

**THE COMMUNITY OF THE SISTERS OF THE CHURCH**

**An exploration of their Foundations and their early struggles  
following their arrival in Australia in 1892.**

**by**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Humanities, University of Tasmania.**

**NOVEMBER, 1994.**

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## INTRODUCTION

For a school which in 1994 has over one thousand students, a full time staff of over seventy and a reputation as one of the best schools not only in Tasmania, but also in Australia, the opening day of St. Michael's Collegiate School over 100 years ago on Monday 3rd October 1892 was very low key. There was no formal opening by the Governor of Tasmania. There was no Bishop. No fanfare in the local press announced the new school. No reporter from The Mercury came to write up the event for Tuesday's paper. Twelve students were brought to the new school in Harrington Street (now the offices of Murdoch Clarke & Drake Solicitors and Barristers). There the twelve first enrolments were received by Sister Phyllis, Sister Hannah and Sister May of The Community of the Sisters of the Church which had founded the School, under the name of a "Higher Grade Elementary School" as it was then called. The Dean, Dean Dundas, read prayers and to misquote T.S. Elliot, Collegiate was born not with a bang but a whisper.

Lack of a "Grand Opening" did not spell lack of strong support. Many people prayed for its success. Naturally the school had loomed large in the devotions of those three Sisters and the other four who had sailed from England. The other four Sisters (Bridget, Lucy, Irene and Rose) had gone on to Melbourne and Adelaide to work for the Order there and also found schools.

No one prayed for the school more earnestly than Mother Emily Ayckbowm, the foundress of both the Church Extension Association (C.E.A.) in 1864 and the Community of the Sisters of the Church in 1870; the secular and the spiritual arms of her efforts to spread Christ's messages to rich and poor. BUT - Who was Emily Ayckbowm? What was the Community of the Sisters of the Church? Who brought these Sisters to Australia? What was their work to be?

## **EMILY, PEW RENTS and CHURCH EXTENSION**

Emily Harriet Elizabeth Ayckbowm was born on 1st November 1836; the eldest of two sisters and a brother. Her father, Fredrick Ayckbowm, had German connections which accounts for her rather un-English name, and the fact that Emily was born in Heidelberg in South Germany. He himself had been born in Dublin and had graduated Bachelor of Arts at Trinity College, Dublin. He had been Chaplain to the Duke of Westminster, one of the wealthiest men in England with extensive property in London. His country seat was in Cheshire at Eaton Hall and in 1825 Revd. Fredrick Aychbowm moved to Chester to be Rector of Holy Trinity, a living which was in the Duke's gift.

When Emily was nearly five her mother died. Her father soon remarried, something which was common in Victorian times when a man or woman was widowed, especially if there were small children left motherless. Emily says that she was fortunate in her step-mother: "We were soon devoted to each other. My father and I were always close, and he often took me with him when he went to minister to the sick, the needy and the dying".<sup>1</sup> These visits later included Chester's slums. Despite having a wealthy Duke as patron, Aychbowm was not one of those comfortable Parsons who concentrated on the rich man in his castle to the exclusion of the poor man at his gate. So, Emily acquired a broad and unconventional education from her father whilst her governess gave her a more conventional one emphasising the self-discipline considered a valuable quality in Victorian girls. When nearly twenty she and her sister returned from a two year "finishing school" of touring Germany and Italy where they studied languages and art. But her education was "not finished" as she said herself, she "never ceased to learn".<sup>2</sup>

On the Continent she had been impressed by the devotion of the Christians of all creeds with which she had contact and she came back determined to do something to help stop the blight afflicting religion in England. In 1851, while the General Exhibition was proclaiming the

country's robust material wealth and healthiness, the first national census of church attendance announced the country's shocking spiritual sickness. About "40% of the population of England and Wales did not go to church or chapel on Sunday".<sup>3</sup> Most of the absentees lived in the working class areas of the mushrooming industrial cities. Some of these had absentee rates as high as 65%. Phillips records that "Preston in Lancashire topped the league with 75% and in the poor parts of these cities, the rate was even higher, rising into the nineties".<sup>4</sup> She says that when the Archbishop of Canterbury is said to have mourned that the Church of England was losing the city working people; Disraeli is said to have replied "Your Grace, it never has had them".<sup>5</sup>

One reason it never had them was because it was during this period that cities were growing so fast that the churches could not keep up with ministering to the faithful, let alone regaining backsliders or converting those who had never been faithful. If working-class people did venture into church or chapel a thoroughly uncongenial atmosphere often awaited them. The Church of England depended for its clergy largely on the sons of the landed class and on middle class sons whom private schools had turned into gentlemen in growing numbers. Most had little or no experience of working class people.

There were practical reasons why the city poor very often kept themselves away from church. They had no decent clothes; certainly no Sunday suit; every day they wore second hand or third; or fourth hand clothes. These made the respectable noses sniff. They complained that the poor smelled. They were probably right but by the time that they had proper running water and sanitation later in the century, the poor were too far gone in paganism. Cleanliness was much too far behind to assist godliness.

Those working class who did brave it and actually go to church were pushed to the back where it was cold and draughty and hard to hear. Often they had to stand for lack of a seat. All the

best places in church were taken up by pews which were the property of those who could afford to buy or hire them; or could establish by long custom a right to monopolise them.

Emily had abominated this pew system even before she and her sister went overseas. On the Continent she found no such system, and churches actually welcomed the poor. She was determined to attack this sore on the face of the church. It was apparently a small thing, but it was a start in her campaign to bring the poor to church. In 1859 Holy Trinity (her father's Church) had become so run down that a new one was planned. Here was Emily's chance to make an impression. She and her sister joined with friends to collect money for the new building. The money collected was to go into the building fund provided all the seats in it were free. By 1862 they had made £100. Also in that year her father and her sister died and the new Vicar and the congregation refused to allow free seating in the new church. Emily would not give up and so decided that she would use the hard earned funds to help build free and open churches, to convert unfree and closed ones and to assist churches. This body was the Church Extension Association - the C.E.A. - founded in 1864. It started in a small room in the home of her step-mother in Chester. "The Association consisted of 'subscribers' who gave five shillings a year and members who gave two and six; and in addition worked for the cause." <sup>6</sup>

By 1867 the C.E.A. had over 200 members spread over England. A quarterly paper was started to keep members in touch, all of it initially written, edited and published by Emily. This paper was the forerunner of the Community's magazine *Our Work* the first of which was published in 1878. *Our Work* became the magazine of both the Community and C.E.A. circulated to the general public. The C.E.A. adopted as their motto, the apposite "PRO ECCLESIA DEI" - translated as "For the Church of God" and later this too became the motto of the Sisters of the Church - and of St. Michael's Collegiate School; as it did of all the Schools of the Order.

In September 1866 Emily had to break off temporarily from C.E.A. work. A cholera epidemic was sweeping through the poorer districts of Chester, as it was in many other cities. She had continued the work of her father in Chester's slums and now ten years later, she went to nurse

the sick and the dying from an epidemic. Cholera is rampant where a pure water system and an adequate sewage system are lacking and while mid-Victorian England had provided these facilities for those in the better off parts; the poor and those who lived in the slum areas still had to cope with water from streams and rivers polluted by industrial effluent and human waste. Slum tenements were overcrowded - up to a family of seven or more in one room.

For eight weeks Emily worked and nursed in an emergency hospital set up in an isolated area in a remote section of Chester. Her experience in the hospital of washing and cleaning filthy bodies, changing soiled clothes and bed linen, having to lay out the dead and at times going long hours without rest or sleep; were crucial factors in her later decisions to found an Order. Important though her work in the Church Extension Association was, it only scratched the surface of the humanitarian and religious work she wanted and hoped to do. She was now in her mid-thirties, had inherited a comfortable fortune and possessed much more than her fair share of energy and initiative.

Her independent income liberated her from the need to marry, but not from the constraints the society of mid-Victorian times placed on ladies. A lady could only minister to the poor on the occasional charitable visit. A Sister could visit the poor in the slums every day. A lady could not nurse except in emergencies like the Chester cholera epidemic. Nursing as a profession was for lower class women. "Florence Nightingale had taken ladies to nurse in the Crimean War of 1854 - 1856; but, significantly, fourteen of her most experienced lady nurses were of an Anglican Order and ten more were of a Roman Catholic one. Her later efforts to enrol ladies like herself in a nursing profession failed and she had to concentrate on making nursing professional and respectable and she largely succeeded." <sup>7</sup> Sisters could nurse regularly.

Ladies could teach but not as regular teachers in the new elementary schools mushrooming all over London and England through the Education Act of 1870. They could and did teach in the new schools if circumstances had made them poor. They also often became governesses and

companions. They could teach in private schools for girls but these were scarce until a small wave of foundations created some permanent teaching posts. Belonging to a Religious order provided the opportunity for a lady to teach.

Belonging to a Religious Order gave a lady the opportunity to nurse, to teach elementary schools, visit slums, feed, clothe, house and generally care for the starving, sick and homeless. She could even try to save prostitutes. She could shoulder responsibilities and not just have these short occasions in the areas she wished to work in the time of crisis. She could have a leading role not just that of an aide. All this she felt she could do in a close community of like-minded women.



### **SISTERS, PROSTITUTES and ORPHANS**

Emily wrote to the Rev. R.C. Kirkpatrick; the first Vicar of St. Augustines, Kilburn, asking if there was likely to be an opening in his parish for the Sisterhood she hoped to form, and for school work among the poor and orphans. Father Kirkpatrick was a regular subscriber to the C.E.A. She was invited to lunch with Fr. Kirkpatrick and his sister who lived with him, and asked to give further details of her plans. She wrote later of the lunch and this interview: "As usual, when asked to speak formally, to speak of my work and plans, I felt struck with semi-dumbness and left the house feeling I had given a very false impression of my intentions".<sup>1</sup> Later she wrote a letter stating her hopes and aspirations and plans more fully, and received a cordial reply from Fr. Kirkpatrick in which he assured her of his sympathy and promised his hearty co-operation in her undertakings.

The way was now open for Emily's next step and on the 5th April 1870, she was clothed as the first Novice of the Community of the Sisters of the Church. The ceremony took place in a small temporary Chapel in Belgrave Road, Kilburn.

The Rev. R.C. Kirkpatrick was at the Altar; The Rev. Charles Gutch taking part; an East Grinstead Sister giving her help and in the midst Emily Ayckbowm kneeling before the Altar, simply clothed in habit, cap and veil as now, giving herself up to the Religious Life, the first Novice of the Community.<sup>2</sup>

These are the words of Miss Hunter Baille who went on to tell of how four others came forward to be clothed as Sister-Associates. When all the visitors had left they all sat on the floor with Sister Emily and talked of all they hoped for and all their plans for the future.

Very soon after Sister Emily wrote her *Quarterly Paper* to the members and friends of the C.E.A. to announce the new developments. The following are some quotations from it:

The issue of this quarterly paper affords us an opportunity of giving you and other members of the Church Extension Association some explanation of a recent change in the working of the Society. I feel this is only due to those whose interests are so bound up with our under-taking, and who may be rather unprepared for such a development of the work . . .

The changes have also opened a way for the commencement of the Sisterhood which we have long hoped might be connected with this Society . . .

The instruction and religious training of poor girls is doubtless the most important part of our undertaking, and those who labour for these neglected and almost heathen children see that if any real and lasting impression is to be made, it can only be by those who devote themselves entirely to their welfare . . .

This we have long felt, and therefore we are truly thankful that a beginning was made on Tuesday 5th April when the first Sister was set apart for the service of God and the Church . . .

The Sisters are to be called "Sisters of the Church" as this name appears to describe their work, which is not a new scheme but has grown out of the Church Extension Association that has been working for some years . . .

The principal work of the Community will be to seek out poor and ignorant girls and bring them under the influence of the Church.

The Sisters of the Church will therefore work in Day, Night and Sunday Schools, and hold classes for Holy Baptism and Confirmation.

Sister Emily, Hon. Sec. <sup>3</sup>

After her clothing as a novice she quietly lived in Belgrave Road as before, going to the "ragged school" in Lissom Grove which she had started two years earlier, and beginning classes for the children of Kilburn, as well as co-ordinating the activities of the C.E.A. and thinking and praying about the future of her Community. In September 1870 a second novice was clothed, and in July 1871 two more. All of them had been her friends, and members of the C.E.A.

Sister Emily was professed in July 1872 by Father Kirkpatrick, with the sanction of the Bishop of London and in February 1873 the second novice was professed. After this second profession she felt that the Community had really been founded, and she was now called Mother Emily, being the Superior of the Order. In the same week she had an interview with the then Bishop of

London, Dr. Jackson, taking with her the draft of the beginnings of her Rule for the Community (discussed in the next section) which the Bishop read and as Emily put it "expressed his approval". He promised to remember the work in his prayers, gave her his blessing and arranged a time for her to bring the other professed sister to receive a blessing also. Every year brought an increase in numbers of professed Sisters where Churchmanship was to be a bastion of the English Catholic faith.

Before her clothing Emily had already begun to collect some of the ragged, neglected, wild and dirty children who swarmed the streets and gutters of Lissom Grove. She and her helpers went forward with their plans. The clergy in the Parishes of St. Cyprians, Marylebone and Christ Church, Lissom Grove were supportive. The Sisters received a loft over a stable in each of the two Parishes and children were invited to come.

The majority that came had not had any breakfast and so had to be fed as well as taught. A breakfast of hot sweet tea and a large current bun was provided before school and the first of the famous "Bun Schools" was begun. The name was attractive and many children came. We must gather the little ones by hundreds and thousands," said Mother Emily. They were arriving in increasing numbers from big girls with bad manners to tiny toddlers with no knowledge except what had been picked up in the streets, including a precocious knowledge of evil.

The loft in which the Lissom Grove Bun School was scrubbed clean, fires burned on cold days, and "brightly coloured pictures of Our Lord adorned the walls".<sup>4</sup> Bible stories were taught, hymns were learned and answers were repeated from the simple C.E.A. Catechisms that Mother Emily had written. She had also compiled a children's Hymn Book along with the "Special Stories". These were sold in the thousands by the C.E.A. to help raise funds for the Community. Some were translated into Swahili for the children of the Universities Mission in Zanzibar.

Some of the better-behaved and more intelligent children were prepared for baptism and confirmation and one of these wrote thirty years later, after Mother Emily's death:

How I loved the Bun School!

I can see now in my mind the great cans of tea and the currant rolls. We used to get to school before the ladies and stand at the top of the yard for the pleasure of walking down to the door with them, and how we envied the two who could get at the side of our dear 'Mother', as she was called.<sup>5</sup>

In 1872 Mother Emily could report that a number of older Bun School girls had been clothed by the Association and placed in respectable situations, some in the families of small tradesmen.

More and more of the Order's efforts went into education. It was a way out of the slums. Besides many of the ad hoc schools in barns, halls or other convenient spots, between 1870 and 1893 the order built and staffed eight large schools in London for nearly 6000 children, one in Liverpool, and it also adapted buildings in York and Croydon. Mother Emily had insisted the teaching Sisters pass examinations for government certificates of qualification. Sisters were sent daily to training colleges in London; including those for secondary teacher training.

Mother Emily is said to have gone so far as to tell the Sisters "that God could be glorified as much by study as by meditation or prayer or even receiving Holy Communion".<sup>6</sup> The Sisters were the first Anglican Order to obtain certificates as registered teachers and most of the Orders Schools had a Sister as Headmistress/Principal. Inspectors of Schools whether or not in England or Australia gave the Sisters' Schools good reports. "The quality of the work is considerably above the average .... It is clear evidence of good teaching and attention on the part of those taught."<sup>7</sup>

Joined to the humanitarian reason for starting schools was a spiritual one. The Education Act of 1870 had by 1880 brought free and compulsory elementary education but allowed in the

schools only emasculated religious education, a wishy-washy compromise dictated by disputes between religious groups and the need to keep as many voters as possible. Mother Emily feared paganism in these schools. Similar motives pushed her into secondary education for girls.

She favoured it and training for professions because she believed in the intellectual and administrative abilities in women. Although she did not equate women and men, she considered they each had their own virtues and faults, and neither was better than the other. She would have had a deep inner satisfaction when professions were open to women: for instance, the Medical Practitioners Act 1876 allowing the registration of women doctors, and two years later the University of London voting to grant degrees to women students, and in 1884, the University of Oxford admitting women to Honours degrees. Being the person she was, she saw a risk: "materialism and secularisation in the pursuit of a career could erode and drive out the spiritual".<sup>8</sup> What would a girl have profited if she gained a profession and lost her soul?

## **THE COMMUNITY and ITS RULE**

Mother Emily's educational philosophy was rooted in her Religious philosophy.

The development of character in the direction of high aspirations and moral uprightness is one great purpose of the school ..... (Pupils) go to school that they may become more and more their best selves, and be fitted to fill a real place and do a real work in the world - their own work which no one else can do. In every human being is the germ of a great future, and each one may unfold into something as beautiful and as necessary to God's earth as the most exalted saint or hero that ever lived! <sup>1</sup>

It was God's work, not hers, and so it could not fail; that was her unswerving belief. The first clause of the Rule she compiled for the Sisters of the Church says: "The Religious Community of the Sisters of the Church has been founded to promote the honour and glory of Almighty God and the Extension of His Kingdom upon earth." <sup>2</sup> and commenting on this clause in a book of instructions for the Sisters she says:

In answer to the prayer of those called to found a Community, some special lead is granted, some great need of humanity is pressed home to their hearts, and little by little, God's will becomes clear to them . . .

It is with communities as with individuals. Each Community is the creation of God, and just as each individual receives the gift of life for some definite end and object, so has the Almighty Ruler some special purpose in calling each community into existence . . . "

To attempt to form a community by mere human effort would be to build a house upon the sand, only to see it crumble and fall, when the storms of adversity should beat against it, or trials and temptations assail it . . . <sup>3</sup>

In the same commentary she goes on to speak of the special work of the community as it related to the Rule:

It would appear that God is especially calling religious orders into being, in these latter days of the Church, for the two-fold purpose of labouring for the relief of human suffering and for the spread of a knowledge of the true faith .... more particularly has God opened a way for us to minister to the lambs of his flock in our orphanages and schools, these children who but for His servants' care and love would assuredly drift into sin, and wander far from the fold, perhaps never even hear of the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the flock? <sup>4</sup>

When the Sisters are asked who they are, and answer "Sisters of the Church", the reply often comes "What Church?" The idea of the Founders was to help and extend Christ's Church (as seen in the initial founding of the C.E.A.). Mother Emily herself helps explain the name of the community in her commentary on the Rule of the Sisterhood.

The nature of the work to be taken up by the community had already been foreshadowed. It was to be a work of church extension; and the name "Sisters of the Church" was given since the main object of their prayers and labours was the advancement of Christ's Holy Catholic Church. They were to hold themselves ready to sacrifice all individual interests and preferences, to resign personal wishes and inclinations, comfort and convenience, even life itself if needful, for the sake of spreading God's truth. The Sisters shall consider the call to instruct the ignorant, feed the hungry and tend the poor and suffering, as a precious opportunity of showing forth their love to Jesus Christ by serving Him and His members. <sup>5</sup>

It took Mother Emily sixteen years to complete the Rule, with the approval and encouragement of Bishop Jackson, and when it was completed and printed she wrote in her circular letter to the Sisters in 1887: "It was accepted as that by which each member of the Sisterhood is bound to frame her life ..... I would beg you with all possible urgency to make the Rule the guide of your every action, the companion and director of your life . <sup>6</sup>

It is evident from this the very great importance and the high opinion she had of a Religious Rule to the Community and its members. In the midst of her many labours in the seventies and eighties, while organising the Community and Sisters in their infancy, building schools and homes, relieving the poor, she still went on in the drawing up and writing of the Rule. At the very beginning of the Rule she gives the Aim of the Sisters: "To perfect holiness in the fear of

the Lord, that more and more united with Him by faith and love, they become His special instruments". <sup>7</sup> Striving for holiness was to come first and the work would follow. She goes on to say: "Secondly, they shall strive by prayer, alms - deeds and personal influence, to bring all within their reach to know and love God." <sup>8</sup>

In her commentary on the Rule of prayer, she reminds the Sisters that prayer for others can be carried on in very various places and in all kinds of ways; not only union with our Lord before the Altar, or during Divine Office or even in Chapel; but also when travelling, when passing people hurrying through the streets, or going past a church or a 'tavern'. Prayers can dart up to God at all times and in all places. She showed that formal acts of prayer are not needed; a thought, a hardly perceptible movement of the soul is sufficient; if we lie sleepless at night, or have unexpected intervals of leisure; and then there is the offering on behalf of others of our daily life; actions can pray, suffering can pray. <sup>9</sup>

The Holy Eucharist was to be celebrated as often as possible, and all the Sisters were to be present, unless they were engaged in duties that had been designated by the Community or the Sisters' House in which they lived. They were to begin the day with Jesus and to make the oblation of all their thoughts, words and actions in union with His sacrifice. All the sisters were to make a special point of assisting at the Holy Eucharist every Sunday.

In addition to the Eucharist and the Office the Sisters were to spend half an hour together in meditation, and at least half an hour at some other time in prayer and spiritual reading. The novices had some training in a variety of methods of prayer, but otherwise the sisters were to be left free to meditate as the Holy Spirit directed them. Mother Emily often made suggestions in her letters and publications on prayer, but none were compulsory.

It is necessary to say something of her teaching and Rule on the three Vows of Religion: poverty, chastity and obedience; about which Mother Emily had very clear ideas and on



which she wrote one of her most detailed sets of instructions. The professed Sisters were to show their earnestness of purpose by zealous fulfilment of the three fold Vow. This was their chief obligation, to keep the vows they had so solemnly made at their Profession when they had received the black veil, and ring, and girdle.

"Religious Poverty", Mother Emily wrote, "consists in the voluntary renunciation of all temporal possessions in order that the heart detached from earthly interests, may more entirely rest in God, the external and true riches".<sup>10</sup> Poverty like all other observances, was not to be an end in itself, only a means to an end, and the Sisters were to aim at true inward poverty of spirit, which alone would sanctify their outward renunciation and fit their hearts to receive the spiritual riches of the Divine love.

The poverty practised by such an Order as the Sisters of the Church could not be in extreme poverty. The Sisters were to have moderate comfort, good plain food, and comfortable beds to get necessary sleep. Mother Emily explained that they could not literally follow our Divine Redeemer who had nowhere to lay His head, and died, stripped of all things, on the Cross, but they could practise individual poverty by having nothing of their own. The Rule of poverty required the Sisters to be careful against loss or waste, and to be satisfied with the food, clothing and other things provided for all. It also warned the Sisters not to become absorbed in particular work or to regard it as their own. It was the spirit of ownership that a Sister was to renounce, the selfish longing to possess something as exclusively her own. To cling possessively to anything, however trivial, would hold a Sister back from entering into the riches of our Lord's poverty.

Poverty could also be exercised in spiritual privileges being ready to give up a service in Chapel or a quiet meditation when in an emergency someone had to do so. Yet some might refuse to do this and even persuade themselves that they chose the "better part". Mother Emily adds: "Alas, for poor weak human nature!"<sup>11</sup> This teaching on the meaning of religious poverty

shows the realistic attitude of the Foundress, and how she kept the prayer-life and the work side-by-side. This is clearly shown in the last quote when she speaks of those who profess to prefer "spiritual" work to any other.

She goes on: "Such a Sister would hear an orphan say its prayers, but leave it dirty and hungry; she would read the Bible to a sick man but object to binding up his wounds or making his bed; would teach the Creed but not the alphabet, would lecture the poor but object to dispensing food and clothing to them. Still less would she trouble to raise funds to relieve their sufferings. She would leave irksome duties to others, while she read a spiritual book in her cell". <sup>12</sup>

It was this sort of conduct and action that was not at all the idea of Mother Emily's perception of Spirituality and Poverty. The spirit of poverty was to be preserved even to the death of a Sister, when the funeral should be "as simply conducted as possible, and an inexpensive cross alone mark the last resting place of a Sister of the Church". <sup>13</sup>

In her Rule on the Second Vow of Chastity, Mother Emily says that by it "A Sister dedicates herself soul and body to Jesus Christ in a life of perfect purity". <sup>14</sup> God in His wisdom had called these women away from ordinary human joys, from marriage, from domestic ties so that they might consecrate themselves to the love of Jesus only.

For Him alone shall they live; for His love only shall they care; so will their hearts be free from all claims on earth, and from such desire of human praise or affection as might mar their perfect oblation of themselves to Him, the Bridegroom the Spouse of the faithful soul. <sup>15</sup>

In her Commentary on The Rule, Mother Emily quotes St. Augustines words:

In a vision I saw Chastity; she was all shining with a radiant light of serene and holy joy. Like a fruitful mother this angelic grace brought forth in abundance pure joy, patient endurance, holy zeal, gentle compassion and charity in word and action. <sup>16</sup>

The writer of *A Valiant Victorian* found in her diary an opinion which seemed to adequately express Mother Emily's thoughts:

The consecrated virgin remains free to yield herself up to God. Nothing diverts her from prayer and works of charity, nothing separates her from the supreme love of Christ. She enjoys communion with God such as is not possible for the married woman with her earthly cares and distractions.

She adds some realism to these thoughts by adding:

We must not however, suppose that it is the mere abstaining from marriage which is understood by the Vow of Chastity. No, our human nature must be entirely surrendered to God. Those who make the choice of this life must have a care that they at the same time embrace that higher chastity of the soul. <sup>17</sup>

She continues on to warn the Sisters to endeavour to subdue the natural tendency to find pleasure in being noticed and admired and there is the warning against becoming too attached to any particular Sister. There are also remarks that it would be selfish to try and win the affections of the children of others.

Mother Emily does not disparage family ties. Remember she was very attached to her family, particularly her father and her sister. She says in one section of her commentary

The Sisters shall not seek to crush out and destroy the natural love of kindred and friends, a love which our blessed Lord in His perfect human life shared and sanctified; but they shall rather hallow it by making it subservient to His supreme love, and by treating all with equal kindness and cordiality for His sake. <sup>18</sup>

Her teaching on the third Vow of Obedience is equally clear and detailed. She says in the Rule that by vows of poverty and chastity the Sisters dedicate themselves and all their possessions to God, but by the vow of obedience they make a yet more perfect oblation, since they yield their WILL as an entire sacrifice, solemnly engaging to submit to the Rule of the Order until death.

In the Rule and her commentaries on it, Mother Emily says a great deal about the virtue of Religious Obedience. It is this virtue that is often misunderstood by people who are not all that familiar in the principles of Religious life. Many Religious Orders choose a special virtue to make their own and the Community of the Sisters of the Church chose the virtue of obedience. She says in the Rule

The Sisters of the Church shall learn to love the rule of obedience, and to find in it a source of peace and blessing, as bringing them into intimate union with Jesus Christ, Who has given us the most perfect example of this virtue. <sup>19</sup>

She stresses the supreme importance of being faithful to the Rule and Constitutions and notes that it has generally been laxity in keeping the rule which in the past has been the downfall of many religious orders and leads to their dissolution. As Mother Emily put it herself:

The poorest and most ignorant Sister who is obedient to her Rule will be a blessing to all, while the richest and most talented, if she be irregular, will prove a burden and a curse. <sup>20</sup>

She hastens to add that talents and influence are God's gifts and when united to humility may assist in setting forth His glory. She describes how Sisters may be lead away to want work different from that of their community, to want more of the contemplative life, to want this or that, all of which is contrary to the vow of obedience. "Such innovators" she says, "have invariably caused confusion and disorder, and have sometimes brought about the ruin of a society which originally promised well." <sup>21</sup> Although Mother Emily stressed the value and necessity of obedience, she also highlighted its reasonable and useful side. Even obedience was a means to an end; not an end in itself. She never encouraged commands to do things that were unnecessary or unreasonable, and she warned superiors against making such requests. She knew that Religious Orders were sometimes accused of giving up human freedom and acting like machines, but she would not allow this to be the case.

"Not as slaves must we obey", she wrote, "but as those who share the glorious liberty of the Children of God. Far from forfeiting our freedom we increase and perfect it. In whatever work Sisters are given to do, there is scope for much freedom and initiative." <sup>22</sup> She also pointed out that obedience is a necessity in human affairs: in the army and navy and in all institutions where a number of people have to act together. She goes on to say that the Sisters surely would not allow themselves to be outdone in devotion to duty "by a rough private soldier". They were to aim at something higher than the heroic obedience of a soldier, for in obeying her rule and superiors, the Sister was obeying God himself, and only those who had learned to obey would be able in due course to exercise authority in their turn. If the Sisters could maintain the true spirit of obedience and walk humbly in the path appointed by God they would become true conquerors and triumph over their spiritual enemies who fell through disobedience.

In her Rule, written over a period of sixteen years, Mother Emily does not seem to omit anything that would be necessary to the life of a Sister, and yet the Rule is not a list of Regulations, but rather a description of ideals and principles. By the end of 1886, when the Rule had been finished and accepted by the Bishop of London, Mother Emily felt that the Community was firmly established. She, with the approval of the Bishop of London, put the Community under the patronage of St. Michael and his Angels and established September 29th as the patronal Feast of the Community.

The author of the *Call of the Cloister* says that the picture of St. Michael on the cover of *Our Work*, the sisters' quarterly journal, shows the militant spirit of the Sisters of the Church. Perhaps that it is so but the Sisters may well have been proud to stand and fight with St. Michael on God's side against all the forces of evil. They had now become a firmly established community and had increased to around one hundred. They were ready to answer the question: Were children to be brought up simply as citizens of the State, or as children of the Church?

## **SCHOOLS: AT HOME AND GOING ABROAD**

The standard the Sisters expected for themselves was required in others as well. Their spirituality was matched with their social concern. Their social work continued and grew, but an emphasis had really begun to gain momentum. Mother Emily had a deep concern for the large proportion of a rapidly increasing population who was receiving no education at all, and the vast numbers of children who swarmed the back streets of London.

Mother Emily saw the Sisterhood as both proclaiming and defending the faith against the evil and godless Board Schools of England. Christian Education was the key to proper nationhood and her schools must be better than those provided by the State. She took very seriously, as she did most things, studying for examination. She wrote special instructions for those sisters who had to study either alone or in a class, at home or in a college.

Therefore those called to study must set earnestly to work and turn all the time allowed to the best account, never wasting the time, or claiming more than necessary. <sup>1</sup>

The sisters were to study in silence and offer all they did to God. She said that Sisters could glorify God by study as much as by meditation or prayer, or even the reception of Holy Communion. They could exercise humility, recollection and silence, and must show to an unbelieving generation that Christians and especially the religious orders are ready to do as much out of love for God, as the children of the world do to advance their own interests. "The Sisters must not be put to shame by those men of Science who devote themselves night and day with untiring energy to some branch of knowledge.

Mother Emily had come to believe that education was the focus of the Sisters' work. To achieve education's object she insisted that joy be brought into a student's life. This, in her mind, was prevented by mere memory work and dull drill. Cramming "stultified the intellect and the imagination". <sup>2</sup> Like the pioneer educational philosophers, Pestalozzi (1746 - 1827)

and Froebel (1782 - 1856), she wanted creativeness and the ability to work and think for oneself cultivated. Games, pictures, music and stories were all an integral part of the process in developing the person. "It is not by the teacher the mind is developed . . . " Mother Emily said. Instead the teacher "is only the assistant of nature, and should regard herself less as a purveyor of knowledge than as a moulder of character".<sup>3</sup>

Her concern and her influence is truly remarkable. Educational Foundations, Orphanages and Mission Outreach Organisations of the Order include:

1872	Childrens Home, Broadstairs
1873	St. Augustine's School for Girls and Infants, Kilburn
1875	Mission Work Shoreditch, Kilburn and Paddington
1880	Orphanage, Kilburn
1882	Church Teachers' Union
1883	Mission Work Surrey Docks
1884	Eastcombe Orphanage
1885	Lady Adelaide Home for Boys
	Gordon Memorial School, Kilburn
	Women's Workrooms
	Dinners for School children
	Religious Education Union
1887	St. Mary's Home, Broadstairs
	Petition on Education with 250,000 signatures
1888	Wilberforce School, Kilburn
	Refuges for Homeless men
	Dispensary at Kilburn
1889	Princess Frederica School, Kensal Rise
	Keble Memorial School, Harlesden
	Old Palace School, Croydon
1890	Omerod Children's Home at St. Anne's-on-Sea
	Work began in Toronto and Hamilton
1891	Home for boys, Oxford
	Saltram Crescent School, West Kilburn
	House for Children, Clevedon
	School opened Ottawa, Canada

1892                      Siddon Memorial Girl's School, London  
                                 Madras Collegiate Girls School, India <sup>4</sup>

As can be seen in the above list it was in 1890 that the sisters began to spread the work of the Order beyond Britain. It was in October 1890 that the Order embarked on its first outreach to Canada in Toronto and Hamilton; and the next year the first school outside Britain opened in Canada's capital Ottawa. In 1892 the Sisters opened the Madras Collegiate Girl's School in India, and a little later the same year, seven Sisters sailed for Australia to open schools in Hobart, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney .

The Community had many friends and helpers in Australia, through those who had emigrated from England. They had established local secretaries in Brisbane, Ballarat, Melbourne, Sydney and Tasmania. These groups distributed copies of "Our Work" and sent money towards the work of the Sisters in England. Mother Emily had received many letters, not only from priests but also from other supporters, asking her to send Sisters to Australia. It was in early 1892 that the most urgent plea came. She records in her diary:

Early in the year [1892] we had a beautifully expressed letter from the Bishop of Adelaide [Bishop Kennion] urging us to send Sisters to Australia; especially to his own diocese. He put it so forcibly we could hardly hold back. His request was backed up by a visit from a friend of his, Miss Lang, who came to see me at St. Mary's, Broadstairs, as I could not get to Kilburn, and urged the matter with such eloquence, offering to pay the passages of four Sisters to Adelaide, and provide a house there. Simultaneously with the good Bishop's appeal came one to the same effect from Hobart, and these are by no means the first we have had. All tell the same tale - in all that vast continent, there is not a single Church Sister, while every town is over-run with Roman Catholic nuns. The letters were made public in the Community and it ended by a number of Sisters volunteering. <sup>5</sup>

*Our Work* for June 1892 also mentions the letter from Bishop Kennion of Adelaide:



The Bishop alluding in the kindest manner to the work of Our Community at home, and concluding with words which could not fail to thrill our very hearts. As we quote directly from the Bishop's letter:

Lest all the good work should be lost, lest all the great opportunities should pass without the Church availing herself of them, I ask you in my own name, and I ask you in the interests of my diocese, and I dare to ask you in the Name of our Blessed Lord and Master to send those from your Kilburn Sisterhood may come over and help us.

She shows that Australia is on the Order's agenda where she says in *Our Work* "The generous offer of a lady to provide a house and passage money for four Sisters has made this a comparatively easy enterprise, and great is our rejoicing at being called to the utmost parts of the earth" in the service of our King. <sup>6</sup>

It was finally decided that seven Sisters should start for Australia. The seven would be Sister May who would go for a short time to help start the work. The other Sisters were Sisters Lucy, Hannah, Irene, Phyllis, Bridget and Rose. Two or three of the Sisters were to go to Hobart after many appeals from the Dean there for Sisters to found a Community in his city.

Dean Dundas, of Hobart, responded on the 11th September 1892 with pleasure, but also some concern.

The announcement came so suddenly that things are of necessity quite unprepared, and your letter did not specify the exact nature of the work that they would be prepared to undertake. However Sister May has since written that a high grade school is contemplated, and I trust that all may be happily arranged.

The Bishop of Adelaide writes to me, that he hopes teaching Sisters will be sent to him.

Neither he nor I can quite work out the number of the party - he suggests 15. We shall however be able to receive several at the Deanery; and other clergy and friends offer rooms. <sup>7</sup>

In order to understand the processes and work that had gone on in Tasmania for that letter to be written and to trace the history of the Sisters coming to Tasmania we must turn back to the year 1885.

The position of Dean of Hobart had become vacant.

Charles Leslie Dundas had been a scholar at Brasemore College, Oxford, having been placed in the first class in both in Moderations and in the Theological School. On becoming Denyer Johnston University Scholar and gaining the Hall Senior Greek Testament Prize, he was ordained Deacon in 1870 and priest in 1872, and was elected a Fellow of Jesus College in 1873, being appointed Vicar of Charlton Kings, near Cheltenham. He remained in this Parish until 1883, when he became Curate of Cookham Dean. Dundas suited the Bishop because of his high church Anglo-catholic churchmanship.

Having accepted the appointment as Dean of Hobart, he, with his wife and family, sailed for Hobart, Tasmania, where they arrived on September 26th 1885. He was installed as Dean in St. David's Cathedral on Tuesday, the 29th of the same month. In the months that followed his appointment, Dean Dundas became actively associated with many branches of Church work. He soon realised, however, that when he compared the work in Tasmania to that of England, that there was something lacking in the church's association with the people, and in 1887 at the Synod which met in Synod Hall from May 3rd until the 13th he submitted the following motion on Tuesday 10th May:

That for the better organisation of Women's Work in the Diocese, especially in the matter of district nursing, education and penitentiary work, the introduction or establishment of a Sisterhood is urgently required." <sup>8</sup>

The motion was approved by the Synod, which affirmed the abstract principle of the urgent desirability of the establishment of a Sisterhood. In some areas of the colonial church there was suspicion of Sisterhoods and some immediately (such was the horror) withdrew their financial

support and moral support from the Church Society. The idea of Anglican nuns was absolutely repugnant to the good Protestant Gentlemen. An example of this repugnance came from Alfred Green of Launceston who sent an Electric Telegraph to the Rev. J. Woolnough:

Erase my name from (the) list of contributors to the Church Society. I do not undertake to contribute any longer. You must not expect me to assist supporters of Dean Dundas Proposition. <sup>9</sup>

Dundas stayed firm. In a letter to the Bishop on 25 May he referred to "the crying need which exists in Hobart for organised work on the part of educated women." The synod, he stated "acted in the conviction that there is nothing in the principle of a Religious Community which is alien to the Church of England". <sup>10</sup>

Throughout the rest of the year controversy and discussion followed. As a result, at the next meeting of the Synod in April 1888, the following resolution was passed:

That this Synod, recognising the great divergence of opinion and general lack of knowledge throughout the Diocese on the subject of Sisterhoods, deems the institution of any Sisterhood under the sanction of the resolution on the subject passed last session, inadvisable until time has been given for further consideration, and dissemination of fuller and more accurate information on the subject. <sup>11</sup>

Dundas however had no intention of allowing the matter to be dropped or lost sight of, but before any further step could be made, the Bishop (Sandford) signified that he intended to resign and at a special meeting of the Synod on November 27th, 1888, he formally tendered his resignation. In May 1889, the Reverend Henry Hutchinson Montgomery M.A., D.D. was offered and accepted the Bishopric of Tasmania.

Montgomery was born at Cawnpore, India, on October 3rd, 1847. He was the son of the late Sir Robert Montgomery K.C.B., G.C.S.I., Governor of the Punjab and afterwards a member of the Council of India in London. He entered Harrow in 1861 when the late Dr. Butler was Headmaster. Under the able guidance and tuition of Butler, he was very successful at not only

his studies but also athletics. In the sporting field he became a recognised champion and won many trophies in events up to and including the quarter mile (400 metres) and non championships for fencing and single-sticks.

For three years he was a member of the school cricket 1st eleven and captain of the football club. From Harrow he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1866, taking his degree with Honours in 1869 (Bachelor of Arts). He then studied for the Church under Dr. Vaughan, Master of the Temple, and was ordained Deacon at Chichester in 1871, and obtained the Cure of Hurstpierpoint, Sussex. In the following year he was ordained priest. In 1873 he took his Master of Arts degree.

After remaining at Hurstpierpoint for three years, he then became Curate of Christ Church, Southwark, where he stayed until 1876, when he was appointed to St. Margaret's, Westminster, under Archdeacon Farrar. While Curate at St. Margaret's, he became private secretary to Dean Stanley, a post he held for three years. He then became Vicar of St. Marks, Kennington in 1879 and two years later married Maud, the daughter of Archdeacon Farrar (afterwards Dean of Canterbury). It was not long before he became rural dean and Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Rochester. In 1889 he obtained his Doctorate of Divinity. For a young man "on the move" he had quickly gained the necessary skill, experience and expertise of a Bishopric in the Church of England.

When offered the Bishopric of Tasmania, he accepted (as already stated), and on the 1st May of that year [1889] he was consecrated in Westminster Abbey by the Archbishop of Canterbury. the Archbishop was assisted by the Bishops of Rochester, Ballarat and Antigua. Bishop Montgomery, with his wife and family, arrived in Hobart on the 23rd October 1889 and on the 30th was enthroned in St. David's Cathedral.

In the new Bishop, Dean Dundas found a friend - not only on social occasions but also in churchmanship. Montgomery helped him put the idea of a "Sisterhood of the Church" firmly in the public view and on the Church's agenda.

At the General Synod of the Dioceses in Australia and Tasmania (Tasmania is Extra-Provincial) held in Sydney in 1892 the following resolution was passed:

That this Synod, recognising the importance of the Works of Mercy carried on by Deaconesses and Sisterhoods in various parts of the Anglican Communion, considers that the Australian portion needs such workers, and that it is desirable, under proper safeguards, to encourage the formation in Australia of Deaconesses Institutions and the employment of Deaconesses in Australian parishes and parochial districts, as well as the establishment and work of Sisterhoods in Australia or branches of existing Sisterhoods. <sup>12</sup>

Montgomery and Dundas now had the backing they needed, and Dundas, on 4th March 1892 sent an invitation to the Sisters of the Church at Kilburn, England to send out representatives to work in Tasmania and to found similar institutions to those already under their care in England.

You will remember the conversation which we had last June about the great importance of the introduction of Sisterhood life and work in Australia. The two ladies, Misses Gray and Carter, of whom I spoke to you as receiving training in Lloyd Square, have been unable to complete their novitiate, as their health did not allow of their living in either of the Houses of the Sisters of Bethany during the winter. I therefore write to you to beg you once again to consult with the Mother Superior as to the possibility of your helping the Church in Australia at this crisis.

Could not two Sisters be spared to come out for two years to found a Community here, even if it were not possible to lend them to Tasmania for a longer period. The two ladies who have had their partial training in Lloyd Square desire to return to Tasmania about next October, and would be prepared (I believe) to offer themselves for further training. There are others, I understand, in Sydney, who would probably wish to come.

There is a great need for a teaching Sisterhood - for the higher education of girls. In New South Wales especially an immense number of our children are in Roman Catholic Convent Schools, as parents dread the low tone of many High Schools. This is becoming a most serious danger. <sup>13</sup>

On the 1st September 1882, the following announcement appeared in the Tasmanian *Church News*:

The Dean of Hobart has received with much satisfaction the welcome intelligence that the "Sisters of the Church" at Kilburn are sending out a number of Sisters to establish a branch in Australia.

Seven of these brave hearted women", it was stated, "had sailed from England on the *S.S. Coptic* early in August, and were expected to reach Hobart in mid-September. Of these, five, it was understood, were going on to Adelaide, and two were to be offered to Tasmania for work in Hobart; if suitable work could be found and assigned to them and other arrangements satisfactorily concluded. It was hoped that the opportunity would not be lost, and that the great advantage of self-devoted lives and trained women's work would be secured for the people of Hobart. <sup>14</sup>

The travellers left Kilburn on August 4th 1892 and Mother Emily entered in her diary:

Five of the best orphans went also (Alice, Ethel, Linette, Mary and Nettie), some of them had quite been my companions and I felt the parting with these dear children as much as with the Sisters.

I took them out before the start and got them work-boxes, satchels and many useful things with which they were delighted. We got through the parting fairly well and they set off on board with *Coptic* in good spirits. <sup>15</sup>

## THE COPTIC, HOBART AND WORK

Letters from the voyagers were published in *Our Work* and *The Quarterly Chronicle*. It seems that Sister Phyllis was the most prolific when it came to writing and from her writings the following is a paraphrased account of the six weeks the party spent at sea.

The Coptic sailed down the Thames Estuary and after it rounded the North Foreland, the eastern most point of Kent, the Captain obligingly steered close to the coast to allow the party a farewell view of the Order's Convalescent Home at Broadstairs. Next morning the ship stopped at Plymouth, and some of the party seized the opportunity to go ashore and buy some much needed things. They also bought skipping ropes for the orphan girls. Sailing in the afternoon they saw the last of England. The Bay of Biscay was deceptively calm, but the swell which regularly comes in from the Atlantic soon had rendered all but Sister Bridget and Sister Hannah seasick. They proved to be the "good sailors" and looked after the orphan girls who (except for Linette) were "bad sailors". By Sunday everyone had their sea-legs and had adjusted to life at sea.

The Sisters were kept busy on board. They had their Office to say, prayers at regular interval throughout each day (Prime, Terce, Sext, Noni, Vespers, Compline and Lands). They encouraged the orphan girls to copy out the office for themselves, helped them with religious study, school work and read stories to them. Some of the passengers joined the listening circle. Afternoons were devoted to needlework, games and talk. A Sister kept an unobtrusive eye on the girls, seeing them to bed and up again in the morning at seven. They urged the girls to keep fit with exercises, walking and using skipping ropes that had been bought for them at Plymouth as well as the age old game of hide and seek on the deck. Coming from some of the seamiest London slums, the girls showed an amazed delight at all the new sights: sea birds, flying fish, whales, and the antics of the dolphins and porpoises jumping high into the air and flopping back

into the sea as they swam alongside the ship. One girl, seeing the ship's bell for the first time, supposed it was to ring for Compline - the last office of the Day. They were awe struck by the ocean's immensity.

The Sisters widened their circle of influence by teaching Sunday School for those passengers who wanted to come. Sister Lucy organised a choir which sang after tea on a Sunday night on the steerage deck. Also on Sundays they held two services in the steerage deck - by request - to which nearly all the passengers came. They made many new friends and discretely advertised the Order's work to people who previously had never heard of it. The small passage to their cabins was to become known by the passengers as "Church Lane". A stop at Tenerife in the Canary Islands introduced the girls to fruits and coffee they had not known existed. Another highlight was crossing the Equator: the crew had carried out the traditional ceremony of mock-shaving and ducking those sailors who had not previously "crossed the line".

The *Coptic* called at Cape Town. The regular route between England and Australia was via the Cape and not through the Suez Canal. Even though the Canal had opened in 1869 it catered mainly for the trade to India and ports further East. The much longer voyage round the Cape was compensated by the lucrative passenger trade between England and South Africa and the passage to Australia could be considerably cut down by sailing a long way to the South. That is why the first Australian port many ships called at was Hobart. But sailing too far south could mean dirty weather.

After Cape Town the *Coptic* soon ran into ice and snow, and for two days and nights the captain could not leave the bridge because of fog and icebergs. When these were left behind, the ship met heavy seas. Sister Bridget, walking on deck, was knocked over by an unexpectedly huge wave washing over the ship. She was rolled about in the water on the deck but luckily one of the crew rushed to her aid and carried her to safety before she was injured - or worse. Sister Phyllis was also false-footed and took a tumble because of the ship's wayward motion. She



knocked her head on the deck but was not badly hurt. Sister Phyllis described it as saying that her head bounded "like an Indian rubber ball" after she had helped her to her feet.

On the 16th September, Sister Phyllis wrote a letter to the Community in England:

Here we are on dry land again. As soon as the *Coptic* touched the quay in Hobart the Dean came on board with his wife, two of the clergy with their wives, the Chief Magistrate and his wife, and several of the chief men of the town. We were escorted by this good company to the Deanery to tea, girls and all, and arrangements were made for giving us beds. They would not hear of the Melbourne or Adelaide Sisters leaving until Monday. Nothing could possibly exceed the kindness shown us on all sides. Our luggage was all passed through Custom House without a thing being opened. <sup>1</sup>

Truly our lives have fallen on pleasant ground. <sup>2</sup>

On the 23rd September, a meeting was held at the Deanery to welcome the visitors and to hear something concerning their work in England. In welcoming them to Hobart, the Dean said that he was honoured by the fact that the Deanery was the first house in the colonies to be entered by a Sister of the Church with the view to beginning work. He went on to say that he thought that no event so full of promise for the future had happened since the foundation of the Church in Australia. They were going to train the younger children of the Diocese, which was the most important of all work for the Church, and that it was fortunate for Tasmania that members of the teaching Sisterhood of Kilburn, whose work was known "everywhere", had decided to make their home in Hobart. The Dean was quite generous in his welcome to the Sisters. Sister May responded on behalf of the Sisters. She as the leader of the party, had felt so welcome in Hobart she had decided to stay temporarily and not proceed to Melbourne with the rest of the party. After thanking the Dean and the others for their welcome, she gave an address on the work of the Community and the Church Extension Association in England.

After dealing with works of the Association and the Sisters, which included six orphanages in various parts of England (giving a 'home' to 6,000 orphans), a Convalescent Home for children

at Broadstairs and another at St. Anne's on the Sea, Lancashire, besides six Mission Houses, she then went on to tell of the vast educational work of the Sisters. Lady Hamilton, the wife of the Governor of Tasmania, thanked Sister May for her address, said "that it gave her great pleasure to welcome them to Hobart, and she felt it was an honour to the city that they were going to work in it." <sup>3</sup>

Sister Phyllis wrote of these first days in Hobart:

We all met this morning in the Cathedral at 7.30 for our first Communion and Thanksgiving. It was so lovely, the whole service was most reverent. The Dean celebrated, assisted by Mr. Shoobridge. One could almost fancy we were in England. The Cathedral is not finished yet, but promises to be a splendid building ..... More magnificent scenery you could not see anywhere. Mt. Wellington stands at the back of the town, over 4,000 feet high. We are surrounded by hills and the river in front of us. Sister Hannah says she could fancy herself at Windermere, on a more beautiful scale.

We are all eager to be at work. All are well and brimful of happiness and energy. <sup>4</sup>

It was decided that Sisters Hannah and Phyllis were to begin work by opening an elementary school for girls and infants in St. David's Sunday School, Harrington Street. The *Hobart Centre Journal* reported : "24 September (August crossed out): It is decided to commence a Higher Grade Elementary School at once. The Dean has kindly offered us the use of St. David's School. Sister Hannah to be Head Mistress. Sister Phyllis in charge of infants." <sup>5</sup>

Unlike the "Bun Schools" in London however, the Sister's School in Hobart was now looking for clients, partly because the Government had already established a network of local schools, partly because there were already a number of large and prosperous Independent Schools (Hutchins, Officer College, Bucklands School, Christ's College, Friends, Queens' College and Hobart Ladies College). All these non-Catholic independent schools were competing for a small clientele from the middle class and prosperous landed gentry. Hobart was just

overpopulated with private schools. Another reason that the Sisters needed to look for clients was because the idea of Protestant nuns was repugnant to some in the Diocese.

This was something that the *Tasmanian Mail* had clearly foreseen. On October 1st 1892 the Mail asked whom this school would really be for?

Even if, as reported, for the poor middle class, who do not wish to send their children to Government Schools, they will come into competition with the small struggling private schools already in existence.

By October 8th, the Mail reported again that this was a "higher grade" school and not just for the poor. The Sisters would be better employed in visiting, nursing and charitable work. On October 29, the Mail went so far as to say what was happening was "unworthy" of the Sisters.

One could wonder whether the Bishop may, in these early stages, have had a certain expectation for the Sisters about work with the poor, the derelict, the fallen and the foreigner, but Sister Phyllis saw the battle for Christian Education among the influential gentle-folk as her calling.

## PHYLLIS AND JESSICA

On the 3rd October 1892, the school was opened in St. David's School by the Dean who read prayers. Thereafter the *Hobart Centre Journal* and the *Hobart School Log* records every absence, new enrolment, special event or visitor, but within the year had expressed concern and disappointment that attendance was poor and enrolment slow - only 20 pupils were on the register, with an average attendance of 17. To conclude the first calendar year, the school presented an "Entertainment" on 20th December 1892. Appendix 1 is a variety of extracts from the School Log for those early years.

The Bishop presided at this function and the Synod Hall was three parts full. After the Bishop's wife had presented the prizes and Sister May had once again spoken of the Sisters' work in England, he made a comment that the Sisters could easily have misunderstood: "that the Religious life was an example of self-devotion and love of poverty".<sup>1</sup> He assured them that they would supply the lack of a really good Church School in Hobart.

In April 1893 the Bishop signalled his official sanction of the Sisters and the work they were doing. He indicated to synod that "the Sisters had been welcomed to the Diocese for the express purpose of opening a definite Church of England Girls' School and that Anglican Sisterhoods were now an established fact and a solid power."<sup>2</sup> In the Sisters' life and work he saw examples of absolute self-sacrifice and devotion. No one could condemn them simply because that devotion ran in a form strange to some.

Bishop Montgomery went on to say that the Sisters had made a positive impact on the Diocese, and he thought no greater proof of his appreciation of their work could be shown than the fact that he and Mrs. Montgomery had entrusted the early education of their sons to the Sisters, and he was sure that when his boys grew up they would look back with thankfulness to the influence

and teaching of their school. One of these boys was the famous Field-Marshal, who according to tradition was sometimes a little unruly, and on one or two occasions had to be chastised by Sister Phyllis.

Although the teachers were careful to teach only the church Catechism, some of their ways must have seemed strange - like "the Stations of the Cross twice a day during Holy Week".<sup>3</sup> But then, Hutchins did not even have a Chapel at School, or a School Communion Service. Nor did Hutchins have Confirmation classes. The Sisters began theirs in July and "presented eight girls for Confirmation on the 24th November".<sup>4</sup>

To many, the Sisters may have had strange ways and strange dress but they were presented as hard-working normal women. They got sick like everyone else (Sister Phyllis began the year with a long illness<sup>5</sup>), they went on bush walks, they went to the beach for games and picnics, they climbed Mt. Wellington and had to struggle down home again along the tracks in the dark - they were just so committed to try and show the people of Hobart that they enjoyed a variety of activities. These things commended the Sisters to many in the Hobart community. It was becoming more obvious that Collegiate (the name was introduced in July) was offering an education which people wanted and were prepared to pay for: Christian, academic, cultural and physical. That this was going to be the emphasis of Collegiate was confirmed in a rather cryptic entry in the Journal at the end of first term 1895.

Sister Hannah ceases to be in charge.<sup>6</sup>

Sister Hannah was more interested in the "Bun School" concept which the Sisters had also started in Holy Trinity not long after the opening of Collegiate in 1893. Sister Phyllis, who took over, was only focused on the idea of a really good Academy.

When she took over the reins of Collegiate its course was now going to be well and truly determined. The Bishop had hinted earlier that it might be possible to take over The Ladies College and "Stephenville" <sup>7</sup> in Macquarie Street and this step was endorsed by the Bishop on the 5th April 1895. The *Mercury* also foreshadowed the move of Collegiate to the Ladies' College during the holidays and reported the opening of the mid-winter term:

July 27 Collegiate School re-opened at the Ladies College, Macquarie Street, where in future it will be held. A large increase in both staff and pupils. <sup>13</sup>

The move to "Stephenville" meant the closure of the rented Community House in Goulburn Street and centralisation of the work (except for the Bun School at Holy Trinity) in Macquarie Street - School, Convent and Boarding House were now in one of Hobart's best and grandest houses. Sister Phyllis was clearly in charge and was vitally concerned with examinations and outward appearances of success. Her standards were high as were her expectations:

The Third Form has done fairly well - they are a very dull set of children. <sup>9</sup>

So much so did she take control that The Hobart Centre Journal, the inhouse daily record which had on several occasions criticised Sister Phyllis, the Lady Principal, came to an abrupt end on the 20th August 1896 with a single comment that Sister Phyllis would now record everything in the School Log Book. All entries will now be in her hand. On the 19th October she became head of both the Sisters' House and the School - Sister Hannah was transferred to Sydney to run Orphanage work. Sister Lucy and an orphan, Fanny, came from England to continue the work of Holy Trinity. This "Bun School" closed in mid 1896 because of continuing clashes with parish activities like the Flower Show where it had to close for a week in July 1895. All power was Sister Phyllis's, and she was determined to make her School successful. May Parsons recollected those early years in her article for the School Magazine in 1942, the School's Jubilee year. (see Appendix 2)

Sister Phyllis was Lady Principal of Collegiate until 1927 and up until 1938 (the year before her death) was responsible for the writing of the Sisters Letter in the annual report and the Collegiate School Magazine. In this period of time she left an indelible impression on the School and on many of the women of Hobart.

As the School entered the twentieth century, Sister Phyllis said in her 1899 Report of the School:

Though not yet a very big child for its years, it is, we think, a healthy one. It has had several serious illnesses and relapses which have retarded its growth, but not impaired its constitution. In the Pharmacopoeia of Schools the several illnesses could be classified as "Bad Times", competition of both State and Private Schools, measles, whooping cough and other childish ailments.

In the following years to 1905 when the first two Log Books end some of these problems remained, some were overcome and some new ones attacked the growth and stability of the School. "Bad Times" could quite possibly have referred to financial problems and accommodation. Part of the financial problem was both solved and recreated by the enrolment question. As numbers increased and the curriculum was extended and diversified, the school plant had to be developed.

The second problem Sister Phyllis highlighted was competition. The school maintained an edge over other similar institutions because of its lower fees and because the Sisters were prepared to scrimp and save. They "shared rooms to accommodate more girls <sup>10</sup> and were delighted when 'any cost could be minimised' ". <sup>11</sup> As well as teaching they did domestic chores and nursed the sick - they were not afraid of hard work because they were dedicated women with a vision. The growth and success of the school can be measured by the enrolments: "1900 - 62 pupils and a full boarding house; 1904 - 86; 1905 - 104 with 26 boarders." <sup>12</sup>

Collegiate was attractive for both its style of education and its academic success. Fairly typical of academic success was the external examination and a Report of the Whole School by Mr. Dunbabin (M.A. Oxford) in October 1903 of which Sister Phyllis wrote:

All did well - one child got 100/100 for Geography, 76/80 for History and 50/50 for Grammar. Form IV's recitation was the best the examiner had ever heard. 13 got full marks and none lost more than 6 out of the 28 girls. <sup>13</sup>

With all this academic success, practical and pastoral care, the Sisters were winning the love and admiration from students and parents alike, but a problem struck the school early in the twentieth century. The churchmanship issue came to a head. The Hobart Centre Journal records the success and support they were receiving from the parents but they also record the public criticism that they had also been hearing:

A tiresome little Curate of the Kensitite type is doing his best to injure the school. <sup>14</sup>

The major attack was to come from Captain de Houghton of Brighton - a Synodsmen and powerful defender of Protestantism. It was an attack that was to backfire. In the Synod of 1901 he tried to move a motion through Synod that condemned the Sisters' Religious Education. The motion read:

That in the opinion of Synod some of the teaching of the Sisters of the Church at the Collegiate School, Hobart, is opposed to the doctrine and practices of the Church of England. <sup>15</sup>

The Rev. R.K. Collisson raised the point of order that Collegiate was a private enterprise, and Synod had no jurisdiction over it or the Sisters of the Church. The Church Advocate was of the same opinion and added that the Sisters were doing a splendid work in the State. He added that if Synod carried this motion they would make themselves the laughing stock of the State.



When after considerable debate the motion was put to Synod, it was overwhelmingly rejected but Sister Phyllis was determined to turn challenge into conquest. Through the Dean, she asked the Bishop to establish a Commission into Religious Education at the School. The Commission, made up of the Bishop's Examining Chaplains, came under fire from Captain de Houghton and his supporters:

"I object both to the personnel of that Commission and to its proposed methods of proceeding." <sup>16</sup>

He objected to the fact that the three clergymen appointed to the Commission were men of one school of thought, to which he was opposed, and urged that clergymen of the Evangelical school ought to be represented on the Commission. The Bishop stood firm and the Commission examined only written witness of class notes, lectures and teaching materials at the school. They found nothing inconsistent with the teachings of the Church of England and indeed congratulated the Sisters on their careful and faithful instruction.

Captain de Houghton renounced the Commission, but he had failed to produce written material to support his claims and so turned his attack on the Bishop - claiming he was a papist. The Captain had lost public credibility, but the School had won general and enthusiastic support. The Dean congratulated the Sisters on "their tactics" <sup>17</sup> and the parents showed their support in the form of gifts and cards. From this point the School had public and official recognition. It was part of the Hobart establishment and attacks on the Sisters were mean, ignorant and low.

The Sisters had a constant concern with standards, success and tone - it was an appealing mixture which brought its own rewards. Tone was important. In 1900 a girl was expelled for walking with boys in the street and in 1901 another was expelled for "misconduct not quite up to our standard". Even staff were expected to keep and uphold the "tone" of the school. Sister Phyllis wrote of one Master who gave up his German class much to the pupil's delight and that he had not taken much interest. As can be seen in Appendix 3 in Mary Stannard's reflections the

tone and standards developed by Sister Phyllis were and still are maintained as an integral aspect of the school.

The Collegiate School magazine which began publication in April 1906 reflects the attitudes and beliefs that Sister Phyllis imposed on the girls and the way they both loved her and respected her and all she stood for. The magazine was the official voice of the school and could only say what the Lady Principal agreed with. Her first address in the Magazine was in September 1906 (No. 3) where she spoke of the untimely death of one of the first Collegiate girls, Elsie Davies, at the age of twenty-five. She worked on the theme of training and its practical application. To conclude she posed the question "What should girls plan to do when they leave school?" <sup>18</sup>

In answer to her question she used in many of her letters the theme of useful hard work or variations of this idea. For example in 1908:

Remember, we, none of us, can live without leaving some mark, either good or bad, on those with whom we come in contact ... He has put us into a certain niche, and given us work to do. He does not mean us to fritter away our hours  
... <sup>19</sup>

This concept of useful hard work was tied up with the service of God, loyalty to the Empire and the honour of the School.

In 1911 she addressed the Collegiate community through the magazine on work and success. There are, she wrote, four necessary characteristics for success both at school and in life after school: teachableness, thoughtfulness, diligence and thoroughness. The upper most thought should be to "prepare for future usefulness".

Each of us is expected to do his work in the world for the honour of his profession, and the lasting benefit of his fellow men ... we all should try to do whatever God has given us to do, in as true and thorough way as we possibly can; putting our noblest self into our work just because we know God is looking on, and, therefore, we cannot give Him anything but our best. <sup>20</sup>

Another aspect that she often wrote about was the vital role that moral standards played in a woman's life. One could argue that there was even a clear note of feminism in her "Address" of March 1912:

Girls have, on the whole, higher ideals than men, nobler aspirations, more perfect purity ... Believe me, dear girls, I am telling you an old and sad truth when I say men, not respecting and reverencing women, have used them as mere toys for an hour's amusement, to be thrown aside when a passing inclination, which was never real love, has passed away, and so have added to the number of broken hearts and saddened lives. <sup>21</sup>

Not only as a nation, but as individuals in the lawless spirit that is abroad. One hardly takes up the morning paper now, without feeling a sadness of heart, at the doings recorded there. Nation sparring against nation; criticism of those in authority; husbands deserting their wives; wives disgracing their womanhood; murder, robbery, crime of all kinds, even against the children. <sup>22</sup>

It was the sacred duty of mothers, she believed, to exercise discipline so that they may train their sons "to be grand and great men, a tower of strength in our land" but a divisive social issue was temperance and alcohol. It was one of "the very big breakers ahead of us" and so she wrote in 1919:

She reflected on the importance of women building up the nation and wondered if the recently elected woman M.P. in England would use her influence to change laws on alcohol. It was, she thought, certainly one of the ways Collegiate girls could use their influence. It was possible that girls could shape the characters, careers and even destinies of young men by refusing to "dance" with men who had touched "the horrid stuff".

While drink was one of the problems in the breakdown of Moral Standards another was the vulgarity and breakdown of the traditional social values and customs. She detested outrageous dress and behaviour - it was inner grace and beauty that would bring out the best in their men friends. Beware of men "who want to enjoy a passing hour with you". don't let men "take a

liberty". Be prepared to slap a man's face if he dare to offend you - you can "be a queen in your anger".

Don't indulge in the present-day fashionable style of dress, short skirts, and very low necks, almost minus a sleeve, don't dress so as to attract attention ... pray and trust that your dear souls just entering in life may lead noble lives, have characters strong, true and earnest, and be a blessing and a satisfying reward to your parents... <sup>23</sup>

One can still see the influence of Sister Phyllis, when she writes in 1929 (two years after her retirement as Principal) as she thanks the parents for enforcing her request that no girl should be "up and down the street after 4.15" and she continues to show the Sisters' concern for the tone and standards of the students as they venture outside the school grounds.

We are, as it were, members of a city set on a hill, and must remember that our conduct will prove our loyalty to 'Home, School and Country' . <sup>24</sup>

When Sister Jessica took over as Principal in 1956 some 28 years after Sister Phyllis had retired, very little had changed: "Collegiate stood as a bastion for old values in a rapidly changing world". <sup>25</sup> On the 22nd May 1956 the Log Book records that the girls all wrote out the school rules and stuck them on the lids of their desks. We hope this will have some effect on the discipline and work habits of the girls. The editor of the School Magazine wrote on the theme of Courtesy:

Here at Collegiate we have, set before us, a high standard of courtesy, but do we make full use of our opportunity to grow in gracious manners? Courtesy is needed to promote peace in social relationships, peace between nations. <sup>26</sup>

By 1958 Sister Jessica records in the Log Book on the 6th February that the girls are showing the realisation at last for self discipline and the need of good work habits. Despite the dubious influence of television, the arrival of a helicopter at Hutchins, the wonder at the completion of the Snowy Mountain Scheme, the Vatican Council, modern teenagers and their dances to rock-n-roll, the emergence of Canberra as the symbol of Australian nationhood, but for Collegiate

the model of Australian womanhood was the Queen. On 1 June 1953 the school was decorated to mark the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and had later been awarded the Queen's Coronation Medal. On 17 June the whole school went to the Coronation film at the Prince of Wales Theatre. It is a kind of a continuous chorus that runs through and behind the Collegiate history: hard work, Service to God, loyalty to the Empire and the honour of the School.

The high educational standards demanded by Sister Phyllis were still demanded by Sister Jessica. In 1962 she had made much of the fact that only 64% had qualified for matriculation; but in 1964 she was able to boast an 86% success rate. It was during this period of Sister Jessica's reign from 1956 - 1964 as Principal that she had overseen the erection of the Assembly (Linmor) Hall, the intermediate wing on Macquarie Street, the development of Anglesea at South Hobart, inaugurated the building scheme for Music and Home Economics, and the building of a Modern Science Block.

When she left Collegiate in 1965 she used the "building" theme to advise the girls that they too should become "bricks - forming a strong wall within the school standing for what is right and honourable".<sup>27</sup> It was also at this time that Sister Jessica drew attention to the significant change in policy for the Community. Owing to the lack of teaching Sisters they had already withdrawn from their schools in Perth and Melbourne, appointing secular Principals. They had had to close their school in Sydney and were now proposing to appoint a secular Head of Collegiate. This person would still be the Principal: Miss Powell was Head, Sister Elizabeth May was Principal.

In 1969, Sister Jessica was welcomed back again as Principal. The Sisters had now withdrawn from all schools in Australia and it was her job to oversee the withdrawal from Collegiate. Sister Jessica had had some difficulty in coming to grips with the changes of the sixties and in many ways represented the stability and conservatism of the past, but like Sister Phyllis before her she was open to the challenges of the present and the future:

We all realise that the young reflect, as in a mirror, both the good and bad trends of society at large. Amongst the less desirable trends today are such things as rebellion against authority, a lack of interest and respect for the past and permissiveness. The first - rebellion against authority - involves disobedience and a refusal to act according to the standards of truth and honesty; the second - lack of respect for the past - leads to the failure to appraise all that is good in the past and ingratitude for a goodly heritage; the third permissiveness - is leading to the lowering of standards in morals and everyday relationships with the opposite sex. In general the Christian way of living and thinking is becoming more and more blurred to the eyes of youth and with this we are seeing the increase of the devastating drug addiction. Perhaps one of the most difficult things today - but certainly the most imperative is the creation of such an atmosphere in the home and school that thoughtfulness for others, honesty, self-control and diligence are made irresistibly attractive to the young. To achieve this, Religious Education as well as many extra-curricular activities have an important and definite role to play. <sup>28</sup>

It is not hard to imagine Sister Phyllis sitting at her desk writing these words herself or sitting in a chair at the Community House reading them and nodding her approval. Much could be written on Sister Jessica and the work that she did at Collegiate and in the Community of the Sisters of the Church. The Sisters had worked not only in Collegiate but also in Tasmania for the virtues of "godliness, holiness, truthfulness and womanliness, and all this is so obviously exemplified in Sister Phyllis and Sister Jessica who had been Principals of Collegiate for fifty-two of the eighty-two years that the Sisters had been in control. It is interesting to note that in the other thirty years, seven sisters had acted in the role of Principal. Appendix 4 is a copy of the deeply moving eulogy given by Mr. Dan McNeill on Sister Jessica who had died in Melbourne in August 1990. Many felt that the last link with the mysterious past of the Sisters' School in Hobart had been severed. Rosemary Satler wrote back in 1974 when Sister Jessica retired:

It's hard to express in a few words the Sisters' contribution to our School. It is even harder, however, to imagine Collegiate without a Sister. The smooth running of the school down the years has been largely attributable to their hard work and diligence, and it is the Sisters who are responsible for giving the school its traditional character and high standard. Sister Jessica, for example, may have been very traditional in character, but her modern outlook and understanding of

today's generation has endeared her to the school, and will be very sadly missed by the staff and the girls, as well as all no longer at Collegiate. <sup>29</sup>

A good deal has been said about Hobart which was the first place in Australia where the Sisters landed and began work a matter of weeks later. Warm friendliness was shown by those who met them, they overcame the financial, academic, religious and moral challenges over the many years they served the Hobart and Tasmanian Community. In 1901 the Dean of Hobart (Dean Dundas) said in a speech to Synod

there is one thing which I can look back on in my life with satisfaction and that is having been instrumental in introducing the Sisters to Tasmania. <sup>30</sup>

The sense of achievement was confirmed by the Governor, Sir Earnest Clark, at the Speech Night of 1938 when he said:

Yours is a School with an honoured name in Tasmania, a School whose aims and reputation always have been high, a School to which it is an honour to belong. <sup>31</sup>

This was very much a public endorsement by the State, and while the local Bishops had given the School support it was in 1939 that the Bishop of Riverina, Reginald Holse (later to become the Archbishop of Brisbane) gave an outside blessing of the Church. He emphasised that the love of art, literature, music, drama, and learning were all of immeasurable value -

and I have not the slightest doubt that Collegiate School provides that background and atmosphere in its Sisters and teachers which will gradually and surely make the pupils feel that education is something more than just passing exams. <sup>32</sup>

It is with this unqualified support that Sisters have come and gone from Hobart and many could echo the words of Sister Phyllis in a letter to the Community in England:

"The others laugh at me for becoming a burning educationalist. The School is my daily delight." <sup>33</sup>

But what had happened to the other four Sisters who sailed on the Coptic? Where did they go?

What did they do? . . .



## MELBOURNE and ADELAIDE

### MELBOURNE

After the wonderful welcome the Sisters had received in Hobart and a couple of days rest and recuperation, the rest of the party sailed for Melbourne on the 19th September 1892. Sisters Irene and Rose stayed there with Miss Roche (one of the friends that sailed from England) and two of the orphans. In Melbourne the Sisters were not as welcome as they had been in Hobart - or were to be in Adelaide. In the larger cities, Low Churchman and Evangelicals were more numerous and powerful and regarded the Sisters with great hostility, tarring them as Romish. <sup>1</sup>

It was not long after their arrival in Melbourne that a letter was sent to Mother Emily in Melbourne. It too was full of optimism in those early days, but little did the Sisters know the struggle that was before them:

We had a beautifully calm passage from Hobart (Bass Strait was kind). Sister Esther was the first person to meet us on the dock and we all went to the Deaconesses' House for dinner. She offered to put up two of us, and another lady offered to take the girls and so Sister Irene went with them to St. Kilda, and Miss Roche and I stayed with the Deaconesses.

Melbourne is a huge place, but the tram and train services are good. We are told that in the Prahan neighbourhood where we are staying, there should be an opening for a school for middle-class children. At Fitzroy there is a large Mission House well fitted up with club rooms for men and boys, and a little chapel. Mr. Hughes, the curate at the Mission had told us he had taken the idea of it from ours at Dock Street when he was in England for a year.

Everyone says the same thing about the terrible ignorance amongst the children educated and brought up in state schools. <sup>2</sup>

The Deaconesses referred to in this letter, not long afterwards became the Community of the Holy Name, with Sister Esther as their Foundress and first Mother Superior. They have since

become a very well established community with a vast work in the Melbourne Community. The Mother House is at Cheltenham.

The Curate referred to at the Fitzroy Mission became a life long friend of the Community and the Sisters. He had as he said, done some work in London at St. Peters on the London Docks. He had returned to Australia and was very keen to establish a sisterhood in Melbourne with the specific purpose of founding Church Schools with a bias to Catholic worship.

In April 1893 the Sisters began giving Religious Instruction in Malvern Road State School - "sixty-two children in one class".<sup>3</sup> In a letter home to the Community in England, Sister Rose says:

The Victorian Churchman is attacking us very violently, a friend reassured us by saying "I don't think it will do you any harm.

The beginnings were obviously much harder than what they had been for Phyllis, Hannah and May. Where was the welcome at the Dock by the Dean, Bishop, Clergy and the leaders of the City? Obviously, because Melbourne was a much larger community there was so much less a family life in the Church and the Churchmanship of the Diocese was a lot more varied than that of the smaller Dioceses. The Sisters soon found those of "like mind" and in August 1894 the Sisters helped in a Mission at Christ Church, South Yarra, and reported - "The Church, a large one, was well filled, the congregation steadily increasing as the week went on."<sup>4</sup>

*As in*  
Similar to Hobart, finances were a problem and quite often the Sisters were down to the bottom of the barrel - and were grateful for any gifts of food, as well as those of the monetary kind. The greatest problem they found in those early years was finding a suitable premises for both the Community and the beginnings of a School. It was not until March 1895 that they found a house in Marlton Crescent, Saint Kilda that they regarded as "solid". It must have been for it is still a part of their premises to this day. It had been a boarding house and so was large and roomy. Sister Rose reported in a letter home "It is secluded but in a very central position - rent

£100 sale price £3000. There is a downstairs verandah in front, and little side balconies upstairs ..... Most of the rooms may really be regarded as lofty and so will do well for schoolrooms. Besides the large rooms there are smaller ones that will be just the size for sisters to sleep in." <sup>5</sup>

While Marlton Crescent ended up turning out to be everything they hoped it would be, the Sisters had a good many ups and downs before they became really established and St. Michael's Grammar School was on a firm footing. This was the first school outside England that had been named after the Patron Saint of the Order. (Collegiate School in Hobart was not renamed St. Michael's Collegiate School until 1949 following the visit of Mother Rosemary. There were many <sup>who</sup> that objected but the change indicated the Superior's power.) <sup>6</sup> Like Collegiate they often found balancing the books a difficulty. In August 1895 an entry in the journal says:

It is a great thing that all our friends are pleased. They have very little idea how terribly heavy our expenditure is. We have had to get new desks now that we have fifty children. <sup>7</sup>

The Sisters in Melbourne were entrepreneurial when it came to raising funds for their work and their school. A cutting was sent back to England that was taken from the Melbourne Argus. It said:

Lovers of animals will be glad to know that a shelter for lost and starving dogs has been opened in Marlton Crescent, St. Kilda. Here homeless dogs are received and after forty-eight hours to allow for them to be claimed, fresh homes are found for them. Dog lovers should make it known to their friends that anyone wanting a dog can get one from there. <sup>8</sup>

This was a source of income for the Sisters for many years, until the increase in the numbers in the school made it necessary to close it.

As the years went on the school expanded, buildings for not only the school but also the Sisters were built and or renamed. Eventually neighbouring properties were purchased and the Sisters work was becoming more and more accepted but they had to adjust to the fact that it may take

some time for this to happen as Sister Rose recorded in the Journal:

Passing down a street where we are not so well known, as in most, I heard a boy remark, "I thought Henry VIII done away with monks and nuns".<sup>9</sup>

Information has been difficult to obtain on St. Michael's Grammar School, Melbourne, as at this present time a history of the school is being written for their centenary in 1995. It was not until 1972 that the Sisters formally withdrew from the school and a School Council was set up. The Sisters retained the ownership of the property and have one voice on the Council. They also have quite a close "informal" association with the school because of the fact that their Provincial House is only a short drive away in East Burwood. It will be very interesting to read the history of St. Michael's Grammar School when it is published in 1995 to note the similarities and differences that may exist between it and St. Michael's Collegiate School, Hobart.

## **ADELAIDE**

With Sisters Irene and Rose in Melbourne, Sisters Lucy and Bridget and Miss Lang (a person who was to become a lifetime friend and benefactor in Adelaide) set off in the S.S. Innamincka "a coastal ship of 1375 tonnes owned by the Adelaide Steamship Company".<sup>1</sup> The Innamincka was expected in Port Adelaide at 8.00 a.m. on the 22nd September, but about 20 kilometres out she ran aground on a sandbank and two tugs could not move her. Not knowing when the Sisters would arrive, the Bishop (Kennion) and other clergy did not wait, but did meet them when they arrived at the Adelaide railway station at 12.30 p.m. that afternoon.

Miss Lang had already set up a house in Ovingham that belonged to her as a Community House with the idea of using it as a branch of the Sisters of the Church. It was called St. Peter's Home.

This house proved to be too far from where the Sisters would do most of their work in those early years and so when they moved to Kermode Street they took the name St. Peter's with them. There are many who think it is so called St. Peter's Collegiate Girls' School because it is the Sister school of St. Peter's Boys, but this is not so. It is because of the friendship and support of our Miss Lang.

On Friday the 23rd September the Bishop told the Sisters he would be away for two weeks on a country tour and he did not want them to start work until his return! These Sisters came from a very independent minded Order and the implication that he wanted them to await his orders and the thought that they might be tied to a Bishop's apron strings was certainly not their intention, so they set about looking for a place of their own that would make them independent of the Bishop, Diocese and other people. In November, Miss Lang gave them the house in Ovingham to sell as well as a further gift of £1,000. They were overjoyed when she told them it was for them to buy their own house in which to live and start their High School for girls.

The Sisters were being bombarded by pleas from well-to-do families in Adelaide wanting an Anglican School for their daughters. The sons of these and other families had the choice of Puttney Grammar School (1848) and the Collegiate School of St. Peter (1847), daughters had none. Back in England *Our Work* in its issue of 1st December 1892 highlighted that Australian parents "must send their boys and girls to the Godless State Schools of the country, or consign them to the care of the Roman Catholic Sisters" <sup>2</sup> Not quite true in the case of Adelaide as these were the schools for boys but no girls school offered a full-bodied Anglican Religious Education and a good academic one. It is not surprising that the Anglican parents and clergy now called for one. Bishop Kennion led the calls and his wife spoke of "children of the upper sort, taught in gentle and holy ways" <sup>3</sup> and offered any help she could.

One only needs to know a little of her life to understand the type of school that was being envisioned. Mrs. Kennion was a sister of Sir James Fergusson, eighth Governor of South Australia (1869 - 73) and had rather taken South Australia to heart since her husband became

Bishop. She feared the secularising and materialistic effects secondary education might have on girls, if they were not balanced by a good religious upbringing and education. Moving in High Society and High Church circles in England since girlhood she had been steeped in the spirit of the principle that the upper class had duties as well as privileges, one of these duties being to help bring up those less fortunate than themselves. Such a view may not sit very well in our community of the 1990's, but it was the found of much of the charitable and philanthropic work of the 1890's.

Following the purchase of 22 Kermode Street in December 1892 for £3,000, it was not until August 1893 that the Sisters could finally shift in.

Burnside was just a small place at the foot of the hills, Keble Cottage in Palmer Place - four doors from Bishops Court and three from Christ Church, we were either too far away or cheek-by-jowl with the Bishops home. <sup>4</sup>

This was to be the Community Home for the Sisters and St. Peter's Collegiate Girls' School for the next sixty-four years.

Like Hobart and Melbourne, money was a constant worry. Miss Lang would always open her purse whenever she could but the Sisters already felt indebted to her for the provision of a home. Fundraisers were centred around Church circles and Government House. Two of the Governors aides were great supporters of the Sisters. In Adelaide the Sisters used a tactic that was very successful in England. This was the formation of The Beggars. Begging expeditions to well-to-do houses were a long established Kilburn tactic and was so formed in Adelaide. There is no record of it happening on the same scale in any of the other cities or Communities in Australia. The Sisters in Adelaide enlisted eminent clergy "some were good at it, some were not so good". <sup>15</sup> Archdeacon Love according to Sister Lucy was "a poor beggar" but it was not for his lack of trying as he is legendary for his energy and tirelessness. She went on to say that he was however, "handicapped by his inability to abide pretentiousness or pompous or petty behaviour". <sup>16</sup> Like the poor Archdeacon, the Sisters must have walked miles in the pursuit of

gifts and met many an offputting snub. But the Journals generally record the many open-handed and kind people they met, whether Anglican or not. Now a hundred years later, we have our many door-knocks for the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Anglicare etc. and have the same experiences as the Archdeacon and the Sisters.

Like Hobart and Melbourne they began work with the poor and the destitute and the orphans. They set up a depot for the collection and distribution of second hand clothing and other items that were useful to those in need. Along with the depot came a children's home in Glenelg, they took over the teaching of Religious instruction in local schools and set up local branches of the C.E.A. and training the secretaries of these groups. Their work was many faceted and varied. They were not idle and the sisters kept cheerful and confident. As a result by October 1894 they were ready to take their first enrolments a full two years after they had arrived. This was totally unlike Hobart. Since they were ready and so was their school they were not going to wait until the following next school year 1895 and so on Monday 8th October 1894 St. Peter's Collegiate Girls' School began its life.

In those first few weeks of 1894 only four students came to the school. In 1914, twenty years later, two hundred and sixteen came. Naturally at first the increase was slow. The start of the first full year added only one to the original four and she was only a temporary while her parents visited Adelaide. In 1896 there were seventeen on the roll after Easter and ten of those were new; and the next year by the end of March, the enrolment had doubled to thirty-four. From now on up to 1905 the enrolments steadily increased and in 1904 ten years after the opening, the enrolment hit fifty three - the largest the school had known. So the Sisters gave "a half-holiday to celebrate. Some of the older students went home, others went to Glenelg and enjoyed the seafront and the beach although it was rather cold". <sup>7</sup>

For recruits, the Sisters did not rely on advertising, rather they put their trust in reputation and word-of-mouth, perhaps the best of all forms of advertising. Some of their best and most effective recruiting officers were the clergy. They could spread the word on the school far and

wide in those days. The Journal records that on one occasion Canon Green preached in the Cathedral with Bishop Harmer present. He urged parents to send their daughters to St. Peter's and not to Roman Catholic Schools and said that he could

not understand the consciences of church people who on Sunday could pray in the Litany to be delivered 'from false doctrine heresy and schism' and then on Monday morning start off their children to Roman schools. <sup>8</sup>

In the earlier years most students were in the infant and early primary years and older girls were few and far between and it was not until 1910 that the School Log makers note of the fact that there was a marked increase in the number of older girls.

Like Hobart the Sisters were very conscious of the tone of the school. The Sisters in charge of St. Peter's vetted all parents and children applying to come and were not afraid to veto those they judged unsuitable. Nor did they shrink from ridding the school of girls who refused to learn or made trouble. A scanning of the School Log and the Centre Journal shows that they had a vision in mind as to the type of girl St. Peter's would have and how they would "turn out". One girl proved so tiresome she was not allowed to return no matter how hard her mother pleaded. Another stayed away for several months and on her return knew even less than before; she, too, was not allowed back. Girls were sent away for consistently upsetting other girls, calling them unpleasant names, or badgering them in the street. Do not believe for one minute that the Sisters were totally rigid, they could and did change their initial judgements. In 1911 a girl threatened with expulsion was found, on questioning, to have behaved badly on the tram but behaved well in school, she was allowed to stay on her promise not to disgrace herself or the school again, on the way to and from St. Peter's. One girl from North Adelaide was at first refused admission because her father seemed to have kept a hotel in Western Australia and was connected with another one in South Australia. It was a total misunderstanding,<sup>9</sup> her father was not a publican at all but a builder/architect renovating an Adelaide hotel. The daughter was welcomed. Another occasion involved admitting a girl whose father actually was a publican.



After a visit from the father and much thought, the Sisters decided not to apply their usual rules and guidelines and allowed her admission.

Some of these incidents may make the Sisters seem a little snobbish. They themselves were certainly not snobs, as their work among the cities of Hobart, Melbourne and London has proved, but if they were to build successful secondary schools, they had to consider and bow to the parental wishes that their children should associate at that school with those of comparable social class.

It was not until 1914 that the first School magazine (*Chronicles of St. Peter's Girls*) was published. It was the Golden Jubilee year of the founding of the C.E.A. and the Principal of the school, Sister Nora, wrote the editorial and introductory letter. In it she talked of the need to cherish the school spirit and help it grow stronger. The School badge was a symbol of the way of life in which the Sisters and Staff were aiming to educate the girls. The badges of Melbourne and Hobart are exactly the same. It was a way of life informed by Christianity and the Cross and meant self-sacrifice as well as self-fulfilment. The badge should remind girls of the need to behave well: "Wherever you are, be it in town, in the train, in the pictures etc. remember your badge and the honour of the School".<sup>9</sup> Significantly she did not stress any excellence except of behaviour. Nor did she want any elitism in the School: "They should be no 'cliques' in a good school, and a girl should never be allowed to think that no-one cares for her - if this is the case, there is something wrong here".<sup>10</sup>

Mother Emily would have applauded and so to those Sisters in Melbourne and Hobart.

Like Melbourne and Hobart, as well as the girls' academic education, the Sisters wanted to nourish their religious education in an age of dechristening, mounting materialism, and hedonism. After all that had been a part of Mother Emily's vision and St. Peter's employed various means to achieve this vision. The usual regular and special church worship services

formed a solid foundation. From the School Magazine in 1932 we have an apt illustration. Besides a daily service in the Assembly Hall to start the school day, a Eucharist was held for any girl to attend each Wednesday at 7.30 a.m. in the Sisters' Chapel. After the Eucharist breakfast was supplied by the Sisters. The Sisters hoped this practice would inculcate a corporate spiritual feeling in girls and make the Chapel a place any girl past or present felt at home in at all times.

In Lent, a Eucharist was held in the Cathedral every Thursday morning and in Holy Week every afternoon. (In later years the days and times changed but not the custom.) At the beginning and end of terms, special services were held. Many girls not only from St. Peters but also from Collegiate and St. Michael's, will identify with the words and music of the hymn "Lord, dismiss us with Thy Blessing". On St. Peter's Day, 29th June, a Sung Eucharist was held in the Cathedral and followed by a half day holiday.

Girls were prepared for Confirmation and after the ceremony, took their first Eucharist in the Sisters' Chapel. Later they attended a Retreat for a day which concluded with a Solemn Magnificent. Throughout the year talks and addresses were given by visitors. Sisters from other parts of Australia and England visited whenever possible and spoke on the work of the Sisters. Missionaries and Bishops were always welcome visitors and talked of their work and its difficulties and rewards, often urging the girls to consider the vocation of missionary life. Mary Stannard's words in her reflections of Collegiate in Appendix 3 could just as easily have been written from a St. Peters Old Girl.

The work of the Sisters at St. Peter's ceased in 1968. It was with immense regard and after much deliberation that the Sisters took the decision to withdraw from their control of the school. The Sisters slowly but steadily shed their involvement with their five large Australian schools. St. Gabriel's in Sydney had already closed. Perth College was handed over to the Province of Western Australia. In 1972 a School Council was set up to help the Sisters with

St. Michael's Grammar in Melbourne and in Hobart the withdrawal took place in 1973 when the school was handed over to the Christ College Trust. But the words of Sister Phyllis would echo in the hearts of May, Hannah, Irene, Lucy, Bridget and Rose:

"The others laugh at me for becoming a burning educationalist.

The school is my daily delight."

## CONCLUSION

As I now sit and reflect on what I have written, as I think about the log books and journals that I have read, as I remember the week-end I spent in Community House in Melbourne, as I think about the Sisters I spent some hours with reliving their memories and I think about all the old girls I have spoken to as they relived their days and years in the school, I wonder whether or not I have captured their true spirit? If so does there not seem to be some tragedy in the fact that they are not in our schools now?

The Sisters had seen their schools as great bastions of the conservative English Catholic Faith. An important component within that had been the Empire. But the faith and certainly its practice has changed so significantly that those early founding Sisters would now never recognise it. Perhaps what the Sisters I spoke to see is an erosion of those old certainties of Church and Empire upon which their schools had been established. What impact had all those years of faithful service and teaching had on the schools, and where was it to be found now? There was a sense of shock at the knowledge that Eucharistic vestments were not always worn in the School Chapels and that the girls don't have a worship service every day or at least every week.

There was a great sadness as the Sisters reflected upon the fact that all those schools established by the Sisters which were to be a great ecclesiastical chain around the world from England to India, from Tasmania to Toronto no longer existed. That there were not enough teaching Sisters to staff up even one school. So much effort, self-denial, conviction and love had gone into the schools and now to where had it dissipated?

Have I overstepped the mark when I refer to the Sisters just as Phyllis or Jessica or Irene? Could I not have offended or degraded their status? When I read what Mary Stannard wrote or

what May Parsons wrote as to what characterised their lives was the remoteness, that they never "revealed" who they really were; they were never "real people" to the students. Here was a group of extremely devout and committed women who had given their lives in love to Jesus. They loved their schools, they loved their girls but above all they loved their Order and the Church.

They themselves adopted the true anonymity of the Religious Sister. They were self-effacing, and almost self negating. They shied away from the personal, the extraordinary or even the anecdotal. For example the story has it that Sister Karina was being applauded and began to applaud herself and asked the person beside her why everyone was clapping. They are largely remembered "en masse" as "the Sisters", and when one seemed to shine out she was moved, or if one drew attention to herself the Superior soon stepped in to deflate such apparent pride.

Those early Sisters had a very hard time and were not always popular or initially acceptable. They had to fight for recognition and show dogged determination in what they intended to do. But we cannot pretend that they were welcomed with open arms into the Church in Australia. That would be doing them a disservice and so it would be by saying that they did not have problems or failures or "ups and downs".

As I complete this work a word keeps returning and that is tone. By this they meant a certain code of behaviour - demure and diffident. The code of behaviour which meant it was just natural to wear gloves and avoid the gaze of males. It was a sober call to motherhood and it meant not being seen in public places or venturing into the city alone. To be a woman was a high calling - to achieve success without the rough and brutish ways of men, to be the best whether in School work, University or Church work. Not only sister Phyllis but all the Sisters struck a note of feminism in their letters and addresses - "work, work, work" - not just for your sake but for the glory of the school and ultimately to the glory of God.

It is a truism that daughters, mothers, sons and fathers have all been deeply touched and influenced by the teaching, standards and faith of the Sisters. The schools I believe are a lot poorer for their going and here we might join in some of Sister Jessica's sadness for it was a benign influence - an influence for good, for God and for Glory.

A moment in History has passed, but we are inheritors of the Sisters - for better or for worse.

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## **APPENDIX 1.**

### **EXTRACTS FROM THE SCHOOL 'LOG'**

1892.

September 28th. Very busy preparing the School.

October 3rd. The School was opened. The Dean said Prayers. Twelve children admitted.

October 10th. Admitted one more girl.

October 13th. Miss Cartwright called; asked if we would take boarders, as she knew a gentleman who wished to send his four children.

November 20th. Admitted another little boy at School.

December 19th. A very busy day preparing for the Drill tomorrow.

December 20th. The entertainment, people said, was a great success. St. David's School was about three parts full, and the children went through their songs and recitations better than we had feared. The Drill, too went off nicely, considering that we had not yet had the School open for three months. Mrs. Montgomery gave away the prizes.

1893.

January 30th. School re-opened. Admitted twelve new children, mostly for the Upper Forms.

April 17th. Admitted thirteen children this week.

April 18th. Synod sits today, so we had to have double session. the girls brought some lunch, and we went to work till 1.45 p.m.

April 19th. When we arrived at School we found the Dean had put up a notice to say that we would give a Drill exhibition for the benefit of Synod. So we moved forms, and just had time to get everything arranged, when they began to arrive - about fifteen Priests, six ladies, and the warden of the University. The Infants did their drill and marched first; receiving many claps and "Bravos"! Then the girls did their Pole Drill, which was very much appreciated.

One Priest said, "You must never take Doctors' children in your School, Sister." We, not at first seeing what he meant, answered, "Oh, but we have one." "Cruel, cruel! Why, you are taking their very bread away! No more delicate or weak chests with this drill!"

The Warden kindly said he saw a brilliant future before our School. The general wish seemed to be that we should take boarders. When drill was over, the visitors went through the School examining the girls' work, and the Kindergarten.

April 20th. A Lady from Lansdowne Crescent called, to admit two children.

May 11th. Ascension Day. Took the School to Church for Celebration - at least forty of them, for we sent the Babies home. The Dean had sent us the hymns to practice.

The morning mail brought the news that the Sisters from England (Sister Francesca, Sister Emma, and Sister Hilda) had actually arrived in Australia.

May 24th. Queen's Birthday - a general holiday.

July 21st. The girls went to their first Confirmation Class.

September 17th. The Bishop asked if we would take the "Ladies' College if offered to us, and expressed the hope that we should one day have it.

1894

January 20th. At the meeting to-day, seven out of the twelve Bishops in Hobart (present for the Consecration of the Chancel of the Cathedral) attended, besides many of the clergy from the different parishes. The Bishop of Tasmania presided, and opened the proceedings with a short speech in which he expressed his appreciation of the Sisters' work in general, and said he could offer no greater proof of his confidence in their power of education than that of sending his own boys to their School in Hobart. He was greatly pleased with their progress, he said, and if, in after years, they grew up christian gentlemen, it would be greatly due to this early training.

The Bishop of Adelaide also spoke, and said he had never ceased to be thankful for the coming of the Sisters to the Diocese.

The girls did a very pretty and effective scarf drill, but, being holiday time, there were not nearly so many as there should have been, and no little ones could be mustered. However, it all went off extremely well, and one could not help noticing the anxiety of the children to do their very best.

January 20th. School re-opened, admitted 19 altogether.

February 25th. The Dean's last Sunday. He preached his farewell sermon to-night.

February 26th. The Dean left this morning for England.

April 25th. Admitted four children yesterday.

Extract from the Bishop's speech at the commencement of the Synod, 1893.

Amongst the events that had taken place during the year he announced that we had been welcomed here for the express purpose of opening a definite Church of England Girls' School. He went on to say that during the last few years one reproach at least had been wiped away from the Church of England, in that Anglican Sisterhoods were now an established fact and a solid power.

October 6th. Our first boarder, Ethel Wilson, arrived to-day.

November 12th. May Downie arrived in the evening - she will be a nice companion for Ethel.

**1895**

July 8th. To-day witnessed our removal from 51 Goulburn Street to 134 (now in our Jubilee year 218) Macquarie Street lately known as the Ladies' College - now hereafter to be known as Collegiate School.

## APPENDIX 2

### RECOLLECTIONS. (Collegiate School Magazine Dec. 1942)

This year, 1942, reminds very many pupils, past and present, that our much-loved Collegiate School has had its Jubilee.

Sister Phyllis always called me "The first Boarder", but, I must tell you here, another girl was a boarder here for six weeks before me, but she only stayed one quarter.

The "Old Girls" have seen many changes, and I would like to tell you, briefly, some of the early experiences. When the Sisters of the Church came from Kilburn, England, in 1892, they went first to a house in Davey Street, and commenced their School in the Synod Hall in Harrington Street. They later took a larger house in Goulburn Street, where they decided to take boarders. And it was to this house, "Currievale", that I first came as a boarder on November 12th, 1894.

I so well remember my first impressions, when, after travelling by coach and train, I at length reached my destination. I had never before seen a Sister, nor did I in the least realise what "Boarding School" really meant. Sister Phyllis met me at the door, and took me to my dormitory, where she told me, "Silence must always be observed", and that I "must always put my things away tidily". Sister then told me to come down to supper (at 7.30 p.m.), when the bell rang. After this we went to Chapel, and then to bed. (I may tell you that all our meals were taken in silence!)

The dressing-bell went at 6 a.m., and we had to have our beds made, and room tidy by 6.45. Then we went to practise or to do our preparation, till breakfast, which was at 7.45 a.m. Then we went to Chapel, after which we dressed, ready to start for school, 8.40 a.m. We returned to "Currievale" for dinner, having to be back at school by 2 p.m.

Besides Sister Phyllis, at "Currievale", we had Sister Emma and Sister Hannah, and there were also five English girls who came out with the Sisters. These helped with the teaching, and also in the work of the house. There was also Miss May Brown, our much beloved teacher, who remained for many years at the School.

It was at the Synod Hall that we held our first School Fair, and the excitement was very great when the result reached the total of £40 ! We had three stalls, representing England, Ireland, and Scotland. It was at this time that the School Colours (in which we were allowed a voice) were chosen - Red and White.

After being at School for about a year, I had to return home for six months, owing to eye trouble. On returning to school I went straight to the present school in Macquarie Street (to which the Sisters had in the meantime moved), where, to my joy, I found four new boarders. We then started our "walks", both in the morning and in the afternoon. These were usually taken by Miss Brown. Our hours were much the same as they had been in Goulburn Street.

Two of the boarders left to go for a trip to England with their parents. I cannot remember what happened to the other two, but when I left School, we numbered fourteen - which we considered a great crowd ! In the "Twenties", though when my two daughters were boarders, there were as many as seventy-five.

Many hundreds of girls have been trained by the Sisters, and one and all who have passed through "this School of ours" are very thankful that they have in their midst women such as the Sisters of the Church to train their girls.

The Sisters set before us three great aims - devotion, loyalty and service. I feel sure at this time we need, more than ever, such a training to carry us through.

Sister Phyllis, who passed to the Higher Life more than twelve months ago, was truly mourned by very many. She left a very large gap at the School. Sister was an "Ideal" in every sense of the word, and her love, justice, and understanding endeared her to us all. She was always equal to solving our difficulties, and whatever we took to Sister was never too small to gain her undivided attention. "She was as near to perfection as any woman could be."

Dear Sister Susan, too - very many will remember her with great affection.

Sister Dora Beatrice, who, when I first went to School, was known as Miss Chambers, had her "beloved boys" at the Synod Hall. Sister continued to take the boys at the present School, where there were as many as twenty-seven. Sister was very devoted to them all, and I have no doubt that it was through her early training that some splendid results were obtained. General Montgomery was one of these boys. His father, Bishop Montgomery, and Dean Kite were frequent visitors and instructors at the School. A grand-daughter of Dean Kite's is at present a boarder.

Sister Dora Beatrice became Head after my time, and has always been most attached to the School in every way. All the girls are most devoted to her. She is noted for her knack of keeping the "Old Girls" united. For this we are most grateful, for there is no doubt that "Unity is Strength".

Two of my daughters, and several nieces, have passed through the School, and I hope yet to see some of my grand-daughters there.

May God bless our School abundantly, and all who are connected with it.

November 18th, 1942.

MAY PARSONS (née Downie)

### APPENDIX 3 (*Reflections of a Century* page 101)

#### MARY STANNARD REMEMBERS 1942 - 1955

I started at Collegiate (St. Michael was added on much later) in 1942 at the age of 3½ and I left 14 years later having been Head Prefect in 1955.

The basic education was as good as anything available at the time and I can't recall anyone who failed to learn to read, write and do arithmetic.

I have many friends who attended the 'great' Victorian schools and I think our secondary education was better, probably due to the Tasmanian syllabus, in spite of the fact that few teachers had university degrees. Tasmanian history was 'glossed-over', a phenomenon I suspect not unique to Collegiate. Although there were convict broad arrows on the walls at the back of the school those poor creatures were nothing to do with us whereas in fact in many cases they were our ancestors. I also did not know until quite recently Charles Darwin had visited during the voyage of the Beagle - perhaps Evolution was suspect too.

General Science and Biology were well taught but Physics, Chemistry and Maths were not available at matriculation level although Hutchins very generously allowed a few of us to attend lessons there.

Exposure to the Arts was limited. The school play was the prerogative of girls who took Elocution as an extra; Music was private lessons and group singing, Art was for those who couldn't manage German.

Sport was important and the 'stars' were much admired but the range was limited - athletics, basketball, hockey, tennis, swimming and life-saving.

There was no debating or public speaking but we occasionally went down to Hutchins to listen to the boys debate. At least two of that group have entered politics and one has become a very well-known radio and TV journalist but the girls were not intended for public life.

Missionaries were the main 'role models' and I can recall only two famous 'old girls' - Dr. Kathleen Blackwood Taylor (who inspired me) and Earl Montgomery of Alamein who had attended the school as a little boy when his father was Bishop of Tasmania.

Most people wanted jobs in the traditional female areas of teaching, nursing or secretarial work to fill in time until marriage while the Sisters actively encouraged service in the mission fields.

Religion pervaded all activities and bigotry was not unknown. Catholics were always 'Roman' and we were not allowed to participate in Empire Youth Sunday the year the service was held in St. Mary's Cathedral.

There was daily assembly with prayers and hymns and frequent services at the Cathedral. The much loved Dean of Hobart, the Very Reverend H.P. Fewtrell visited at least weekly to be

surrounded by little girls shouting, "Mr. Dean, Mr. Dean" and there was great emphasis on 'christian service'.

However there was no debate on religion or morality in a broader sense and no community service - the needs were in far away places, not in Hobart.

Discipline was strict with major emphasis on wearing hats and gloves, standing for adults on public transport, not eating in the street (a really heinous crime) and not going into milk bars. There was a minute milkbar next to Princes' Picture Theatre where it was possible to get banana and cherry milk shakes unobserved but there were spot inspections at the gates on wearing of hat and gloves and for years in adult life I felt uncomfortable in the street without gloves.

Drugs, crime, alcohol and even sex were unheard of an attempt to introduce sex education in the early fifties came to a sudden halt when someone vomited in the first session. Punishments were 'staying in' after school, writing lines and learning Collects or hymns by heart. It was possible to 'rebel' by doing something completely harmless and in retrospect it was great Psychology although I doubt that anyone had planned it that way.

Social life was Mrs. Donnelly's dancing class at Hutchins on Saturday nights and the Hutchins and Collegiate annual school dances. Talking to Hutchins boys on street corners was strictly forbidden and those of us who went to lessons at Hutchins were in a unique position to report back on the objects of admiration.

In retrospect, and after close contact with a Catholic order in my adult life, the most amazing feature of school life was the remoteness of the Sisters.

They lived in Sisters' House, did not eat in front of us, were always fully-dressed in their habits and in no way revealed who they were, what their own education was, why they had joined the Order or what it was like to be a Religious Sister. When I was Head Prefect we redecorated the Prefects' Study and the Sisters provided afternoon tea to celebrate the event. The crumpets were toasted on only one side which confirmed their unworldliness and I recall being quite shocked later that year when I was sent out to buy a jar of instant coffee. They were never 'real' people and it is not surprising that the order has become virtually extinct.

The only personal discussion I ever had with a Sister was when, shortly before I left school, Sister Dorothea made me promise I wouldn't marry a Tasmanian!

In spite of, or because of all this, I loved the school, I have a career in Medicine, I remain an Anglican, and I didn't marry a Tasmanian.

#### APPENDIX 4. (With Pride We Wear No. 15, 1990)

### SISTER JESSICA

Sister Jessica, known in her youth as Winifred Constance Elie, was born in the South England town of Lewisham on the 26th October, 1905. She died in Melbourne, Australia on the 30th August, 1990. She was in her 85th year.

Little is known of her early life. During quiet dinners at "Clonmel" during her frequent visits to us she hinted that she was the only child of a first marriage. Her first encounter with the Sisters of the Church was as a small girl seeing "two black scarecrows" as she described them. So frightened was she that she asked her mother to cross the road. Later she went to a community school in London and during her teens her interest in religion began to grow. A Sister Verity impressed her particularly and her growth in the religious faith led to her "falling in love with God" as she put it. In a sense, that initial love never

At the age of twenty-one she crossed the Thames to join the novitiate of the Community of the Sisters of the Church at Kilburn. Two or three sisters still alive at Ham Common today remember her as a beautiful and lively young woman. While training as a teacher in one of the community schools at Paddington the novices attributed different verses of the psalms to one another. One, who had a particularly arrogant bearing, was given the verse, "*Lord I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks*". The verse dedicated to Jessica was "*I have more understanding than my teachers*".

After profession Sister Jessica spent time in the community's various schools and children's homes in England and she joined fully into the life of the Community. Then, in 1938 she came to Australia partly for the sake of her health as she was quite delicate and anaemic. Later in her life she described herself as a draught-horse, her health was so good. And we will verify that on her visits to us she was indefatigable.

#### A two year stay

In 1940 World War II intervened and her two year stay became a 52 year one. Our gain was England's loss.

At the age of 33 Sister Jessica was appointed Principal of St. Gabrielle's School in Sydney, the youngest Head of an independent school in the country at that time. She nurtured the school through the war years and the very difficult time that followed, a time when a number of independent schools ceased to be.

She had a great love and affection for St. Gabrielle's and she kept up with its old scholars right to her death. One, in particular, gave her the greatest satisfaction. Judith, the Reverend Mother Superior of the Community of the Sisters of the Church, and whom we welcomed here today, was enrolled by Jessica as an 8-year old boarder and at 18 was farewelled from the school by that same Principal, friend, and I am told, second mother.



## A partnership in love

In 1956 Sister Jessica succeeded Sister Dorothea as Principal of St. Michael's Collegiate School and thus began a 15-year partnership and great love not only with the school but with the Diocese and the people of Tasmania. It is this partnership in love which we give thanks for in particular today.

In the last eight years and in recent weeks in particular, as I have come to know more about a predecessor who became the very dearest of friends and confidants, I have been able to define five characteristics, in the sum of their parts, unique to Jessica. Let me share these with you now.

The first was her acumen in the world of business. One has only to look at the way in which she negotiated the handing over of the school to the Diocese in 1973 to recognise this. Is it any wonder that she was once described to me as "the greatest business man in Australia". In her dealings in this area she left nothing in doubt. As the young John Munnings found in the mid 60's when, fresh from law school and with the arrogance and confidence that all young graduates have, he was sent up to see what he thought would be an aging frail nun and sell her Cananore at the vendor's price. He thought it would be a push-over. He came away chastened and wiser by the ordeal. The word "ordeal" is his, not mine.

Secondly, Sister Jessica was a builder. Like Christopher Wren her monument is about those who stand in the Central Courtyard at Collegiate today. She built Linmor Hall, Chambers, Gladwyn and the Emily Centre. She purchased much of what is now our Preparatory School at Anglesea and Cananore came her way. To show that she was mortal, however, she did not get "Jerusalem". So in the master plan she left in 1973 she simply excluded it.

But this Principal was not simply a builder of buildings. She was also a builder of human beings, having no doubt been reminded often of the words of the psalmist who said,

*"Unless the Lord builds the house  
Those who build it labour in vain."*

Such building required the development of the intellect, a growth in one's spirituality and a recognition that to whom much is given much is expected. Moreover, to be a woman fit for the Kingdom of God one had to live a disciplined life.

So in the magazine for 1965 she wrote,

*"As my name seems to be associated with building programmes I feel it will be in keeping if I say something about bricks. Have you ever heard the phrase, 'she is a regular brick'? I would like to think that every girl is a brick, forming a strong wall within the school, standing for what is right and honourable."*

Such expectations were not wishy-washy. Her standards were high. 1961 was a year of incredible successes in every facet of school life, to which she responded

*" Whilst we are very happy about a great number of the girl's progress and attitude, we feel there are far too many who are content with a low standard. This contentment with low standards is prevalent in our society today and some girls are inevitably affected by it; and unless parents demand more of them in all that concerns work and behaviour they will continue to be content with low standards."*

### **They had to share**

In reaching the highest standards Collegiate girls were taught they had to share. From my reading it would appear that she was the first of the Sister Principals to openly voice the belief that girls had a role to play in public life. The School Magazines of the 50's focused on the right choosing of a career or vocation, stated that Australia needed women in its public life, urged that young women with talents should not be selfish with them and reminded girls that no matter who they were they had something to give.

If school comments like this were ahead of their time they reflected the Principal. Sister Jessica was a woman for all seasons. Her stewardship at St. Gabrielle's showed her response to those difficult war and post-war years. She enjoyed the turbulent 60's, was very comfortable in the 80's and would have handled whatever lies ahead of us superbly. It is no accident that today's eucharist uses An Australian Prayer Book. For her there was no alternative. When I visited her in February she was not hung low with the knowledge of her final illness. Instead she talked about her concerns for the new Archbishop of Melbourne, that he would be someone to recognise the need for social justice and be sympathetic to the ordination of women. she moved with the times and sometimes ahead of the times because she loved life. To her it was a joyous experience. "I have had a long, happy and stimulating life" she wrote in her final letter, just two weeks before her death.

### **A deep spiritual life**

And finally there is no doubt that the young Winifred Constance Elie who fell in love with God continued this love affair as Sister Jessica until the end of this earthly existence. Underlying all was a deep spiritual life, a journey which never ceased, a desire for God which grew in strength and never abated. A day or two before she died she asked Mother Judith to help her with a worry regarding what she felt to be a continuing failure in her response. When we consider that Judith had been one of her little girls in Sydney we can appreciate the greatness of her trust and her humility. she undertook her last annual retreat in May this year. Her journal shows that she was aware that death was not far off and she quoted from the book of Esther De Waal. Under the title "Act of Surrender and Dedication" she wrote.

*"O God in your mercy accept me, receive me uphold me, now, today, tomorrow and for the rest of my life until the other side of the grave where at last all will be known and I shall see everything in the light of Easter and the glory of the risen Christ."*

There are many who have their own special memory of Sister Jessica. Sadly there are those who do not. Different people saw different sides of her and to some one side blinded all the others. Two anecdotes illustrate this.

Some 30 years ago a State dignitary was invited to Collegiate to present the prizes at Speech Night. At the end of this address he turned to the younger girls and wished them well and said, "and if any of you in life, find a dragon sitting too closely to your tail, you come and tell me." Some days later while holidaying on a beach nearby he and his wife noticed two little girls hovering nearby, anxious to speak. They got to speaking and one of them said, "thank you, sir, for calling Sister Jessica a dragon".

The other is told by Mother Judith. In the week before Jessica's death she and the Mother were talking and Judith was saying how much Jessica had meant to so many people, how many friends she had and what they meant to her. Tow which came the reply, "but you know, Judith, few people know the real Jessica.

Dan McNeill  
Principal  
St. Michael's Collegiate School