served as shops, a weatherboard Post Office, thirteen pubs and fourteen churches (only two of which were Catholic). In fact, the most remarkable building was the gaol. Policing was entrusted to twelve policemen. Drainage was almost non-existent; and the frequent flooding of the river and its creeks further hampered communications. The population of the whole State was 28,056, of whom little more than 7,000 were Catholics.⁴ Financially, Quinn's Diocese was the poorest of the Australian Sees, in debt to the sum of £750, 'without even ordinary resources', and altar furnishings not even paid for. The arrival of the Bishop and

³ MORAN, Patrick Francis Cardinal, *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*, Vol 1, Oceanic Publishing Co. Ltd., Sydney, p.608; also MCLAY, Yvonne Margaret, *James Quinn, First Catholic Bishop of Queensland*, Graphic Books, Armadale, Vic., 1979, p.41,

⁴ MORAN, p.592; BOLAND, Thomas Patrick, *James Quinn: Monarch of All He Surveyed, Aquinas Lecture* 12 November 1979, Aquinas Library, Brisbane 1981, p.11; MCLAY, pp.43-4; BALANGERO, Giovanni Battista, *Australia e Ceylan. Studi e Ricordi di tredici anni di Missione*, Ditta G.B. Paravia e Comp., Torino 1897 p. 94 inflates these figures, giving the population for 1861 as 34,000.

his party only served to make things worse, increasing the debt to between £1200 and £1300.⁵ The situation was not helped by the disastrous bank crash of 1866.⁶

Yet, by 1881, Quinn could write to Rome: “the Church is firmly established. The Bishop holds the reins of Government in his hands with as much control as the parish priest of a small country parish. The clergy are steady, orderly zealous, and well affected. The Bishop and clergy are respected by those outside the Church, and they are beloved and obeyed by those inside, except a handful who either through weakness or malice or for selfish motives are disaffected.”⁷ The intervening period had been one of tremendous expansion. Brisbane had taken on the outline of a ‘sprawling capital rich in natural resources ... pastoral, agricultural and mineral.’ The extent of the State exceeded France, Spain and Italy together.⁸ The population had risen to 322,853, of whom 77,000 were Catholics.⁹

This development, in no small way, had been partly the result of the strategies adopted by James Quinn himself. His Queensland Immigration Society – treated elsewhere in greater scholarly detail than I am able to provide within the limits of this lecture¹⁰ – was just one of these ventures. Another feature was his several visits to the remote corners of his diocese between 1861 and 1876.¹¹ The anti-Quinn *Queensland Times* was alarmed that Queensland might soon be renamed “Quinn’sland” as the Bishop undertook his mission of creating ‘a new Rome in the South.’¹² Justly, Patrick O’Farrell declared that Quinn ‘sowed the seed’ for the Queensland church.¹³ Indeed, such was his contemporary influence that, when he died, on 18 August 1881, it is said that the

⁵ MARTIN, Denis Walter, *The Foundation of the Catholic Church in Queensland*, Church Archivists’ Society, Toowoomba 1988, pp.153, 155

⁶ BYRNE, Neil, *Robert Dunne 1830-1917, Archbishop of Brisbane*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1991, p. 64.

⁷ MORAN, p.623.

⁸ MCLAY, pp 43-44, citing Quinn’s *Report of the Diocese of Brisbane 1861-1871*, prepared for his *ad limina* visit to Rome.

⁹ These figures are from the 1886 Census and are followed by MORAN, p 593 and BOLAND 1979, p. 11. As with the earlier population figures, given in note 4, BALANGERO, p. 94 inflates the general figure to 326, 110.

¹⁰ BOLAND, Thomas Patrick, *The Queensland Immigration Society*, D.Hist Thesis, Gregorian University, Rome 1960.

¹¹ MORAN, p.609, 622; MCLAY, pp. 44, 46-47

¹² As cited in MCLAY, p. 121.

¹³ O’Farrell, Patrick, *The Catholic Church in Australia. A Short History 1788-1967*, Thomas Nelson (Australia), Melbourne 1968 (rpt. 1972), p. 98, citing his obituary.

Queensland Premier wept. “Celebrations of a Royal Visit were muted and the Queensland community mourned. It would be an exaggeration to call it grief, but there was general and genuine regret. He was one of the first and one of the finest Queenslanders.”¹⁴

But what was the administrative system that Bishop James Quinn imposed on his fledgling Diocese? An early clue is revealed in the account of his Episcopal Ordination, which took place in the Church of the Catholic University, St. Stephen’s Green, Dublin, on 29 June 1859. While the leading figure of the Irish Church at the time, Cardinal Paul Cullen, was absent due to illness, the list of those present reads like a Who’s Who of the Irish hierarchy.¹⁵

Up to this time, the structure of the Catholic Church in Australia had been dominated by the English ‘Benedictine’ vision of the Archbishop of Sydney, John Bede Polding. By the time of Quinn’s appointment to Brisbane, however, Polding’s influence was waning¹⁶ and, in Queensland at least, the church of convict days was seen as a church of the past. A new model of Church was needed for the Church of the 19th century in the world of Pius IX. This model was provided by Dublin’s Cardinal Paul Cullen, whose influence on the Australian hierarchy has been magisterially documented and illustrated by the work of John Molony.¹⁷ Cullen had been Rector of the Irish College in Rome from 1832 to 1850; he had been associated with the College of Propaganda Fide (and hence had an interest in missionary territories); and he was later to be instrumental in the drawing up of the formula for papal infallibility agreed to at Vatican I. The appointment of James Quinn, one of Cullen’s protégés, to Brisbane presented a unique opportunity of making Cullen’s dream a reality.

In implementing Cullen’s vision of an Irish episcopal autocracy, Bishop James Quinn was a decisive force. “He bulldozed his way through custom and law, civil and canon, to ensure he got his way in major enterprises, when people were close to crippled by present difficulties. He was sure his plan was God’s will. He was not given to doubts

¹⁴ BOLAND 1979, p.15.

¹⁵ MORAN, p.602; MARTIN, pp. 198-203.

¹⁶ O’FARRELL, p. 96.

¹⁷ MOLONY, John N *The Roman Mould of the Australian Catholic Church*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 1969.

on that score. The will may have been divine, but at times it was scarcely human.”¹⁸ Quinn always worked on the grand scale. Faced with the vastness of his Diocese, he sought to find a population to fill it. He even contemplated its future subdivision, with new Sees at Maryborough, Rockhampton and Townsville. On a local parish level, it was Quinn’s vision to construct a sort of ecclesiastical compound of buildings – church, presbytery, convent, and school surrounded by the residences of the locals. And, of course, this compound was situated on a hill, where it could stand as a beacon of the Faith for all.¹⁹ Popularly, Archbishop James Duhig is known as ‘James the Builder’; but he was only building on a model originally put in place by James Quinn.

It is ironic that Quinn’s grand vision did not always find ready acceptance from his Irish countrymen. One of the first problems he faced as Bishop came from the Parish of St. Mary’s, Ipswich, and its eccentric priest William McGinty, or McGinnety as he is sometimes known. McGinty had been in Ipswich since 1852,²⁰ and, in the year of the creation of Brisbane diocese, he had completed construction of a church there at the cost of £7,000. He enjoyed the support of his parishioners, including the first Catholic Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, Patrick O’Sullivan (elected 1860). In 1862, McGinty challenged Quinn to his face, again with the support of his parishioners. Ostensibly, it was all about money; and, indeed, Quinn needed money to meet the diocesan debts.

But, I believe, the matter went deeper, to the issue of the way the diocese was to be governed. The dispute evoked another of the statements that have entered Quinn folklore: “I am a sacred person; I have been ordained and received the Holy Ghost; anyone attacking my character commits a most gross and sacrilegious act.”²¹ Quinn tried to send McGinty back to Sydney, then threatened excommunication, and finally suspended him. McGinty appealed to the Queensland Parliament (which paid his salary) but without success. By 1864, the two men had apparently patched up their quarrel, for

¹⁸ BOLAND 1979, p.12. See also Maguire, MAGUIRE, John P., *Prologue. A History of the Catholic Church as seen from Townsville 1863-1983*, Church Archivists’ Society, Toowoomba September 1990 p.33

¹⁹ MAGUIRE, p. 21.

²⁰ SUTTOR, T.L., *Hierarchy and Democracy in Australia 1788-1870. The Formation of Australian Catholicism*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 1965 p. 282.

²¹ SUTTOR, p. 290.

on April 16 of that year, Quinn appointed McGinty to the newly created parish of Bowen (Port Denison). McGinty remained there until his death, on 27 November 1871.²²

McGinty's case is illustrative of the autocratic nature of Quinn's episcopacy; and it is not unique. Other Irishmen who fell out with Quinn – again ostensibly over money – were Frs. Michael Renehan, James McGahan, Matthew Devitt and William Manson Walsh. Walsh returned to the Diocese in 1878; and, like McGinty, was appointed far away – to Townsville. The rest did not return. That they subsequently seem to have followed exemplary clerical careers in the U.S.A. must be of some significance.

James Quinn may have populated his diocese with the Irish,²³ but he could not recruit sufficient Irish priests to supply his needs; and so he was obliged to look elsewhere. While the religious sisters that he brought with him were all Irish Sisters of Mercy, the priests who accompanied him in 1861 were mostly French²⁴ and those in 1871 Italian. To these may be added several priests who came to serve in Queensland at the behest of the missionary Congregation of Propaganda Fide. The sojourn of this latter group of priests was of a temporary nature, and they could find themselves in Ravenswood one year and transferred to Ceylon the next – as exemplified in the case of Giovanni Battista Balangero.²⁵

Quinn had a poor opinion of these 'foreign priests' – though he made an exception in the case of Giovanni Cani. In 1878, he wrote to Rome expressing fears that "Religion must lose immensely" and "will be retarded" by the appointment of such priests. He went on: "The Irish Catholics, who are the only Catholics here, will lose their faith, and a gross injustice will be done them by placing over them people whose language and habits they don't understand, and who have little or no sympathy with

²² HANLON, Christopher Paul, *Priests Who Have Served in Queensland*, unpublished Index.

²³ It should also be noted that Queensland also had a significant German population – 6,000 in 1871; one-fifth of whom lived on the Darling Downs. Quinn's Vicar General and successor, Robert Dunne, attempted to learn German while in Toowoomba in 1869, and failed to do so. Frs. Hugh von Ackerman and Francis Xavier Kaerscher came to the diocese to minister to the German community; but, generally, the Irish clergy regarded them with suspicion. Robert Dunne's assessment was among the more kind, declaring that the work of the German chaplains served only 'to clique the German residents.' (BYRNE, p.82) And so, the German mission failed; and many German colonists found their way to the Lutheran church..

²⁴ Excepting the Italian Giovanni Cani and the Irishman Patrick Renehan.

²⁵ BALANGERO, *Australia e Ceylan*.

them. ... I have been greatly blamed by the Catholics of the Queensland Vicariate for handing them over to foreigners as they said.”²⁶ This attitude against the appointment of ‘foreign priests’ proved to be a long-lasting one. On 6 November 1886, four years after Cani’s appointment as Bishop of Rockhampton, Quinn’s nephew, Fr. Andrew Horan of Ipswich, would write to Cardinal Simeoni in Rome: “The general opinion of Irish priests in Australia is that calumnies to the Holy See against them will never cease so long as there are among them foreign Bishops or priests.”²⁷

Perhaps the feeling was mutual. In 1877, Quinn’s Italian clergy, dissatisfied with their treatment by the bishop, composed a Syllabus of Accusations which they sent to Rome.²⁸ Cani repeatedly complained of the actions of the group of Irish clergy, which he dubbed the ‘Mitre League’, who were working against him.²⁹ The issue was so hotly pursued that Quinn could remove Robert Dunne from his post of Vicar General of the Diocese, mistaking Dunne’s neutrality on the issue for disloyalty.³⁰

Yet, the inescapable fact remains that it was ‘foreign priests’ who to a large extent were responsible for much of the development of the Queensland church. In the past, their contributions have tended to be downplayed or marginalized. One need only look at the examples of Giovanni Cani (Warwick, North Queensland, Rockhampton), Peter Capra (Roma), Jerome Davadi (Stanthorpe), Constantine Rossolini (The Burnett and Bundaberg), Benedetto Scortechini (The Logan), Paul Tissot (Maryborough), Pierre-Marie Bucas (Mackay), and Charles Murlay (Rockhampton, Gladstone) to see the extent to which we are indebted to their labours. To this list one more name may be added, even though he was ordained some time after his arrival in Queensland: Joseph Augustine Canali, popularly known as ‘the Apostle of Brisbane’.

They were by no means undistinguished men. Balangero’s memoirs reveal that he preached in English to the people of Brisbane a week after his arrival (8 December 1872).³¹ Cani held a degree from the Sapienza University in Rome and administered

²⁶ As cited in MAGUIRE, p. 34.

²⁷ As cited in MAGUIRE, p. 34.

²⁸ BYRNE, p. 107.

²⁹ BYRNE, p. 129.

³⁰ BYRNE, p. 106.

³¹ BALANGERO, p. 96.

three dioceses. Capra held a Doctorate in theology, though few would know it.³² Scortechini was a noted Colonial botanist, Fellow of the Linnaean Society of NSW and foundation member of the Royal Society of Queensland.³³ Davadi is today regarded as the ‘father of the Queensland fruit industry’.³⁴ Canali, generally described as having poor English (sic!), was a civil engineer who oversaw the completion of St. Stephen’s Cathedral and managed to pass muster at the exam for teacher’s classification in Queensland in late 1875.³⁵

In the interests of fairness, it must be acknowledged that Irish priests also played a part in the ‘Catholic Progress’ of the church in Queensland.³⁶ They have been treated elsewhere with scholarship and precision and I leave it to you to consult those accounts, referring only to a few names in passing: Quinn’s three nephews Andrew (Ipswich), James (Warwick), and Matthew Horan (Gympie), Thomas O’Brien and John O’Reilly (Maryborough), Stephen McDonough (Warwick and Stanthorpe, North and Central Queensland), and Patrick McGuinness (far-western Queensland).

The point I am trying to make is that, although the model of ecclesial governance imposed upon the Queensland Church was essentially an Irish one, other more diverse ethnic influences lie alongside this as part of what we understand as Catholicism in Queensland. One of the places where this can be found is in the area of the popular devotions and of church art. Space does not permit me to expand on this feature; so, by way of example, I content myself with referring you to the apsidal stained glass window in St. Patrick’s Church Fortitude Valley. Two saints are on either side of the ensemble. Predictably, one is St Patrick, the church’s patron, but the other is St Celestine, a saint who has more in common with the popular devotion of France and Germany than with Irish Catholicism.

If questions of ethnicity other than Irish were not uppermost in James Quinn’s mind, then the mission to the aborigines must be seen as an opportunity missed. Mark

³² DUHIG, James, *Crowded Years*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1947 pp. 12-13.

³³ TYNAN, Patrick J., *Pioneer Priest and Botanist, Benedetto Scortechini*, Church Archivists’ Society, Toowoomba February 1989, p.98.

³⁴ *Granite Belt Wine Country* <http://www.granitebeltwinecountry.com.au> accessed 10/10/2008

³⁵ TYNAN, Patrick J., *The Apostle of Brisbane – a Biography of Joseph Augustine Canali*, Church Archivists’ Society, Toowoomba August 1992, pp. 5, 45-46.

³⁶ The works of Fr. Jeremiah O’Leary are referred to.

Cryle has drawn attention to the fact that, during the 19th century, “virtually all attempts at aboriginal evangelisation in the eastern part of the country at least, were undertaken by non-Irish, and in most cases non-English speaking clergy.”³⁷

This is a curious anomaly; for, in fact, the Queensland church owes the occasion for its very creation to the desire of Sydney’s Archbishop Polding to establish an aboriginal mission on Stradbroke Island in 1843. By 1846, the effort had clearly failed and the personnel had been withdrawn. Yet others remained concerned. Mother Vincent Whitty, of the Sisters of Mercy, wished to do something, it is said; but she could not come to terms with the wandering habits of the people.³⁸ The meeting of Australian Bishops of 1869 paid lip-service to the crying need, but placed it in the ‘too-hard-basket’ and referred the matter back to Propaganda Fide in Rome for action.³⁹ In 1873, Giovanni Battista Balangero arrived from Propaganda and was sent by Quinn to the Ravenswood Charters Towers district in the north of the State. Although his reminiscences contain numerous references to aborigines and their practices, it may be seriously questioned as to whether he really understood the people. He believed them to be a doomed people, with ‘no understanding of spiritual matters’ (sic!), whose only hope for survival lay in their being removed from their tribal environment and placed in an environment similar to that which Bishop Salvado, O.S.B, was developing at New Norcia, Western Australia. In the event, Balangero lacked the resources to do anything, and, at the end of 1874, he was transferred to the mission in Ceylon and was not replaced.⁴⁰ A fresh effort from Rome came in the establishment of the Pro-Vicariate of North Queensland, in 1876-7, with – at first – Italian priests to serve them, and then – after 1882 – under John Hutchinson and a group of Augustinians. Both attempts were without success.⁴¹

Two efforts, however, did show some promise. In 1869, on his arrival in Port Mackay, Pierre-Marie Bucas established an aboriginal settlement at Merara (later known

³⁷ CRYLE, Mark, *Duncan McNab, James Quinn, and the Mission to Queensland Aborigines 1875-1880*, *Proceedings of the Brisbane Catholic Historical Society* 10 (2006), p.82.

³⁸ O’DONOGHUE, M. Xaverius (Frances), *Beyond Our Dreams. A Century of the Works of Mercy in Queensland*, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane 1961 p. 21.

³⁹ TOBIN, Susan Mary, *Catholic Education in Queensland*, The Conference of Catholic Education, Queensland, 1987, vol.2, p. 30.

⁴⁰ BALANGERO, especially pp. 133-155.

⁴¹ TOBIN, vol.2, p. 30; MORAN, p.650; MAGUIRE, p. 31.

as Bucasia) and engaged the Sisters of St. Joseph to assist him. It was the first such settlement in Queensland. However, Bucas, too, did not have the necessary resources to further his plans. Nevertheless, some lasting results must have been achieved; for my mother used tell a story from her childhood, of an elderly woman – whom she only knew as “old ginnie” – who used visit the grave of her deceased husband. When she asked, she was informed that “old ginnie” was ‘one of Fr. Bucas’ people’.

In 1875, Fr. Duncan McNab, a relative of Bl. Mary McKillop, obtained permission from Quinn to work amid the scattered tribes of his diocese. The Queensland Government appointed him to the Aborigines’ Protection Board. McNab set about learning the various dialects and customs of the tribes, and translating the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed and the Commandments into the Cahil language. At Mackay, he was struck down with a tropical fever and returned south; having in the meantime become disillusioned with what he saw as the real motivation that lay behind the Aborigines’ Protection Board.⁴² Bishop Quinn, for his part, was only interested in evangelisation in the narrow sense of the word and wanted numbers and quick results.⁴³ McNab’s approach did not fit into the diocesan model that the Bishop was seeking to develop. Quinn did not renew the faculties needed for his mission.⁴⁴ In desperation, McNab appealed to Rome for assistance and made a personal visit to put his case in March 1879. When he returned to Australia in 1880, it was not to Queensland. The Queensland church is still coming to grips with its mission to indigenous Australians today.

Perhaps James Quinn’s greatest lasting achievement came in a direction which seemed at first to be a failure: Education.⁴⁵ On his arrival in the diocese, Bishop Quinn found the oversight of education, under the Education Act and the Grammar Schools Act of 1860, to be in the hands of a largely non-conformist Board of Education, which sought to impose secular and compulsory education. The Anglican Bishop of Brisbane, Edward Wyndham Tufnell, who had arrived in the new Colony before Quinn, voiced his opposition to the arrangement and had managed to have the Board replaced by one which was more favourably disposed to the provision of aid to some but not all denominational

⁴² BYRNE, p. 199.

⁴³ CRYLE 2006, p. 188.

⁴⁴ CRYLE 2006, p. 191.

⁴⁵ BOLAND 1979, p. 13.

schools. James Quinn was of like mind to Tufnell. Both understood the value of religious education in developing a stable co-operative society; both were opposed to the secularist tendencies of the day; and both affirmed the vital need for religion to be part of the content of that education.

Opponents of the bishops sought to divide the two of them by accusing Bishop Tufnell of being ‘an instrument of Irish Romanists and demagogues’.⁴⁶ This was not true: Tufnell was nobody’s puppet. What the two prelates realised, while others sometimes did not, was that the old sectarian rivalries would do no good to a cause that both held so dear. It was preferable to present a united front to State Parliament on the issue. In an amazing gesture of ecumenism, without parallel, the two bishops launched a joint “Bishops’ Crusade” during the summer of 1863-4, in which they shared a single platform, on various occasions and in various places, to press the cause of a fully Christian education. Bishop Quinn was even prepared to compromise to the extent of agreeing to teach an identical curriculum in his schools to that taught in State-sponsored schools, and to have their standards monitored by State inspectors.⁴⁷ He went even further, seeking to open two schools under the 1860 Grammar Schools Act – one in Brisbane and one in Ipswich – but in this matter his strategies came to nothing.

Quinn’s decision to set up a separate system of Catholic education alongside the State system had some unlooked-for consequences for female religious in the teaching orders. Broadly speaking, there were two differing responses: that of the Sisters of Mercy and that of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

The Sisters of Mercy, led by Mother Vincent Whitty, had established themselves as part of Bishop Quinn’s diocesan system. Six of them had accompanied him to Brisbane in 1860-1; and a further eleven were in his party in 1871.⁴⁸ They recruited their members from the Irish middle and upper classes and each brought a dowry with them on admission to the order. In Queensland, their ‘jewel in the crown’, All Hallows, “was largely a Young Ladies Finishing School, with special emphasis on music, singing and

⁴⁶ MCLAY, p.119; MAGUIRE, p.21

⁴⁷ TOBIN, Vol.1, p.7; also BOLAND 1979, pp. 13-14; BYRNE, p. 58.

⁴⁸ MORAN, pp. 608, 616; O’DONOGHUE, pp. 1-3, 21.

fine needlework.”⁴⁹ But the Sisters also played their part in establishing a network of schools throughout Queensland: St Stephen’s, Brisbane (1861); St Patrick’s, Valley (1862); Ipswich and All Hallows (1863); St Ann’s (1868); Nudgee (1869); St Saviour’s Toowoomba, and Kent St, Rockhampton (1873); Warwick (1874); Stanthorpe (1875); Dalby (1877); St Patrick’s, Townsville (1878); Gympie (1879); and so on.⁵⁰

Mother Vincent Whitty sought, without success, to prevent her schools becoming caught up in the debate over vested and non-vested schools. She believed that the Bishop was too hasty and consumed by his zeal for the cause, unwilling to wait for the fruit to ripen. But most of all, she feared that she and her sisters would be unable to meet Bishop Quinn’s demands.⁵¹ The Bishop, for his part, swept her concerns aside, and chose to assume control, through his cousin, Mother Mary Bridget Conlan, who had been one of the sisters who arrived with Quinn and Whitty in 1861. Mother Vincent Whitty and her able disciples, Mother Mary Patrick Potter⁵² and Sister Mary de Sales Gorry⁵³ knew their place. In civilized society, 19th-century women were not expected to argue their causes on the public platform. They set about doing their best in a ‘religious silence.’⁵⁴

The schools were divided into general and select schools, conducted under one roof. This arrangement served two purposes. It provided an education for the children of the small middle and upper class groups who would be the leaders of local society, and supplied finances for the school through the fees they paid.⁵⁵

On the other hand, the Sisters of St. Joseph represented a home-grown response to local needs. Their arrival in Brisbane, led by Bl. Mary McKillop herself, on 31 December 1869, marked their first expansion after their foundation in South Australia. They stayed at All Hallows for three weeks and then moved into their own residence at South Brisbane.⁵⁶ The Josephites did not support the division of their schools into general and select schools under one roof. Their pupils were invariably bare-footed and fewer than

⁴⁹ O’DONOGHUE, p.34, MAGUIRE, p 17.

⁵⁰ O’DONOGHUE, p. 345.

⁵¹ TOBIN, vol.1, p. 10; O’DONOGHUE, p. 22.

⁵² For Mother Patrick, see O’DONOGHUE, p. 52.

⁵³ For Sister Mary de Sales, see O’DONOGHUE, p. 99.

⁵⁴ TOBIN, vol.1, p. 8.

⁵⁵ TOBIN, vol.1, p. 10.

⁵⁶ *Courier* 1 January 1870; JOYCE, M. Martina, *The Sisters of St Joseph in Queensland. Beginnings: 1870-1880, Proceedings of the Brisbane Catholic Historical Society* 3(1992) pp. 35, 39, 43.

half of them attended regularly. Yet their work prospered, and by the end of 1870 they could count three hundred children at their three Brisbane schools. Other centres were soon to follow: Maryborough (1871), Gympie, Mackay, Meadowbank, Bowen (1872), Copperfield 5km south-west of Clermont, Townsville (1873), Helidon, Redbank Plains, Gladstone (1874), Yatala (1875), Merara Orphanage at Mackay and Bundaberg (1876).⁵⁷

While the Sisters of Mercy tended to be women of middle and upper class origin, the Sisters of St. Joseph were more egalitarian in nature. All grades and distinction were frowned upon within the order: the servant girl could join as easily as the more educated woman. "Because over half of the members had been reared in the colonies, the distinctive characteristic of the members was their ordinariness."⁵⁸ This was not always seen as a value in 19th-century Queensland. One of Bishop Quinn's nephews, Fr. Matthew Horan of Gympie, stated publicly that they "were only barmaids and cooks ... incompetent to teach."⁵⁹ In Townsville, the priest, James Connolly, reluctantly provided them with an unlined, unpainted cottage and then cut off their water supply by fencing the well inside the presbytery yard. The sisters had to cut a hole in the fence to gain access to water. Connolly subsequently denounced them from the pulpit for "unorthodox teachings." These conditions clearly could not last, and Mary McKillop withdrew the sisters from the town on 22 June 1878.⁶⁰

The two examples provided above shed some light on the system of Irish ecclesiastical autocracy that was developing in the Diocese of Brisbane under Bishop James Quinn. Both Frs. Horan and Connolly subscribed whole-heartedly to that model, which placed the Bishop as the supreme and unquestioned authority whose will was law and whose local representative was the Parish Priest.⁶¹ But Mary McKillop was no Mother Vincent Whitty, content to respond to circumstance by becoming "as quiet as a nun at her prayers." Her position was that the sisters were at the disposal of the bishop "so long as it does not interfere with the observance of their Rule." She knew the Queensland scene as well as anyone, and argued vehemently for the central government

⁵⁷ TOBIN, vol.1, pp. 16, 19 (Table 2); JOYCE p. 42

⁵⁸ MCKENNA, Margaret M., *Mary McKillop's Visits to Queensland, Proceedings of the Brisbane Catholic Historical Society* 6 (1999), p. 17.

⁵⁹ JOYCE, p. 42; TOBIN vol.1, p.33.

⁶⁰ JOYCE, p. 43; MCKENNA 1999, pp. 30-31; TOBIN, vol.1, pp. 41-42.

⁶¹ MCKENNA 1999, pp. 27-28.

of the Josephite Congregation beyond the control of any single bishop. She was prepared to argue her case in Rome and did so successfully. Bishop James Quinn's response, in May 1875, was to call her "an obstinate and ambitious woman" who was "upsetting the peace."⁶²

Two different structures of church governance had collided and from this time onward the influence of Mary McKillop in Queensland decreased until she finally removed her Sisters from the Diocese in July 1880. It does not do to 'cross' a prelate – they have long memories. For twenty years the Josephites were banished from Queensland. They returned in 1900, when Bishop Higgins of Rockhampton invited them to open a school in Clermont.⁶³ Sadly, the Archdiocese of Brisbane had to wait longer still; though we have sought to make amends by building a shrine to Mary McKillop in Old St. Stephen's.

As the 1860s and 1870s progressed established positions on the education question hardened in other directions as well. In 1864, the very year of the "Bishops' Crusade", Pius IX issued the *Syllabus of Errors*, which attacked strongly any concept of general secular education which was completely subject to civil and political authority.⁶⁴ In 1869, Bishop Quinn made a contribution of his own: in his Lenten Pastoral Letter of that year he denied the sacraments to parents who failed to send their children to Catholic schools wherever they were available. The stigma of this coercive measure has lingered to this day. I, for one, experienced it, as I was educated in infancy at a State School. Yet Quinn deemed it necessary to ensure that he gained the full support of the laity – both personal and financial – for his denominational system of schools. Government reaction came in the Education Act of 1875, whereby State aid was withdrawn from all non-vested schools on 31 December 1880. Bishop Quinn's attempts to oppose this move were unsuccessful.⁶⁵

St. John's school in Roma was the last Catholic school to be opened in Bishop Quinn's lifetime. By that time, the struggle for government funding had been lost. But

⁶² MCKENNA 1999, pp. 16, 28; O'DONOGHUE, p. xi; Joyce, p. 44.

⁶³ TOBIN vol.1, p. 37; JOYCE, p.48.

⁶⁴ MAGUIRE, p. 18.

⁶⁵ MAGUIRE, p. 19; MORAN, pp.627-628, 631.

Catholic schools had established themselves alongside government schools as providers of education. This achievement was not achieved without costs. It had come at expense to the Nuns, who had given their all to the cause in what was often a harsh, unforgiving climate, under primitive living and working conditions. The Sisters of Mercy, for example, drove themselves so hard that between 1868 and 1888 thirty-two of them broke down and died premature deaths, a truly appalling statistic. It worried even the autocratic Bishop Quinn. Yet, the survival of Catholic education would require many more such sacrifices in the years that lay ahead.⁶⁶ It is only just that on the occasion of our Sesquicentenary we acknowledge the contribution of these courageous women and their successors who carry on their work today.

Another cost lay in the loss of parental responsibility for the religious education of their children. In enrolling their children in a Catholic school, many believed they had done their duty. Almost every major historian who has discussed Catholic education in Australia has seen the bishop's decision as completing the separation of clergy and laity within the Catholic Church in this country. The rights of parents to be responsible as 'the primary educators of their children in the ways of Faith' would need to be rediscovered in the wake of Vatican II; and it is still one of difficulties in the Church today.⁶⁷ At sessions preparing children for the reception of the Sacraments, many parents have told me that they simply do not know what to say.

A positive dimension to the debates over religious education in schools has revealed itself in the field of Ecumenism. Bishops Quinn and Tufnell realized that old sectarian rivalries would do no good in promoting causes that both churches held so dear; and so they decided it was preferable to present a united front to Queensland society. That collaboration has prospered and grown in the years since that time. The relationships that existed between Bishops Robert Dunne and William Webber, Bishops Francis Rush and John Grindrod, and Bishops John Bathersby and Phillip Aspinall deserve mention here, in passing. Since World War II, the ecumenical movement in this State has gathered momentum with the establishment of bodies such as the Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue, The

⁶⁶ TOBIN, vol.1, p. 29; O'DONOGHUE, p. 56. It was a similar case with the Sisters of St Joseph, see JOYCE, and MCKENNA for details.

⁶⁷ See, e.g., SUTTON, p. 303, O'FARRELL, pp. 187, 294, MOLONY, p. 167, MAGUIRE, p. 19.

Brisbane College of Theology, and Queensland Churches Together. These moves must not be allowed to stagnate or they will wither and produce no fruit.

In his Advent Pastoral Message, delivered only last Sunday, Archbishop Bathersby reflected upon the Sesquicentenary celebrations of the birth of the State, and of the Anglican and Catholic churches that lie within it. He told the people of Brisbane: “Today ... 150 years after the establishment of our two Dioceses we have a wonderful opportunity to work together to evangelise the State of Queensland and our respective dioceses with the good news of Jesus Christ, and to challenge the secular nature of our society with the magnificent vision that Jesus has left us.”⁶⁸

This brings me back to Premier Anna Bligh and her call for ‘150 icons’ to grace the coming Q150 celebrations. But wasn’t this where we began our little talk? Thanks for your attention.

⁶⁸ Archbishop BATHERSBY, *Advent Pastoral Message*, 30 November 2008,

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