

PAPER VIII

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

A. *Homily at the Mass in St.. Stephen's Cathedral, 3 February 1995, by Fr Denis Martin*

Father James Hanly: 3/2/1895 - 3/2/1995. Just 100 years ago at about this hour a telegram from Sydney was received at "Dara" by Archbishop Dunne. It informed him of the death of Father James Hanly.

Even then, in 1895, many in Brisbane would have asked, "Who was Father Hanly?" It was nearly forty years since he had left - Brisbane had changed from a northern outpost to the capital of a colony and what had been his parish is now the Archdiocese of Brisbane and part of Toowoomba. In later years he would say, he was the P.P. of Queensland.

Having come out from Tipperary to Sydney as a clerical student, he was ordained in September, 1843. Three months later and only 28 years of age, he was sent to Brisbane Town on the little P.S. "James Watt". The main interest in the town was how much wool could be got down from the back country and transhipped while prices held high. Nevertheless, there were a few Catholics grateful to Archbishop Polding for sparing them a priest. Neither were the Archbishop's hopes and expectations misplaced in sending one so young and inexperienced to so isolated a place. He soon earned the respect of Government officials, squatters and Aborigines alike.

There were a few hundred Catholics to attend to - some in Brisbane, fewer in Ipswich, a handful in each of the settlements of Warwick, Drayton, Maryborough and Gayndah, and the rest isolated families on the Stations in between. To seek these out, Father Hanly travelled on horseback twice a year and could be "out of town" for up to six weeks.

What 'John O'Brien' the poet, wrote of 'Fr Pat', is applicable to Father James Hanly and many pioneer priests:

We turned our horses' heads out west beyond the furthest track,
with nothing but an alien star to light the journey back.

We said our Mass in canvas tents, beneath the gnarled trees,
of red-gum slabs and sheets of bark we built our sanctuaries.

As one of the pioneers recalled, "Fr Hanly's labours were immense, but his physique was proof against all labour, and to his flock he was an ideal priest, gentle, big-hearted and self-sacrificing."

On at least one occasion he swam the river on a sick call; several times he stood by the hangman, as the noose tightened at the old Petrie Terrace jail, and almost alone with axe in hand he built a cottage for a widow and her four children on Kangaroo Point. Other deeds are recorded too numerous to be mentioned now.

And he knew a good horse when he saw one! In fact, he owned and bred thoroughbreds and grazed them on the land which he later gave for the establishment of St James' School. The horses he needed for his missionary journeys, but he also participated in the town's early race meetings and took part in kangaroo hunts.

He it was who acquired the land for St Stephen's in 1847 and added two further allotments as they became available. He established the first successful school in the town in 1845. In May of 1850, after years of fund raising and planning and two years of hard, physical work, St Stephen's church was completed.

What can be said of the faith he nurtured, taught and kept alive? Only God knows! the Book of Life is more enduring than the ageing registers which bear testimony to his administration of the Sacraments and missionary trips.

After thirteen years here, Father Hanly was transferred to the south in 1857. He refused the appointment of Bishop of Goulburn in 1865. When he died he was in the 52nd year of his priesthood.

Archbishop Dunne requested prayers throughout the diocese and attended a Solemn Requiem Mass here in the Cathedral a few days later.

Let our Prayer of the Faithful now be that prayer on Dean Hanly's Memorial card:-

“Loving and merciful Jesus, have mercy on the soul of Thy servant James; bring him from the shadows of exile to the bright home of heaven where we trust, Thou and Thy Blessed Mother have woven for him, a crown of unfading glory”

and it concludes with the traditional,

“All I ask of you is, wherever you may be, you will remember me at the altar of the Lord.”

***B. Speech by Father T.P. Boland at Dedication of
Memorial Plaque for Dean James Hanly***

***“First Parish Priest of Queensland”, in Old St Stephen’s
Cathedral on Friday, 3 Feb 1995***

We are here to set in place a memorial to Fr James Hanly, the first “Parish Priest of Queensland”. He built this historic church. Just one hundred years ago he died in Sydney at the age of 80. Fifty-two of those years were spent pioneering in Australia, fourteen of them here in Brisbane.

At the start I should like to thank those who have made it possible for our Brisbane Catholic Historical Society to make this commemoration. First, Archbishop Bathersby, who shows a keen interest in our history, and who matched our donation of \$500 to the Sydney commemoration of Fr Hanly and his confreres. I thank the Administrator of St Stephen’s, Dean Clem Hodge, who approved and encouraged this function. We are deeply grateful to Mrs Rita Tyrell and her sister Mrs Alice Timbrill, relatives of the Hanly family, whose generous gift of \$400 largely paid for the plaque. It was Fr Denis Martin whose acute researches established much of the Hanly story and instituted this event. He, too, supervised the design and preparation of the plaque and the occasion. Mr Michael Lynch produced the appropriate music for the commemorative Mass.

James Hanly was a native of Moorestown, Co. Tipperary, born in 1815, the year of Waterloo. He studied for the priesthood at St John’s College, Waterford.

Like many Irishmen of his time he could not be accepted into his own diocese because of the large number of vocations. He had to await the call of a missionary bishop for ordination. Finished his studies and still unplaced, he heard Archbishop Polding appeal for remote Sydney and responded on the spot. Since Polding was leaving next day, he had to leave without saying goodbye to his family. He never saw Ireland again. It was a very Irish situation, and we should not forget it.

He arrived in Sydney 9 March 1943. On board were several people whose memory assists in making this place appropriate. You might say he is in the company of friends. Archbishop Polding obtained the site. There was a company of Passionists recruited to preach to the aboriginal people on Stradbroke Island. One of these especially, Fr Vaccari, found his unhappy fate tangled with that of Fr Hanly. There were three Christian Brothers, including Brother Larkin. Their stay in Sydney proved temporary, but Brother Larkin remembered his days here and spoke of them to one he encouraged to join his Congregation. This was Brother Ambrose Treacy, the second founder in Australia. Br Larkin returned and finished his days in Brisbane. The Brothers began their teaching in this building in 1875 and a plaque on the outside wall remembers them.

Archbishop Polding was scarcely back in Sydney when he made a pastoral tour of the Moreton Bay area. During his absence overseas Governor Gipps had declared the former penal station open to free settlement. He made his unfortunate visit here, tumbled in the Cleveland mud, and in a foul mood, cut the Brisbane streets by half in width. Polding hastened to inspect and plan for the future. On his return to Sydney he ordained Hanly in September and appointed him to Moreton Bay. He sailed with Fr John Kavanagh on the little paddle steamer "James Watt", 31 December 1943. He was 28 years of age. The European population of Brisbane was 700, of the Queensland area 2000. There were five lawyers and four doctors: what did they all do? There were 17 other educated persons, few of them Catholic. Queen Street consisted of "straggling weatherboard, shingle-roofed houses and low-walled pubs, mercifully obliterated in the great fire of December, 1864." The flames of Brisbane burning must have danced in menace on the walls of this building. Opposite this site stood the gallows, where Fr Hanly often accompanied his parishioners on their last journey.

His nearest priestly neighbours were at Port Macquarie, East Maitland and Singleton. Once a month he rode down New England and met one of them under a particular tree in the middle of nowhere. There they exchanged diocesan gossip and gave each their solitary reconciliation. His pastoral visits carried him over most of S.E. Queensland and northern New South Wales.

As Brisbane grew he had to build a church. There were comparatively few regulars in Brisbane, but there were some distinguished faces among them. W.A. Duncan, after whom Duncan Street was named, was organist and caretaker. Caroline Chisholm was here, though not in this building. James Davis, known to the Aborigines as Duramboi, was married by Hanly in 1846. In that year Hanly contributed £1 to a collection to send Ludwig Leichhardt on his way to the gulf.

By 1847 he was ready to build. In the following year a tender of £1400 was accepted. Hanly had already arranged for £1200 of it. He was constantly on site. One day he noticed a labourer, a newly arrived migrant, overcome by the heat. He took his pick and did the digging for him. The church is all of 45' by 27'. It is often called the Pugin Chapel. Once there was a plaque with that information on it, but, like so much of historic interest, it has disappeared. How close Pugin's connection is we must leave in some obscurity. Augustus Welby Pugin, the great neo-Gothic architect, was friendly with Archbishop Polding, and he provided him with drawings for a small church. It is likely that Polding intended it as a generalised plan for use in country towns. This was in 1842, when Polding was in England and Hanly was recruited. Last year there was an exhibition of Pugin's plans and drawings in England. St Stephen's, I am told, appeared in the catalogue. The first Mass was celebrated here on 12 May 1850. Just a few feet away Fr Hanly stood for seven years and consecrated the life of Brisbane to God and called down the blessing of God on that life. This is a sacred place. We neglect it at our spiritual and cultural peril.

In 1857 James Hanly swapped places with Fr Rigney, his occasional companion under their distant trees. He was made Dean of Yass and refused a bishopric in NSW. The story of the last half century of his life is for another time and another place. Here we recall that he died 3 February 1895.

Monsignor Patrick Hartigan, 'John O'Brien' of the "Boree Log", was born in Yass in 1878. On some occasion when he was a boy he saw an old priest with a long white beard in the sanctuary at Benediction. He had never seen a priest with a beard, and he asked his mother who he was. She replied: "Hush, that is dear old Dean Hanly who was stationed here when your father came." James Hanly was here when our forefathers in faith came; and we pray that this plaque will never let us forget him.

C. Father Canali - Is he a prospective Saint?

Fr Patrick Tynan

6 June 1995

Rather than attempt in the short space of twenty minutes available to me tonight, to sketch Father Canali's life, which you can read for yourself anyway, I thought I would explore the question, in this year of the Beatification of Mother Mary MacKillop, is there enough evidence available to start an enquiry into the life of Father Canali, with a view to seeing if he may also be raised to the altars of the Church.

Last year I took part in a seminar conducted by the Jesuit biographer of Mother Mary, Fr Paul Gardiner. He said that for enquiry to begin into a person's life, as a prospect for canonisation, there must be evidence of a continuing popular devotion, centred around the memory of the person in question. Do we have evidence of continuing popular devotion in the case of Father Canali?

Let us look at some of the evidence. Canali died on the Feast of the Assumption, 15 August 1915. That year the feast was a Sunday. He died at 20 to 8 in the morning in the Mater Hospital in South Brisbane. Word of his death quickly spread among what we would call today the inner city churches. Emotion among the congregations was very strong as the news was broken to the people. At the 11 o'clock Mass at the Cathedral, Father Bill McGoldrick, who was then a young man and on the Cathedral staff, spoke of Canali to the people as the saint of Brisbane and said no priest in Brisbane had sent more souls to heaven than Father Canali. Fr McGoldrick was later the first parish priest of Herston which he left in 1923 to go as the first Australian to the Columban Mission in China. As Father Boland and I both know well, after he was expelled from China in the early 1950s he became Spiritual Director of the Seminary at Banyo where I was a student and Father Boland Professor of Ecclesiastical History. Now, this is the point I want to make, after more than forty years, most of it spent outside Australia, he still spoke to us young students in almost bated breath, of Father Canali, whom he recalled from his young days. In fact it was these reminiscences that led me to try to find out more about this revered man. Is this an indication of continuing popular devotion?

Bishop James Duhig, Coadjutor to Archbishop Dunne, was not in Brisbane at the time of Canali's death. However, he was present at the subsequent month's mind. It was on this occasion that he said that Canali's life recalled that of St Vincent de Paul, St John the Baptist and the Cure of Ars. It was Duhig who

conferred on him the title of the 'Apostle of Brisbane', just as St Philip Neri had been nicknamed the 'Apostle of Rome'.

How well did Duhig know Canali? Let us look at some further evidence. At the dedication of the headstone over Canali's grave twelve months after his death in 1916, Duhig said that Canali was a familiar sight to everyone in the streets for he was always going about doing good. One of the people he would have been familiar to would have been Duhig himself, as a young man before going to Rome to study for the priesthood. He had probably gone to Confession to Canali at the Cathedral while on his rounds as a butcher boy in the 1880s. We find it difficult to imagine Brisbane at the turn of the century - the population was just over 100,000 people. People were much more visible before the advent of the omni-present motor car. Later on as a young priest and Coadjutor Bishop, Duhig would have seen on the annual clergy retreat what others had also noted - Canali's wrapt attention at prayer.

On that occasion I just referred to above, the dedication of the headstone in Nudgee Cemetery, Duhig also said that no patient ever entered or left the Brisbane General Hospital without seeing Father Canali and having a word of kindness from him. It would appear that Canali's ministry to the Brisbane Hospital began while he was still a layman. In any case certainly from the date of his ordination in 1879 till his death in 1915 he was a constant visitor to the sick in that institution. A brass plaque was erected, along with a clock, in the new operating theatre, which had been built in 1914 - now the canteen of the present day hospital. How long these remained there we don't know because the operating theatre changed location in 1939 and was converted into the present canteen in 1957. By accident the misplaced plaque was found in the hospital strong room by Professor John Tryer in 1989, who told the speaker of its existence. It was renovated and re-dedicated on the wall of the ecumenical chapel of the hospital, on B floor, on the 75th anniversary of Canali's death in 1990. Its wording is worth noting in view of the question I put at the start of this talk: "In memory of the Reverend Joseph Augustine Canali who died August 15th, 1915 and whose devoted attention to the inmates of this institution was one of the endearing features of a life abounding in Christian Charity." His memory lives on in the hospital he served so well.

To come next to the mural tablet lying as it does for over two years ingloriously on the floor behind me; and hopefully in the not too distant future to be repositioned within the precincts off the Cathedral with which Canali is associated both as engineer and priest. I stand corrected, Father Martin would know if it otherwise, but I think that Father Canali would be the only priest to be

so commemorated on the walls of the Cathedral, apart from the bishops. I point out to those who don't know that this tablet was on the wall in the south-western corner of the Cathedral near one of the old confessionals until the renovation work carried out in the 1980s.

While on the subject of memorials, it should also be remembered that SS Peter and Paul's Church at Bulimba is named the Father Canali Memorial Church. This church was blessed in 1926. At the time of his death Canali was virtually the parish priest of Bulimba saying Mass on Sundays in the original little wooden church there. It was while returning from a sick call to Bulimba that he had the fatal fall from a tram car which resulted in his death. There are still homes in Bulimba which contain large framed photographs of Father Canali on their walls after eighty years.

The last testimony I want to bring in Canali's favour is that of the Anglican journalist and soldier, Major-General Reginald Spencer Browne. Browne is an interesting character himself. Born in 1856 he entered journalism as a young man, fought in the Boer war and at Gallipoli, married twice, but was childless. In 1927, while one of the editors of the "Courier Mail", he published his well-known Journalist's memories. This has remained a valuable source for both the history and the legend of Queensland. Fortunately, it has an index so it is easy to find out whether or not it contains the name of the person you seek information about. Most entries are only recorded once in the Index. He mentions items about Canali twice - remember this was written twelve years after 1915. On page 19 he is speaking about Dr Cani. He says that Cani was "like the late venerated Father Canali of Brisbane - everything went to the poor". On page 121 he runs over the list of Roman Catholic bishops and priests who were here in the early eighties. He speaks about the Italians and includes the "saintly and quaint Father Canali". And note this was very early in Canali's career.

So there you have some of the evidence. I could give you more if time allowed. Do we have here signs of a "continuing popular devotion"? I leave you to decide.