

Occasional Papers No. 2

**THE HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

By
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INTRODUCTION

This paper is the outcome of a very successful set of lectures on the history of the Northern Territory held at the State Reference Library of the Northern Territory during July and August 1982.

Speakers covered different aspects of Territory history and illustrated the wide and varied nature of our history.

The transcripts of the lectures are being published individually in this series. No major editorial work has been undertaken, so that the lectures are presented as they were delivered by the speakers.

THE 1982 STATE REFERENCE LIBRARY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY HISTORY LECTURES

The Caldon Bay Killings

—Ted Egan (21 July 1982) —not to be published at the request of Mr Egan

The History of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory

—Bishop O'Loughlin (28 July 1982)

The Military occupation of Cox Peninsula; and Point Charles Lighthouse

—Mike Foley (4 August 1982)

The Queensland Road

—Peter Forrest (11 August 1982)

Chinese Contribution to Early Darwin

—Charles See-Kee (18 August 1982)

John Stokes and the Men of the Beagle:- Discoverers of Port Darwin

—Alan Powell (25 August 1982)

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

It so happens this year that we are celebrating in Darwin the Centenary of the Church, not the Church in the Northern Territory but the Church in Darwin. The Church in the Northern Territory dates back over 150 years but the Church in Darwin will celebrate this year the Centenary of the arrival of the first missionaries in the Territory, in Darwin itself. I could go into a digression here on what you mean by Church. You could think of the institutional Church. We have learnt in recent years to hear that the Church is people. I don't think most of us would think there is a real Church around unless there's a minister of the Church. So that's what we are celebrating this year in the Centenary, the arrival of three priests and a brother to begin the work of the apostolate in Darwin itself. A priest arrived in the Northern Territory many years before that; his name was Don Angelo Confalonieri and he went to Port Essington.

Now there was an interesting prelude to this. Archbishop John Bede Polding, the first Archbishop of Sydney, decided to send one of his few priests to Perth when the first settlement was made, down there on the Swan River. This priest's name was John Brady. He got to Perth and found the whole responsibility for evangelising Western Australia on his shoulders. He had no assistance and no resources. So he decided to go to Europe and visit Rome. While in Rome, he paid an official visit to what we know as the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples but in those days, it was known simply as the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. Propaganda, of course, has a bad meaning now, so they refined their terminology. But it's the same Congregation because Propaganda means spreading and the work of that Congregation was to spread the Church throughout the world.

FATHER BRADY'S MEMORANDUM

Anyway, Father Brady had his own ideas about this and he presented the Cardinals of the Congregation with a memorandum as to how they should divide up Australia to facilitate the work of the apostolate. He said, "Now that I'm in Perth, I think you should set up a Diocese there. I would like you to set up a diocese in the north of Australia, based on Port Essington, and another one based on Albany or King Georges Sound". That's the design; I've never seen territorial boundaries so interesting; he has here in the Vicariate of King Georges Sound, a very strange shaped piece of territory. Perth is there and Port Essington up there, with a line running from the south-west corner of the Gulf of Carpentaria down to the Great Australian Bight. But they took some notice of him and those revered men set up a diocese in Perth and here what we know as a Vicariate Apostolic. This is a Church division dependent upon the Pope directly; the man who rules it, the Vicar, does so in place of the Holy Father. So it was way back in 1945 when the Church really started in the Northern Territory because from that time there was a Vicariate Apostolic at Port Essington.

POLDING'S PLAN

However, Archbishop Polding was hot on the heels of John Brady, his priest, and he went along to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda and gave them a plan; he didn't call it a memorandum, he called it a plan. The Cardinals listened to his plan

and found it more pleasing and they decided then to take the boundaries which he had suggested and set up now three dioceses. One was the Diocese of Victoria. Now that's got nothing to do with that very cold place in the south of this continent! It has got to do with the township of Victoria which was the name of the town at Port Essington, the settlement out there. And so he said "Let's have a diocese. We'll have the Diocese of Melbourne separated from Sydney at the same time, and the Diocese of Maitland". Some years ago, when we were building the Cathedral, I wrote a note to the famous Archbishop Mannix, who was the Archbishop of Melbourne and I said: "Your Grace, the Northern Territory and your own Archdiocese have the singular honour of being separated from Sydney on the same day way back in the 1840's". This pleased him so much (because there is not much love between Sydney and Melbourne) that he sent me a hundred pounds to assist in the building of the new Cathedral and that of course shows the advantages of knowing a little bit of history. This plan of Archbishop Polding was approved by Pope Pius IX in 1847. It was acted upon, I think, the next year when Maitland and Melbourne and the Northern Territory were separated from the Archdiocese of Sydney. But even then, there were some doubts expressed about the continuation of the settlement at Port Essington and one of the Cardinals, Cardinal Castracane made this remark: he said, "A bishopric at Essington is quite important for establishing a mission there for the benefit of the Aborigines. From such a mission, one could learn and decide which would be the most effective methods of bringing about the conversion of the blacks who are scattered throughout other dioceses as well". So these men, a long way away from the southern hemisphere, were aware of the challenges and problems of life in Australia, and wanted to assist. They established at that time the boundaries of the Diocese of Victoria, which were the meridian of 140 degrees east on the eastern side, on the west the Western Australian border and on the south, the 25th degree of south latitude. The southern boundary of the Diocese of Darwin is still the 25th parallel which cuts a strip of the Northern Territory off my Diocese. You might be surprised, but Ayers Rock is in that little strip and so the Bishop of Ayers Rock is not the Bishop of Darwin, but the Bishop of Port Pirie. He has visited it recently because he is a new bishop, and he doesn't want to give it up!

DON ANGELO CONFALONIERI

Now who constituted the Church of the Diocese of Victoria? It was this man, Don Angelo Confalonieri who came from the north of what is now Italy but which in those days, I think, was a part of Germany. He was born at Riva on Lake Garda, not far from Trent. Some years ago, I went in search of Don Angelo and I managed to find his baptismal certificate in the register of the church at Lake Garda. I have a copy of it at home and it tells me a little of the background of Don Angelo. Out at Victoria, where his is buried, his tomb is marked "Don Anstow" and I think, "German Missionary." We would think a man with a name like that is Italian and I suppose racially he would be Italian although his nationality in those days was German. Now this brave man was recruited in Europe by no less a person than Father Brady who had since become a Bishop and had returned to Australia, to Perth, with a motley crowd of missionaries (some of whom went down to Albany) including Don Angelo and two young Irishmen. They headed up for Port Essington by ship via Sydney. Somewhere in the Torres Straits they were shipwrecked and the two young Irishmen were drowned. Don Angelo and the captain managed to survive the shipwreck and were picked up by a passing boat and brought to Port Essington. So that was the Church. The settlement was in the charge of Captain McArthur, a staunch Presbyterian. The few soldiers there, I imagine, would be of

various protestant beliefs and this lone Italian-German priest came amongst them. They were very kind to him until he could get supplies of his own because he arrived only with what he stood up in. He didn't waste time around the settlement. He went into the bush and worked amongst the Aborigines. He did a considerable amount of translation and study of their language, taught them some prayers in their language, and tried to help them but it was very difficult for him. I think he must have suffered from malnutrition and after two years, he died of fever. He sent a message into the settlement and they brought him in and he died rather quickly there, looked after by the British settlers at Victoria on Port Essington. As I said, his grave is still there. But he was the first missionary in the Northern Territory of any sort and if we are going to treasure the history of the Church in the Northern Territory, then we must start with Don Angelo Confalonieri. So that would be Stage I, 1846 to 1848, when Don Angelo spent two years out there on the Coburg Peninsula.

Now you know after that in 1849, Port Essington folded up. The British garrison left and there were no Europeans, if we can so described ourselves, in the Northern Territory for a number of years but there was a certain amount of exploration and discovery going on. We had Stuart coming up from the south, crossing the continent and arriving at Chambers Bay. Leichhardt had already appeared at Port Essington after a trip from Moreton Bay and Gregory went across the continent from Victoria River to Moreton Bay. So a fair amount of knowledge of the Territory was being amassed. In the meantime in South Australia, they got up to the Goyder line and were having problems finding land for agriculture and for stock and so they decided to ask for the Northern Territory as a kind of colony of Adelaide. This annexation took place, I think, in 1863. So the Territory became attached to South Australia. It wasn't long before settlers came from South Australia to the Territory. I think in 1867 there was a settlement out at Chambers Bay — Escape Cliffs — and finally in 1869 a settlement in Darwin. The town of Darwin celebrated its hundredth year in 1969. So there were people now in the Northern Territory of European and British descent and there were people professing the Catholic religion and so someone was needed to look after them.

JESUIT MISSIONARIES FROM S.A.

It was the turn of the Jesuit Fathers next to come to the Territory. Now the Jesuit Fathers in Australia had two sources of origin. One group were attached to Ireland, there was an Irish Province, and the others were attached to — I suppose it would be Austria-Hungary in those days, but to Germany and Austria and Czechoslovakia. They had settled near the Barossa Valley at what is now known as Clare and Sevenhill where they still have a Monastery which produces a very good wine.

Three priests came to Darwin in 1882 on a ship called the "Indus". They didn't waste much time before getting to work and a week later they were having a Sunday service here in Bennett Street in some rented premises. They had gone out to Rapid Creek, surveyed a site there and established a mission for the Aborigines. All this in 1882. So the Church now in the Territory was getting properly established. It wasn't long, I think it was in 1889, when the little Church in Smith Street, which lasted until the cyclone, was erected and they had a presbytery there for the priests as well, but the main effort was out at Rapid Creek where they established the mission to the Larrakeyah people and to the Woolnas. But this was not a success. Darwin, I suppose, has always been a pretty rough place but it was very rough in those days. There were many Chinese about as well as people of European descent. We have

marijuana and heroin, they had opium and it wasn't long before some Aborigines became addicts of opium in Darwin and of course it was a hopeless task to try to deal with them. They had very nomadic habits and the Jesuit Fathers decided that there was no future in their mission at Rapid Creek and they went off to the Daly River.

Now the Daly River story is another story altogether. They were there from 1886 to 1899. They had their problems; one problem was getting there! I understand they went off with a horse and dray and it took them six weeks to travel from Darwin to the Daly. They had in mind establishing there something similar to the famous Reductions which were so successful in South America, especially in Paraguay. I think the word reduction gets its name from the fact they led the Indians in Paraguay in from the forest and the bush and perhaps from nearby settlements and they established townships where they could receive an education, medical care and be trained in the skills necessary for a village life. The history of the Reductions in Paraguay makes very interesting reading. And that was what they hoped they could establish on the Daly. They had their problems. Their first station was not far from the present Daly River Mission but across the river. They decided to go down to what became the Reserve, what is now the Port Keats Reserve, and they established a mission at Hermit Hill. They came back to the River later and established a station called St. Joseph's about 14 miles from the present crossing. Things went very well for a long time. If you have a mission station, you start from the ground up so there was plenty of building to be done. They grew crops, they pastured stock, they had a small school where they imparted religious instruction and the elements of reading and writing and they carried on their missionary work. I suppose looking at it now after all these years, you might wonder whether it was wasted.

These men were Jesuits. Their founder was St. Ignatius Loyola. This old Spaniard, a soldier, who because of his wounded leg (he was lame) was laid up after the wars and having nothing much to read, read the lives of the Saints. He emulated these lives and wanted to beat the Saints at their own game. He did in the end. He became a saint himself. But on the way, he founded this band of missionaries called the Jesuits. He called them the Company of Jesus as though they were soldiers. They were a remarkable group. He recruited many of them from the universities; they were scholars, teachers and missionaries and in a few years, they spread from Europe to India and to the Far East. St. Francis Xavier, one of the first of Ignatius' band of missionaries, got as close to Australia as Amboyna. He went to Japan and China, and died off the coast of China. His colleagues evangelised India and the Far East and even went to South America.

This particular group of Jesuits that arrived in Darwin had come, as I said, from Bavaria, from Czechoslovakia and from Austria. They wanted to work among the Aborigines. Twenty-one priests and brothers worked in the Territory for twenty years. The statistics are not very impressive. They baptised in that time 129 adults and 197 children, a total of 326 people. In 1898, just before they left the Daly River, there was a resident population at the Mission of 41, with about 149 living in the bush not far away. I would think that they would be very satisfied with their work because it's not just a question of mathematics. These men, because of their scholarship, did considerable study of the language, pointed out the peculiarities of it, how they had pronouns which were not only single and plural, but dual. The plurals were exclusive and inclusive just as they are in other native languages in this area. And they passed this information on to other people.

They studied some of the ceremonies of the Aborigines and some of their culture, if you would like to name it that, and found that some things were repugnant to Christian belief and practice and couldn't have anything to do with them. But then they closed up. Some people seem to think it's a mystery that the Jesuit Mission on the Daly River closed, but there is no great mystery. One of their reasons was financial. Even to have 41 Aborigines on the station would have been a big expense because they had to be fed and clothed. Organisationally, it was very difficult to run a mission in those times in a place as remote as the Daly River is from Darwin and from Sevenhill especially. Then the two Provinces, the Irish and Austrian Provinces, were united. There was a reorganisation among the Jesuits themselves. Some of the young Jesuits who were Austrian returned to Austria, and so the numbers diminished. They had climatic problems, especially the problem of flooding which still exists. Some years ago, we went back to the Daly and I asked one of the local residents to show me on the trunk of a tree the mark to which the highest flood had reached in his time. He put a mark, but a few months later we had a flood which was much higher than that. Perhaps his memory was at fault, or maybe my calculations! Flooding on the Daly River is a tremendous problem and it is still occurring. It was too much of a problem for the Jesuits and so in 1899 after a visitation by one of their Superiors from overseas, they decided to close down. Some of them stayed around Darwin but in 1902 they all left and that was a great pity. It was a very brave effort on their part and we are always very grateful to them for what they were able to accomplish and for what they tried to accomplish even though they weren't successful.

FOREIGN MISSIONARIES

Now that brings us to Stage 3 in the history of the Church in the Northern Territory — 1902. No priests in the Territory! This was a concern of the Bishops in Australia. They had this Diocese; they had a bishop too, the famous Bishop Salvado who had been appointed the Bishop of Victoria and carried on as Bishop until 1888. At this time, Father Strele was just acting as a kind of delegate of Bishop Salvado. It is interesting to note how all these people connected with mission work in Australia were not Australians, they weren't even British. The two Benedictines in Western Australia were Serra and Salvado, both Spaniards. Most of these Jesuits were German, some were Czechoslovak. Down on Stradbroke Island, a group of Italians tried to establish a mission at Moreton Bay, over at Broome, German Pallotine Fathers. We will shortly see when another group of missionaries came to the Territory, these were French. This brings us to Bishop Gsell. The Bishops were very worried about the Northern Territory and who was going to look after it. In 1905, there was held in Sydney what is called a Plenary Council of all the Bishops of Australia and it says in the Acts of this Council that the Bishop of Geraldton, who at that time happened to be a man named Kelly, on whose shoulders the care of the Northern Territory had sort of been deposited was anxious to get rid of this burden. So he reported to the Plenary Council on these terms: He said "I have got my own diocese of Geraldton which is big enough but I have also got to look after the Northern Territory which is more than a half a million square miles. To get to it I have to travel by sea 2,500 miles". So he confessed that he appealed to the Congregation of Propaganda in Rome to be relieved of the difficult task of administering the Northern Territory, but all in vain. He confessed to the Bishops that the present situation was unchanged from the time when he had appealed for relief. But he had learnt, he said, that the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart might be asked to care for it and they could do this for a beginning by sending a priest from

Thursday Island. He could travel on the steamships which plied regularly between Sydney, Thursday Island, Singapore and the Far East. So we are getting a hint now that some other missionaries might soon be on the scene.

It is interesting to note what the bishops say about the Aboriginal apostolate and this is 1905. They had to confess that at that date by far the greatest part of the Aborigines had not been contacted. They complained that the new settlers enriched themselves materially in this country and yet impoverished, and what is more corrupted, the Aborigines because they didn't hand on any Christian beliefs which they possessed. And yet they were able to say that some missionary effort had been crowned with success in New South Wales where some of the local secular priests had worked amongst the local Aborigines. Not a great deal had been accomplished yet sufficient to prove that the endeavour was not fruitless and to remove any doubts about the capacity of Aborigines to embrace the Christian doctrine and to practice the Christian way of life because this was not always held by people at that time. They recommended that if missions were established they would be sort-of segregated from the community, something like the reductions in Paraguay, and that there should be a lot of land around any stations where missionaries were working. They said that missionary personnel should not only be sacerdotal but there should be lay brothers amongst them who could give instruction and impart practical skills to those amongst whom they worked. They said that an annual collection should be taken up in Churches until the mission should become self-supporting. We are still waiting for that day, not for the collection, but for the missions to be self-supporting. They set up machinery so that the money which was collected would be distributed by a commission of bishops consisting of the Archbishop of Sydney and the Bishops of Maitland and Goulburn. It is a bit more sophisticated these days. Then they issued an historic protest against the cruel persecution being suffered by the Aborigines in the north of Australia saying this often respected neither age or sex and often resulted in extermination.

During the period after the Jesuits left, from 1902 to 1906, when Bishop Gsell arrived a couple of men did come from Thursday Island, a Father Guis, we have his signature in our baptismal and our marriage register. I think he came over to perform a wedding and he did about half a dozen baptisms in the few weeks he was here. And another man, Bishop Bach, who was a retired Bishop living on Thursday Island, came across here too, to do a wedding and to do a few baptisms.

In 1906 eventually Francis Xavier Gsell arrived as Apostolic Administrator. This meant he took the place of the Bishop and he was appointed by Rome. Now some of you have heard of Francis Xavier Gsell. He was buried in the cemetery at our Monastery outside Sydney at Douglas Park and we are bringing his remains to Darwin to enter them in the Crypt of the Cathedral and this will take place next Saturday week. He was born near Strasbourg in 1872. Now those of you who know about history, and I imagine you all do because you wouldn't be here otherwise, know that this was just consequent to the Franco-Prussian War. The family of little Francis Xavier Gsell had been French, but shortly before his birth, became German. His mother's language and his language at home would have been German but Francis Xavier Gsell was very French, more French than the French themselves. He was educated in France. He joined a religious order called the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and after his preliminary education in France went to Rome where he studied at the Appollinare University with no less a person than Eugene Pacelli who

later became Pope Pius XII. Like most of his fellow Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, he wanted to come to Oceania and specifically to New Guinea. He got as far as Sydney and they said “ We now need you here because this is our base of operations in the Pacific and we want you to do some teaching. We would like you to assist the bursar who has the task of supplying the missions and you can do a bit of Parish work at Randwick when you have any free time”. He had to wait for a few years till 1900 until he got to New Guinea. He writes in his book that he was very happy in New Guinea until one day his Superiors told him that he would need to come to the Northern Territory. They needed someone over there.

MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART

In 1906, Fr. Gsell arrived in Darwin. Some years ago, I was able to read in the archives of our Congregation in Rome, some letters written by Francis Xavier Gsell about the Darwin of his time. It must have been a very depressing place for a zealous and active young missionary. But he persevered and he was still here when I arrived in 1949 and he had done a tremendous job. Gradually he was joined by confreres. One was a lay brother, a German called Brother Lambert, and another was Brother Philippe, a Dutch builder, who built the old convent and the first school in Darwin. And another was a compatriot named Father Cros. I think he was responsible for building the first little Catholic Church in Pine Creek. Bishop Gsell remained in Darwin for a few years, five years, and he thought that he had established the Church pretty well by then — a school had been built as well as the convent, and there was already a small presbytery and a Church provided by the Jesuits — so he was off to do what he came for, and that was to work amongst the Aborigines. In 1911, he went to Bathurst Island.

The story of Bathurst Island is a separate story. I don't know if you have read the book, “The Bishop with 150 Wives” — a very catchy title but the reality was not as vivid as the title may give you to expect. This story of Bathurst Island is also written about in a book called “North of the Never Never”. Brother Pye has recently published a booklet on the Tiwi Islands, and Father Flynn, who has published a number of books on the Territory, gives the story of Bathurst Island in some of his publications. I would like to speak a little bit about Bishop Gsell. I used to meet him when I was a student sometimes in Sydney. He had a very deep voice and a very big beard and he used to make us laugh as students when he said Mass for us because they were the days of the Latin Mass and he just happened to be there during the Octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi. I still remember the initial word of that Mass, “Cibavit” and he used to start right down low “Cibavit” and we would all burst out laughing, and then look forward to the next morning when the same Mass would be said. He used to regale us with stories of the Northern Territory and perhaps that's one reason why I came eventually, because of the inspiration I got from Bishop Gsell, a man of courage and endurance, a man of practical skills and a man of considerable practical wisdom. He gradually settled in over there amongst the Tiwi. When he first arrived, there was a war on between the Tiwi on Bathurst Island and some of the buffalo shooters on Melville Island. Many of these were from Coburg Peninsula and they had some squabbles about matrimonial affairs and they were firing high-powered rifles across the Strait. This didn't deter Bishop Gsell, although he thought of going away and returning at a more peaceful and propitious time. He stayed on. He was doing good work, he was able to get Sisters to help him in this work, and he was quite happy.

One day, a little girl called Martina came crying to him in great distress and she said "There is a man out there". He is described in the bishop's book as "an anonymous hairy creature", who had come in from the bush and wanted this little girl of about 12, Martina, who had been brought up with the nuns on the mission station. So the bishop was very disappointed because he thought he had in Martina a good prospect for the future; she was taken off to the bush, but she ran away and came back to the mission. Her outraged legal husband came with a party armed with spears to recapture her. Bishop Gsell could see that all his work would be spoiled if this went on, and he prayed about it, thought about it for a long time. He wondered if he could exchange this little girl for some material goods which would appeal to the Aborigines. When he saw they were in a group, shaking their spears, he displayed before them on a big table, some of his material riches — flour, axes, knives, treacle, tobacco and so on. They said "What's all this about?" He replied "Well, you go off and have a good night's sleep and we'll have a discussion tomorrow morning". When they returned the following day he said, "Now I am prepared to give you all these things if you let me have Martina, because she doesn't want to go back to the bush. She wants to stay here and live at the mission". So they agreed to this, and I suppose you could say that the Bishop had bought his first wife because he paid the husband of this girl for her, and he relinquished all rights to her. So the Bishop became legally her husband. He thought he had made a great breakthrough. Martina, in due course, married a young man about her own age and she had a family of five, two of whom were daughters. One day, Martina and her family came in from the bush without one of the daughters, whose name was Elizabeth. The Bishop said "Where is Elizabeth?" They replied "Well, we're sorry but she's out bush. She has been claimed by a man as his wife". So he hadn't quite solved this problem of matrimonial relations. He had to pray about this new development. However, quite inexplicably, this young, vigorous man who was the legal husband of Martina's daughter, Elizabeth, died. That solved that problem for the time being — he couldn't marry Elizabeth because he had departed from this world!

And so, the Bishop had to find out what was going on. Martina explained that when she was a little girl, a man had been deputed to be her future son-in-law, so that all her daughters would become his wives. It wasn't only Martina who was concerned, it was her daughters also. After that, if he wished to buy a young girl, Bishop Gsell had to pay the husband and the son-in-law as well, because the son-in-law had the right to her daughters. Quite complicated! That was the marriage system on Bathurst Island in those days. That a young man acquires a mother-in-law before he acquires a wife! Now we men-folk know it is bad enough to acquire a mother-in-law after you have acquired a wife, but to acquire a mother-in-law before you acquire the wife seems to me to be an imposition on the male part of the community! Due to Bishop Gsell, this practice has been wiped out amongst the Tiwi. He stopped polygamy, child marriage and the abuse of young girls and the degradation of women. He was able, on the positive side, to establish the Christian family. Although this may just seem an interesting story, it was very important for the establishment of Christianity amongst the Aborigines.

There are still parts of the Territory where this question hasn't been faced up to, and as recently I believe, as this year and last year, we have had cases of young girls running away from settlements to escape from some old man who claimed them as his wife. So that was Bishop Gsell at Bathurst Island. I would say that is his great claim to fame. He can be called the Apostle of the Tiwi, and the work he was able to

do at Bathurst Island, in comparison with the work which often proved unsuccessful in other parts of the Commonwealth, is something we should admire and give him credit for.

The rest of the story of the Church in the Northern Territory is a story of the Church going amongst the settlements that were formed. In 1929, as you know, the railway was completed from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs. There was a community of Catholic people who asked for priests. One family was named Cawood — their descendants are still there. Father James Long was sent to Alice Springs as the first priest and I happened to know him. In 1929, I met him in Adelaide. He had a nice new Chev, the latest model. He was heading north with the Chev and it gave him very good service in the Territory. He travelled from one end of the Territory to the other. The Church at Alice Springs did some work among the “town blacks” as we called them. This work was carried on later at Arltunga and eventually at Santa Teresa. It is interesting now that after the passage of time, the Aborigines are back in Alice Springs in large numbers and they are part of the Parish there.

In 1936, I was just ordained a priest and was in Adelaide again where I met a young priest named Father Wilfred Dew. He had been science master and was very fond of books. He was heading north to Tennant Creek. I remember his visiting some fairly well-to-do people in Adelaide appealing for his new mission. He was furious one day when he visited a wealthy woman and she said “Give my love to the miners!” It wasn’t what he wanted — he was after a few pounds at the time. This young man went to Tennant Creek after ten years’ teaching, and evangelised the mining community. He did a lot of travelling, built a nice library, and his presbytery-cum-church had all the latest scientific devices which he was able to design. He was there till the war when he became an army chaplain.

Just before that, we were invited by the Government at the time, to go down to Port Keats. Port Keats is halfway between Darwin and Wyndham, between the Daly River and the Fitzmaurice River. In 1935, it was a pretty wild place. The famous Nemarluk, after whom Nemarluk Drive in Darwin is named, was a leader of a group called the Red Band who were responsible for raiding a Japanese lugger and killing all the crew on board. They were guilty also of a fair amount of internecine strife, if you could call it that, and of raids on nearby cattle stations. So the Government at the time said to Bishop Gsell: “Can you send someone down there to quieten these wild people of Port Keats?” The Bishop sent down Fr. Docherty. We have different types of missionaries: We have that ex-school teacher. Father Docherty was an ex-saw miller from down the south of Perth — you know, the big Kauri country. He worked as a saw miller as a young man before he decided to study for the priesthood. He was in his element here in the Northern Territory. He went down to Port Keats and was able to bring civilisation to these people without discrediting them in any way. When he first went there, he told me the Aborigines used to bring their spears to work. They would stick them in the ground, pick up a shovel or a hoe and do a bit of cultivation. He helped them a great deal, and established the Church amongst them. One of our few Aboriginal clergymen is a Port Keats man. He is an ordained deacon and he comes from the tribe of Nemarluk.

In 1940, we were asked by the Government to do something for orphan children. Many of them were of part-Aboriginal descent and so there was established at Melville Island, and about the same time, at Croker Island by the Methodists, a little

settlement for these children who came from cattle stations, Aboriginal camps and so on. There are many views expressed about this practice. I see the Croker Island people were complaining last year about their experience. I don't think I would be ashamed of what took place at Garden Point, on Melville Island, starting in 1940 and finishing up only a few years ago. In Darwin, you will find over 300 people of mixed descent who owe their schooling and many of their good qualities to their experience at Garden Point where Father Bill Connors established the mission and where great work was done by a nun named Sister Annunciata who died only a few years ago. All the grandchildren, around now in Darwin, of these children who were once at Garden Point, used to regard her and call her Sister Granny, because she was the only mother that so many knew.

We went back to the Daly River in 1955.

Katherine got a priest and a little Church in 1962.

When the mining of bauxite started at Nhulunbuy in 1971 the Church was established out there by Father Alan Corry and only last year a priest went out to Jabiru and he is still establishing a Church there.

Darwin meanwhile, is growing. We have three parishes in Darwin in addition to the Cathedral parish. The few missionaries that we had in the early days, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and nuns belonging to the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, have been joined by others: by the Little Sisters of Jesus, a French order in Alice Springs; by the Missionaries of Charity — these are the Indian nuns of Mother Teresa who are working in Katherine; by Dominican nuns who are looking after the Hostel at Salonika; by Canossian Sisters who are doing work amongst the migrants in Darwin; by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary; and more recently by the Sisters of Mercy who have two foundations in the Territory. The Christian Brothers came to help us. There is a school run by the Christian Brothers at Bathurst Island and one at Port Keats. The Marist Brothers are working in Alice Springs. So you can see that this Church, which was established so many years ago, has grown and spread. We have lay groups too, like the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and I am very happy to think that they are working in the Territory as well as groups like the Apostleship of the Sea who have a mission to seafarers. I don't know if you have been able to follow what I've been saying. Perhaps you can't see the wood for the trees, because there are a lot of trees here in the notes and, when I get a little bit of time, I might put a bit more order and simplification and connecting links into what I have told you tonight.

I have mentioned that many of the missionaries were foreign. They are now Australian, and they are still coming to the Territory so that they can work with Aborigines. So there could be no Church without the Aborigines and we must never forget this.

Out at Wanguri, not far from Casuarina Shopping Centre, there are four streets — one is called Angelo Street, one Strele Street, the third is Gsell Street and the final one Martina Street. In the names of those streets you will have a summary of the history of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory.