

SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH: THE TASMANIAN EXPERIENCE

THE FOUNDATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH IN TASMANIA

1887-1937

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## STATEMENT OF SOURCES

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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Signature

## ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on and analyses the first fifty years, 1887-1937, of the Sisters of Saint Joseph's ministry in Tasmania. The design of the study is qualitative in nature, employing ethnographic techniques with a thematic approach to the narrative. Through a multifaceted approach the main figures of the Josephite story of the first fifty years are examined.

The thesis attempts to redress the imbalance of the representation of women in Australian history and the Catholic Church in particular. The thesis is that as a uniquely Australian congregation the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph were focused on the preservation of the original spirit and tradition articulated at their foundation rather than on the development of a unique Tasmanian identity. The thesis argues that it was the formative period that impacted on their future development and the emerging myths contributed to their search for identity. Isolated from their foundations through separation and misunderstanding, they sought security and authenticity through their conservation of the original Rule. The intervention of cofounder Father Tenison Woods in the early months of their foundation served to consolidate a distinctive loyalty to him to the exclusion of Mary MacKillop. Coupled with the influence of Woods were the Irish and intercolonial influences of significant Sisters from other foundations which militated against the emergence of a distinctive Tasmanian leadership.

As a Diocesan Congregation the Tasmanian Josephites achieved status as authentic religious within Tasmania and yet were constrained by their Diocesan character. The study identifies the factors that contributed to their development as a teaching Congregation through the impact of the Teacher and Schools' Registration Act

1906, influence of government regulations on the Woods-MacKillop style of education, and the commitment of the Church to provide Catholic education in the remote areas of Tasmania. The thesis identifies two major formative periods as occurring at the instigation of Archbishops Delany and Simonds at both the foundation and then more significantly after the consolidation phase at the end of the period under examination.

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I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my parents Frank and Moira Brady through whose decision I first encountered the Sisters of St Joseph.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AHMA	Archdiocese of Hobart Museum and Archives
AOT	Archives Office Tasmania
BR	Rules for the Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph 1878, Bathurst.
OR	Original Rule for the Institute of St Joseph 1867.
IBVM	Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto Sisters)
IBVMA	Archives of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary .
NSSJA	Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph North Sydney.
PSSJA	Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph, Perthville, NSW.
SMAC	Archives of the Sisters of Mercy Callan, Ireland.
TSSJ	Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph.
TSSJA	Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph Tasmania.
WSSJA	Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph, Wanganui, NZ.
Sr	Sister
Fr	Father
Sr A.	Pseudonym, which bears no relationship to the actual name of the Sister which is adopted to preserve the anonymity of Sisters who engaged in the process of interview in June and July 2002.

## Measurements and Conversions

One pound (£)	20 shillings (20/-)
One shilling	12 pence (12d)
One pound (£)	two dollars at the time of conversion to decimal currency (1966)
1 foot	30.5 centimetres
1 mile	1.61 kilometres

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## CHAPTER 1

### STUDY OVERVIEW AND METHOD

#### Introduction

This thesis reports on and analyses the first fifty years, 1887 to 1937, of the Sisters of St Joseph's ministry in Tasmania. The work of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania involved the establishment and running of their schools, with part of their ministry also including visitation of the children and their families and the instruction of Catholic children attending state schools. The Sisters of St Joseph responded to the needs of the people of their time by providing Catholic education in the remote areas of Tasmania, ministering outside the metropolitan areas of Hobart and Launceston, sharing in the lives of the scattered Catholic families and supporting them in the development of their faith.

The Sisters of St Joseph had their origins as a teaching Congregation founded at Penola in South Australia in 1866 by Father Julian Tenison Woods and Mother Mary MacKillop. Father Julian Tenison Woods' continuing interest in education led him to become the first Director of Catholic Schools in any colony of Australia, when in April 1867 he assumed the role of Director in South Australia.<sup>1</sup> As Director he sought to establish a "system" of Catholic schooling in South Australia. The Sisters of St Joseph Congregation was founded in response to the Catholic Bishops of Australia's decision to provide education for Catholic children. The problem was aggravated in South Australia as there were no religious congregations present in the Colony and therefore

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<sup>1</sup> M. Foale, *The Josephite Story*. Sydney: Sisters of St Joseph Generalate, 1989, 313.

the Woods-MacKillop initiative was timely, as a model to provide staffing for a struggling Catholic school system. The founding of the Sisters of St Joseph was fraught with difficulty as Woods departed from accepted conventions of his time such as founding a Congregation “to teach poor schools without any aid except alms and what the children [could] themselves afford.”<sup>2</sup> His instructions demanded a great commitment from the Sisters:

We must never consider ourselves, but only our work and be ready to do it wherever it is to be done, and not ask what resources there are, or what means to help us. Give us children to educate and instruct, and if we have to live in a shed and sleep upon the ground, with scanty food and poor raiment, these inconveniences should make our courage rise.<sup>3</sup>

### *Basis for the Study*

As historian Edmund Campion (1996) has argued, women religious played a major role in the development of the Catholic Church in Australia, yet Australian Catholic Church history has focused on the Bishops. Campion asserts that “the true creators of Australian Catholicism were the nuns”.<sup>4</sup> In recent years there has been significant development in historical scholarship relating to religious women’s congregations through an increase in congregations commissioning the writing of their histories. While women generally may have been restored to their rightful place in historiography through the writings of feminist historians, the story of the Tasmanian Catholic Church and the role of the Sisters of St Joseph in that story are yet to be told.

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<sup>2</sup> Sr. Chanel, *Life of Mother Mary, Foundress of the Sisterhood of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart*: Sisters of St Joseph, 28-29.

<sup>3</sup> J.E.T. Woods, *Book of Instructions for the Use of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart with Community Prayers, School Directory*, & C. Brisbane: S. Pole & Co, n.d., 2. TSSJA.

<sup>4</sup> E. Campion cited in M. R MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope; Institutes of Women Religious in Australia*. Darlinghurst: Crossing Press, 1996, vii.

Of particular relevance for this thesis is the origin of the Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph and the subsequent independent foundation in Tasmania. Miriam Dixson (1999) in *The Real Matilda* argues for the importance of the formative experiences in shaping or “stubbornly imprinting” and for such experiences setting the pattern for the future development of the organisation.<sup>5</sup> Waelder cited in Dixson expands on the Freudian hypothesis that as childhood has a disproportionate influence in the development of character, so too the national identity character is impacted upon by the formative experiences. It can then be argued that the development of any group is likewise influenced by its formative period. The formative period is that “in which the ethos common to the group came into being and was accepted and the mutual identifications established”.<sup>6</sup> The initial period is one of stabilization and consolidation of group values. These formative experiences are transmitted as memories and passed from one generation to the next. So embedded are these memories that they can become fixed.<sup>7</sup>

Following Dixson’s claim that it is possible for a group to have more than one formative period and recognizing that such was the case with the Tasmanian Josephites the period selected for study falls between two such formative periods. The arrival in Tasmania and separation from the Perthville foundation in 1887 is one such period, while the reforming as determined by Simonds in 1937 with the rewriting of the Rule marks an additional period of formation. The study is therefore defined by these two formative points.

The formation of the Sisters of St Joseph in South Australia, their foundation and subsequent separation at Perthville with all associated turbulence and acrimony was to influence and have a “lasting imprint on the future of the group” which was transplanted

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<sup>5</sup> M. Dixson, *The Real Matilda: Woman and Identity in Australia 1788 to the Present*. 4th ed. Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999, 62.

<sup>6</sup> Dixson, 61.

<sup>7</sup> Waelder cited in Dixson, 62.

into the Tasmanian foundation. The origins of a movement or organization are important in determining its future shape. The work of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania was shaped by their experiences in these early years. The emergence of the Rule, role of Woods, the characters of the founding Sisters, and the Tasmanian society in which they were immersed laid the foundation for what was to follow in the next hundred years. As a Diocesan Congregation, however, the personalities and influences of the bishops, who held ultimate authority, must also be considered.

The key research questions, which provide the framework for the study concern identity, ambiguity and Irish and intercolonial influences on the development of the Sisters of St Joseph. Did their search for identity as an authentic religious Congregation and their desire to preserve the original spirit as stated in their 1878 Constitution hinder their development? Integral to this question is the question regarding the ambiguity of origin with their separation from Mary MacKillop's Sisters in 1876 and their allegiance to cofounder Fr Julian Tenison Woods. To what extent were their identity and development shaped by Irish and intercolonial influences? What was the impact of so many key Josephite figures from other foundations on the Tasmanian group?

#### Literature survey

There is little evidence of historical scholarship regarding the Sisters of St Joseph in general Tasmanian Catholic Church histories. Noted Tasmanian Catholic Church historian Fr Terry Southerwood remains largely silent on the role of women in general and the Sisters of St Joseph in particular. In his various histories such as *Launceston Parish: A Sesqui-centenary History (1838-1988)*, *Planting a Faith in Tasmania: The Country Parishes (1977)* and in his *Planting a Faith in Tasmania in*



*Hobart*, Southerwood's focus is on the development of the parishes and the personalities of the male clergy.<sup>8</sup> He treats the religious congregations of women as an adjunct to the central story of Catholic life in Tasmania, and by so doing underestimates the influence that these women have had on church life. Photographic evidence illustrates the role of religious women but the women remain unidentified and nameless. Conversely the liberal use of photographs of clerics is complemented in all circumstances by their identification visually and in text. The appropriateness of Tarnas' comment is evident - "how deeply problematic consequences have ensued from masculine assumptions about reality, knowledge, nature, society and the divine".<sup>9</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the treatment of the Sisters of St Joseph is relegated to a few oblique references in the chapters on the New Town and Moonah parishes.

From an Australian perspective there has been much written in recent years regarding the development of the Sisters of St Joseph with the focus of this writing centering on Mary MacKillop and to a lesser extent Julian Tenison Woods, their cofounders. The beatification of Mary MacKillop was the impetus for Gardiner's *An Extraordinary Australian- Mary MacKillop*.<sup>10</sup> Prior to these publications the histories of the Sisters of St Joseph in South Australia by Sr Marie Foale (1989) *The Josephite Story* and the history of the New South Wales province by Burford examined the development of the centrally governed Sisters of St Joseph.<sup>11</sup> The Sisters of St Joseph Federation historians, such as Sisters Margaret Press (1994, 1997),<sup>12</sup> Isabel Hepburn<sup>13</sup>, Janice

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<sup>8</sup> W.T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith*. Hobart: The Author, 1968; *Planting a Faith in Tasmania: The Country Parishes*. Hobart: The Author, 1977.

<sup>9</sup> R. Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind - Understanding the Ideas That Shaped Our World View*. London: Pimlico, 1991, 408.

<sup>10</sup> P. Gardiner, *An Extraordinary Australian- Mary MacKillop*. Newtown NSW: E.J. Dwyer, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> M. Foale, *The Josephite Story*. Sydney: Sisters of St Joseph Generalate, 1989; K. Burford, *Unfurrowed Fields: A Josephite Story NSW 1872-1972*. Sydney: St Joseph's Convent, 1991.

<sup>12</sup> M. Press, *Julian Tenison Woods: Father Founder*. North Blackburn: Collins Dove, 1994; M. Press, *Julian Tenison Woods*. Sydney: Catholic Theological Faculty, 1979.

<sup>13</sup> I. Hepburn, *No Ordinary Man- the Life and Letters of Julian E. Tenison Woods*. Wanganui N.Z.: Sisters of St Joseph, 1979.

Tranter<sup>14</sup> and Anne Player have focused much of their research and writing on Julian Tenison Woods.<sup>15</sup>

Some research has been conducted on the Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph foundations at Lochinvar by Sister Janice Tranter.<sup>16</sup> Tranter in writing of the Lochinvar Josephites views the contribution of the members as limited only by their natural talents, enthusiasm and the work they undertook. They were not without culture or talent, but what they brought to the Institute was primarily themselves, with their varying individual gifts, and the courage and religious dedication needed for such a venture. They came from the pioneering working people, particularly those whose livelihood depended on manual skills, and on the land, and they were there for the people. Their rootedness among the ordinary people, as their founder had envisaged was the base for their ministry.<sup>17</sup> Sr Beverly Zimmerman (2000) examined the contribution and development of the Sisters of Mercy, Dominicans and St Joseph of Lochinvar in the Maitland Diocese.<sup>18</sup> The concept of the capacity of the Sisters of St Joseph to make a significant contribution to their educational enterprise is developed by Zimmerman who identified their focus as a preoccupation with their students' success, rather than on learning for its own sake. Zimmerman sees the Sisters of St Joseph's search for identity as bound up with their quest for educational excellence.

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<sup>14</sup> J. Tranter, "Fr Julian Tenison Woods - His Role as Founder of the Sisters of St Joseph, Lochinvar, NSW." *Australian Historical Society* 1990, 48-49.

<sup>15</sup> A. V. Player, "Julian Tenison Woods 1832-1889: The Interaction of Science and Religion." M.A thesis, Australian National University, 1990.

<sup>16</sup> J. Tranter, "Foundations: The Forces at Work in the Foundation of the Sisters of St Joseph of Lochinvar." M.A., thesis, University of Newcastle, 1988.

<sup>17</sup> J. Tranter, *Early Josephites: Socio-Religious Perspectives, History of Women Religious Workshop Papers*. Strathfield, N.S.W.: Institute of Religious Studies, 1992, 186, 211-212.

<sup>18</sup> B. Zimmerman, "She Came from a Fine Catholic Family" *Religious Sisterhoods of the Maitland Diocese, 1867-1909.* *Australian Historical Studies* 31, no. 115 (2000): 251.

Marie Crowley<sup>19</sup> and Diane Strevens<sup>20</sup> published histories of the Sisters of St Joseph in Perthville, New South Wales and Wanganui, New Zealand respectively. Strevens writing of the New Zealand Josephites echoes the feeling of identification with the ordinary, as living among the people with whom they worked, in similar houses. Their backgrounds enabled them to identify with the local communities and their willingness to go wherever they were needed is consistent with the aims of the founder. Crowley provides a detailed history of the origins of the Diocesan Josephites with the separation from Mary MacKillop's Sisters and subsequent development of the Perthville Josephites.

There has, however, been no detailed study of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania. The Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania have had only two minor publications in their 120-year history. These comprise a thin pamphlet, *Torchbearers for Christ*, published in 1966<sup>21</sup> and a photographic souvenir booklet, *Sisters of St Joseph: God with Us 1887-1987*,<sup>22</sup> published on the occasion of the centenary in 1987, which gives a concise history of foundations and documents the ministries of the current membership.

A Masters study on the impact of Vatican II on the ministries of the Sisters of St Joseph by the writer was concerned with the post Vatican II period.<sup>23</sup> There has been no major historical study of Tasmanian Catholic schooling in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Two minor theses in the form of Bachelor of Arts honours essays provide the only studies. Hollingsworth<sup>24</sup> in the 88 page essay *Catholic Schools 1906-*

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<sup>19</sup> M. Crowley, *Women of the Vale: Perthville Josephites 1872-1972*. Melbourne: Spectrum, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> D. Strevens, *In Step with Time: A History of the Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth, Wanganui, New Zealand*. Auckland: David Ling, 2001.

<sup>21</sup> V. Burns, *Torchbearers for Christ: History of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart in Tasmania 1887-1966*. Hobart: Sisters of St Joseph, 1966.

<sup>22</sup> Sisters of St Joseph, Tasmania, *Sisters of St Joseph: God with Us 1887-1987*. Hobart: Sisters of St Joseph, 1987.

<sup>23</sup> J. M. Brady, "The Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania: Vatican II and Education" Master of Ministry thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> J.A. Hollingsworth, "The Catholic Schools in Tasmania 1906-1967." B.A. Honours Essay, University of Tasmania, 1970.

1967 examines the development of schools with some reference to the Sisters of St Joseph and Haley<sup>25</sup> in the 54 page essay, *Catholic Response to the Educational Crisis, 1850-1900*, makes little reference to the Sisters of St Joseph.

### Significance of the study

This study is therefore significant, as it covers a period that has not been researched before, and although it has its roots in the origins of the Sisters of St Joseph with Julian Tenison Woods and Mary MacKillop, it has a specific Tasmanian perspective. As a Tasmanian historical study its significance is twofold in providing additional research on late nineteenth century and early twentieth century church, as well as providing an understanding of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania. The circumstances regarding the Tasmanian foundation and details of the separation from Perthville have largely been unknown to the Tasmanian Josephites. The study therefore serves to fill a gap in the history of the Sisters of St Joseph, the Tasmanian Congregation in particular, as there has been no study into the foundation of the Josephites in Tasmania, the establishment of their schools or any significant treatment of the women who call themselves Tasmanian Josephites.

It is important that the story of the Josephite contribution to education and Catholic life in Tasmania is documented as their influence in the development of the Catholic Church and in particular Catholic education was widespread. The Sisters of St Joseph operated more schools and educated more children in Tasmania than any other congregation in this period, 1887-1937. The study will be useful in providing a greater

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<sup>25</sup> E. Haley, "Catholic Response to the Educational Crisis, 1850-1900." B. A. Honours essay, University of Tasmania, 1967.

documentation and appreciation of the development of Catholic education particularly in the rural and mining areas of Tasmania for the same period.

This thesis examines the formative experiences of the Sisters of St Joseph and argues that it was these experiences which shaped their future development within the Tasmanian setting. It will argue that the Sisters of St Joseph although considered limited by the accepted standards for the religious women of their time, were in fact remarkable in their adaptability and flexibility in meeting the increasing demands for change wrought on them by society, educational trends and the church itself. Although largely unrecognized, their influence on the development of the Tasmanian Church and Catholic school system was profound and widespread. By this study I would hope “to reinstate women’s presence in the past [providing] spaces for women’s voices and actions in the present”.<sup>26</sup>

## Methodology

As an historian I am mindful of Lowenthal’s comment that “no historian can cover and thus recover the totality of past events as their content is virtually limitless. Most information has never been recorded and the rest was evanescent”.<sup>27</sup> As Jenkins notes the study of the past is necessarily a study of historiography. The past as we know it is always contingent upon our own views, our own present. Nobody can divest himself/herself from his/her own knowledge and assumptions. Through hindsight we know more about the past than the people who lived in it. Lowenthal concludes that

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<sup>26</sup> J. Blackmore, *Troubling Women: Feminism, Leadership and Educational Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999, 23.

<sup>27</sup> Cited in K. Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History*. London: Routledge, 1995, 19.

histories as known to us appear more comprehensible than we have any reason to believe the past was.<sup>28</sup>

Jordanova states that the use of biography is more than hagiography but provides a focal point at which historical forces coincide. In a single individual's life we see many factors operating such as political, social, and economic as well as kinship, friendship, leisure activities, and education. Jordanova indicates that reconstructing a life can be a form of a *histoire totale* on a limited scale.<sup>29</sup> Through the use of the lives of some members, a complete understanding of the manner in which the Rule functioned and shaped the religious Sisters in their local communities can be constructed. Southgate (1997) quoting E. P. Thompson professed a concern "to rescue" some of "history's losers" and to describe a process of self-discovery and redefinition. Whilst this approach has been challenged, the use of the biography of a few Sisters has relevance for this study, as those selected provide an insight into the social context in which the Sisters lived out their lives.<sup>30</sup>

Southgate writing of the post modern context identifies the change in historical study with the recognition of the limitations of the subject itself. He highlights that the removal of "'objective truth' as a meaningful goal is counterbalanced by a perceived need for many different data of the past - none claiming any special privilege, but each providing some illumination from its own perspective".<sup>31</sup> The presumption is that we may legitimately construct our own histories, as long as we remain aware of and openly acknowledge the bases upon which we are constructing them.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Jenkins, 19.

<sup>29</sup> L.Jordanova, *History in Practice*. London: Arnold, 2000, 41.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in B. Southgate, *History, What and Why? Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 1997. Reprint, 1997, 92.

<sup>31</sup> Southgate, 8.

<sup>32</sup> Southgate, 92.

The historical research approach is of its nature interpretive. While the researcher brings his/her own bias to the study, what is required is both the acknowledgments of the researcher's views, thinking and conduct and reflexivity as Jill Blackmore (1999)<sup>33</sup> and Southgate agree on the difficulty of historians in reporting on the past in the light of who they are, but acknowledges:

That in itself it is no bad thing as long as they are aware of what they are doing and why they are doing it. For at some point a decision has to be taken about what is important; even if all decisions are relative, they have to be made. We are obliged to make some sense of what we see, to interpret data in such a way as to elicit meaning from it, so that we know how to proceed.<sup>34</sup>

Mindful of the difficulties associated in constructing any history, the writer brings insight and bias as a member of the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph, as a teacher and a woman in the Tasmanian Catholic Church. Rather than the bias being a disadvantage, the researcher's involvement as a member of the Sisters of St Joseph for the past thirty years is an advantage. The writer is an expert on the living out of the ideals, though the period under scrutiny is beyond the researcher's experience. As an interviewer personal knowledge of the participants enabled a degree of sensitivity to the process and an immediate rapport was drawn upon. By moving between the documentary data and the Sisters, the researcher was able to minimise any potential bias.

### *Thematic Approach*

The major themes considered concerned the influence of Mother Mary MacKillop and Fr Julian Tenison Woods, the founding Sisters and the interpretation of

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<sup>33</sup> Blackmore, 23.

<sup>34</sup> Southgate, 144.

the Rule of the Congregation as it shaped the development of the Congregation. Elements considered concerned the background of the membership, the conduct of Josephite schools within the Tasmanian society, the influence of the Tasmanian Education Department and the Catholic Church through the authority of the bishops. The period studied includes the episcopacy of five bishops, four Irish and one Australian, two of whom are worthy of closer scrutiny given their pivotal role in Josephite history.<sup>35</sup>

A thematic approach to history, according to Jordanova (2000) allows for a variety of materials and methods to be unified in a single piece of research. Linking the themes throughout the study will be the historical narrative approach focusing on the characters of the Sisters and their individual journeys toward their understanding of their mission in school and in the Tasmanian community. Dominant themes will be the community, church and schools. The study will examine the involvement of the Sisters of St Joseph in their schools, resources, educational background, their students, the local community and the Church. The story of the Josephites is an account from the underside of the historical agenda, which will mean examining the various members of the group, not just the designated leaders or superiors. Burke writes of “history of culture from below” and identifies that women were marginalised from the historical record.<sup>36</sup> This is true of the historical records of the Catholic Church and even for the Sisters of St Joseph themselves. To this end the life histories of three ordinary Sisters of St Joseph will be selected; Sr Monica Wright, Victorian, who joined the Tasmanian Josephites in

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<sup>35</sup> The Irish Archbishops were Daniel Murphy (1866-1907), Patrick Delany (1907-1926), William Barry (1926-1929), and William Hayden (1930-1936). The first Australian Archbishop of Tasmania was Justin Simonds (1937-1942).AHMA.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in M. Spongberg. *Writing Women's History since the Renaissance*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002, 179-180.



1907 and died in 1967; Sr Vincent Bowler, Irishwoman and first entrant in Tasmania and Sr Magdalen Hagarty (Hegarty), the first Tasmanian postulant.<sup>37</sup>

The selection provides a range of personalities who illustrate the typical life experience of a Sister of St Joseph throughout the period studied, contributing either in the local community of the parish or in the larger sphere of the Congregation as a whole. In addition to the ordinary members, influential members such as Sr Hyacinth Quinlan, member of Mary MacKillop's Adelaide community and founder of the Diocesan Josephites, Sr Ambrose Joseph Dirkin, foundress of Lochinvar and Congregational Superior in Tasmania and long-serving Congregational Superior Sr Columba Cahill will be treated in detail within the study.

### Research design

The research design follows the qualitative process, informed by the holistic ethnograph, defined by Jacob (1987) in Wiersma (1995) as “describing and analyzing all or part of a culture or community by describing the beliefs and practices of the group studied and showing how the various parts contribute to the culture as a unified, consistent whole”.<sup>38</sup> Typically, ethnography involves the study of a small group of subjects in their own environment. In this case the six Sisters selected for interview provided an opportunity to acquire a detailed understanding of the circumstances of those participating in order to inform the study and both to compensate for the deficiencies the historical data and as verification for the conclusions derived from the synthesis of data. The ethnographic account, then, is descriptive and interpretive;

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<sup>37</sup> Magdalen's surname in convent records is spelt Hegarty, but her inclusion in the Tasmanian Pioneers Index is spelt Hagarty. It may be that common usage and pronunciation in the district may have contributed to the spelling of “Hagarty”.

<sup>38</sup> W. Wiersma, *Research Methods in Education; an Introduction*, Sydney: Allyn and Bacon, 1995, 10.

descriptive, because detail is so crucial, and interpretive, because the researcher determines the significance of what she obtains through the data gathering.

Atkinson and Hammersley identify the following four features of ethnographic research: an emphasis on the nature of particular social phenomena rather than testing hypotheses; working with unstructured data; investigation of a small number of cases; and analysis of data involving explicit interpretations of the meanings and functions of human actions.<sup>39</sup> This consists of verbal descriptions and explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinated role.

The process of historical research is holistic with an overlap of activities. The process of data collection and interpretation occurs simultaneously as well as the determination of the authenticity and relevance of sources.<sup>40</sup> The qualitative process was selected as this approach best suited the examination of values, beliefs and therefore the examination of the research questions. The relatively unstructured process of data gathering and the interaction with the six Sisters through interviews was well suited to the qualitative process.

### *Synthesis of Information*

The investigation proceeded by looking at the official documents of the Sisters of St Joseph such as Constitutions and Rules, as well as the narrative accounts given in the interviews. Given the cumulative view of data drawn from different contexts, triangulation was employed to examine where different data intersect. In this way, some qualitative researchers believe that triangulation improves the reliability of a

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<sup>39</sup> Cited in D. Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data. Methods for Analysing, Talk, Text and Interaction*. London: Sage, 2001, 56.

<sup>40</sup> Wiersma, 235.

single method.<sup>41</sup> This contributes to the verification and validation of qualitative analysis by verifying the consistency of the findings generated by different data collection methods and the different data sources within the same method. With direct reference to the study use will be made of historical data collection and interviews to generate the oral history of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania.

### *Paucity of historical data*

In recognising the contribution of women to the church Thompson, states that one of the problems identifying the contribution of women to the Church is a paucity of historical evidence, since their work was out of the public spotlight.<sup>42</sup> Mercy historian, McLay, suggests that the use of oral evidence from disciplines other than history, such as sociological contributions with regard to the role of the myth in corporate cultures can assist in providing additional source material.<sup>43</sup> Spongberg in her discussion confirms the validity of oral history as allowing the participants to speak for themselves without any filtering giving rise to “herstory” archives and providing a rich source of data.<sup>44</sup> Therefore formal interviews of six Sisters who joined the Sisters of St Joseph prior to 1938 assisted in developing an oral history component. The Sisters’ lived experience and the significance of their observations enhanced the study by providing additional data and developing an opportunity for interactive and ongoing research and validation.

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<sup>41</sup> Silverman, 324.

<sup>42</sup> R. C. Thompson, "Women and the Significance of Religion in Australia." *Australian Historical Studies* 28, no. 108 (1997): 118-125.

<sup>43</sup> A. McLay, "Writing Women's History: One Feminist Approach." In *The Long Patient Struggle: Studies in the Role of Women in Australian Christianity*, edited by M. Hutchinson & E. Campion, 13-24. Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994, 21.

<sup>44</sup> Spongberg, 224-225.

*Primary Source material*

The primary source material consisted of convent diaries, personal details of the Sisters, letters, constitutions, notes on constitutions and chapter documents. Other material examined included the recollections of the Sisters themselves, informal conversations over the years and the researcher's personal memories of stories handed on when spending time with elderly Sisters and former pupils now deceased. Their lived experience and the significance of their observations enhanced the study and provided an opportunity for interactive research.

An additional difficulty associated with the study has been the lack of extant material held within the archives of the Tasmanian Josephites and the Archdiocese of Hobart. The dearth of personal information is in keeping with the spirit of humility and obscurity espoused by the early Sisters of St Joseph in keeping with their Rule.<sup>45</sup> The Sisters believed that their letters or details of their lives were not significant enough to be preserved. They would never have envisaged that a study such as this would have been undertaken. Their motivation was wholly spiritual and their Rule demanded that they live a hidden life. In their compliance, they have made historical data gathering a challenge.

The archives of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania consisted of manuscript material including the *Westbury Diary*, *Records of Elections of Sisters Guardian*, a brief diary through until the 1920s, copies of *The Rule*, *Book of Instructions*, *Customs and Practices*, notes on *The Better Keeping of the Rule*, *Letters from Our Founder*.<sup>46</sup> The

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<sup>45</sup> Sisters of St Joseph, *Rules for the Guidance of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart*. Sydney: J. G.O'Connor, 1883.

<sup>46</sup> All documents are in manuscript form and held in the archives of the Sisters of St Joseph at New Town, Tasmania.

Sisters of St Joseph archives included the data gained at entry of the candidates and newspaper clippings of the funeral orations, but little else is preserved pertaining to individuals. Any archdiocesan data relating to the Sisters of St Joseph's arrival in Tasmania was destroyed when the elderly Archbishop Daniel Murphy destroyed all archival material prior to his death.<sup>47</sup> Papers relating to the episcopacy of Archbishops Delany, Barry, Hayden and Simonds contained notes and diary entries relating to the Sisters of St Joseph. Of particular significance was Delany's handwritten report on the Sisters of St Joseph to Rome in 1924, detailing the foundation, formation, education and history of the Sisters of St Joseph.<sup>48</sup>

The study included the examination of primary source material from the archives of the Sisters of St Joseph at New Town in Tasmania, Lochinvar, and Perthville, and the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart in Sydney, New South Wales. Use was made of Inspectors' Reports of the Tasmanian Education Department held in the Tasmanian State Archives and the Archives of the Archdiocese of Hobart for material on the role of the Bishops in the life of the Congregation. Data was drawn from Catholic papers such as *The Catholic Magazine 1916-1918*, *The Catholic Standard 1921-1937* and *The Monitor 1887-1920*, *The Catholic Advocate 1887-1937*, as well as the local papers, such as *The Mercury*, *The Examiner*, and *The Advocate* relating to the period. Given the hidden nature of the Sisters' ministry, the entries in the secular press are rare.

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<sup>47</sup> "Archbishop Murphy destroyed many records," note by Archbishop Delany on an envelope forwarded to Archbishop Simonds by a fond nephew of Murphy found in Murphy papers (CA6/MUR 44). According to Le Clerc, Archbishop Murphy destroyed most of the records before his death - A.A. Le Clerc. "The Episcopate of Daniel Murphy, First Archbishop of Hobart: 1866-1907." Master of Humanities thesis, University of Tasmania, 1994. Murphy's nephew Michael Beechinor recalls in the Memoirs that before Murphy's death "he burned all his useless private papers, then he left St Virgil's for the last time" Fr Michael Beechinor. "Memoir of Archbishop Murphy." Launceston: Tabart Bros, 1916, 98.

<sup>48</sup> P. Delany. "Rapport De L'archeveque De Hobart (Tasmanie) Sur L'institut Diocesan (Juris Dioceain) Des Soeurs De St Joseph." Hobart: Catholic Church Archives, 1924, 23.AHMA.

## Summary and Future Chapters

The thesis is developed according to the major themes of origin, foundation, background, the role of Archbishop Delany, the schools, and Irish and episcopal influences. The second chapter considers the Tasmanian situation into which the Sisters of St Joseph arrived in Tasmania in 1887. At the request of Archdeacon Hogan of Westbury the Sisters moved from Perthville, a small settlement 17 kilometers from Bathurst, New South Wales to Westbury in Northern Tasmania. The Sisters of Charity and Presentation Sisters were present in the larger towns of Hobart and Launceston from 1847 and 1866 respectively. The invitation to come to Tasmania was influenced by the Australian Catholic Bishops' decision to provide a system of Catholic schools. The chapter addresses the philosophy, social setting, educational background and the political and economic scene in Tasmania. Discussion includes the relationship of the Tasmanian Bishop to the Australian hierarchy and to the Colonial government, which had withdrawn state aid to schools in 1854. The Sisters coming to Tasmania came in as strangers but with their own "baggage" and yet their mission both shaped and was shaped by the prevailing conditions within Tasmania.

The third chapter considers the social context into which the five Sisters who arrived in Westbury were placed. The background of the founding Sisters is examined, including the spirituality and initial and ongoing formation of these Sisters and the type of education, which they were to produce. The chapter treats the relative inexperience of the Sisters in religious life and their dependence on cofounder Fr Julian Tenison Woods for the interpretation of the Rule and guidance in dealing with episcopal authority. The Sisters' perception of their task, their interaction with the parents and children and their self-understanding of being one with the people are examined. Chapter Three treats the

relevant Catholic Church documents of the nineteenth century and the impact of the Tasmanian colonial education system on the Sisters of St Joseph and the development of their school system. The convergence of the influence of the Woods-MacKillop method of education, the requirements of the Tasmanian government and the influence of the Tasmanian Bishops is discussed in this chapter. It is a matter of conjecture that in the initial phase the Sisters viewed their schools not as part of a system, but rather as autonomous in attempting to survive. Discussion shall also include the chronology of the establishment of the schools, the Church and the Sisters' involvement and influence on the educational decisions of the government.

Chapter Four examines the development of a Tasmanian identity through adherence to the Rule. Discussion includes the rhetoric and the reality of the Rule and the power exerted by individual members, such as Srs Hyacinth Quinlan, Ambrose Joseph Dirkin and John Dowling on the government of the Congregation. The emerging understanding of the origins of the Congregation with its associated historical inaccuracies and their impact on the development of the Congregation as a religious entity through the latter part of the nineteenth century until the First World War are explored.

Chapter Five addresses the vital role of Archbishop Delany who played a prominent part in assisting the Sisters of St Joseph in their self-determination, through his architecture of teacher training and formation with the consequent sense of achievement of authenticity as a bona fide religious congregation. The roles of significant Tasmanian education acts and the imposition of state inspection are developed in relation to the Josephite response through the establishment of Sacred Heart Convent and the development of Sacred Heart School as a model school for the training of future Josephite teachers.

Chapter Six addresses the impact of the state Inspectors on the Sisters of St Joseph and the development of the school system with particular reference to the country schools. Examination includes the development of secondary classes, commercial classes and music teaching. An analysis of the establishment of the school at Moonah provides an example of the development of the Josephites as teachers and their ministry in the latter period.

The seventh chapter considers the membership of the Sisters of St Joseph, with particular reference to their place of birth, fathers' occupations and age upon entering. Consideration is given to the influence of the Irish membership of the Congregation and the impact of Irish recruitment in the 1930s. To amplify the background of the women entering the Sisters of St Joseph, three Sisters from its ordinary membership who typify the Josephite women, are selected for study: Sr Monica Wright, a Victorian, who joined the Tasmanian Josephites in 1907 and died in 1967, Sr Vincent Bowler, Irishwoman and first entrant in Tasmania and Sr Magdalen Hegarty, the first Tasmanian postulant. All joined during the period of the study and spent their lives in country Tasmania. These women exemplify the Josephite story in Tasmania.

The eighth chapter focuses on clerical and Irish influences on the Congregation, with the recruitment of the Irish Sisters, their contribution to the life of the Congregation and their continuing influence on the Congregation over the next three decades. This chapter addresses the themes of the continuing development of the Sisters of St Joseph, the expansion of secondary education and the implications for tertiary qualifications. The role of Archbishop Justin Simonds and his part in the reshaping of the Congregation as a religious entity are examined for its consequent impact on the Josephite identity.



The concluding chapter identifies the finding of the study and its contribution to scholarship in relation to Australian religious women and the Sisters of St Joseph in particular. It discusses the appropriation of the Woods-MacKillop style of education, its impact on the Tasmanian setting and its subsequent development to accommodate the requirements of the Tasmanian Education Department. The interaction of Church hierarchy, state Education Department and the influential members of the Congregation on the Sisters of St Joseph's self-determination and identity are synthesized from the material presented in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ORIGINS AND THE RULE

#### Introduction

The foundation of the Sisters of St Joseph and the subsequent separation and reformation were to have a lasting impact on the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph. It will be argued that for the Tasmanian Josephites the period of separation and the rewriting of the Rule were to mould their self-understanding and define their development over the next fifty years. The influence of Tenison Woods in Tasmania prior to the Josephite arrival and his influence on the foundation group were crucial in their development and interpretation of their founding story.

The Sisters of St Joseph had their origins as a teaching Congregation founded at Penola in South Australia in 1866 by Father Julian Tenison Woods and Mother Mary MacKillop. Father Julian Tenison Woods' continuing interest in education led him to become the first Director of Catholic Schools in any colony of Australia, when appointed Director in South Australia in 1866. He sought to establish a "system" of Catholic schooling in South Australia.

The Congregation was founded in response to the Catholic Bishops of Australia's decision to provide education for Catholic children. The founding of the Sisters of St Joseph was fraught with difficulty as Woods departed from accepted conventions of his time such as founding a Congregation "to teach poor schools without

any aid except alms and what the children can themselves afford”<sup>1</sup>. His instructions demanded a great commitment from the Sisters, who were to be available to bring Catholic education to the more isolated areas of the Colony, providing an education for the poor. These women, who were drawn from the working class Australians, had shown their willingness to suffer deprivation, hardship, loneliness and to be isolated from the regular religious support of daily and weekly Mass in their attempt to provide Catholic schools in the more remote areas of outback Australia.

### *The Development of the Rule*

The Rule of the Sisters of St Joseph, as with all religious congregations, was the framework upon which their lives were based. It provided the model for the way in which they would live out their lives and formed the basis for the philosophy, which shaped their schools. It will be argued that the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph’s self-identity became synonymous with their Rule and given the conflict surrounding the Rule, the preservation of the Rule was to be paramount in the Tasmanian Josephites’ development both in a spiritual and corporate sense.

The Rule in which the Tasmanian Josephites embedded their way of life was the modified Rule, based upon the Original Rule which was written by Fr Julian Tenison Woods in 1867, referred to hereafter as the Original Rule. The variations of the Rule was to create divisions which occurring as they did in the formative years was to have a lasting impact on the development of the Sisters of St Joseph. This will be examined in more detail later within this chapter. Discussion of the Original Rule will provide an understanding of the beliefs and values of the Tasmanian Sisters of St

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<sup>1</sup> Letter, J.E.T. Woods to M. MacKillop, August 23 1870. NSSJA.

Joseph. As it was preserved with only minor modifications to guide them in their way of life, it was vital to their way of life.

Tenison Woods was the author of both the Original Rule and the Bathurst Rule. He claimed his authorship in his letter to Mary MacKillop accompanying the Original Rule, with specific instructions for it to be copied and presented to the Bishop in another's handwriting, thereby distancing himself from the original and to give it greater authenticity. Woods' motivation was to protect the Rule and the foundation of the Sisters of St Joseph from those in the Church who were demonstrating antipathy towards him and his vision for a Catholic education system.

I enclose the Rule. You must without delay copy it out into a small neat notebook smaller than this note paper and written on one side and enclose it back to me. The original you can then get Sr Blanche to copy it [*sic*] and bring it into town. The reason I want the copy is that I don't want my handwriting to be seen and the Rule of any Religious congregation must according to canon law be deposited in the hands of the Superior of the Diocese before a house is founded. So you see you have to make haste. Of course it can be altered or modified as we see how it works, but it must never be spoken of as my work.<sup>2</sup>

The Original Rule (hereafter referred to as OR) consisted of fifteen chapters, the first three chapters of which were considered dear to the Sisters by Mary MacKillop.<sup>3</sup> For the Josephites the preservation of the Rule was to be an ongoing issue for self-determination and identity over the first twenty years of their existence in Adelaide, Brisbane and Bathurst. Discussion in this paper shall be confined to Bathurst and its implications for the Tasmanian group.

The Rule was pragmatic consisting of regulations rather than an emphasis on inspirational ideals consistent with the Rule of the older monastic orders such as *The Holy Rule* of Benedict. The Rule developed by Woods sought to meet the needs of the Australian colonies and yet conscious of the requirement for unity the Rule attempted to

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<sup>2</sup> Letter, Woods to MacKillop, May 31 1867. NSSJA.

<sup>3</sup> MacKillop, 1873, *Observations on the Rule*. In "Mother Mary's Circulars to the Sisters, 1870-1909." North Sydney, 1976. NSSJA.

safeguard the spirit of unity amongst the isolated communities by maintaining a central government. The issue of government was poorly formulated and MacGinley comments that this lack of clarity emanated from the “evolution of canonical norms then underway and what Julian Woods could have realistically known of this”.<sup>4</sup> The lack of clarity on this aspect would provide the catalyst for ongoing controversy in the years ahead.

### *Objects of the Institute*

The objects of the Institute were stated emphatically and those objects were to have relevance in the poverty of the colony of Tasmania with its depressed economy and with the impoverished Catholic population in a minority.

In the name of the glorious patriarch St Joseph, this Institute has been erected for the pious education of children whose parents are in humble circumstances, and its subjects may attain either by direct teaching, by the management and care of Seminaries taught by others, or by taking charge of orphanages, to which may be added, where circumstances allow, refuges for destitute persons. The Sisters shall, however consider themselves principally bound to education, and more to the children of the poor than to others.<sup>5</sup>

The focus of the Congregation was to be education of the very poor with additional ministry to be conducted toward the destitute. Whilst the Tasmanian group’s primary object was education they never embarked upon the more social welfare aspects of the original objects of the Institute. The priority for the Diocese was the provision of schools, and the Sisters of Charity and Good Shepherd Sisters were already engaged in the care of orphans and the “fallen” women and girls. The Sisters coming to Tasmania had only school experience.

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<sup>4</sup> MacGinley, 1996, 159.

<sup>5</sup> J.E.T. Woods, 1868, Rules of the Institute of St Joseph, Ch 1. Hereafter referred to as OR.

The early Sisters of St Joseph would have been well content with working in the outlying rural and mining areas of Tasmania, often with inadequate accommodation for such a lifestyle was in total harmony with their spirit of humility and self-effacement.

They must be poor, humble, and consider themselves the least among all religious congregations, studying to keep their lives hidden in God as the life of St Joseph was. They must give place and preference to the religious of every other Congregation, and their highest ambition must be to remain unknown and poor.<sup>6</sup>

### *Poverty*

The Rule was clear in its definition of the poverty which the Sisters were to embrace, “The houses shall be absolutely without revenues and the Sisters shall derive their support entirely from either the schools, the Institutions over which they have charge, or from alms”.<sup>7</sup>

Whilst the houses were to be consistent with the poverty of the underprivileged, so too were the furnishings of the houses, “The houses shall be very poor and fitted with furniture such as poor people use. . . The beds must be of straw, with coverlets such as are used for the poor. The vessels of tin or earthenware.” The concept of community was indeed to be faced in its radical form with the prescription, “The Sisters shall, where it is convenient, all sleep in one dormitory”.<sup>8</sup>

The ready acceptance of a simple poverty ensured that the Sisters were to be mobile and at the disposal of the Church authorities and the Rule enshrines this, “The Sisters must hold themselves in readiness to go wherever they are sent in the Diocese where they are established.” They were to accept whatever conditions were provided:

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<sup>6</sup> OR, Ch I.

<sup>7</sup> OR, Ch II.

<sup>8</sup> OR, Ch II.

The Sisters must be prepared to take charge of schools in any district, no matter how poor, and they may live in any house they can get, no matter how small the rooms are, nor how few, bare and dilapidated; even one room may be taken for a time until better accommodation be afforded.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, like so many of the religious women of the time the pioneering spirit was both thrust upon them and fully embraced by them in the quest for the salvation of souls through the provision of Catholic education.

The concept of poverty was applied rigidly to the religious dress of the Sisters, even to the extent of advocating the wearing of darned and patched habits. Some concession however was allowed for the heat, but this would have little relevance for the Tasmanian climate.

The Sisters shall wear a brown woollen dress - brown in winter - but in summer where the heat of the climate would make such a colour oppressive, a mantle of holland.<sup>10</sup>

All these things must be of poor material, even though a more expensive material would wear better and last longer, for the poor must endure the consequences of poverty and the Sisters try to correct the inconvenience of this by extra care.

The Sisters must be contented with the poorest houses, fare and habits. They can keep neither money nor property beyond the second habit and breviary. They must not be ashamed to wear one that is patched and darned.<sup>11</sup>

The founder was determined that the Sisters should live as the poor around them by enduring the inconvenience of less serviceable material in the interests of poverty. Poverty was not merely notional for the early Sisters but a reality.

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<sup>9</sup> OR, Ch II.

<sup>10</sup> OR, Ch III.

<sup>11</sup> OR, Ch IX.

*Relationship with the pastor, externs and children*

The Rule demonstrates the paternalistic and patriarchal society of the Church of the nineteenth century to which the Sisters belonged. To the pastor was subscribed the utmost respect and an acknowledgement of a perceived wisdom in all things, except those pertaining directly to the observance of the Rule. The Rule under the title of Obedience urges the Sisters to, “be guided by the advice or suggestion of the local pastor and look up to him with the utmost docility for guidance and advice in all things, which do not absolutely interfere with the observance of the Rule”.<sup>12</sup>

Sisters were able to meet with externs but only for limited periods and frequent contact with friends and family was strictly discouraged. There was, however, always the provision for any person in need to be served, “Any person can, as charity or hospitality requires, be provided with a meal in the recreation room or parlour, but the Sisters may not remain with them while may partake of it.” There was no such prohibition on the contact with children, “they shall, however, be accessible to the children at all times in imitation of Our Blessed Lord who has said, “Suffer little children to come unto me”.<sup>13</sup>

While the understanding of religious obedience was rigid and the “the Sisters should be perfectly detached from their own wills, obedient to the Rule, and submissive to the Little Sister (Superior),” there was nonetheless a gentle wisdom in its application. “If the Little Sister sees that any command gives pain or causes distress, she should

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<sup>12</sup> OR, Ch X.

<sup>13</sup> OR, Ch V.



withdraw it until a more favourable occasion, for, like the Holy Family, they must love and cherish each other and bear with one another's weaknesses".<sup>14</sup>

### *Superiors*

There was only one class of Sisters within the Institute unlike some European Congregations, which had both choir and lay Sisters. The Sisters of St Joseph, in common with the Australian founded Sisters of the Good Samaritan, had no lay Sisters. The notion of equality embraced those in authority as the title used for the superior in each community was to be "Little Sister", "who shall bear that name to avoid the use of the word 'Superior'".<sup>15</sup> The Superior General was to be called the Sister Guardian and both these terms were maintained continuously within the Tasmanian Institute.

### *Daily duties*

The daily routine for the Sisters was arduous with the day commencing at 5.00 a.m. with the regular routine of prayers and Mass. By the time school was due to commence the Sisters had participated at Mass, meditated, prayed, cleaned the house, had breakfast, prepared the meals for the day and prayed the office of Prime and Terce and prepared for their classes. There was no time to be idle.<sup>16</sup>

The religious significance of their ministry was embedded in the Rule with the admonition to take every opportunity of introducing the children to a spiritual dimension of their lives. Arriving at school in the morning,

[They] may occupy themselves with the children as they arrived in encouraging them and exciting the hearts to piety by little pious

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<sup>14</sup> OR, Ch VI.

<sup>15</sup> OR, Ch VI.

<sup>16</sup> OR, Ch VI.

conversations and instructions, never losing an opportunity of impressing upon the young minds religious maxims and Rules of conduct.<sup>17</sup>

The Rule attempted to provide the Sisters with a blueprint for their relationship to the students in their care. Theirs was to be a gentle patient Rule; “The Sisters must not allow themselves to be irritated by the noise or perverseness of the children, but should speak gently, remembering what a holy office it is for all those tender souls to virtues”.<sup>18</sup>

Such was the care of the Sisters for the children that after school the children were to be accompanied home in groups, “The Sisters take home the children in bands, according to the various quarters of the town, and not leave them until they have dispersed separately somewhat near their own homes”.<sup>19</sup> Having accomplished the dispersion of the children the Sisters were then to pray:

Their first care on reaching the convent shall be to say the Little Office, Vespers and Compline, and the rosary. They shall then take some exercise if required or to serve the purpose of the Institute, such as to visit parents whose children have missed their attendance at school, to visit sick children, and suchlike occupations.<sup>20</sup>

Every moment of their day was totally accounted for until they retired at 10:00 p.m. before which they would have spent time in recreation and study.

After dinner they shall visit the oratory for a few minutes and then have recreation for about an hour. They shall then have meditation, or an instruction, and then study for about two hours, or attend to a night class or workroom, as the Little Sister shall arrange. They shall then recite Matins and Lauds in the oratory and night prayers, with meditation until 10, when they shall retire to rest.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> OR, Ch VI.

<sup>18</sup> OR, Ch VI.

<sup>19</sup> OR, Ch VI.

<sup>20</sup> OR, Ch VI.

<sup>21</sup> OR, Ch VIII.

*Sunday Observance*

Sundays were to be a challenge and the Sunday observance was acknowledged by Mary MacKillop as impractical.<sup>22</sup> The Sunday observance was maintained in the Diocesan group into the new century, albeit in a modified form from the original observance. “Sunday is the day on which the Sisters should consider it their sole duty to devote themselves to the spiritual interests of their holy charges.” The Sisters were to arrange beforehand to meet with their scholars who were going to receive communion at the convenient hour before Mass. After Mass they would pray for one-quarter of an hour and “then the children [would] go to the convent with the Sisters and partake of the plain refecton in the community room with the Sisters”.<sup>23</sup>

After Mass on Sundays the Sisters would accompany the children to their homes as on the school days. From 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. classes were to be conducted, with the assistance of teachers. At the end the children were to be conducted home again in usual manner. “The remaining time until Vespers and benediction the Sisters shall spend either in visiting parents whose children have not attended school, sick children, prisoners, or those sick in the hospitals”.<sup>24</sup>

It is easy to comprehend the complexities of trying to adhere to such a strict regime both for the Sisters, their charges and the families. However to a large extent part of this pattern was adopted within the Tasmanian group and maintained until the late 1930s with the provision of religion classes on Sunday afternoons.

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<sup>22</sup> Letter, M. MacKillop, 1875. NSSJA.

<sup>23</sup> OR, CH VII.

<sup>24</sup> OR, CH VII.

## The Vows

The Sisters made three vows with the addition of a fourth vow, though while neglected in all other branches the practice of which was maintained in the Tasmanian setting until the 1930s. “The vows shall consist of poverty, chastity and obedience, with a vow to do all in their power to promote the love of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in the hearts of little children”.<sup>25</sup>

While the vows poverty and obedience are both treated, the Rule is largely silent on the vow of chastity. This would not be addressed until the revised 1912 Constitution for the Tasmanian Sisters.

That the Rule combined the spiritual exercises of the Sisters with their ministry is highlighted through the provision of the weekly chapter to address failings with regard to the Rule, followed by a meeting regarding the progress of the school.<sup>26</sup> The assumption was that the community was engaged in teaching and therefore the affairs of the school were the affairs of the total community. Regular weekly staff meetings were already in vogue and happening within a community setting two decades before the school Inspectors would request their implementation.

Time was given for an annual holiday, during which the retreat of one week was to take place at Christmas. The object of the holiday was for the Sisters to “try as much to recruit their piety as their strength”.<sup>27</sup> The regular Christmas retreat would remain a feature of Josephite life until the advent of Vatican II. The period from Palm Sunday to Low Sunday was also to be a holiday and this was to prove a problem for the Sisters trying to maintain consistency of education within a highly regulated government

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<sup>25</sup> OR, CH 1V.

<sup>26</sup> OR, CH X1

<sup>27</sup> OR, Ch XII.

system. Feast days<sup>28</sup> were spent in “making an extra visit to the Blessed Sacrament of half an hour, and visiting the hospitals and prisons, besides giving up an extra hour to study in the morning and afternoon”.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike other Congregations of the period the Sisters of St Joseph were not to take in boarders or to do so only in exceptional circumstances and only the children of the poor who had no other means of educating them.<sup>30</sup>

### The ideals of the Sisters of St Joseph

Although essentially pragmatic in its interpretation the Rule provided the Sisters with an opportunity to be flexible in meeting the needs of the local communities in which they lived. Woods’ comment regarding the Rule that “it can be altered or modified as we see how it works” indicated an approach which would be accommodating to meet contemporary situations such as the teaching of music and other issues.<sup>31</sup> The Rule apart from the pragmatism provided some inspirational passages in relation to the development of the spiritual life. The final chapter of the Rule provided an example of the spirituality of the era through devotion to the Sacred Heart, “to light up a burning devotion to Mary” and to “obtain relief in every possible way for the holy souls in Purgatory.” The Sisters therefore had a charter for the promotion of pious practices within the far-flung parishes.

A final exhortation reminds the Sisters the spirit of the Institute was one of poverty and prayer. They were called to:

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<sup>28</sup> Feasts included the celebration of the Annunciation, Visitation, Help of Christians, Assumption, the glorious patriarchs St Joseph and St John the Baptist (OR, Ch XII)

<sup>29</sup> OR, CH XII.

<sup>30</sup> OR, Ch XIV.

<sup>31</sup> Letter, Woods to MacKillop, May 31 1867. NSSJA.

Detachment from exterior things, thus leading to purity of heart and union with God. This spirit can only be obtained by a perfect mortification of the passions, and a renunciation of all unnecessary gratification of the eyes, tongue, and other senses, which could take their hearts from God alone.<sup>32</sup>

The application of the Rule was to ensure an ascetical way of life. The extreme poverty, which they courageously embraced, enabled the Sisters to accept austere conditions and for some it would impair their health severely. The manner in which this translated into the Tasmanian scene is the subject of the succeeding chapters.

### The Formation of the Diocesan Josephites

The following discussion shall address the dispute concerning the Original Rule, its modification by Rome and the subsequent formation of the Diocesan Josephites. The Tasmanian Josephites had their origins in the formation of the Diocesan Josephites at Perthville in the Bathurst Diocese in 1876. The misconceptions regarding the separation were to continue within the oral tradition and it is the purpose of this thesis to clarify facts surrounding the events that led to the division of Sisters of St Joseph into two distinct groups. The misunderstanding of the basis for the rewriting of the Rule prevailed through the oral tradition. It will be argued that the presence and influence of Hyacinth Quinlan, who was at the centre of the dispute, was a contributing factor in the oral tradition prevailing in the Tasmanian interpretation of the formation of the Diocesan Josephites.

In 1872 the Bishop of Bathurst, Bishop Mathew Quinn invited the Sisters from Adelaide to the Bathurst diocese. On 16 July 1872, Sr Teresa McDonald, Sr Joseph

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<sup>32</sup> O.R., Ch XV.

Dwyer and Sr Hyacinth Quinlan, accompanied by a young Jewish convert arrived in the Bathurst Diocese.<sup>33</sup> Their first community was established at The Vale Road (now Perthville), a small settlement 12 kilometers from Bathurst.<sup>34</sup> By 1876 they had opened another six small schools on the goldfields to the west and south of Bathurst.<sup>35</sup>

The formalization of the Sisters of St Joseph's Rule required that Mary MacKillop travel to Rome for the Rule to be approved by the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. In Bathurst, however, during Mary MacKillop's absence, concern was being expressed over the position adopted by Bishop Quinn with regard to central government of the Institute and the teaching of music. Quinn wanted the Institute to be Diocesan in government with the Bishop as the Superior. He wanted music taught by the Sisters, but the Original Rule precluded the teaching of music, regarding it as the prerogative of the wealthy and therefore not in harmony with the educational aims of teaching the poor.

These issues were discussed by Bishop Quinn and Mary MacKillop, when they met in Dublin on September 7, 1874 and whilst no compromise was reached with regard to the issue of government, Mary agreed to allow the Sisters to remain in Bathurst until Quinn returned. For the Sisters in Bathurst no resolution meant that they were left in a state of confusion regarding the role of the Bishop and his appointed nominee. The period of uncertainty continued with the absence of those to whom the Sisters would have looked for guidance such as Woods and Mary MacKillop. Of significance during this period is Quinn's recruitment of Irish girls for his diocese, nine of whom were intended for the Sisters of St Joseph. They would form a vital bargaining tool in his continuing dispute with Mary MacKillop.

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<sup>33</sup> Teresa McDonald and Hyacinth Quinlan were present in Adelaide during the excommunication of Mary MacKillop in 1871 and both chose to be dispensed from their vows in preference to acceding to Bishop Shiel's changes to the Rule. See Burford, 1991, 260.

<sup>34</sup> Strevens, 2000, 17.

<sup>35</sup> Burford, 1991, 273.

Quinn was influenced by the Irish model of Diocesan congregations, which he preferred as a better design of government for the easier management of personnel within his diocese.<sup>36</sup> It was the approval of the Constitutions and their acceptance by the General Chapter in March 1875, including the confirmation of central government for the Sisters of St Joseph that became the catalyst for Quinn to set about the establishment of a Diocesan congregation. The Sisters of St Joseph, however, had accepted and renewed their vows according to the new Constitutions in August 1875. They were therefore bound by them and their acceptance of Quinn's Diocesan government would contravene their vows.

Quinn gave the Sisters the option of remaining in the Bathurst Diocese under his governance or of remaining faithful to the new Constitutions, under which the Sisters had renewed their vows, and returning to Adelaide. In the midst of the existing dilemma Hyacinth Quinlan emerged as a key figure in her decision to remain in the Bathurst diocese, and thus become the "foundress" of the Diocesan Josephites. Her role was vital in the formation of the Diocesan group and of great significance to the Tasmanian foundation as she exerted immense influence as Superior over a number of years. Hyacinth will be treated in detail in Chapter Four.

Hyacinth Quinlan, remaining at Perthville, had been appointed to train the nine postulants from Ireland during Teresa's illness. According to Burford (1993) Teresa's death at 35 years of age on January 31, 1876, became a symbol of the Sisters' solidarity and allegiance to the Constitutions. Mary MacKillop had agreed to allow Hyacinth to remain until the postulants were sufficiently well trained to take over from the Sisters vacating the six schools and returning to Adelaide. Hyacinth, having accomplished this task would then return to Adelaide. However, in spite of this undertaking by Mary

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<sup>36</sup> Burford, 1991, 18.



MacKillop, the General Council in Adelaide unanimously refused to allow Hyacinth to remain.<sup>37</sup>

Quinn, on hearing of the General Council's decision to recall Hyacinth to Adelaide, informed Mary MacKillop that he would "compel Sister Hyacinth to stay".<sup>38</sup> Hyacinth had previously indicated her acceptance of the new Constitution and protested her allegiance to Mary in her letter of January 24, 1876 that "[she] would never waver".<sup>39</sup> Her final letter to Mary MacKillop is in a different vein entirely:

My dear Mother Mary, I wish to acquaint you that I have placed myself under the authority and care of the Bishop of Bathurst. I have taken this step for the greater glory of God and the salvation of my own soul.

Your affectionate sister in J. C.

Mary Hyacinth.<sup>40</sup>

Josephite historian Zimmerman (1991) argues that Hyacinth was coerced by Bishop Mathew Quinn under danger to her immortal soul to remain behind to train the novices.<sup>41</sup> Certainly there is a marked contrast in style and tone between Hyacinth's final letter and earlier letters. Press (1994) asserts that Quinn may have dictated the final letter as it concludes with his customary form.<sup>42</sup> Interpretations by Gardiner and Burford concur that Hyacinth was under considerable duress by Quinn and therefore felt compelled to stay at Perthville.<sup>43</sup> Thus Hyacinth, at twenty-four, became the Sister Guardian of the Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph, commonly known as the "black" Josephites.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Burford, 1993, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Letter, M. MacKillop to Kirby, February 10 1878 cited in Burford, 23.

<sup>39</sup> Gardiner, 195.

<sup>40</sup> Letter, H. Quinlan, M. MacKillop, January 30 1876. NSSJA.

<sup>41</sup> Zimmerman, 1991,173.

<sup>42</sup> Press, 1994, 175.

<sup>43</sup> Gardiner, 195; Burford, 21.

<sup>44</sup> The Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph wore a black habit identical to the brown habit worn by the Sisters of St Joseph with Central Government from 1905.

Hyacinth's decision to operate outside the newly approved constitutions placed her in a canonical limbo. Therefore Mary MacKillop questioned her canonical status in a letter to His Eminence Cardinal Franchi, February 11, 1876

There are now two professed Sisters still remaining at the Bathurst house; one of these is professed for life, and renewed her vows according to the Constitutions with full approbation of Dr McAuliffe who, at the time acted in the Bishop's place towards the Sisters. She is remaining there without the permission of the Council, and I was told by my spiritual adviser that she could not do so without a dispensation from Rome.<sup>45</sup>

Clearly Hyacinth had no understanding of the predicament, which Mary MacKillop perceived in her regard. Hyacinth's renewal of vows the preceding year, according to the new Constitutions, had seen her affirm her obedience to the Mother General, yet her actions in succumbing to the authority of the Bishop of Bathurst could be perceived as a renunciation of her previous commitment. Hyacinth, while at variance with Mary MacKillop considered herself as a true Josephite and as such perceived herself to be the custodian of the original Rule and tradition.

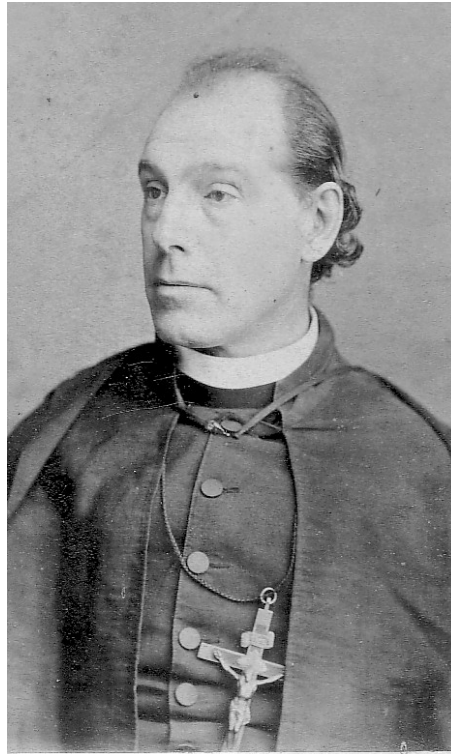
Her loyalty to the Bishop was certain and his role as her Superior was without question. Given the original undertaking by Mary to provide guidance for the novices, in the person of Hyacinth, it is understandable that Hyacinth would have felt some obligation to fulfil this function. The pressure brought to bear on Hyacinth and her distance from both the Adelaide Sisters, coupled with the pressure of the Bishop and priests and haphazard contact with Mary MacKillop, left her little in the way of good canonical counsel. The combination of all these factors impacted on her in such a way, that she made her decision to remain, regarding herself still as an authentic Sister of St

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<sup>45</sup>Letter, M. MacKillop to Cardinal Franchi, February 11 1876. NSSJA.

Joseph.<sup>46</sup> Hyacinth was to refer to these events as a “tragedy” in the later years of her life.<sup>47</sup>

### Fr Tenison Woods and the Rewriting of the Rule



*Fr Julian Tenison Woods, cofounder of the Sisters of St Joseph  
Courtesy Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town, Tasmania.  
Used with permission*

Following the separation of the Sisters of St Joseph in 1876, Julian Tenison Woods arrived in Bathurst early in 1877 at Bishop Quinn’s request to assist in the formation of the Diocesan group. At the time of Woods’ Easter retreat to the Sisters; they numbered 30, most of whom were novices or postulants, spread over six

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<sup>46</sup> Crowley (2002) records the amazement of the Bondi community when Hyacinth, while staying with them, declared that the Diocesan Josephites were the original Institute founded by Woods. (Agnes Cecilia Boyle RSJ, personal communication, Sydney, 1985 cited in Crowley, 229)

<sup>47</sup> Letter, H. Quinlan to Xavier, August 26 1926. Copy TSSJA uncatalogued.

communities.<sup>48</sup> From early 1877 until October 1878, Woods devoted himself to forming the group, by writing the Rule, visiting and instructing the Sisters. Finally Bishop Quinn approved the Rule in July 1878, hereafter referred to as the Bathurst Rule (BR).

*Differences in the Rule - The Bathurst Rule of 1878*

The Bathurst Rule was basically the Original Rule of 1876, differing only in its designation of the Bishop as the ultimate authority in each diocese. The original ideal of poverty was retained, all property occupied by the Sisters to remain the property of the diocese and the Sisters were to provide music teaching.<sup>49</sup> The oral tradition was such that confusion existed over the exact nature of the changes of the Rule. For the Diocesan Josephites there was the belief that the Original Rule was one which contained the Diocesan government and that it was the new Constitutions, approved by Rome which effected the change to central government under a Mother General. In fact the reverse was true and the Original Rule included the central government structure, which was endorsed by Rome. The confusion regarding government was no doubt exacerbated by the appending of Bishop Shiel's approbation to the rewritten Rule, which concretized the idea that Diocesan control was contained in the original Rule. It may have been this that led Hyacinth to claim, in old age, that the Diocesan Josephites were the true Josephites.

The Original Rule written by Woods in October, 1867, according to O'Neill had been inspired by the Rules of St Benedict, St Francis, and St Paul of the Cross and contained elements of these. "Generous aspirations, high ideals, warm and sincere piety.

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<sup>48</sup> Press, 1994, 180.

<sup>49</sup> Constitutions Ch. IX.

. . . but it lacked nearly all that was required to make them serviceable”.<sup>50</sup> O’Neill’s criticism of the Rule as largely ineffectual and confused followed on the critique given by Fr Bianchi OP (Procurator-General of the Order of St Dominic and Consultor of the Congregation of Propaganda), as “very imperfect, confused, full of directions which are too detailed etc. [*sic*] it has seemed good to abandon them, and put before the Sisters the Constitution here adjoined”.<sup>51</sup>

*Differences between the Original Rule, 1867 and the Bathurst Rule, 1878*

The 1878 rewritten Rule differed little from the new Constitutions approved by the Holy See for the Sisters affirming central government under one Superior General (See Table 1 below). The new Bathurst Rule erroneously concluded with the approbation of Dr Shiel, who had died four years earlier. According to Crowley (2002) Woods based the rewritten Rule on that drafted by Bianchi and approved by Rome. The Original Rule was attached to the rewritten Rule under the heading of “Explanation of the Rule.” The rewritten Rule differed little from the original.

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<sup>50</sup> O’Neill, 1929, 293.

<sup>51</sup> Cited in Foale, 1989, 130.

Table 1: Differences between the Original Rule and the Bathurst Rule<sup>52</sup>

	Original Rule	Bathurst Rule 1878
<i>Government</i>	The Institute is to be governed by a Sister Guardian and two consultors – all who are to be elected by the sisters every six years.	The Sister- Guardian is “Superior <u>under the Bishop</u> of all the houses of the diocese. She is elected every three years and is assisted by a Council of three chosen by herself, with Bishop’s approval. One of these is the Novice Mistress.
	The Institute shall be divided into provinces governed by the Sister Provincial who shall <u>under the Bishop</u> regulate the affairs of the communities of that Province. She shall be appointed by the Sisters Guardian General.	
<i>Chapters</i>	A General Chapter shall take place every six years in a Provincial Chapter every three years. Both may add constitutions which must be approved the Sister Guardian General and Consultors before adoption.	General Chapter takes place every three years.
<i>Accounts</i>	The Little Sister shall take charge of the accounts or shall appoint another to do so.	In each house a Sister shall be pointed who shall keep accounts- Ch. II Rule III The Sister Bursar shall give an account to the Bishop every year.
<i>The Vow of Poverty</i>	They shall not accept property for their houses and they should not <u>easily</u> receive rich postulants. If postulants who are rich wish to join the Institute they must resign the use of their property entirely while they are with the Sisters and the Institute must benefit no way by it. The houses shall be absolutely without revenues.	The same as the original rule only the word <u>easily</u> omitted. Candidates bring no dowry. But as the Institute cannot possess property she cannot leave its administration to the Sisters. (Ch III, II) They shall be supported by such arrangements as the Bishop shall direct.
<i>Entrance to the Institute</i>	Postulants may be received after three months probation. They serve one year as novices. The vows are then renewed for two years. Then renewed for life	1. Postulants must be six months before being habited- then are one year novices, their vows are made for two years then for four years and then for life. 2. Converts must have a dispensation from the Bishop.
<i>Religious exercises</i>	1. The professed Sisters should when they can communicate every day	1. The Sisters should go to communion on all convenient occasions.

<sup>52</sup> TSSJ. "The Rules Compared." Westbury, 1889.TSSJA.

	(Book of Instructions). 1. They shall then hear Mass. (Daily Duties).	2. The Sisters should assist at Mass when <u>convenient</u> once a day. If they cannot hear Mass they should assist in spirit or read Mass Prayers.
<i>Religious observances</i>	1. Taking care to avoid speaking to anyone in the street even to each other. In leaving the house at any time they shall observe the same rule. 2. The Sisters abstain from meat on every Wednesday and Saturday and from fruit during novenas preceding the feasts of St Joseph and the Immaculate Conception	1. Same as original rule.  2. The sisters shall abstain from meat on Wednesdays from fruit during novenas preceding the 19th March and 8 <sup>th</sup> December.  3. The Sisters shall not take wine, spirits, or any intoxicating drink...No general dispensations can be allowed on this rule.
<i>Noviciates</i>	1. In every diocese there shall be <u>Houses of Noviciate</u> where postulants shall be trained for the school. 2. The Mistress of Novices shall be appointed by the Sisters Guardian General and have power to send away or receive postulants with then consent of the Sister Provincial and local Chapter. 3. When the community consists of no more than two or three, postulants may be received by them but not novices. 4. The Little Sister may appoint a Mistress of Novices where such an office is required by the number of novices.	1. In every diocese there shall be a noviciate where <u>novices</u> and postulants shall be trained to their duties. 2. The Mistress of Novices is appointed after each general Chapter by the Sister Guardian <u>with the consent of the Bishop.</u>
<i>Foundations</i>	1. They may in extreme cases go in a community of two.	1. Never less than three should be sent to a foundation.
<i>Music</i>	To promote devotions they shall teach music but no instrumental music.	1. A Sister with the permission of the Bishop may play the organ in the Church, but only where no other player can be obtained and never for a secular choir. 2. Whenever they undertake to teach music it must be only under circumstances of necessity in keeping with the objects of the Institute.

The most significant difference effected was that of the government of the congregation with the transfer from central government to Diocesan control, whereas the original Rule stated:

The Institute is to be governed by a Sister Guardian General and two consultors - all of whom are to be elected by the Sisters every six years. They have authority over all the houses of the Institute.

The Institute shall be divided into Provinces formed by a Sister Provincial who shall under the Bishop regulate the affairs of the communities of that Province. She shall be appointed by the Sister Guardian General.<sup>53</sup>

The 1878 Bathurst Rule quite decisively placed the authority for the Congregation firmly in the hands of the Bishop,

The Sister Guardian is Superior under the Bishop of all the houses of the diocese. She is elected every three years and is assisted by a council of three chosen by herself, with the Bishop's approval. One of these is the Mistress of novices.

The Bishop, as Superior, assumed responsibility for a minutiae of details of convent life, including the yearly financial accounts for each house - "the Sister bursar shall give an account to Bishop every year" whereas the original Rule left the accountability of the finances of the Congregation in the hands of the Sisters' Council.<sup>54</sup>

A curious inclusion or perhaps a curious exclusion from the Original Rule was the prohibition of alcohol, "The Sisters shall not take wine, spirits or any intoxicating drink. No general dispensations can be allowed on this Rule."<sup>55</sup> This was to be enforced for the next hundred years, until a reassessment occurred in the 1970s.

The issue of separate novitiates was enshrined in the Rule, maintaining the autonomy of each Diocesan group and ensuring that ties to the original foundation were severed.

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<sup>53</sup> O.R. Ch X.

<sup>54</sup> BR, Ch VII.

<sup>55</sup> BR, Ch. VII.



In every diocese there shall be a novitiate where novices and postulants shall be trained to their duties.<sup>56</sup>  
The mistress of novices is appointed after each general chapter by the Sister Guardian with the consent of the Bishop.<sup>57</sup>

### *Foundations*

A variation between the two Rules was on the number of those required to make a new foundation. There may have been some confusion between the concept of a foundation, which would have occurred on entering a new diocese, and between an additional community set up in the same diocese. The change in the number of personnel could be attributed to this confusion. For the Diocesan Josephites the establishment of new houses occurred at considerable distance from the original foundation at Bathurst, for example Wanganui, New Zealand and Westbury, Tasmania. The additional personnel was a sensible change.

They may in extreme cases go in a community of two.<sup>58</sup>  
Never less than three should be sent to a foundation.<sup>59</sup>

They are never to go alone into any parish, but they may in extreme cases go in a community of two. Three or four is the desirable number for a mission, but unless the school be large, all four need not be employed in teaching.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> BR, XI.

<sup>57</sup> BR, XI.

<sup>58</sup> OR, V.

<sup>59</sup> BR, V.

<sup>60</sup> BR, V.

### *Teaching of Music*

Whilst the original Rule forbade the teaching of music, “To promote devotion they shall teach singing, but no instrumental music nor foreign-language”.<sup>61</sup> The rewritten Rule allowed the teaching of music. This was indeed a fortuitous innovation as it was the music fees that provided the financial assistance to maintain most communities, “Whenever they undertake to teach music it must be only under circumstances of necessity in keeping with the objects of the Institute”.<sup>62</sup>

The spiritual direction that Woods’ continued to exert over the Diocesan group ensured that he was regarded as their founder to the exclusion of Mary MacKillop. His removal by Quinn as director in 1882 had significant impact on his place in the history of the Diocesan Josephites at Perthville; while away from Perthville the Tasmanian Josephites were to maintain a consistent contact with him until his death.

### The Formation of the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph

The work of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania took place around the establishment and running of their schools. Part of their ministry also included visitation of their children and the families and the instruction of Catholic children attending state schools. In the decade preceding the arrival in Tasmania of the Sisters of St Joseph, Fr

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<sup>61</sup> OR, Ch VI.

<sup>62</sup> BR, Ch VI.

Julian Tenison Woods, their cofounder had a significant impact operating as a missionary in the Tasmanian community. Bishop Daniel Murphy had become acquainted with Woods in Adelaide when he was appointed to examine the nature of the opposition of the clergy to Woods and the Josephites. The resulting report was forwarded to Rome. Murphy invited Woods to spend many years giving missions throughout Tasmania.<sup>63</sup> Woods also acted as administrator in Hobart while the Bishop and the administrator were holidaying in Sydney.<sup>64</sup> Bishop Murphy had even extended an invitation to Woods to remain permanently in Tasmania; an invitation Fr Woods chose to decline in preference for continuing missionary work.<sup>65</sup> Woods was therefore well known to the local priests and respected as an eminent preacher and his missions given throughout the island were well received by the parishes.<sup>66</sup>

The charismatic influence of Father Woods while giving missions is illustrated by fifteen Tasmanian women joining the Sisters of St Joseph in Bathurst and Queensland between 1870 and 1874, with thirteen joining during 1874.<sup>67</sup> Among the numbers joining as a result of Woods' intervention, Josephite records show that three women joined from the little township of Westbury.<sup>68</sup> Woods' newly founded Congregation of the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, attracted a further four Tasmanian women, including Catherine Gaffney, who as Sr Stanislaus was the first Superior.<sup>69</sup> The influence of Woods within the Tasmanian Church was significant and his influence and the esteem in

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<sup>63</sup> Fr Woods was present giving missions throughout Tasmania from July, 1874 to December 1876.

<sup>64</sup> Press, 1994, 168.

<sup>65</sup> I. Hepburn, 1979, *No Ordinary Man- The life and letters of Julian E. Tenison Woods*, Sisters of St Joseph, Wanganui, N. Z., 184.

<sup>66</sup> At Geeveston, above the lintel of the door, Woods recorded that 472 people received communion there at the first mission in 1874. An extraordinary number, considering the population of the town. Anecdotal evidence relates that families pitched their tents in the church grounds to hear him preach See Hepburn, 178.

<sup>67</sup> Fr Woods in a letter to Mary MacKillop of July, 1875 speaks of his gaining numbers of young women for the Sisters of St Joseph. "I nearly doubled their numbers," cited by O'Neill, 1926, 278.

<sup>68</sup> Sisters of St Joseph Archives, Mount Street North Sydney confirm Sr Mary La Merci Mahoney, from Westbury became Mary MacKillop's Assistant 1890-1896.

<sup>69</sup> Hepburn, 81.

which he was held long outlived his contact with the Tasmanian people. His missionary activity was a prelude to the ready acceptance of the Sisters of St Joseph into Tasmania some ten years after his last mission. Woods writing to Mary MacKillop had intended providing Sisters for Tasmania as early as 1869:

There is no diocese, however, which wants the Sisters so badly as that of Tasmania. I am to see the Bishop of that place today or tomorrow on the subject and whatever comes I would send Sisters there if I am asked.<sup>70</sup>

Events in Adelaide militated against a foundation in Tasmania at that time. The Sisters of St Joseph, who would eventually arrive in Tasmania, were both Diocesan and formed from a separated group, following the estrangement of Mary MacKillop and Woods.

It was from the remaining Perthville group that the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph were founded in 1887. Francis McCarthy, one of Bishop Quinn's Irish postulants was selected to be foundress of the Tasmanian foundation, while Hyacinth transferred to the Tasmanian group in 1891 after founding the Diocesan New Zealand Josephites at Wanganui in 1880. The Tasmanian group, therefore, had a tangible link to the original foundation through Hyacinth, Francis McCarthy the Foundress of the Tasmanian foundation, and also through the pronounced influence of Woods on the Tasmanian Church.

On their arrival in Tasmania, the Sisters of St Joseph did not possess copies of the *Book of Instructions*, or the *Directory* as they had been destroyed at Perthville during 1883. Correspondence from Fr Woods revealed the exact nature of their destruction:

In answer to your questions, you speak of the Directory but not of the Book of Instructions (here he alludes to the name we gave it) [at Bathurst it is crossed out]. The Bishop of Bathurst now says that he never authorized Fr Huggard to have them burnt. The Bishop of Maitland, when he heard of their destruction, said that the objections to it were

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<sup>70</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to M. MacKillop, April 24, 1869. Copy TSSJA uncatalogued

most foolish and so permitted the Sisters to keep them. If you have not got the *Instructions*, I will send them to you.<sup>71</sup>

They relied on their contact with Fr Woods to shape their understanding of the Rule. In discussion of the Rule, this research will address only the portion of the Rule which appeared in the rewritten Rule as “Explanation of the Rule”, but which was in fact the Original 1867 Rule. This Rule animated the life of the Congregation and the writer’s research suggests that it was through their reliance on this Rule that the Josephites in Tasmania maintained many of the traditions, which were altered in other branches of the Congregation. These will be addressed in Chapter 3.

#### Option to join Mary MacKillop’s Sisters

Just one year after their arrival in Tasmania on July 25, 1888, Roman authorities (Propaganda Fide) issued a decree, confirming the Constitutions of the Central Josephites and giving the Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph the opportunity of remaining in the Diocese under the respective authority of the Bishops or of joining the Motherhouse in North Sydney.

That it is permitted to the Bishops who have in their dioceses convents of the aforesaid Sisters to erect them into a Diocesan Institute, if the said Bishops be unwilling that the Sisters in their dioceses should be dependent on the Motherhouse in Sydney; but in this event that it is free to those Sisters who at the present moment dwell in these dioceses either to remain in the Diocesan Institute or to betake themselves to the Motherhouse.<sup>72</sup>

The decree also required that the Diocesan Institutes make some change to the habit and the Rule to distinguish them from the Central Josephites:

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<sup>71</sup> Letter, J.E.T. Woods to F. McCarthy, n.d., 1887.TSSJA uncatalogued.

<sup>72</sup> Propaganda, July 25 1888, "Decree of Propaganda".

Lastly that those Diocesan Institutes which shall be distinct from the regular Congregation, shall make some change in the habit and the Rule, and shall be approved by their respective Bishops.<sup>73</sup>

The Decree was to have no impact on the Tasmanian Josephites, as Bishop Murphy, failed to inform the Sisters of the decree. The other Bishops with Diocesan Josephites in their dioceses omitted to notify the Sisters of the decree and it was not until 1899, with the printing of the approved Rule for the Josephites in the Bathurst diocese, that they were made aware of the option that they had been given 10 years earlier.<sup>74</sup> For the Tasmanian Josephites the option to return to the Central Josephites in Sydney was never raised and the Chapters<sup>75</sup> occurring through the 1890s make no comment on this matter, nor is any consideration given to this option. Crowley (2002) and Zimmerman (2000) consider that the Bishops chose to keep the Sisters in ignorance so as to preserve the staffing of their schools.

It is a matter of speculation as to whether the Tasmanian Sisters would have taken up the option to join the Sydney Josephites and extant material provides no evidence that the Sisters were aware of the decree. Their allegiance to Woods and their strong adherence to the 1878 Rule, coupled with the influence of Srs Joseph Eather, Hyacinth Quinlan, Ambrose Joseph Dirkin and John Dowling, may have precluded their considering seriously the option to rejoin the Central Josephites, although the option to transfer was available until the turn of the century.

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<sup>73</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>74</sup> Crowley, 82.

<sup>75</sup> Chapters are formal meetings of all members of the Congregation to discuss matters of importance and to elect the leadership of the Congregation. All members who have made vows for life are able to vote. These members would have been Sisters for 9 years.

## Conclusion and Significance

The formative experiences of the Sisters of St Joseph which centred upon the controversy over the interpretation of the Rule and its revision by Rome and the ensuing separation, were to have a lasting impact on the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania. This inherent sense of separation was to shape the Josephites self-understanding and they carried with them a sense of inferiority, stemming from their Rule's prescription that they be humble and be considered least in the household of God. This sense of inferiority will be discussed in a later chapter. The factors described gave rise to historical distortion regarding the authenticity of the Original Rule and the revised Rule, which was perpetuated into contemporary times. This is evidenced by their interpretation through oral history of their belief that the Original Rule contained Diocesan government and that Rome had changed Woods' original intention. The belief that they were the keepers of the original tradition as enshrined in the 1867 Rule, reinforced and articulated by Woods in both the 1867 Rule and again in the 1878 Bathurst Rule was to provide them with a sense of authenticity. For the Tasmanian foundation both Woods and Hyacinth Quinlan played a unique role in their formation. The former through his correspondence to Francis McCarthy in the founding months and Hyacinth as the custodian of the Josephite spirit from Perthville and through her leadership in Tasmania. Hyacinth's place, which had a lasting impression, shall be discussed in subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE TASMANIAN FOUNDATION

#### Introduction

The Tasmanian foundation was to provide a major challenge given the recent foundation of the Congregation, the inexperience of the Sisters, their age and the distance from the Bathurst community. The Congregation had come to birth only twenty years earlier in South Australia in 1866 and the subsequent parting brought about by Bishop Matthew Quinn of Bathurst saw the fourteen of the sixteen more experienced Sisters leave for Adelaide with Mother Mary MacKillop.<sup>1</sup> The acrimony towards Mary MacKillop in later years was absent in the foundational phase of the Tasmanian community; however, of particular significance for the founding group was their reliance on cofounder Tenison Woods in their foundation year, which it will be argued, heightened their recognition of him as their founder and director. It shall be argued that there are two misconceptions of the “founding myth,” relating to a sense of not being welcome and confusion regarding their intended foundation stemming from their insecurity relating to the separation at Perthville.

However, the Tasmanian setting and prevailing social conditions were ideally suited to the Josephite model of religious life and schooling. The Tasmanian Catholic Church’s engagement in the education debate provided the impetus for the development of the Josephite schools and the Tasmanian colonial education system influenced and affected the Sisters of St Joseph and the development of their school system.

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<sup>1</sup> Foale 132.



### Tasmania in the 1880s

Tasmania in the 1880s was in a period of unprecedented growth between the depressions, which had marked the 1870s and the 1890s. During the 1880s, there was an increased growth of population, whereas the preceding decades had seen a decrease. The population growth was assisted by the mining discoveries of tin, gold, lead, silver and copper in particular at Mount Bishoff, Zeehan, and Mount Lyell. The colony grew from 100, 000 in 1870 to 115,000 in 1881. The population by 1891 had increased by 26.75% to 146,000. Of significance was the increase of children who accounted for 41% of the population in 1891.<sup>2</sup>

The end of the depression in the 1870s heralded a new prosperity, which gave rise to increased confidence and saw an improvement in communication. Agriculture developed steadily between 1870 and 1900 and wages and price increases improved the lot of the working classes. During the 1870s, there was the beginning of notable development in the north of the colony beyond Deloraine, with the completion of a sealed road linking Emu Bay to Launceston in 1885. This development was even more significant in the 1880s and the area beyond Deloraine, into which the Josephites would move, had a population of 34,000 by 1901.<sup>3</sup>

Setbacks in the 1890s resulted in high unemployment in the towns. Tasmania suffered perhaps more than the other colonies during the general depression of 1890-94. The collapse of the Bank of Van Diemen's Land, Tasmania's biggest financial institution, a typhoid epidemic resulting in a high mortality and the end of the land

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<sup>2</sup> W.A Townsley. *Tasmania from Colony to Statehood 1803-1945*. Hobart: St David's Park, 1991, 131.

<sup>3</sup> Townsley, *Tasmania from Colony to Statehood 1803-1945*, 132.

boom brought a decrease in confidence in the future of the colony, a loss in trade with the other colonies and resulted in widespread poverty.<sup>4</sup>

The great majority (79.9%) of the Tasmanian population was born in Australia with 70.59% born in Tasmania. Catholics were a minority group in 1891 with the census showing they accounted for only 18% of the population. The majority of the population was Anglican (54%), 14% were Methodists, 8.5% Presbyterians, and 6% Baptists.<sup>5</sup> The Catholics formed a small portion of the population and were largely Irish with many of convict ancestry. Anti Catholicism existed but was not a significant factor given the low numbers and the moderate line taken by the clergy.<sup>6</sup> The sectarian feeling would emerge with regard to the educational reforms introduced prior to the Sisters of St Joseph's arrival in Tasmania in 1887.

### *Education in Tasmania*

Education had long been a concern in the colony with a Board of Education set up in 1838 to supervise all public schools. Thirty schools existed under the direct control of the Church of England with an annual government grant of £3,500. Governor Wilmot adapted the government subsidy to include funding of one penny a day per child in independent schools in 1848. The Board of Education had responsibility for 22 schools with 1267 pupils, the Church of England had 24 schools with 951 pupils and the Catholic schools numbered four with 315 pupils.

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<sup>4</sup> D. Selth. "The Effect of Poverty and Politics on the Development of Tasmanian State Education 1900-1950." M A, University of Tasmania, 1969, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Townsley, 131.

<sup>6</sup> L.L. Robson. *A History of Tasmania: Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980's*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991, 84.

Thomas Arnold, (Inspector of Schools 1850-1856) son of Arnold of Rugby School was appointed Inspector of Schools in 1850 and during his term was instrumental in convincing governments to treble expenditure on education, and developed a system for the training and promotion of teachers.

There had been no real educational reform in Tasmania, as the depressed economic conditions from the early 1850s to the 1880s did not allow the expenditure necessary for the reform of education. The 1881 census revealed that 35% of the population was illiterate but the poor economy prohibited free education.<sup>7</sup> There was no teacher training institution and this situation was to remain beyond the turn of the century at which time 30% of teachers had pupil-teacher training only and the remainder had no professional training of any kind.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the mainland states it was not sectarian sentiments or increasing enrolments which stimulated educational reform, but rather the new found prosperity resulting from the mineral wealth of the mid 1880s which was the catalyst for social and educational reform.<sup>9</sup> The 1901 census revealed a slight increase in literacy rates from 1881 but still only 77% of Tasmanians could read and write; the only state lower was Queensland with a high proportion of illiterate Pacific Islanders.<sup>10</sup>

### *Educational Reforms*

The Public Schools Bill of 1868 was the means whereby Tasmania became the first colony in the British Empire to introduce compulsory education for neglected

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<sup>7</sup> Robson, *A History of Tasmania: Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980's*, 143.

<sup>8</sup> Selth, i.

<sup>9</sup> A. Barcan. *A History of Australian Education*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980, 149.

<sup>10</sup> Selth, 9.

children and made elementary education compulsory from 7 to 12 years. The various exemptions, however, negated the full impact of the Bill. This Bill resulted in sectarian controversy as Catholics had grown in number since the abolition of state aid in 1854, when they had fewer schools.<sup>11</sup> State aid to denominational schools had ended in 1854, but teachers provided religious instruction for the first hour of the day and clergy had the right to access classes for their own instruction. With the arrival of the new Irish Bishop Daniel Murphy and his Irish Vicar General, a more hard line approach was adopted than the one taken by his English predecessor, Bishop Willson. Bishop Murphy through the local Catholic paper, *The Catholic Standard*, called for schools to be reserved for Catholic children or in the case of a majority of Catholic students that Catholic teachers be employed. This occurred at the Harrington Street, Hobart school, which although a public school operated as a Catholic school. The main issue dealt not with the religious instruction of children, but rather with the abolition of State aid to schools.<sup>12</sup>

In 1873 parliament amended the Public Schools Act raising the age of compulsory schooling from 12 to 14 years and increasing the obligatory attendance at school to those living within one mile to two miles of the school. Despite the endeavour to ensure compulsory education the efforts resulted in an attendance rate of 75.3% of enrolments: this had declined to 72.4% by 1881. A Public School Amendment Act of 1882 led to estimates of the number of illiterates being 35% of the population.

A select committee on education was established in 1882 and concluded that a State Education Department should be established.<sup>13</sup> The situation in the 1880s showed

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<sup>11</sup> Catholic schools numbered only four in 1848 with an enrolment of 317.

<sup>12</sup> Barcan, 146.

<sup>13</sup> The System of Education in Tasmania and Central Control Thereof, Report of a Select Committee of the House of Assembly 1882, Vol. XL111, Tasmania Parliament 1882, No. 106.

a high degree of irregular attendance and a floating population of students transferring from one school to another, if the issue of non-attendance was addressed. The reason for truancy was the poverty of the families who relied on the earnings of the children, and hence had little regard for education. Reading materials were in short supply and it was only in Hobart and Launceston that public libraries existed.<sup>14</sup> The people in rural areas were intent on the development of the land and the families on meagre wages depended heavily on any other additional source of income for their survival. While school was compulsory for all children aged between seven and thirteen for three days of the week, for poorer parents the payment of fees precluded regular attendance, as the children were required to contribute to the household income. The fees would be waived in case of real poverty but amounted to a cost of one shilling per week by parents who could afford to pay.<sup>15</sup>

The 1885 Education Act was amended in 1886 by Henry Dobson, Minister of Education to make school compulsory for 5 days a week, but as L. L. Robson (1991) observed education was “still not free, secular and compulsory but cheap, Christian and compulsory”.<sup>16</sup> All children were required to pay to attend school, whether they were in state or non-state schools with fees charged ranging from 6d to 9d per week. The amended Education Act of 1886 was a document full of compromises, reducing the leaving age to 13 years from the 14 years. The rationale for granting of exemptions made a mockery of compulsory education as children as young as eleven could be granted an exemption from attending school, and children could stay at home for two days each week with four hours attendance counted as a day. The 1886 Act ended non-denominational religious instruction by the teacher but clergy were still able to continue instruction.

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<sup>14</sup> Selth, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Royal Commission; Strahan to SS, C. O. 280/390; T. P. P. 45 (70), (123) 1883.

<sup>16</sup> Robson, 144.

*Non-government schools*

The non-government sector had seen an increase in the provision of education for both primary and post primary students. By 1885, Tasmania had five grammar schools for boys and three for girls. The largest school was the Anglican Hutchins School with 96 pupils. Launceston Church Grammar had an enrolment of eighty-five, Horton College in Ross had fifty, Scotch College, Hobart had 65 boys. The Quakers opened their school, The Friends School in 1887, which was coeducational. The girls' schools included the Presentation Convent of St Mary's in Hobart with 220 pupils; the Methodist Ladies College and an Anglican Ladies College had 85 pupils. The state schools system had not yet developed a system of secondary schools and these would not be developed until the new century.<sup>17</sup>

The Catholic Response to the Education issue

The Tasmanian setting into which the Sisters of St Joseph immersed themselves was to provide them with challenges which called forth their particular charism. Most Catholic people of late nineteenth century northern Tasmania were poor, lacking in education and generally failing to influence the political situation of the day. By 1870 accounting for 22% of the population, Catholics had little influence, given the restricted franchise and property requirements for members of parliament. In 1879

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<sup>17</sup> Townsley, 148; Robson, 147.

there were only three Catholic members of parliament, all of whom were born in Ireland (J. Balfe, J. M. Dooley and C. O'Reilly were members of Parliament who were Catholic).<sup>18</sup> Primary education, while acknowledged as important, had never gained the necessary financial support from the government to meet adequately the needs of the young. The Anglican Bishop Daniel Sanford in his report to the Archbishop of Canterbury judged Tasmanian education to be at very low level with irregular attendance and poorly educated teachers in the rural areas. He described a moral and spiritual lethargy and stated that "Tasmanians were ignorant but proud of it".<sup>19</sup>

From the 1860s the Catholic Church had taken up the issue of education and had been uncompromising in its zeal in the promotion of Catholic schools. The 1869 Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Province speaks of the "evil of mixed schools"<sup>20</sup> and William Dunne the Vicar General of Hobart, referring to the hour of religion each day, writes of "Catholic children [having] practically a form of religious instruction forced upon them in the Public schools, which their parents and guardians and their Church condemn."<sup>21</sup> Bishop Daniel Murphy of Hobart in his 1874 Pastoral letter quotes from the Decree concerning education published by the Second Provincial Council of Australia, calling for the removal of Catholic youth from public schools and for the erection of Catholic schools.<sup>22</sup> A Catholic Association was mooted in the 1879 Pastoral Letter in an attempt to mobilize the faithful in "the promotion of all that may pertain to the true and genuine education of Catholic youth, according to the mind of the Holy See".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Robson, 84.

<sup>19</sup> Robson, 162.

<sup>20</sup> "The Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop and Bishops of the Province." Melbourne: Clarson, Massins, 1869. AHMA.

<sup>21</sup> W. J. Dunne. "Pastoral for Lent 1870." Hobart Town: Mercury, 1870, 17. AHMA.

<sup>22</sup> D. Murphy. "Pastoral Letter." Hobart Town: Mercury, 1874, 8-9. AHMA.

<sup>23</sup> D. Murphy. "Pastoral for Lent 1879." Hobart Town: R.G. Fitzsimons, 1879, 7. AHMA.

The 1884 March Pastoral letter of Bishop Murphy, although strongly condemning mixed schools, was not supported as enthusiastically by the Tasmanian Catholic community as the Catholic community of New South Wales vigorously supported the Church authorities in the education debate. By 1883 in Tasmania, 2,142 Catholics attended public schools, which was 15% of all pupils. The number increased to 2,391 in 1886, which was 14.9% of the total state enrolment. The only area to demonstrate a decline of Catholic children in enrolling in state schools was in Hobart, which had more Catholic schools, and where the Church had a greater influence.<sup>24</sup>

In March 1884 Bishop Murphy called on all Catholics to devote themselves to the establishment of Catholic schools and gave an indication that Catholic schooling would be available beyond the major towns of Hobart and Launceston, yet remained optimistic that funding would be restored to the schools.

We see no reason why the other townships which do not as yet enjoy a like advantage should not place themselves to do so. . . In this country of your adoption you have full scope to practise and extend your religion, and to establish Catholic schools, and little more is required of you to support these than the regular payment of school fees, which is in the power of the generality of our people to do without much inconvenience to themselves. Yet this sacrifice we believe to be only temporary, for we assure ourselves that our legislators will, in time acknowledge the justice of your claims to a share of the education grant, for the support of your schools, which claims it is your interest to urge again and again until they are granted.<sup>25</sup>

The Catholics requested payment by results for government funding. Bishop Murphy complained that Catholics were in fact being taxed twice, as they could not receive public funding for education without compromising their beliefs. Their quest for payment by results was unsuccessful.

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<sup>24</sup> Barcan, 148.

<sup>25</sup> D. Murphy. "Pastoral Letter." Hobart, 1884, 9.AHMA.



The Second Plenary Council<sup>26</sup> of 1895 dealt with the Catholic school at length and spoke of “the dangers that beset the house,” but also warned “of those which lurk in the school”.<sup>27</sup> The Council acknowledged the growth in the numbers of Australians joining religious congregations, whose major focus was on the provision of Catholic education. “The spirit has been spread abroad amongst our native youth, calling so many of them to dedicate their lives to the religious state, in order to provide the spread of Catholic education”.<sup>28</sup>

Despite lack of government funding Catholic education continued to spread and to maintain high standards with a very competitive edge to it, enabling the Bishops to proclaim,

In all cities and chief towns of the colonies we have schools in charge of brotherhoods and sisterhoods, which have again and again passed in triumph through the ordeal of public competition.<sup>29</sup>

By the 1890s the Sisters of St Joseph had already established themselves as a credible teaching force. With their particular focus on the poorer rural areas, it is understandable that Bishop Murphy invited the Sisters of St Joseph to Tasmania to assist in the provision of Catholic education in the more remote areas of the island.

In the remote settlements we have schools conducted by excellent Catholic teachers, trained chiefly in our larger establishments; and the poorest localities attended with the spirit of self-sacrifice, beyond all praise, by the Sisters of St Joseph.<sup>30</sup>

In an effort to counter a move promoting schools purporting to be Catholic but not under the control of the Catholic Church, Archbishop Murphy issued a letter to his clergy requesting that they inform the people of their obligation to support Catholic schools and that priests should give no encouragement to other schools unless they

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<sup>26</sup> Meeting of all Catholic Bishops in Australia.

<sup>27</sup> Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of Australia in Plenary Council Assembled 1895. Batson, Sydney, 37. Hereafter referred to as Plenary Council 1895.AHMA.

<sup>28</sup> Plenary Council 1895, 37. AHMA.

<sup>29</sup> Plenary Council, 1895, 44. AHMA.

<sup>30</sup> Plenary Council, 1895, 44. AHMA.

were recognized by the diocese. He took the extreme action of also reminding priests of their power to deny the sacraments both to children who attended non-Catholic schools and to their parents and guardians.<sup>31</sup>

This hard line approach with the imperative to provide children with Catholic schooling or face excommunication made the Josephites a solution for the provision of Catholic schooling in the more remote areas of the island. The poverty of the people and the Josephites' capacity to endure a frugal existence made their introduction into Catholic life very welcome. It was in this milieu that the Sisters of St Joseph were to become involved for the next one hundred years.

#### The Sisters of St Joseph arrive in Tasmania

Oral history is somewhat ambiguous about the actual intended destination of the Sisters. The "founding myth" has maintained that the original destination of the Sisters was Launceston. This thesis shall correctly identify the intended foundation and argue that the sense of not being welcome came from the ascendancy of the Bishop's family, the Josephites own sense of insecurity and the inadequate preparation for the Sisters' arrival, rather than from any change in the intended foundation.

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<sup>31</sup> D. Murphy. "Letter to Clergy on Catholic Schools." Hobart, 1896. AHMA.

*Founding Sisters of St Joseph, Westbury 1887*



*Back: Srs Stanislaus Doyle, Joseph Eather  
Front: Patrick Nolan, Francis McCarthy, Teresa Prendegast  
Courtesy Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town, Tasmania.  
Used with permission*

Founding myth

Oral tradition believes that the original invitation to Tasmania came from Archdeacon Michael Beechinor of Launceston, who visited Perthville and asked for a community of Sisters for Launceston.<sup>32</sup> On their arrival the Sisters were met by the Presentation Sisters but discovered that there was no place for them in Launceston. Oral history has maintained that they were unwelcome in Launceston, as the Presentations,

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<sup>32</sup> V. Burns. *Torchbearers for Christ: History of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart in Tasmania 1887-1966*. Hobart: Sisters of St Joseph, 1966, 8-9.

already established there, were very much part of the Murphy establishment, with the Launceston foundation having been made by yet another relative of the Beechinor-Murphy dynasty.<sup>33</sup> They then departed for Westbury.<sup>34</sup> However, the suggestion to move to Westbury and their arrival in Westbury within 24 hours of their arrival in Tasmania would indicate that their intended destination was Westbury, as there was a relatively high proportion of Catholics in the Westbury district and the parish priest was anxious to secure a Catholic school for his young parishioners.

This understanding is corroborated by Bishop Joseph Byrne's (Bishop of Bathurst 1885-1901), recording the intended destination as Westbury - "4. 5. 1887 – visited Convent of St Joseph Vale and arranged for Sr M Francis and a party of foundresses to go with her to Westbury, Tasmania to form a foundation of the community in the Diocese of Hobartown."<sup>35</sup>

Whatever about the initial invitation, it was certainly with the consent of and perhaps due to the request of Bishop Daniel Murphy that the five Sisters of St Joseph arrived in Westbury, a little town in northern Tasmania on May 24, 1887. The Westbury diary records the arrival, "Five Sisters of St Joseph arrived in Tasmania from Bathurst- Sr M Francis, Sr M Patrick, Sr M Joseph, Sr M Stanislaus and Sr M Teresa. May 24, 1887".<sup>36</sup>

The request must be considered in the knowledge that the Sisters of St Joseph and Fr Woods were well known to Bishop Murphy. In writing to Mary MacKillop in

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<sup>33</sup>Tasmanian historian L. Robson notes Bishop Murphy arrived in 1866 with his nephew Michael Beechinor as chaplain, followed, in October, by another nephew Daniel Beechinor and his sister Sr Francis Murphy and four Presentation Sisters, who were nieces. In total he managed to place four of his nephews as priests in Tasmania.

<sup>34</sup>Burns, 8.

<sup>35</sup>J. P. Byrne. "Diary 1885-1892." Bathurst, May 5 1892. Excerpts copied PSSJA.

<sup>36</sup>TSSJ. "Westbury Diary." In *Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town Tasmania*, 1887.

1869, Fr Woods remarks on the great need in Tasmania for Sisters of St Joseph and that he would send Sisters if he were asked.<sup>37</sup>

*Departure for Tasmania and reconnection with Mary MacKillop*

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1887, the Launceston *Examiner* reports in its information on shipping that the *SS Corinna* arrived from Sydney with “four Sisters of St Joseph’s convent”.<sup>38</sup> The *Corinna* had left Tasmanian Jetty of the Grafton Street Wharf the previous Thursday at 10:00 a.m.<sup>39</sup>

The number of members of the founding community is confusing as the Tasmanian register records five Sisters, but the shipping records only four and Joseph Eather recalls only four staying at Mount Street. Photographic evidence clearly depicts five Sisters present in Westbury in 1887<sup>40</sup> and the Melbourne *Advocate* records the names of five sisters.

Five members of a little community of the Sisters of St Joseph arrived at Hobart from New South Wales. They are to be settled at Westbury, and their names in religion are: Sr M Francis, Superior, Sr Patrick, Sr Bernard, Sr Mechtildes [sic] and Sr Bonaventure. The two first named are Irish, the third is a native of Tasmania and the other two are natives of Victoria.<sup>41</sup>

Joseph Eather’s recollections may have been influenced by the contemporary tendency to discount those who had left the Congregation “to return to the world” and

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<sup>37</sup> Letter, Fr Woods to Mary MacKillop, April 27 1869. “There is no diocese, however, which wants the Sisters so badly as that of Tasmania. I am to see the Bishop of that place today or tomorrow on that subject and whatever comes I would send my Sisters there if asked.” Copy TSSJA.

<sup>38</sup> "Information on Shipping." *Examiner*, May 23 1887.

<sup>39</sup> "Shipping." *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 19 1887.

<sup>40</sup> Photograph - Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart Tasmania.

<sup>41</sup> "Diocese of Hobart, Arrival of Nuns." *Advocate*, June 4 1887, 17.

as Teresa Prendegast left after the expiration of her temporary vows within the first few years, this would account for removal from the records.<sup>42</sup>

The Perthville Register, however, records the departure of the Sisters for Tasmania on May 20, 1887. “Sr M Francis (Sister Assistant) left in the company of Sr M Joseph, Patrick, Stanislaus and Teresa to make a new foundation in Westbury”.<sup>43</sup> Clearly the discrepancy, which exists, could be accounted for by the rewriting of the Perthville diary some years later.<sup>44</sup> The confusion in the names of the sisters can attributed for their tendency to change their names for a new foundation, hence Bernard was renamed Joseph to maintain the practice of having a Joseph in each community. Stanislaus had been named Mechtilde at Perthville and Bonaventure became Teresa in Tasmania.<sup>45</sup>

The early departure at 10:00 a.m. on May 19 would have necessitated accommodation overnight in Sydney and therefore the Sisters stayed with Mary MacKillop at Mount Street Sydney in the motherhouse of the Central Josephites. At this time Mary MacKillop presented the Sisters with a collar belonging to Fr Woods and a note authenticating it in her handwriting.<sup>46</sup> Joseph Eather, one of the pioneering Sisters recalled Mary MacKillop’s kindness, some fifty years later:

The four Sisters, myself included for the Tasmanian foundation stayed some time with the late foundress, Mother Mary. She was a real mother to us and gave us an invitation to the General Chapter, which was close at hand. But Archbishop Murphy would not allow us to accept the kind offer.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Letter, J. Eather to M. Cyril, May 12 1934. Copy TSSJA.

<sup>43</sup> Perthville Sisters of St Joseph. "Perthville Diary." In *Perthville Archives*. Perthville, 1872-1934. Perthville Diary 1872-1934, May 20 1887, 14. PSSJA.

<sup>44</sup> Crowley notes that the Sisters began a new diary after 1876 which was later copied into several books. The confusion in departure dates may have resulted in inaccurate copying. See Crowley, 216.

<sup>45</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>46</sup> C. Andrews, conversation with the author, June 22 2002. The custom of keeping articles of clothing or locks of hair was common in this period and in giving the founding Sisters an article belonging to Woods, MacKillop provided the group with a symbol connecting them to the founders.

<sup>47</sup> Letter, J. Eather to M. Cyril, May 5 1934. TSSJA.

The friendliness and kindness that the founding Sisters received from Mary MacKillop and her gesture in providing a “relic” of Woods circumvents the spirit of animosity which arose between Mary MacKillop and the Diocesan Sisters. According to Eather, Mary MacKillop invited them to attend the forthcoming chapter. In so doing MacKillop discloses a generosity of spirit towards the estranged group. However, the Tasmanian Bishop and the desire for Diocesan control coupled with the arrival of Hyacinth Quinlan and other Woods’ devotees contributed to the dissipation of such a warm relationship.

### *Westbury*

The town of Westbury, 20 kilometres from Launceston was a rural settlement. The town had been laid out in 1828 and closely resembled an English village with its village green. A public school, established in the town in 1854, was conducted in the local Catholic Church.<sup>48</sup> The Sisters of St Joseph arrived in Westbury from Launceston in a cab on May 24, 1887, carrying with them nothing but a large statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>49</sup> The Bishop, Archdeacon Beechinor and Fr Callaghan, replacing Archdeacon Hogan<sup>50</sup> who had left for a visit to Ireland, greeted them on their arrival. Arriving in an open chaise cart drawn by draught horses, they were greeted by the people of Westbury.<sup>51</sup> The convent, however, was not yet ready for their use, so Fr Callaghan vacated his house for the Sisters until the convent was ready. Such an inauspicious arrival would have tested the mettle of these pioneering Sisters but it was

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<sup>48</sup> J. Cullen. *Events of Catholic Interest, Unpublished*, n.d., 8.AOT.

<sup>49</sup> Burns, 8-9; "Death of Sr Francis McCarthy." *The Standard*, 1940.

<sup>50</sup> Archdeacon Hogan was appointed to Westbury by Bishop Willson in 1850 and was parish priest for 49 years in Westbury. See J. Cullen, 8.

<sup>51</sup> S. Becker. *Memories of Our Early Sisters*, 1986. Cassette recording.TSSJA.

this capacity to meet courageously the inconveniences of life in rural Tasmania, which would endear them to countless generations of Tasmanians. The “founding myth” interpretation of not being wanted is enhanced by the sense of being the newcomer and of inadequate preparation, so that even the little cottage that was to serve as the convent was not available. The school over which the Sisters of St Joseph presided opened with eight pupils in May, 1887 but in a matter of weeks the number of pupils had risen to ninety-four.

### The Pioneering Sisters

The five founding Sisters were to form the nucleus of the Tasmanian Congregation and therefore have a unique place in the founding story. Three of the Sisters were Irish and two Australian. The Sisters arrived under the leadership of Sr Mary Francis McCarthy, who came from Dublin, was 37 years old, and had been a Sister of St Joseph for 13 years.<sup>52</sup> Sister Mary Stanislaus Doyle from Wexford was aged 25 years had been a sister for five years. Sister Mary Joseph Eather, native of Newcastle, N S W was aged 27, a Josephite for eight years. Sister Patrick Nolan, native of Kerry Ireland, was aged 60, and had been a Sister of St Joseph for 12 years and the youngest member was Sister Teresa Prendergast, from Victoria aged 21. Known as Sr M. Bonaventure at Perthville, she had been a Josephite for four years.<sup>53</sup> Despite the mature years of Sister Patrick, her commitment as a Josephite was twelve years, three of which would have been as a postulant and novice.

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<sup>52</sup> Perthville Records 1872-1934. Record Book, Vale Road, Bathurst, NSW St Joseph's Convent July, 1872 to October 3 1934. PSSJA.

<sup>53</sup> "Westbury Diary." In *Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town Tasmania*, 1887.



Of the founding group both Francis and Patrick were present during the tumultuous time of the separation from the centrally governed Josephites at Perthville in 1876 and would have experienced the anguish caused by the turmoil and uncertainty of their status as religious. The founding Sisters, Francis McCarthy, Joseph Eather, Patrick Nolan, Stanislaus Doyle and Teresa Prendegast were each significant, three were to play a pivotal role as Sisters Guardian over the next decades. The founding Sisters illustrate the embodiment of the Rule in the way it was interpreted and lived within the Tasmanian setting and therefore their life is worthy of examination.

#### *Sister Francis McCarthy*

Francis McCarthy as foundress, as a link with the Bathurst separation, and as one of Quinn's Irish postulants was significant in her contribution in the foundational phase of the Westbury community. Her link with the Bathurst separation, her sympathetic attitude toward Mary MacKillop and her genuine spirituality made her an ideal foundress. Her lasting contribution to the Congregation was her faithful and charitable approach to life. She embodied those Josephite ideals of simplicity and hiddenness. Her role as Superior lasted only a few years, but her reputation as a saintly woman has been captured in the oral tradition.

Francis McCarthy was born Ann (Annie) McCarthy in Dublin Ireland on December 12, 1849. Her father Nicholas was a bootmaker. She left Ireland in 1875 aged twenty-five, at the request of Dr Matthew Quinn, Bishop of Bathurst, to enter the Sisters of St Joseph at Bathurst New South Wales. After disembarking from the *Ann Duthie* in Sydney, she arrived at The Vale (a small settlement outside Bathurst, now

known as Perthville) on May 1, 1875. Known at The Vale as Sr Francesca, she was professed on Low Sunday April 7, 1877, renewed her vows December 1878 and made Final Vows on Easter Sunday, 1879.

Francis has a unique place in the history of the origins of the Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph, as she was one of the Irish postulants left at Perthville with Hyacinth Quinlan, when fourteen Sisters decided to return to Adelaide and Mother Mary MacKillop in February, 1876. Her decision to remain at The Vale was not made freely as the young novice had made her intentions clear to Sr Joseph Dwyer, her Superior, who returned to Adelaide.

S. Francesca they sent back to The Vale. We saw her and she begged hard to come with us, but of course I could not take her, so she said she would tell the Bp. (Bishop) that she was determined to adhere to Mother Mary and the Constitutions and would go and earn her passage money and pay it back.<sup>54</sup>

The young novice was to remain a member of the Diocesan Josephites for the remainder of her life. The first twelve years of her life were spent at “The Vale” where she came under the influence of Father Julian Tenison Woods. After Fr Woods’ final retreat to the Sisters, Bishop Quinn appointed her assistant to Benedict Hickey in December 1881.<sup>55</sup> “She left for Hobart mission May 87.”<sup>56</sup> Twelve years later as the leader of the five foundation Sisters, Sr Francis stayed with Mary MacKillop at the convent in North Sydney before embarking on the sea voyage to Launceston. They were warmly welcomed by Mary MacKillop, who no doubt had fond memories of her as a young postulant, newly arrived from Ireland.<sup>57</sup> At the foundational phase the relationship with the cofounder appears particularly warm, in spite of the separation eleven years previously.

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<sup>54</sup> Letter, J. Dwyer to M. MacKillop, February 2 1876. Copy PSSJA.

<sup>55</sup> Crowley, 72.

<sup>56</sup> Perthville Register, 1914, 15.PSSJA.

<sup>57</sup> Crowley, 73.

Francis's early life in the Sisters of St Joseph would have been marked by the bitterness of the division between the professed Sisters and those who elected to stay behind with Hyacinth. Francis spent part of her postulancy at German Hill. Here she was to experience the difficulties of teaching in deprivation. The government had requisitioned the original school, built on crown land for the public school and the Sisters and children were relocated to a stable. The people provided accommodation for the Sisters in a lean-to, attached to a house. The parish priest had given the Sisters the choice of staying with the people until a school could be built or of moving to Borenore or Orange. Sr Francis in her letter indicates that the Superior, Sr M de Sales chose to remain for the sake of the children. Francis, in the only extant letter of an Irish postulant to Mary MacKillop writes in positive terms about a depressing situation:

So we are quite happy in our little room, only there is no room to stir. We leave our beds in a stable all day, and there is no glass in the window. One family offered all their place to us but S M de S [*sic*] did not like to knock them about, so one gave a stable for the school and another a room to live in. It is about 10 minutes walk from each place. Fr Welsh came and said mass in the hut we are living in. We enjoy the best of health and spirits, sincerely hoping that you, dearest mother enjoy the same.<sup>58</sup>

The spirit of courage and resignation to accept whatever life presented was to mark Sr Francis' approach to her task of educating the children. It would have therefore been inconceivable for her to be troubled by the convent not being completed for occupancy on her arrival in Westbury. She had after all lived in a "hut" and taught in a stable at German Hill and to be accommodated as a temporary measure would have been of no consequence. Such inconveniences would surely be a contrast from the city of Dublin, which she had known, to outback Australia and finally to rural Tasmania.

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<sup>58</sup> Letter, F. McCarthy to M. MacKillop, November 2 1875. Copy PSSJA.

Francis McCarthy was regarded as a highly cultivated lady and a most successful teacher. Archbishop Simonds, in speaking at her funeral attributed the rapid increase in the Westbury school to her “zeal and charity”.<sup>59</sup> In 1889 Francis, in the company of another professed sister and a postulant founded the convent at Hamilton on Forth, and within two more months had founded an additional convent at Ulverstone. A little over a year and again Sr Francis had opened a fourth convent at Devonport. Within a period of four years, she had established four convents. Regardless of the success of the foundations she made, Simonds recalls her suffering:

In her solicitude for the infant Congregation of which she was the mother in Tasmania, poverty, hardship, sufferings and many journeys were her lot. She too was subject to a perplexing trial, when after one of her journeys for the infant Congregation she lost the guardianship of the child she had brought to Tasmania, and was asked by authority to take a subordinate place in the young Institute she had founded.<sup>60</sup>

The interpretation of the change in leadership given by Archbishop Simonds is at variance with the official documentation from the *Records of Elections* which records that the transition occurred, only after the request from Francis that Joseph Eather replace her.<sup>61</sup> Certainly from Fr Woods’ correspondence, it can be gleaned that leadership was a trial to Sr Francis and a source of anxiety to her. There may well have been a personality conflict within the early community, but religious discipline would have seen someone with Sr Francis’ faith transform such obstacles as an opportunity for holiness.

Whether there were difficulties within the little community of Sisters, Francis was well loved, particularly in Northern Tasmania, where she was regarded as a saint. A

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<sup>59</sup> J. D. Simonds. "Death of Sr Francis McCarthy." *The Standard*, Feb 15 1940.

<sup>60</sup> Simonds, Feb 15 1940. AHMA.

<sup>61</sup> Tasmania Sisters of St Joseph. "Records of Elections of Sister Guardian in the Institute of St Joseph of the Diocese of Hobart." Hobart, 1898.

miracle attributed to Francis occurred in 1893 or 1895, when a little girl named Williams punctured her eyeball while trying to untie a knot from her shoelace with a fork. The local doctor declared that there was no hope of the child regaining her sight, but Sr Francis bound her eye with the brown scapular, and in a short time the child could see as well as ever. This event was reported in *The Messenger*. Mr Jack Crowe in a letter to the editor of *The Standard* speaks of Sr Francis as “the pious and saintly Sr Francis, beloved of all children.”<sup>62</sup>

Francis was a woman of great faith, who in her latter years was able to spend time in deep prayer in what she referred to as enjoying a “honeymoon”. Her relationship with Christ was personal, familiar and ever deepening, as her letter to Sr Anthony at Perthville reveals:

Here in my 77<sup>th</sup> and a half year, O it is worth living for. You know old couples can't enjoy each other's company in peace till all the fuss and worry of the children are over and all cleared out to their own home. So with us, when we are done in school and won't be let work through old age, we can have good chats and growls too. . . . While waiting for the word, 'Come' or 'Well done good and faithful . . . Sister into the joy of thy Lord.'<sup>63</sup>

At her funeral Simonds spoke of Francis' gaiety and spontaneity which enabled her to “use the most ordinary things of life to elevate her own mind and the minds of others to supernatural things”.<sup>64</sup> His conclusion to the eulogy included her own prayer based around a battered crib at Ulverstone:

Grant O infant Jesus, that I may be like that shepherd, without a head to reason or rebel; like that cow without horns, to escape hurting anyone; and without feet like your little image here so as not to be able to run away from Thee. Amen.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> J. Crowe, Letter to the Editor, *The Standard*, February 15 1940.

<sup>63</sup> Letter, F. McCarthy to M. Anthony, July 1927. Copy TSSJA.

<sup>64</sup> Simonds, Feb 15 1940.

<sup>65</sup> F.McCarthy, n. d.

The prayer illustrates a profoundly simple faith which provided Francis and the Tasmanian foundation with the strength and courage to meet all the challenges involved in living out religious life and enabled them to be one with the people as together they lived out their vision for the Catholic school and parish. Her life typifies the ordinariness of her background and yet reflects the deep and simple spirituality which marked her life.

*Sister Mary Joseph Eather*

Joseph Eather as the second Superior fulfilled a very different role from Francis, her predecessor. In contrast to the saintly qualities of Francis, Joseph displayed a unique individuality and independence, which placed her outside the acceptable normal hallmarks of a Sisters of St Joseph. Of particular interest is her competence as a music teacher, which provided her with a certain status within the Tasmanian community and which was at variance with the Josephite notion of “hiddenness.” Joseph was very much an individual, who as a convert, departed from the average recruit. Her allegiance to Woods would prove to be a point of contention in her old age and cause her to seek transfer to the centrally governed Josephites. Joseph maintained her individuality and did not succumb to the pressures of the vowed life, remaining always a woman of independence and determination, demonstrating the unique individuality which continued to flourish in what would have been considered a very conforming society.

Joseph Eather was the daughter of the pioneering Protestant family of Robert Vincent Eather and Annie Cornwell. Born on September 4, 1860, Joseph converted to Catholicism through the intervention of her aunt, Cecilia Despointes, a great friend of Fr

Woods.<sup>66</sup> Named in the Tasmanian Register as Mary Agnes Eather, native of Newcastle, Joseph entered the Perthville community on April 16, 1879 and received the habit on January 13, 1880. Two of her Sisters had previously joined the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in Sydney in the early 1870s. Known at Perthville as Sister M Bernard of the Power of Mary, Joseph was professed on March 19, 1881. After her final profession on May 10, 1887, she left for the mission to Tasmania within the next two weeks, changing her name to Joseph in order to maintain the tradition of having a Joseph in each new group.

Her presence in the new community at Westbury allowed the teaching of music, as she was an accomplished music teacher. Sr Celsus McCarthy recalls Sr Joseph as “a very successful music teacher and an able administrator. . . an extremely determined person . . . and very faithful to her religious duties”.<sup>67</sup> Her role in Tasmania was particularly important as she assumed the position of Sister Guardian (Congregational Leader from 1889 to 1899). Archbishop Daniel Murphy appointed Sr Joseph as Sister Guardian for six years on June 18, 1889. On January 9, 1896 as there was no majority, Sr Joseph was reappointed on the understanding that another sister was to be elected or appointed.<sup>68</sup>

Joseph specialised in the violin teaching to students to licentiate level. In so doing she enabled her students to achieve a standard in music that had not been reached in the area before. One former student remembered her as “lovely with me and would not take nonsense”.<sup>69</sup> Joseph taught this student violin until she was 18 or 19. Although never demonstrating the violin, Sr Joseph had the capacity to demand and achieve

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<sup>66</sup> E. Lea-Scarlett. *An Outline History of the Eather Family in Australia*, n.d., 93.

<sup>67</sup> Lea-Scarlett, 93.

<sup>68</sup> TSSJ, 1898, 5.

<sup>69</sup> M. Dunphy, conversation with the author, March 2000.

perfection from her students. Molly Dunphy recalls wearing short sleeves for her Licentiate exams and earning Joseph's displeasure at her perceived immodesty.<sup>70</sup>

Joseph Eather was a strong minded and independent woman, on whom obedience did not sit easily. A note in the Josephite diary in Sister Guardian, Columba Cahill's hand states, "Sister M Joseph sent wire from Launceston saying she was leaving by "Nairana" that day. I had not received any previous word about her going".<sup>71</sup> Remembered as a colourful character by the elderly Sisters, Joseph supplied much information to Fr George O'Neill for the publication (1929) of his *Life of Julian Tenison Woods*.<sup>72</sup> This biography and its seeming distortion of their founder caused much distress to the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania and until the 1970s it remained prohibited reading. Perhaps Joseph felt the displeasure of her Sisters for her part in furnishing details to the author. One could speculate that this was the impetus for Sr Joseph, despite having lived a fulfilling life in Tasmania, to apply to join the Central Josephites at the age of 74. Her letter provides no clue for this radical step, taken while staying with the Good Samaritan Sisters in Sydney in 1934. Certainly her motivation could not have been to be closer to her Good Samaritan Sisters as they had both died four years earlier. Her entry into the Sisters of St Joseph in 1879 precluded her involvement in following the earlier Rule. She would have seemingly had no ties to the Central Josephites in Sydney, unless from her time in Forbes in the early 1880s.<sup>73</sup> The Diocesan Sisters from Wilcannia transferred to the Central Josephites in 1902. Did Sr Joseph imagine a kindly welcome awaiting her from the Sisters she knew in her younger years? Whatever her motivation, she wrote to Mother Cyril:

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<sup>70</sup> M. Dunphy.

<sup>71</sup> TSSJ April 16 1934.

<sup>72</sup> Crowley, 225.

<sup>73</sup> Information gleaned from notes on a Letter sent to Dr Fox. Notes PSSJA.



I, Sr Joseph Eather of the SSJ [*sic*] of Tasmania, in an interview with Archbishop Hayden and the Apostolic Delegate respectively, have permission to ask you dear, Mother General, if you will allow me to receive the brown habit, and become one of your daughters.<sup>74</sup>

Understandably her request was denied, given her age and the years spent within the Tasmanian community. Mother Cyril, Mother General of the Central Josephites, concludes, “You cannot realize what it would mean to you to sever the ties of 47 years. When you had done so, you would be very sad and lonely, and, more than likely, very discontented.”<sup>75</sup>

Joseph remained with the Tasmanian group and died in Launceston from cancer of the face in 1946.<sup>76</sup> She was remembered as a saintly person by the parishioners of Moonah, but her life proves that not all the professed members of the Sisters of St Joseph were willingly subservient and the founding story was not immune from the normal conflicts of authority and power.<sup>77</sup>

#### *Sr Mary Stanislaus Doyle*

The third member of the founding community to become Sister Guardian was Stanislaus Doyle. Her election as Sister Guardian occurred thirty-two years after her arrival in Tasmania, illustrating the high priority the Sisters placed on the older foundational members. Stanislaus was born Sarah Doyle in Wexford, Ireland on January 17, 1862. Her father John Doyle was a miner and her mother was Margaret Prendergast. Little is known of the Doyle family except that they, like many others were “forced by poverty and the brutality of a tyrannical Government to seek better

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<sup>74</sup> Letter, J. Eather to M. Cyril, May 5 1934.

<sup>75</sup> Letter, J. Eather to M. Cyril, May 5 1934. Copy TSSJA.

<sup>76</sup> TSSJ. "Sisters Personal Record Cards." 1887-1937.

<sup>77</sup> V. Higgins, conversation with the author, 1998.

things in Australia".<sup>78</sup> As a young child she travelled with her parents to Australia, settling near Bathurst in New South Wales and at the age of twenty joined the Sisters of St Joseph at Perthville on June 5, 1882. On March 19, 1883 she was received as a novice and given the name Mechtilde, and on March 19, 1884, she was professed. After her profession in 1887, she volunteered her services to join the Sisters coming to Westbury in Tasmania. She changed her name to Stanislaus on her arrival in Tasmania.

When a branch house was opened at Oatlands on April 10, 1893, where a training school and novitiate were set up, Stanislaus was appointed Superior and Mistress of Novices.<sup>79</sup> One of the first novices was Sr Columba, who in turn had a profound influence on the Congregation as leader. Stanislaus was later appointed Superior of different convents throughout her life, Ulverstone twice, Zeehan, Forth, Devonport, Westbury, Cygnet, Richmond, and Colebrook. She was also the first Superior of the convent and Juniorate at Newstead in 1938.

Her great charm and personality impressed all who encountered her. She regarded her Sisters as friends and was attentive to their needs. "Consequently she was universally loved by the Sisters, the priests and the people".<sup>80</sup> Sr Stanislaus was appointed Sister Guardian from 1920-1923 and was elected for a second term from 1929-1932. She was noted as a splendid administrator with a great love of the Rule.

Stanislaus was known for her great reverence. She loved the church and everything about it, spending hours before the Blessed Sacrament. "She served no fewer than six Archbishops, and all of them learned to admire her outstanding virtue and to appreciate her great devotion. Archbishops were her spiritual leaders, especially

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<sup>78</sup> "The Archdeacon's Discourse at the Funeral Liturgy of Sister Stanislaus Doyle." *The Standard*, August 22 1946, 7.

<sup>79</sup> TSSJ, 1898, 8.

<sup>80</sup> "The Archdeacon's Discourse at the Funeral Liturgy of Sister Stanislaus Doyle." *The Standard*, August 22 1946, 7.

Archbishop Delany who was to her and her Order such a steadfast friend.”<sup>81</sup> Mindful of the particular bias of religious newspapers of the period to sanctify the priests and religious of the era, particularly in death, the comments, nonetheless provide a particular view beyond the immediate community environment and therefore are worthy of consideration given their particular perspective and the paucity of secular sources.

Stanislaus Doyle was typical of many of the Josephites coming from Irish parentage and capable of assuming leadership. She developed a rich spirituality and in common with those of her era, had great reverence for the clergy, but was also adept in maintaining good relations with those in authority within the Church, as evidenced by the identification of her friendship with Delany.

#### *Srs Patrick Nolan and Teresa Prendegast*

Patrick Nolan and Teresa Prendegast illustrate the impact of those from the underside of history, who through their commitment and dedication, although fulfilling no leadership role, play an important part in the ordinary lives of the community in which they were immersed. In keeping with the Josephite spirit of being “ordinary” Patrick exemplifies this in her capacity to be one with the people; her Irish background providing a ready acceptance by the Catholic population. Teresa through her presence in the foundation and later through her absence is representative of those who decide to leave a religious congregation after having made an initial commitment.

Patrick Nolan, another Irish woman, was born Mary Nolan on January 1, 1832, a native of Kerry Ireland. The daughter of Denis Nolan, a shopkeeper and Kate Leonard,

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<sup>81</sup> “The Archdeacon's Discourse.”

Patrick sailed for Australia in the company of Sr Benedict Hickey and Fr Huggard aboard the *Gainsborough* to join the Sisters of St Joseph at Perthville on December 15, 1875. Mary, aged 42 when she arrived at The Vale, though educated, was considered by the Sisters to be “too old” for rigorous religious life and it was only through Bishop Quinn’s insistence that she was given a trial.<sup>82</sup> Receiving the habit on April 7, 1876, she was professed April 7, 1877 and renewed her vows in 1878. Three years before her arrival in Tasmania, she made her perpetual vows in December 1884.<sup>83</sup>

Little is recorded of Sister Patrick Nolan, who died in the early years of the Congregation in Tasmania in 1909. In correspondence from Fr Woods to the Westbury community he recalls his pleasure at meeting with a group of Sisters some time prior to their departure for Tasmania and mentions Patrick specifically.<sup>84</sup> In her obituary, the author notes that in her various missions she was loved by the children and parents. Her “beautiful gift of true Irish sympathy” endeared her to those suffering and coping with sorrow. She was a powerful influence in the district, particularly in areas of privation, which Patrick had to share in common with the people. Her optimism and faith in the future ensured that those to whom she ministered were not depressed by their lot but were inspired to anticipate a more prosperous future.<sup>85</sup>

The youngest member of the group was Mary Predegast, native of Victoria, born 1864, and entered 1882. Known in Perthville as Sr M Bonaventure of the Blessed Sacrament, she was professed in March, 1884, and renewed vows in January, 1887 before she left for Westbury in May. Teresa was a member of the community founded from Westbury at Forth by Francis in May, 1889 and left sometime after that date before she made perpetual vows. Her complete omission from the Register indicates the

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<sup>82</sup> Letter, J. Dwyer to M. MacKillop, December 18 1875. Copy PSSJA.

<sup>83</sup> PSSJ, “Perthville Register 1914”, 15.

<sup>84</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods, August 1889.TSSJA.

<sup>85</sup> "Obituary." *The Catholic Monitor*, September 10 1909.

degree of disapproval and sense of failure occasioned by her departure so early in the foundation years. Terminology such as “returned to the world” is indicative of the degree of censure at such decisions. Such attitudes were to prevail until more recent times.

The founding Sisters were women of deep faith and prayer imbued with a simplicity that endeared itself to the Catholic families of the Westbury district and beyond. They were excellent teachers and maintained a human and compassionate approach to their students with the development of sound relationships. Products of the nineteenth century church, they had a profound respect for the priests and Bishop, therefore they were able to accept and transcend the many hardships and injustices which would have frustrated twentieth century religious women.

#### Fr Tenison Woods and the Tasmanian Foundation

All the founding Sisters of the Tasmanian community knew Woods, while Francis McCarthy, as a postulant newly arrived from Ireland, had also known Mother Mary MacKillop prior to the separation. The relationship with Woods, however, was much more significant and prolonged than the fleeting contact with Mary MacKillop. Woods demonstrates certain warmth towards the Sisters in his letters to the Westbury community:

I was delighted with their loving letters and how it touched my heart to find that neither time nor distance has lessened their loving devotion. I soon remembered everything about them, the new ones and the old. I remember when I saw them last at Blayney and at Molong. I never had the happiness of seeing you [Sr Francis McCarthy] and Sister Patrick at Mitchell’s Creek where I am sure

our Lord taught you lessons that you will now find useful in Tasmania.<sup>86</sup>

Within the Tasmanian setting the founding Sisters experienced a sense of isolation and their separation from the Perthville community placed them in a position where they had to become self-reliant in the interpretation of what it meant to be Josephite within the Tasmanian Church. The clergy themselves were unclear about the relationship between the Westbury community and Perthville as evidenced by the consternation caused when the Sisters needed to establish their own Novitiate. In 1889 Archdeacon Hogan contemplated asking the Sisters to be recalled to Bathurst, rather than having a separate Congregation established in Westbury.<sup>87</sup> The invitation to Hamilton on Forth prevented their recall, but nonetheless their future was not secure and their self-determination was marked by uncertainty.

Given the situation in which Francis found herself, she sought counsel from the cofounder Fr Julian Tenison Woods. In his knowledge of both the Josephite Rule and the Tasmanian Church he provided support for Francis and the Westbury community. His communication occurring in the second part of 1887, in their initial days, was to prove crucial in establishing a firm foundation.

Reliance on Fr Woods in the foundational phase of the community was to have a profound impression on the shaping of the Congregation, providing security for them in their attempt to hold on to the Josephite tradition. Arriving in Tasmania with no *Book of Instructions* or *Directory*, the Sisters relied on correspondence with Woods to assist them with the interpretation of the Rule and in determining the detail of their life. Woods' explanation, regarding the destruction of the *Book of Instructions* and *Directory* at Perthville, provided the Sisters with an authoritative account and Woods' inclusion of

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<sup>86</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, August 1887. TSSJA.

<sup>87</sup> J D Simonds. "Death of Sr Francis Mccarthy." *The Standard*, Feb 15 1940.

the acceptance of the documents by the Bishop of Maitland gives them a certain spiritual standing, hitherto unknown. Both documents were pivotal in the Josephites' life and were read on a daily basis for the next 50 years. Woods' insistence on the importance of the Rule was to have a lasting influence on the Tasmanian foundation and in the preservation of the Bathurst Rule, when other Diocesan groups had already modified it significantly.

*Fr Tenison Woods in Tasmania*

Woods' popularity as missionary was in decline in the years following the rewriting of the Rule for the Diocesan Josephites in Bathurst and his capacity to act as a mentor was severely curtailed. He had been removed as Director of the Sisters of St Joseph in Adelaide in 1872 and was forbidden to have contact with them. The same fate befell him in Bathurst in October, 1882, when Bishop Quinn took exception to a sermon he preached at Orange and effectively removed him from ministering in the Bathurst Diocese.<sup>88</sup> "Agreement between the three country Bishops was immediate and effective", and from 1883 the Bishops of Bathurst, Maitland and Goulburn prohibited Woods from visiting Sisters within their dioceses.<sup>89</sup> Woods' contact with the Sisters of St Joseph, therefore, was limited to correspondence.

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<sup>88</sup> P. Gardiner. *An Extraordinary Australian- Mary MacKillop*-. Newtown NSW: E.J. Dwyer, 1993, 119: M. Press. *Julian Tenison Woods*. Sydney: Catholic theological Faculty, 1979,155.

<sup>89</sup> Crowley, 75; Press, 165.

*Fr Tenison Woods and the Tasmanian Foundation*

Such prohibition did not exist in Tasmania and a notebook surviving from the period has meticulous handwritten copy of letters from Fr Woods to the community at Westbury.<sup>90</sup> The recipient is identified as “My own dear child,” a reference to Francis McCarthy, Superior of the community. At this time (May, 1887 to December, 1887), Woods writing from his sick bed usually dictated to Sr John Dowling, a Tasmanian and former ward of Woods, who acting as secretary, wrote many of his letters.

Francis McCarthy’s decision to continue contact with Fr Woods was indeed fortuitous. The correspondence provided the founding community with both the opportunity of revisiting the founder’s intentions with regard to the spirit of the Institute, and with advice for the various difficulties that Francis encountered in guiding the infant Tasmanian community. The surviving correspondence over the seven-month period of 1887 illustrates the paternal care of Woods for the founding community and it provides insight into the community’s adaptation into the Tasmanian Church. The correspondence reveals an interesting mixture of advice given by Fr Woods to the Sisters. His correspondence encompasses spiritual direction, spiritual exhortation regarding the spirit and the Rule, interpretation for life, paternal advice and encouragement. He provides a practical commentary on the life of the Sisters. The agenda for the letters is very much governed by the letters written by Sr Francis and the Sisters to him.

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<sup>90</sup> Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph, New Town, Tasmania.



A letter received after coming to Tasmania, demonstrates Woods' approval and his enthusiasm for this mission and also promises clandestine help:

I am glad to find that you are established and well taken care of in St Joseph's island of Tasmania for I have never seen any place so fitter [*sic*] for the Institute as your island, nor where it will do more good.<sup>91</sup>

The nature of his relationship with the Tasmanian community is shaped by the actions of the Bishops such as Bishop Murray of Maitland, who had expressly forbidden the Sisters to correspond with him. Woods in a letter to Ursula Dunning is conscious of the influence of Murray on the other suffragen Bishops.<sup>92</sup> Accordingly Woods sees his anonymity important if this new foundation is to flourish, rather than being identified with him. He warns the community:

You can lean upon me and rely upon my help in everything, the only favour I will ask of you is not to mention my name or speak of me or quote my authority, especially to any of the clergy. Indeed it would be better not to mention your correspondence with me. You will see the wisdom of this hereafter.<sup>93</sup>

Bitter experience with the other dioceses had made him wary even in a Diocese where he had been a most successful and popular missionary.<sup>94</sup> Again Woods writes, "I'm so glad that your pastor (Rev T. O'Callaghan) is so good to you, but do not show him any of our letters because it is against a rule I laid down on the subject".<sup>95</sup> The level of secrecy lent an added importance to Woods' correspondence and subsequently gave the relationship an almost mystic tone.

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<sup>91</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, August 1887. TSSJA.

<sup>92</sup> Cited in B. Zimmerman. "A New Order: Bishops Matthew Quinn and James Murray and the Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph 1876 and 1883." *Australasian Catholic Record* 68, no. 2 (1991): 167-91, 176.

<sup>93</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, August 1887. TSSJA.

<sup>94</sup> Fr Woods preached at the opening of the Westbury church and delivered the homily at the reception and then the eulogy at the funeral of Sr Columba, a Presentation Sister and the Bishop's niece. See *The Mercury*, May 22 1874.

<sup>95</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods, August 29 1887. TSSJA.

*On the spirit of the Institute*

The Rule of a religious congregation is open to interpretation and through his correspondence Woods has a unique role in providing the Tasmanian foundation with an authentic interpretation of the Rule by the cofounder, thus ensuring that the Tasmanian community lived out the Rule in its original form. Woods' correspondence encourages the Sisters in maintaining the spirit of the Institute and in the observation of the Rule. The importance of its observation is enhanced by his warning that "dreadful consequences in failing to observe it properly. His references to the struggles that the Rule had endured, ensured that the Tasmanian foundation will attempt to conserve it in its original form. His emphasis, "that it is essential that nothing should be changed in the ordinary observance" and ". . . love your Rule in the letter and in its spirit" enshrines the importance of the Rule in its original form.<sup>96</sup>

In a letter entitled "A circular letter from our founder on the spirit he wishes us to have," Woods exhorts the Sisters to remain true to the spirit of the Institute, "We must love to be hidden and not shrink from being despised, and go on in our simple way trusting in God." He reminds the Sisters that they should be regarded as "the servants of the poor. . . [to] be content with [their] lot and so, to teach the poor to be content with theirs".<sup>97</sup>

The cofounder's words provided affirmation and optimism to the founding group, isolated as they were from their Perthville community. Woods maintains a confidence that, "The great days of the Institute are yet to come . . . a great

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<sup>96</sup> J. E. T. Woods, Circular Letter, November 18 1887, 7.

<sup>97</sup> Circular Letter, 2-3. TSSJA.

responsibility is attached to you. The Institute is still in its foundation stones. . . love your Rule in the letter and in its spirit”.<sup>98</sup> Words such as these provided the motivation for some Sisters to transfer to the Tasmanian community, believing Woods prophesied a great future.

### *Relationship to other Diocesan Groups*

Within his letters Fr Woods shows an interest in the day-to-day affairs of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania but also reveals an ambiguous relationship to the other Diocesan groups. He speaks of his disappointment at his lack of contact with the Goulburn Josephites, “I never hear from the Goulburn Sisters. Tell me what you know about them and how they have spread”.<sup>99</sup> His appreciation of the Lochinvar group is revealed in his promotion of them as faithful to the spirit of the Institute; “They are true children of mine and they keep the Rule exactly, with the true spirit”.<sup>100</sup> His comments regarding changes occurring in other groups are alluded to, “But I think the time will come when the wayward spirit of novelty will depart from these experiments and all St Joseph’s children will be brought back together again and be what they were in the beginning”.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Circular Letter, 7. TSSJA.

<sup>99</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, August 1887. TSSJA.

<sup>100</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, August 1887. TSSJA.

<sup>101</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, August 1887. TSSJA.

*The teaching of Music*

The teaching of music was a point of departure from the original 1868 Rule and it continued to be a difficulty for the Tasmanian Sisters. Although the teaching of music was incorporated into the 1878 Rule at Bishop Matthew Quinn's insistence, its implications caused uneasiness in Tasmania, with the expectation of Bishop Murphy that the students would perform in public. Woods advises against the public performance by children stating: "Children's concerts in aid of the convent etc are only another form of theatres [*sic*]. Do not have them. Do what is right and leave the rest to God." Within the same letter he advises that music is used to encourage enrolments, and should not be employed for financial security:

You cannot help teaching music but keep it within its proper limits. Music is only to be taught for an attraction for those who would go to State schools, or where they would not be taught the faith if they have not got Sisters to teach music, but it is not to be looked at as a means of support.<sup>102</sup>

Music and public performance continued to be a stumbling block for the community to such an extent that Francis considered returning to Bathurst. It was Woods' intervention that prevented the transfer back to Bathurst.

You asked me, "Are you to return to Bathurst if the Bishop or priests insist on having plays stage, etc. [*sic*]"  
My dear child do not let us hear anything more about returning, that is so grave an alternative that we may put it out of the question. Of course if the Bishop insists, after hearing all your arguments against it why, then, you must silently obey and trust to prayer to take away the evil. I think if we are humble and keep our Rule, that our Lord will not let us be defeated in the efforts we must make for the salvation of souls.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, August 1887. TSSJA.

<sup>103</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, September 30 1887. TSSJA.

This issue was still a concern in October and Woods advises Francis to adopt a more conciliatory stance, “as far as I am concerned I would not allow the children’s playing in public and if the Bishop insists, I suppose you must give way”.<sup>104</sup> The approach was realistic in that the will of the Bishop would prevail in any case.

*Practical advice*

Francis in her determination to develop a sound foundation for the community seeks Woods’ advice on many issues. In his response Woods demonstrates a flexibility and humanity in the interpretation of aspects of the Rule. Examples include advice regarding alcohol and suggesting that they need not take wine but merely to put it to the lips, in order to avoid any argument and “delicate Sisters may use meat twice a day”.<sup>105</sup> The dependence that community had on the cofounder for so much detail regarding their lives is illustrated with the practical advice he gave on details such as the compilation of a diary, “The Diary should be entered whether remarkable things occur or not, just stating that the Rule has been observed that it need not be entered every day”.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, October 26 1887. TSSJA.

<sup>105</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods, October 26 1887. For example the answers to questions were listed at the end of letters as in the letter of August 1887

Write only once in three months to relations and friends.

Remain only half an hour at a time with them, where they come to visit you, even from a distance.

Never allow them to remain all night in the convent, or encourage them to visit or stay long with you.

Never write or receive Letters to or from your relations during Advent or Lent.

Never let two Sisters be separate from each other even by a log or fence when out walking. Never allow child or adult between two Sisters.

Never allow others to handle or play with your beads or habit.

Never leave your beads or crucifix with the sick.

<sup>106</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, October 26 1887. TSSJA.

*Advice on education*

Woods reveals a pragmatic approach to education advising the Sisters not to teach the poor children useless fancy work but rather teach them to mend, to darn, patch and make their own clothes. He suggests that it would be important to give them lessons on housekeeping, cooking, keeping accounts and housework.<sup>107</sup> His recommendations are consistent with those of Mary MacKillop and show an insight into the needs of the poor community.<sup>108</sup> As well he advocates a progressive approach to discipline with the use of positive rewards rather than enforcing discipline by the cane.<sup>109</sup> This approach, adopted by the Sisters toward their students, was commended by the state school Inspectors, who examined the schools from 1907 and wrote of the gentle Rule and kindly discipline of the Sisters. The gentle Rule of the Sisters at Richmond produced a good tone and pleasing manners. The Inspector was, however critical of the routine as being insufficiently stimulating as to allow only a moderate standard of achievement.<sup>110</sup>

Conclusion and Significance

The uncertainty regarding the religious status of the Josephites emanating from their separation shadowed their development in the Tasmanian setting and gave rise to a

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<sup>107</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, August 1887. TSSJA.

<sup>108</sup> K. Burford. "Mary MacKillop's System of Catholic Education." 36 , 1998.

<sup>109</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, August 1887. TSSJA.

<sup>110</sup> "Inspector's Report, Richmond." Education Department Tasmania, 1914.(Hereafter IR)

sense of inferiority and insecurity.<sup>111</sup> This diffidence was counteracted to some extent through the devout faith of the founding Sisters, particularly Francis, who provided significant modelling of how a Sister of St Joseph lived out the Rule in isolation from Perthville. The reliance on Woods ensured both the preservation of the original spirit in the new community and a deep reverence of him as “Father Founder”.

The critical guidance of Woods in the foundational phase of the Congregation ensured that the original spirit and traditions were embedded in the Tasmanian community. Woods’ insistence on the importance of the Rule served to enshrine it in such a way that, unlike other Diocesan groups, the conservation of the Rule became a significant element of the Tasmanian identity. The lasting legacy of Woods was that the Tasmanian Sisters faithfully adhered to the 1878 Rule through the episcopacy of five Bishops. The spirit of the Institute, articulated initially by Fr Woods and nurtured conscientiously by Francis McCarthy and the founding community, was to form the Tasmanian community into a haven for Diocesan Josephites who sought to transfer from Bathurst, Wilcannia, Maitland, Bundaberg and New Zealand. Those transferring found a new beginning within “St Joseph’s island”<sup>112</sup> and were in turn influential in maintaining the spirit of the Sisters of St Joseph, through their willingness to put past hurts and disappointments behind them and lead this island community faithfully into the new century.

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<sup>111</sup> This sense of inferiority and the way it shaped the Tasmanian Josephites is worthy of greater consideration and will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

<sup>112</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to F. McCarthy, August 1887. TSSJA.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TASMANIAN IDENTITY

The development of the distinct identity of the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph was formed by the ambiguity surrounding their origins and their isolation from mainland Australia. The Tasmanian community's development was determined by their quest for authenticity through their adherence to the Rule, the influence of the Sisters transferring from other Diocesan groups, their devotion to the cofounder and their own interpretation of the Rule. Of particular importance to this study are the roles of Sr Hyacinth Quinlan, Sr Ambrose Joseph Dirkin and Sr John Dowling, as these religious women through their positions within the Congregation would have a significant influence on the shape of the Tasmanian Congregation and on its self-understanding, giving rise to a diminution of the role of cofounder Mary MacKillop and consequent prominence to Julian Tenison Woods. Of particular significance is the relationship of Hyacinth to Mary MacKillop and its influence on the Tasmanian perspective of the history.

Leadership of the Congregation developed as a key issue and the presence of significant Josephites figures from other foundations militated against the emergence of Congregational leadership through the normal chapter process and resulted in the subsequent devolution of authority for appointment of a Superior on the Bishop. Through the use of biographies of these Sisters, these elements will be identified and the resolution of the issue of leadership occurring with the election of Hyacinth Quinlan as Sister Guardian in 1908 will be established.



### Sisters transferring from Other Branches

The arrival of Sisters transferring from other branches of the Diocesan Josephites, including three pivotal figures, provided legitimacy and authenticity for the Tasmanian community over the following decades. The 1890s saw an increase in the members of the Tasmanian Josephites with the arrival of Sisters from all branches of the Diocesan groups except Goulburn. The process of transfer was in many cases beneficial to the Congregation but in some circumstances was disadvantageous. Many Sisters joining the Tasmanian community were born in mainland dioceses, and often inspired by priests giving missions were directed to join the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph. This was to be a pattern for the first forty years. In addition to new recruits from interstate the Tasmanian community attracted several established Sisters of St Joseph, who sought a transfer to the island community for reasons which will be discussed. Rather than remain isolated and insular, therefore, the Tasmanian group was to be enriched by the influence of Josephite figures, who had previously founded or had been Superiors in other dioceses. Their relationship with Fr Julian Tenison Woods and continued correspondence with him ensured that the Tasmanian group remained faithful to his vision and withstood many of the other influences and developments that were to shape the other Diocesan groups.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Crowley, 83.

### Three key Josephite figures

To gain insight into the Tasmanian foundation the lives of three key Josephite figures, Ambrose Joseph Dirkin, Hyacinth Quinlan and John Dowling will be studied. Use of case study is an accepted historical methodological approach providing a prism through which to view their personalities and subsequent influence on the development of the Tasmanian foundation.

Each of these women had a unique position within other foundations and an intimate association with cofounder Fr Julian Tenison Woods, having been instructed by him at Perthville. As discussed previously, the loyalty of these women towards Woods would shape the Tasmanian identity with Woods emerging as the prominent cofounder and consequently Mary MacKillop's position would be expunged. Hyacinth arrived in Westbury in 1891 from Wanganui in New Zealand. Her entry to Tasmania was precipitated by difficulties encountered with the clergy in New Zealand, while Ambrose Joseph Dirkin, having founded Lochinvar, was invited by Archbishop Murphy to come to Tasmania as an expert music teacher. Sr John Dowling, ward of Julian Tenison Woods and his amanuensis, while a member of the Sydney Elizabeth Street community caring for him prior to his death chose to re-enter the Josephites at Westbury and was to have a marked impact on the Congregation over an eight-year period. Sisters Stanislaus Fitzpatrick, Sister Guardian of Wilcannia, and Ignatius Chartres who arrived in the Tasmanian group after staying on from a health trip in 1891 were to provide a lifetime's commitment to the Tasmanian group. Their influence was not as marked as the previous figures and therefore will not be discussed in detail. Yet, not all transfers were effective, as one from Bundaberg (Sr Raphael McGuinness), brought scandal in her

wake by leaving to marry her sixteen year old music pupil, who was two decades her junior.<sup>2</sup>

Table 2: Professed Sisters of St Joseph transferring to Tasmania<sup>3</sup>

Year	Sisters Transferring	Sisters Leaving	Convent of Origin
1887	Francis McCarthy Stanislaus Doyle Joseph Eather  Patrick Nolan Teresa Prendegast	Teresa Prendegast left 1889?	Perthville N. S. W.
1891	Stanislaus Fitzpatrick Ignatius Chartres		Wilcannia N. S. W
1891	Hyacinth Quinlan		Wanganui, New Zealand
1892	John Dowling was received at Westbury	Left to found a community in Creswick, Victoria in 1899. Transferred to Lochinvar, 1915.	Entered at Perthville, 1880 and left in 1884
1892	Benigna Corry		Perthville
1893	Raphael McGuinness	Withdrew 1900	Bundaberg
1895	Ambrose Joseph Dirkin		Foundress of Lochinvar
1897	Aloysius Cahill	Returned to Lochinvar December, 1897	Lochinvar

### *Sr Hyacinth Quinlan*

A woman of paradox, Hyacinth was the diocesan congregations' link to the original foundation and to Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods. Depicted in literature as a troublesome woman from her time at Perthville and Wanganui, her reputation may have preceded her to Tasmania but nonetheless she emerged as amongst

<sup>2</sup> Letter, M. McGuinness, August, 2002. TSSJA.

<sup>3</sup> TSSJ. *Register*.. TSSJA.

the most successful of the Tasmanian leaders, where she made a lasting contribution to the development of that community and there received the acknowledgement and affirmation from her religious sisters and also from successive Archbishops which had eluded her in her previous communities and dioceses.

*Hyacinth's origins*



*Sr Hyacinth Quinlan 1880*

*Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town Tasmania. Used with permission.*

Bridget Quinlan (Hyacinth) was born on 22 August 1850 in the family home at *Rossmore* near Clare in South Australia.<sup>4</sup> Her mother, Lucy Naulty, born at Glendalough, County Wicklow, Ireland sailed to Australia in 1846 to join her older sister, Sarah who had married and was living near Clare. Lucy married Irish farmer Richard Quinlan on 25 April 1847 and eleven children were born in sixteen years - Jeremiah, Ellen, Bridget, Lucy, who died aged six years, Patrick, Mary, Lawrence,

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<sup>4</sup> *South Australian Register of Births* 1842- 1867 29/40

twins Peter and Elizabeth, who died shortly after birth, Anne and John.<sup>5</sup> Bridget the third child of the marriage was baptized by Fr Denis McGuinn on 23 August 1850 with her sponsors Peter and Sarah Nalty [*sic*].<sup>6</sup>

The family property *Rossmore* conducted mixed farming with wheat, stock and an orchard. The family home is still standing and the barn which was once the centre for community gatherings in the Clare district is still in use. A person of considerable means Richard Quinlan was able to extend his holdings and progressively acquired 1497 acres, which enabled him to provide farms for his children. Richard died of cancer aged 66 on 20 March 1880 and his wife Lucy died as a result of severe burns after catching alight from a candle in mid December 1900 and dying on 1 January 1901 aged 78. The family was well provided for as indicated by the estate of Richard Quinlan of £4450 and on his wife's death seven of the remaining children shared in the estate of £3402.<sup>7</sup> Both Quinlan parents are buried at Sevenhill cemetery and a stained glass window dedicated to the memory of Richard is in St Michael's Catholic Church, Clare.<sup>8</sup>

Bridget and her older sister, Ellen, both entered the Sisters of St Joseph. Bridget entered the Sisters of St Joseph a year before her sister on 16 August 1868 at the Franklin Street Convent, received the habit on 15 November 1868 and made her first profession of vows as Sr Hyacinth of St John the Baptist on Christmas Day 1869. Her sister, Ellen, joined the Josephites in Adelaide on 11 June 1869, receiving the habit three months later she was professed as Sister Michael of the Immaculate Conception on 8 September 1869. Both the Quinlan sisters ceased wearing the habit during the period of Mary MacKillop's excommunication and resumed it later.<sup>9</sup> Hyacinth remained

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<sup>5</sup> G. A. Lally, , *G. A Naulty Family History: 150 Years in South Australia 1846-1996*. Clare: Lally:, 20-23.

<sup>6</sup> *South Australian Catholic Archives Register A – C10*.

<sup>7</sup> The eldest son Jeremiah was excluded from the will. Lally, *G. A Naulty Family History*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Lally, *A Naulty Family History*, 22 – 23.

<sup>9</sup> Foale, 218.

in Adelaide during this period, Michael, however returned to her home in Clare. Both Hyacinth and Michael resumed living religious life after the unrest in March 1872 and the former made her Life Vows at Perthville on 27 December 1872 and the latter in Adelaide on 12 February 1875.<sup>10</sup>

Hyacinth's first teaching appointment was as an infant teacher in Adelaide where 300 pupils were in attendance. She later moved to Port Adelaide, where she completed her novitiate and then spent some months at the Infant School West Terrace before being transferred to Wallaroo. At the time of her appointment to Bathurst foundation Hyacinth was principal of one of the suburban schools in Adelaide. She was selected by Fr Woods to be part of the foundation in the Bathurst diocese arriving at The Vale on 16th July 1872.<sup>11</sup> Michael by contrast remained in South Australia for her religious life and served as congregational bursar from 1881 to 1889. Michael died at Kensington on 5 September 1915.<sup>12</sup>

Hyacinth was a link to the Congregation's origins to Mary MacKillop and the Grote Street community in Adelaide, through the separation from that community at Bathurst, and across to New Zealand. In her final destination in Tasmania she made a lasting contribution to the development of that community. In the Tasmanian community, she received acknowledgement and affirmation from her fellow Sisters and also from successive Archbishops which had eluded her in her previous communities and dioceses.

Hyacinth's role in the development of the Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph was paramount as she assumed the responsibility for the safeguarding of the original spirit of the Congregation and ensured that the tradition was upheld and preserved in the reformed group at Perthville, after the separation from the centrally governed Sisters of

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<sup>10</sup> *TSSJ. Register.* TSSJA

<sup>11</sup> Handwritten notes by Hyacinth Quinlan, undated, Sisters of St Joseph Archives, Tasmania.

<sup>12</sup> *Sisters of St Joseph Adelaide Register.*

St Joseph in 1876. A woman of paradox, Hyacinth was the Congregation's link to the Adelaide foundation and to Mary MacKillop, but it will be argued that Hyacinth appears to have used her influence to expunge knowledge of the Adelaide foundation from the history. Depicted in literature as a troublesome woman from her time at Perthville and Wanganui, her reputation may have preceded her to Tasmania but nonetheless she emerged as amongst the most successful of the Tasmanian Josephite leaders .<sup>13</sup>

### *Hyacinth's relationship to Mary MacKillop*

Hyacinth's relationship to Mary MacKillop and the Central Josephites will be examined, as her perspective influenced the Tasmanian and Diocesan Josephites' understanding of their identity and their foundation. Hyacinth is of particular relevance in this context, as she embodied the spirit, and maintained the tradition through three Diocesan Congregations as discussed previously. Despite the affirmation afforded her by her Tasmanian community, Hyacinth was unable to reconcile herself to her former community and appeared to carry a deep hurt with regard to Mary MacKillop that revealed itself only in her correspondence with Fr George O'Neill and Sr M Xavier of Wanganui some decades after the separation.

According to Gardiner Mary MacKillop had to contend with Hyacinth who was undermining her attempts for the Sisters to return to Adelaide during this period. One sister writing to Mary MacKillop requests, "send for us as soon as you can, for I can plainly see what Sister Hyacinth intends doing"<sup>14</sup> An earlier historian Fr George O'Neill claims that Hyacinth used no influence in favour of separation and, "though not

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Crowley, 2002; Gardiner, 1993; G. O'Neill., 1929.

<sup>14</sup> Gardiner, 197.

personally attached to Mother Mary, she was not intentionally disloyal to her; to this Mother Mary subsequently testified”.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately there are no references regarding the testimony to which O’Neill refers and certainly earlier in her life in Adelaide Hyacinth was reliant on Mary’s counsel and wisdom in times of difficulty, such as during the period of excommunication.<sup>16</sup>

Hyacinth, who had remained at Perthville and ensured the continued presence of the Josephites there with assurance of the Bishop that this was “the will of God”, felt most deeply Mary’s rejection of her. Hyacinth was unable to understand Mary’s attitude toward her, given that the latter had originally given her permission for Hyacinth to remain to train the novices; however, this permission was later withdrawn.<sup>17</sup> Hyacinth then acquiesced to Quinn’s demands and decided to remain at Perthville for “the glory of God and the salvation of my own soul”.<sup>18</sup> Hyacinth’s decision to remain at Perthville was a difficult one, given her allegiance to her own sister in the Adelaide community and her knowledge that she was creating a gulf between herself and her former Superior. Mary MacKillop had grave concerns regarding Hyacinth’s canonical status. According to Gardiner Mary MacKillop believed that Hyacinth should have been dispensed from

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<sup>15</sup> O’Neill, 203.

<sup>16</sup> Crowley, 27.

<sup>17</sup> **Chronology of events**

March, 1875	General Chapter accepts the Rome approved Constitutions
August, 1875	Hyacinth renews vows according to new Constitutions
December, 1875	Quinn informs Sisters of his objections to new Constitutions
January 5, 1876	Mary MacKillop consents to Hyacinth remaining to train the postulants
January 23, 1876	Council disapproves of Hyacinth’s remaining and seeks her return to Adelaide
January 30, 1876	Hyacinth informs Mary MacKillop she will remain

<sup>18</sup> Letter, Hyacinth Quinlan, January 30 1876. Copy TSSJA.



her life-vows.<sup>19</sup> This impasse would influence Hyacinth's attitude towards Mary MacKillop and would shape to some extent the Tasmanian perception of Mary MacKillop and the Central Josephites.

Hyacinth's decision, influenced by Bishop Quinn, was made in complete faith, that to be true to her commitment to the Josephite spirit within the Bathurst diocese, she chose to remain and thereby assured a continuing Josephite presence. Hyacinth had laboured under harsh conditions within the Bathurst region for four years and had experienced the death of her Superior, Teresa MacDonald. Writing 40 years after the event Hyacinth shows some vestiges of resentment:<sup>20</sup>

Things were in a terrible chaos for a time and in the midst of it all, Sister Teresa, Superior at Bathurst died. She had been ailing for some time. I had been her assistant from the first but now Sister Mary appoints another sister to the position, but after a few days she sent her away to Adelaide. <sup>21</sup>

Hyacinth's somewhat critical and acerbic comments in her letters in relation to Mary MacKillop are at variance with the Tasmanian Sisters' perception of her as, "the calmest and most level headed religious I've known . . . her charity in speech was a striking trait".<sup>22</sup> Deeply hurt by the failure of the Adelaide Sisters in informing her of her Josephite sister, Michael's<sup>23</sup> (Ellen) death in 1915, Hyacinth confides her disappointment to her old friend from Wanganui, Sr Xavier,

I always thought I had a strong heart, and indeed I must have had to withstand all the shocks etc I have received during my life. Though

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<sup>19</sup> Gardiner, 685.

<sup>20</sup> However, Hyacinth's displeasure with Mary MacKillop seems to occur from the time prior to the separation in 1876, when Mary failed to appoint Hyacinth as Superior at Perthville, Bathurst, following Teresa McDonald's death. Hyacinth had been Teresa's assistant and it would have been logical to appoint Hyacinth as Superior, but Mary MacKillop, aware of her personal problems, which seemingly resulted in moodiness and her authoritarian approach in community, chose to appoint Sister Joseph Dwyer as Superior.

<sup>21</sup> Letter, H. Quinlan to M. Xavier, June 29 1916. WSSJA.

<sup>22</sup> Letter, M. Wright, to M. Xavier, May 2 1958. WSSJA.

<sup>23</sup> Sr Michael, Ellen Quinlan, was born on May 2, 1849 and died September 5, 1915. Entering the Sisters of St Joseph in Adelaide in 1869, she remained in South Australia, being elected to the Council in 1881 as Bursar, a position she maintained until 1889. See G.A. Lally, 1996.

the last one, the death of my dear sister Michael, in the convent, Kensington, Adelaide (Brown Sisters) in September last nearly finished me. She was in bed a fortnight and the Sisters knew she was dying, yet they never sent word, nor ever let her people in South Australia know she was ill.<sup>24</sup>

Hyacinth reveals closeness to her family, despite her absence from Clare, the family home, and South Australia since 1872.<sup>25</sup> Within the same letter regarding Michael Quinlan, Hyacinth speaks disparagingly of Mary MacKillop and her role in the separation of the Diocesan Congregation, thereby demonstrating her allegiance to Fr Woods:

Now for the question. Who blundered? I should say Mother Mary (or as she was called then, Sister Mary) and she being a woman of great determination self-will [*sic*], carried her blunder all through. This much I heard from Fr Woods himself, when some of the Sisters were commenting on her going to Rome.<sup>26</sup>

Hyacinth's antipathy toward Mary MacKillop perhaps stemmed from her perception that Fr Julian Tenison Woods, to whom Hyacinth was quite devoted, did not receive due acknowledgement as cofounder of the Congregation. This is a frequent refrain during her letters to other members of the Diocesan groups, such as her comment, "I do not object to their giving their history, but I do object to their leaving F. W. [Fr Woods] out altogether. They don't give him credit for anything only when they cannot help it".<sup>27</sup> Fr Woods' influence on her life is exemplified clearly by the presence of a locket containing a strand of his hair among her possessions, discovered following her death in 1933.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Letter, H. Quinlan to M. Xavier, June 29, 1916. WSSJA.

<sup>25</sup> Her return to Clare occurred only after her Diamond Jubilee in 1933.

<sup>26</sup> Letter, H. Quinlan to M. Xavier, June 29, 1916. WSSJA.

<sup>27</sup> Letters, H. Quinlan to G. O'Neill, July 7, 1927: Sr M Xavier, Wanganui, June 29, 1916. NSSJA; WSSJA.

<sup>28</sup> Sisters of St Joseph Tasmania archives hold a locket identified as belonging to Sr Hyacinth and containing a lock of Fr Woods' hair. TSSJA.

By contrast Hyacinth's association with Mary MacKillop was virtually severed at the time of the separation in 1876. A Tasmanian contemporary of Hyacinth's recalled in 1958, when asked about Mother Mary Hyacinth said, "She received me, but I never liked her, as I felt she was trying to oust Father"<sup>29</sup> Sadly all reference to Mary MacKillop as cofounder would vanish within Tasmania in the next few decades, despite the kindly relationship displayed by Mary MacKillop toward the foundation Sisters on their journey to Tasmania in 1887.

Hyacinth was influential in shaping the foundation of the Wanganui community, before assuming Superiorship in Tasmanian community thirteen years after her arrival. Hyacinth arrived in Tasmania in May, 1891, after having gained permission from Archbishop Murphy to transfer from New Zealand. Archbishop Redwood, Archbishop of Wellington, provided her with a letter of recommendation, facilitating the transfer. Redwood's response to Hyacinth's request for a transfer is a well considered one, "viewing your case calmly before God in regard to your spiritual advantage, I believe you are right and your case is a deserving one".<sup>30</sup>

#### *Problems in New Zealand*

The difficulties alluded to by Redwood in his letter are worth considering. The difficulties Hyacinth encountered arose from her continuing struggles with the Archbishop Redwood and Dean Kirk over the Rule from 1880. These difficulties culminated with the arbitrary decision by Redwood to "make a slight change in [the]

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<sup>29</sup> Letter, M. Wright, May 2, 1958. TSSJA.

<sup>30</sup> Letter, F. Redwood to H. Quinlan February 7, 1891. WSSJA.

name and habit” on February 18, 1885 and saw an immediate response by Hyacinth, which ultimately had no effect. New Zealand Sisters became known as Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth and commenced wearing the black habit from 1885.<sup>31</sup> Certainly Redwood’s letter indicates that the transition for Hyacinth from Superior to ordinary sister was difficult and yet he acknowledges her commitment to the establishment of the Wanganui Josephites,

I can testify to the fact of your having established the branch of the Institute of St Joseph in Wanganui most successfully, and of your having shown great zeal in working it up. Having been in office for two terms, of six years in all, a change had to be made according to the Rule. Since that was done you have, from a variety of circumstances, found it more or less awkward to be moving about in a different position where you were so long known as Superioress. I can quite understand – especially considering some exceptional circumstances – that you very naturally think you could do better where you would not be so circumstanced and where you could live quietly as an ordinary Sister of St Joseph which you are most anxious to do.<sup>32</sup>

From this letter it is apparent that Hyacinth’s transition from Superior at Wanganui and her desire to “live quietly as an ordinary sister of St Joseph” could not be effected easily as there were “exceptional circumstances” in which she found herself. The precise nature of the circumstances is not revealed but could relate to the ongoing stress and tension between Hyacinth and Father Kirk, parish priest of Wanganui during Hyacinth’s six years as Sister Guardian.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> D. Strevens, 64.

<sup>32</sup> Letter, F. Redwood to H. Quinlan February 7, 1891. WSSJA.

<sup>33</sup> Strevens, 67-68.

*Hyacinth the Troublesome Sister*

The perception of Hyacinth as difficult or troublesome is borne out in the actions of Hyacinth's successor as Superior in New Zealand, Tasmanian born, Sr Joseph Kinsella, who contrived to have Hyacinth remain at Perthville, while they were ostensibly on a recruiting trip. This was totally without Hyacinth's knowledge, as Bishop Byrne's diary records an entry for January 22, 1887, "saw Sr Joseph of Wanganui. She wants to leave Hyacinth at The Vale and to replace her with a more tractable sister. Sr H. [*sic*] knows nothing of this and expects to return to N. Z.". <sup>34</sup> The inclusion of the words "tractable" relates to Hyacinth's tenacity in upholding the Rule, when prevailed upon by Church authorities to deviate from it. It was a wise decision for Hyacinth to return to New Zealand as according to Crowley Bishop Byrne and Mother Benedict Hickey would have been unwilling to receive Hyacinth, as she was considered a threat to the new regime, given her loyalty to Fr Woods and her attachment to the original spirit of the Congregation. <sup>35</sup>

After successfully founding the community in New Zealand and strenuously ensuring the spirit of the Institute was maintained, despite opposition from both Dean Kirk and Archbishop Redwood, Hyacinth looked toward her future and retired from the battle, leaving Wanganui on May 29 1891. The decision to leave New Zealand was Hyacinth's alone and not orchestrated by the Sisters or by Redwood as suggested by Gardiner and O'Neill, both of whom maintain that Hyacinth was responsible for the introduction of "novelties" such as the boarding school at Wanganui, but it must be

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<sup>34</sup> Bishop J. P. Byrne. "Diary 1885-1892." Bathurst, 1892. Copy of excerpts PSSJA.

<sup>35</sup> Crowley, 79. From 1883 Woods' influence over the Sisters was terminated by the country Bishop of Bathurst, and the Bishops of Maitland and Goulburn also complied. Hyacinth's return to the Perthville would have represented a threat to the new direction of the Sisters since Woods' influence had been seemingly thwarted.

remembered that this was instigated under pressure from Redwood himself with Hyacinth turning to Fr Woods for advice.<sup>36</sup> Both writers assert that Redwood declared Hyacinth ineligible for office as Superior, but as Redwood's letter reveals the Rule prevented her continuation as Superior.<sup>37</sup> Hyacinth has been misrepresented as a "too-stormy Sister" by O'Neill and this judgement distorts her image of a more mature religious as shall be addressed later. Hyacinth revealed no acrimony over her treatment by her New Zealand Sisters and her memories of them were warm. Sr Monica Wright, a Tasmanian Josephite, recalled, "Sister kept her interest in New Zealand to the end; she loved that foundation".<sup>38</sup>

#### *Arrival in Tasmania*

The choice of Tasmania for Hyacinth was explicable as the Archbishop of Hobart, Daniel Murphy, was anxious to secure religious for his schools. By 1891 the Josephites had increased in their numbers and therefore Bishop Murphy would have considered an experienced religious teacher, such as Hyacinth, an asset. Hyacinth was known to most of the Tasmanian founding Sisters at Perthville before going to found the New Zealand community, having assumed responsibility for two of them as postulants.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps of greater consideration in her approach to the Tasmanian group, would have been their strong allegiance to Fr Woods and their adherence to the 1878 Rule. Hyacinth considered the spirit of the Institute should be maintained at all costs, and it was this

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<sup>36</sup> Gardiner, 689; O'Neill, 318.

<sup>37</sup> Letter, F. Redwood to H. Quinlan February 7, 1891.WSSJA.

<sup>38</sup> Letter, M. Wright, May 2, 1958.TSSJA.

<sup>39</sup> Francis McCarthy and Patrick Nolan were among the original group of Bishop Quinn's Irish postulants, arriving in 1875. See Crowley, 2002, 268.

commitment that caused some of her anguish with the Church authorities in New Zealand, particularly the parish priest of Wanganui, Father Kirk,

Two points I consider most important and against the spirit of the Institute are becoming property owners and admitting grades among the Sisters - such as choir and lay Sisters. I don't think any of the dioceses have gone in for the latter, but many have become property owners. Tasmania has not deviated in this respect, so far anyhow.<sup>40</sup>

### *Hyacinth as Sister Guardian*

Leaving New Zealand on May 29 1891, Hyacinth moved into the Tasmanian community living as an "ordinary sister" at Westbury. Although Hyacinth's leadership was well known by the Sisters, she had failed to establish herself sufficiently well in the preceding 13 years in Tasmania to gain their confidence in order to be elected Superior. Hyacinth's appointment as Sister Guardian on January 9, 1905 occurred by default, when during the Chapter of elections three ballots yielded no absolute majority. The Sisters' inability to elect their Superior, once again saw the Coadjutor Archbishop, Patrick Delany assuming his canonical responsibility, stating, "We therefore declared and appointed Sister Mary Hyacinth Superior for the three years henceforth remaining".<sup>41</sup> Hyacinth subsequently chose Sr Francis McCarthy as Assistant, Sr Stanislaus Mary as Bursar and Sr M Ambrose as Mistress of Novices. These appointments were most diplomatic and political, securing the loyalty of Francis, the foundress, and the goodwill of Ambrose the former Superior, charging the latter with the formation of the novices. Hyacinth's wisdom in these appointments reveals a more

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<sup>40</sup> Letter, H. Quinlan to M. Xavier, June 29, 1916. WSSJA.

<sup>41</sup> TSSJ, "Records of Elections of Sister Guardian in the Institute of St Joseph of the Diocese of Hobart." Hobart, 1905, 12. Hereafter "Records of Elections".

mature and flexible religious, certainly more politically astute than was the perception from her days in New Zealand and Perthville.

Hyacinth's role as Sister Guardian received endorsement, when at the Chapter of Elections in 1908 she was elected by an absolute majority at the first scrutiny.<sup>42</sup> This event was significant in its affirmation of Hyacinth's leadership and in the coming of age of the Tasmanian group in their acceptance of their rights and responsibilities in electing their own Superior, 21 years after their foundation. The 35 Sisters gathered at the Chapter of 1911 saw Hyacinth again elected in the words of Archbishop Delany; "at the first scrutiny such an overwhelming majority for Sr M Hyacinth that I deemed it proper to waiver objection in the case of her two successive Superiorship [*sic*], and accordingly confirmed the election of her".<sup>43</sup>

#### Establishment of the Motherhouse at New Town

During Hyacinth's term as Sister Guardian, Archbishop Delany organized the movement of the motherhouse to New Town, a suburb on the northern outskirts of Hobart. Archbishop Delany's purpose was twofold: to provide an adequate convent for the Sisters and their novices and to enable him to oversee their teaching training in order for them to meet the requirements of the Teachers' Registration Act of 1907.<sup>44</sup> It was fortuitous that Hyacinth was the Superior during this period, as her experience of establishing Sacred Heart College at Wanganui, New Zealand was advantageous in the development of Sacred Heart, New Town into a permanent motherhouse and place of

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<sup>42</sup> TSSJ, "Records of Elections"1908, 14.

<sup>43</sup> P. Delany in "Records of Elections," January 6, 1911.

<sup>44</sup> The issue of the Teacher's Registration Act will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.



formation for the novices. The partnership between Hyacinth and Delany would have an ongoing impact on the development of the Sisters of St Joseph and the educational mission of the Church in Tasmania.

Hyacinth in reflecting both on her early years and the treatment Fr Woods received, bitterly comments to O'Neill:

I think there was a great want of honour and sincerity in the Quinn family, Dr Murray, a cousin included. As long as they were getting good work out of you for little cost to themselves it was alright [*sic*], but let there be any trouble or difficulty, and it was all the other way.<sup>45</sup>

It was in Tasmania that Hyacinth achieved her dream from New Zealand to live as an “ordinary sister of St Joseph”, relinquishing the title “Mother,” she was able to reinvent herself in the island Diocese with a supportive hierarchy. Teaching at Westbury, The Forth, and Ulverstone as an “ordinary sister of St Joseph,” she was able to influence those with whom she lived and worked. The distance enabled her to divorce herself from the past and achieve true greatness through her capacity to learn from earlier experiences. Her letters to O'Neill are the only evidence of any bitterness, for throughout her religious life in Tasmania she modelled what a good nineteenth century Sister of St Joseph aspired to be. In a letter to O'Neill she comments, “I have kept no notes, and the number of years I have had to go over are many,” and a final perceptive reflection made over the past fifty years, “The whole thing is like a vast tragedy to me,” leaving the reader with many unanswered questions.<sup>46</sup>

*Hyacinth's influence on the Tasmanian perception of Josephite history*

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<sup>45</sup> Letter, H. Quinlan to G. O'Neill, November 7, 1926. PSSJA.

<sup>46</sup> Letter, H. Quinlan to M. Xavier, August 28, 1926. WSSJA.

Hyacinth's recognition of the "tragedy" of the events surrounding the separation coupled with her prohibition on speaking of the origins resulted in the details of the separation "[becoming] enmeshed in fiction".<sup>47</sup> This is evidenced by the elderly Sisters, who joined the Tasmanian Josephites in the 1930s, in speaking of their knowledge of the history of the Tasmanian Congregation, "I learnt nothing of the origins of the Congregation. Mother Mary was condemned and Fr O'Neill and his book on Fr Woods were forbidden. Sr Columba (Superior during the formation of the Sisters) did not believe in talking about our founders."<sup>48</sup> Another sister recalled, "We were not allowed to read the life of Julian Tenison Woods and Mary MacKillop was not mentioned".<sup>49</sup> The failure to convey any of the history of the Congregation was further testified by another Sister who clearly recalled of her formation in the 1930s that, "I knew nothing of the origins or of the split from Mother Mary".<sup>50</sup> "We did not bother with the origins of the Congregation. I felt it was good enough for Columba it was good enough for me. On my way out from Ireland to join the Tasmanian Josephites, a priest in Melbourne said to me, 'Why are you joining them? Are they the real Josephites?' I had no notion of what he meant".<sup>51</sup>

This veil of secrecy regarding the origins was to have a lasting impact on the Tasmanian Josephites' identity. Given Hyacinth's reluctance to acknowledge Mary MacKillop and the less than flattering biography of Fr Woods<sup>52</sup>, in which she and other Sisters had collaborated by responding to Fr George O'Neill's queries, the Tasmanian Sisters were left with a distorted view, which was only restored after the Second Vatican Council's directive for religious congregations to examine their origins. The confusion

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<sup>47</sup> Crowley, 27.

<sup>48</sup> Sr B, interview by the author, June 22 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Sr E, interview by the author, June 26, 2002.

<sup>50</sup> Sr F, interview by the author, June 24, 2002.

<sup>51</sup> Sr E, interview by the author, June 26, 2002.

<sup>52</sup> Hyacinth responded over the years 1926 and 1927 to letters by Fr George O'Neill and material was used by O'Neill in his biography, 1929, *The Life of the Rev. Julian Edmund Tenison Woods*.

and discomfiture regarding the origins of the Congregation would therefore give rise to an increased importance of the Rule. It became the only tangible link with their origins and therefore assumed a far greater importance to the Tasmanian group in the maintenance of it in its original form, than perhaps some of the other Diocesan groups, which had undertaken revision by the end of the century. This shall be discussed later in this chapter.

#### The Tasmanian version of the history

At Hyacinth's Diamond Jubilee celebrations on January 23, 1930, in her 80th year, the vagueness regarding the origins of the Congregation are evident in the address given by Fr P. J. Lynch, who mistakenly says that Hyacinth "in 1872, (was) chosen as Superior to go with four Sisters to Bathurst, and there at a settlement called The Vale she founded the first community of the Institute in New South Wales"<sup>53</sup> This is, as discussed earlier, is quite inaccurate and leads the reader to interpret the development of the Diocesan congregations as unbroken and is further amplified by the inclusion of the following:

In 1876 Sister Hyacinth was appointed Sister Guardian of the growing number of Josephite houses in the Diocese of Bathurst, and administered their fortunes so admirably that, four years later, Fr Woods chose her to lead a little company of Sisters to the far-off shores of New Zealand, there establish a foundation at Wanganui... If her enterprise had been successful in New South Wales, it was still more the case in her new field of activity.

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<sup>53</sup> "Diamond Jubilee at New Town; Sister M Hyacinth 60 Years Professed: A Link with Fr Julian Woods." *The Catholic Standard*, January 23, 1930.

<sup>54</sup> "Diamond Jubilee at New Town."

It is therefore explicable that mystification and uncertainty centred on the development of the Congregation, when within Hyacinth's own lifetime, the facts of the origin of the Diocesan group were distorted or sanitized to some extent. This is borne out by the Tasmanian Sisters' ignorance of their history until the 1970s.

Hyacinth's legacy, whatever the origins, was to hand down faithfully a tradition that she received. Her contemporaries in Tasmania saw the mature Hyacinth in her role of Superior, displaying "wisdom and care" as one who, "endeared herself to the Sisters by her gentleness and motherly interest in their welfare".<sup>55</sup>

#### Ambrose Joseph Dirkin

Sr Ambrose Joseph Dirkin, another figure who founded a Diocesan community, emerges as a key figure in the development of the Tasmanian Josephites through her formation by both Hyacinth Quinlan and Fr Julian Tenison Woods. Of particular importance within the Tasmanian context was her role as Sister Guardian from 1899-1904. As Sister Guardian she was able to tread the path of intimacy with the archbishop and yet not compromise the spirit of the Sisters of St Joseph and their mission to the poor. Her familiarity with Fr Woods' teaching enabled her to place the Tasmanian community on a firm foundation and also strengthened the community in its living out of the Rule. Having founded the community at Lochinvar she had a depth of experience to bring into the Tasmanian setting.

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<sup>55</sup> Sr Stanislaus Doyle cited in "Diamond Jubilee at New Town."



*Sr Ambrose Joseph Dirkin*

*Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town, Tasmania. Used with permission*

Arriving in Tasmania in 1895, Ambrose Joseph Dirkin was invited to found the Zeehan Convent, by Bishop Murphy.<sup>56</sup> From the 1878 Rule music teaching was a feature of Diocesan Josephite schools and their main source of revenue; therefore, as a noted musician, Ambrose Joseph's particular talent was required in Tasmania. Remembered as a tall and stately person, who always walked like a lady, according to Sr Margaret Mary Littlejohn, who was a former pupil, Sr Ambrose Joseph had blue eyes and a pink complexion.<sup>57</sup> A gifted music teacher and painter of note, Ambrose Dirkin was responsible for the administration of the school as the role of Superior combined the two positions. Regarded by some as enacting the role of "grande dame" as Superior,<sup>58</sup> she was also considered kind, generous and motherly

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<sup>56</sup> "The Death of Pioneer Sister of St Joseph." *The Standard*, January 1948.

<sup>57</sup> M. Littlejohn, record of interview, March, 1987. TSSJA.

<sup>58</sup> C. McCarthy, record of interview, June 26, 1986. TSSJA.

by younger Sisters.<sup>59</sup> Her success as foundress of Lochinvar was not easily translated into the administration of a large school in a West Coast mining town. Both Ambrose Dirkin and her Sisters suffered through the deprivation of adequate support through isolation and the poverty induced by the economic decline in mining.<sup>60</sup>

Born Annie Mary Dirkin on June 8, 1860 at County Armagh Ireland, Annie immigrated to Australia and the family settled in the small western town of Tichborne between Parkes and Forbes in New South Wales.<sup>61</sup> Annie Dirkin was given the religious name of Ambrose of the Immaculate Conception, on entering the Sisters of St Joseph at Perthville. This was changed to Joseph at the foundation of the Lochinvar convent, reverting to Ambrose during her time in Tasmania. Influenced by Fr Julian Tenison Woods she joined the Sisters of St Joseph at Perthville in June 1880. She was received on September 26, 1880 and made her first vows on January 4, 1881, renewing these vows in 1883. From Diocesan records Fr Woods officiated at both her reception and profession.<sup>62</sup>

Her relationship with Fr Woods, which was to continue through correspondence until his death in 1889, reveals a deep respect and mutual admiration. Woods' letter from Singapore in 1883 illustrates his warm regard for her, "I knew from the first that you would be one of my true children and I loved and trusted you when I first saw you".<sup>63</sup> He writes of her to Sr Francis McCarthy recommending that they contact Sr Joseph (Ambrose) at Lochinvar regarding a new member:

In the case of the girl you speak of write to Sister Joseph in Lochinvar Maitland and enter there. They are true children of mine and they

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<sup>59</sup> M. Littlejohn, record of interview, March, 1987. TSSJA.

<sup>60</sup> W.A Townsley, 1991, 285.

<sup>61</sup> J. Tranter, "Sister M Ambrose Joseph 1860-1948." Unpublished manuscript, n.d. TSSJA>

<sup>62</sup> Tranter, n.d.

<sup>63</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods to A. Dirkin, December 29, 1883. Copy TSSJA.

keep the Rule exactly, with the true spirit. They have true holy poverty and plenty of crosses.<sup>64</sup>

Woods' belief was that Ambrose remained steadfast to the original spirit, which he had envisioned for the early Sisters of St Joseph back in the Penola days and rewritten in the 1877 Rule at Bathurst. Woods' endorsement gave her additional credence in the interpretation of the Rule in the Tasmanian setting. It was this clarity of interpretation of the spirit and the Rule, which she would bring to the discharge of her duties in Tasmania.

*As Foundress of Lochinvar*

A woman with easily identifiable leadership qualities, she was asked to found a Congregation in the Diocese of Maitland at Lochinvar and left for the Lochinvar mission on August 28, 1883.<sup>65</sup> This was surely a daunting task for a twenty-three year old. Arriving at Lochinvar on the September 2, 1883, in the company of three companions, she responded to the task and established a new community. After establishing eight branch houses<sup>66</sup> she resigned as Sister Guardian on May 23, 1890 and was appointed Superior at Carrington, where she taught music. In his life of Tenison Woods the historian George O'Neill writes that Sr Ambrose Joseph was deposed by the Bishop and that he "relegated her to the care of an inferior class in a branch school".<sup>67</sup> There is little evidence to support this opinion and her invitation to Tasmania by Bishop

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<sup>64</sup> Letter, J. E. T. Woods, 1887.TSSJA.

<sup>65</sup> PSSJ. "Perthville Diary." In *Perthville Archives*. Perthville, 1872-1934, Entry 58.PSSJA.

<sup>66</sup> Merriwa, Quirindi, Knockfin, Cessnock, Dungog, Burwood, Carrington, and Largs were all established during her time as Sister Guardian. See Tranter n.d.

<sup>67</sup> O'Neill, 314.

Murphy and subsequent appointment as Sister Guardian by Archbishop Delaney would appear to negate this poor opinion.

*As Sister Guardian*

At the instigation of her lifelong friend, the Most Rev Dr Delaney, she was made Sister Guardian of the Institute in Tasmania from 1899-1904. The Archbishop, obviously recognizing her gifts, selected Ambrose over Hyacinth who had arrived eight years earlier. Ambrose's appointment as Sister Guardian occurred when nineteen Sisters gathered for the General Chapter in Oatlands in January, 1899. Again no absolute majority was obtained, "Three scrutinies having been taken and none having the necessary absolute majority, the Bishop acting in virtue of his delegated authority appointed Sr Mary Ambrose for three years to the Superiorship of the Congregation in the diocese".<sup>68</sup> Yet again at Ulverstone on January 5, 1902, when the required majority was not achieved by the eighteen capitulars, the Archbishop decided to reappoint "Sister Mary Ambrose to be Sister Superior of the Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph in this Diocese of Hobart for the period of three years, commencing from this day".<sup>69</sup>

*Zeehan the Motherhouse*

The task of leading the Congregation from such an isolated area as Zeehan perhaps demonstrates the capacity of this remarkable woman, who once again was

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<sup>68</sup> *Records of Elections*, January 9, 1899.TSSJA.

<sup>69</sup> *Records of Elections*, January 5, 1902.TSSJA.



required to draw on those skills of leadership, which had given rise to the successful establishment of the Sisters of St Joseph of Lochinvar. The motherhouse being situated in Zeehan necessitated the novitiate and all new recruits undertaking the arduous trip by boat from Hobart to Strahan, and then travelling by fettlers' train to Zeehan. It seemed to those joining the Sisters of St Joseph from 1899 that they were travelling to the end of the world.<sup>70</sup>

During Ambrose's term as Superior the Congregation opened a further four houses at Richmond, (1899), Franklin (1900), Lymington (1900) and Creswick, Victoria (1900). The foundation of houses in the remote Huon Valley, south of Hobart, brought the Sisters into contact with families over whom Fr Woods had exerted such an influence in his missionary endeavours of the 1870s. The local knowledge would have ensured a receptive and welcoming environment for his Sisters. During Ambrose's term as Superior ten more Sisters were received into the Congregation, three of whom were Tasmanian girls. The community was very much dependent on the work of priests giving missions interstate and directing young girls to the Tasmanian community.

It was indeed fortuitous for the Tasmanian community that Bishop Murphy requested her to transfer from Lochinvar to Tasmania in 1894 as the Sisters required additional music teachers. Ambrose as an accomplished musician was able to prepare students for the various music examinations. In total she spent 31 years of her long religious life in the mining town of Zeehan. In the eulogy Fr W. Ryan, a former pupil, commented on her endowments of mind and soul:

Chief among these perhaps was her love for and great knowledge of music. So great was her reputation, which she enjoyed, that many Professors of Music, both from Australia and from the continent, would come to talk to her about a subject which was so dear to her heart. These professors spoke in high terms of the pupils whom she put through the various examinations, and many musicians in

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<sup>70</sup> P. Lynch, interview by the author, January, 1974.

Tasmania today owe their position to the early training she gave them for Trinity College music examinations in both violin and pianoforte.<sup>71</sup>

Both the priests and the people held her in high esteem and wherever she went she left the indelible mark of the great and holy religious. Ambrose lived out the spirit of the Rule to work amongst the poor and disadvantaged. Father Ryan recalled, "She went among the sick, helping and caring for them, bringing Christ-like comfort to them".<sup>72</sup> She was well known in the mining town and revered by the people; it was said in Zeehan: "When Ambrose got a cold all the chooks in Zeehan took to the trees."<sup>73</sup> In the eulogy Ryan spoke of her leaving Zeehan, "I myself will remember the day she left Zeehan. Hundreds of people of all denominations flocked to the railway station to bid her goodbye and to thank her for help she had always given them."<sup>74</sup> She was remembered with affection and commemorated in a poem to mark the centenary of the mining town.

Old Father Murphy came to give salvation to the soul  
Dear Sister Ambrose, gracious nun, knelt with flock to pray  
Taught Zeehan folk, Jim Bell was one, pianoforte to play.<sup>75</sup>

#### *Relationship to Archbishop*

Ambrose had the capacity to relate to a variety of people, commiserating with the poor of Zeehan and yet sharing a deep friendship with "her lifelong friend, the Most Rev. Dr Delany".<sup>76</sup> She was able to exert some influence over the Bishop as well,

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<sup>71</sup> "The Death of Pioneer Sister of St Joseph." *The Standard*, January 1948.

<sup>72</sup> "The Death of Pioneer Sister of St Joseph."

<sup>73</sup> C. McCarthy, record of interview, June 26, 1986. TSSJA.

<sup>74</sup> "The Death of Pioneer Sister of St Joseph."

<sup>75</sup> Author unknown, n.d. TSSJA.

<sup>76</sup> "The Death of Pioneer Sister of St Joseph."

according to Joseph Eather, “The Archbishop, at the time, thought highly of Sisters A. [Ambrose Dirkin] and H. [Hyacinth] but especially of the former”.<sup>77</sup> It was Ambrose Dirkin’s influence over Delany that ensured John Dowling, another key figure would not return to Tasmania. O’Neill (1929) claimed that Archbishop Delany “had given his word to Sister A. (Ambrose Dirkin) that she (John Dowling) would never return”.<sup>78</sup> The Tasmanian transfer provided both Hyacinth and Ambrose Joseph Dirkin with credibility and new found affirmation from the Archbishop, previously unattainable by both of them in their former dioceses.

#### Sr John Dowling

John Dowling emerges as a most complex character in the Josephite story with movement from Perthville, leaving the Sisters of St Joseph, joining Gertrude Abbott’s community in Elizabeth Street, Sydney, joining the Josephites at Wilcannia, rejoining the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania, founding a community at Creswick, Victoria and finally joining the Lochinvar community. John Dowling’s impact on the Tasmanian group was substantial in her writings and her interpretation of the Rule. Her closeness to Fr Woods gave her an elevated status within the community, but her own restless spirit coupled with the strong personalities residing in Tasmania saw her departure within nine years. John’s knowledge of the spirit and the Rule were to have a lasting impact on the community long after her departure. She is enshrined within the Tasmanian community as a well-educated sister, but above all else as one with a profound knowledge of the Rule and its interpretation. Over a hundred years since her departure for Creswick, many

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<sup>77</sup> Letter, J. Eather to G. O’Neil, August 29, 1926. Copy TSSJA.

<sup>78</sup> G. O’Neill, 308.

elderly Sisters were pleased to provide a connection with John through their Novice Mistress, Sister Sebastian Bailey, who claimed proudly having John as her Novice Mistress and instilling in them that she had been formed according to the Rule.<sup>79</sup>



*Sr John Dowling, Oatlands c. 1896*

*Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town, Tasmania. Used with permission.*

Juliana Dowling (John Dowling) was born in Hobart, Tasmania on May 15, 1853 to William Paul Dowling an artist and photographer<sup>80</sup> and Julia Ann Devereaux also spelt de Veaux.<sup>81</sup> William Paul Dowling, Juliana's father, arrived in Hobart as a political prisoner on the ship *Adelaide* on the November 29, 1849. He received a conditional pardon on August 14, 1855 and a free pardon on February 24, 1857. Julia died in 1869 and William Dowling died in 1875.<sup>82</sup> According to Monsignor Cullen, her dying father made Juliana a ward of Fr Woods.<sup>83</sup> It was at Fr Woods' direction that she entered the Sisters of St Joseph at Perthville on May 8, 1880, taking the religious name John.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> J. Howe, interview by the author, June 26, 2002.

<sup>80</sup> Many photographs of Fr Woods from his time in Tasmania bear the stamp on the reverse side, "William Paul Dowling, Artist and Photographer, Launceston." Archives, Sisters of St Joseph, Lochinvar. TSSJ. *Register*, TSSJA.

<sup>81</sup> TSSJ. *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>82</sup> Letter, Wray to Craig, February 20, 1960. TSSJA.

<sup>83</sup> J. Cullen, interview by the author, May 25, 1947.

<sup>84</sup> O'Neill, 307; TSSJ, *Register*, TSSJA.

Although no record of her entry exists in the Perthville register, this date is recorded in both the Tasmanian and Lochinvar registers.

According to Crowley, John Dowling left Perthville in 1884 as public opinion had turned against Fr Woods.<sup>85</sup> O'Neill also maintains that the destruction of the founders *Directory* or *Book of Instructions*, together with the prohibition of correspondence with him was the impetus for her leaving.<sup>86</sup> After leaving Perthville, it is believed, John Dowling joined a group of Diocesan Josephites known as Holy Family Sisters in Queensland in the mid 1880s and from there she joined a community based around Gertrude Abbott in Sydney, who later cared for Fr Woods in his declining years. Although strictly speaking John Dowling was no longer a religious in a canonical sense, she was referred to as "Sr John" in Fr Woods' letters. Certainly as a member of the community she was present at the time of Fr Woods' death and his *Last will and Testament*; dated August 8, 1887 has her signature as a witness.<sup>87</sup>

Following Fr Woods' death Crowley and Tranter speculate that John Dowling joined the Wilcannia community and wrote the memoirs of Fr Woods using the pseudonym Columcille at Hillston, although no historical record remains of her involvement there.<sup>88</sup> Certainly John Dowling had close ties to Wilcannia through continued correspondence with fellow Tasmanian Sister Stanislaus Fitzpatrick, while transcribing letters for Fr Woods. This correspondence occurred during the duration of the time in the Elizabeth Street community from the mid 1880s until 1889.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Crowley, 87.

<sup>86</sup> O'Neill, 307.

<sup>87</sup> J.E.T Woods, "Last Will and Testament." Sydney, 1887. Copy TSSJA.

<sup>88</sup> Crowley, 87.

<sup>89</sup> O'Neill, 307; Letters J.E.T. Woods to S. Fitzpatrick December 2, 1887; J. E.T Woods, December 2, 1887, J. E.T Woods, December 2, 1887, J.E.T Woods, January 3, 1888, J.E.T. Woods, February 24, 1888. Copies PSSJA.

*John Dowling and the Diocesan groups*

Through her connection with Fr Woods, John Dowling was assured of a welcome from those Sisters and groups who held Woods in high esteem. She was an enthusiastic disciple of Woods and according to O'Neill:

was one of the best inheritors of his spirit. He fostered among the Sisters the belief that she was favoured with supernatural lights for the guidance of souls, and it was understood that he wished her to be mistress of novices. But the persons in power in The Vale were far from desiring the growth of this influence.<sup>90</sup>

Therefore it is not unrealistic to surmise that John used her contacts with the Josephites to her advantage and reconnected with her former community members.

*John Dowling joins the Tasmanian community*

John Dowling would have been welcomed into the Tasmanian group, particularly by like-minded devotees of Fr Woods, such as Joseph Eather, Sister Guardian at the time. Acquainted with the members of the Tasmanian community through her time at Perthville and knowing all the founding Sisters, her decision to return to Tasmania is predictable. This group would have had a particular appeal for her as Fr Woods had predicted a great future for the Tasmanians. Certainly her reception into the Sisters of St Joseph was noted by the Catholic community and so was her musicianship. The *Tasmanian Catholic Standard* records John Dowling's reception as novice at Westbury:

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<sup>90</sup> G. O'Neill, 307.

St Joseph's day was duly celebrated by the good Sisters who bear his name. They selected that day as a fitting occasion for the reception into their Congregation of Miss Juliana Dowling - now Sr John - daughter of the late Mr. Paul Dowling, so well known in Launceston as a portrait painter. The Venerable Archdeacon performed the ceremony in the Church of the Holy Trinity according to the prescribed ritual.

Our Catholic school, conducted by the Sisters of St Joseph, maintains its own, despite the dullness of the times, and the accession of Sr John, who is an accomplished musician, will without doubt, be a great assistance.<sup>91</sup>

According to Burns (1966) John was appointed Novice Mistress, around, 1893.<sup>92</sup> If she were appointed Novice Mistress, the Tasmanian group must have been willing to overlook her years as unattached to a religious group from 1884-1892. Her knowledge of the founder, Fr Woods and her closeness to the Sister Guardian, Joseph Eather, would have assisted in allowing this disregard of canonical requirements.<sup>93</sup>

Finally in Tasmania John Dowling had the opportunity of realizing the predictions made by the cofounder Fr Woods. In a letter to O'Neill, Joseph Eather comments that, "Father (Woods) wanted Sr Mary John Dowling to be Mistress of Novices [at Perthville], but the Sr Guardian chose the Sr [sic] I have just described".<sup>94</sup> The 1899 Chapter records John as elected witness to the Elections for Sister Guardian at Oatlands. At that time she was also deputed as the sister:

To collect desirable information from the newspapers. Slips will be cut out by her and sent to the various branch convents. It will be a matter of duty for teaching the Sisters to study these slips, and any matter historical or otherwise bearing upon them. The sister appointed at present to collect such information is Sister Mary John.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> "Sr John Dowling," *The Catholic Standard*, April 1892.

<sup>92</sup> Burns, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Canonical requirements included a novitiate lasting two years and a person appointed Novice Mistress would have been in the community until such time as her life commitment, normally for six to nine years.

<sup>94</sup> Letter, J. Eather to G. O'Neill, August 29, 1926. Copy TSSJA.

<sup>95</sup> TSSJ, "Regulations for the Better Keeping of Our Holy Rule, Chapter 1893-1895."

Her selection as the collator and censor of material suitable for Sisters to use in schools is indicative of both her status and perceived trustworthiness.

*The influence of Sr John Dowling on the Tasmanian group*

John Dowling's time in the Tasmanian Congregation was marked by a high degree of respect on the part of those who knew her well.<sup>96</sup> Her familiarity with Fr Woods at the end of his life gave her a reverential status and extant material shows her as the keeper and interpreter of the spirit and Rule of the Congregation. O'Neill includes John Dowling's memoirs of Fr Woods as an appendix to his *Life of Fr Woods* as "corrective to whatever, in the preceding pages, we have written or led our readers to infer concerning the sanctity, spiritual life and external demeanour of Fr Woods".<sup>97</sup> Given John Dowling's credibility within the Tasmanian group, they therefore relied on her to verify their understanding of the Rule as an 1883 edition of the *Rules for the Guidance of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart* carries the following note signed by Sr M John:

These Rules were not written by our founder, but by Mother Mary of the Cross - They are useful in many ways, as throwing light upon the customs of the Institute but they cannot be taken by us as a Rule. These Rules do not have our Founder's simplicity of style. I have underlined a few passages to illustrate this.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> See letters of Eather, August 29, 1926, Quinlan November 7, 1926 and interviews by the author of Sisters June, 2002.

<sup>97</sup> O'Neill, 407.

<sup>98</sup> Sisters of St Joseph, *Rules for the Guidance of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart* (Sydney: J. G. O'Connor, 1883). TSSJA.



*Notes on our holy Rule by Sr Mary John*

Of greater significance is a handwritten copy of “Notes on our holy Rule by Sr Mary John,” which consists of 114 pages. These notes are prefaced by the explanation that the writer is complying with a suggestion made by a confessor and by some of the Sisters, “not because [she] can benefit anyone thereby, since [her] views are by many of the Sisters thought incorrect but some persons of experience have thought them singularly correct”.<sup>99</sup> These writings provide John Dowling’s reflections on many aspects of religious life, including the training of postulants and novices, dignity and deportment – “This is a certain reserve of speech and manner and most desirable in Religious. It is not an affected pomposity; and is consistent with great simplicity”.<sup>100</sup> She also provides a detailed account of the procedures required for the teaching of music, “as the Sisters go in for teaching music; and as it is a subject upon which I have had much experience, I give you here a few suggestions”.<sup>101</sup> These suggestions cover fifteen pages with detailed advice and a lesson plan.

A woman of very decided views, her writings supply a quaint view of the religious world of nineteenth century Catholicism, such as in speaking of the use of slang as the “language of thieves and pickpockets invented to deceive the police”.<sup>102</sup> On good manners she suggests that, “The novices unlearn whatever worldly ideas they may have and study the manners of the Holy Family, kind, simple, truthful, sincere, unselfish, modest, humble; avoiding all display, boasting, roughness etc.”.<sup>103</sup> Her advice covers a

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<sup>99</sup> J. Dowling "Notes on Our Holy Rule by Sr Mary John." (Oatlands: n.d.). TSSJA.

<sup>100</sup> Dowling, 9.

<sup>101</sup> Dowling, 38.

<sup>102</sup> Dowling, 33.

<sup>103</sup> Dowling, 34.

wide range of topics and betrays a surprising trace of pride when she declares on “Money Matters”:

I feel not very well qualified to speak on this subject, for I have found through life that I have by no means a commercial or financial spirit, and, in fact, that persons, who I may, without arrogance, say to be very much my inferiors intellectually, appear to have much greater success in finance.<sup>104</sup>

Aspects of her advice are sound with a broad acceptance that, “Economy is not necessarily poverty, nor is stinginess . . . Generous giving is characteristic of our Sisters in every place”.<sup>105</sup> John also writes with some feeling about the Sisters’ relationship to the Bishop, “It is not an unheard of fault in our Institute for Sisters to be too fond of referring things to the Bishop, which strictly speaking do not belong to his province, and also to speak of the Bishop’s directions, concerning things which need not be referred to him”.<sup>106</sup> Her views are very much in keeping with the nineteenth century woman and religious decorum is frequently highlighted with comments in relation to the Bishop such as, “before receiving communion from him, we should keep our lips closed until we have kissed his ring. There is a forty days’ indulgence each time we kiss a Bishop’s ring”.<sup>107</sup>

### Interstate Foundation

John Dowling has the distinction of leading the only interstate Tasmanian foundation in 1900.<sup>108</sup> But when she sought to return to Tasmania in 1914, Archbishop Delany refused permission. According to Joseph Eather cited in O’Neill, Delany had

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<sup>104</sup> Dowling, 77-78.

<sup>105</sup> Dowling, 78- 79.

<sup>106</sup> Dowling, 66.

<sup>107</sup> Dowling, 76.

<sup>108</sup> In October 1900, Sr M John together with Sr Baptist went to found a community at Creswick, at the invitation of Dr Moore, Bishop of Ballarat. There were ties between Ballarat and Hobart as Archbishop Delany had been secretary to Dr Moore prior to his appointment to Hobart.

given his word to Sr. A. (Ambrose Joseph Dirkin) that she would never return.<sup>109</sup> John Dowling, therefore, together with her six companions, sought admission to the Lochinvar Josephites and remained there until her death in 1922.<sup>110</sup> The Creswick foundation was made at the invitation of the Dr Moore, the Bishop of Ballarat, following his unsuccessful request for a foundation from Maitland. Perthville Josephites were already established in the Ballarat Diocese at Bungaree and Dunnstown from 1891.

The circumstances leading to the establishment of the Creswick foundation involve John Dowling. John Dowling while on holiday in the area observed the Bungaree community failing to keep the Rule and reported this to Archbishop Delany. Bishop Moore instigated an inquiry and determined that Sisters' lacked foundational knowledge of religion and religious life. Moore then sought to establish a motherhouse at Creswick and place the Sisters at Bungaree and Dunnstown under a Superior and novice mistress from Maitland. Failing to secure the Sisters from that diocese, he then sought Sisters from Hobart. Sr John Dowling was selected as the Superior; however, the incumbent community of Sisters would not accept John Dowling as Superior and therefore left the Diocese to join the Perthville and Sydney Josephites.

Despite the loss of the members of the existing community and Baptist Osbourne, who accompanied John to Creswick, returning to Tasmania within the first year, John Dowling remained at Creswick for fourteen years. The community conducted two schools despite severe hardship and illness. John suffered a stroke and became an invalid and sought permission to return to Tasmania, which was denied. She together

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<sup>109</sup> O'Neill, 308.

<sup>110</sup> Letter, J. Dowling, June 6, 1914. Copy PSSJA.

with members of her community applied to join the Lochinvar community, transferring on December 23, 1914. She spent seven years there dying in 1922.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to examine closely the Creswick community, but only to treat its foundress John Dowling. O'Neill speaks of John Dowling's "restless spirit" which saw her on the move.<sup>111</sup> Hyacinth in writing to Fr O'Neill, speaks of some of the Sisters "swearing by" the sanctity of "M. J. Dowling, especially M Joseph Eather. To my mind, M. J. Dowling had better qualities than M. Joseph Eather, but she (Dowling) was not a success in anything".<sup>112</sup> This reflection is confirmed when considering John Dowling's movement from group to group and the significant failure of the Creswick foundation in Victoria.<sup>113</sup>

#### The importance of the Rule

The myths regarding the origin of the Congregation gave rise to a particular devotion to the Rule, and it became the defining instrument for the Tasmanian Congregation. Through their adherence to the Rule the Tasmanian Josephites sought legitimacy as a religious Congregation. They therefore sought to maintain it in its pristine form as it became more important to their identity. The influence of the Sisters discussed previously provided an added depth and enrichment to the living out of the Rule and its spirit through their training by Fr Woods.

The Rule on which the Tasmanian Josephites based their way of life was that which was rewritten by Fr Julian Tenison Woods in Bathurst in 1877 and approved by Bishop Quinn in 1878. For the community the preservation of the Rule and spirit was

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<sup>111</sup> O'Neill, 308.

<sup>112</sup> Letter, H. Quinlan, November 7, 1926. WSSJA.

<sup>113</sup> Crowley, 87-89.

integral to their evolution as a religious community. The presence of Ambrose Dirkin, Hyacinth Quinlan, John Dowling and the founding group confirmed the importance and their writings served to enforce its preservation. This Rule remained unchanged in a handwritten form from its approval by Coadjutor Archbishop Delany in 1895, through to its printed publication in 1912. The only change that occurred related to the colour of the habit from brown (1895) to black (1912) and some minor modifications to the training of postulants and novices. There was an expectation that the Rules by which the Tasmanian group was living would be approved by the Holy See and the insertion on page 40 of The Regulations “until our Rules shall be approved by the Holy See,” indicates a sense that the Tasmanian group was living in the expectation of papal approbation.<sup>114</sup> This was never gained, owing to the small numbers within the Congregation.

*Development and interpretation of the Rule*

The Tasmanian group remained faithful to the original constitutions as evidenced through consistent use of terms such as “Little Sister” and “Sister Guardian” until the present time. Titles such as “Mother General and council” and “Superior” are absent from the Tasmanian Rules and Constitution through its first twenty – five years, even though these titles had been appropriated by the other Diocesan groups before the turn-of-the-century. All the original practices from the 1878 Rule were maintained such as the use of the presence bell, novenas and the refrain “May Jesus Mary and Joseph be

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<sup>114</sup> *Regulations for the Better Keeping of Our Holy Rule*, 1899. (Hereafter known as *Regulations*). TSSJA.

praised” used at the beginning of the recreation period and the response “For ever and ever”.

*Chapters 1893, 1895, 1899 and Interpretation of the Rule*

Examination of the document entitled “Regulations for the better keeping of our Holy Rule Chapter 1893 – 1895” illustrates the development of the Rule within the Tasmanian context. The document was drawn up at a Council meeting held at Westbury in January, 1893 and revised at the Chapter held at Oatlands in January, 1895. In the revised form it was approved by the Coadjutor Archbishop Delany on January 9, 1895, consisting either of reminders to practice certain portions of the Rule which had been neglected, traditions in the Institute or such arrangements as experience had shown to be necessary. Sisters were enjoined to adhere strictly to the regulation; but in case of serious inconveniences arising from them, a dispensation could be gained from the Sister Guardian. The regulations were to be read aloud at dinner and tea on Retreat Sundays.<sup>115</sup> The document provides an insight into the specific manner in which the Rule was interpreted within the Tasmanian context.

Certain rigidity existed with the timetable and the expectation was that the exercises be held at the appointed time.<sup>116</sup> The only cause for postponing an exercise

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<sup>115</sup> *Regulations*, 1899.

<sup>116</sup> *Timetable*

The horarium shows a well ordered day, in keeping with the original timetable, as outlined below

Community Exercises

5am Rise

5. 25 Morning prayers and Meditation

6. 00 Angelus

6. 10 Chaplet and Office

was if the priest should visit, and then the Sisters were expected to make him aware of the regularity of the exercises.

The admonition to read the Rule frequently ensured that the Sisters continued familiarity with it:

The Rule is to be read on Wednesdays and Fridays at dinner and each sister must read half a page of it or the *Book of Instructions* privately every day. *The Book of Instructions* is read on Wednesdays and Fridays at tea. In reading it, it was the wish of our founder that we should pause at least one minute for reflection at the end of each paragraph.<sup>117</sup>

Prayer and study punctuated the day with each moment accounted for. The bias towards Woods by those in leadership is found in references to “our founder” to the exclusion of Mother Mary MacKillop.

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- 7. 30 Breakfast, unless Mass be expected
  - 8. 00 Mass Prayers
  - 10. 00 On Sundays, if there be no Mass, if possible, study for an hour.  
Retreat Sundays meditation
  - 10. 55 On Saturdays and school holidays study
  - 11. 55 Angelus -and except on school days - recreation
  - 12. 30 Dinner, then recreation till 1. 30
  - 2. 55 Friday is Commemoration of the Passion, on school holidays – study, this may be omitted if preparing for retreat or decorating the church, as also the morning study.
  - 4. 15 Rosary, etc. If Matins and Lauds be said this time the prayers may be commenced as soon as the Sisters assembled in the oratory.
  - 5. 15 Tea
  - 5. 40 Grace and recreation
  - 5. 55 During retreat Angelus, etc.
  - 6. 45 Matins, Lauds and meditation
  - 7. 40 On Saturdays, chapter
  - 7. 55 Study, except on Saturdays and Sundays and extra recreation days
  - 8. 30 Spiritual Reading on Sundays when there are no public devotions
  - 9. 00 Spiritual Reading
  - 9. 15 Night Prayers
  - 10. 00 Lights out and all in bed except in case of illness, travelling or taking a bath. But in latter case, lights must be out at 10. 15. See *Regulations*, 6. TSSJA.

<sup>117</sup>*Regulations*, 24.

*The Rule in Daily Living*

Reading material was restricted to literature such as *Christian Politeness* and only the Gospel and Acts from the Scriptures, revealing a suspicion of other parts of the Bible, which was in keeping with the mindset of the time.<sup>118</sup> The Sisters were unable to read the newspaper except for the Little Sister (Superior) and council members, who were able to read the newspaper only on matters relating to education and advertisements. The Little Sister was unable to get permission for any sister to read the newspaper but she was allowed to read aloud anything necessary. There was little time for the pursuit of individual interests and every activity was geared toward the mission. The egalitarian nature of the Congregation saw that each of the Sisters must take it in turns in all household duties unless exempted by the Sister Guardian.

*Poverty*

Throughout the regulations, poverty is highlighted in the day-to-day arrangements within the convent. Poverty was vital to the Josephites' way of living. The Sisters lived a frugal life and their diet was entirely consistent with that of the poor, to whom they ministered. The prohibition on the use of alcohol continued to be highlighted and at this point the Sisters were asked to refrain from using stimulants if ordered by doctors unless the Sister Guardian dispensed them.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> *Regulations*, 25.

<sup>119</sup> *Regulations*, 43.



This poverty suited the conditions of the Tasmanian communities such as at Zeehan, where economic depression determined the lifestyle of the community.<sup>120</sup> The *Explanation of the Rule* reiterates the paramount importance of poverty to the Josephite community, “The convent shall be very poor and fitted with furniture such as poor people use”.<sup>121</sup> The same poverty was applied to the chapel where there was to be only one pre dieu and this was to be for the use of priest, however Sisters praying at another time would be free to use it. The arrangements were for sleeping in a dormitory with mattresses, which were to be filled with a fresh straw or chaff once each year.

### *Recreation*

Whilst recreation was a relaxed time with Sisters engaged in sewing activities, certain Rules existed with regard to conversation. Topics that were forbidden to be spoken about in recreation included, “1. Faults either of the children or others. 2. Worldly news of any kind. 3. Our homes or relatives and friends. 4. Affairs of persons we visited, or any news heard in the parlour. 5. Politics. 6. Nationality. 7. Criticism of priest or sermons”.<sup>122</sup> These guidelines flow from the advice given in the *Book of Instructions*, while ensuring that charity and decorum govern recreation. Unfortunately for the historian, it meant that the Sisters were largely unaware of the background of the members of the community. This is particularly true of key Josephite figures, such as Hyacinth, who were still alive at the time of the entry of some senior members of the

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<sup>120</sup> A sister related that the parents of a student at Zeehan used to cut additional sandwiches so that the sister had something to eat at lunch time. See Sister C, interview by the author, June 24, 2002.

<sup>121</sup> BR, Ch. II.

<sup>122</sup> *Regulations*, 13.

community. The practice of not speaking about home or relatives ensured that a richness of oral history was untapped.

Living in very small communities the Rules governing conversation provided a framework, which preserved the confidentiality of the students and promoted a healthy relationship to the local priest, although Sisters were not to go to the presbytery without a companion, even if it were in the same grounds as the convent. Safeguards extended to communication with the people as well. Instructions included under “Intercourse with Seculars” that visitation with seculars should only occur for half an hour, if the person had travelled some distance and normally only for 15 minutes.<sup>123</sup>

#### *Commemoration of Founder’s anniversary*

The Tasmanian community group revered Father Julian Tenison Woods and by 1893 the practice of commemorating his anniversary with a feast day celebration with; “October 7<sup>th</sup>, Our Founder’s anniversary dismiss school at 3pm. Recreation from 3.15 to 4.15 and from 8pm to 9pm”.<sup>124</sup> This practice is in contrast with the Perthville Josephites, where the founder’s death according to Crowley did not receive even a diary note.<sup>125</sup> All reference to cofounder Mary MacKillop had ceased in Tasmania and Perthville.

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<sup>123</sup> *Regulations*, 38.

<sup>124</sup> *Regulations*, 15.

<sup>125</sup> Crowley, 85.

### Changing to the black habit

The Tasmanian community continued living religious life in the same way as they had at Perthville. The Decree from Propaganda (1888) had in no way affected their lives and isolated from mainland Australia they continued to wear the brown habits after the other Diocesan groups changed into black. Crowley notes the Perthville change to black habits after 1892 . For the Tasmanian community the *Book of Regulations* continued to prescribe the wearing of brown habits until after 1899 indicating that habits were to be of brown serge at a cost of three shillings per yard, 53 inches wide.<sup>126</sup> The regulations are quite specific and measurements and costs are exact, perhaps the prescriptive nature is an attempt to prevent the variation away from the simpler style of the habit with trains, quality European fabric and double sleeves of the Perthville Josephites introduced in the 1880s . It was not until 1905 that the Tasmanian community changed from their brown habits to black, exactly seventeen years after the decree was issued and without the knowledge that they had the option of joining the centrally governed Josephites in Sydney. It is significant that it was during Hyacinth's term as Superior that the brown habit finally disappeared in compliance with the Roman decree and the Tasmanian Sisters finally adopted the black habit, marking their separation. Hyacinth who had been instrumental in the separation at Perthville, as leader in Tasmania was responsible for overseeing the change from the brown habit as she had in 1885 in New Zealand; thus severing yet another link to the original foundation.

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<sup>126</sup> *Regulations*, 57.

### *School*

While the *Regulations for the Better Keeping of our Holy Rule* outlined many aspects of daily life of the Sisters, the focus was always on the school. Religious observance was inextricably linked with the mission to the poor. The Regulations confirm the importance of Sisters being present at all times in the school with the children from 9am until school is dismissed. Religious decorum was to be observed with the Sisters advised against using swings, or seesaws, running violently or allowing the children to catch them by the habit.<sup>127</sup> The Tasmanian schools were to close with an examination of studies and distribution of prizes, with the warning that recitations, acting or singing were to be part of the normal school work. The influence of Bishop Murphy's pressure on the foundation group is evident in the statement "The Sisters are also prohibited from letting the children take part in public entertainment."<sup>128</sup>

### The 1912 Rule

The handwritten copies of the 1878 Rule were used in Tasmania until 1912, when Archbishop Delaney published the first printed copies of the Rule. Unlike their Diocesan counterparts their Rule remained intact, whereas the Perthville Josephites had the Rule revised as early as 1892.<sup>129</sup> The 1912 Rule retained the entire former Rule (1878) with some variations. The *Explanation of the Rule* was reprinted as part of the document with the original Note of Julian Tenison Woods, Bathurst NSW July 2, 1878. The *Explanation of the Rule* was endorsed with the approbation affixed to the Rule, "We

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<sup>127</sup> *Regulations*, 51.

<sup>128</sup> *Regulations*, 52.

<sup>129</sup> Crowley, 83.

hereby approve of the foregoing Rules of the Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph, and the Explanation thereof for the Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Archdiocese of Hobart. Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, 1912.”<sup>130</sup> Finally after 25 years of existence the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph had official approval for their Rule. Unlike their Josephite Diocesan counterparts, the Tasmanian Josephites had managed to retain Julian Tenison Woods’ Explanation of the Rule as part of their Rule.

The 1912 Rule was a document intended to formalize the framework of the Sisters’ lives and there was a particular emphasis on the formation of young recruits. The Sister Guardian with the permission of the Bishop could accept postulants and the candidates were to bring no dowry. The influence of the Tasmanian Teachers Registration Act is apparent in the twelve-month requirement for postulants to receive the habit after having passed registration as teachers.

By 1890 the Tasmanian Sisters had made an impact on the island Diocese and in a letter to Archbishop Kirby requesting permission for the Sisters to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in their convents Archbishop Murphy praises them:

The Sisters of St Joseph especially are delighted beyond expression by this inestimable blessing. The Blessed Sacrament is indeed to them the bread of life in more senses than one. For residing in the state in the remote bush of Tasmania, far from the residence of the priest, devoid of the consolation of daily Mass and often of Sunday Mass, the presence of Our Lord’s their main support in their difficulties.

Although not two years as yet in Tasmania they have succeeded in establishing three convents in remote parts of the Diocese with schools for female children, which I have just returned from visiting in which I have found in a flourishing condition.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Sisters of St Joseph, T. Rules and Constitutions of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Archdiocese of Hobart. Launceston: The Monitor, 1912. TSSJA.

<sup>131</sup> Letter, D. Murphy, May 3, 1890.AHMA.

The letter confirms the Josephites' commitment to the spirit of the Rule to provide a Catholic education to the poor without concern for their own physical and spiritual well being.

Bishop Murphy appeared to take little interest in the Sisters and their affairs and delegated his Coadjutor Bishop, Patrick Delany, to attend the Chapters of election and to accept responsibility for the schools. It was in this latter role that Patrick Delany was to prove himself a lasting friend and benefactor of the Sisters. His role will be discussed in more detail later.

#### *Election of Sister Guardian*

The Bishop maintained paramount importance in the governance of the Congregation in the appointment of the Sister Guardian (Superior). Sister Francis McCarthy, the founding Superior, according to Bishop Murphy, was appointed as temporary Superior.<sup>132</sup> At the request of Sister Francis, the most Rev Daniel Murphy Archbishop of Hobart appointed Sister Joseph Eather, Sister Guardian for six years. The change of Sister Guardian, discussed earlier, indicates a certain struggle for leadership within the Tasmanian community in the 1880s, which was not easily resolved in the next decade.

Chapters held at three yearly intervals were unable to reach the required majority for the election of a Sister Guardian. The Bishop therefore assumed a greater responsibility in having to appoint a Superior for the Congregation. As discussed earlier this occurred in 1896, the first general chapter, with the appointment of Sister Joseph,

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<sup>132</sup> *Records of Elections*, 1898, 2.TSSJA.

when three ballots could yield no majority. The Bishop insisted that at the expiration of these three years another sister must be appointed in keeping with the canons and discipline of the Church and with the decree of the First Plenary Council of Australasia.<sup>133</sup>

The 1899 Chapter saw the appointment of Sister Ambrose Joseph after three ballots were unable to provide a majority.<sup>134</sup> The following Chapter resulted again in the reappointment of Sr Ambrose.<sup>135</sup> Similar voting trends continued in the Chapter of elections in 1905 in the appointment of Hyacinth as Sister Guardian.<sup>136</sup>

#### Problem of leadership and a Tasmanian solution

It would appear that leadership was the significant problem for the Tasmanian Josephites. The Tasmanian group had a core of influential women who had in turn made a marked impression upon other foundations; therefore a natural leader would have difficulty in emerging, given the experience and status of so many members of the community. At the 1899 Chapter there were no less than five former Sisters Guardian present, Francis McCarthy (Westbury), Ambrose Joseph Dirkin (Lochinvar), Stanislaus Fitzpatrick (Willcania), Hyacinth Quinlan (Perthville and Wanganui) and more recently Joseph Eather. Whether the Tasmanian Sisters reacted to the presence of so many influential people and were unable to determine who would be best to lead them is a matter of conjecture. With only 10 members with voting rights, and half of them former leaders, the problem was not the lack of adequate leadership material but rather the

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<sup>133</sup> *Records of Election*, 1896, 5.

<sup>134</sup> Delany in *Records of Election*, 1899, 7- 8.

<sup>135</sup> *Records of Election*, January, 5, 1902.

<sup>136</sup> *Records of Election*, January 9, 1905.

overabundance of potential leaders, forcing the Bishop to exercise his authority and appoint a suitable leader.

Perhaps the increasing influence of Tenison Woods' disciples, such as John Dowling, Ambrose Joseph Dirkin and the presence of Hyacinth may have contributed to a more negative attitude to Mary MacKillop, which had not previously been in evidence. The presence of so many significant Josephite women in the early foundation resulted in key positions of leadership within the Congregation being held by non-Tasmanians. It would only be in the second part of the century that a Tasmanian born Josephite would be elected as Sister Guardian with the election of Sr Magdalen Saye in 1946. This is in direct contrast with the Lochinvar Josephites who had a local woman appointed Superior within the first decade. Zimmerman (2000) contends that the Josephite story was one of a quest of authenticity, as the founding Sisters strove to establish themselves as authentic religious. This difficulty was exacerbated in Tasmania where the Tasmanian population, isolated, generally retiring and with a sense of inferiority emerging from a convict ancestry was seeking to establish a religious identity while being very much influenced by members born interstate.<sup>137</sup> The first Tasmanian born priest, Adrian Doyle, was not appointed Bishop until 1998, although a Tasmanian, Joseph Lyons, had been elected Prime Minister of Australia as early as 1932.

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<sup>137</sup> Archbishop Mannix quoted in *The Catholic Standard*, speaking of his visit to Tasmania, stated "some people think that the Tasmanian people are rather slow, but they do an injustice to Tasmania and the people" "Dr Mannix's Views," *The Catholic Standard*, June 9 1923. This comment is illustrative of the Australian mainland view of Tasmanians. Mannix, however, continues his statement to include positive aspects of the Tasmanians' faith and education.



### Conclusion and Significance

The presence of the Josephites discussed previously such as Hyacinth Quinlan, Ambrose Joseph Dirkin and John Dowling within the Tasmanian community gave strong leadership and authenticated the living out of the Rule. Their devotion and grasp of Fr Woods' spirit provided the Tasmanian Josephites with an authentic perspective on the original spirit, which would form them into an effective teaching force within the Church. The origins of the Congregation became shrouded in mystery, although several founding Sisters, such as Hyacinth, Ambrose, Francis McCarthy and Joseph Eather had lived through the foundation. The Rule itself, with its restrictions regarding conversation and the natural reticence of nineteenth century religious to speak of themselves, prevented the accurate portrayal of history, and the Tasmanian community became completely intent on preserving intact the Rule from 1878. The Tasmanian community, therefore, isolated from 1900 from other Diocesan Josephite influences, simply lived out the 1878 Rule in its entirety, defining themselves by it.

## CHAPTER 5

### ARCHBISHOP DELANY AND THE SCHOOLS

#### Introduction

The twentieth century brought challenges to Catholic education in Tasmania through the various Acts of Parliament; however Archbishop Patrick Delany anticipated the changes and set in train structures to respond to the reorganization of education through the promotion of free education for all and the insertion of the Catholic schools into the state system. The Education Acts and the changes to Tasmanian education proposed by the new Director of Education had a significant impact on the Sisters of St Joseph, their approach to education and their internal organisation. The introduction of State Inspections of the schools initiated major changes to the schools and community. Anticipating these changes Delany introduced teacher education for the Sisters of St Joseph and made it possible for the Sisters to establish a motherhouse at New Town in Hobart. In the face of the new requirements the training school at New Town was successful in meeting the new regulations, although the country rural schools experienced considerable difficulty.

Dr Delany could be considered the architect of the Tasmanian Catholic education system, ensuring its survival in one of the most critical periods of its history. It was in the educational context shaped by Delany that the Sisters of St Joseph conducted their schools. Delany was a great benefactor and mentor to the Sisters of St Joseph from 1893 until 1926, enabling the Josephites to meet the challenge of implementation of registration and the inherent difficulties arising from the various

education acts. Through Delany's educational expertise, they moved from relative obscurity in the small towns to mainstream education. As a Diocesan Congregation the Josephites provided Delany with a mobile teaching force, capable of maintaining Catholic schools in the more remote areas, living in less than suitable conditions. Through Delany's invitation to the Sisters of St Joseph to move their motherhouse to New Town, a northern suburb of Hobart, a major turning point occurred, marking both the recognition of the Congregation as a significant participant in Catholic education in Tasmania and also recognising it as a *bona fide* Congregation with a motherhouse and novitiate in a major city. Of particular relevance for this discussion is the evolution of Sacred Heart School, New Town as a model school for the training of Sisters of St Joseph's novices. Sacred Heart School therefore, was influential in the training of the Josephite teachers for schools throughout the island. The achievement of these schools as educational enterprises shall be examined in the light of the State school Inspectors' reports of the period.

#### *Challenges to Catholic Education -Tasmanian Education Acts*

The 1904 Commission of Enquiry into primary education was to provide the catalyst for an unparalleled crisis for the Church authorities. W. C. Neale appointed Director of Education in 1905 found Tasmania lagging behind other States and undertook reorganization of the system. As director he sought to classify schools and teachers, increase salaries for teachers, replace the existing monitor system with pre-service training for teachers, commence inspection of schools, improve teaching methods, and proposed the introduction of free education for state schools. For the

Catholic schools these reforms were to prove expensive. The requirement to meet State standards for buildings and education placed the Catholic schools in grave difficulty as the requirements were compulsory, yet Treasury would fund the improvements to government schools only.<sup>1</sup>

From 1905 several Education Acts were to have an impact on the Sisters of St Joseph and their schools. It was the 1906 Registration of Teachers and Schools Act that was to have the most serious consequences for Catholic schools. The Act required private schools to keep proper statistics, and to be open for inspection by local health authorities. All teachers were required to be registered and all schools registered as sub-primary, primary or secondary or public schools. Non-state schools were now forced to comply with the minimum standards of accommodation and hygiene, and the teachers had to meet the modest standards of proficiency.<sup>2</sup> For the non-government schools the response was twofold. Existing schools had to be improved to meet standards and new buildings had to be constructed according to those standards. Teachers already employed in private schools would be registered upon application but some scheme would need to be devised for supplying teacher registration in the future. In the wake of the Act the number of private schools decreased from 204 in 1906 to 156 in 1907.<sup>3</sup>

### The “New Education” and the Sisters of St Joseph

“New Education” was introduced into Tasmania by Director of Education, W. C. Neale. “New Education”, based on the same ideals adopted in Victoria, was a

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<sup>1</sup> Robson, 253-254.

<sup>2</sup> Parliament of Tasmania. *The Registration of Teachers and Schools Act, 1906*. 6 Edw. VII No. 15.

<sup>3</sup> A Barcan. *A History of Australian Education*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980,192.

process of self-realization, developing every aspect of the child and was a preparation for moral, ethical, civic and social relationships.<sup>4</sup> For the Sisters of St Joseph, who adopted the Woods-MacKillop pragmatic model of education, the inclusion of the additional subjects of drawing, singing and nature study posed significant challenges as it did for their state school colleagues.<sup>5</sup> They had not been trained in the teaching of these subjects and the prospect of being inspected generally and on areas beyond their expertise gave cause for alarm. Through this period the curriculum was enhanced even further to include drill, cadet corps, gardening for boys and the introduction of drum and fife bands.<sup>6</sup>

The “New Education” brought the requirement for appropriate furniture and architecture for the schools, government-approved textbooks, libraries and kindergartens. All of these requirements were to place an additional financial burden on the Catholic schools struggling for survival around Tasmania particularly those of the Sisters of St Joseph in the more isolated country areas. According to the reports in the *Monitor* and *The Catholic Standard* the Sisters and the people, encouraged by the Archbishop worked zealously to provide the resources needed by the schools to meet the inspection criteria.

### School Inspections

In an effort to maintain standards and ensure that the schools were educating on a sound basis, Delany secured the agreement of the Education Department to send

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<sup>4</sup> Robson, 53.

<sup>5</sup> The 1908 teachers’ conference vented its dissatisfaction with Neale’s introduction of singing, drawing and nature study. See Robson, 257.

<sup>6</sup> Education Department Tasmania, *Inspectors’ Reports*, 1907-1937. ED 127 1 /2. AOT.

Inspectors to examine all the Catholic schools.<sup>7</sup> The role of the Inspectors was to act as a critic and reformer to ensure that the department's standards were maintained.<sup>8</sup> The Archbishop met with the Sisters in January 1907 at Ulverstone to acquaint them with the requirements for registration.<sup>9</sup> "On Jan the 5<sup>th</sup> his Lordship interviewed all the Sisters re school matters and the registration of Sisters as teachers, the Law coming into force this year (1907) both for teachers and schools".<sup>10</sup> As an educator Delany's concern was that the Catholic schools were maintaining standards and keeping abreast of the state schools. This was little comfort to the Sisters of St Joseph, who would endure rather than embrace inspections over the coming decades, as their sense of inferiority and lack of confidence as teachers would continue to surface at inspection time.

The Sisters of St Joseph underwent their first inspection by an agent other than that of the Church in 1907. While the Sisters were familiar with regular inspections by the local clergy and the Coadjutor Archbishop himself, they had never experienced the scrutiny of an outsider on their teaching and were ill prepared for the inspections. There was no real preparation or orientation prior to the inspection and the Inspectors' Reports indicate that the Sisters, while forced to comply with government regulations had no understanding of the requirements of inspection. Although they had been conducting their schools in Tasmania since 1887 the educational standards they were required to

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<sup>7</sup> "Sacred Heart Convent at Port Cygnet- Laying of Foundation Stone." *The Monitor*, July 5 1907, 10.

<sup>8</sup> According to the Director, C. E. Fletcher the role of the Inspectors was that of critic and helper. Fletcher described the role as that of "overhauling the class or school, accrediting the value of the good, discovering weaknesses, finding their causes and suggesting remedies and evaluating the sum of the teacher's work". See C. A. Fletcher. "Collaboration between Training Colleges and Inspectors." In *Tasmanian Archives*. Hobart, 1921. AOT.

<sup>9</sup> Fogarty states that Delany requested inspection for "all primary schools other than state schools." As public opinion was not in favour of compulsory inspection of private schools the request was modified to separate the Catholic schools and was thus granted. See R. Fogarty. *Catholic Education in Australia 1806-1950*. 2 vols. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1959, 427.

<sup>10</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

meet were unfamiliar to them, as they had been trained according to another system in New South Wales, transferred from the South Australian Woods-MacKillop system.

Isolated in the country schools<sup>11</sup> with no access to departmental training and professional development held during holidays for departmental teachers, the Sisters of St Joseph were at a disadvantage in terms of preparedness for meeting the department requirements. Often the inspection for the Catholic schools occurred at the beginning of a school year, before the teachers had developed a sufficient volume of work to be examined.

#### Delany's Vision for Catholic Education

For the Tasmanian Catholic Church the major educational reforms coincided with the appointment of Dr Patrick Delany (1853-1926) as Coadjutor Bishop to the ageing Bishop Daniel Murphy in 1893. A man of gifted intellect and a former professor of All Hallows Seminary, Ireland, Delany had studied in Paris at St Sulpice, receiving licentiate in theology in 1880 and gaining first place among 80 students. A man of great personal charm, he was proficient in at least six languages. Delany arrived in Australia in 1885 on commission from All Hallows, and when in his absence, the administration of All Hallows passed on to the Vincentians, he accepted the appointment as secretary to the Bishop of Ballarat in 1887. Visiting Rome in 1887 with Bishop John Moore on his *ad limina* visit, Leo XII bestowed on Delany the title Doctor of Divinity for his studies in Paris.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> All schools apart from Sacred Heart, New Town, in Hobart are considered country schools for the purpose of this discussion.

<sup>12</sup> "Delany Papers." In *Patrick Delany*. Hobart: Tasmanian Church Archives, 6/Del, n.d.

*Delany's response to the challenge*

Delany's knowledge of and enthusiasm for education saw him in his 14 years as Coadjutor Bishop devote himself to organising and examining schools. Delany elected to visit and examine all schools to ensure that standards were maintained, "I used to examine personally each of the schools and each child".<sup>13</sup> *The Monitor* of 1894-1896 comments on Delany's examination of the students. From these reports it is apparent that Delany used these visits to both inspect the schools and also to challenge the parents into meeting their legal responsibilities. The 1894 report of the Sisters of St Joseph's school in Devonport is typical of Delany's thorough approach to his examination of schools.

Examination of the school at Devonport started at 10am with Grade 5 and down through classes until 5pm. He (the Bishop) then distributed prizes.

He was surprised at how well the Protestant children replied. He had discovered the reason, for the Protestant children had done uniformly better than the Catholics because they attended school regularly. The Bishop continued to say that if parents under the cover of giving their children a Catholic education were evading the law and neglecting their obligations towards their children, he might find it necessary to exhibit the school register to the proper authorities at the close of the school year so the state could deal with such parties as they deserved.<sup>14</sup>

Accepting responsibility for the schools, Delany took an active interest in all schools, notably those conducted by the Sisters of St Joseph.<sup>15</sup> His pastoral concern for the Tasmanian Josephites was unique amongst the Diocesan Josephite groups, who

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<sup>13</sup> P. Delany. "Rapport De L'archeveque De Hobart (Tasmanie) Sur L'institut Diocesan (Juris Dioceain) Des Soeurs De St Joseph." 23. Hobart: Catholic Church Archives, 1924.

<sup>14</sup> "The Co-Adjutor Bishop on the NW Coast." *The Monitor*, May 19 1894, 6.

<sup>15</sup> He was capable of using his educational ability in assisting in the training of teachers, lecturing the Sisters of St Joseph in educational subjects over a number of years. See Burns, 1966, 69. Delany had a keen interest in psychology, presenting a paper at the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science in Hobart in 1902. See "Delany Papers".



more frequently encountered the bishops in a manipulative and an oppressive role.<sup>16</sup> The Sisters of St Joseph's Tasmanian experience of the bishops, particularly Delany was marked by paternal benevolence. Having determined the needs of the Catholic schools through inspections, in 1899 Delany invited Miss Barbara Bell,<sup>17</sup> a graduate of Secondary Teachers' Training College, Cambridge to give lectures and demonstrations in each of the principal schools, as well as advising the Sisters on the organisation of the schools.<sup>18</sup> Delany writes of Miss Bell "for three years restructuring the education system of our schools - principally in the schools of the Sisters of St Joseph. The others (schools) inherited methods more or less passable but too restricted to reach a superior standard."<sup>19</sup> The reorganisation of the schools was a prelude to the far greater changes to be imposed on them with the successive education acts of 1906 and 1909.

Delany's familiarity with the schools enabled him to pre-empt the government's changes to education. To ensure the continuation of the Catholic schools, such as those run by the Sisters of St Joseph, Delany as early as 1900, in response to a Bill in August, 1900 proposing free education, requested a modest subsidy from tax collected for payments of teachers' salaries for children in private schools. The Legislative Council, however, rejected the Bill as a "useless expenditure" and free education for state schools only came into existence in 1909.<sup>20</sup>

Delany's commitment to Catholic education ensured that he played a leading role in the education debate regarding the Schools and Teachers Registration Act. His

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<sup>16</sup> See the Diocesan Josephites experience of Bishops in Bathurst, NSW and Wanganui, New Zealand in Crowley (2002) and Srevens (2001).

<sup>17</sup> Miss Bell, a graduate of the Secondary Teacher's Training College, Cambridge had been brought to Australia in 1896, by Mother Gonzaga Barry for the purpose of instructing the Loreto Sisters as teachers. See "Delany Papers". AHMA.

<sup>18</sup> Letter B. Bell to R. Fogarty, June 17 1952 cited in Fogarty, R. *Catholic Education in Australia 1806-1950*. 2 vols. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1959,436.

<sup>19</sup> Delany, 1924. AHMA.

<sup>20</sup> Robson, 1991, 251.

involvement was such that he delayed his visit to Rome to receive the pallium.<sup>21</sup> Extant material relating to these negotiations is only provided by the local Catholic papers, which record Delany's lecture given to the Irish college in Rome on April 30, 1908. Of interest is his notional acceptance of the legislature acting in the interests of the children rather than an attempt by some to "throwing the entire education of this country into the hands of the State department".<sup>22</sup> Delany's wariness wholeheartedly to embrace the scheme emanates from the Victorian education anti-Catholic bias and also from the disproportionate representation of the Board of Registration.<sup>23</sup> The majority of students were in the primary schools, yet the representation was weighted in favour of secondary education and those schools over which the board had no jurisdiction.<sup>24</sup> As Delany argued the "very schools that are most numerous and have the largest interests at stake under these boards are represented upon them in inverse ratio to their interests and importance".<sup>25</sup>

Delany continued to promote free education and as part of a delegation to the Minister for Education, proposed that free education from the state "for a payment from the state of not less than one pound per annum".<sup>26</sup> In response for payment, the Bishop was prepared to adopt the pedagogy of the state school and would incorporate the Catholic schools into the state system retaining proprietary rights and direct control of staff. This proposal was in striking contrast to Delany's fellow mainland bishops, who

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<sup>21</sup> The modern pallium is a circular band about two inches wide, worn about the neck, breast, and shoulders, and having two pendants, one hanging down in front and one behind. The pallium is worn over the [chasuble](#). The use of the pallium is reserved to the pope and archbishops, but the latter may not use it until, on petition they have received the permission of the [Holy See](#) (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11427a.htm> Retrieved 8 July 2004) See Southerwood, 1968.

<sup>22</sup> "Education Question in Tasmania." *The Monitor*, July 17 1908, 3-5.

<sup>23</sup> F. Rogan. *A Short History of Catholic Education: Archdiocese of Melbourne 1839-1980*. Melbourne: Catholic Education Office Melbourne, 2000, 38-39.

<sup>24</sup> Of the eight member Board representing the University, two were from the State education Department, one from the technical education and four optional members one each from the Catholic and Anglican Church and two headmasters of private schools.

<sup>25</sup> "Education Question in Tasmania." *The Monitor*, July 17 1908, 3-5.

<sup>26</sup> "Free Education." *The Monitor*, October 18 1907, 5.

adopted a more biased attitude to state education.<sup>27</sup> The claim was spurned and the matter was never placed before Parliament. The Legislative Council rejected the Free Education Bill for State Schools.<sup>28</sup>

Delany's proposal was at variance with Mary MacKillop and Tenison Woods who had staunchly rejected government funding as it was against the Rule.<sup>29</sup> It may have been a cause of deep concern for the Tasmanian Sisters, yet there is no extant material relating to their reaction. Indeed, they may have been oblivious to the political involvement of their Bishop.

Delany continued to campaign for free education for all children, making it an issue of justice to their parents as taxpayers.<sup>30</sup> As Catholic Bishop he campaigned principally for children in the Catholic school system but also had a wider vision of the needs of all Tasmanian children.

*Free Education, the Tax Act of 1909 and impact on the schools*

The introduction of free education in 1909 and Delany's failure to achieve any government remuneration for the Catholic schools coincided with the Tax Act of 1909, which remitted rates and taxes on Church and Sunday school property but not on private schools. The belief was that private schools, including Catholic schools, were run for profit. In Hobart alone the rates on Catholic schools came to over a £100 annually.<sup>31</sup> Josephite schools and other Catholic schools were forced to raise money to pay rates by whatever means were possible which led to the emergence of concerts and bazaars as

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<sup>27</sup> "Free Education." *The Monitor*, October 18 1907, 5.

<sup>28</sup> "Free Education Bill." *The Monitor*, November 1 1907, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Gardiner, 1993, 82-83.

<sup>30</sup> "Education question in Tasmania," 1908.

<sup>31</sup> Hollingsworth., 15.

major fundraising efforts. Music lessons also assumed greater importance as apart from the cultural significance they became a regular source of income through the fees charged<sup>32</sup>

There was a drop in school fees following the introduction of free education for state schools. In country areas, in particular, the loss of revenue was significant and even the music lessons, which were taught at the end of a hard days' work in school, could not supplement the loss in income. From concern for the welfare of his religious Sisters in desperation Delany appealed to his priests for help.<sup>33</sup> The health of the Sisters began to be affected and once again Delany appealed to the clergy to make the people aware of the serious decline in school fees.<sup>34</sup> Two small Catholic schools had been forced to close, as there was insufficient support for the Sisters.<sup>35</sup>

### The Sisters of St Joseph's Style of Education

The Sisters of St Joseph were trained according to the Woods–MacKillop method of education originating from South Australia. The original timetable for both community and school was contained in *The Rules* and in an *Explanation of the Rules* and the *Book of Instructions* sent to them by Julian Tenison Woods, after their arrival in Westbury.

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<sup>32</sup> Robson, 261. Account books reveal that the music income was greater than the fees from the schools from 1900.

<sup>33</sup> "Fees Crisis." *Monitor*, May 4 1909.

<sup>34</sup> "School Fees." *The Monitor*, August 28 1912.

<sup>35</sup> Mathinna and Campbell Town had both closed by 1912 and another school was threatened with closure. See Hollingsworth, 1970, 8.

Mary MacKillop and Julian Woods were in accord with regard to the type of education to be offered to the children in their schools. The children, Mary maintained, required “an education sufficient to obtain a situation and earn a living and to write legibly, to add up and subtract figures and to communicate”.<sup>36</sup> Contained within *A Book of Instructions* was a carefully constructed timetable with information relating to the various subjects to be taught. Three pages are devoted to general comments regarding the schools under the headings of “Monitors, Manner of entering school, Positions and order in which they go up to class, School bags, The Best child of the week, Regularity, Obedience, Tidiness, Catechism, Merit, and Singing.”<sup>37</sup>

Fogarty (1957) argues “judged by modern standards, the first Sisters of St Joseph were not exceptionally well versed in the theory of pedagogy; in the practice of it, however, their own experience and natural talent combined to make them a competent body of teachers”.<sup>38</sup> Uniformity of method and organization of classwork were enjoined in the directory, which outlined all practices to be followed. The method of teaching was laid down quite clearly for the Sisters and there was no room for creativity or originality:

No matter, therefore, how tiresome or how tedious it may be, or how difficult, they must patiently use every effort to make the children learn and see that they understand what they learn. The Sisters must strictly adhere to the order and method laid down for them and would not follow their own caprice or wishes.<sup>39</sup>

In the school the Sisters should act “with the submission, obedience and readiness of soldiers in an army”.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Circular March 19, 1870.

<sup>37</sup> J.E.T. Woods. *Book of Instructions for the Use of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart with Community Prayers, School Directory, &C.* Brisbane: S. Pole & Co, n.d., 52-53. Hereafter referred to *Instructions*. TSSJA.

<sup>38</sup> Fogarty, 293.

<sup>39</sup> OR, Ch. VI

<sup>40</sup> OR, Ch X.

The emphasis was entirely on the practical. The Little Sister was, for example, “to see each day the Sisters had a fresh task on each subject, which they had to study, the evening before, and then be able to impart to the class the next day. Then followed more minute instructions on the various types of lessons. The Sisters, for example, who were to give the gallery and object lessons, were “to prepare the subjects that night before, and not give any without the consent or knowledge of the Little Sister of the school”. The Sisters were further directed to “prepare their parsing sentence is the previous night”, and all schools “immediately taught from the convent” (presumably the motherhouse) “the class lessons, gallery and object lessons, parsing, etc were to be the same in each class”.

This type of organization, simple but over centralized if it were judged by contemporary standards, was appropriate to the needs of the times and had the capacity to be transferred throughout the various colonies whose education systems were for the most part in their infancy.

The Sisters were to cultivate the spirit of industry and application by appealing to their students rather than through coercive methods, which were in vogue at the time.

The children must be got to love the Sisters, and never to fear them .  
 . . We should show by our acts that we are ready to die for them. We  
 must not think we do too much sacrificing from our means for them  
 ...all that we have is in a certain sense at their service.<sup>41</sup>

A system of rewards was instituted and followed in all schools. The best pupil of the week in each class was to wear a special ribbon, medal, or rosette. The ribbons themselves were to be of different colours and widths and were to be awarded, not for any particular aspect of schoolwork, but on the aggregate of regularity, obedience,

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<sup>41</sup> *Instructions*, n.d., 28.

tidiness, catechism, merit, and singing. The regulations rewarding marks in each of these areas were laid down.<sup>42</sup>

Orderliness was an essential ingredient of the Josephites' school and from the manner of entering the school, the tone was set for the day. They were to enter "with arms joined behind them, salute their teachers and take their places in order, singing daily a hymn to St Joseph as they do so".<sup>43</sup> A number of prayers were listed for the students to say and also the requirement that on the hour the students were to offer a prayer or sing a verse. At 12.00 o'clock after the Angelus and the hymn to Our Lady they were to march out again singing some other hymn and the day was concluded by the singing of an additional hymn. Religious practice was therefore a significant aspect throughout the school timetable. This conformed to Mary MacKillop's wish that the Sisters of St Joseph schools be truly Catholic schools, and following the 1869 Bishops' Conference stated that the essential principle of Catholic education was, "the interpretation of a vital Catholic atmosphere in the school, its infusion with the Catholic life and spirit of prayer. This type of education must act upon the child's whole character of body, soul and mind".<sup>44</sup>

The practice of children entering school by singing hymns and the provision of prayers throughout the day continued to be the practice of the Sisters of St Joseph schools in Tasmania for the next 50 years. In the Inspectors' records of the period 1907 to 1937 the Inspectors frequently comment on the orderly manner in which the children enter school and also on the singing of the hymns.

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<sup>42</sup> *Instructions*, 51.

<sup>43</sup> *Instructions*, 50.

<sup>44</sup> Cited in Burford, 1998, 15-16.

*The School Timetable*

The school timetable of the early Sisters of St Joseph was in use in Tasmania until at least 1907, when Archbishop Delany organized for the inspection of all Catholic schools within the Diocese by the State Inspection. The Sisters were therefore from that time obliged to adapt their programme to meet the requirements of the State.

The teaching routine closely resembled that being used in schools in the late nineteenth century. The curriculum at the time, in all primary schools, besides instructions in the Scriptures, prescribed that the children were taught to read and write, to spell, parse and do simple sums. They were to receive only the rudiments of geography, history and such subjects as algebra, geometry, mensuration, natural philosophy, and bookkeeping, drawing and vocal music. Girls were taught needlework, and there were set national textbooks to be used.

The approach adopted by the Sisters in their schools provided a logical and methodical system of learning. The practice of rote learning was kept to a minimum in preference to the children understanding what they learn, “no matter, therefore, how tiresome or how tedious it may be, or how difficult, they must patiently use every effort to make the children learn and see that they understand what they learn.” And “in teaching they should take every pain, leaving nothing untried as a matter of justice to the parents that the children may progress in worldly learning”.<sup>45</sup>

The benefits of such a system enabled all classes to be kept occupied all the time and so the activity of one class would not impact on the learning of another class. This programme of work was to provide the basis for single teacher and two teacher

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<sup>45</sup> OR, Ch VI.



schools throughout the Sisters of St Joseph schools in Tasmania, where to meet the requirements of the annual inspection meant that each class had to be taught separately.

The use of regular teaching of spelling, tables and grammar for each day of the week in each class with the inclusion of geography, poetry and prose extended the children beyond the mere three Rs, while the study of English, Irish and Ancient history mirrored the origins of the families of scholars. The fifth class programme with the inclusion of Greek roots enabled the children to grasp the foundations of spelling. The practical subjects on Friday afternoons had a peculiarly pragmatic flavour and were without doubt relevant for the poor children, with the darning and patching as well as plain and fancywork for the girls, while the boys were engaged in bookkeeping by single entry.

There was a gradual progression from first class with the provision of learning of letters, poetry or hymns, making strokes on slates, and prayers. The fifth class objectives were that the pupils should be able to read and study English and ancient history, write essays, parse and transpose, and understand school Grammar, Latin and Greek roots, descriptive and political geography of the continents including Australia, and have a fair idea of school geography, arithmetic as far as simple interest, and understand all the different catechisms. Girls expected to be efficient in plain and fancy work, boys in bookkeeping by double entry, first book of Euclid and mensuration.<sup>46</sup> Such attainment for the pupils in the fifth class by contemporary standards would have them achieve at a standard equivalent to the contemporary upper grades of the secondary school system. The delivery of such a curriculum would have been a significant challenge to many of the Sisters of St Joseph. For that reason there was an

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<sup>46</sup> *Instructions*, 52-53.

ongoing system of teacher education within the school system, which was reflected within the Rule itself.

Burford (1988) explains that the use of the gallery or object lessons, similar to the demonstration lesson, enabled the experienced teachers to be observed by pupil teachers. The Sister teaching the object lesson would lead the class to examine the origins and uses of an object such as an inkwell, book, slate or fruit. Sisters in training would repeat these lessons on the same day in each class. Thereby the young inexperienced Sisters would go to the lessons prepared and better able to do justice to the subject of the lesson. A further benefit was that if any sister required replacement the substitute would know exactly what had already been taught in the class.<sup>47</sup>

### Teacher Training

According to Constance Lewis the Woods-MacKillop system of education was based on the British education reformer Kay-Shuttleworth (1802-1877) developed in 1846.<sup>48</sup> The basis of teacher training was to take student teachers into the classroom in order to train them in the art of the teacher. Mary MacKillop would have experienced this system of training in the denominational school at Portland. In like manner the early Sisters of St Joseph learnt the art of teaching by being placed under the supervision of the more experienced teachers. This method had proven itself in South Australia, where Mary MacKillop had modelled good practice for the novices.

The normal type of training at this time in Australia was the pupil-teacher method, whereby the practice of observing the method of best teachers was

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<sup>47</sup> Burford, 1988, 20.

<sup>48</sup> C. M. Lewis. "Provision for the Education of Catholic Women in Australia since 1840." Ph D thesis, Melbourne University, 1989. 349.

supplemented by the use of existing manuals of teaching.<sup>49</sup> From the beginning, Mary set herself the task of personally training the Sisters as religious teachers and Julian Tenison Woods was anxious that the Sisters come under her influence.

Because of the isolated and remote nature of the work both Woods and Mary believed it was essential that the personnel be trained in the same basic uniform system of teaching, whereby each sister knew exactly what was required each day. Such a system, Mary believed, would foster and maintain unity among the sisterhood.<sup>50</sup>

Sisters in country schools, or any distance from the motherhouse, should be careful not to deviate from the usual method or observance, either in the convent or school. When they are obliged to do so it should not be without consulting the Sister Guardian.

If any change seemed desirable, the Sisters should make notes of what would appear to be best and either send them to the Sister Guardian or keep them until the retreat.<sup>51</sup>

The inclusion of the period for study for each evening for about two hours allowed the Sister in charge of each school to see that the teacher assistants had time to develop a fresh task on the subject for teaching the following day.<sup>52</sup>

The system had the potential for great success but its ultimate success or failure would lie in the ability of the sister-in-charge to provide leadership necessary within the small remote communities in which the schools operated. The Sisters' extreme poverty enabled them to accept makeshift lodgings and survive on a pittance. They had an easy mobility and were able to be readily deployed by the Bishops to places of need. The simple materials required for the schools were within the capacity of the Catholic community to provide. Use of national texts, slates and in many cases the use of church buildings ensured that the provision of Catholic education was feasible.

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<sup>49</sup> Burford, 1988, 13.

<sup>50</sup> Burford, 1988, 24.

<sup>51</sup> *Instructions*, 24.

<sup>52</sup> OR, Ch. VIII.

*Tasmanian Josephite Teacher Education*

Aware of the moves to raise educational standards in Tasmania, Delany sought to pre-empt the government and establish a system of training for the Sisters of St Joseph. With this end in sight he opened a fund in 1902, to establish a central novitiate and house of studies for the Sisters of St Joseph.

**THE SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH**  
Have at present  
TWELVE CONVENT SCHOOLS  
In Tasmania with an enrolment of  
ONE THOUSAND CHILDREN  
They are in urgent need of a **Central House**  
For the training aspirants to the Community  
In the **Religious Life** and in the  
**Theory and Practice of**  
**Teaching**  
Subscribers to this meritorious work  
have the benefit of the Prayers and other  
Good Works of all the Convents  
Contributions may be sent to me or to any  
of the Clergy, or to the Sisters themselves.  
Patrick Delany  
Bishop of Laranda,  
Coadjutor Bishop of Hobart

The *Monitor* on February 28, 1902 speaks of the first fifteen years of the Sisters of St Joseph's presence in Tasmania as, "the work has noiselessly grown" and "there are twelve convent schools under these admirable teachers scattered over the Diocese with an enrolment of round numbers of one thousand children".<sup>53</sup> The *Monitor* explains that expansion of the Congregation is expected and therefore there will be further need for recruitment and training. For this purpose:

It has been decided to appeal to the friends of religion and Catholic education to lend a hand in enabling the Sisters to erect a modest

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<sup>53</sup> "The Sisters of St Joseph." *The Monitor*, February 28 1902, 6.

house of studies – a novitiate in some suitable position where they shall have the facilities to carry on that important portion of their work.<sup>54</sup>

Despite advertisements appearing in almost every edition of the *Monitor* for 1902 and 1903, the project did not come to fruition until 1908, but already the planning was under way.

Following the Schools and Teachers Registration Act of 1906, Delany acted upon his 1902 plan to provide a central place of study for the Sisters of St Joseph. Deciding on Hobart as a central location, given the establishment of Teacher Training College (1906) and the University, he accordingly invited the Sisters of St Joseph to assume responsibility for Sacred Heart School, previously conducted by lay teachers. A two-story brick convent was erected, which would serve as the motherhouse and training centre. Some small donations assisted but the “bulk of the necessary funds was made up of what the Sisters’ hard work and economy put together along with a substantial bequest from Michael Fahy”.<sup>55</sup> By 1912 the generosity of Archbishop Delany had been demonstrated by his personally providing £584 towards the erection of buildings at New Town. Again the report was most complimentary regarding the facilities at the school and states “Sacred Heart at New Town is a very model. The Inspector’s Report of the work done there is very satisfying and very encouraging”. The convent was completed in 1907 and the Sisters under the direction of Sr Hyacinth Quinlan moved into New Town.<sup>56</sup>

The Teachers’ Registration Act in Tasmania (1906) and Victoria (1905) had made the provision of Teachers’ Training Colleges imperative. For Tasmania the Act meant “neither the school, nor the teacher, was permitted to function without the

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<sup>54</sup> "The Sisters of St Joseph." *The Monitor*, February 28 1902, 6.

<sup>55</sup> "The Sisters of St Joseph." *The Catholic Standard*, July 15 1922, 11.

<sup>56</sup> "New Town." *The Monitor*, January 24 1908, 5.

authorization of the government”.<sup>57</sup> Archbishop Carr of Melbourne established such a College at Albert Park, Melbourne under the auspices of the Loreto Sisters, Archbishop Carr hoping that the College would not only “impart the highest training to intending teachers” but “serve as an intellectual centre for all their schools and colleges”.<sup>58</sup> The purpose of the college was twofold, to provide for those preparing for teaching as either religious Sisters or lay teachers and to assist those desiring to pursue a university course, “in the easiest and most helpful circumstances”.<sup>59</sup>

Determined that the schools would survive the registration crisis, Delany took the unprecedented step of sending two Sisters interstate for teaching training. For the first time they were to have an influence beyond the Josephite tradition. Delany’s recollection in 1924 of his decision to send, “two of the Sisters of St Joseph to this school to prepare themselves to commence a similar college, where our novices, even postulants ready to enter the novitiate, could do studies required for their diploma, [and] not one has failed!” This revealed an intimate and paternal interest in the Congregation.<sup>60</sup> By enabling the two Sisters of St Joseph to undertake teacher training he ensured that on their return they would be registered and equipped to train the young novices in the school at New Town.

### *Central Catholic Teachers’ Training College*

The Central Catholic Teachers’ Training College opened on May 1, 1906 with an enrolment of 16 students. Among those enrolled in the first intake was Sr Gabriel

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<sup>57</sup> Delany, 1924.

<sup>58</sup> Cited in Fogarty, 1959, 433.

<sup>59</sup> M. Drew. *From Ballarat to Broome- One Hundred Years of Loreto in Australia*, 1975, 19.

<sup>60</sup> Delany, 1924.

Reidy of St Joseph's Convent Tasmania.<sup>61</sup> The register entry of the College shows her entry dating from June 1906 and finishing in December 1907. Her purpose in studying was "training".<sup>62</sup> Gabriel had in fact been sent to study secondary teaching to prepare her on her return to become Mistress of Method. Record number 18 notes Sr M Xavier Canty's entry from February 1907 until December 1907.<sup>63</sup> Xavier was trained as an infant teacher.<sup>64</sup> Delany had financed their education at the Teachers' College from his personal income.<sup>65</sup>

The Mistress of Method at the Training College was Miss Barbara Bell, who had previously worked with Gabriel and Xavier in Tasmania. The Sisters undertook such subjects as would meet the requirements of the Registration Board of Tasmania, and which in turn could be imparted in Tasmania. The classifications for study were sub-primary, primary and secondary. Subjects included professional qualifications such as theory and practice in management of the infant school, school hygiene, blackboard work, singing, and physical education. In addition students had lectures on schoolwork. The course had a highly practical focus with a requirement that of the 80 hours involved in the theory and practice of education, and on the various primary subjects, 60 were to involve teaching in the schools. Weekly criticism lessons formed an integral part of the programme and at least one week was to be spent in charge of an infant department.<sup>66</sup>

The primary programme followed very much the sub-primary with the inclusion of school management and construction of timetables. The practical

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<sup>61</sup> "Sr M. Gabriel, the head teacher in the Convent School here, left last week for Melbourne, to enter the Training College in that city, lately opened under the supervision of the Loreto Nuns, with Miss Bell, late of the Training College, Cambridge, England, as teacher of " Method". "Westbury." *The Monitor*, June 15 1906, 9.

<sup>62</sup> I.B.V.M. "Register Central Catholic Training College Albert Park." Melbourne, 1906.

<sup>63</sup> I.B.V.M., 1906.

<sup>64</sup> Hollingsworth, 12.

<sup>65</sup> "Out of his own pocket he paid for the further training of young teachers at mainland teaching colleges" (Tasmanian Church Archives, 6/Del).

<sup>66</sup> I.B.V.M. "Syllabus of the Training of Catholic Teachers in Sub-Primary, Primary and Secondary Schools." Melbourne, 1907. IBVMA..

component was integral to the training and also incorporated voice production and elocution.<sup>67</sup> The prospective teachers were not only being trained for teaching but also for the role of principal or infant mistress. Gabriel and Xavier returned to Tasmania in December, 1907, and gained the Tasmanian Teachers' Registration Certificate.<sup>68</sup>

*Establishment of Novitiate and Demonstration School*

The *Monitor* records with pleasure the arrival of the Sisters of St Joseph to New Town some 20 years after the foundation in Westbury:

They have built a very fine residence on the grounds attached to the Sacred Heart Church. The members of the Order from all parts of the island came here for their annual holidays and retreat this year. The building, though only a portion of the original plan has been erected, presents quite an imposing appearance, and will, when completed be an ornament to the town. Since the Sisters came to Tasmania - some 20 years ago - they have been looking forward each year to a commodious home where they could make their annual retreat, and now they must feel pleased that they have at last seen their wish realized.

The school under their tuition will reopen on Monday, 27th January. The course will comprise good sound English education, together with voice and musical culture and needlework in all its branches.<sup>69</sup>

The report acknowledged the Sisters' willingness to accept inferior accommodation and to wait until appropriate accommodation was available for them, which was entirely in keeping with their charism and which was replicated throughout the small towns around Tasmania. The report confirmed that the education at Sacred Heart would be a solid one, along the same pattern as that adopted in the country schools, and yet complemented by cultural subjects as well.

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<sup>67</sup> I.B.V.M., 1907.

<sup>68</sup> I.B.V.M., 1906.

<sup>69</sup> "New Town." *The Monitor*, January 24 1908, 5.



The first group of Sisters to arrive at Sacred Heart Convent consisted of seven Sisters and two or three postulants, under the leadership of Hyacinth Quinlan. The ladies from the local community had prepared the convent, making beds, and stocking the larder. The Sisters arriving by 4.30 p.m. express travelled by buggy up Cross Street to their new motherhouse. As was common practice at the time they wore black veils over their faces.<sup>70</sup> The arrival at New Town coincided with the Sisters of St Joseph “coming of age” in their 21<sup>st</sup> year.

Hyacinth’s capacity to oversee the establishment of Sacred Heart College at Wanganui, with its provision of secondary education, made her the ideal leader for the Tasmanian Josephites in the establishment of Sacred Heart Convent at New Town, as the motherhouse and training centre. She would prove that in partnership with a supportive Bishop, she was the most resourceful and visionary of religious women.

The *Monitor* in its April 5, 1912 report provides an explanation of the role of Sacred Heart School in relation to the preparation of the Sisters of St Joseph.

It is likewise the seat of preparation for the candidates for that sisterhood. It contains a Scholasticate in which they are prepared for University Examinations and trained for registration. On the completion of that preparatory course they entered the Novitiate, where each receives spiritual correction to enable them to learn whether they are called by God to that holy and useful sphere of life, and if they are how they were to fit themselves for its demands. The adjoining school is at once the local Catholic school, and at the same time it is the practising school for the Scholastics. Hence it discharges a double function, serving the school needs of New Town Catholics and the Catholic education interests of those other centres wherein the Sisters of St Joseph are conducting schools.<sup>71</sup>

The establishment of the Josephite Convent in Hobart allowed the administration of the Order to become fixed at New Town, with the convent becoming both the motherhouse

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<sup>70</sup> Sr B. Freeman, cassette recording, 1984.

<sup>71</sup> "New Town School Enlargement." *The Monitor*, April 5 1912, 5.

and novitiate. As an adjunct to the religious studies for the novices, the school provided the opportunity for the implementation of the teacher monitor method.

*Sr Gabriel Reidy and Sacred Heart School as a Training School*

On Sr Gabriel Reidy's return from the Catholic Teachers College at Albert Park in 1908, she had the expertise required to inculcate modern teaching methods at Sacred Heart and under her direction sound teaching practices were established as the young novices were trained to teach. The first extant Inspector's Report of Sacred Heart School in 1909 provided a picture of a school with a good building, "in perfect repair and order".<sup>72</sup> The only recommendation was the need for provision of a separate infant room. The comment on Sr Gabriel Reidy as Head teacher indicated that the tone of the school was good with "corporal punishment little used". The methods of teaching and the corresponding results were good.<sup>73</sup> By 1910 Gabriel had impressed the Inspector with her "considerable ability in teaching" and her success in "drawing out the intelligence of her pupils". Sr Maria Gagiery, also on staff, captured the Inspector's attention with her painstaking work and securing good effort on the part of her pupils. Sr Lucy O'Sullivan showed a fair aptitude in the teaching of the infant classes and was employing modern methods of concrete instruction. Sacred Heart was developing nicely and there were plans drawn up for a new infant room.<sup>74</sup>

Gabriel Reidy continued to show a high degree of efficiency in the management and teaching and the 1911 Inspector's Report on Sacred Heart depicts a

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<sup>72</sup> "Inspector's Report New Town." Hobart: Education Department Tasmania, 1909. Hereafter referred to as IR New Town. All Inspectors Reports are held in the Office of Archives Tasmania.

<sup>73</sup> IR New Town, 1909. AOT.

<sup>74</sup> IR New Town, 1910.

successful school under her management. Her Assistant Teachers, Aloysius Carroll and Lucy O’Sullivan were deemed very good. The teaching was described as “highly effective and the methods of instruction employed [were] successful in evoking the interests of the pupils and promoting their mental activity”.<sup>75</sup> The Inspector’s Report of the work done there is very satisfying and very encouraging”.<sup>76</sup>

Sacred Heart at New Town had acquired siblings, Sisters Josephine and Magdalen Saye, who having joined the Congregation in 1914 were both involved in teaching the Infant classes. Sr Josephine had taught at St Matthew’s School Pontville very successfully for a number of years, before joining the Sisters of St Joseph. The Inspector commented about her obvious ability and also remarked on her sister, Sr Magdalen’s ability as her assistant. Sr Xavier Canty in charge of Sacred Heart proved herself as a most capable head teacher, while Sr Sebastian Bailey was described as an especially good singing mistress with “very good power to keep the attention of her classes, which she handles most effectively”.<sup>77</sup> Sacred Heart school was developing well and continued to receive excellent reports throughout this period. The children at New Town had access to a library of 300 books. The 1916 report suggested that the discipline was so good that the children could be said to “run” the school themselves.<sup>78</sup>

*Sr Xavier Canty*

Sr Xavier Canty became responsible for the school in 1917 and in the report of that year received a commendation for her organization and management. Sr Josephine

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<sup>75</sup> IR New Town, 1911.

<sup>76</sup> "New Town School Enlargement." *The Monitor*, April 5 1912, 5.

<sup>77</sup> IR New Town, 1914.

<sup>78</sup> IR New Town, 1917.

Saye teaching in Prep and 1 was commended as excellent and two young teachers, Sr Aquin Bidner and Benedict White showed potential, being described as “efficient teachers and with more experience would be competent to manage large schools”.<sup>79</sup>

After an absence of some years Xavier returned to Sacred Heart in 1921. Her efforts were noticed by the Inspector, “The Head Teacher is new to the school and with a willing zealous staff has brought the school to a fine state”.<sup>80</sup> In an innovative move Xavier, described as “the successful head teacher” was permitted to give up charge of any class so as to be free to supervise the work of the young teachers. According to the report of 1926 this arrangement was evaluated as being very successful.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Sacred Heart School as a Training School*

The Inspectors’ reports present a picture of a model school. Not only were modern teaching methods being employed in the training of the young Sisters, but also some innovative approaches were undertaken. The report of 1920 spoke positively of Sr Gabriel, “The management of the Head Teacher reflects the greatest credit on her”.<sup>82</sup>

The staff presented a very good image and earned the following comments:

All the methods of the modern training method are followed. The staff is a very strong combination. The head teacher is a teacher with a fine control and of great experience and has a deep knowledge of children and great enthusiasm as a teacher. The sister in charge of the infants, prep and transition classes is a brilliant Infant Mistress. The other two Sisters are young teachers, trained by Sr M Gabriel and are doing very

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<sup>79</sup> IR New Town, 1918.

<sup>80</sup> IR New Town, 1921.

<sup>81</sup> IR New Town, 1926.

<sup>82</sup> IR New Town, 1920.

good work by the most highly approved modern methods. Altogether a most satisfactory staff.<sup>83</sup>

Even the problems normally associated with drill had been overcome successfully with the Inspector commenting, “Physical education - the children’s physique could not be better and all the teachers have qualified as Instructors and there are drill sergeants among the Sisters as good as any male instructors in boys’ schools”.<sup>84</sup> Innovative approaches adopted at New Town included the practice of having the children rest their heads on their arms with eyes closed when there had been any special strain of attention and the method of children questioning each other. Both practices were considered excellent by the respective Inspectors.<sup>85</sup>

The increased enrolments resulted in overcrowding in 1921 with 40 students per teacher and 70-80 students in the infant class with Sr Josephine. This gave way to more spacious accommodation in 1922. The report of that year commenting that “the school keeps pace with the northern suburbs. This is a real live school”.<sup>86</sup>

The comments of 1922 are most revealing in the evaluation of New Town as a teaching school. The Inspector speaks of every member as efficient and acknowledges that while not all have been trained, they have all had the example of trained teachers.

They have had a long experience in the training and teaching of children, and experience gained under the inspiration of high ideals and motivated by the most unselfish devotion to duty. The methods followed are on the lines of the most approved methods in education.<sup>87</sup>

Relations between the Sisters and children are described as “nearly perfect” with the children “given full freedom in all things except such as make for bad habits. There is a

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<sup>83</sup> IR New Town, 1920.

<sup>84</sup> IR New Town, 1921.

<sup>85</sup> IR New Town, 1921.

<sup>86</sup> IR New Town, 1922.

<sup>87</sup> IR New Town, 1922.

minimum of punishment in the old sense, though no fault is passed over without notice and disapproval".<sup>88</sup>

The status of Sacred Heart School, New Town continually improved as a training school and the annual Inspectors' Reports were most congratulatory. The epitome of success was perhaps achieved in 1923 following the Inspector's annual report. The Inspector proposed that the senior offices of the Education Department should visit Sacred Heart School.<sup>89</sup> The visitors inspected all departments and the occasion received a glowing report in *The Catholic Standard*.<sup>90</sup>

The gratifying reports in all respects for New Town are often in contrast to some of the other schools. Had the Sisters of St Joseph viewed themselves as a system and less as isolated schools, then many benefits could have flowed on to the Sisters experiencing difficulties in the country. Perhaps the professed Sisters may not have been open to such assistance as afforded to the younger Sisters during their formation. The flat organizational structure in the Congregation, whereby, the Sister Guardian (Head Superior) was solely responsible, militated against the development of a system of Josephite education. There was no second in command, who could assume responsibility for the schools, as occurred in other congregations. Delany himself provided the additional leadership person for Josephite schools, either personally, or through a nominated priest as Inspector of schools. The Josephites took no initiative in the ongoing professional development of their Sisters, as their total commitment to ministry and its utter absorption of their lives left no opportunity for further education

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<sup>88</sup> IR New Town, 1922.

<sup>89</sup> The party consisted of Mr G. V. Brooks, Director of Education and Mrs Brooks, Mr W. Wright (Secretary Ed Dept) and Mrs Wright, Mr P. H. Mitchell, (Inspector), Mrs Mitchell and Miss Mitchell and Mr W. Gibson, Superintendent of Technical Education).

<sup>90</sup> Grades 6 and 7 gave a dramatized reading of the Merchant of Venice. The choir performed in parts and the children gave a drill and marching display. Mr. Brooks complimented them on their all round excellence of the work done. Fr Lynch replied on behalf of the Sisters, and the children presented each lady with a posy of spring blooms. The Director asked for a half-holiday for the children and secured it. See "State Education Department Heads Visit Sacred Heart School New Town." *The Catholic Standard*, April 1923.

during this period. The Sisters were adhering to a strict regime of teaching, visiting, providing additional classes and struggling to contend with the severe poverty of their communities. Certainly the opportunities provided to Sisters Gabriel and Xavier in teacher training in Melbourne were to be of value to many Josephites in their initial training for the next decade or so; however, unfortunately Gabriel and Xavier were not given greater scope to assume responsibility for the ongoing teacher development of their former novices. The introduction of a new approach to education by the Education Department and subsequent inspections caused much discomfort for the Sisters operating in country areas.

### The Country Schools

The first schools to undergo the inspections were those at Colebrook, Devonport, Franklin, Ulverstone, and Westbury in 1907. It is apparent from the early reports that the Sisters were ill prepared for the inspection with Inspector Crawford commenting at Ulverstone that “ My time was chiefly occupied in explaining to the teachers the present requirements of the Department”.<sup>91</sup>

At Franklin Inspector Lovett observed that:

Although the order and tone are excellent and on the whole the teaching fair, the official standards of inspection under which the RC schools are taught appear to be well endorsed but it would be an obvious advantage as regards this inspection if the state school standards were adopted.<sup>92</sup>

After the initial inspections of 1907 and 1908, the Sisters were, in the majority of cases able to meet the department's requirements. Initially shyness prevailed when required to

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<sup>91</sup> "Inspector's Report Ulverstone." October 21 1907. Hereafter referred to as IR Ulverstone.

<sup>92</sup> IR Franklin, 1907.

teach before the Inspectors but as Sisters trained by Gabriel Reidy and Xavier Canty moved into the country, greater confidence and proficiency were revealed.

The standard of schools in the first round of inspections varied from very good with the management and discipline exercised by Sisters Vincent Bowler and Gertrude Johnson at Colebrook to a less than satisfactory report at Devonport with the evaluation of teaching by Inspector Brocket as of “inferior quality”.<sup>93</sup> At Westbury the scholars were nicely mannered but the work was of a low standard and there was no real teaching demonstrated. The comments contained in the Westbury report were consistent with the general impression that the Sisters gave as being “anxious to improve and very teachable”.<sup>94</sup>

During 1908 Cygnet, Franklin, Lymington and Zeehan were inspected. Most schools failed to use the department’s authorized books, as financial resources were in short supply. Cygnet students managed manual work, such as chip carving, a little modelling and fancy needlework as well as their basic subjects. The Inspectors invariably commented on the relatively high age of the children, indicative of their high age at commencing education. The standard of the schools was very satisfactory with the Sisters managing to comply with the government requirement to teach temperance, which was taught incidentally.<sup>95</sup> At Franklin the Sisters managed a well-organized school with a good tone and the teaching was on the whole “fair”.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> IR Colebrook 1907; IR Devonport, 1907.

<sup>94</sup> IR Westbury, 1907.

<sup>95</sup> IR Cygnet, 1908.

<sup>96</sup> IR Franklin, 1908.



Table 3: Enrolments in Schools conducted by the Sisters of St Joseph 1907-1919<sup>97</sup>

School	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1914	1916	1917	1918	1919
<b>Colebrook</b>	28	N/A	N/A	N/A	20	15	30	N/A	28	23	23
<b>Devonport</b>	161	N/A	N/A	N/A	98	107	129	129	151	134	140
<b>Franklin</b>	54	51	47	N/A	54	50	53	44	45	44	46
<b>Ulverstone</b>	74	N/A	N/A	150	146	147	153	162	186	188	200
<b>Westbury</b>	104	N/A	N/A	79	76	94	95	107	104	95	84
<b>Cygnet</b>	N/A	57	N/A	N/A	69	71	85	81	79	81	98
<b>Lymington</b>	N/A	30	N/A	N/A	N/A	25	17	15	13	19	19
<b>Zeehan</b>	N/A	168	N/A	N/A	173	179	161	N/A	150	120	142
<b>New Town</b>	N/A	N/A	101	123	112	74	143	172	200	228	N/A
<b>Forth</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	51	58	N/A	25	32	21	20
<b>Oatlands</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	38	45	58	61	47	48	43	25
<b>Richmond</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	43	47	48	29	N/A	25	36	27
<b>Tunnack</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	41	44	44	43	44	37	40	38

*A poor inspection report –Zeehan*

For Sisters struggling with ill health, inadequate accommodation, and little training, inspection was an ordeal. It was not uncommon for critical inspection reports to be made. The first inspection at Zeehan created one such report and resulted in an

<sup>97</sup> Material drawn from Inspection Reports 1907-1919.

additional inspection. The report gives a picture of a school struggling with poor accommodation,

Classes are held in the Hibernian Hall- a roomy building with the heights of the desks and forms are fairly graduated. Here there are three Sisters, the discipline is good and the tone orderly, but the teaching power is particularly weak [*sic*].<sup>98</sup>

Following the initial inspection of July a thorough examination was conducted in November in 1908. The students were examined from 8.15 a.m. to 6. 15 p.m. on November 19. The inspection notes reveal that Sr Catherine Fennessy taught a preparatory class of 80 children, ranging in age from 4 years 8 months to 11 years 4 months old. It is difficult to imagine a group of 80 in a choir gallery, being usefully occupied in commencing school without the benefit of desks. The high ages of the children were maintained in the upper classes with the Grade 6 cohort ranging from 11 years 7 months to 15 years 10 months.<sup>99</sup> The Inspector notes that:

The Sisters do their best but have had little training. There has been a general air of discomfort amongst the Sisters regarding the requirements. Unfortunately the Sisters had no access to the routine of other convents nor had they been able to access the school papers for the inspection.<sup>100</sup>

Close examination followed the teaching of Poetry, Reading, Spelling, Writing, Arithmetic, Language, Drawing, Needlework, Geography, History, Poetry, Singing, Drill, and Discipline. The Sisters and their students managed to satisfy the Inspector on his second visit and the report concludes:

Some misapprehension has existed as to the standard of instruction required, and I have to acknowledge the very evident desire of the Sisters to obtain information on this matter and at the same time I have to note the improvement in many ways in the school since my visit in July last.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> IR Zeehan, July 1908.

<sup>99</sup> IR Zeehan, July 1908.

<sup>100</sup> IR Zeehan, July 1908.

<sup>101</sup> IR Zeehan, November 19 1908.

*The relationship between the Sisters of St Joseph and the Inspectors*

The Inspectors for the most part showed sensitivity to the Sisters and an understanding of the poverty under which they operated. Inspectors assisted in the Sisters' professional development in the country schools, providing opportunities for the Sisters to observe lessons given by the Inspector.<sup>102</sup> The 1916 report for the Devonport school suggested the need for regular staff meetings and that those notes be kept.<sup>103</sup> A marked improvement in organization occurred with the evolution of monthly staff meetings during this period to meet the various Inspectors' requests. The Inspectors reports indicate that they were of a practical nature and were profitable. Staff meetings overcame some of the difficulties associated with earlier years at Westbury with good administration at weekly staff meetings.<sup>104</sup>

Discussions with the Inspector at Franklin revealed that the Sisters were anxious to extend their knowledge of education and were disappointed at being unable to attend the meetings of teachers in the neighbourhood. Mr. Garrett recommended that, "the teaching Order to which the school belongs, should lay down a uniform procedure for all their schools in the matter of curriculum and record".<sup>105</sup> Had this suggestion been enacted then the Sisters experiencing difficulties in the remote country areas would have had additional guidelines to assist them in the education of the young people.

The Inspectors appeared to have a good rapport with the Sisters and were anxious to assist them in the organization of the school as the 1916 report from Ulverstone indicates. At the conclusion of the inspection there was a lengthy staff meeting to address the plans for the effective future of the school. The failure of

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<sup>102</sup> IR Ulverstone, 1907.

<sup>103</sup> IR Devonport, 1916.

<sup>104</sup> IR Westbury, 1919.

<sup>105</sup> IR Franklin, 1911.

adequate supervision, by Sr Joseph Eather was attributed to an “unfortunate accident” whereby it was impossible for her to take an active part for several months in the supervision of the school.<sup>106</sup>

As part of the ongoing professional development for the Sisters, those stationed on the northwest coast were able to attend the Schools of Method conducted by Mr. Percy Hughes, Mr. Tribolet and Mr. Cole, Inspectors of headmasters in the Education Department. These Schools of Method, which were held annually, gave the Sisters the opportunity to observe the latest methods in teaching. During this particular period the Sisters had a very rewarding relationship with the local state school headmasters and Inspectors.<sup>107</sup> Several of the Sisters who were interviewed in 2002, and who had participated in the Schools of Method, and spoke of them as having a significant impact on the teaching.

### Conclusion and Significance

The Tasmanian Josephite experience differed from their counterparts in New South Wales and New Zealand, as in Archbishop Delany they found a friend and benefactor, who provided for their material and professional needs. His educational expertise enabled them to develop a system of teacher education, which would satisfy the government requirements and set in place an adequate formation programme for the younger Sisters. Delany’s recognition of Hyacinth’s giftedness provided her with the opportunity and support to establish the motherhouse and novitiate of the Sisters in

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<sup>106</sup> Sr Joseph had been the Head Teacher at Ulverstone since 1908 and as music teacher performed no school teaching duties. See IR Ulverstone, 1916.

<sup>107</sup> P. Briggs, interview by the author, April 18 1995

Hobart. Delany's episcopate marked the coming of age of both Hyacinth and Tasmanian sisterhood.

The Sisters of St Joseph's mission had been expanded from providing basic primary education to Catholic children to a more advanced form of education to meeting departmental guidelines and inspections. Their convents had also become centres for music teaching. Their educational mission was inclusive with their schools recording a high percentage of Protestants. In the smaller towns the Sisters were held in high regard by their Protestant friends, who were also their benefactors.

The Inspectors' reports provide an insight into the very real struggles that the Sisters of St Joseph contended with in order to bring Catholic education to the country areas. The Sisters' interaction with the State school Inspectors ensured that their schools were providing quality education as well as some measure of professional development. The inclusion of physical education, gardening, artwork as well as the traditional music and singing saw a further development of the Woods-MacKillop style education.

Finance remained a critical factor both in their living arrangements and in providing the necessary texts and resources for their schools. They had no alternative but to become involved in the many fundraising activities on which their lives and schools depended. Having achieved a degree of authentication in Tasmania from 1908 the next decades would be marked by the consolidation and development of the schools. This will be treated in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONSOLIDATION

#### Introduction

The Catholic schools and the Sisters of St Joseph were managing to keep abreast of Education Department trends brought about by the Schools and Teachers' Registration Act of 1906 and the various inspections by both the Education Department and Church authorities. The period between the First and Second World Wars provided a time of consolidation for the Sisters of St Joseph's experience in school, although with the emergence of Diocesan inspection the schools failed to develop as a system. The leadership of the Sisters of St Joseph placed greater responsibility for the schools on the Diocesan authorities and the organisation structures of the community militated against meeting many of the inspection requirements. The development of secondary education and the provision of commercial classes marked a departure from the original Rule but provided the impetus for a more adequate tertiary education for the Sisters of St Joseph. The evolution of society between the wars necessitated an innovative response to the emerging needs of the poor and while it may be argued that the provision of secondary classes and the attainment of tertiary education for the Sisters was in contravention of the original Rule, such a development was closely aligned the spirit of the Rule in responding to the needs of the poor in Tasmania.

Through examination of the establishment of the new school at Moonah on the outskirts of Hobart, it will be argued that the Josephites had achieved a degree of

competency and professionalism flowing from the influence of the Church authorities and Education Department requirements yet they remained faithful to their charter of providing education for the poor. Education department requirements presented significant challenges in meeting the requirements of the “New Education” with its co-curricular and resource provision. The difficulties of this period were exacerbated by the poverty of Tasmania, the ongoing absenteeism of the pupils and the various epidemics. This period is in contrast to the expansion of schools, which occurred in the earlier period.

During the period 1918-1937, no major educational legislation was passed in Tasmania but the challenge of the depression led to the struggle for the survival of the Catholic school system. The challenges that faced the Catholic schools and the Sisters of St Joseph came from the changing economic and social conditions of Tasmania and the availability of teachers to staff schools. No completely new schools were built between 1906 and 1922 but between 1920 and the 1930s almost total reconstruction of the country Catholic schools occurred.

#### Tasmania 1919-1937

The Sisters of St Joseph were influenced and impacted upon by the prevailing conditions of the time and therefore reference shall be made to the state of Tasmanian education during the period 1919-1937. Throughout the period covered by this chapter the Tasmanian economy was depressed. The population of Tasmania grew from 212, 847 in 1920 to 214,754 in 1926. As well as the slow growth rate Tasmania was affected by migration out of the state, such that in 1926 when 5354 or

2.5% of the total population left, depriving the state of its citizens but also impacting on the per capita Commonwealth grant.<sup>1</sup>

Tasmanian historian, Robson, notes that in a curious way the depression assisted Catholics schools because the falling birth rate maintained a steady enrolment in sharp contrast to the population explosion which was to follow the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> During 1920-1939 about 7% of the Tasmanian population was unemployed, but the figures belie the real situation because employment in many cases was dependent on subsistence farming, which was mainly potato growing.<sup>3</sup> The economic depression, resulting from the effects of Federation and the decline of the mining industry, saw a return to irregular schooling, as families sought to supplement their income with seasonal work by their children. In 1921 the average daily attendance was low in the state schools with primary attendance of 66% and 84% in the secondary schools.<sup>4</sup> Inspectors' reports from the period lament the low attendance, while acknowledging the seasonal work impacting on school attendance.

Throughout this period teachers in the Tasmanian Education Department remained the lowest paid in the nation, despite pay increases in 1918 and 1920. By 1924 only 60% of teachers in State secondary schools had degrees, compared with 89% in Victoria. The Sisters of St Joseph, in common with female religious of the era, would have had no members with degrees.<sup>5</sup> Tasmanian teachers had the highest student teacher ratio in the state primary schools of 55 compared to 45 in Victoria and 33 in New South Wales. Tasmania had the highest proportion of female teachers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Selth, 207.

<sup>2</sup> Enrolments remained fairly constant in Catholic schools with 4,000 (1921); 3,500 (1926); 3,600 (1931) and 4,500 (1941). See Robson, 462.

<sup>3</sup> Selth, 215.

<sup>4</sup> Barcan, 261.

<sup>5</sup> MacGinley, 282.

<sup>6</sup> Barcan, 262.



*Provision of Adequate Resources*

The schools' need to meet the government requirements for the physical standards for classroom teaching necessitated rebuilding if the schools were to continue to function adequately. The amended Education Act of 1912, raising the minimum school leaving age from 13 to 14 years impacted on the country schools requiring additional classes. The country schools continued to contend with difficult accommodation. Classes were held in the local church, used on Sundays for worship and on weekdays for school. Reports from the first inspections criticized the buildings for their design as places of worship rather than for the purposes of instruction. At Zeehan in 1908 for example, "The rest of the school is accommodated in a church. The preparatory children are in the choir and there are no desks, the forms provided for them were built for their parents".<sup>7</sup> At Devonport the children attended regularly with Grades 2 to 6 conducted in the classroom and Prep and Grade 1 in the church with the disadvantage of "a large measure of light being lost with the frosted windows".<sup>8</sup>

Inadequate accommodation was not just confined to the use of churches. For example at the school at Westbury, the Prep Class and Grade 1 were described graphically by the Inspector as "cribbed, cabined and confined" in a narrow lean-to attached to the school. Westbury in 1914 presented as a clean and neat school, yet ventilation in the infant room was very inadequate and in the senior room the lighting was poor. Comments varied according to the Inspector and tended to be subjective as illustrated by the Inspector's critical report of Cygnet in 1914, which provides a gloomy picture in contrast to the earlier positive reports of the school.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> IR Westbury, 1936.

<sup>8</sup> IR Devonport, 1911.

<sup>9</sup> The environment was particularly unattractive to the Inspector:

Major rebuilding occurred between 1920s and 1930s with some Josephite country schools completely rebuilt; Cygnet 1921, Tunnack 1922, Richmond 1925, Lymington 1931, Westbury 1939, and Zeehan in 1942. Between 1927 and 1940 six new suburban Catholic schools were opened with the Josephites assuming responsibility for Moonah in 1932 and Newstead in 1938.<sup>10</sup> Between the war years about 30,000 Catholics in the State spent some £80,000 on building schools and paying fees to support the teachers and maintain teachers and clergy. The Moonah parish provides a typical example of Catholic commitment to the educational enterprise.

The rebuilding and upgrading of facilities coincided with co curricular developments associated with the “New Education”, requiring the inclusion of gardening, fife and drum bands as well as sewing, physical exercises and art, all of which were a challenge to the Sisters in the country schools. Some requirements, however, were easier to meet for example, at Franklin where the boys were engaged in gardening and in 1917 had some success at growing vegetables on the rough hillside at Franklin.<sup>11</sup> The 1919 report suggested that the boys could occupy their time by clearing the playground of briars and docks.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout this period the Education Department promotion of school libraries posed an additional economic difficulty for the struggling schools. Inspectors’ reports highlight the lack of resources such as at Ulverstone in 1911 where the only weakness in the report was the small collection of books in the library, which the Inspector

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The position of the school makes the traffic of the busy neighbouring road a disturbing element, while between the rooms the limited height of the partition makes it serviceable only for screen purposes. Discoloured ceilings and walls, grimy window sashes, the absence of window blinds, hats and cloaks struggling for premier position with pictorial sheets and charts, ancient desks without the provision for inkwells, and the class room door with its primitive button fastening make the rooms singularly unattractive. See IR Cygnet, 1914

<sup>10</sup> Hollingsworth, 32.

<sup>11</sup> IR Franklin, 1917.

<sup>12</sup> IR Franklin, 1919.

acknowledged could be improved when funds allowed.<sup>13</sup> Unlike the library at New Town the school at Oatlands had a very poor library consisting of out-of- date readers.<sup>14</sup> A problem consistent with all Catholic schools was the scarcity of resources. Although, “clean and tidy natural decorations [were] meagre . . . the school library, consisted of only 20 books supplied as a foundation”.<sup>15</sup> At Richmond the Inspector was critical of the absence of dictionaries in the school, complaining that there [was] not one dictionary in the school.<sup>16</sup> The following year it was noted that a globe of the world was being acquired.<sup>17</sup> All additional resources were provided by fundraising of the people for the schools.

A major difficulty associated with the survival and ongoing development of the schools was the need for fundraising. Over the entire period fundraising was a constant for the parishes in order to provide the essential for the schools. Reference to the parents’ efforts was made in 1931 in Devonport where parents were raising money for a new school and at Forth with £86 raised from a recent function.<sup>18</sup>

The Sisters of St Joseph worked hard to meet the state requirements for resources, but their efforts were hampered by the poverty of the local community. The depression was responsible for the paucity of resources and the Inspector identified this at the once prosperous mining town of Zeehan where this resulted in a shortage of funds and material for the scholars. The Inspector observed that one heater was not sufficient for the cold weather.<sup>19</sup> By 1931 a Parents’ Association had proven to be very supportive and had raised £5 for books and a blackboard.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately parents’ associations

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<sup>13</sup> IR Ulverstone, 1911.

<sup>14</sup> IR Oatlands, 1918.

<sup>15</sup> IR Moonah, 1933.

<sup>16</sup> IR Richmond, 1930.

<sup>17</sup> IR Richmond, 1931.

<sup>18</sup> IR, Forth, Devonport 1931.

<sup>19</sup> IR Westbury, 1936.

<sup>20</sup> See Inspectors’ Reports, 1931.

were not part of all schools as in some instances the formation of the parents association was determined by the parish priest, who may have been opposed to money raised being expended on the school. The Sisters in such a situation relied on Divine Providence and whatever assistance the parents could provide.<sup>21</sup>

Given the economic climate and the parents' capacity to provide additional resources fundraising became an essential aspect of parish and community life. The school at Moonah provided an insight into the level of effort which was required to raise funds with the total cost of the project was £8,700 of which £5,075 was spent on the school. The parishioners of Moonah had managed to raise £2,200 during the worst years of the depression from functions which were held weekly over three years; these included dances, raffles and a large fair, which was the high point of the fundraising each year.<sup>22</sup> The church could be converted into four classrooms for use during the week and then used for worship on Sundays.<sup>23</sup>

### *Absenteeism*

Absenteeism was an ongoing problem for the authorities in Tasmania and was a regular feature of inspection reports. Neale, the Director of Education, recorded absenteeism in Tasmania in 1906 of not less than 36%.<sup>24</sup> A continuing problem with several schools was that of irregular attendance and children starting school older than expected. The Inspector observed, "Little was being done by local authorities to insist

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<sup>21</sup> P. Briggs, interview by the author, April 18 1995.

<sup>22</sup> Hollingsworth, 32.

<sup>23</sup> "Moonah." *Catholic Standard*, July 14 1932.

<sup>24</sup> Robson, 255.

on attendance”.<sup>25</sup> Weather was also a contributing factor with less than 20 of the 51 pupils at Forth having arrived at the morning assembly by 9.30 a.m. as the day was “slightly damp”.<sup>26</sup>

The Inspector of 1918 comments that “the attendance just now is lessened by the blackberry season”.<sup>27</sup> Irregular attendance continued to be a hindrance at Cygnet with children absent from school assisting their families during the fruit-picking season. The Inspector commented that the children were respectful and evidently attached to their teacher, yet despite their fondness for their teachers their attendance was irregular causing the Inspector to observe:

For the number enrolled on the books for this populous and prosperous district the average daily attendance is exceedingly poor and most discouraging to the Sisters. At inspection for 1911 the attendance for enrolment averaged 60%, 1912 – 66%, 1913 – 59%, 1914 – 58% [*sic*].<sup>28</sup>

Attendance improved for a time with the Inspector commenting that the Sisters’ devotion to duty was gradually attracting recognition from parents so that punctuality and regularity of attendance were improving (1919). The problem of attendance at Cygnet continued to be an ongoing challenge. In 1931 it was 77%, which was below the state average for attendance.<sup>29</sup>

### *Epidemics*

The various epidemics had a twofold impact, affecting school attendance and the income for the Sisters. During the influenza epidemic of 1919, when the schools were

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<sup>25</sup> IR Richmond, 1910.

<sup>26</sup> IR Forth, 1911.

<sup>27</sup> IR Franklin, 1918.

<sup>28</sup> IR Cygnet, 1914.

<sup>29</sup> IR Cygnet, 1931.

closed for three months, the Sisters struggled to survive on the music fees while the people responded with special fund raisers, organized to assist the convents.<sup>30</sup> The Sisters, mindful of the poverty of the people, only accepted the amount they needed for survival from fairs; “This fair was got up especially for the Sisters, owing to their schools being closed for a good period of last year owing to the sickness, but the Reverend Mother would accept only £15, giving the balance to the Education Fund”.<sup>31</sup>

The epidemics severely affected continuity of learning for the pupils and comments were frequently made by the Inspector. The Inspector reported at Zeehan in 1928 that “epidemic of chickenpox and whooping cough affected attendance”.<sup>32</sup> The various epidemics took their toll on the schools such at Richmond in 1934 where according to the Inspector, “Work has been seriously handicapped particularly in the junior room by the absence of so many pupils through an epidemic of whooping cough” and at Ulverstone in 1935, when the Inspector noted that almost half the children were “absent as sufferers or contacts. The continuous sickness has caused serious breaks in the work and has affected the proficiency of the children.”<sup>33</sup> The pattern of illness was repeated throughout the island as at Forth in 1937, where the Inspector comments, “several latecomers this morning. Attendance 78% in 1936 but 40% for the current year with an epidemic of whooping cough”.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "Devonport." *Monitor*, March 12 1920, 7.

<sup>31</sup> "Devonport," 7.

<sup>32</sup> IR Zeehan, 1928.

<sup>33</sup> IR Ulverstone, 1935.

<sup>34</sup> IR Forth, 1937.

### Inspection Reports and Inadequate Teacher Preparation

The problems associated with the inexperience of the teachers and inadequate teacher preparation for those who joined prior to 1908 emerged as major factors for criticism in the inspection reports. The reports highlight the difficulties encountered and the apparent apathy of those responsible for the administration of the schools to the issues raised in the reports. The academic standards were dependent on the current teaching staff and the Inspectors' reports reveal some excellent practitioners among the Sisters. The Inspectors' reports highlight the deficiencies of the system whereby those already teaching received no assistance from either the Sisters of St Joseph or Church authorities for upgrading to meet the requirements of the Education Department and the inspections.

Changes in staff had an impact on the progression or regression of certain schools as is illustrated in the Westbury Report for 1914. Two weeks after the commencement of the school year deterioration in standards from previous reports was noted "The school used to be one of the most efficiently conducted convent school in the northern region, but the state of affairs at present shows a great falling off".<sup>35</sup> The concluding comment perhaps captures the essence of the difficulties experienced by a new Head Teacher with the words, "It must be noted that the present head teacher has been in charge for a period of two weeks only".<sup>36</sup>

The inspection reports for Forth for 1916-1919 provide an insight into the difficulties faced by the inadequately prepared teachers and their subsequent fear of inspection. The accommodation for the pupils was stated as satisfactory. However, there

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<sup>35</sup> IR Westbury, 1914.

<sup>36</sup> IR Westbury, 1914.

were no entries for the register and the work programmes and timetable were incomplete and the overall assessment of students' attainment was less than satisfactory; "There is a radical need for improvement in instruction. The results of this inspection being very disappointing".<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that the inspection occurred in February and Sisters Kevin Johnson and Gerard Kennedy had been in the school less than a month. The students' attendance was irregular barely reaching 50%. The comments of 1919 highlight a distressing situation for Sr Kevin:

Inspection day is an ordeal for Sr Kevin. She is shy, ill at ease and the children are depressingly quiet. The Sister complains of the apathy of the parents in respect of securing regular attendance. She also complains of her inability to please the Inspector.<sup>38</sup>

The picture presented is of a sister struggling with the demands of teaching in isolation and without an adequate support structure. In 1919 Sr Kevin was the only teacher in the school for 20 children spread over six classes. The earlier reports, which were sent to the Archbishop, should have alerted the authorities to the problems existing at the little school at Forth.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> IR Forth, 1916; IR New Town.

<sup>38</sup> Under the section entitled government, the Inspector records that no boys were doing cadet drill. The children were polite but not as clean and tidy as desirable. The Inspector makes an obscure comment regarding the need of improvement in mental activity on the part of the students in order to promote good work. There was a paucity of material for use in the school and what material was available was not in accord with the syllabus. A reference to the *Revised Course of Instruction* when organizing the promotions with regard to the rearrangements of the classes reveals that the Sisters were not fully aware of its implications. (See IR Forth, 1916).

In the comments regarding instruction, the Inspector draws the sister's attention to a perusal of Hughes' *Mistakes in Teaching* in an effort to avoid loss of time and effort through defective teaching practice. The assessment of the individual subjects showed a very poor standard, with students failing to pass the Arithmetic, Spelling and Composition. The Inspection reports of the succeeding years showed little improvement. Comments frequently highlighted the absence of regular and methodical teaching. The 1917 report stated, "Some subjects appear to be almost untaught and few can be pronounced satisfactory." The assessment of organization and government declined from 60% in 1916, to 40% in 1917, to a low 10% in 1918 and 25% in 1919. There were no records of the quarterly exams for 1916-1918. Clearly Sr Kevin Johnson was experiencing great difficulty with little support from the Congregational Leadership, who were either unaware of her plight or powerless to address the problem.

<sup>39</sup> The following year Sr Kevin was transferred to Zeehan with a larger community and additional staff in the school.



Good teachers followed by inept teachers resulted in a very poor performance in spelling in 1918 at Lymington and the quarterly exam results did not match the present attainment of the pupils.<sup>40</sup> Clearly Sr Evangelist Osbourne did not have the capacity to act as a Head teacher and in 1919 she resumed her role of assistant teacher under Sr Winfred McAllister's leadership. The problems that Evangelist encountered at Lymington followed at Zeehan in 1925.

Of the reports that occurred over the course of the study, of most concern for authorities would have been the report from Zeehan in 1925. Inspector Wright in a letter to the Director of Education requests that the Church authorities take steps to improve matters as "the eighty odd scholars attending the school are making no progress at all" and further,

If such work were presented by any of the Department's teachers I should have no hesitation in recommending dismissal; if by a private school teacher I should recommend de-registration.<sup>41</sup>

This impact of the letter had the desired effect and both Sisters Michael Dansey, who had been in charge since 1920 and Sr Evangelist Osbourne were moved. Bernard Hanslowe who had been at the school only three months at the time of the inspection remained.<sup>42</sup> The Inspector's comments allude to the inadequate teacher preparation:

It is impossible to attach any blame to the ladies in charge. They are doing their best but, unfortunately are unfitted for the work and have no idea of modern methods. While condemning the school as an educational institution I wish to pay tribute to the high personal attributes of the ladies engaged in a work, which they must feel, is beyond them.<sup>43</sup>

The supply of teachers for the school was paramount, and unregistered and untrained teachers were sometimes appointed to the schools. The Council of the Sisters

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<sup>40</sup> IR Westbury, 1919.

<sup>41</sup> W. Wright, letter, November 12 1925.TSSJA.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Dansey was transferred to Franklin and Evangelist Osbourne was moved to Tunnack. See Inspection Reports 1926.

<sup>43</sup> W. Wright, letter, November 12 1925.TSSJA.

of St Joseph failed to address the problems of unregistered teachers raised at Zeehan in 1928 and at Cygnet about the issue of two unregistered members of staff, Srs De Sales and Patricia and action was raised.<sup>44</sup> The inadequate preparation gave rise to unfavourable comments at Westbury, when the following appeared, “the Department wishes to draw the Archbishop’s attention to the undesirably low standard of work in this school”. The students appeared intelligent but their work was of an indifferent standard, a defect that the Inspector felt may have been attributed to the lack of fundamental essentials.<sup>45</sup> Unfavourable comments followed the Inspections at Franklin on March 20, 1936, by Inspector Warner. The Secretary of Education himself qualified these comments, “The attention of the Church authorities is drawn to the low standard of work and particularly to the concluding remarks of the Inspector”.<sup>46</sup> Despite the element of concern raised in the report, no change in staffing was effected by those in authority, nor had any action been taken to alleviate the problems which surfaced for the same Sisters in Zeehan in 1925. The appointment of a supervisor of schools, such as occurred in the larger Diocesan groups may have alleviated the difficulties encountered by such Sisters.

The majority of Sisters were anxious to meet the departmental requirements of inspection, others such as those at Richmond when subjected to departmental criticism appeared to be insensitive to departmental recommendations. The Inspector stated:

This is the fourth annual report from Inspectors in which attention is drawn to the absence of work programmes and quarterly exam register, poor drafting of the timetable and its absence from the wall; inadequate use of the admission register and the absence of daily totals in the admission register.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> IR Westbury, 1936.

<sup>45</sup> IR Westbury, 1932.

<sup>46</sup> IR Franklin, 1936.

<sup>47</sup> IR Richmond, 1918.

The reports of 1917 to 1919 revealed that the school administration under Sr Stanislaus Fitzpatrick failed to meet the Department's requirements. Sr Stanislaus had been in charge of the school since 1907. Despite the obvious flaws in the paperwork the school had a good tone and "the teachers' influence is reflected in the good tone and polite manners of the children".<sup>48</sup>

### *Merging of Community and School Organization*

While inadequate resources, poor accommodation, irregular attendance of pupils and the poverty of the local community challenged the Sisters in the country schools an additional factor to contend with was the merging of community structure and the organization of the school. The designated Head Teacher was normally the Superior, who may have been a music teacher, and who may have had little or no training in school method. In such instances the lack of leadership in the school provided difficulties for the teachers, who had little autonomy in the conduct of the school as they were under obedience to the Superior and in some circumstances were unable to meet departmental guidelines. This was evidenced in both Zeehan and Devonport, where the comments of the Inspector, directed at the Head Teacher, demonstrated a failure to grasp the workings of a religious community hierarchy. At Zeehan the Inspector was critical of the Head Teacher, Ambrose Joseph Dirkin, who as music teacher devoted her time to her 40-50 music pupils and failed to direct the school.<sup>49</sup> A similar situation prevailed at Devonport where Xavier Canty, a well qualified teacher, as discussed in

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<sup>48</sup> IR Richmond, 1918.

<sup>49</sup> IR Zeehan, 1909.

Chapter 5, was thwarted in her attempts in meeting departmental guidelines while working under Sr. Joseph Eather the music teacher.<sup>50</sup>

The merging of community and school responsibilities often gave rise to poor assessment from the inspectors for organization such as at Devonport with poor rating in 1916, causing the Inspector to comment that, “Numerically the staff is strong, the bond between the teachers and the taught and between the Sisters as a body is also strong, so that the low mark for organization is a source of wonder to the Inspectors”.<sup>51</sup> The explanation could be attributed to the non-teaching Superior designated as Head Teacher, who was unaware of teaching requirements and therefore the execution of the various departmental regulations could have been overlooked. For those competent Sisters the community organization gave rise to a level of frustration regarding inspection.

### *Positive Developments*

Having addressed the deficiencies of the organization and the difficulties for the schools, there were, however, positive developments occurring simultaneously. It was not uncommon for the Inspector to provide a commendation for outstanding standards at the time of inspection. In 1918 Sr Vincent Bowler had been at the Colebrook school for 11 years when she was commended on the discharge of her duties, receiving 95% for organization, which was the highest assessment of any of the schools in this period.<sup>52</sup> After Sr Anthony Bowen’s transfer to Zeehan at the end of 1917, the Inspector commended her for her work in his 1918 report: “Having been

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<sup>50</sup> IR Devonport, 1911.

<sup>51</sup> IR Devonport, 1916.

<sup>52</sup> IR Colebrook, 1918.

transferred to Zeehan, the Inspector accords his tribute to the zeal and earnestness, which marked her term of 4 years as Sister in Charge at Cygnet”.<sup>53</sup>

The comments during the latter part of this period were generally favourable. Sr Dominic Perrin, in charge at Devonport was already making her mark on the educational development of the school. She was described as “an enthusiastic teacher with progressive ideas on education. Her control is easy and effective and the children in her immediate charge are making good progress”.<sup>54</sup> The zeal of Sisters was commended at New Town with a higher standard of values required while at Richmond Ss Camillus Lister and Eulalia Smith showed enthusiasm and earnestness and as well the teaching was being conducted on sound lines.<sup>55</sup> Other examples of commendations included Devonport in 1936 and 1937 by Inspector Hughes for Srs Agatha Williams, Paschal Briggs, Catherine Fennessy and Patrick Davies: “The Department desires to express its pleasure with the Inspector’s Report on the efficiency of your school and to commend you and your staff for the good work that you are doing”.<sup>56</sup> The Archbishop’s correspondence in response demonstrates his pleasure at the praise, “The Archbishop begs to acknowledge receipt of your report on the work of the Devonport Convent School. The Department’s commendation is very gratifying and it will be a pleasure to pass on that commendation to the staff of the school.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> IR Cygnet, 1918.

<sup>54</sup> IR Devonport, 1930.

<sup>55</sup> IR New Town, 1931; IR Richmond, 1931.

<sup>56</sup> IR Devonport, 1936; IR Devonport, 1937.

<sup>57</sup> Letter J.D. Simonds, July 2, 1937. AHMA.

*Student teacher relationships*

The relationship between the students and their teachers over the decades are described as kindly with little or no use of corporal punishment, which was prevalent at the time.<sup>58</sup> The children were observed as “obedient, self-reliant with bright manners, courteous and self-respecting”. The scholars at Oatlands were found to be polite and respectful, with relations between the students and Sisters Veronica Johnson and Killian Quinn described as those of confidence and affection. The Sisters, it was noted, were doing their utmost for the children in their charge.<sup>59</sup> At Cygnet in 1914 the Inspector speaks of the children being “respectful and evidently attached to their teachers despite their fitful attendance”.<sup>60</sup> The assessment for Westbury in 1919 indicates an improvement under Sr Michael Dansey with Sisters Eulalia Smith and Maria Gagiers who were described as providing a “methodical and kind Rule”, which secured good discipline without apparent effort.<sup>61</sup>

Examples of the individual kindness of the Sisters were shown in circumstances such as at New Town where children travelled long distances by train to the school each day. Sr Paschal Briggs, while a student, recalled arriving by train at Sacred Heart from Brighton with Gabriel Reidy providing a cup of tea before school for them, while Sr Veronica Higgins remembered Sister Josephine bathing Veronica’s cold feet in warm water and drying them with a towel before school.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The report for 1910 at Richmond reveals that Sisters Stanislaus Fitzpatrick and Alphonsus Johnson were “experienced teachers conducting a well run school with modern teaching methods” and “using effective control without any corporal punishment.”

<sup>59</sup> IR Oatlands, 1911; IR Richmond, 1910.

<sup>60</sup> IR Cygnet, 1914.

<sup>61</sup> IR Westbury, 1919.

<sup>62</sup> P. Briggs, interview by the author, April 18 1995; V. Higgins, interview by the author, April 20 2000.

*Protestant students*

An atypical feature of the period was the anti-sectarian sentiment espoused within the Tasmanian rural communities. The Sisters of St Joseph enjoyed a good relationship with the Protestants in the country as evidenced by both their attendance at the schools and the support of the local community. As early as 1891 the presence of Protestants was evidenced in the schools: "Visitors were agreeably surprised by the intelligence shown by the children and were delighted with the affectionate regard with which the Sisters were held by them, of whom a considerable number are Non Catholic".<sup>63</sup> Protestant children accounted for two-thirds of the enrolment in 1902 and The *Monitor* comments, "Indeed the Sisters of St Joseph seem to have established themselves in the good graces of Tasmanian Protestants generally, but nowhere more so than at Ulverstone."<sup>64</sup> The local businessmen provided accommodation and furniture for the annual retreat.<sup>65</sup> At Devonport in 1907, Protestants accounted for 80 out of the total enrolment of 161.<sup>66</sup> The relations with the Protestant community were indicative of the appeal of Josephite education in the smaller Tasmanian communities and the openness of the Sisters themselves.

Through their willingness to accept Protestants through their music, commercial and mainstream teaching, the Sisters of St Joseph were able to alleviate the sectarian

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<sup>63</sup> "Ulverstone." *The Catholic Standard* 1891, 221.

<sup>64</sup> "Protestant Generosity." *The Monitor*, January 10 1902, 7.

<sup>65</sup> A report carried by *The Monitor* confirms the good relations:

The Sisters of St Joseph had their annual retreat and School Congress at Ulverstone during the Christmas holidays this year. It was not an easy matter to provide for the accommodation of over 40 persons; but the kindness of friends facilitated matters considerably. Mr Bonner set at their disposal his newly built handsome residence, and Mr Richards, Manager of the Don Company's store, volunteered to supply gratuitously a large quantity of furniture, while the Messrs Ellis acted with like generosity from their large stores. We beg to tender our thanks to these Protestant gentlemen. Indeed the Sisters of St Joseph seemed to have established themselves in the good graces of Tasmanian Protestants generally, but nowhere more so than at Ulverstone. "Protestant Generosity." *The Monitor*, January 10 1902, 7.

<sup>66</sup> IR Devonport, 1907.

bitterness, which was so much a feature of mainland educational struggles. Whether it was the ecumenical approach adopted by their cofounders or the fine example set by Archbishop Delany, the Sisters of St Joseph were to endear themselves to many outside the Catholic Church. The inclusion of such a significant number of non-Catholics demonstrates the lack of sectarian bitterness in the small towns in which the Josephites lived. Protestant pupils had always been a component of the school population. They were normally excused from the midday religion class.<sup>67</sup>

#### Professional development of Sisters of St Joseph

In common with most religious congregations in the early part of the century the Sisters of St Joseph received little in the way of tertiary education. MacGinley comments it was the practice until the 1950s to restrict university education to a few gifted women.<sup>68</sup> The Teachers' Registration Act of 1906 dictated that Tasmanian teachers had to have an understanding of theory and practice of education in order to fulfil the registration requirements and pass the examination. This challenge was met successfully and by 1919 Sacred Heart Convent had prepared eleven candidates successfully for the registration examination. The *Monitor* records the success of Misses D Perrin, (Sr Dominic), B. Williams (Sr Agatha) and Constance O'Brien. The first two were novices, having entered the Novitiate in 1917 and were in common with all Sisters subjected to external scrutiny by the examiners beyond the Catholic school system. The

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<sup>67</sup> V. Higgins, interview by the author, April 20 2000

<sup>68</sup> MacGinley, 282.



1919 examination was conducted by Mr H. Gillot, former Principal of the Launceston Church Grammar School and Sr Phyllis Principal of the Anglican Collegiate school .<sup>69</sup>

In order to meet the Tasmanian registration requirements of theory and practice a pragmatic approach was adopted. The Sisters therefore received some instruction as well as the continuation of the monitor system established in 1908. This approach was not unique to Sisters of St Joseph as the religious women in Australia, according to McGrath, were given only that minimum of education required for their work in the apostolate.<sup>70</sup> While the introduction of formal teacher training provided the requirements for teacher registration it did not adequately provide the Sisters with solid pedagogical foundation. The attainment of teacher registration did little to alleviate the general sense of inadequate teacher preparation, which surfaced in all interviews conducted by the writer.<sup>71</sup> As described by one Sister the acquisition of teachers' registration was not education as such, but rather a process of arriving at a qualification to enable teaching. As Sister C. explained, "The Sisters were all conscientious and did not lag on the job. Considering their inexperience they were rather heroic".<sup>72</sup> Those who were music teachers and who were given the opportunity to gain their A. Mus. A. were more confident in their ability to teach, recognizing their importance in maintaining the financial viability of their communities.<sup>73</sup>

The interaction with the Inspectors, opportunities to attend Schools of Method and the establishment of a religious education course all assisted in the increasing professionalism of the Sisters of St Joseph. The various Inspectors' reports record the improvement in teaching methods and the greater organizational details. Staff meetings

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<sup>69</sup> "Sacred Heart School." *The Monitor*, December 26 1919.

<sup>70</sup> S. McGrath. "Women Religious in the History of Australia 1888-1950: A Case Study- the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta." *Journal Australian Historical Society*, December 1995, 205.

<sup>71</sup> Interviews June, July 2002.

<sup>72</sup> Sister C. interview by the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>73</sup> V. Higgins, interview by the author, June 25 1999.

and the recording of minutes had progressed from the Saturday morning chapter of faults conducted within the community to a more professional and educational structure.

The earlier period of teacher preparation with Sisters Xavier Canty and Gabriel Reidy, who were specifically educated for the task, provided good preparation for the Sisters. The sudden death of Sr Xavier Canty on August 24, 1934 was a severe handicap to the professional development of the Sisters, as there had been no plan of succession in teacher training.<sup>74</sup> Xavier provided the mentoring, opportunity for criticism lessons and was an innovative principal. She had a direct manner, which was welcomed by those in training.<sup>75</sup> Following Xavier's death, Sister Dominic Perrin assumed her role as Principal of Sacred Heart and responsibility for the preparation of the Sisters for registration. Whilst the Sisters acknowledged Dominic's goodness, her duties as Principal of Sacred Heart and Bursar of the Congregation prevented a methodical approach to classes for teachers' registration. Classes were held each afternoon between 4.00 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. for School Method but Sr Dominic rarely turned up as Sister A. explained, "The only way we passed was to learn it ourselves".<sup>76</sup>

The inadequacies in teacher training were addressed by the leadership of Sisters of St Joseph by augmenting Dominic's classes with the services of Fr John Lynch and Christian Brother, Ted Joyce. The Sisters were fortunate to have the assistance of such excellent educators as the Diocesan examiner, Fr J. Lynch, who had attained his Master of Arts in Ireland, and the headmaster of St Virgil's College, Br E. Joyce. These gentlemen were most generous in bringing their combined expertise to the subjects of mathematics, languages and psychology. The progress of the Sisters in their academic pursuits is faithfully recorded in the local Catholic paper. For example, "Gwen Briggs

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<sup>74</sup> Xavier collapsed while taking school assembly and died shortly after. See P. Briggs, interview by the author, April 18 1995.

<sup>75</sup> Sister E, interview by the author, June 26 2002.

<sup>76</sup>Sister A. interview by the author, June 22 2002.

(Sr Paschal) and Doreen McHugh (Sr Joan) passed their Registration examination practical and theoretical".<sup>77</sup>

The Sisters' sense of inadequacy for the task emanated from both a perceived deficient preparation and from a burdensome timetable that prevented time for additional activities other than the prescribed teaching tasks, such as preparation and marking. For the Josephites, without the assistance of lay Sisters, there was an expectation that all Sisters participate in all domestic duties, such as cooking, laundry and housekeeping, regardless of the position held in school or study commitments. Sisters, such as Dominic Perrin, as Principal of Sacred Heart College, used to rise very early on Monday mornings to commence the washing for the whole community so that the laundry would be ready to hang out when the Sisters rose at 5.30 a.m.<sup>78</sup>

The consequences of limited income and understaffing in country areas particularly were that school Sisters were required to teach music and commercial classes before school commenced and after school concluded. So onerous had this become that in the Sister Guardian's report of 1940, Eulalia Smith urges the Sisters:

If I may make one suggestion it is that the school Sisters take only as many extra lessons in music and commercial subjects as they can conveniently manage, so that there will be no curtailment of spiritual exercises and study periods.<sup>79</sup>

The Chapter report although beyond the scope of this study is retrospective in its observation but has relevance as a reflection on the lives of the Sisters who lived through the late 1930s.

During the latter part of the period under study the Tasmanian Josephites commenced tertiary studies at the university, while combining teaching with their

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<sup>77</sup> IR Tunnack, 1931.

<sup>78</sup> Sr E. interview by the author, June 26 2002.

<sup>79</sup> E. Smith. "Sister Guardian's Report for Chapter of 6th January, 1941." Hobart: Sisters of St Joseph, 1941.

university studies. The first Sisters to commence their degrees were Sisters Berchmans Anderson, Brendan Keogh and Canice Cronin. For those who managed to gain a degree, teaching qualification or any form of professional development, it meant great self-sacrifice as the structured timetable did not lend itself to personal developmental pursuits, which would have been considered self-indulgent in an age where humility and domestic prowess was valued to the detriment of scholarship.<sup>80</sup> Studying at a university would have been considered a necessary evil to be endured for the sake of the ministry.

For those who commenced university studies, it was a case of walking straight out of school and being picked up by a parishioner to make the 4.00 p.m. lectures and on returning they went straight into prayer.<sup>81</sup> Subjects were selected merely on the basis of what was offered at 4.00 p.m on any day and had little to do with the individual interests of the Sisters.<sup>82</sup> Full-time university study would not occur until several decades later with the urgency for maintaining the larger secondary schools of the 1950s and 1960s.

### *Teaching of religion*

Professional development in the secular subjects was matched by a significant change in approach to teaching Christian Doctrine. Between 1926 in 1930, the Sisters of St Joseph were influenced by more modern educational method of teaching of Christian Doctrine in a movement led in Tasmania by Fathers Francis Kent, Vincent Green, John Lynch and John Cullen, the first two Australians, the last two Irishmen. Their approach was to move from rote learning to an understanding of the truths of the faith with emphasis placed on the Bible, Church History and lived Christianity. This represented a

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<sup>80</sup> OR, Ch. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Sr A. interview by the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>82</sup> M. Noonan, interview by the author, 1994.

significant change in approach for the teachers. Their approach focused on the understanding rather than the memory. They believed that more emphasis should be placed upon the study of the Bible, the Church History and authenticity.<sup>83</sup> The publicity given to these discussions prepared the way for the introduction of classes and Christian doctrine examination in the 1930s.

From 1930 Fr P J Lynch was appointed Diocesan Examiner in Christian Doctrine. In 1931 a syllabus for the teaching of religion for both primary and secondary classes was published and annual examinations were instituted from that year.<sup>84</sup> Results of the annual examinations were published in *The Catholic Standard* and schools were competitive in their enthusiasm about the success of their pupils. As no extant reports remain of the Diocesan inspection of schools it is difficult to determine the success or otherwise of the Josephite response to the new methods of instruction. The Sisters interviewed recalled the change in direction for Religious Education as a positive enhancement of the teaching of religion.<sup>85</sup>

### Introduction of Secondary Education

For both the state school sector and Catholic system there was an emphasis on primary schooling. By 1921 there were 478 State primary schools and only five State high schools. Secondary education had been encouraged with the provision of bursaries in 1915, but despite this, the majority of children did not complete high school, given the costs of fees and inaccessibility of the high schools. In 1921 the four year high

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<sup>83</sup> IR Tunnack, 1931.

<sup>84</sup> Fr Lynch also wrote and published a liturgical catechism which was later used throughout Australia. See Hollingsworth, 43 and "Christian Doctrine," *Catholic Standard*, January 22 1931.

<sup>85</sup> Sister C. interview by the author, June 24 2002.

school was extended to five years and the Junior Public Examination was replaced with the Intermediate and Senior Public Examination by the Leaving Certificate.<sup>86</sup> It was the Intermediate that formed the pre-requisite for teacher registration.

The stringent economic conditions had consequences for the departmental high schools, which were obliged to impose fees of £1 per term for children less than 14 years of age and of £1/10/0 for those over 14 years. The result was a decrease in attendance of one third to half at high schools at Devonport and Burnie.<sup>87</sup> The steady decline in enrolment was addressed in 1934 with the abolition of fees, but Tasmania continued to have a relatively smaller number of pupils undergoing post-primary education than all but one of the Australian states.<sup>88</sup> The average enrolment of children proceeding onto high schools peaked at 9.8% in 1918 and declined to 7.3% in 1924. By 1925 an increasing number of students were attending high schools and the percentage rose to 15.1 only to fall in 1930 and 1931 with the financial crisis.<sup>89</sup> The preference for parents was for an extended primary education, which was less expensive than the high schools.

The movement into the sphere of secondary education marked a departure from the Woods-MacKillop vision of a basic primary education and shaped an alternative development for the Tasmanian Josephites. The move into secondary education, and consequent need for tertiary education, would remain a point of unease within the community. As well as contending with annual inspections by the State Inspectors and Church Inspectors and meeting the associated standards, the Sisters prepared students for the Junior Public examinations conducted by the University. Students sat the Qualifying Examination, which would gain them entry into the newly established high

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<sup>86</sup> Selth, 185.

<sup>87</sup> G.L. Johnston, "Fifty Years of State Secondary Education in Tasmania, 1913 to 1962: A Study of Educational Developments." M.A. thesis, University of Tasmania, 1963, 104.

<sup>88</sup> Fletcher, 42.

<sup>89</sup> Johnston, 108.

schools, and the opportunity to be awarded State bursaries for secondary schools. Only Hobart and Launceston offered four years of high school. Devonport and Burnie had established two-year State high schools in 1915, but for the rest of the State, secondary school was unattainable.

The numbers in the country areas qualifying were small and their failure to take up their places in the high schools was a concern. In contrast the children in Hobart at New Town gained their certificates in greater numbers; while 16 out of 20 passed their scholarship examination, only 9 attended high schools.<sup>90</sup> An alternative to secondary classes in rural areas was the provision of commercial classes for students wishing to pursue a career in clerical work.<sup>91</sup> To compensate for the inaccessibility of high school education the country schools expanded into commercial classes.

#### *Commercial classes*

As an adjunct to the primary classes the Sisters of St Joseph also conducted commercial classes for secondary children. The commercial classes provided the opportunity for students to progress beyond the primary classes and undertake training, which would be an opening into employment. The qualifications gained from National Business College, Sydney, gave them credibility in the job market and assisted in their employment prospects.

At Devonport boys and girls were prepared for examinations for the National Business College in Sydney as early as 1915. Courses comprised Bookkeeping, Shorthand and Typewriting. Results of the examinations were published in the local and

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<sup>90</sup> IR New Town, 1931.

<sup>91</sup> Robson, 259.

Catholic papers and great prominence was given to the winners of awards or medals such as Miss E. Best who received a book keeping diploma and gold medal for typewriting and Shorthand in 1916.<sup>92</sup> The success of the commercial classes was reported in *The Catholic Magazine* the following year where the examiner stated that he “had not seen a better set of papers during the whole examination”, with 22 having so far gained a pass in Advanced Book Keeping and Typewriting.<sup>93</sup>

Schools such as at Forth provided classes and congratulatory comments to the Sisters were published in *The Monitor*; “It shows that you are conducting your commercial classes along very satisfactory lines .<sup>94</sup> Oatlands school students also met the requirements of the National Business College, Sydney with distinctions of 93-100%.<sup>95</sup> In 1918 Devonport student Margery Lindley gained a gold medal from the National Business College.<sup>96</sup> The examiners’ comments published in the *Monitor* asserted that, “The best and neatest work comes from the West Devonport Convent”.<sup>97</sup>

The Commercial classes conducted in the country schools continued to gain good results throughout the 1930s, such as at Devonport where students sat examinations set by the National Business College and Stott’s Business College; students invariably scoring results of 90 to 100% in Book Keeping, Shorthand and Typewriting. For the country students these commercial classes provided a practical alternative to secondary education for the Sisters of St Joseph and their pupils.

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<sup>92</sup> "Commercial Exams." *The Monitor*, December 15 1916, 11.

<sup>93</sup> See IR Westbury, 1919 and "Commercial Exams." *The Catholic Magazine*, December 1917, 17.

<sup>94</sup> IR Forth, 1919.

<sup>95</sup> "National Business College Sydney." *The Monitor*, November 30 1917, 2.

<sup>96</sup> "Devonport Commercial Examinations." *The Monitor*, August 2 1918, 2.

<sup>97</sup> "Devonport Commercial Examinations."



## St Therese's School Moonah

The successful establishment of St Therese's School at Moonah on the outskirts of Hobart provides an opportunity of closer examination of the increasing professional development of the Sisters of St Joseph and their capacity to meet the demands of the Education Department without sacrificing their ideals for education of the poor. The invitation to the Sisters of St Joseph to undertake the establishment of a new school within the greater Hobart area marked a significant departure from their involvement in the country areas. Their former involvement in catechetical classes in the Glenorchy area would have predisposed the Sisters to an involvement in the Moonah parish as well as the poverty of the area which was a significant factor on the decision to be involved.

Moonah was the most heavily populated area of the city having a high proportion of working-class people and the school on opening was the largest primary school in the Catholic system at the time. The only Catholic school in the area was Sacred Heart at New Town and that school catered for all the Catholic children of the northern suburbs. The plan to provide the school, church, and convent for the northern suburbs was an ambitious one that was driven by the inimitable Fr T. J. O'Donnell.<sup>98</sup> The church, which was built, could be converted into four classrooms for use during the week and then used for worship on Sundays.<sup>99</sup> The total cost of the project was £8,700 of which £5,075 were spent on the school.

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<sup>98</sup> Fr T. J. O'Donnell was described at his funeral by Archbishop Tweedy cited in Southerwood "as the most colourful figure in the history of Tasmania in the past 25 years. O'Donnell gained international interest when he gained freedom after being incarcerated in the Tower of London. His civic and political interests were of a controversial nature, which ensured he had a high public profile throughout his life. See Southerwood, n.d., 124-125.

<sup>99</sup>"Moonah." *Catholic Standard*, July 14 1932.

The school opened with 200 children, and staff had to be increased almost immediately.<sup>100</sup> Under the direction of Sr Gabriel Reidy, Sisters Benigna Corry, Bernard Hanslowe, Augustine Reidy and Miss Roach taught the 242 pupils under difficult conditions with an average size class of just under 50 students.<sup>101</sup> The inspection comments in the first year are most favourable with the Inspector viewing the pupils as “a friendly well-mannered and cheerful lot”.<sup>102</sup> The report gives the impression of a well ordered school with children actively engaged in their work. The standard of singing regarded “as the best singing heard in any of the convents with both songs and theory receiving attention,” indicates that the standard of cultural pursuits was equivalent to any other convent school, which was commendable given the difficulties in establishing a new school.<sup>103</sup>

### *Resources and Staffing*

The ongoing problem of church use for the school continued. Given the poverty of the region the church had the dual function of operating as both school and church. Inspection reports of succeeding years highlight this concern “the new building [was] more suitable for a church than a school. The wooden partitions are by no means sound proof”.<sup>104</sup> The Sisters and their 255 pupils operated out of the local church with wooden partitions dividing off the church into different sections for the various classes. On Monday mornings the boys would pull up the long forms which would act as desks and attach the inkwells. The Inspector noted that these arrangements made it difficult for

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<sup>100</sup> IR Moonah, 1933.

<sup>101</sup> IR Moonah, 1933.

<sup>102</sup> IR Moonah, 1933.

<sup>103</sup> IR Moonah, 1933.

<sup>104</sup> IR Moonah, 1933.

individual personal supervision of the children during the progress of the lessons. The long forms prevented the smaller children from gaining a good standard, as often they had to stand in order to write.<sup>105</sup>

Despite the difficulties in accommodation and inadequate resources, two out of three students had gained their qualifying certificate and three had passed scholarship enabling them to continue to secondary study. The achievement is admirable, given the poverty of the school and the large classes.<sup>106</sup> Within its first two years *The Catholic Standard* recorded the photo of pupil, Charles Wright of St Therese's, Moonah, winning a Junior City Bursary.<sup>107</sup>

Inadequate staffing was an ongoing difficulty with the increasing numbers of children and the Inspectors commented on this with regularity and with an observation that an assistant was needed in Grades 3 and 4.<sup>108</sup> With the increased professionalism and organizational structures the provision of staff meetings for the Sisters had become commonplace. At Moonah Gabriel Reidy was holding monthly staff meetings and recording the minutes. By 1936 the school had established itself to the stage where the school was commended "for the earnest, enthusiastic attention of the staff to their work".<sup>109</sup>

### Sisters and their relationship to the people

Consistent with the Josephite commitment to provide education for the poor the Sisters sought to assist where they could, given the poverty of the Moonah people. Sr

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<sup>105</sup> IR Moonah, 1935.

<sup>106</sup> IR Moonah, 1933.

<sup>107</sup> "Junior City Bursary." *Catholic Standard*, February 1 1934, 3.

<sup>108</sup> IR Westbury, 1936.

<sup>109</sup> IR Moonah, 1936.

Veronica Higgins, who lived in Moonah during the establishment period of the convent and school, recalled the kindness of the Sisters to her family. Whenever Mrs. Higgins had a baby Gabriel Reidy would bring a casserole for the evening meal and check to see if the family had sufficient food.<sup>110</sup> The school fees were only sixpence a week and even though the failure to receive the remuneration would have been felt keenly by the Sisters' community, many families were not sent accounts for school fees, if they were suffering from extreme poverty.<sup>111</sup>

### Conclusion and Significance

Having addressed the initial training for the Sisters by the provision of the monitor system training and the classes necessary to obtain registration, the Sisters in the country, however, were left to their own resources. Any ongoing training was left to the Education Department through the inspections or Schools of Method. The former Woods-MacKillop system, which had worked well in the founding years, had been displaced by the demands of government authorities to conform to the State standards, often without the prerequisite knowledge or resources. The leadership of Sisters of St Joseph bowed to Church and government authorities and relinquished control of their schools, maintaining authority only over staffing.

The role of the Sister Guardian was defined exclusively in terms of a spiritual leader in the living out of the Rule and religious life. In this aspect, the Tasmanian Josephites differed from their mainland counterparts, who appointed supervisors of their schools and therefore maintained a greater control over them. The Church authorities

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<sup>110</sup> V. Higgins, interview by the author, April 20 2000.

<sup>111</sup> V. Higgins, interview by the author, April 20 2000.

contributed to a degree of powerlessness on the part of the Sister Guardian in the conduct of the schools through the appointment of the Diocesan Examiner and through the imposition of the state inspection. The inspection reports were sent to the Archbishop and not to the Sister Guardian. On occasions when the inspection report required action to be taken, the stance by the leadership of the Sisters of St Joseph was reactionary rather than proactive. The effect was for some Sisters to struggle under great difficulty fulfilling roles for which they had little aptitude. The interpretation of the mission of the Church by those in authority was such that it dominated the lives of the Sisters. The Sisters saw God's will in whatever situations were presented and it was their commitment to educate the poor that gave their work meaning, in some cases at great personal cost.

The Sisters of St Joseph demonstrated flexibility in their approach to education under the influence of the Education Department, Diocesan Examiners and tertiary education. This phase marked a broadening in the understanding of Josephite ministry as illustrated by the opening of the school at Moonah as well as their engagement in the secondary and commercial classes, which formerly would have been considered alien to the original Rule. They had become attuned to the needs of the Church. Their commitment to the poor was wherever the poor were to be found and not exclusively in the country areas, nor were they restricted to primary classes but moving to a wider appreciation of the needs of the rural students and their families.

## CHAPTER 7

### MEMBERSHIP OF THE SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH

#### Introduction

The background of the membership of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania paralleled that of the other Diocesan Josephite Congregations; the disparity occurred in the percentage of intercolonial and Irish recruits throughout the period of this study. The smaller Tasmanian population and its consequently smaller Catholic population made recruitment a challenge even in an age in which people were more disposed to life commitment for religious ideals and therefore the Tasmanian Josephites relied on non-Tasmanian recruits in the first instance and Irish recruits in the latter part of the study. From the data available it will be argued that the background of the members of the Sisters of St Joseph was ideally suited to the Tasmanian mission and the religious Rule shaped a flexible and committed teaching force.

According to theologian Chittister (1996), religious life comes out of a particular culture and it also embodies that culture in terms of the mindsets and personalities of its' members in the agendas and questions of it times.<sup>1</sup> The Tasmanian Josephites with their commitment to the poor and those living in isolation became enmeshed in the lives of the small parish schools and communities throughout Tasmania. To provide the reality of the lived experience the stories of three ordinary members of the Sisters of St Joseph are selected for examination. In the investigation of their lives and personalities the culture of the Tasmanian Josephites will be evident.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Chittister. *The Fire in These Ashes*. Kansas City: Shed and Ward, 1996, 6.

*The call to religious life*

An understanding of the motivation of those aspiring to religious life is paramount in gaining an insight into the forces which both initiated and sustained such life choices. For this study cognisance needs to be taken of the theological understanding of the late nineteenth century in relation to religious life. Contemporary authors have examined religious life and concur with theologian Schneiders that the existing theology of religious life is markedly different from that which prevailed in the early part of the twentieth century. Schneiders shows that from the thirteenth century religious life was considered a “higher life, the life of perfection, a Superior vocation not given to all Christians”.<sup>2</sup> Religious were bound by the vows or “evangelical counsels, whereas laity were bound by the Christian commandments”. Terms such as “state of perfection” were used in relation to religious life, thereby denoting it as superior to those who elected to marry or remain single. The first Vatican Council affirmed this concept of separation from the laity in what McNamara identifies the emergence of religious as “auxiliary to the clerical elite”.<sup>3</sup>

Schneiders in her examination of religious life in a new millennium clearly identifies the motivation of women joining religious life as the “quest for God and the love of Christ”. Citing Ranft’s study that religious life offered women alternatives to marriage, such as autonomy and security coupled with education, she argues, “I know of no primary source where women explicitly state any of those reasons why they pursued religious life. In every instance they tell us their reason was religiously

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<sup>2</sup> S. Schneiders. *New Wineskins: Re-Imagining Religious Life Today*. New York: Paulist Press, 1986, 24.

<sup>3</sup> J. McNamara. *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998, 609.

motivated. They wanted to become saints”.<sup>4</sup> The spiritual motivation is corroborated in Hoy’s work on the migration of Irish postulants and professed Sisters to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This identified religious as endeavouring to enlarge the scope of their lives by service of others in another country. The motivation for these religious women, unlike other emigrants, was not economic opportunity but rather “they sought opportunities that were spiritual, psychological, and non-material”.<sup>5</sup> “Religious life has always been shaped by a profound realisation of the mystery of God”.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly Australian historian Turner (1988) in her project on Australian religious life identifies the motivation of joining a religious order as spiritual motivation or a call. “I always felt that the Lord was calling me to himself”.<sup>7</sup> In interviewing 100 participants Turner notes that the majority of Sisters experienced a strong feeling that God was calling them into life.<sup>8</sup> Historian Zimmerman writes of women entering religious life in the Maitland Diocese as viewing “their decision as an act of special commitment to God and the Church.” She notes that the ideals of religious life coincided with the accepted norms of late nineteenth century womanhood.<sup>9</sup> For the majority of Catholic families the decision to join a religious congregation was well received, especially for the families of Irish Sisters where the notion of a religious vocation was regarded as an honour to the family.<sup>10</sup> This, however, was not always so in Australian families, according to Turner’s study, where the prospective entrants often

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<sup>4</sup> Ranft cited in Schneiders, 2000, 297.

<sup>5</sup> S. Hoy. "The Journey Out: The Recruitment and Emigration of Irish Religious Women to the United States, 1812-1914." *Journal of Women's History* 6, 7, no. 1 (1995), 77.

<sup>6</sup> M. J. Leddy. *Reweaving Religious Life*. Mystic, C. T.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991, 13.

<sup>7</sup> N. Turner. *Which Seeds Shall Grow? : Men and Women in Religious Life /*. Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1988, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Turner, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Zimmerman, 2000, 255.

<sup>10</sup> Hoy, 77.



met with opposition from their parents.<sup>11</sup> In the majority of cases the religious joined the Congregation that had educated them.<sup>12</sup>

The sense of rejection of the world was commonplace in such a decision and those joining religious life were seen “to leave the world” and developed practices and a spirituality which would reinforce this separation.<sup>13</sup> Those entering religious life assumed different names and followed different schedules of daily living; every aspect was prescribed in minute detail by the 1917 *Code of Canon Law* with over 200 canons defining the lifestyle.<sup>14</sup> Their commitment to their common purpose gave their lives a coherence and sense of shared vision. Such dedication enabled them to accept the discipline and deprivation of such a way of life. Leddy (1991) in her study of religious life remarks that although rejecting the world apostolic religious were committed to responding to the needs of the world, indirectly through the middle ground of Catholic institutions such as schools and hospitals.<sup>15</sup>

Within the Australian context from the 1880s much of Australian Church energy and resources have been expended on the provision of Catholic schools. The Australian Bishops took their stand against secular education and hence a system of Catholic schools arose to meet the challenge. Australian Church life and the religious lives of Australia’s Sisters and Brothers and some Priests were largely shaped by this decision for the subsequent 100 years. Their horarium and their very lives revolved around the school. The poverty of their lives and their real connection with the local Church and the laity afforded the religious great respect from their fellow Catholics .<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Turner, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Turner, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Leddy, 14.

<sup>14</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, 1917, can. 479-687.

<sup>15</sup> Leddy, 15.

<sup>16</sup> J.M. Brady. "The Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania: Vatican II and Education." Master of Ministry, Melbourne College of Divinity, 1997, 13.

*Spirituality*

For the Sisters of St Joseph distance from the major centres inevitably led to a more creative approach to spirituality, with dependence on daily Mass compensated for by other forms of prayer. The spirituality of the Josephites was to become the spirituality of prayer and service. The spirituality of Fr Julian Tenison Woods, which permeated the lives of the early Sisters, was characterised by his regard for “the love, generosity, humility, gentleness, trust, fidelity and poverty exemplified by the Sacred Heart”.<sup>17</sup> He had advocated self-denial and a form of poverty which required detachment from material possessions. This translated into the Sisters’ acceptance into the Congregation without any dowry, their living in rented accommodation and being prepared to share their insufficient means.<sup>18</sup> The removal of the dowry requirement opened membership to a wider group, although it also contributed to their financial vulnerability and dependence of the Congregation on the local parish communities. Both Tenison Woods and Mary MacKillop had a high regard for the practice of poverty shown in accepting “the uncertainty of support, and linked to a preference of serving the poor and neglected places”.<sup>19</sup> The Congregation was egalitarian in nature and did not have two classes of Sisters, unlike many of the congregations operating in Australia with Irish or European foundations. In some congregations the failure to provide a dowry ensured the recruit the status of a lay sister, a situation which remained in place for a longer period in older European congregations in the United States.<sup>20</sup> Those

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<sup>17</sup> M. Press. "The Josephite Contribution." *The Australasian Catholic Record*, January 1978 (1978), 28.

<sup>18</sup>OR, Ch 1.

<sup>19</sup> Press, 1978, 30.

<sup>20</sup> Hoy, 77.

joining the Tasmanian Josephites enjoyed full membership and opportunities for education.

The spiritual direction of the cofounders gave rise to a spirituality that was closely allied to the spirituality of the people in the times in which the Sisters lived. Josephite historian Press notes that the isolation of the Sisters left its mark and contributed to the individuality, simplicity and homespun quality of Josephite spirituality.<sup>21</sup>

*Records of Membership of the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph*

The Sisters of St Joseph's archives at New Town, Tasmania, hold only records of those who proceeded from the postulancy to the novitiate. Many more would have been accepted but left during the first months of candidature. Archbishop Delany in his report to Rome in 1924 accounts for 68 candidates being admitted as postulants from 1887, with 12 withdrawing. Of the 56 who proceeded on to become novices, three left during the noviceship. Fifty-three novices were admitted to temporary vows, with two leaving when their vows expired. One who had made perpetual vows in another diocese and transferred to Tasmania left of her own accord. Two were dispensed from the perpetual vows at their own request. One was secularized by virtue of the office given by the Holy See, for she did not observe the Rule and caused a great deal of worry. Delany hastens to add that no scandal occurred.<sup>22</sup> Of the 100 aspirants recorded as being accepted as novices between 1887-1937, seventeen aspirants left, often at the

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<sup>21</sup> Press, 1978, 32.

<sup>22</sup> The inclusion of the Holy See is bewildering as Delany himself had the authority to release the Sisters from their vows, as they were a Diocesan Congregation. See P. Delany. "Rapport De L'archeveque De Hobart (Tasmanie) Sur L'institut Diocesan (Juris Dioceain) Des Soeurs De St Joseph." 23. Hobart: Catholic Church Archives, 1924.

expiration of their temporary vows or as novices and six after the making their life vows. The retention rate according to the details in Delany's report amounts to 70% of all aspirants remaining.

The membership of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania consisted of women from working class families from both Tasmania and beyond. Unlike the Sisters of St Joseph, Lochinvar, who relied on recruits from the local region, the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania drew their recruits initially from rural communities interstate.<sup>23</sup> It was not until the 1920s that the Tasmanian Josephites' intake came principally from Tasmania. The appeal of the Sisters of St Joseph lay in rural families' familiarity with them and the relative ease of entry.<sup>24</sup> In the latter part of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century, missionary priests, such as the Redemptorists gave parish missions throughout Australia and in renewing the faith of the people, often expounded on the virtue of joining the priesthood, brotherhood and sisterhood. Knowledge of the Tasmanian situation placed the priests in a unique position of being able to advise young girls, who sought advice from them regarding which Congregation to join.<sup>25</sup>

In the first decades more recruits came from Victoria or New South Wales to join Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph, than from Tasmania itself. Zimmerman comments that to travel a greater distance and leave home and everything familiar was a greater

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<sup>23</sup> Zimmerman details that from 1883-1909, only 9 women came from outside the local area and each of them was resident in New South Wales. See Zimmerman, "She Came from a Fine Catholic Family," 270.

<sup>24</sup> A dowry was the normal expectation for those joining religious orders. The money, which would have equated to several hundred pounds, was held in trust for the candidate. The interest accrued was used by the Congregation. In the event of the candidate leaving the dowry was returned intact minus the interest. Magray (1998) writes of the typical amount of all orders as £500 to £600. Towards the end of the 19th-century the typical amount had become £200 to £300. (See M.P. Magray. *The Transforming Power of Nuns: Women, Religion, and Cultural Change in Ireland 1750-1900*. Vol. 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 36-37). MacGinley (1996) quotes the Mercy dowries in Ireland between 1840 and 1867 as £375 per annum. The dowry was a significant amount considering a teacher in a denominational school in Australia at the time earned £60 per annum. See MacGinley, 60.

<sup>25</sup> Sr E. interview by the author, June 26, 2002.

sacrifice than merely leaving home to serve the Lord.<sup>26</sup> Sr Bernard Freeman, from New Town, in discussing her decision to join the Central Josephites states that the option of joining a group in her own home suburb was too easy and lacked merit.<sup>27</sup>

### Place of birth

The place of birth, as recorded in the records is the presumed point of entry for the aspirant. While the majority of families remained stationary, some moved from towns within the State to other States. For example Sr Dominic Perrin was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, but entered the Tasmanian Josephites from Melbourne.<sup>28</sup> From anecdotal evidence, this would apply to several of the families. From entries of 100 aspirants only 20 record the birthplace as a city of any size. Of the Tasmanian contingent only 16 candidates were born in Launceston or Hobart, all others coming from country towns. Of the interstate cohort, aspirants were born in country Victorian towns such as Harrietteville (Sr Lawrence Walsh), Gembrook (Sr Sebastian Bailey) and Meredith (Sr Eulalia Smith). Only Sr Monica Wright and Sr Margaret Mary Leitch were born in Victorian cities, Melbourne and Geelong respectively.<sup>29</sup> The New South Wales entrants came from Grenfell, Brookfield, Krumbach and Hinton, and two aspirants entered from Newcastle. The Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph held greater appeal to those from rural communities rather than from the cities.

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<sup>26</sup> B. Zimmerman. "A New Order: Bishops Matthew Quinn and James Murray and the Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph 1876 and 1883." *Australasian Catholic Record* 68, no. 2 (1991): 206.

<sup>27</sup> B. Freeman, taped interview, 1984.

<sup>28</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>29</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

Those joining the Sisters of St Joseph from 1887 were generally of Irish descent, having been born in Ireland or born in Australia of Irish parents. The numbers joining in any year were small, varying from between three to five. The most significant growth for the Congregation occurred during 1891 to 1900, when 34 new members were added. This larger than normal intake coincided with the depression and expansion of the Congregation to other foundation convents.<sup>30</sup> Of this larger intake five had transferred from other foundations.

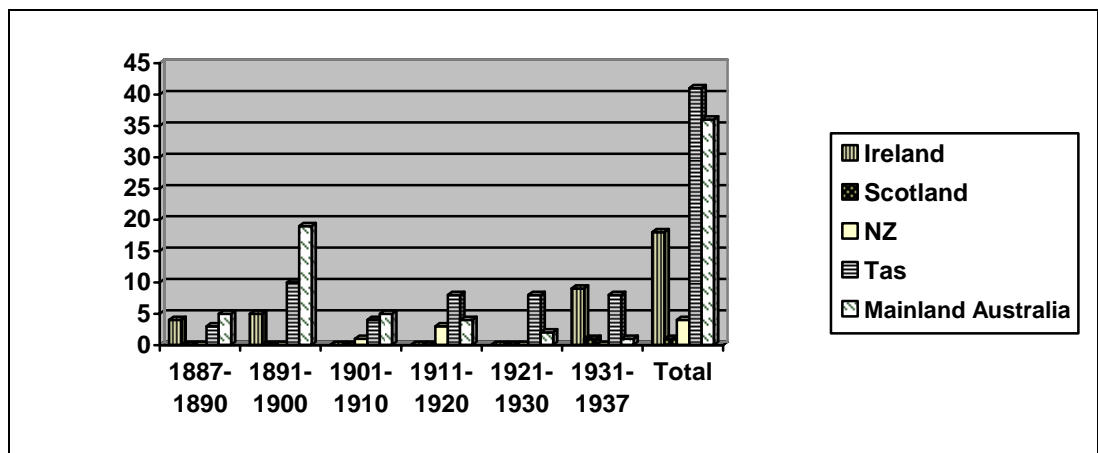
Table 4: Birthplace of Sisters entering Sisters of St Joseph  
1887 to 1937

	1887- 90	1891-1900	1901-10	1911-20	1921-30	1931-37	Total
<b>Ireland</b>	4	5	0	0	0	9	18
<b>Scotland</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>New Zealand</b>	0	0	1	3	0	0	4
<b>Tasmania</b>	3	10	4	8	8	8	41
<b>Interstate</b>	5	19	5	4	2	1	36

The Tasmanian recruits during the latter part of this period were supplemented by the Irish intake of the 1930s when nine young women joined the Congregation from the Missionary School at Callan, County Kilkenny. This will be discussed in Chapter 8. From the tables above it is apparent that the Tasmanian Congregation was dependent upon recruits from beyond Tasmania to maintain its schools and provide additional support in the rural parishes of the Archdiocese.

<sup>30</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

Table 5: Birthplace of members 1887-1937



The aspirants to the Sisters of St Joseph were part of the people they served, sharing with them a common background of an Irish heritage and for the most part a farming background. The Irish aspirants of the 1930s also shared a common heritage of faith and culture with the Tasmanian population where the leadership of the Tasmanian Catholic Church during this period was predominantly Irish.<sup>31</sup> What placed the Sisters apart was their decision to live a life of consecrated celibacy, obedience and poverty. Their family background was a definite advantage to them in their relationships with the people, providing them with a sympathetic approach to the families of their students in the struggling rural and mining communities dotted around Tasmania. As former Prime Minister Paul Keating noted, the commitment of these women had an enormous impact on families and changed Australian society and the Catholic Church and “gave it an earthiness which it would not always have had”.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Australasian Catholic Directory for 1922*. Sydney: William Brooks, 1922.

<sup>32</sup> P. Keating. "Mary MacKillop's Sisters - Book Launch." *The Sydney Papers Summer 1997* 9, no. 1 (1997), 97.

*Siblings joining the Josephites*

Nine families gave nineteen daughters to the Sisters of St Joseph during the fifty-year period. It was not uncommon for sisters to enter the convent at the same time. The Johnsons from Brookfield, New South Wales, gave four daughters Bridget (Dorothea), Ellen (Veronica), Kate (Alphonsus) and Mary (Kevin) who joined in 1894 and 1895 and MaryAnn (Gonzaga) and Maria (Gertrude) Johnston from Grenfell, New South Wales entered in 1888. The Reidys, Srs Augustine and Gabriel, came to Tasmania from Bungaree, Victoria in 1895 and 1899 respectively. Among the Irish candidates coming to Tasmania were the Fallons and the Healys, who provided no less than seven daughters for the Tasmanian Catholic Church. Srs Colman (Bridie) and Francis Mary (Kathleen) Fallon came from County Galway, Ireland in 1935 and 1937, joining their two Presentation Sisters, Patricia and Brendan, who arrived in 1933 and 1934. Sr Malachy (Kathleen) Healy in 1936 arrived in Tasmania; her two Sisters Lucy and Augustine later joining the Sisters of the Presentation (F. M. Fallon, personal communication, October 9, 2003). Later two more Healys, Sisters Francis and Philomena, would join their compatriots in Tasmania.

Siblings from four Tasmanian families entered the Josephites: The Clearys, Philomena (Teresa) and Eustelle (Honora) joined in 1897 and 1903. Eustelle died of typhoid fever in Zeehan in 1906. Srs Evangelist (Emily) and Baptist (Lucy) Osborne, who were the first to join from southern Tasmania, entered at Westbury in 1890; their sister Julian (Florence) joined in 1895. In the 1920s the Ulbrichs, de Sales (Hilda) (1926) and Anselm (Caroline) (1927) entered at New Town. Srs Christina (Nellie) and



Peter (Olive) Toole both entered in 1935.<sup>33</sup> The Maitland experience is similar with 41 women from 16 Maitland families entering between 1883 and 1909.<sup>34</sup> Six of those with siblings joining during the period of the study, left during this period or as late as the 1950s, the majority leaving after life vows.<sup>35</sup> This could be attributed to the familial influence in joining, given the esteem in which religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests were held in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>36</sup>

### *Occupations of fathers*

The occupations of the fathers determine the social context of the families from which the Sisters were drawn. Consistent with the mindset of the era, the mothers' occupations remain unlisted. From the Records of the Sisters of St Joseph, 23 distinct occupations are given, while there is no recorded occupation for eight of the Sisters' fathers.<sup>37</sup>

Table 6: Classification of parental occupations as a percentage

Occupation	Percentage
Professional	10
Retail	15
Farmer	42
Manual	33

<sup>33</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>34</sup> Zimmerman, 2000, 204.

<sup>35</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>36</sup> Hoy, 77.

<sup>37</sup> Of interest is the removal of the occupation of Sr Columba Cahill's father from the records. Presumably this would have occurred during her time as Sister Guardian

Table 7: Occupations of Fathers of Sisters joining 1887 to 1937

Occupation	Number	Occupation	Number
Farmer	30	Road maker	2
Shopkeeper	7	Lighthouse Keeper	1
Builder	6	Methodist Minister	1
Miner	6	Office Clerk	1
Gardener	5	Policeman	1
Labourer	5	Portrait painter	1
Vinedresser	4	Retired Soldier	1
Inspector	3	Teacher	2
Hotelkeeper	3	Engineer	1
Boot maker	2	Journalist	1
Orchardist	2	Not stated	8

From these occupations four groupings emerged: farmer, professional, retail and manual. The families of those joining the Josephites are consistent with the findings of Zimmerman, and her study of the Maitland Diocese with the majority of Sisters coming from farming families.<sup>38</sup> On a percentage basis, the occupation of the fathers is typically rural with the manual occupations associated with agriculture such as orchardist, vinedresser, and gardeners. This is reflective of the Australian settings from which the aspirants were drawn, coming from rural Victoria and New South Wales. The Tasmanian membership was largely farming as the Tasmanian economy was a rural

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<sup>38</sup> Zimmerman, 2000, 263-264.

one, despite the drift to the towns, and this is reflected in the occupations of the Sisters' fathers for the fifty-year period.<sup>39</sup> The percentages of occupations are consistent with the census figures between 1901 and 1921, which display primary producer figures between 32.5 and 25.8%. The corresponding percentages for professional are 6.8 to 8.7 over the same period.<sup>40</sup> The low percentage of those with professional fathers is consistent with the appeal of Sisters of St Joseph to those from the middle to lower working class Catholic families.

Sr Bernadette (Mary) Pollard (1891-1978) is atypical, as both a convert from Methodism, and because her father was a Methodist clergyman. Her age at entry of 35 years places her well beyond the norm.<sup>41</sup> Ill health forced Bernadette to leave in 1926, she re-entered in 1929 at 38 years of age. The only other sister leaving and re-entering was Sr Augustine Reidy, who "left for the world, February 7, 1921" and re-entered on August 17, 1930 and made her life profession on her deathbed in 1936.<sup>42</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests the reason for her departure was ill health as her stance was exceedingly stooped. Earlier she had been in a situation at Oatlands where she had to carry buckets of water from the convent to the school for the provision of drinking and hygiene purposes.<sup>43</sup> Whether this was a contributing factor is speculative. Certainly her death occurring only six years after her return to the Congregation would indicate health problems.

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<sup>39</sup> Tasmania remained by and large a rural economy, despite the movement to the towns. Even in 1938 more than 20, 000 were farm workers - 7000 in agriculture, 6000 in dairy, 2300 in pastoral industry and 4700 in fruit growing. See Townsley, 285.

<sup>40</sup> Commonwealth Government. *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia No.25*. Vol. 25. Canberra: Government Printer, 1932,488.

<sup>41</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>42</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>43</sup> IR Oatlands, 1911.

*Age*

The age of entry of the candidates is of significance for this study, but must be considered within its historical context. Those entering the Sisters of St Joseph were not without some adult experience, joining as they did with an average age of 20 years and a mean age of 19. The youngest candidates were 14 and the oldest was 36 years of age.<sup>44</sup> Those aspirants of below 15 were required to do an extended period as a scholastic before being admitted as a novice. One elderly Sister recalled entering the Congregation in 1934 at 14 years of age, “I had two years as a postulant and then had to do my Intermediate with the Sacred Heart students.”<sup>45</sup>

It must be remembered that during the period of examination, adolescence had not yet emerged as a factor in stages of growth and young people beyond compulsory school age were expected to assume an adult role. In comparison with women marrying, the aspirants to the Josephites had a two to three year training period before making their first vows and a total of nine years before making a life commitment.<sup>46</sup> According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies the age of women in Australia during this period entering into marriage for the first time was 20-24 years of age.<sup>47</sup> Certainly prospective entrants to religious life had nine years for evaluating their decision before making a final commitment.

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<sup>44</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>45</sup> Sr.C, interview by the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>46</sup> By contrast the writer’s grandmother, Dame Enid Lyons, was a junior teacher at 16 years of age and married at 17 to the Minister for Education, J. A. Lyons. By the time the typical Tasmanian Josephite was making a life commitment at around 26 to 28 years, my grandmother had been married eleven years and had already given birth to seven of her twelve children. See E.M. Lyons. *So We Take Comfort*. Melbourne: Heinemann, 1969.

<sup>47</sup> Australian Government. *Australian Institute of Family Studies*, n.d. [cited July 4 2003]. Retrieved July 4, 2003. <http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/info/charts/marriage/women.html> .

*Educational background*

The entrants were without full secondary education. Certainly this would not have been uncommon, given the non-existence of State high schools until as late as 1913 for Hobart and Launceston and two-year high schools for Devonport and Burnie.<sup>48</sup> Therefore secondary education to intermediate level and beyond had to be provided prior to undertaking teacher training. Delany's report illustrates the typical situation in which the aspirants found themselves, "At present there are four students preparing to sit for the state diploma examination - necessary for anyone who wants to be a primary school teacher".<sup>49</sup> There were exceptions, as in the case of Srs Winifred McAllister and Josephine Saye, who were experienced as primary teachers before joining the Josephites.<sup>50</sup>

Some Sisters of St Joseph

In order to further illustrate the personality of the Sisters and illustrate the reality of the Rule in the lived experience for the Sisters, three Sisters of St Joseph have been selected as representative of the background, age, personality and education of the Sisters. The selection of these Sisters is based upon their position within the Congregation. Monica Wright, who lived throughout the period under study, remains the foremost informant on Sr Hyacinth Quinlan. Her life is one of a

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<sup>48</sup>Hollingsworth, 27.

<sup>49</sup>Delany. "Rapport De L'archeveque De Hobart." AHMA.

<sup>50</sup>*The Catholic Standard* records Miss Marie McAllister, who was teacher at Tunnack for the last three years, leaving to re-open the Catholic school at Jerusalem (Colebrook), after Sisters Stanislaus Fitzpatrick and Ignatius arrived to take charge of the school. See "Tunnack." *The Catholic Standard*, November 1891, 359.

typical Josephite, as she followed the usual path of the Josephite teacher in the country schools. Srs Magdalen Hagarty, the first Tasmanian born postulant and Vincent Bowler, the first postulant received into the Congregation represent the harsh reality of the life of many religious throughout Australia during the early part of the nineteenth century, both dying at a young age.

### Sr Vincent Bowler

Margaret Bowler, like many of the early Sisters of St Joseph, was born in Ireland. The daughter of Patrick Bowler and Deborah Brosnohan, born in County Kerry on January 1, 1861, she immigrated to New Zealand with her parents, entering the Sisters of St Joseph on May 25, 1888 at Westbury, a year after their foundation. Her entry caused some consternation for the parish priest, Archdeacon Hogan, as his assumption was that the training would be conducted back at the motherhouse in Perthville.<sup>51</sup> The issue of accommodation would have loomed large in Hogan's mind, having only just provided accommodation for the original community; the prospect of future demands on his revenue would have been a challenge to him.

Margaret Bowler arrived in Tasmania from New Zealand and at a mature age of 27 chose to enter the Sisters of St Joseph. Her father, Patrick, in common with the fathers of other aspirants, was a farmer. Apart from the details recorded in the register, her reception and profession are not publicized in the local Catholic paper. As

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<sup>51</sup> Archdeacon Hogan failed to understand that the nature of the Diocesan group was such that it became a separate foundation and therefore, all training was provided by each new foundation, as the Rule explicitly stated that if another foundation was made in another diocese it would be entirely independent of the diocese it has left and under the authority of the new diocese. The Rule was quite specific on this point. See B. Rait. "The Church of the Holy Trinity Westbury." 1974.

commented upon earlier, this was in keeping with the spirit of the Congregation, to be least among the congregations in the Church.<sup>52</sup> *The Catholic Standard* records the religious events of the Sisters often in an anonymous fashion, merely detailing that the event had occurred but often without reference to the names of the candidates. The Sisters' own records show a similar restraint and when the reader would expect a significant entry regarding the first postulant there is an obvious reticence. Within the diary itself it merely records, "Sunday 27<sup>th</sup>, Being the Feasts of the Holy Trinity and of the Church here: we received the postulant into the community at 4pm".<sup>53</sup> The first mention of Vincent's name occurs in the Diary on Saturday July 28, when she accompanies Sr Stanislaus to the doctor in Launceston, leaving at 10.00 a.m. and returning at 3 p.m.<sup>54</sup> By contrast the second entrant is named on entry as "Miss Henrietta of Formby and called Sr Bridget of the Sacred Heart, aged 28 and to be trained for the new foundation at Beaconsfield".<sup>55</sup> The Josephites failed to attach importance to their first postulant or endeavouring to develop humility chose to overlook it.

Vincent received the pepper and salt coloured habit of the Sisters of St Joseph on Easter Sunday, April 25, 1889: "In the evening at 4.00 p.m. Sr M Vincent received the holy Habit from the Archdeacon in the Convent Oratory which ceremony, being the first in Tasmania in St Joseph's Institute. The candidate being Irish" (sic).<sup>56</sup> This ceremony marked the first step in the journey of Vincent's commitment to the Sisters of St Joseph within the Tasmanian Church. She was subsequently professed on May 24,

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<sup>52</sup> TSSJ, *Rules*, 1912, 16. TSSJA.

<sup>53</sup> TSSJ. "Westbury Diary." In *Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town Tasmania*, 1887, 14. Hereafter referred to as TSSJ, *Diary*.

<sup>54</sup> TSSJ, *Diary*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> The Beaconsfield foundation did not eventuate and Bridget does not appear as an entry in the register, although it appears from local papers a second candidate was received as a novice and professed with Vincent, presumably Bridget.

<sup>56</sup> TSSJ, *Diary*, 26. The habit was changed to brown in December 1893 to replace the grey (pepper and salt). This was changed to black in 1905.

1890. The ritual of the ceremony captured the attention of the writer who noted that “real crown of thorns on the head and a cross of wood on the shoulder” was carried into the church for the ceremony.<sup>57</sup>

Vincent Bowler renewed her vows on July 13, 1892 and made her life commitment on January 9, 1897. Her life as a typical Josephite remained largely hidden in the little country town of Colebrook, formerly called Jerusalem, where she was sent in the company of Sr Alacoque Gallagher to open the convent in 1894. Vincent spent the remainder of her life in the midlands region of Tasmania, dying in a neighbouring town, Tunnack, in 1919.

Five years after joining the Josephites Vincent was appointed in charge of the little school and convent at Colebrook. Such an appointment was typical of the pioneering approach adopted by the Sisters of St Joseph in order to meet the demand for Catholic schooling. The Sisters assumed responsibility very early in the religious life. Vincent spent her entire religious life at Colebrook, endearing herself to the little school and parish community there. The school population never exceeded more than 28 pupils and Vincent, as head teacher, usually had a class of three or four grades with her oldest pupils in Grade 6 as old as 15 years.<sup>58</sup> For the twenty four years spent in Colebrook, Vincent lived with only one other sister at a time. Some Sisters included Monica Wright 1912, Agnes McCue 1917, Cecelia Beardwood, 1918, Gertrude Johnson 1907, Philomena Cleary 1911.<sup>59</sup> Such was the commitment of Vincent to educating children that she perfected her craft of teaching under the guidance of the Inspectors.

The Sisters’ lifestyle during this period was a simple one and very much in keeping with the rural community around them. During the years of the First World

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<sup>57</sup> "Reception and Profession of Two Sisters of Sisters of St Joseph." *The Catholic Standard*, June 1890, 93.

<sup>58</sup> IR Colebrook, 1917.

<sup>59</sup> IR Colebrook, 1907- 1931.



War the Sisters would have often depended upon the charity of the families to keep them in food. The site for the Colebrook school at Colebrook was impressive occupying perhaps the best site in the town. The convent and school building was originally a most substantial building, built for the officers' quarters in the days of the Van Diemen's Land Company. Its adaptation as a school left much to be desired. According to the Inspector of 1918 it had only "tolerable light and ventilation."<sup>60</sup> A Sister who lived and worked at Colebrook in the years following Vincent recalled, "Colebrook was primitive and we slept in a dormitory with a low roof. We bathed and washed in a bucket. The toilet was outside. We had to stono (scrub) the flagstones every weekend. The children were beautiful".<sup>61</sup> This is the manner in which Vincent would have lived out her religious life, content with little and inspired by a greater vision for the good of the children.

*Vincent Bowler as teacher*

Inspectors' reports from 1907 provide an insight into Vincent's teaching style. As head teacher she impressed the Inspector with her thorough methods in the secular subjects. The reports from 1907 to 1918 reveal a development in Vincent's teaching style and her capacity to meet departmental requirements. The discipline and management of the school were very satisfactory and the Sisters were willing to learn. On the first inspection, Inspector Grant noted, "Everything about the school is clean and tidy".<sup>62</sup> As head teacher Vincent showed a good administration style, "The general management of the school is good being marked by care and judgement" and "self-

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<sup>60</sup> IR Colebrook, 1918.

<sup>61</sup> Sr A., Interview by the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>62</sup> IR Colebrook, 1907.

activity, industry and self-reliance”.<sup>63</sup> The last inspection for Vincent was her most outstanding, containing a commendation from the Inspector, “Sr Vincent is to be complimented on the manner in which she discharges her supervisory duties and she received a rating of 95% on organization, which remained one of the highest assessments for the Sisters of St Joseph”.<sup>64</sup> Some of the Education Department requirements eluded the Sisters, as was the case with the cadet corps, with Vincent being deemed “unqualified to give instruction”.<sup>65</sup>

Nothing is recorded of the spiritual life of the tiny Colebrook community, but it can be assumed that Vincent would have prepared the children for the sacraments and assisted the priest in providing prayer services for the people when he was unavailable. As there was no priest resident in Colebrook, for nearly all the years of her ministry, Vincent would have been unable to avail herself of daily Mass. As Press (1978) observed:

Distance from the centres of liturgical and theological richness has always encouraged the development of creativity and a “do-it-yourself” approach. Right from the beginning of the Congregation it was recognised that a privation we had to be prepared to accept as our pattern of living was the lack of opportunity to assist at Mass daily, or even frequently.<sup>66</sup>

The *Rule and Explanation of the Rule* is clear on this point, “as the vocation of the Sisters is to go to remote places where the priest does not reside, if they cannot hear Mass they should assist in spirit, or read the Mass prayers or make a spiritual communion”.<sup>67</sup>

The Mass prayers said in the absence of the Mass, the rosary and the office would have sustained Vincent’s spiritual life. On Sundays she would have often

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<sup>63</sup> IR Colebrook, 1911.

<sup>64</sup> IR Colebrook, 1918.

<sup>65</sup> IR Colebrook, 19178.

<sup>66</sup> Press, 1978, 57.

<sup>67</sup> TSSJ. *Rules and Constitutions of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Archdiocese of Hobart*. Launceston: The Monitor, 1912, 24. Hereafter TSSJ, *Rules*.

travelled by horse and buggy with some kind family to Mass at Oatlands or Tunnack, a considerable distance for that mode of transport. The annual retreat before Christmas each year would have provided the opportunity for spiritual renewal for Vincent and the opportunity of connecting with the larger Josephite community as the Rule prescribed, “The spiritual exercises of ten days should be made once a year, in common by all the Sisters.

Vincent Bowler’s sudden death at Tunnack, her first year away from Colebrook, on December 9, 1919 brought to an end twenty-six years of ministry in the midlands of Tasmania. In common with all Josephite women of her era her life was in many ways unremarkable and her significance in an historical sense is greater through her position in Josephite history than it was in life. Her final entry in the Josephite register simply records, “Died at Tunnack 9<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1919. First postulant received in Tasmania”.<sup>68</sup> As a typical Josephite she remained understated and unremarkable in life and death. By Josephite standards she fulfilled all that was required to be a good sister, teaching well, prepared to remain in the more isolated areas and live the life of the poor. Vincent Bowler had achieved what it meant to be a sister of St Joseph as stated in the objects of the Institute; “They must be poor, humble, and consider themselves the least among all religious orders, studying to keep themselves and their lives hidden in God as the life of St Joseph was”.<sup>69</sup> Vincent had remained hidden and except for the annual inspection reports would have left no written record of her life and teaching.

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<sup>68</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>69</sup> TSSJ, *Rules* 24.

Sr Magdalen Hegarty (Hagarty)



*Sr Magdalen Hegarty  
Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town. Used with permission*

Magdalen (Jane) Hagarty was the first Tasmanian born Sister to enter the Sisters of St Joseph and the first of the Sisters to die. As a child of thirteen she welcomed the Sisters on their arrival to Westbury.<sup>70</sup> Jane was born in 1874 to Patrick Hagarty and Mary Dynan and her father, in common with many of the Josephites' fathers, was a farmer.<sup>71</sup> Her father's farm was at Emu Plains in the Westbury district and Jane was one of the younger daughters of a family of ten children.<sup>72</sup> One of the first pupils at Westbury convent school, she achieved a special prize for fourth grade music.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Rait, 1974.

<sup>71</sup> Archives. *The Tasmanian Pioneers Index 1803-1899* Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in association with the Archives Office of Tasmania, 2003 [Retrieved December 1 2003].

<sup>72</sup> "Westbury." *The Monitor* 1905, 8.

<sup>73</sup> "St Joseph's School Westbury." *Catholic Standard* 1890, 7.

Jane entered the Josephites on June 13, 1890 and received the name Magdalen of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Her time as a postulant was spent at Westbury, but from *The Catholic Standard* accounts, she moved to Ulverstone with Sr Gonzaga Johnston and Evangelist Osbourne, after receiving the habit on January 7, 1891. Her novitiate and teacher training continued under the close supervision of Joseph Eather.<sup>74</sup> Magdalen made her profession of vows July 16, 1892, renewing her vows at Westbury, on November 1, 1894 and her life commitment was made on January 9, 1899.<sup>75</sup>

Magdalen was typical of many of the early Sisters in the frequent moves made during their ministry. She was appointed in 1896 to join Sisters Hyacinth Quinlan and Canice McMahon in making a foundation at Port Cygnet in the south. It was within such a community that Magdalen received her ongoing formation as a Josephite from Hyacinth Quinlan, newly arrived from Wanganui and Superior of the community at Port Cygnet. The founding community travelled by boat from Hobart in order to reach Port Cygnet. The school had an enrolment of 80 pupils at the time of Magdalen's arrival there. As she died in 1905 before the introduction of registration of teachers and inspection reports, no records survive of her teaching.

As with many of the convents the accommodation at Cygnet was inadequate and some ten years after their arrival a new convent was opened. The *Monitor* referring to the Archbishop's address:

Their housing at Port Cygnet, if poor, was not indeed, worse than almost every other where they had started a foundation of the Sisterhood. He [Delany] remembered going to a district to open a new church where the Sisters of St Joseph taught and on entering their convent, he saw the light shining through the roof. The Sisters were wonderfully economical, spending nothing more on themselves than they had absolute need of and employing no servant in the domestic work.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> "Ulverstone." *The Catholic Standard* 1891, p.221.

<sup>75</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>76</sup> "Sacred Heart Convent at Port Cygnet- Laying of Foundation Stone." *The Monitor*, July 5 1907, 10.

The condition of the convent at Cygnet again is consistent with the strictures of the Rule, but such poverty of accommodation took its toll on the health of many of the Sisters. At Devonport in 1905, Magdalen developed the symptoms of consumption.<sup>77</sup> As the sea air was considered detrimental to her health she was moved to Westbury, where she appeared to regain her health after a few months. However her health deteriorated again and she “prepared for the inevitable, took leave of her relatives and devoted herself more earnestly than ever to the practices of piety, dying peacefully on 6 June 1905”.<sup>78</sup> In her obituary in the *Monitor*, the writer notes that she “joined the Sisters of St Joseph just fifteen years ago and devoted herself to her holy vocation of teaching children in Catholic schools, and of visiting the sick and poor in their homes at Westbury, Port Cygnet, Devonport and other districts”.<sup>79</sup> The funeral celebrant Fr Kelsh referred to the “pure life of the deceased symbolized by the white coffin”. The first Tasmanian Josephite to die was buried in the cemetery at Westbury. “The funeral procession was accompanied by the girls, and boys, suitably attired in white dresses wearing mourning sashes and the boys wearing black souvenirs and armbands. The Sisters took leave of the bier at the church gates”.<sup>80</sup>

The obituary captures the spirituality of the era, highlighting the purity of her life and her patient suffering through her illness. In death Magdalen, as with many of the early Sisters, achieved a distinction which was not normally hers in life. The discourse highlights the characteristics for the early Josephite women such as piety, concern for children, the sick and the poor. Magdalen characterizes Josephite spirituality in her hidden life, marked by a simple spirituality. Born near Westbury and

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<sup>77</sup> The Sisters must be prepared to take charge of schools in any district no matter how poor, and they may live in any house they may get no matter how small the rooms, or how few, bare, and dilapidated; even one room may be taken until better accommodation can be afforded. See TSSJ, *Rules*, 24.

<sup>78</sup> "Westbury." *The Monitor* 1905, 8.

<sup>79</sup> "Westbury." *The Monitor* 1905, 8.

<sup>80</sup> "Westbury." *The Monitor* 1905, 8.

dying at Westbury she remained close her own people, when the observance of the Rule would normally have dictated otherwise. Almost a century after her death she is remembered as being a notable part of the community because of her connection in the Westbury district. The older Westbury identities spoke of her in interviews conducted in the 1980s and although they had not known her, she remained firmly entrenched in the oral history of the Sisters of St Joseph and the Westbury district.<sup>81</sup>

Sr Monica Wright



*Sr Monica Wright*  
*Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town. Used with permission*

Monica Wright like many Josephites spent her years of teaching “in the bush”. As with many of her contemporaries, Monica was constantly on the move, spending

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<sup>81</sup> (Speaker) S. Becker. *Memories of Our Early Sisters*, 1986. Cassette recording.

little more than a year or two in a small town before moving on. Monica taught in the schools at Colebrook (1912-1913); Zeehan (1914-1917; 1936-1937); Cygnet (1918-1921; 1933), Franklin, Ulverstone (1922), Richmond (1926- 1928), Forth (1929), Westbury (1924) and Tunnack (1929-1931). The listing of Monica's appointments during the period under study gives evidence to a mobility espoused in the Rule: "The Sisters must hold themselves in readiness to go wherever they are sent in the diocese where they are established".<sup>82</sup>

According to oral history, Monica was a woman of great intellectual ability and well read. Those who had lived with her believe that she transcended the narrow boundaries often imposed by the rigid observance of the Rule and displayed a breadth of interpretation for the living of religious life more typical of the post-conciliar Church.<sup>83</sup> Monica Wright has provided Josephite historians with personal reminiscences of Hyacinth and has been cited in all histories of the Federation of Sisters of St Joseph. To illustrate her breadth of interest, mindful that the speaker is delivering a funeral address and given ordinarily to poetic licence, it is still notable that Archbishop Guilford Young would both recall and speak of meeting Monica many years earlier, recalling a conversation around a fire late one night at Oatlands, "We spoke about world affairs, people, and governments. She was an extremely intelligent woman; her eyes sparkled with the quickness of her mind. That she was so interested in things is in itself remarkable".<sup>84</sup> What this comment also betrays is Young's stereotypical approach to religious women, and Sisters of St Joseph in particular, as unintelligent and disinterested in world affairs.

Myra Eveline Wright was born on July 1, 1888 at North Carlton in Victoria. The daughter of James Joseph Wright, a journalist, and Annie Laura Bentley, she joined the

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<sup>82</sup>TSSJ, *Rules*, 20.

<sup>83</sup> C.McCarthy, interview by the author, 1981.

<sup>84</sup> "Sister Mary Monica SSJ." *The Standard*, November 17 1967, 6.



Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph from Melbourne on December 13, 1907. The diary entry simply records, “Srs M. Xavier and M Gabriel returned from Albert Park, bringing Sr M. Monica (Myra Wright) with them. She was the first postulant to enter at New Town”.<sup>85</sup> Both Gabriel and Xavier were returning from their teaching training course at the Central Teachers’ College at Albert Park. Monica had not been a student at the Teachers’ College, but joined on recommendation of Archbishop Carr of Melbourne.<sup>86</sup>

*Monica as teacher*

Monica’s first entry in the Tasmanian Education Department Inspectors’ Reports occurs early in her career in 1909, as an assistant teacher at Sacred Heart New Town under the direction of Sr Gabriel Reidy, the head teacher. She is listed as Miss M. Wright, and at this stage had not assumed her religious name as Sr Monica. Here at Sacred Heart she would have observed “an excellent tone in the school, good methods of teaching and corporal punishment little used”.<sup>87</sup> The latest teaching methods would have been in place and Monica would have been exposed to them.

Monica had an extended period as a postulant and undertook her teacher training before commencing her novitiate. Normally the postulancy lasts only six to twelve months, but in Monica’s case she undertook her teacher training and probably gained her Teachers’ Registration before commencing her novitiate. According to the Rule, postulants were to have 12 months in the Institute before receiving the habit and must have passed for registration as teachers.<sup>88</sup> On January 7, 1910, Monica was clothed in

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<sup>85</sup> TSSJ, *Diary*.

<sup>86</sup> Sr C. Andrews, conversation with the author, July 14 2004.

<sup>87</sup> IR New Town, 1909.

<sup>88</sup> TSSJ, *Rules*, 1.

the habit and received the name Mary Monica of Our Lady of Dolours. Her first profession of vows occurred on January 7, 1912 and her life vows on January 5, 1918. On the completion of her novitiate Monica was sent to the small rural town of Colebrook, with Vincent Bowler, where they taught 27 children between them. After two years with Vincent, she was moved to Zeehan in 1914.

During her Requiem Mass Archbishop Young recalled this era, “She was one of the generation of Josephites who with gallantry and gaiety went round the coast to Strahan and walked to the school at Zeehan”.<sup>89</sup> At Zeehan, as a younger sister, Monica was under the guidance of Ambrose Joseph Dirkin. Women, such as Ambrose, would have imbued Monica with a sense of the tradition of the Congregation, and it may have been their influence that enabled her to retain a freedom of spirit uncluttered by the minutiae of religious life.

1918 saw her move from the West Coast mining town to the Huon Valley where she accepted responsibility for the school at Cygnet. On February 13 and 14, 1918 two weeks after her arrival at the school, the inspection took place. A nerve wracking experience at the best of times was made worse by the early stages of the year and the new position for Monica. The inspection revealed, “The buildings and accommodation [are] inadequate. The rickety discoloured desks and the makeshift partition correspond with the general appearance of the building. While the grounds capable of becoming an attractive feature remain undeveloped year after year”.<sup>90</sup> The Sisters were skilful at improvising in an effort to overcome the lack of resources as evidenced by the comment, “A number of useful charts have been prepared by the Sisters”.<sup>91</sup>

The comment, “The teachers are still inclined to help the children overmuch forgetting that “telling” is not “teaching”, is understandable given the difficulty for the

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<sup>89</sup> "Sister Mary Monica SSJ," 1967.

<sup>90</sup> IR Cygnet, 1918.

<sup>91</sup> IR Cygnet, 1918.

students of remembering work for examination from the previous year after the long summer break.<sup>92</sup> By the following year Monica had settled into her role and impressed the Inspector, who commented that “The management keenly anxious of improving methods shows adaptive capability in a directly forward movement”.<sup>93</sup>

Monica’s major problem as head teacher, common at the time, was the lack of adequate facilities. The Inspector of 1920 notes in his report that, “school discipline is hampered by packed desks. The Prep class is only separated from the seniors by a thin partition quite inadequate for this purpose of keeping its necessary lessons within its own bounds.” Despite the difficulties of resources, however, the Sisters had managed to satisfy the Inspector with the formation of a fife and drum band.<sup>94</sup>

For years Sisters such as Monica had worked under great difficulties at Cygnet.

A sympathetic Inspector reported in the annual inspection in 1921:

It is now an old story to report on the difficulties the Sisters labour under through crowded rooms in a building of poor design for school purposes. The strengthening of the bond between school and home has produced very cordial feeling towards the Sisters for their self-denying labours from the parents. Hence a large increase in furniture free of debt during the year and a large increase in the attendance in both the numbers enrolled and in respect to regularity and punctuality.<sup>95</sup>

The comments regarding parental influence and support signify the successful, warm approach that Monica instigated, overcoming the problems of punctuality and attendance which had been a great concern for the Sisters and Inspectors in areas such as Cygnet.

Monica having established herself as head teacher at Cygnet was moved in 1922 to Ulverstone where she was once again under the direction of Ambrose Joseph Dirkin.

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<sup>92</sup> IR Cygnet, 1918.

<sup>93</sup> IR Cygnet, 1919.

<sup>94</sup> IR Cygnet, 1920.

<sup>95</sup> IR Cygnet, 1921.

The difficulties for those responsible for the discharge of school duties and yet being responsible to a non-teaching Superior were challenging. One can only surmise the process of adaptation for Monica to assume a more subservient role in the school. All this she would have done as her motivation was at all times to do the will of God. If her human frailty caused her concern, she would have elevated the inconveniences and seen them as mere trials. Religious women of this era had enormous capacity to spiritualize their hardships and endure difficult times and places. They possessed certain stoicism and Monica was one such as these “who were animated by a sense of purpose and vision . . . willingly [assuming] the discipline and deprivations demanded by this commitment” .<sup>96</sup>

Many of the Inspectors’ reports of the schools where Monica was in charge comment most favourably on the courtesy and kindly relations between the Sisters and the pupils. Where some schools had been noted by the Inspectors for the lack of responsiveness of the pupils in the past, Monica was able to remedy the situation. At Tunnack for several years the Inspectors had commented that the students, “manners are being trained but speech is very brusque and blunt”.<sup>97</sup> By 1931 and 1932, there were more positive comments such as, “Discipline is of a kindly nature and is effective; the pupils being orderly and responsive” and “Pupils show respect and esteem for their teachers and assist them in every way”.<sup>98</sup> Monica had taken to heart the spirit of the Rule which advised the Sisters “to make themselves the companions of the children, and not assume the authority of Superiors except in the most gentle manner” and to talk cheerfully to their young charges.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Leddy, 15.

<sup>97</sup> IR, Tunnack 1929.

<sup>98</sup> See IR Tunnack 1929, 1931, 1932.

<sup>99</sup> TSSJ, *Rules*, 24.

Monica exercised her kindly approach at Cygnet and the resulting Inspector's Report bears testimony to her ability to live out the Rule through her teaching.<sup>100</sup> In 1936 Monica had returned to Zeehan where the Inspector suggested that she would be better taking the older children in Grades 5 to 7 and Sr Anthony Grades 3 and 4.<sup>101</sup> Whether this was acted upon in that year is unknown, but by the following year Monica was responsible for Grades 3 to 7 and for the first time in her teaching career had the luxury of spare classrooms. The 1937 report records "Decreasing attendance due to the decay of the town renders the accommodation more than sufficient rooms. The boys have cut down the long bench desks to more suitable dual ones".<sup>102</sup> The once thriving school of nearly 300 students had been reduced to 59, with the collapse of the mine. The community at Zeehan, and the Sisters with them, struggled through the misfortunes of the mining town. One sister who taught in Zeehan recalled:

We received £6 per fortnight for tuition for the Sisters to live on. I made drinks for the children and used to sell dinners. The parents all helped when they could. Fundraising was really important. Fairs were essential; as there were no funds for equipment we often made sweets and sold them.<sup>103</sup>

The amount raised through school fees for the two sisters was significantly less than the basic wage for females in the 1930s which remained between £2 9shillings and £4 11 shillings. The equivalent male wage for the era was £6 1 shilling and £6 7 shillings per week.<sup>104</sup> The deficit in income was compensated for by the support of the people who assisted in fund raising ventures and the payment of school fees in produce. Later the

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<sup>100</sup> IR Cygnet, 1933.

<sup>101</sup> IR Zeehan, 1936.

<sup>102</sup> IR Zeehan, 1937.

<sup>103</sup> Sr C. interview by the author, June 24 2002

<sup>104</sup> Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics 1937. See <http://www.worksite.actu.asn.au/showall.php3?secid=3&page=article&artid=469>. Retrieved June 18 2004.

generosity of the community revealed itself with milk, meat and eggs being given to the Sisters as the result of a roster drawn up by parishioners.<sup>105</sup>

*Breadth of vision*

Monica had spent her entire life in small country towns. One would have expected that her interests would have been narrow, but on the contrary she had a breadth of vision and a remarkable interest in life and world affairs. Musing on what it was that gave her, and her generation of Josephites, such a zest for life Archbishop Young determined the secret:

What is the secret? They may be living and teaching in small convents, but they are close to very real things. With what do our Monicas in our small schools deal? Sin, virtue, the design of Christ for man. In this perspective they act and live out their lives. In a Sister Monica you see a marvellous balance, a firm grasp on the fundamental realities.”<sup>106</sup>

Monica was committed to the education of the young in the ways of Christ and this sustained her through the difficult times. For almost sixty years she lived in small isolated rural and mining communities in Tasmania. As an older lady of 77 years she was still teaching students at the little school at Colebrook when it was closed by the Catholic Education Office. The Director, Fr Philip Green, congratulated her on her zeal and commitment to the children of Colebrook and acknowledged her sadness at the closure of the school.<sup>107</sup> Monica was resilient and extremely flexible and so moved on to New Town, putting aside her own personal preferences, as she had for her whole life.

As a characteristic Josephite Monica came from interstate, learned her teaching craft through the monitor system and perfected it through the Education Department

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<sup>105</sup> K. Cahill, interview by the author, January 14 2003.

<sup>106</sup> "Sister Mary Monica SSJ," 1967.

<sup>107</sup> Letter, P. Green to M. Wright, October 25 1965. AHMA.

inspection. Monica never attained high positions within the Congregation. She spent her entire life with one or two other community members in small rural or mining towns of Tasmania. Monica had a breadth of vision and a great love of people. She endeared herself to those with whom she lived, as she loved life. Monica maintained loyalty and integrity in the life she had chosen at nineteen years of age, when she crossed Bass Strait to join the Sisters of St Joseph in 1907. In the somewhat condescending words of the inimitable Guilford Young, “Sr Monica was a great nun who did great things for Christ, who lived a life, devoted to things that really mattered. But Sr Monica was as close to Christ, as effective and important in our work for the community as any Archbishop could be”.<sup>108</sup>

### Conclusion and Significance

The Irish influences which emerged and shaped the Tasmanian community gave rise to the predominance of non-Tasmanian leadership throughout the period of the study. While the arrival of Irish recruits was regarded as a blessing to the Congregation, it occurred at a time when the Irish recruitment to Australia and to the Diocesan Josephites had declined. The Tasmanian Congregation was largely atypical of the Diocesan Josephites in the duration of the period of recruitment and numbers recruited from Ireland at the behest of the Bishop.

The search for authenticity was enhanced by the Irish recruits, who were already well formed in the ways of religious life before their arrival in Tasmania. The abundance of interstate leadership hampered the development of a particularly

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<sup>108</sup> "Sister Mary Monica SSJ" 1967.

Tasmanian identity and therefore greater reliance was placed on the Rule for this was the vehicle by which the Tasmanian Josephites defined themselves and their way of life. The Irish recruits and mainland entrants, unlike their Tasmanian counterparts, were not attracted by the spirit of the Congregation, for they knew nothing of the Tasmanian Josephites before their entry, but were attracted to the ideals of a religious life in Tasmania. The influence of the cohort from beyond Tasmania protected the community from the isolation that could have emanated from an island community. Their contacts and communication provided a richness and world view beyond Bass Strait and enriched the local community.

Monica is representative of the many Tasmanian Josephite women who served their God and their Church through selfless devotion and a willingness to suffer deprivation for a greater good, in order to further the development of the Church through its mission to educate the young for “the Sisters should understand that they have been founded to teach poor children in remote places”.<sup>109</sup> At the end of each year they packed their belongings and made their way to New Town for the annual retreat. At the end of the retreat they would be posted to their destination for the New Year. There was no opportunity for farewells from their former place.<sup>110</sup> In many ways they were pilgrims, having no real stability from one year to the next.

The Sisters who came from beyond Tasmania played a vital role in the continuation of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania. They were shaped by the Rule that provided an ideal for living out their commitment and the Rule was beneficial to the Tasmanian Church. The Irish recruits strengthened the membership and influenced the shape of the Congregation for succeeding decades. The interstate and Irish membership with their commitment to the young Tasmanians in the small country towns enriched

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<sup>109</sup> TSSJ *Rules*, 18.

<sup>110</sup> Sr E. Interview by the author, June 26 2002.



the Tasmanian Church with Tasmanian born recruits in the years that followed. Guilford Young's statement about their importance cannot be underestimated; for it was their influence on the lives of Tasmanian families that ensured the development and consolidation of the Catholic faith through their establishment of primary schools and involvement in the visitation of families in a largely Protestant island.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> "Sister Mary Monica SSJ," 1967.

## CHAPTER 8

### CLERICAL AND IRISH INFLUENCES

#### Introduction

As a Diocesan Congregation the influence of the Bishop on the life of the Congregation was profound. This chapter will argue that the influences of the Irish bishops and Irish membership of the Congregation contributed to the Josephites self-understanding. The issue of authority for the Sisters of St Joseph which had caused their initial separation at Perthville in 1876 was evident in all stages of their development. It shall be argued that if the Decree from Propaganda of 1888 had been conveyed to the Sisters, and its resultant option of rejoining the original foundation, the pathway for the Tasmanian Josephites would have followed a different direction. This omission by the hierarchy both illustrates the absolute authority of the Diocesan Bishops over the Josephites and reinforces their Diocesan character. Through their Diocesan character they remained committed solely to the Tasmanian Church, whereby they remained at the disposal of the Bishop and assisted in the provision of staff for the schools. Their commitment to the Archdiocese in Tasmania, with its small population and even smaller Catholic population, militated against their capacity to attract sufficient recruits to meet the demand. Of significance for this study is Irish recruitment that occurred during the 1930s at the instigation of Archbishop Hayden and this will be treated as integral to the Irish influence, which saw the continued reliance on Ireland for membership. The Irish influence was reinforced through the leadership positions occupied by Irish Sisters throughout the period under study.

Initiatives raised in 1915 by the apostolic delegate regarding amalgamation of the Diocesan Josephites would have addressed the isolation, training and membership. Again the Diocesan Josephites' response was shaped by the bishops' reactions to it. The appointment of Australia's first Apostolic Delegate in 1915 resulted in the regularization of the Congregations of religious women as Archbishop Bonaventure Cerretti sought to familiarize the Diocesan Bishops with the Roman documents, *Conditae a Christi* (1900) and *Normae* (1901). These documents treated the canonical requirements for formation and religious profession as well as ensuring the centrality of representative chapters.<sup>1</sup> The Apostolic Delegate instructed the bishops to enforce the requirements so that a full canonical year be undertaken in the first year of novitiate without the intrusion of teaching duties. The bishops were to remind the Superior that Rome had requested that the current practices of using novices to assist in teaching be rectified.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly the Tasmanian Josephites subscribed to these prescriptions when the use of novices would have alleviated severe problems in staffing in the country convents.

As a consequence of the Roman decrees some alterations had to be effected to the Rule. The manner in which Archbishop Delany elected to inform the Sisters of St Joseph of the necessity to increase the membership of the Council was indicative of the collaboration which existed between the Archbishop and the Sisters of St Joseph. Delany records that on January 8, 1914:

Considering that the Holy See in issuing the "Normae" has directed that the Ordinaries conform to them in the Rules of Diocesan Institutes of Religious to be thereafter established, We deem it at once no more than respectful to the authority of the Holy See, and at the same time a practically advisable measure to ordain, as we hereby do ordain that henceforward the Council of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania shall consist of the Sister Assistant, the Bursar, and apart from cases in which her own charges comes to be investigated – the

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<sup>1</sup> MacGinley, 275.

<sup>2</sup> Letter B. Cerretti, September 24 1915. AHMA.

Mistress of Novices, and two additional Councillors, who shall be appointed like the three others, under the terms of the existing Rule.<sup>3</sup>

### Roman and Episcopal Influences

In a Diocesan group the Bishop was the ultimate Superior of the Sisters; “The Sister Guardian under the Bishop is Superior of all the Houses of The Diocese”.<sup>4</sup> The Bishop approved the appointment of local Superiors, admission of new recruits and foundation of new houses.<sup>5</sup> The authority of the Bishop has been amply illustrated by the role of Bishop Matthew Quinn in the foundation of the Diocesan Josephites and in the autocratic decision taken by Bishops Lanigan, Byrne, Murray and Murphy in failing to inform the Sisters of St Joseph within their Dioceses of the Decree from Propaganda in 1888.

Again in 1919 Delany advised the Sisters of implications of the Code of Canon Law issued in 1917. On December 30, 1919, in the presence of the Coadjutor Bishop, William Barry, and with all members of the Congregation present, Delany explained that the practice of renewing temporary vows in periods of two and four years was not in accord with Canon Law. The Sisters given the option of three years or of renewing vows annually elected to take temporary vows annually for six years .<sup>6</sup> Through the process of consultation with all the Sisters, Delany ensured changes complying with the *Code of Canon Law* were made; thereby, at least in this instance, the Sisters of St Joseph were engaged in their self-determination. However on the issue of

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<sup>3</sup> TSSJ Rules, Ch. X. See P. Delany. "Untitled." In *SSJ Archives*. New Town, 1914.

<sup>4</sup> TSSJ Rules, Ch. X.

<sup>5</sup> TSSJ Rules, Ch. II.

<sup>6</sup> P. Delany. "The Temporary Vows." In *SSJ Archives*. New Town, 1919.

amalgamation, the Sisters did not enjoy the same level of participation in determining their future in the wider Josephite context.

### The issue of amalgamation

The development of a wider Australian identity was a minor consideration for the Tasmanians who had maintained some connection informally to members in the other Diocesan groups. The impetus for amalgamation came from the apostolic delegate but as it emerged without reference to the Diocesan Bishops it received no support and was removed from the agenda for the next forty years; such was the power of the Bishops over the Diocesan Congregations.

According to MacGinley amalgamation of the Diocesan groups was first raised by the Apostolic Delegate in 1916.<sup>7</sup> However Crowley (2002) records the issue being raised in 1915 when the Apostolic Delegate visited Perthville in May 16, 1915. On learning of the history of the Congregation from Bishop Dunne, Cerretti recommended that the various groups be united.<sup>8</sup> There is no record of discussion in the Tasmanian Josephite archives of this issue; the only extant reference is contained within the correspondence of Hyacinth Quinlan to Sr Xavier of Wanganui:

Don't worry over this amalgamation business. No one will compel you to amalgamate unless you wish it yourselves. We were told, one time, when amalgamation was in the air here, that every member of the community must be for it, or no amalgamation can take place.<sup>9</sup>

The earlier discussion Hyacinth alludes to is the 1888 decree, which may have afforded the Diocesan Josephites the opportunity to join the North Sydney

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<sup>7</sup> MacGinley, 327.

<sup>8</sup> Crowley, 107.

<sup>9</sup> Letter H. Quinlan to M. Xavier, June 29 1916.WSSJA.

Congregation. However, Hyacinth would have only gained knowledge of the decree after its publication in the Bathurst Rule of 1899.<sup>10</sup> From her response Hyacinth had scant appreciation of the role of the Apostolic Delegate; “We have no knowledge of the Delegate, or his doings here, only what we see in the papers. He has no work with the Diocesan Orders except what they give him”.<sup>11</sup>

The question of amalgamation had arisen from time to time, but given the Tasmanian Sisters’ distance from the other groups, it was never an issue. It was the other Diocesan groups who initiated the discussion when it arose. Further discussion regarding amalgamation occurred in the 1920s at the Eucharistic Congress in Sydney in 1928, when representatives from Goulburn, Lochinvar, Tasmania and New Zealand met.<sup>12</sup> Archbishop Cerretti, present at the Congress as Papal Legate encouraged the unity but urged caution and prayer. Unfortunately the Perthville Sisters had not been a party to the discussions and Bishop Norton of Bathurst on becoming aware of the conversation vehemently opposed it, fearing the loss of his authority over the Perthville Josephites. He predicted dire consequences if an amalgamation were to occur for the Perthville Josephites, citing the impact on their autonomy and financial viability.<sup>13</sup>

There is no extant evidence indicating the Tasmanian Sisters’ involvement in the discussion, nor the Tasmanian Bishop’s response. The only extant reference by a Tasmanian Sister is by Monica Wright who exclaims in a letter, “God speed the Federation! May you bring Father into his own”.<sup>14</sup> Monica, although elderly at the time of writing the letter, displays an enthusiasm for federation some twenty years after the issue was first raised. Given her links to the founding Sisters, Monica may have spoken

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<sup>10</sup> Crowley, 82.

<sup>11</sup> Letter H. Quinlan to M. Xavier, June 29 1916.WSSJA.

<sup>12</sup> MacGinley, 327.

<sup>13</sup> Crowley, 146.

<sup>14</sup> Letter M. Wright, May 2 1958.TSSJA.

for the isolated Tasmanian Sisters who had maintained connections with all the other branches through to the 1930s.

Again the possibility of the Diocesan Sisters joining with the larger body, such as the Central Josephites, as in 1890s, or those groups originating from Perthville was thwarted by the Diocesan Bishops. The Sisters of St Joseph lacked the necessary autonomy to be self-determining on such significant issues, even with the intervention of the Papal Legate. The Bishop as Superior of the Diocesan groups was indeed a reality and the issue of federation was allowed to lapse for forty years.

#### Decline in membership

After the initial foundational phase the Tasmanian Josephites ceased to receive interstate recruits. The period 1922 to 1928 saw a decrease in membership. With the appointment of Archbishop William Hayden the decreasing membership was addressed with canvassing for Irish recruits. Hayden had been Bishop of Wilcannia Forbes, the largest diocese in the southern hemisphere, prior to his appointment to Tasmania. By contrast Tasmania must have been reminiscent of Ireland for this gentle and scholarly Irishman).<sup>15</sup> In the ten-year period prior to Hayden's appointment only ten aspirants had joined the Sisters of St Joseph; death and ageing were having their impact on the membership of the Sisters of St Joseph (see Table 8 below).

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<sup>15</sup> Sr A, interview with the author, June 22 2002.

Table 8: Number of Sisters of St Joseph 1918 to 1937<sup>16</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>1918</b>	<b>1922</b>	<b>1927</b>	<b>1932</b>	<b>1937</b>
<b>Numbers</b>	50	49	46	54	58

William Hayden, born in County Kilkenny, Ireland, had relied on recruits from St Brigid's Missionary School at Callan to assist in the staffing of his schools in Wilcannia Forbes. It was therefore, predictable that he would turn to Callan seeking recruits for the island diocese, when lack of recruits was causing problems for both the Sisters of St Joseph and the Sisters of the Presentation.

#### Irish Contribution to the Tasmanian Josephites

Irish influences shaped both the Tasmanian Church and the Tasmanian Josephites through the strong leadership provided by Archbishops Delany, Barry and Hayden.<sup>17</sup> Prominent Irish Josephites who were to have a marked effect on the Congregation included Sisters Guardian (Head Superior), Francis McCarthy, already discussed, Columba Cahill, Superior for 24 years and Stanislaus Doyle who was also Novice Mistress (1888 to 1893). Sisters who were graduates of St Brigid's Missionary School Callan and who had a significant leadership role in the next decades included Sr

<sup>16</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>17</sup> Archbishop Delaney's deteriorating health resulted in the appointment of another Irishman, Dr William Barry, as Coadjutor Archbishop in 1919. The new Bishop had been regional Inspector of schools in Sydney and therefore turned his attention to the Catholic schools in Tasmania. See "Archbishop Barry." *The Monitor*, September 12 1919. He examined the schools throughout the island. Unlike the more conservative Delany, Barry was a great advocate of Irish causes, claiming at his consecration ceremony in Sydney, that Hobart had been sanctified by the bones of the Irish political prisoners, although none had actually been buried in Tasmania. See Robson, 360.

The Tasmanian Church was certainly an Irish church, given its Irish leadership and Irish descendants. Irish issues aroused much passion throughout the period with the Catholic papers such as the *Monitor* and *The Catholic Standard* reporting in detail Irish events of interest to the readers.



Brendan Keogh, Novice Mistress; Sr Celsus McCarthy, Sister Guardian (1970-1975); Sr Kieran Cahill, local Superior (1948-1977) and Sr Francis Mary Fallon, Principal.<sup>18</sup>

*Saint Brigid's Missionary School, Callan, Co. Kilkenny.*

In 1884 the Sisters of Mercy, Callan, opened Saint Brigid's Missionary School, a school where girls desiring to become nuns could be educated and trained. It was the only institution of its kind in Ireland. Established by Mother Michael Maher, who had two prominent relatives who were to have an impact on the Australian Church, Cardinal Paul Cullen of Dublin and her cousin Cardinal Patrick Moran of Sydney, its object was to replicate the service provided by All Hallows College, Dublin, which provided missionary priests, by educating young women for missionary Congregations.

An extract from the school brochure provides its mission:

Saint Brigid's Missionary School is intended to prepare and qualify girls to enter convents at home and in foreign lands. Many religious communities abroad are most anxious for postulants but they do not wish to bring them out directly from their homes at the risk of having to send them back again in the event of not having a true vocation. A kind of preliminary novitiate at home is needed to meet such cases. This want, the Callan missionary school undertakes to supply. It will test vocations of these girls, ascertain their aptitude for various religious orders, supply any deficiency in education, give them training in the art of teaching and furnish a solid foundation for the religious life. Girls who believe they have a vocation and are not qualified to enter at once can, by spending a short time at Callan, be introduced to some suitable convent.<sup>19</sup>

During its 75 years of existence, approximately 2000 girls attended this preliminary novitiate, having their vocations tested and tried under the untiring care and

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<sup>18</sup> TSSJ. "Sisters Personal Record Cards." 1887-1937.

<sup>19</sup> Sisters of Mercy. "Our Future Nuns." In *The missionary school*. Callan, 1912. SMAC.

inspiration of Sr Alacoque of the Sisters of Mercy.<sup>20</sup> The majority of these girls entered religious orders for foreign missions with 359 girls leaving for Australia and New Zealand.<sup>21</sup>

Students came to Saint Brigid's from every part of Ireland, with the majority from country towns of the South and the West.<sup>22</sup> The annual fee for the school was £22 but no candidate was ever turned away for financial reasons. Girls were at least 14 years old, had completed primary education and had decided to become nuns. Saint Brigid's pupils were aspirants not postulants. Although they had not yet entered religious life the daily routine resembled that of those who were novices or postulants.<sup>23</sup> In fact former aspirants testify that the training they received in St Brigid's was more concentrated and severe than the novitiate.<sup>24</sup>

The course of studies was comprehensive and included emphasis on languages and the arts as well as teaching method. Later commercial courses, such as typing, bookkeeping and accounting became part of the curriculum.<sup>25</sup> The general acceptance of going to Callan before coming to Australia became commonplace and as one Irish sister explained, "You knew if you wanted to be a nun when you went to Callan. I did not realize how hard it was going to be at Callan".<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> C. McCarthy, conversation with the author, 1980. According to the enrolment register 1, 958 individuals left for missions between 1884 and 1959. Tasmania is regarded as a separate entity from Australia listed as "359 who left for Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania." See St. Brigid's Missionary School, Callan, *Register of Aspirants*. SMAC.

<sup>21</sup> Sisters of Mercy. "Our Future Nuns." SMAC.

<sup>22</sup> Sisters of Mercy. "Our Future Nuns." SMAC.

<sup>23</sup> Sisters of Mercy Callan. "Book of Rules- St Brigid's Missionary School, Callan." 1898. SMAC.

<sup>24</sup> Sr C. interview with the author, June 24 2002. The aspirants were restricted to the confines of St Brigid's; they could not write to outsiders or see visitors without the Superior's permission. See Sisters of Mercy Callan. "Book of Rules- St Brigid's Missionary School, Callan." 1898.

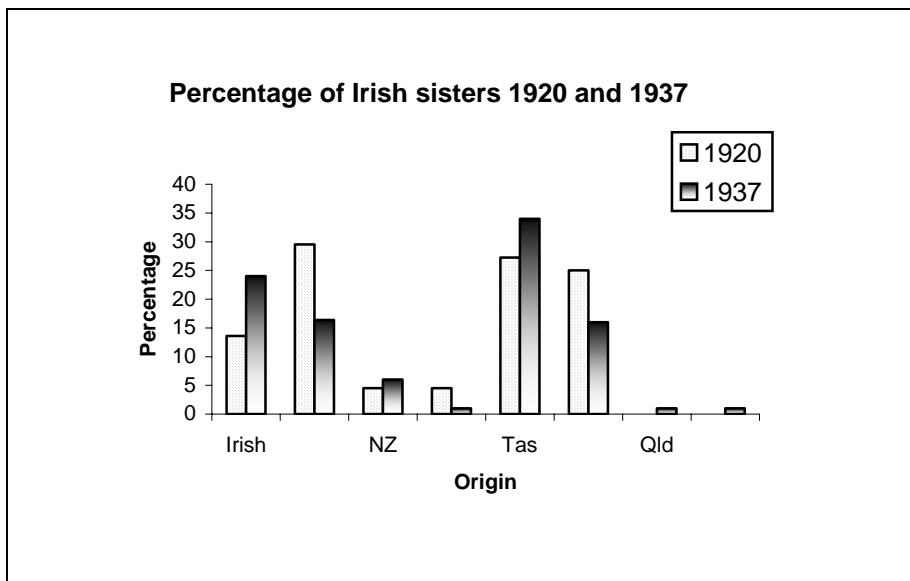
<sup>25</sup> Saunders, 1995.

<sup>26</sup> Sr D. interview with the author, June 25 2002.

The Irish Sisters

The arrival of the young girls to join the Sisters of St Joseph was a direct result of Archbishop Hayden's visit to Ireland in 1931, where he went from parish to parish asking for volunteers for Tasmania.<sup>27</sup> So successful was Hayden's recruitment that by 1937 Irish Sisters accounted for almost a quarter of the membership of the Sisters of St Joseph. The numbers rose significantly until the Second World War interrupted the Irish recruitment (see Table 9 below).

Table 9: Irish membership of the Sisters of St Joseph



In 1920 while there were only four Irish Sisters out of a group of 44 Sisters of St Joseph, the percentage is comparable to that recorded for religious sisters in the United States.<sup>28</sup> The presence of an Irish Superior, Sr Columba Cahill, contributed to the security of the young Irish recruits. Any ignorance regarding the Sisters of St Joseph and the origin of the Congregation was alleviated by Columba's presence. One elderly

<sup>27</sup> Fallon cited in Tasmania Sisters of St Joseph. *Sisters of St Joseph Tasmania: God with Us: 1887-1987*. Centenary ed. Hobart: Advance Publicity, 1987, 14.

<sup>28</sup> Hoy, 77.

Irish sister explained, “If it was good enough for Columba, it was good enough for me”.<sup>29</sup>

Table 10: Irish girls coming to Tasmania from Callan from 1933-1937

1933	Kathleen Cronin (Canice) Teresa Cahill (Kieran)
1934	Julia Keogh (Brendan) Teresa Barry (Brigid)
1935	Bridie Fallon (Colman)
1936	Maura McCarthy (Celsus), Kitty Healy (Malachy)
1937	Kathleen Fallon (Francis Mary)



*Irish recruits 1932-1937*

*Back row: Srs Canice Cronin, Brendan Keogh, Colman Fallon, Celsus McCarthy, Brigid Barry*  
*Sitting: Srs Kieran Cahill, Malachy Healy, Xavier Murphy, Francis Mary Fallon*  
*Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town. Used with permission*

*The first Irish postulants –Srs Canice Cronin and Kieran Cahill*

The first two Irish recruits Kathleen Cronin (Canice) and Teresa Cahill (Kieran) arrived in Tasmania in 1933. Their religious names, Kieran and Canice, were given to them by Dr Hayden after two Ossary Saints. In September of 1931, Kathleen

<sup>29</sup> Sr C. interview with the author, June 24 2002.

and Teresa after hearing Dr Hayden speak at Miltown, Malbay, Ireland, decided to go to the Callan missionary school in preparation for the journey to Tasmania.

The religious fervour of these young women was mixed with the very human experience of separation. Kieran Cahill provides a powerful comment on the experience of leaving Ireland after having fifteen days at home over the Christmas of 1932-1933, and then taking leave of her family by catching the train for Callan, prior to departure for Tasmania:

I'll never forget that morning I left. Death would have been preferable to going through that torture . . . as the train pulled out I thought never again would I be happy or laugh for joy. But all things pass and time is a great healer.<sup>30</sup>

The decision of the Irish girls to dedicate themselves to a missionary life in Tasmania was courageous, given their age and the distance they were to travel from home. This must be considered in the context of their siblings, who at a similar age were forced to leave Ireland for England or the United States in search of work. Sr Hannah Frisby, Callan Mercy archivist, believed that for Irish families this was the norm, and that between 1851 and 1920, 3.3 million Irish settled in the United States.<sup>31</sup> In reflecting on the period of Josephite Irish recruitment, some seventy years later, it was also a self-sacrificing act, as the Irish recruits did not return to Ireland until thirty years after their first voyage to Tasmania and at a time when most of their parents were deceased. Those deciding to join the Sisters of St Joseph would have been under great pressure to remain, given the costs involved in travelling to Tasmania and the family's attitude toward entering a Congregation. For Irish Sisters, who chose to leave the Sisters of St Joseph, so great was the stigma attached to leaving the Congregation by their

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<sup>30</sup> K. Cahill. "Untitled Manuscript." In *Sisters of St Joseph Archives*. Hobart, n.d.

<sup>31</sup> H. Frisby, interview with the author, April 7 200. See J. A. Nolan. *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920*. Lexington, Ky.: university Press of Kentucky, 1989, 43.

families in Ireland that they elected not to return to Ireland but travelled to Canada or the United States.<sup>32</sup>

*The Irish influence*

Between 1933 and 1938 twelve girls from Callan had entered the Sisters of St Joseph. The Irish Sisters were warmly welcomed to Tasmania and felt they were more popular than the local Sisters. Local Sisters believed that the pre-novitiate experience of the Irish recruits gave them an advantage over the local girls in the ways of religious life. Many of the Tasmanian entrants sensed this, with Sr Sebastian Bailey, the Novice Mistress, claiming that the Irish made better Sisters.<sup>33</sup> The Irish Sisters certainly were well prepared for religious life through their initial training at Callan where they were well educated in religious knowledge and community living. They were encouraged to “act as ladies” and received instruction in “table etiquette” and “personal neatness”.<sup>34</sup>

They enjoyed a genuine friendship with the Irish priests and were visited during their novitiate by Archbishop Hayden. The local Tasmanian Sisters interpreted such affection and esteem towards their Irish Sisters as favouritism, particularly when this occurred in conjunction with early entry to tertiary study for some of the Irish Sisters. Columba Cahill added to a sense of favouritism when viewed from a Tasmanian perspective, “Sister Columba was Irish and favoured the Irish Sisters and organized for their tertiary education.”<sup>35</sup> Although Tranter draws the conclusion that the Irish Sisters

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<sup>32</sup> Sr D. interview with the author, June 25 2002. Two Sisters from the Irish cohort who left after life commitment – Eileen Walsh and Mary Jo Murphy – moved to Canada and the United States respectively

<sup>33</sup> Sr F, interview with the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Sisters of Mercy Callan, 1898.

<sup>35</sup> Early entrants to University from the cohort of Irish Sisters included Sisters Brendan Keogh, Canice Cronin and Aidan Walsh. Sr C., interview with the author, June 24 2002.

were in no way separate from the colonial Sisters, the Tasmanian perception of a period beyond the founding phase, demonstrates a perception that served to heighten within the Tasmanian born Sisters a sense of inferiority.<sup>36</sup>

The Irish Sisters believed that being Irish was an advantage to them in Tasmania, "The Australian Sisters and Catholic community loved the Irish because of the sacrifices they made in leaving home and country. Just because you are Irish does something for people!"<sup>37</sup> Another advantage was the generosity generated by the Irish from the Tasmanians. Sr Brigid Barry recalls shopping with a Tasmanian sister and both buying the same item, but only the Tasmanian had to pay for it. Brigid thought that "They especially loved the County Clare accent".<sup>38</sup>

The egalitarian nature of the Josephites ensured that opportunities were available to all without the distinction of choir and lay Sisters. Unlike their country women in the United States, their status was not determined by the provision of a dowry or an adequate education.<sup>39</sup> Their own background, from large families engaged in farming, shopkeeping or labouring, assisted them in adapting to the communities throughout Tasmania which they would serve. Their presence in the Tasmanian Josephites was a blessing to the Congregation in increased membership and also afforded them with educational and leadership opportunities they may otherwise have not attained.

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<sup>36</sup> J. Tranter. "The Irish Base of an Australian Religious Sisterhood: The Sisters of St Joseph." Paper presented at the Irish -Australian Studies 1991, 239.

<sup>37</sup> M. Healey, interview with the author, June 1991.

<sup>38</sup> B. Barry, record of interview, June 1991.

<sup>39</sup> Hoy, 77.

*Sister Columba Cahill: An Irish Sister Guardian*



*Srs Columba and Aloysius Cahill  
Sisters of St Joseph Archives, New Town. Used with permission*

A close analysis of Sr Columba Cahill provides an opportunity to examine the maintenance of the Irish influence through the election of Irish leaders, in a period when the notion of an Australian leadership was being promoted in ecclesial circles. Within Church circles the emergence of an Australian or Tasmanian leadership would occur in the closing years of the twentieth century and for the Josephites the election of a Tasmanian born Superior would occur in 1946; 59 years after the foundation. The election of a local Superior occurred later than the other Diocesan Congregations.<sup>40</sup> Irish born Columba Cahill was Sister Guardian for 18 years, (1914-1920; 1923-1928, and 1932-1937) and a further four years from 1942 to 1946, when she resigned owing to ill health. In effect she was Superior from 1914 until 1946 with only the statutory 3-year breaks between appointments (see Table 11).

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<sup>40</sup> Sr Lucy Cuffe was elected Superior of Perthville in 1902 and Sr Xavier Malone was appointed in 1914 See Crowley, 274 and Strevens, 313.



Table 11: Elections of Sisters Guardian and Sisters Professed for Life

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Sister Guardian</b>	<b>Sisters professed for life</b>
1896	Oatlands	Joseph (appointed -no majority)	10
1899	Oatlands	Ambrose (appointed -no majority)	19
1902	Ulverstone	Ambrose (appointed -no majority)	18
1905	Ulverstone	Hyacinth Quinlan (appointed -no majority)	23
1908	New Town	Hyacinth elected	
1911	New Town	Hyacinth elected (overwhelming majority)	35
1914	New Town	Columba Cahill elected	38
1917	New Town	Columba Cahill elected	
1919	New Town	Stanislaus Doyle elected	
1923	New Town	Columba Cahill elected	43
1926	New Town	Columba Cahill elected	40
1929	New Town	Stanislaus Doyle elected	
1932	New Town	Columba Cahill elected	
1935	New Town	Columba Cahill elected	
1938	New Town	Eulalia Smith elected	44

In the intervening period the position of Superior was taken over by another Irish woman and founding member, Stanislaus Doyle, while Columba was appointed First Assistant on the Council and therefore maintained a degree of influence.<sup>41</sup> The prominence of former Sisters Guardian was assured with the direction of the Archbishop that they be consulted before any major decision was taken.<sup>42</sup> According to McGrath, given the conservative nature of Sisters, the practice of alternating

<sup>41</sup> Sr Stanislaus Doyle was Sister Guardian from 1919-1921 and from 1929- 1931. TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>42</sup> The 1926 Chapter which elected Columba Cahill as Sister Guardian, Sr Xavier Cauty as Novice Mistress, Sister Gabriel Reidy as Sister Assistant and Head teacher and Sr Josephine Saye. Archbishop Delany records that "But the above four, including Columba - while constituting the Ordinary Council, are to consult Joseph, Ambrose and Stanislaus Doyle by letter during the year on any matter of greater moment" See P. Delany. "1926 Chapter." Hobart: Sisters of St Joseph, 1926.

leadership between two Sisters within a women's Congregation was commonplace and continued up to the 1940s.<sup>43</sup>

Columba Cahill's legacy was the consolidation of the Tasmanian Josephites in the movement from the leadership of the pioneering Sisters, such as Hyacinth, Francis, Joseph and Ambrose, to a legitimately elected interstate recruit. Although Irish born, Columba was the first Sister Guardian who had no Perthville connections and was wholly Tasmanian trained. Her early formation was under the direction of those imbued with the Perthville spirit and who had firm loyalty to cofounder Fr Julian Tenison Woods and would have influenced her understanding of the foundation of the Congregation.

Columba, was born Jane Cahill at Strokestown, County Roscommon in the west of Ireland, on October 11, 1864. Her birthplace is said to be the most beautiful part of Ireland, with the great mountain Croagh Patrick. Her parents John Cahill and Anne Emmerson migrated to Brisbane from Roscommon in 1889. Here the family met with success, her brother, Major Cahill, becoming Commissioner of Police in Queensland, a position he held for many years until his death.<sup>44</sup>

In Brisbane in the early 1890s, Jane Cahill came under the influence of Sr John Dowling who at Fr Tenison Woods' behest had been assisting the newly formed Sisters of Perpetual Adoration with singing and other subjects. On entering the Tasmanian Josephites, John maintained contact with Cahill and as a result Jane Cahill volunteered to come to Tasmania in 1893, entering the convent at Oatlands on May 9, 1893 with Sr Stanislaus Doyle as Novice mistress. Receiving the habit on January 9, 1894, she was given the religious name Columba. Her spiritual formation was under the

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<sup>43</sup> McGrath, 208.

<sup>44</sup> "A Great Nun Goes Home to God." *Standard*, September 1946.

direction of her Novice Mistress, John Dowling. Columba was professed on January 10, 1895 and made her life commitment on January 3, 1901.<sup>45</sup>

Columba's first appointment was as a member of the foundation community at Zeehan in 1895 under the leadership of Sr Ambrose Dirkin, with Josephites Raphael McGuinness and Evangelist Osborne.<sup>46</sup> In her first community Columba would have experienced the lady-like qualities of Sr Ambrose Dirkin. According to local Church historian, Southerwood, the Zeehan convent became noted for its prayer, learning and culture in an otherwise rugged mining setting. Ambrose brought with her an appreciation of art, painting, singing, drawing and music.<sup>47</sup> These early experiences were to shape young Columba's understanding of religious life and to provide her with sensitivity to the challenges faced by the Sisters in isolated communities in her future role as Sister Guardian.

Columba was also a member of the foundation community at Franklin in 1900 with Xavier Canty and Canice McMahon. Her appointments included Devonport, 1907; Cygnet, 1911-1912; New Town, 1922 and Colebrook 1929. As discussed in Chapter 4 Columba's expertise as a school principal and teacher was commended by the inspection report of 1912.<sup>48</sup> This study is, however, more concerned with her role as Sister Guardian.

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<sup>45</sup> TSSJ, *Register*. TSSJA.

<sup>46</sup> Around 1890 Fr Daniel O'Sullivan wrote of his fifty hour journey on the schooner, "Koonya" around the gale swept South West Coast to Strahan and then overland to Zeehan. D. O'Sullivan, manuscript, n.d.

<sup>47</sup> W.T Southerwood. *Planting a Faith in Tasmania: The Country Parishes*. Hobart: The Author, 1977.

<sup>48</sup> IR Cygnet, 1912.

*Columba as Sister Guardian*

The role of the Sister Guardian as Superior of the Sisters of St Joseph was of paramount importance, and as such the incumbent was capable of much greater influence than any other member of the Congregation. Columba's tenure in this position over so many years had a significant impact on the shaping of the Congregation and in the Sisters' perception of the role of Sisters Guardian. As Sister Guardian she discharged her duties in a very compassionate and pastorally caring manner. Mindful that funeral discourses can carry a particular bias, it is worth recording the comment,

She knew all the Sisters and gave them a real mother's love. She was ever ready to receive each one, listen to her troubles and to do all in her power to bring comfort...So to all her Sisters, Sr Columba was the good mother, the guardian and friend.<sup>49</sup>

These sentiments have been corroborated over fifty years after her death by Sisters interviewed who experienced her in the role of Sister Guardian. They are therefore a valid assessment of the woman's leadership qualities.

The elderly Sisters who knew Columba as Sister Guardian, remembered her as "a strong, warm woman", "a great woman of prayer, a good religious and kindly"<sup>50</sup> She was also considered "lovely and understanding".<sup>51</sup> As a Josephite, Columba displayed impressive qualities in her attention to the poor in the area of New Town. Sister Margaret Mary Littlejohn, a young scholastic in 1927, almost seventy years later recalled encountering Columba's great faith and her concern for the poor. "I remember

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<sup>49</sup> "A Great Nun Goes Home to God."

<sup>50</sup> Sr B, interview with the author, June 22 2002; Sr A. interview with the author, June 22 2002.

<sup>51</sup> Sr E. interview with the author, June 26 2002.

her sending me down to the shoe shop to buy a pair of shoes for a little boy whose shoes were like paper. A loaf of bread was sent to different people each day.”<sup>52</sup>

Columba had the ability to maintain firm leadership within the Congregation and was able to delegate to the local Superiors, who “knew what Sister Columba wanted”.<sup>53</sup> The Sisters were so aware of Columba as Superior that the Archbishop assumed a less significant role in their eyes. This was prevalent to the extent that during Columba’s terms of office several Sisters were unaware that the Bishop was the Superior.<sup>54</sup> This recollection is in stark contrast to Sr Eulalia Smith’s term as Sister Guardian with Archbishop Simonds where the Bishop assumed a more significant authoritarian role over the Sisters.

Columba, whilst visiting the Sisters as part of her annual routine, did not take any part in visiting or examining the Sisters in the classrooms.<sup>55</sup> This role was left to the Inspectors, the Archbishop and Fr P. J. Lynch, Diocesan Inspector. Columba’s Superiorship over almost a quarter of a century provided strong modelling for the future Sisters Guardian in the practice of abstaining from a supervisory involvement in school. The difficulties encountered by the Sisters in their school ministry were only ever addressed at the local level unless the matter was brought to the attention of the Archbishop by the Inspector as in the case of Sr Kevin at Forth.<sup>56</sup>

Columba possessed natural grace and charm and skilfully managed her role of leadership in conjunction with the Archbishops with great diplomacy. “She was admired by all the Archbishops of Hobart and served under six of them. She was loved

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<sup>52</sup> M. M. Littlejohn, interview with the author, 1991.

<sup>53</sup> Sr D. interview with the author, June 25 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Sr F. and Sr C. interview with the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>55</sup> Sister A. recalled “The Congregational Leader spoke to the children but showed no interest in the school. Earlier Congregational Leaders may have tested the children. The State Inspector inspected the children, as did Dr Tweedy who sent Father Lynch and gave a catechism exam every three years. Sr C. interview with the author, June 24 2002; Sr A. interview with the author, June 22 2002.

<sup>56</sup> IR Forth, 1919.

by all the priests of the Diocese especially by those in whose parishes she lived and worked".<sup>57</sup> Archbishop Delany had a wonderful reverence for Sr Columba, and during her initial term of Sister Guardian, Sacred Heart, New Town, continued to develop with Delany's financial assistance.

#### *Development of Sacred Heart, New Town*

The increase in numbers of recruits to the Sisters of St Joseph provided the stimulus for the extensions to Sacred Heart Convent to provide adequate accommodation for the numbers of scholastics.<sup>58</sup> During Columba's term as Sister Guardian, developments occurred at both Sacred Heart convent and the school. The extensions to Sacred Heart School consisted of rooms being added in 1921, and in 1924, creating a quadrangle around which the school buildings stood.<sup>59</sup> *The Standard* of 1924 called on its readers to support this venture as the Archbishop had already expended a considerable amount of his private income in building the schools. The local community already had plans for fundraising; included a Princess Carnival.<sup>60</sup>

#### *Columba's influence over Congregational history*

As Superior for half of the period of this study, Columba merits a detailed discussion with regard to her influence on the interpretation of the history of the

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<sup>57</sup> "A Great Nun Goes Home to God."

<sup>58</sup> Scholastic was the term used to denote those reaching an adequate level of secondary education before being accepted into the novitiate as a postulant.

<sup>59</sup> "New Town." *Standard*, February 3 1924, 14.

<sup>60</sup> "New Town."

Tasmanian Josephites. Given her connection to John Dowling, a devotee of Fr Julian Tenison Woods, Ambrose Dirkin and Hyacinth Quinlan, both of whom were her Superiors in her formative years, it is inevitable that Columba would be reluctant to encourage study on the origins of the Congregation during the formation programme, contributing to the misinformation regarding the origins of the Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph. This reluctance may have been in part due to the presence of such strong women such as Hyacinth, Joseph Eather, Stanislaus Doyle and to a lesser extent Francis McCarthy, who were touched by the division as well as the advent of O'Neill's (1929) biography of Woods. The impact of O'Neill's biography has been discussed previously and its impact on the Sisters, such as Hyacinth, fifty years after the event, can only be surmised.<sup>61</sup>

The influence of key members of the congregation such as John Dowling, Ambrose Dirkin and Hyacinth Quinlan would make her receptive to a certain view of the cofounders and the events surrounding the establishment of the Diocesan group. Each of these Sisters had either been Columba's Superior or mentor in her formative years in the Josephites. It is understandable, given the constraints for discussion in community that for the sake of those such as Hyacinth that Columba chose to curtail any discussion of the origins in the interests of both charity and harmony. It is probable that no discussion occurred regarding the origins while Hyacinth was Sister Guardian, if she reverted to her practice in Wanganui of discouraging its discussion.<sup>62</sup> Hyacinth writing to Archbishop Redwood in speaking of the arrival of some of Mary MacKillop's Sisters to the area reveals her attitude to discussion of the division:

those who may know something of the division between the two branches of Srs of St Joseph would keep it quiet and not talk freely

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<sup>61</sup> G. O'Neill. *The Life of the Reverend Julian Edmund Tenison Woods*. Sydney: Pellegrini & Co., 1929.

<sup>62</sup> Strevens, 64.

about it amongst themselves. It is never mentioned in the community here, and I do not think it would edify others to hear it.<sup>63</sup>

Hyacinth had forbidden discussion of the topic of the division by her community in Wanganui, New Zealand, and it can be assumed that a similar practice had prevailed in Tasmania. The publication of the *Life of Woods* (1929) would have rekindled the issue. It is within this context that the following comments should be understood. Two of the Sisters interviewed in 2002, who had known Columba, recalled being discouraged from reading books about the origins of the Congregation and a veil of silence existed regarding Mother Mary MacKillop.<sup>64</sup> As Sister A stated, “I learnt nothing of the origins of the Order. Mother Mary was condemned and Fr O’Neill and his book on Fr Woods were forbidden. Sr Columba did not believe in talking about our founders”.<sup>65</sup>

The absence of both literature and education on the origins of the Congregation contributed to a sense of illegitimacy which would only be addressed by more scholarly study after the Second Vatican Council’s directive to research the charism of the founders.<sup>66</sup> Columba’s role in the Josephites self-understanding was pivotal, as she provided the bridge between the original foundation and the future. Failure to acknowledge and endorse the history underscored the struggle for authenticity and laid the way for conformity to imposition of alterations to the Rule in the face of a dynamic agent of change such as Archbishop Justin Simonds.

Columba Cahill’s role was one of consolidation for the Tasmanian Josephites and overseeing the arrival of the Irish recruits. Her real power lay in her ability to work in collaboration with the Archbishop, not as subservient to him but as one who assumed

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<sup>63</sup> Letter H. Quinlan, July 10 1884, cited in Strevens, 64.

<sup>64</sup> Sr C, interview with the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>65</sup> Sr A, interview with the author, June 22 2002.

<sup>66</sup> *Perfectae Caritatas*, par 2.



the leadership of the Tasmanian Josephites at a time when they were the largest Congregation within in Tasmania and responsible for more schools and pupils than any other religious congregation. In this period the Sisters of St Joseph and their schools flourished. The formation programme for the Sisters continued to develop and the Tasmanian Sisters' self-understanding was enhanced through the genuine appreciation of their efforts at education.

By 1937 the Sisters of St Joseph were educating 1,077 of the 3, 651 children in Catholic schools in communities at New Town, Devonport, Colebrook, Tunnack, Richmond, Port Cygnet, Franklin, Zeehan, Westbury, Ulverstone, Forth, Moonah and Lymington.<sup>67</sup> The community had reached 56, which included fourteen novices (see Table 12).<sup>68</sup>

Table 12: Summary of the teaching congregations in the Archdiocese of Hobart 1937<sup>69</sup>

<b>Congregation</b>	<b>No of members</b>	<b>No of schools</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Sisters of St Joseph	56	14	1077
Christian Brothers	14	2	631
Sisters of the Sacred Heart	17	3	289
Sisters of Mercy	18	3	325
Sisters of Charity	23	3	456
Presentation Sisters	53	5	873

<sup>68</sup> *Australasian Catholic Directory*. Sydney: Pellegrini 1938,265.

<sup>69</sup> The table is based on information contained in the 1937 census *Australasian Catholic directory*, 1938, 263-265.

*Relationship with the Clergy*

Crowley (2002) in the study of the Perthville Josephites writes of difficulties faced by the Sisters in relation to the parish priest, who could appropriate funds intended for the convent. In some instances the Sisters had to endure “the invasion of their privacy by some parish priests who exercised a proprietary control over the community”. Despite their treatment the Sisters maintained a loyalty to their priests.<sup>70</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania enjoyed anything but congenial relations with the local priests. Their appreciation of the Rule and the Explanation of the Rule promoted a quaint nineteenth century reverential attitude to the role of the priest, “They are to look up to him with the utmost docility for guidance and advice in all things which do not absolutely interfere with the observance of their Rule”.<sup>71</sup> This concept of the priesthood is consistent with that of other congregations, such as the Parramatta Mercy Sisters who “as a result of their exalted view of the priesthood worked hard at extolling the clergy and reinforcing their sense of superiority”.<sup>72</sup> This view is echoed in the Josephite Rule, which promoted a deep respect for the priest, “Sisters should be honoured by a visit from one who holds the place of Jesus Christ in their regard”.<sup>73</sup> Obedience to the Rule encouraged a reverence and subservience that ruled out conflict. Kennedy’s assumption that they ran the risk of clerical attempts to control them and “reinforced the myth of the passive, pious, clergy

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<sup>70</sup> Crowley, 108- 109.

<sup>71</sup> TSSJ, *Rules*, Ch V.

<sup>72</sup> McGrath, 203.

<sup>73</sup> TSSJ, *Rules*, Ch V.

dominated Catholic woman” are largely unfounded in the Tasmanian Josephite experience.<sup>74</sup>

The priests were always welcomed in the convents and the Sisters were encouraged to do whatever they could to support them. The kitchen was often a place of warmth and comfort in the cold Tasmanian winters and informal conversation occurred. On the West Coast in particular the priest always had a good relationship with the Sisters.<sup>75</sup> The convents in the country areas were greatly assisted by the priests in both a spiritual and financial sense. A typical example was Cygnet where the accounts for the convent reveal that in 1937 Fr A. Cullen contributed an amount of £84 toward the convent. The school fees for the year had reached only £33.<sup>76</sup> The community consisted of four sisters and as indicated in the previous chapter the contemporary basic wage for females was approximately £3 per week and £6 for males. The situation as seen context indicates the extreme poverty which pervaded the living existence of the sisters. Convent financial records reveal that the balance at the end of the year averaged as little as £ 13.<sup>77</sup> The meager balance placed strain on the community raising the amount required for the annual train fare to New Town at the end of each year. In many instances the parishes contributed for the cost of the fares such as at Devonport in 1919 where the Convent Education Fund Statement recorded “£15 - passage assistance for the Sisters to Hobart”.<sup>78</sup>

During the epidemics, it was often the priests who assisted financially. At Devonport when the schools were closed for several months, Archdeacon Michael Beechinor “came to the rescue of the Sisters in their great need during the time the

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<sup>74</sup> S. Kennedy cited in R. C. Thompson. "Women and the Significance of Religion in Australia." *Australian Historical Studies* 28, no. 108 (1997): 118-25, 122.

<sup>75</sup> Sr C. interview with the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>76</sup> TSSJ. "Financial Statement Cygnet." 1937. Between 1937 and 1940 Fr A. Cullen contributed £84/19/-, £67/12/1, £70/0/0.

<sup>77</sup> TSSJ "Cygnet School Fees and Allowances 1937-1940." TSSJA.

<sup>78</sup> "Devonport." *Monitor*, March 12 1920, 7.

schools were closed by giving them the Sunday morning collection".<sup>79</sup> Another typical example is cited in the Inspector's Report for Westbury where "Fr Ryan is very generous to the school in that he supplies materials and requisites from his private means".<sup>80</sup> There were of course instances where the priests were less than generous and prevented the development of parent associations to fundraise specifically for the school. In such circumstances the Sisters were left with just a stick of chalk and blackboard as their resources, but this situation was unusual.<sup>81</sup>

### *Relationships with the local community*

The Sisters of St Joseph and their relationships within the local community are reflected in the newspaper report relating to Sr Killian's departure from Ulverstone. Fr Dowling commenting on Sr Killian at her presentation said:

Sr Killian had spent six very fruitful years at Ulverstone as Reverend mother and had achieved excellent results in music and academically. She was self-sacrificing in her solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the children in the three centres at great inconvenience to herself had gone into the country centres with another Sister to impart catechetical instruction. She would be greatly missed from Ulverstone as her kindly disposition and genial intercourse with the people and charming personality had won her a host of friends not only those of her own religious persuasion but among non-Catholics with whom she came in contact.<sup>82</sup>

The extract supports the view that the Sisters were significant to the local community and shared in the life of the people, enjoying congenial relations with both Catholics and their Protestant neighbours. These informal relations with the priests and people, which had developed over the fifty years since the Sisters' arrival in Tasmania

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<sup>79</sup> "Devonport." *Monitor*, March 12 1920, 7.

<sup>80</sup> IR Westbury, 1936.

<sup>81</sup> P. Briggs interview with the author, April 18 1995.

<sup>82</sup> "Ulverstone Farewell." *Standard*, January 1934, 29.

would be redefined to become proper and formal with the arrival of Archbishop Justin Simonds.

### Simonds as Josephite Superior

“The Archbishop of Hobart is the Superior of the Order of the Sisters of St Joseph. Under him they live and have their being”.<sup>83</sup> These godlike attributes ascribed to the Bishop by Fr T. J. O’Donnell could have been a fair summation of Simonds in the role of Archbishop and his relationship to the Sisters. Although Simonds was Bishop in the final year of this study his approach was a marked contrast to his predecessors. Where Columba Cahill enjoyed a collaborative relationship with the various Archbishops, her successor was not so fortunate.

The Sisters of St Joseph remembered that Sister Guardian, Eulalia Smith, was frightened of Simonds.<sup>84</sup> Sr Eulalia Smith, elected in 1938, was remembered as a kindly and saintly lady but perhaps easily manipulated and intimidated. As one sister stated, “He ruled her very much”.<sup>85</sup> Where Delany had refrained from altering the Rule, except in a minimal sense so that it conformed to Canon Law, Simonds chose to rewrite the Rule in conjunction with Eulalia Smith. Justin Simonds was so determined to promote the revision of the Rule that he disregarded Eulalia’s battle with cancer, convincing her that her suffering as Congregational leader would be more beneficial to the Congregation than if she relinquished the role and allowed another sister to assume

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<sup>83</sup> "A Great Nun Goes Home to God."

<sup>84</sup> Sr C. interview with the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>85</sup> Sr C. interview with the author, June 24 2002.

office.<sup>86</sup> His attitude is revealed starkly in his stoic approach to suffering in his discourse at Eulalia's funeral:

I advised her beforehand that if the Chapter wished her to retain office of Sister Guardian, she should accept the responsibility, for I felt that her sufferings for the Institute would be more efficacious if she continued to suffer as its head rather than as a simple member of the community.<sup>87</sup>

Simonds had intimated his desire to commence rewriting the Rule in 1937.<sup>88</sup> For the Sisters of St Joseph who had carefully followed the Rule from their arrival in 1887, the revision was a time of crisis. The Archbishop was already exerting an undue interference in their lives by the enforcement of a more rigid approach to their living of the religious life. The manner in which the Rule was lived out changed or as Sister C. stated, "Regulations happened under Dr Simonds".<sup>89</sup> Sisters experienced this alteration initially through subtle changes which included the erection of doors of enclosure in the convent corridors, behind which no person, other than members of the community, was to enter.<sup>90</sup> This caused difficulty in the country convents where the design did not lend itself to the demarcation and the priest was welcome into the common living areas.<sup>91</sup> This demarcation symbolized a change to a more enclosed approach to living, creating barriers between the Sisters and their local community, in a manner from which they

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<sup>86</sup> The official approval of the Rule was given on September 8 1940, eight months before the death of Eulalia Smith See Burns, 23.

<sup>87</sup> "Death of Sister M Eulalia Smith." *Catholic Standard*, June 12 1941.

<sup>88</sup> According to Simonds, "at the request of the Holy See it became necessary to undertake the task of revising the Constitutions of the Institute to bring them into conformity with the prescriptions of the Code of Canon Law, of stabilizing its Religious Customs, and of editing its Directory of approved prayers and devotions. (See "Death of Sister M Eulalia Smith").

<sup>89</sup> Sr C. interview with the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>90</sup> Simonds' regulations had little impact on some of the priests. Fr Lynch disregarded the prohibition of the enclosure, walking through it to the kitchen at New Town as he had done for years. See P. Briggs, interview with the author, April 18 1995.

<sup>91</sup> Eulalia in her report to the 1940 Chapter spoke of the associated difficulty, "The enclosure has been marked and is observed in each house, but owing to the faulty plan of many of our convents, it is impossible to have uniformity in defining the enclosure" E. Smith. "Sister Guardian's Report for Chapter of 6th January, 1941." Hobart: Sisters of St Joseph, 1941. TSSJA.

had hitherto been free.<sup>92</sup> Simonds was re-establishing the boundaries between the laity and clergy, but the Josephites belonged more properly to the laity.

Simonds demanded a more formal form of address by the Sisters to one another and henceforth Sisters were to be referred to as “Sister Mary Columba” or “Sister Mary Eulalia.” For convenience a more informal term had been to simply refer to the sister by her name without the use of the term “Mary”. The community lists from 1937 on reveal the formal term of address.<sup>93</sup> The Sisters at the end of the period of this study were changing from the less formal, ordinary sisterhood to one which was modeled more on the Irish or European model. Regulations regarding the visitation of parents and children had become more rigid, and Sisters were no longer able to visit singly but always had to visit in pairs.<sup>94</sup> Sisters were required to be home by 6.00 p.m. each evening and infringements could result in the Bishop taking action.<sup>95</sup> The flexible interpretations of the Rule came to an abrupt end with its revision and Simonds’ rigorous scrutiny of the Sisters of St Joseph. In the process of renewal Simonds managed to antagonise many of the Sisters and the clergy. As an elderly sister explained, “Dr Simonds wanted to renew the face of the earth”.<sup>96</sup>

Simonds’ previous experience as rector in the seminary would have placed him in a unique position to be able to assist in the religious formation of the Sisters of St Joseph. There was a need for the revision of the Rule so that it conformed more closely to the mind of the Church, and given Simonds’ experience of formation with the

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<sup>92</sup> Sr D. interview with the author, June 25 2002.

<sup>93</sup> TSSJ. "Mission Lists." 1937-1942. TSSJA.

<sup>94</sup> Previously Sisters such as Monica Wright at Zeehan had visited Rosebery, travelling by means of a fettleter’s cart over the railway. Monica visited alone and left her companion at another house (L. Jarvis, interview with the author, July 5 2002).

<sup>95</sup> Sr C., in her interview, recalled being at New Town from her convent in the company with her Superior, Sr Eustelle Smith but both were sent home, as it was 6. 30 p.m. The Sisters were reminded of what had happened to Sr Camillus, being put out of Newstead. See Sr C. interview with the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>96</sup> P. Briggs, interview with the author, April 18 1995.

candidates for the Diocesan priesthood, he certainly had the zeal and experience for the task. An anecdote related by the historian McGrath in relation to the Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta, involved a Sister of Mercy from Parramatta making representation to Simonds in Hobart over the issue of superiority. Simonds, on her behalf contacted Archbishop Gilroy of Sydney and the matter was addressed.<sup>97</sup> This incident gives rise to speculation that Simonds may have enjoyed a reputation as an expert on religious life in the wider Australian Church.

*Simonds and the Juniorate*

Certainly Simonds laboured to provide the Tasmanian Josephites with confidence in their capacity to attract Tasmanian recruits and to rely less on Irish and mainland candidates. Simonds was generous in his concern for the welfare of the Josephites and Josephite historian Sr Valerie Burns speaks of his interest in the Sisters of St Joseph as manifested in many ways such as fostering vocations. Within months of his arrival in Tasmania he had taken measures for a Juniorate to be established in northern Tasmania and during his episcopacy the numbers of Tasmanian girls increased as Simonds zealously fostered vocations and embarked upon the recruitment of Tasmanian girls.<sup>98</sup> The establishment of the Juniorate occurred in 1938, and signalled a departure from the normal method of recruitment for the Sisters of St Joseph, indicating Simonds' influence on the Congregation.

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<sup>97</sup> McGrath, 208.

<sup>98</sup> Simonds is quoted by Burns as stating that the pessimists predicted that he would never get Tasmanian girls to enter convents and would have to turn to other parts of world. See Burns, 23.



The Juniorate was to provide secondary education for girls who were considering joining the Sisters of St Joseph. Three acres of land had been purchased three years earlier at the corner of Abbott and Campbell Streets at Newstead.<sup>99</sup> They could attend from 12 years of age and pursue their education until they were ready to move into the novitiate in Hobart. This development, unique in the Josephites' Federation history, would not have happened without Simonds' intervention.

### Josephite Golden Jubilee

The development of the Rule occurred over the next few years but of immediate concern for the Archbishop was the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Sisters' arrival in Tasmania. Realizing that the day of jubilee had passed unnoticed, the Archbishop published a letter to the editor of *The Standard* entitled "His Grace the Archbishop desires that steps be taken by the priests and people of the Archdiocese to celebrate worthily the Golden Jubilee of the arrival in Tasmania of the Sisters of St Josephs [*sic*]"<sup>100</sup> The Archbishop commented that through their "noble work of providing a Catholic education for the children of the poor, the Sisters of St Joseph have courageously maintained the ideals of their holy Foundress and Simonds likened their labours to being in the front trenches line of the battle line."<sup>101</sup> However his acknowledgement of Mary MacKillop and his failure to refer to Fr Woods would have caused consternation to some of the pioneer Sisters still alive. This omission reveals

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<sup>99</sup> "Catholic School for Newstead." *The Catholic Standard*, July 19 1934, 34.

<sup>100</sup> *Sisters of St Joseph Tasmania: God with Us: 1887-1987*, 10.

<sup>101</sup> *Sisters of St Joseph Tasmania: God with Us: 1887-1987*, 10.

Simonds' misinformation regarding the origins of the community and insensitivity to the role of the cofounders.

### Conclusion and Significance

The crisis of the decrease in numbers had been faced by the recruitment of the Irish Sisters from Callan. The increased Irish membership ensured that the Irish influence would be retained beyond the period of Irish leadership. The profoundly Irish influence on the Congregation had served it well through the leadership of the first Sisters Guardian. The only exception to Irish leadership had been the Australian born Hyacinth Quinlan, who was of Irish descent and provided a uniquely refounding experience for the Congregation, given her links to the cofounders.

The development and self-determination of the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph that had been a feature of the early period under Archbishops Delany, Barry and Hayden was challenged in their fiftieth year by Archbishop Simonds. Simonds, however, contributed significantly to the expansion of the Congregation and to the fostering of the Tasmanian membership. Within the Tasmanian setting the Sisters of St Joseph had been spared the enduring conflicts with authority which had been a part of the nineteenth century church between some bishops and women's congregations; however this conflict emerged for the Tasmanian Josephites well into the twentieth century. The rewriting of the Rule would herald a new phase in their ongoing development and see the emergence of a hierarchical dominance during Simonds' term hitherto largely absent from their governance.

At the end of 1937 the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph were at a peak of membership and had expanded to serve 13 schools and communities. They were the largest and most widespread religious congregation in Tasmania, but remained faithful to their commitment to teach the poor and isolated children. Having established their identity over the past fifty years, they were now being challenged by the canonical prescriptions of the zealous new Australian Bishop.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

This thesis has examined the foundation of the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania, 1887-1937. The work of Catholic women and religious women in particular is largely missing from Australian history and from the Catholic Church history. This investigation seeks to redress the omission by an exploration of the contribution of a specific group of Catholic women, namely the Sisters of St Joseph in Tasmania and their role in the development of the Catholic school system and the Catholic Church within Tasmania.

The key research questions, which informed this study concern identity, the ambiguity of their origins and Irish and intercolonial influences on the development of the Sisters of St Joseph. Fundamental to this study is the separation from Mary MacKillop's Sisters in 1876 and the allegiance to cofounder Fr Julian Tenison Woods. What was the impact of so many key Josephite figures from other foundations on the Tasmanian group? To what extent was their identity and development shaped by Irish and intercolonial influences? Did their search for identity as an authentic religious Congregation and their desire to preserve the original spirit as stated in their 1878 Constitution hinder their development?

## Methodology

The approach has been historical narrative, based on primary written documents, where possible, but given the paucity of extant material, much use has been made of secondary written and oral accounts. When there was a problem in accessing primary data from the relevant archives oral history has provided supplementary material.

As a member of the Sisters of St Joseph the researcher is aware of a possible bias in the interpretation of the data available. On the other hand identification with the group provides sensitivity and an understanding in the interpretation of data such as diary entries, archival material, newspaper accounts, versions of the Rule, Inspectors' reports and in the formal interviews conducted with six of the Sisters. The method of triangulation provided the opportunity of authenticating material from different sources and then of providing validation through interviews with those Sisters who lived in the latter part of the period being investigated. The interviews provided a rich source of data and the opportunity allowed the participants to speak for themselves.

## Findings

### *Josephite identity*

The study shows that Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph were unique amongst the Diocesan Josephites in their foundational phase because of the interplay of so many

significant founding figures. Cofounder Fr Julian Tenison Woods, through his letters in the first year of foundation, guided Francis McCarthy in the interpretation of *The Rule* and in developing flexibility toward it in order to accommodate Archbishop Murphy and his wishes for the Tasmanian Church. Sr Hyacinth Quinlan made a unique contribution to the Tasmanian Congregation in her leadership over a nine-year period. Her religious formation with both Mary MacKillop and Tenison Woods ensured that the spirit and charism identified in the original foundation would be maintained in Tasmania. The opportunity to lead the Tasmanian group provided Hyacinth with the scope to reinvent herself in a more sympathetic environment, with a more understanding Bishop. The Tasmanian Hyacinth Quinlan had reached a maturity which life's circumstances had previously denied her and her role in the development of the Diocesan Josephites would benefit from a more detailed study.

The founding Sisters' limited experience in religious life, compounded by the immaturity of the Congregation itself created a feeling of inadequacy which, was therefore reinforced by *The Rule*.<sup>1</sup> Their perception of alienation from the established religious Sisters in the area, the Sisters of the Presentation and the injunction that, "They [Sisters of St Joseph] must give place and preference to the religious of every other Congregation, and their highest ambition must be to remain unknown and poor," coupled with their move to Westbury when their convent was not adequately prepared, re-enforced their feelings of inferiority as a religious congregation in comparison to the well-established Sisters of the Presentation.<sup>2</sup> The initial sense of being unwelcome and the temporary nature of their accommodation gave rise to the misconception that their intended foundation was the city of Launceston, rather than Westbury. The quest for credibility for the Tasmanian Josephites reached its

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<sup>1</sup> OR Ch I.

<sup>2</sup> OR Ch I.

culmination with the emergence as Hyacinth Quinlan as Congregational Leader. The establishment of a permanent motherhouse at New Town, on the capital's outskirts defined their attainment of the status of a *bone fide* religious congregation.

The use of life stories has given voice to those from the underside of history to give shape to the understanding of the Tasmanian Josephites. There is a need to be oriented to the ordinary members – living as well as the dead.<sup>3</sup> Women such as Magdalen Hagarty, Vincent Bowler and Monica Wright served to provide an opportunity to examine the reality of the Rule that defined living religious life in country Tasmania. Though unremarkable in so many ways the Sisters made a lasting impression on the little communities in which they taught and served the Church. The examination of their lives also provided an opportunity to understand the manner in which the religious community was developing. Monica with her wider vision of religious life provides the example of a woman freed from the minutiae of mindless regulations and epitomizes the best qualities of being a Josephite woman without subordinating herself unnecessarily to Superiors or clerics. Her correspondence through her sympathetic interpretation of Hyacinth Quinlan remains among the most authentic extant material for providing historians with a deep and accurate assessment of a complex woman.

It has been argued that Diocesan Congregations face the risk of intellectual isolation, narrowness in outlook, an isolationist mentality and community inbreeding.<sup>4</sup> In an island Diocese such as Tasmania the isolationist mentality was a reality when combined with the physical reality. However, the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph were freed from these restraints by the arrival of interstate recruits and the transfer between Congregations of mature religious women. The arrival of Irish

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<sup>3</sup> McLay, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, 425.

recruits and the Irish influence contributed significantly to a wider worldview and also served to reinforce the distinctly Irish influence prevalent in the foundational phase. The Tasmanian group, therefore, had the broadening influence of those with experience of a world beyond the island of Tasmania.

*Issue of origins*

The mystery surrounding the origins of the Congregation contributed in a significant manner to the search for authenticity. Unsure of their foundational story the Tasmanian Sisters were uncertain of what was worth preserving and so the Rule and its safeguarding underpinned their identity. However failure to acknowledge and endorse the history underscored the struggle for authenticity and prepared the way for submission in the face of a dynamic agent of change such as Archbishop Justin Simonds.

The formative period as argued by Dixson has a disproportionate influence on the identity of the ethos of the group and these formative experiences are passed on in the memory of the group. The failure to acknowledge the foundation story had a long term impact on the Tasmanian Josephite identity.<sup>5</sup> In correspondence as late as 1940, Tasmanian Josephite, Gertrude Johnson, requests information from Perthville as “no history of the first Superior could be found in the records. It seemed to be a mysterious secret to all, except one interested person”.<sup>6</sup> The misinformation regarding the Perthville separation was replicated in the Westbury foundation story. The historical distortion with regard to the Rule was embedded in the Tasmanian setting

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<sup>5</sup> Dixson, 61.

<sup>6</sup> Letter G. Johnson to M. Seraphim, February 19 1940. PSSJA.



and the confusion regarding the original Tasmanian foundation was carried into the next century. This thesis has addressed the misconception of the original separation and corrects the historical distortions that have originated from the failure to preserve the foundational story.

The publication of O’Neill’s (1929) biography of Woods and the Josephite resolve to prohibit its reading served to give the impression of a sense of shame and uncertainty with regard to the cofounders. At the celebration of the Golden Jubilee Simonds commented that by their “noble work of providing a Catholic education for the children of the poor, the Sisters of St Joseph have courageously maintained the ideals of their holy Foundress”.<sup>7</sup> However it was the cofounder Woods’ ideals they believed they were maintaining. With the removal of Mary MacKillop from the history and suspicion regarding Woods, the Tasmanian Josephites were bereft of any historical certainty and were left with a distorted view of their origins.

### *The Issue of Leadership and the Rule*

The influence of key Josephite figures such as Hyacinth Quinlan, Ambrose Joseph Dirkin, and Joseph Eather and to a lesser extent Francis McCarthy contributed to the adherence to the Rule and its interpretation according to Woods’ injunction that “it is essential that nothing should be changed in the ordinary observance”.<sup>8</sup> The 1878 Rule, which they followed, became for them the means by which they defined themselves as Sisters of St Joseph. While it may be argued that all religious institutes sought to preserve their original rules, for the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph the

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<sup>7</sup> TSSJ. *Sisters of St Joseph Tasmania: God with Us: 1887-1987*. Centenary ed. Hobart: Advance Publicity, 1987, 10.

<sup>8</sup> J.E.T. Woods. "Circular Letters from Fr Julian Tenison Woods to Westbury Community." 1887 and Letter to F. McCarthy, November 18 1887. TSSJA.

preservation of the rule had an added significance as the debate regarding the Rule had been fundamental in the separation at Perthville. As religious estranged from the original foundation, The Rule became the measure by which they defined themselves as Sisters of St Joseph, and therefore as authentic religious.

Their adherence to the Rule and their dependence upon figures such as Sister John Dowling, who had a deep commitment to the cofounder, gave *The Rule* a significance, which was reinforced with the printing of *The Rule* in 1912 with only minor modifications. Evidence of this commitment to the Original Rule, which remains unique to the Tasmanian Sisters, is found in the traditional terms of address which remain in use; terms of address such as a “Sister Guardian” for the Head Superior, and “Little Sister” for the Superior of each house. Terms of address more commonly used by other religious congregations, and with the other Diocesan Josephites, such as “Mother” and “Mother General” were never used by the Tasmanian Sisters. Their Rule provided a sound basis for their mode of living and the Woods-MacKillop method of teaching was adapted. They displayed within their method of teaching a flexibility to change to meet the demands of government requirements.

#### *Teacher preparation and the schools*

The challenge of meeting the requirements for teachers’ registration saw a sudden departure from the Woods-MacKillop style of teaching, which had been the mainstay of their survival in schools from 1887-1907. The necessity for adequate teacher preparation with the Teacher Registration Act of 1906 facilitated the

progression from the Woods-MacKillop system of education with the teacher training influenced by the Loreto Sisters at the Central Catholic Teachers' College at Albert Park, Victoria as discussed in Chapter 5. The success of Sacred Heart New Town as a model school from its establishment until the 1930s is tribute to both Delany's vision and the skills of Gabriel Reidy and Xavier Canty as teacher educators.

The value of the inspections contributed to maintaining fairly consistently high standards throughout the island, with poor inspection reports being the exception. Use of the Tasmanian Education Department Inspectors' reports gave an objective appraisal of the Sisters' teaching ability and of the standard of the schools. The capacity to embrace such antipathetic extra curricular activities as gardening, physical education, cadets, drum and fife bands were illustrative of their flexibility and tenacity to meet the challenges, motivated by their desire to provide the best education for their pupils. They were not unique in their quest for excellence for their pupils, but what placed them apart from their lay counterparts was their capacity, sustained by their fervent religious motivation, to work for so little and to endure primitive conditions.

The thorough teacher preparation that had occurred from 1908 to 1932 gave way to a more *ad hoc* approach as the Sisters' needs for formal education were subsumed into the provision of additional teachers. The formation of teacher educators for the Sisters' preparation was no longer a priority as meeting the demands of supplying teachers for the increasing numbers in the schools became crucial. Teacher preparation became another duty for Sister Dominic already overburdened with pressures of school and Congregational responsibilities. Although some attempt to introduce university education was offered to a few from the mid 1930s the

leadership failed to address appropriate teacher education as thoroughly as in the preceding decade.

### Role of the Bishops

The Bishops had determined the emergence of the Diocesan Josephites in 1876, prevented their unification after the 1888 Decree and vetoed their amalgamation. In the closing period of this study the issue of the Bishop's authority arose as a major factor in the Tasmanian Josephite development and self-determination. From the time of separation in 1876 at Perthville, the Diocesan Josephites relinquished their autonomy and were dependent upon the local Bishop in a spiritual and financial sense. Father T. J. O'Donnell's comment "The Archbishop of Hobart is the Superior of the Order of the Sisters of St Joseph. Under him they live and have their being" was an accurate assessment of the relationship between the Bishop and the Diocesan Congregation.<sup>9</sup> The various Bishops were crucial in the development of the Diocesan Josephites who were independent from their original foundation on their arrival in Tasmania.

In the discussion regarding the Bishops it must be acknowledged that the Diocesan Sisters were dependent upon the Bishop and, as nineteenth century Diocesan religious, were prevented from assuming responsibility for their own Congregational future. The Congregation itself had originated from such a debate. In the 1890s Archbishop Murphy and the other suffragen Bishops had failed to inform the Sisters of St Joseph that Rome allowed them the option of reconciliation and reuniting with the centrally governed Josephites. The possibility of the amalgamation

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<sup>9</sup> "A Great Nun Goes Home to God." *Standard*, September 1946.

of the Diocesan Sisters of St Joseph raised in 1915 and again in the 1920s was largely abandoned because of the negative reaction of the Diocesan Bishops. Given the presence of the key characters involved in the initial separation, amalgamation may never have eventuated, but the Sisters were deprived of the freedom to explore the issue seriously. This issue is once again on the agenda for the Tasmanian Sisters of St Joseph 80 years later.<sup>10</sup>

From a tentative and fearful relationship with the elderly Archbishop Murphy the Sisters of St Joseph flourished with the benevolent Archbishop Patrick Delany. In Delany the Sisters of St Joseph had a truly paternal benefactor who enabled them to establish themselves as a credible teaching force within the Archdiocese. Archbishop Delany provided the Sisters with the opportunity for professional development and the establishment of an authentic way of being part of the Church of Hobart. His financial support and his capacity to collaborate with Hyacinth Quinlan and Columba Cahill enabled the Sisters of St Joseph to develop a foundation upon which they could confidently build towards the future. Delany enabled the Sisters of St Joseph of Tasmania to claim their own identity by respecting their Rule and its Explanation through its preservation. Archbishop William Barry's episcopacy had little impact on the Sisters of St Joseph but Archbishop William Hayden, who succeeded Barry in 1930, had a profound influence in securing Irish recruits for the Sisters of St Joseph thereby ensuring their long term viability as a teaching Congregation.

With the appointment of Archbishop Justin Simonds the Sisters of St Joseph were forced to reassess themselves in the light of the development of a new Rule, which took little cognizance of the 1878 Rule or the 1912 reissue. The twentieth century Australian Bishop assumed the role of Religious Superior in an autocratic

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<sup>10</sup> TSSJ Congregational Meeting July 2004.

manner with his failure to collaborate with the Sisters over his proposed renewal. His appointment occurring in the final year of the study provides a backdrop against which to scrutinize Josephite development and identity.

*Under the shadow of Archbishop Justin Simonds*

Simonds' appointment serves to highlight the ongoing Josephite dilemma with authority. Where Columba Cahill had enjoyed a collaborative relationship with the various Archbishops, her successor was not so fortunate. Delany had refrained from altering the Rule, except in a minimal sense so that it conformed to Canon Law, whereas Simonds chose to rewrite the Rule in its entirety. For the Sisters of St Joseph who had meticulously followed the Rule from their arrival in 1887, the revision was a time of crisis, as it appeared to them that the Archbishop was already exerting an undue interference in their lives by the enforcement of a more rigid approach to their living of the religious life. Simonds had intimated his desire to commence rewriting the Rule soon after his arrival in Tasmania in 1937.<sup>11</sup> His motivation for reform may have come from a genuine desire to regularise the Rule and the customs and practices of the Tasmanian Sisters. He certainly consulted widely with the North Sydney Josephites and the Bishops of the other dioceses but his failure to engage in

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<sup>11</sup> According to Simonds, "at the request of the Holy See it became necessary to undertake the task of revising the Constitutions of the Institute to bring them into conformity with the prescriptions of the *Code of Canon Law*, of stabilizing its Religious Customs, and of editing its Directory of approved prayers and devotions". See "Death of Sister M Eulalia Smith." *Catholic Standard*, June 12 1941.

consultation with the Sisters themselves was seen as an exercise of autocratic power.<sup>12</sup>

The way of life for the Sisters of St Joseph changed or as one Sister reflected, “Regulations happened under Dr Simonds”<sup>13</sup> Sisters experienced this alteration initially through subtle changes, which included the erection of doors of enclosure. This demarcation symbolized a change to a more enclosed approach to living, creating barriers between the Sisters and their local community in a manner from which they had hitherto been free.<sup>14</sup>

#### *The Josephite response*

The Josephite response to Simonds’ renewal of the Congregation and the application of strictures was one of acquiescence. The strong leadership evident of Columba Cahill had dissipated in the face of an equally strong-minded Bishop. The remaining founding Sisters were elderly and their consistent leadership over the first fifty years had circumvented the emergence of a new leadership capable of withstanding the pressure of an autocratic Bishop. In the absence of strong leadership the ordinary members of the Sisters of St Joseph, like Monica Wright, flouted as far as possible the draconian changes. The uniquely Tasmanian Josephite identity developed over the past fifty years, however, was being replaced by a more subservient mode of religious life. The strong leadership provided by the Irish

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<sup>12</sup> Simonds’ papers in the Archdiocesan archives of Hobart include letters on the Rule to Mother M. Cyril of North Sydney. See Letter J. Simonds, December 31 1937; November 21 1940, Mother Seraphim Perthville, Letter November 21 1940 and the Bishop of Maitland. AHMA.

<sup>13</sup> Sr C. interview by the author, June 24 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Sr D. interview by the author, June 25 2002.

Superiors was at an end and the collaborative practices developed by Columba and Simonds' Irish predecessors were disintegrating.

The influence of Tenison Woods on the foundational story gave the Rule a status that precluded its revision, unlike the other Diocesan Josephite Congregations. The Tasmanians' gradual divergence from the other Diocesan influences and the North Sydney Sisters, accompanied by the publication of the O'Neill life of Woods, contributed to undermine their sense of history. In face of a Bishop such as Simonds their uncertainty and the revision of the Rule provoked an identity crisis. The official response was one of acquiescence but the emotions associated with the capitulation of the Rule remained a source of unease for decades readily surfacing in all the interviews conducted over fifty years later. The achievement of self-determination under strong leadership provided Hyacinth Quinlan, the founding Sisters and by Columba Cahill was undone.

## Conclusion

The study has provided the opportunity to examine the Josephite identity and history as it has unfolded in the Tasmanian context. As a Sister of St Joseph the researcher has been able to reflect upon the nature of the story and identify those individuals who shaped the story. As women, the Josephites had the opportunity of exerting great influence in the local communities and were supported by the families they served. In many of the areas they served they were without the services of a resident priest and fulfilled many roles of the absent clergy, causing Delany to



comment, “Really these Sisters almost meet the want of a resident priest. God bless them!”<sup>15</sup>

The pattern of development occurring in the Tasmanian foundation reinforced a sense of inferiority and a reliance on authority beyond the Congregation with regard to the organisation of the schools. The Irish influences which emerged and shaped the Tasmanian community gave rise to the predominance of non-Tasmanian leadership throughout the period of the study. While the arrival of Irish recruits was regarded as a blessing to the Congregation, it occurred at a time when the Irish recruitment to Australia and to the Diocesan Josephites had declined. The Tasmanian Congregation was largely atypical of the Diocesan Josephites in the duration of recruitment and the numbers recruited from Ireland at the behest of the Bishop.

The Tasmanian Congregation remained steadfast in their appreciation of the Rule and unlike their mainland Diocesan Sisters were able to preserve the 1878 Rule and its practices with the complicity of the Bishops. The Tasmanian community observed the minutiae of the Rule with regard to titles, terms of address and ownership of property, which is evident in contemporary times. Theirs was a loyal adherence to the original Woods’ Rule proposed at Perthville and the presence of those connected with the separation ensured that the cofounder’s influence was maintained.

The Tasmanian Josephites’ availability and dependence on Church and government authority enabled them to meet the needs and demands of both the Church and the state; however unlike their Diocesan counterparts interstate the Tasmanian Josephites failed to develop a system of schools as such and the professional support which was available within the larger Diocesan groups was

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<sup>15</sup> "Ulverstone." *Standard*, 1894, 216.

impractical within the Tasmanian group as their total energies were expended on simply providing teachers for classrooms in the expanding Catholic school system. The focus on adequate teachers' preparation in the period immediately after the Teachers' Registration Act was not replicated again with the same vigour. The lack of support structure and inadequate teacher preparation, the pre-eminence of interstate leadership contributed to a feeling of inadequacy for the Tasmanian membership.

The failure to develop a system of schools, while depriving the Sisters of a supportive infrastructure, enabled a more independent school structure with a less centralized Congregational structure, giving rise to resilient independent women, such as Columba Cahill, Joseph Eather and Monica Wright. They were far from Kennedy's "passive, clergy dominated Catholic women" but extremely inventive and resourceful.<sup>16</sup>

Living in communities of two or three, the Sisters of St Joseph were the most widespread group of religious in Tasmania. At the end of their first fifty years their thirteen schools catered for over a thousand children. Faithful to their founding vision they were flexible and mobile, answering the needs of the Tasmanian Church to minister in the small country towns without adequate resources:

We must never consider ourselves, but only our work and be ready to do it wherever it is to be done, and not ask what resources there are, or what means to help us. Give us children to educate and instruct, and if we have to live in a shed and sleep upon the ground, with scanty food and poor raiment, these inconveniences should make our courage rise.<sup>17</sup>

The greatest legacy of the Josephites to the Tasmanian church with their accent on poverty emanated from their readiness to suffer hardship for the sake of the mission.

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<sup>16</sup> Kennedy, 264.

<sup>17</sup> J.E.T. Woods. *Book of Instructions for the Use of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart with Community Prayers, School Directory*, & C. Brisbane: S. Pole & Co, n.d., 2.

Their capacity to embrace an austere lifestyle with its poor fare, basic housing and simple dress enabled them to live in the same conditions as those of their local community. Their lived experience of poverty generated a willingness and generosity from parishioners, priests and Protestant supporters to provide support. Support ranged from extra sandwiches provided by a student at Zeehan,<sup>18</sup> additional beds for retreats by Protestant businessmen,<sup>19</sup> a roster organised to provide basic foodstuffs at Zeehan,<sup>20</sup> fundraising for the fares required to attend the annual retreat in Hobart,<sup>21</sup> to an annual donations from the parish priest at Cygnet or the provision of the Sunday collection during school closures at Devonport. Such assistance is indicative of the manner in which they endeared themselves to the local community. For them the injunctions of the Rule demanded a self-sacrifice that at times endangered their health and provided grave concern for the provision of a staple diet. Through such deprivation they remained committed to their mission of education proving to be a “most useful order” while excelling at meeting the challenges of tough living in the economically depressed towns and country areas which has characterized Josephite living.<sup>22</sup>

The Tasmanian experience of the Sisters of St Joseph was one of faithful commitment and development over a fifty-year period. They provided education for the poor, established schools in the country areas and developed a system of spiritual and professional education for their Sisters, upon which the succeeding generations would build. Above all they had attained a sense of authenticity as a religious

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<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 4, footnote 120.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 6, footnote 65.

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 7, 239.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 8, footnote 78.

<sup>22</sup> The editor of the Monitor comments that, “It is consoling how to see how this useful order is fast gaining in numbers as it gives hopes to the many country missions which have Catholic schools of having them under skillful and efficient management of good Sisters.” See *Monitor*, June 19 1896, 17.

congregation through their work with the less affluent. Committed to the original spirit of being “hidden”, the Golden Jubilee of the Sisters of St Joseph’s arrival in Tasmania passed without any public celebration, which was entirely consistent with their image. However, disregarding the retiring public persona of the Sisters Simonds addressed this oversight and publicly applauded their efforts in his address:

Consecrated to the noble work of providing a Catholic education for the children of the poor, the Sisters of St Joseph have courageously maintained the ideals of their Foundress, and in the struggle which the Church is waging for the cause of Catholic instruction, these good Sisters are always to be found in the front trenches of the battle-line.<sup>23</sup>

The greatest battle that of the preservation of their identity as uniquely Tasmanian would be played out in the shadow of Simonds’ reign and beyond. Such was the enduring impact of the role of the Bishop on the Diocesan Josephites.

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<sup>23</sup> Letter J.D. Simonds. June 15 1937. AHMA.

APPENDIX A

Ethics Approval

Australian Catholic University  
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** Dr Richard Rymarz Melbourne Campus  
**Co-Investigators:** Dr Jackie McGilp Melbourne Campus  
**Student Researcher:** Sr Josephine M Brady Melbourne Campus

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**  
 The foundation and development of Josephite education in Tasmania 1887-1973  
**for the period:** 01/05/02 - 31/07/02  
**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** V2001.02-51

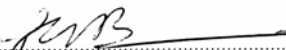
The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (1999)* apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  - security of records
  - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  - proposed changes to the protocol
  - unforeseen circumstances or events
  - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than minimum risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of minimum risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: .....  ..... Date: 14/09/04  
 (Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)

Appendix B

Decree of Propaganda, 25th July 1888

Whereas there are in many Australian dioceses Sisters of the Institute of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who were founded in the city of Adelaide and have hitherto had their Motherhouse in that city, the most Reverend Prelates, the Archbishops and Bishops of those dioceses, in which the aforesaid Sisters dwelt, have besought Our Most Holy Father, Leo XIII. That these Sisters should be placed under a fixed Rule of life, and with definite dependence on the various Ordinaries.

Wherefore His Holiness in an audience on the 15th of the current month of July, I - at the petition of the undersigned, Most Rev. Dominic Jacobini. Secretary of this Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, all things having been maturely considered. Ordered the matter to be determined as follows

1st. That while the approval of the Constitution of the aforesaid Sisters is reserved to the Apostolic See, the Institute itself be erected into a regular Congregation, which shall have its Motherhouse in the City of Sydney.

2nd. That it is permitted to the Bishops who have in their dioceses convents of the aforesaid Sisters to erect them into a Diocesan Institute, if the said Bishops be unwilling that the Sisters in their dioceses should be dependent on the Motherhouse in Sydney; but in this event that it is free to those Sisters who at the present moment dwell in these dioceses either to remain in the Diocesan Institute or to betake themselves to the Motherhouse.

3rd. That the present Superior-General shall preside for ten years from this date over the Convents which with the Motherhouse in Sydney constitute the regular Congregation; but at the expiry of that period, the election of a Superior-General shall be made by the Chapter according to the Constitutions.

4th. Lastly that those Diocesan Institutes which shall be distinct from the regular congregation, shall make some change in the habit and the Rule, and shall be approved by their respective Bishops.

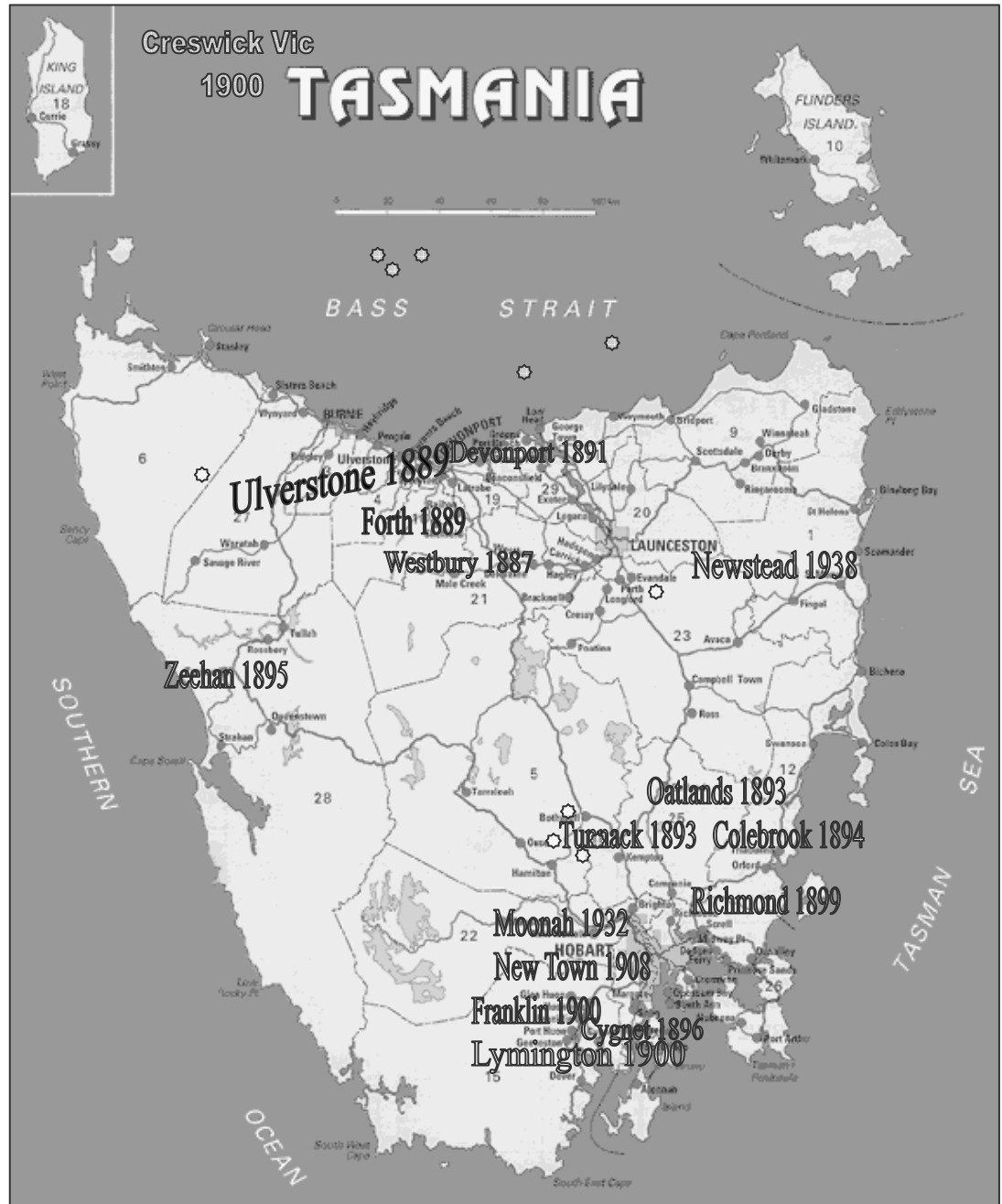
With regard to the foregoing His Holiness ordered the present decree to be published.

Given at Rome from the Offices of the Propaganda on the 25th July 1888.

+JOHN CARDINAL SIMEONI, *Prefect.*

Appendix C

Sisters of St Joseph Foundations 1887-1938



[Http://www.tas.gov.au/images/tasmap-600.](http://www.tas.gov.au/images/tasmap-600)

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