

# A Reflection



*Missionaries of the Sacred Heart*

*Central Australia*

1929 - 2007

The following is a very brief overview of the events and the people who paved the way for the Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Alice Springs, Northern Territory. This is not an official publication but an information booklet to coincide with the Celebrations of the work of the MSC Priests and Brothers in Central Australia on 3 June 2007.

From Fr James Long in 1929 to Fr Brian Healy in 2007. Not forgetting Br Ed Bennett who has served this community into his 94<sup>th</sup> year.

There are many small publications, letters and articles along with the book Francis of Central Australia and the Memoirs of Br Ed Bennett, that have helped fill some of the gaps in this magnificent history, each giving their own version of events. There are many tales that still need to be told and hopefully some time in the not too distant future it will all come together as a tribute to the wonderful priests, brothers and sisters, with the help of a band of local Centralians, that have made our parish what it is today.

Acknowledgements:

Francis of Central Australia by Frank McGowan

Archives of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

Memoirs of Br Ed Bennett

N.T. Dreaming

Santa Teresa and East Aranda History by John Pye MSC

OLSH Parish records

Bernie Kilgariff

Br Maurie Bambridge

Fr Adrian Meaney

Fr Brian Healy

Photos supplied by MSC Archives, Parish records, OLSH

College records and Marian and Jim Brown.

Father James Long MSC was the first appointed resident priest of Alice Springs, or Stuart as it was then called, in May 1929. Alice Springs was officially gazetted in 1933. He was given the commission of setting up the Catholic Bush Mission. Prior to this appointment the people of 'Stuart' were administered to by Fr Clunes MSC who came up from Port Augusta, South Australia. Father Long travelled as far as Rumbalara on the train as the line was still under construction so he completed the final part of the trip in a truck driven by Gus Brandt, arriving on 26 May. Father Long resided in the Stuart Arms Hotel but due to the fact that his portable altar had been misplaced on the journey north it was another two weeks before he could celebrate the first Mass. There were about two hundred Europeans along with mixed races and Aborigines. The Residency served as the church but Father Long saw that there was a need for a church to be built and set about the task. "A few months ago I was sent to found a Bush Mission in Centralia. No easy task, to be sure, to tread where no priestly foot has ever pressed. Away out in the real bush there are cattle stations that have never known the blessing of a priest and where souls are starving for the Bread of Life..... Much has to be accomplished – much traveling to be done. .... How to reach them, that is the question, since I have no means of transport except that provided by nature. That is not all, for I have neither house nor the means wherewith to build one." Pray for this new mission that it may accomplish the end for which it was founded: That the Sacred Heart of Jesus might be everywhere known and loved." *The Freemans's Journal* November 14 1929.

Negotiations for land in Stuart commenced April 1929 and on 1 July the Church was given title over Lots 53 and 54 in Hartley Street. It was decided that concrete bricks be used for the building of the church and these were made by Father Long, Stan Cawood and an Aborigine. Building commenced 9 June 1929. The site was marked out by Joseph Kilgariff and the foundations dug. Most of the work was done voluntarily with the brick-laying done by John Kilgariff and the plastering by Arthur Long.

The first Mass took place on Sunday 8 December 1929 even though the church was not yet completed; there were 50 people present. The church cost £795 of which £120 was for labour and about £150 for freight.

The first baptism in the new church took place on 15 May 1930. The baby was Walter William Braitling, son of William Walter Braitling and Doreen Rose Braitling (nee Crooks).

The 26 June edition of the church paper "The Advocate" reported the official opening.

*"In glorious sunshine, the Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Alice Springs was ... solemnly blessed and opened by his Lordship the Bishop of Port Augusta, (Right Rev. Dr. Killian), on Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> inst.*

*The building itself is 45 x 20 feet (13.7m x 6.1m), with a porch in the front 10 x 8 feet (3m x 2.4m), and has a sacristy and two small sacristies. The walls are of concrete bricks, with pale green Arctic glass windows. The floor is jarrah, and the whole property is enclosed with a concrete post fence.)*

*On 4 August 1930 Fr Long was able to report that construction of a house, or presbytery, would soon commence. He described the house as "a real tropical one and seven feet off the ground on concrete piers. There will be a 10 foot verandah all round."*

November 26 1931 Fr Long wrote:

*"Recently I visited part of the parish and covered 2200 miles."*

This trip took in Barrow Creek, Banka Banka Station, Tennant Creek, Newcastle Waters, Anthony's Lagoon, Avon Station, Lake Nash.

*"From here we went onto Lake Nash, and found this the worst part of the track; unlike most of the tableland track, which are rather smooth, this one is very rocky. On the return trip .....*

*before reaching Newcastle Waters a disc wheel broke, and we had a forced stay there of 11 days waiting till another wheel came from Darwin."*

A school was commenced on 27 March 1933. A small stone building on Lot 30 in Bath Street served as the classroom. The school was under the charge of Mr W. Phelan and opened with fifteen pupils.

In the same year, 1933, Lot 32 in Bath Street and adjoining Lot 53, was transferred to the Catholic Church from Monsignor Francis Xavier Gsell.

In 1934 the Church began negotiations for the title of Lot 31 Bath Street. The following year it was granted as freehold.

Father Long departed Alice Springs and was succeeded in January 1935 by Fr Patrick J. Maloney who was to establish a mission for Aboriginal people of East Aranda. Frank McGarry arrived in Alice Springs in March 1935 to work with Fr Maloney as a layman. The "Little Flower Mission", as it was called, was established in the back yard of the presbytery.

The Administrator offered Father Maloney a tract of land outside the town where a water supply was found on the northern bank of Charles Creek. 425 acres (172 ha) was granted in December 1936. The mission moved there the following year. A school/church was built and a kitchen and laundry was built to the east.

Father Maloney wrote about the transfer to Charles Creek:

*"We were very glad to leave the town..... the result is that now we have three streets, with wurlies all in line. We are glad to say that the black have built their own homes, though under great difficulties."*

In October of the same year Brother Edward Bennett MSC at 22 years of age was appointed to the Little Flower Mission. He arrived in Alice Springs in December along with Father Wilfred Dew who was to relieve Fr Maloney while he took a break for a month. Fr Dew later moved to Tennant Creek.

With the establishment and growth of the Mission at the Charles River, Fr Maloney soon saw the need for Sisters to care for and teach the children so he wrote to Mother Concepta Henschke, Provincial of the OLSH Sisters in Kensington NSW. On 5 February 1938 three Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Sisters arrived in Alice Springs from Kensington, New South Wales. These were Sister Germaine Cawood, daughter of the Government Administrator, Sister Columbanus Baker and Sister Stephanie McNally. When the sisters arrived they were placed in quarantine for nearly three weeks as they had passed through polio infected areas.

On 28 February Fr George Henschke arrived from Sydney and on the same day the nuns opened the Catholic school with 25 children attending, Bernie Kilgariff the first student enrolled. This first "Convent" school was built by Steve Kilgariff, Gordon Lines and Brother Ed Bennett.

Fr. Maloney, Br Ed Bennett and Frank McGarry vacated the presbytery so that the nuns could use it as a convent. They took up residency in a two roomed stone cottage. Three more sisters arrived 12 April 1938: Mother Adrian Smith, Sister Gemma McCullagh and Sister Consolata McKay.

The school, now called Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Primary School, began on 28 February 1938 and held classes in the church. Infants were taught on the porch.

Brother Bennett was known as an excellent bush carpenter having made seats for the church-school, seats and tables for the Mission and then turned his hand to laying concrete flooring for the bough shed which had been built by Frank McGarry and some aborigines

Construction of a new school began on Lot 32 in Bath Street in 1939. Turner transferred the title of Lot 30 to the Church in April of the same year. 18 March 1939 Father Henry V. Eather and Mother Josepha and Sister Kevin arrived: Fr Eather replaced Fr Maloney. Later in the year construction of a new presbytery began on Lot 53 in Hartley Street, being built by Fr Eather, Steve Kilgariff, Gordon Lines and Br Bennett.

The school was completed in time for the 1940 school year and consisted of two classrooms and a verandah. The new presbytery was completed at about the same time. It was built

by Father Eather, Steve Kilgariff, Gordon Lines and Brother Bennett.

Boarders were then taken in for the school. Girls slept on one side of the front verandah of the convent and boys slept on the other side.

10 May 1941 the Provincial of the OLSH sisters, Mother Concepta arrived along with Sister David. In 1942 a new convent was built on Lot 55. The old convent was renovated and became the boarding house for the school.

#### *Little Flower Mission*

In mid 1940 Lot 55 in Hartley Street was transferred to the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The Army arrived in Alice Springs late in the year and both administrators and missionaries became concerned and convinced that a new site for the Little Flower Mission was needed. A site at Arltunga, 80 miles east of Alice Springs was selected. The Bishop applied for a Mission Lease and a reserve of eighty-six square miles was approved. The journey over a rough track took six hours.

Bishop Gsell assigned Father Eather, Brother Groves and two nuns to Arltunga and Father Frank Flynn to be in charge at Alice Springs. Br Groves worked and lived at Charles Creek, Arltunga and Santa Teresa during his time in Central Australia.

In September 1942 military trucks transferred Father Eather, two nuns all the mission aborigines along with everything from the Alice Springs mission. The facilities were minimal and could not cope with this influx. The nuns stayed at the police station the night and returned to Alice Springs the next morning with Father Eather. Frank McGarry remained there with the over 100 mission aborigines. Father Eather and Brother Groves visited Arltunga over the next few months. Work was done on the road and in March 1943 building materials were sent by Government truck along with a grant of £750. With the return of Father Eather, acting as cook and overseer and Brother Groves working on the foundations of the school along with the work of Frank McGarry, Arltunga facilities progressed. Later they moved to Cross Roads Well (six miles from Arltunga) for 12 months due to a lack of water.

In 1953 the Catholic Church was given the rights to approximately 500 square miles at the junction of Todd and Phillipson Rivers about 45 miles from Alice Springs, the Arltunga Mission was moved to what became known as Santa Teresa on 30 June 1953. An old army hut from Darwin was the first building erected. It served a triple purpose: staff quarters, depot and church. The second building was a presbytery and the third a convent. The Church was built by Steve Kilgariff, and the hospital built under the watchful eye of Fr Dixon. Br Ed Bennett returned to Central Australia and was assigned to Santa Teresa.

#### *Back in Alice Springs*

1943 a recreation hall was built on Lot 30. With troops arriving into the town the church and other facilities could not cope with the numbers. The hall was used for Mass on Sundays as well as for recreation.

In 1946 Gemma House was built behind the old convent on Lot 54 and a new wing was added to the school. Gemma House became the girls' boarding house and the old convent (renamed John Paul Hostel) became the boys' boarding house.

1965 Fr Dwyer MSC commenced preparation for the present Church. Construction of a new church was underway on Lot 56 in late 1967. The foundation stone was blessed by Bishop J.P. O'Loughlin on 17 March 1968. The Church was officially opened on 11 May 1969. Construction was by the Alice Springs firm Sitzler Brothers and the architect was Andrew McPhee. A two storey dormitory building was constructed at the rear of the convent in 1969. The present day OLSH primary school was completed in 1972 and dedicated to Father Dwyer.

In March 1977 the official opening took place of the St Vincent de Paul Society Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre. Mr and Mrs Dick Palmer cut the ribbon to officially open the centre.

The old two story convent was demolished in 1978 and replaced by the present Parish House. Initially this was used as a dormitory for the boys, and dining room and kitchen for both

boys and girls. About two years later staff shortages caused the closure of the boarding section. In 1979 the Marist Brothers established a foundation in Alice Springs at the invitation of Fr. Adrian Meaney, although they had been investigating the need for their presence in Alice Springs since the early 1970's. They were living in the old house on Lot 27 in Bath Street. With the closing down of the Hostel it was decided that the Marists would move into the presbytery and that the MSC would take over the vacant Hostel. This move took place in Easter 1986.

The **OLSH Sisters** continued their wonderful work in the parish both in education and the care and support of the Aboriginal children.

The **Little Sisters of Jesus** arrived in 1956 and worked and lived in poverty sharing with the aboriginal people and living among them.

**FMM Sisters**: Sisters Dympna, Suzanne and Christine FMM were the first FMM Sisters in Alice Springs arriving in January 1975. The sisters were asked to look after the religious education lessons in the Government schools. As well as R.E. lessons the sisters worked at Amoonguna with the Aboriginal children and migrant work was also undertaken by Sister Eulalia. The sisters continue to work from their convent in Gillen today.

Today we see the **Missionaries of Charity** working in the parish. The Parish was privileged to have had a visit from their founder Mother Teresa.

### **Notes on History of Alice Springs Parish 1972 to 1981**

**By Father Adrian Meaney**

#### **1972**

It was January 4, 1972 that I arrived in the Alice from Darwin. Father Bert Cuneo, Curate, had already left the parish and father Alan Guest was to depart within three days. Moreover, at the Convent there was a new Superior, Sister Laurencia, a new headmistress for the school, Sister Gemma and two other Sisters Lucia and Helen. Father McDermott was relieving at Tennant Creek and would arrive down some time later.

It was decided to officially open the new school on March 12 and to prepare for this we organised a parish mission which was given by father Tom Dumphy CsSR, March 5-12. On the 12<sup>th</sup> we had

the official opening of the school with Doctor Hedley Beare, Bishop J. Doyle MSC and Father Vin Dwyer MSC. The school was dedicated to father Jim Dwyer MSC a former Parish Priest who had, in large part, been responsible for the construction of the school.

On the same day as the opening of the school, we published the results of a questionnaire which we had arranged in order to ascertain the willingness of parishioners to become involved in the life of the parish. From all this it became evident that people were very concerned about the High School students and about the need for youth activities.

August 22 saw the visit of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Gino Paro. He was returning to Canberra after the consecration of the Darwin Cathedral. About the same time Archbishop Virgil Copas of Port Moresby also arrived. The Archbishop and I worked together for seven years in Port Moresby and it was a happy reunion. His grace spoke at all the masses on the Sunday and a special appeal was made for his mission.

#### **1973**

February 18-25, Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne. Graham Ross and Michael Rice went with a group of Aboriginal people to this Congress and Lionel Rose jnr went as a representative of the Altar Servers.

On April 19 the Marist Old Scholars had a meeting and on the 20<sup>th</sup>, Good Friday, an impressive passion Play was presented by a large number of parishioners. Over six hundred attended this truly outstanding performance. The inspiration behind the production came from Margaret Butler.

On June 1 the Gap boxing group was formed. The interim meeting consisted of Graham Ross, Bob Liddle, John Burrs, Terry Gadsby, Father Meaney and Michael Rice.

On August 1 the School Ladies Auxilliary was changed and known thereafter as Parents and Friends Association.

On August 21 Bishop J. O'Loughlin MSC, visited Alice Springs and presided at a Mens'

dinner held at the Top of the Town Restaurant, Alice Springs Hotel.

On October 28 sixteen children from Amoonguna received their First Holy Communion, some being baptised on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

November 3, an over 18 Fancy Dress Caberet was held at Elkira Court.

#### **1974.**

February 13<sup>th</sup>. Knights of the Southern Cross investigating the possibility of setting up a Credit Union.

Decision taken to complete the wall behind the altar in the church as planned by A. McPhee.

Approval given for lease of land at Gillen.

March. Father L. Bissett MSC arrived as new curate.

April 15<sup>th</sup>. Father Cuskelly MSC (Father General) visits for 2 days.

April 20<sup>th</sup> Bishop O'Loughlin's Silver Jubilee of his Episcopate.

July 23<sup>rd</sup>. Parish dinner at the Top of the Town to honour Bishop O'Loughlin's silver Jubilee as Bishop. Town Council gave a civic reception for the Bishop. Parish presented the Bishop with a cheque for \$1,200.

September 15<sup>th</sup>. Bishop O'Loughlin met with Parish Council.

December 3<sup>rd</sup> Special thanks to Mark Tattersall for his work in the parish. Mark expects to join the MSCs.

Gap Store (St V de Paul) has been remodelled by Mr K Edgan, St V de Paul representative from Sydney.

December 18<sup>th</sup>. Folk mass at 5.30pm. This was held every Sunday.

The lottery ceased at the end of December.

#### **1975.**

January. Cyclone Tracy work of the St V de Paul. The Parish, especially through the St V de Paul, united with the Alice community in assisting the people of Darwin as they came south. In excess of

\$20,000 was spent through church agencies in Alice in the first six weeks of 1975.

January 25<sup>th</sup>. Sisters Dympma, Suzanne and Christine FMM arrive and parishioners were at the airport to welcome them- red letter day for the parish.

February 9<sup>th</sup>. Father K. Summerhayes MSC arrives.

April 9<sup>th</sup>. Mr K Scully, Assistant Editor of Catholic Weekly Sydney arrives in Alice to write articles on Centralia.

June. Missionaries of Charity invited to work in the parish in 1976.

September 20 parish Walkathon up the Todd River followed by mass offered at Telegraph Station as part of parish picnic.

September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Sister Pamela FMM visits the parish.

#### **1976.**

June 10<sup>th</sup>. Meeting at presbytery to discuss need for Adult Education.

June 28<sup>th</sup>. Fatehr John Clancy MSC visits us as he prepares to make his overseas trip. Fr John has spent many years working at Santa Teresa Mission and his mark will remain on the people for many years – he has been a great blessing.

October 8<sup>th</sup>. 1976 parish Dinner dance held at Verdi Club. Guest was Bishop J. O'Loughlin.

#### **1977.**

January. Parish library in the presbytery is open for parishioners use.

January 30<sup>th</sup>. Brothers Leo McVeigh and Aiden Smith (Marists) arrive in the parish – the beginning of a new era.

March 10<sup>th</sup>. Visitors: Bishop O'Loughlin MSC, Fr Bede Mooney Assistant Provincial MSC, Sisters Jessie Regional Superior OLSH, Marion and Gemma OLSH, Sister Pamela Provincial FMM and Sisters Frances and Teresita OSS (Tennant Creek).

March 17<sup>th</sup>. Opening of St V de Paul Centre at the Gap. \$90,000.

Bishop L Faulkners of Townsville to say Mass for children in resource centre then bless the Centre.

March 18<sup>th</sup>. Opening of Resource Centre by Senator T Tehan, Victoria. Builder Russell Thomas at cost of \$385,640.

March 19<sup>th</sup>. St Pat's races in afternoon. Ball in evening.

March 20<sup>th</sup>. FMM Convent at Gillen opened by Bishop O'Loughlin with open air mass at 9.15am followed by opening and refreshments.

March 27<sup>th</sup> Parish group meet at Gap Centre to discuss suitable activities for people of Gap area.

March 31<sup>st</sup>. Passover meal at school.

May 8<sup>th</sup>. Welcome to Sister Roslyn the new Superior of the Little Sisters of Jesus.

May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Fr N Earl MSC conducting retreat for OLSH sisters. MSC priests on retreat with other MSCs at Daly River.

May 29<sup>th</sup> Death of Fr O McDermott MSC.

June 7<sup>th</sup>. Fr Summerhayes on vacation for 2 months. This year he is celebrating 25 years as a priest. Fr Alan Guest MSC to relieve in parish.

June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Fr John Flynn MSC leads Living Faith discussions.

June 25<sup>th</sup> FMM Sisters move into new Convent at Gillen. The Bath St house will be occupied by the Marist Brothers.

July 3<sup>rd</sup>. Presentation of parish financial report. In 1974 most of the parish finances helped pay off the parish church debt. Funds were then allowed to accumulate. Thus the parish was able to pay from its own resources half the cost of the new FMM convent (total cost \$86,000). All future planning will depend largely on the financial support and generosity of parishioners.

July 30<sup>th</sup>. Meeting of Aborigines and the Church. Papers by Margaret Gaff, Sue Wallington and Sr Christine.

August 28<sup>th</sup>. Br E Bennett MSC has taken up full time duties in the parish.

October 9<sup>th</sup>. Welcome to all participants in National Aboriginal Sports Carnival.

November 13<sup>th</sup>. Primary School Hostel – grant of \$190,000 approved for upgrading. Dental Room – approval given for dental chair and facilities in school.

December 7-22. Fr Meaney to attend the MSC Provincial Chapter.

## **1978**

January 8<sup>th</sup>. Brother Bennett and some helpers have done a great deal of work in school grounds. Garden plots are ready for plants. Brother Kevin to supervise erection of adventure playground.

April Natural Family Planning centre to operate in old Church every second Wednesday of the month.

April 7<sup>th</sup>. Visit of Governor General and Lady Cowen to OLSH school.

April 9<sup>th</sup>. Contract for construction of primary school signed with Sicoma Constructions. Tender price \$139,578. To be completed within six months.

May 5-8. FMM Seminar. Accommodation and discussions at YWCA. Meals at Melanka. 70 territory and interstate visitors. Theme of Seminar- Religious Instruction amongst Aboriginal people. Open to all interested people.

July 9<sup>th</sup> Congratulations to Sr Eulalie on her 81<sup>st</sup> birthday.

September 3<sup>rd</sup>. John Paul 1 becomes our new Pope. Aborigines – a statement of Concern is published by the Commission of Justice and Peace.

October 1<sup>st</sup>. Casino for Alice. Interested persons urged to sign petition at Church door to

be sent to NT Legislative Assembly. Objections:-

- forcing casino on us without consultation
- the attitude that money for NT matters more than its people
- tourism based on gambling rather than tourism based on unique environment of the Centre
- the possible undesirable social effects of casino – drink, crime, prostitution.

October 22<sup>nd</sup> Parish picnic at Honeymoon gap.

October 29<sup>th</sup> Marriage encounter. First Darwin weekend late Feb/Mar 1979 to follow Alice.

November 12<sup>th</sup>. Letter by Fr A Meaney objecting to the complete misrepresentation by the NT Government of the arguments put by Catholic church to the establishment of a casino in Alice.

### **1979.**

January 14<sup>th</sup>. Visitors included Fr Dominico Garcia, Chaplain to Spanish Migrants Sydney, Fr Brian McCoy SJ and Jesuit student Michael Kelly.

February 18<sup>th</sup>. St Pat's Ball. It has been suggested that this is a family affair and that children 11 and over be allowed to attend. The dance will be from 8pm to 1am.

Students have occupied the new Primary School Hostel. There are 25 boarders. Hostel is being furnished and parishioners are asked to make a donation of something to make the Hostel a more homely place.

March 18<sup>th</sup>. Official opening of Moloney House (Boarding School) by Senator Fred Chaney. Special mass at 11am in Church, lunch at School, concert in the Hall. Visitors include Srs Gemma and Laurencia, Sr Patricia Ryan, Frs Fyfe and Luby, Brs Kinnane and Lilwall and Fr Reilly and Sisters and Brothers from Santa Teresa. Thanks to Federal Govt for grant of \$190,000 for this project and to OLSH Sisters who have given so much to so many over the last 40 years that the Hostel has existed.

Sr Cabrini has come to join the OLSH community. Special thanks to Les Loy for his work on the St Pat's races. Visitor Fr Bob Boland CsSR.

April. Terry Bowman and Paul McGuigan are on leave for 4 weeks.

May 8<sup>th</sup>. Meeting of all secondary school students to look at their needs.

Death of Fr Dick Docherty MSC, founder of Port Keats mission who worked in the Territory for over 50 years. An outstanding missionary with a firm trust in Christ.

June 11<sup>th</sup>. Prayer group meeting at 9 Cedar Court. Gathering of members of various churches to pray for Christian unity. Talk by Fr Hoy at 5pm meal at 6pm and Prayer by member of Uniting Church at 7.45pm.

June 10<sup>th</sup>. Paul McGuigan leaves parish after invaluable years as a voluntary worker. Going to USA with parents for ordination of Servite priest and on his return intends to join MSC Congregation.

Flo Dourlay who was housekeeper at Presbytery for approx 4 years is visiting Alice.

July. Meeting re Golden Jubilee Celebrations. Parish was founded 50 years ago. Fr Jim Long MSC celebrated first Mass in Alice in 1929. Fr Long left Adelaide by the Ghan on May 23<sup>rd</sup> and went as far as the train could go at that time – the railhead at Rumbalara. The journey took three days. Father then travelled the remaining 140 miles by truck. He was given a great welcome by the townspeople of the day and they strongly supported his every effort. By 1930 the first Catholic Church was built and is still standing beside the Presbytery. *Alice – A Modern Friendly Town* copies of the publication on sale at front of Church for \$2.80. Thanks to production team of Fr K Summerhayes, Bernadette Joyner, Barry Alwright, Vic Urban, Wayne Zerba, Brendan Heenan, Damian Ryan, Trist McMahon, the Santa Teresa staff and people.

July 8<sup>th</sup>. Bingo ceased as from Friday as there are too few helpers.

July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Jubilee Celebrations planned to date: Friday August 31<sup>st</sup> – Civic Reception Saturday Sept 1<sup>st</sup> – Parish Dinner

Sunday Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> – Parish Mass of Thanks with picnic to follow.

August 12<sup>th</sup>. The Apostolic Pro-Nuncio Archbishop Luigi Barbarito and the Chief Minister Paul Everingham accepted invitations to parish dinner.

August 19<sup>th</sup>. Sr Germaine, an OLSH Sister, who as a child was instrumental in the appointment of the first priest to come to Alice Springs, will be here for the Jubilee Celebrations. Sister was also one of the original OLSH Sisters who came to the Alice in 1938. Fr Wilfred Dew MSC who came with Br Bennett in 1935 will also be here.

### **1980.**

February 13<sup>th</sup> Bishop O'Loughlin interested in some building being commenced at Gillen. Two plans one for \$100,000 and one for \$40,000. the latter plan could start quickly if agreed upon.

Fr Meaney reaches 25 years as an MSC.

March 17-19. Frs Meaney and Summerhayes attend priests meeting in Darwin.

April 22. Four Vietnamese families arriving in Alice in next 3 weeks. Meeting with Mr R Fordham (Indo China Refugee Assoc SA) and a Vietnamese refugee for discussion.

Thanks to all who attended Education meeting over 80. A catholic High School is wanted here and Fr Fyfe now is aware of this.

May 4<sup>th</sup>. Resolution of Dioscesan Education Council re catholic High School.

“That the Dioscesan Education Council inform Fr Meaney and the Catholic people of Alice Springs that it supports in principle the establishment of a Junior Secondary School in Alice Springs and that the Catholic Education office will give what ever assistance it can to the Alice Springs parish in the preparation of a detailed study of the project and preparation of a formal submission.” Moved Bishop O'Loughlin, Sec Mike Higgins.

May 18<sup>th</sup>. Christian Unity Week. Fr Meaney preaching at Uniting Church and Pastor Steve Mattner preaching at Catholic Church on 25<sup>th</sup>.

July 29<sup>th</sup>. Inaugural meeting of “Grow”.

August 6<sup>th</sup>. AGM of newly constituted Gap Neighbourhood Centre

October 10<sup>th</sup>. Blessing and official opening of St Francis Centre Gillen with 6pm Mass.

November 30<sup>th</sup>. Kevin O'Brien is attending a St V de Paul store conference in Melbourne. Elsie Carswell has completed 12 months service in John Paul Hostel and is returning to Tasmania. Marist Brothers have agreed to supply two brothers for a new Catholic Junior High School.

### **1981.**

February 15<sup>th</sup>. Terry Bowman enters MSCs to commence studying for priesthood.

Elsie Carswell returns to work in parish and Patricia Fenton arrives to work at John Paul Hostel.

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### **Catholic High School**

Plans were underway to open a Catholic High School in Alice Springs. Brother Des Hornsby of the Marist Brothers was chosen as the first principal of the High School. He along with an elected parish committee in 1982 planned for the opening of the school. The decision was made to start the school in 1983 and the old John Paul Hostel was utilised for the purpose. A new campus was set up in Sadadeen which it was hoped would be ready for the 1984 school year but it was about another six months before this happened. The old church served as an extra temporary classroom along with a room and verandah at the Convent. Alice Springs Catholic High School opened its doors on 23 July 1984 with 117 students from Year 7 to Year 10.

The Primary school eventually expanded to two sites in 1992, with the second campus at Traeger Park. In 1994 the High School took on senior classes (Years 11 and 12). At the beginning of 1995 Bishop Ted Collins announced that OLSH Primary School and Catholic High School would combine to become one College by the beginning of the 1997 school year. He noted that the decision offers the opportunity to maximize Catholic resources and to better prepare the students for the future. Now known as Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College it has an enrolment of

nearly 1000 students from Transition to Year 12 across the three campuses.

**Parish work** continued throughout the years often working quietly for the people of the Centre.

In 1986 there was much preparation for the planned visit of Pope John Paul II to Alice Springs on the 29 November that same year. Students prepared butterflies which were then used to adorn the caterpillar path on the grounds of Blatherskite Park.

Br Ed Bennett, Fr Kingston Summerhayes and Sr Laurentia made up the reception party at the airport to greet the Pope. This was a highlight for the Aboriginal people of the centre as Pope John Paul walked among them.

Community Refugee Settlement Scheme came to the Red Heart in 1980 when local parishioner Enzo Floreani set up a program to sponsor Vietnamese "Boat People". The parish bulletin carried information for those interested in being a sponsor family to a refugee family. In May 1980 four refugee families arrived. Some difficulties were encountered with housing and work. The Santa Teresa Town House, which was originally built to house Aborigines who visited from Santa Teresa and no longer used, soon became home to the families. Today many are still living and working in Alice Springs.

### **A Marist Brothers Snapshot of some MSC**

#### **Pastors**

#### **By Br Maurie Bambridge**

**Father Adrian Meaney** was parish Priest at the time the Marist Brothers came to work in Alice Springs. He gave the Brothers a great welcome and encouraged them in their early efforts to explore various apostolates within the parish – such as the St Vincent de Paul Gap Youth Centre, the town campus; Yirara College; High School Catechetics and youth group activities in conjunction with the FMM Sisters.

Adrian was a gregarious person who could relate easily and warmly with all kinds of people; meals at the presbytery table were often lively affairs with lots of passers-by enjoying Adrian's hospitality; in the school yard he was king of the kids likewise the bush kids in the then exiting hostel enjoyed his company and generosity.

His dynamism encouraged much parish social activity including a parish bush picnic out at Honeymoon Gap there was real touch of the entrepreneur about him (some referred to him as a 'con man'!) but he could laugh off such assessments; the parish was never the same after he left.

**Fr Kingston Summerhayes** was the assistant priest to Fr Meaney. He was urbane and outgoing with a quirky sense of humour and a gusty laughter. Painting was his special gift and he produced classy landscapes. In collaboration with Bernadette Joyner, Kingston published a fine collection of his paintings. His earlier pastoral work at Santa Teresa brought out a care and sympathy for needy people to who he showed generosity and liberality.

**Fr Phil Hoy** was a classic extrovert and a tall imposing figure who could relate easily with all kinds of people. His powers of persuasion and encouragement made him an ideal local manager at the time of the visit of Pope John Paul II to Alice Springs in 1987. Fr Phil made a great contribution to the success of that historic occasion. One could not easily reuse his requests for help especially when he himself was always in the thick of the action. His ready sense of humour and hearty laughter helped to solve many sticky problems. He was held in high esteem.

**Fr Brian Healy** has been a long serving MSC to the Territory having been appointed to the Top End, Santa Teresa and for the last 18 years Alice Springs as Parish Priest. His responsibilities in the Diocese has been varied.

Fr Brian has served the Alice Springs community faithfully, always punctual, celebrating daily Mass and at times all five masses on a weekend and daily rosary at Our Lady's altar. Father has overseen the administration of the OLSH Parish, a along with the normal duties of a Pastor: Marriages, Baptisms, Hospital and Home Visits, Last Sacraments - Anointing, Reconciliation, Requiems – Burials, November Memorials, First Communions, Confirmation. As well as these duties he has been very generous with his time to the staff and students of Our Lady of

the Sacred Heart College providing staff, class and school Masses, reconciliation, liturgies and talks.

The hospitality at the Presbytery continued and parishioners came in their numbers with generous platters of food to help celebrate a birthday or special occasion or commemoration.

Service to the Alice Springs community in general took the form of involvement with the Ministers Fraternal, Australia Day Ceremonies, Anzac Day and November Ceremonies, visits to the Jail and the Prisoners Fellowship.

Father is totally committed, untiring, uncomplaining and obliging.

### **A Letter from Fr Adrian Meaney MSC**

My time in the Alice was one of great blessings. The parishioners were receptive and open-minded. There was a breadth of experience amongst the worshippers who filled the pews on Sundays, and the different Religious Congregations offered a catholic diet of views. We were gifted with people from many parts of the globe, and through the generosity of the locals, and with support from “Corroboree Lotteries” we were able to have an extensive building programme.

The fresh spirit of Vatican II was in the air, and most of the congregation welcomed it with joy.

Obviously we had a primary concern for the aboriginal peoples –the first inhabitants of Centralia.

We welcomed visitors, especially Catholics from far flung properties, and the surrounding settlements.

I personally was encouraged by my experience in PNG where I had been introduced to a Catholic Church with missionaries from very parts of the world, where people dared to make a difference, and where the lay Catholics, especially the catechists were the foundation of all good works.

While I was in the Alice the following worked with us and consequently became members of the MSC, Paul McGuigan, Terry Bowman and Mark Tattersall.

If the MSC gave a lot to the Alice it is equally true that we received as much. Regularly here in Sydney I go for meals with former parishioners and later in the year I have been asked to bless a marriage going back to Alice days. Alice is a place where you can easily make friends for life.

One day I plan to come back and spend some time in the center. Perhaps when the SVD's, who are such wonderful people, are in full flight. I admire them greatly, and I am sure so will you all.

Make them welcome.

God bless.

Adrian F. Meaney MSC

3 June 2007.

### **A Reflection by Bernie Kilgariff AM OAM**

I was born 30 September 1923, and arrived in Stuart (Alice Springs) from Adelaide with mother Mary (nee Egar) along with my sister Marian in 1930. My father Steve, because of the depression, worked with Joe Kilgariff, who had the Stuart Arms Hotel. Joe and his family arrived in 1926/27 and my father 1928/29. Our family lived first in the old Stuart Arms Hotel.

Father Long MSC was first priest assigned to the area. Steve, Joe Kilgariff and Stan Cawood built the small Church in Bath Street. I became an Altar Boy for Fr. Long.

In 1930 the construction began of a two story house on the north side of the Church which became the first presbytery. Prior to that a small dwelling in the middle of the block was their living quarters – it was rough living.

Anzac Hill was then known as “Priest Hill” or “Priest Lookout”, the population was less than 200. There was a “mixed train” once a fortnight. No communication other than through the Overland Telegraph Station that was at the Post Office where we collected any mail. There was no aircraft and no electricity, no water reticulation, no made roads and little fresh food.

The priests over the years had a most arduous life, with little home comforts. An old 'Morris' vehicle their only transport.

Father Maloney the next priest, was a great man seen walking with his collapsible walking stick. He was a well known figure. He was a respected musician who entertained the town people with his music stick. His instrument was a stick of about 16 inches long with knobs that he could play music/chords on. He often entertained the town people in the welfare hall on the northern end of Todd Street with his music, songs and poetry. This building was eventually removed and now is known as the Steak House in Bath Street.

Aboriginal people in the area lived in a primitive state, a few in Alice Springs but mostly in 'wurlies' to the north and west of the town. The Aboriginal deaths, particularly children were extremely high in the area for many years. Health facilities and hygiene was poor.

Br Bennett arrived ex Sydney in 1935. Frank McGarry and Fr. Long commenced the Little Flower Mission on the eastern bank of the Charles Creek. These were difficult years. Br Bennett dug the well there as there was no water. Fr Maloney, Br. Ed Bennett and Frank McGarry were a great team.

During the war the Little Flower Mission was moved 'holus-bolus' to Arltunga, then later to Cross Roads Well.

The contribution of the Catholics in Alice Springs has been immense, the Sisters, Priests, Brothers, lay people in their daily toil have made a strong foundation.

Each MSC could well be written in a book – there is a considerable sadness to think that it is now happening. It is just beginning to sink in that this period of some 78 years is coming to a close and another period of Catholicism commences. To write about what each MSC has done in their lifetime is impossible. We hope that the proposed plaque in the Church will reflect to some degree their achievements and our appreciation.

Perhaps one little story indicates the efforts of the many priests over these years.

“When Father J Dwyer commenced and with his Church committee built the present Church, his drive was amazing, so impressive was his tireless management that one Les Loy said, “Thank goodness he is not in business with us, or we would be broke” in closing, we have had in this entire period of 78 years, three Bishops: Bishop Gsell, Bishop O’Loughlin and Bishop Collins, we thank them for their overall administration. We pray for them.

Our present MSC priest is Father Brian Healy. He is the last of the fine body of MSC priests in Alice Springs. We cannot close this chapter of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart without paying him a very high tribute for his efforts from 1990 to 2007, some 17 years. Words cannot describe the warranted tribute. His selfless endeavours on behalf of the parish. We wish him well in his future years wherever he may be as an MSC in service to people.

We pray for him at least as some small token for our respect of this great Australian. He has of course, been recognized by the award, the Order of Australia Medal, for his service to the Church and its people.  
3 June 2007.

### **Speech by Brendan Heenan on the history of the MSC's in Central Australia – 3 June 2007.**

The Parish owes a great debt to the Sacred Heart Missionaries or the MSC's as we know them.

They saw the need for a mission in Alice Springs.

Fr. James Long MSC was the first priest here in May 1929 – he had a total of 30 parishioners. The town had a population of approx 200. He was the first of 73 MSC priests and 3 Brothers to come and minister to the parish of Alice Springs and the mission in Central Australia.

I would like to highlight some of the achievements and memories of the MSC priests and brothers in our parish during the early days and of course up to the present day.

Fr Long lived in the Stuart Arms Hotel for the first few months on arrival. The first presbytery was a small building, which stood for many years in the middle of what were later the school grounds. That was built in the early 1920's It was rough living – every block in town had their own well for water – no electricity – very little fresh food – communication was via the “Overland Telegraph Station”.

Fr James Long purchased an acre of land in Bath Street on which to build a church and Father Long asked Steve Kilgariff, his brother Joe Kilgariff and Stan Cawood to build the small church where it still stands today. All the bricks were handmade in moulds –by Fr James Long, Stan Cawood and an aboriginal man.

Fr. Patrick Maloney arrived in 1935 to take over from Fr. Long. Brother Bennett had arrived in 1935. Fr. Maloney saw the need for an aboriginal mission – and with the help of Brother Bennett and lay missionary Frank McGarry, started the “Little Flower Mission” at Charles Creek. Fr. Maloney was a great entertainer. He played the piano with a piano stick, (as I have been told by Bernie Kilgariff and Marion Brown). He also sang and recited poetry.

Fr. Eather came next in early 1940. He asked Steve Kilgariff to build a hall in 1942 and with the help of soldiers, during the war years. It was the largest hall in town for many years, and was used for all school functions, balls, wedding receptions and so on. It was hard and difficult work for the early MSC priests to establish, fund and maintain the parish, schools and the mission.

Monsignor Francis Xavier Gsell was responsible for all Catholic Church involvement with aborigines in the N.T. from 1906 – 1949. Bishop Gsell resided in Alice Springs from 1942 until 1945 when all people were evacuated from Darwin during the war. He then spent 4 years from 1945 to 1949 in Darwin before Bishop O’Loughlin MSC succeeded him as Bishop of the N.T.

In 1939 the Little Flower Mission at Charles Creek was moved to Arltunga at the start of the war.

Fr. Dallas Cox was the first permanent MSC priest at Arltunga in 1939.

Brother Groves was with him for the first 2 years. I remember Fr. Cox telling me stories of his arrival in Alice Springs. He was given a fully loaded utility and told to go to Arltunga. He said that he had never driven a vehicle before. He was given a basic lesson on how to drive but not how to change gears. So he eventually drove all the way out to Arltunga in low gear, with many stops on the way.

It was in the 1952 that my father Mick Heenan, Bishop O’Loughlin, Fr. Aub Collins and myself at 12 years old, drove out to the land (which Bishop O’Loughlin had applied for in 1950 as a future site for the Little Flower Mission) Bishop O’Loughlin chose the site and changed the name to “Santa Teresa”. In 1953 the mission at Arltunga moved to Santa Teresa.

Fr. Guest MSC had taken over from Fr. Cox in 1947 and he was the priest in charge of organizing the move from Arltunga to Santa Teresa with the help of Brother Bennett.

Fr. Jim Dwyer MSC came to the Alice Springs Parish in 1963. He proceeded to fundraise, with his church committee, for a new church. His drive was amazing – he established a lottery office in the original presbytery building which was in the middle of the school grounds.

Local businessman Les Loy once said, “Thank goodness he is not in business in opposition to us or we would all be broke.”

Fr. Dwyer had leukaemia for many years. He died the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1969 but was able to say Christmas Mass in 1968 in the new church before it was completely finished. It was officially opened in May 1969 by Bishop O’Loughlin.

Fr. Phil Hoy MSC was the parish priest in 1986 when Pope John Paul came to Alice for the celebrations at Blatherskite Park.

Fr. Brian Healy is the last of our MSC parish priests to minister to the parish. Fr. Healy has been here this time for 17 years. Previously he was at Santa Teresa for 2 years from 1976 to 1978 and then in Alice Springs for 2 years from 1982 to 1984. Then came back to Alice Springs in 1989.

Fr. Healy has been recognised by the award “The Order of Australia” for his service to the church and its people.

We have had three Bishops during the 78 years – Bishop Gsell, Bishop O’Loughlin MSC and our current Bishop Ted Collins MSC.

So it is sad to say goodbye to the MSC priests and brothers. We will not forget their contribution to the parish and its people, their dedication and selfless work since 1929 to the present day.

To speak about each of the MSC priests and brothers and what they have achieved for our community is impossible to talk about today. I hope a historian will record their history for all time.

We will always remember the 73 MSC priests and 3 brothers who lived and worked in our community over 78 years.

Our love and heartfelt thanks to you all from the parishioners and people of Alice Springs.

**From our Parish Priest -  
Fr Brian Healy**

I take this opportunity to thank all parishioners and friends for their tremendous support over the last seventeen years. It would be impossible to name and thank each one. Let's just appreciate generous people who keep the Church clean; people who do washing, ironing and mending, Readers and Leaders at Mass, many who sing , play instruments and lift us with sounds and voices; the young people who serve on the altar, the parishioners who type, print and hand out the Bulletin. You are a wonderful and generous group. May God Bless and reward you. Please continue after I leave and keep the wonderful spirit going.

God Bless  
B.Healy MSC  
3 June 2007.

*This document does not do justice to the great works of the MSC's in Central Australia and will be built upon as more information is gathered and hopefully one day there will be a historian willing to write the book on the wonderful works of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart who have been instrumental in the development of the Catholic Church in Alice Springs as well as the town itself.*