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Bishop Quinn's Departing Clergy of 1867:

Part II - The Newark Trio

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In the first part of this study of Bishop Quinn's departing clergy of 1867 attention was given to the four priests who relocated to upstate New York - the Albany Quartet. We now turn to the remaining three priests who resumed their pastoral activities in New Jersey, in the diocese of Newark. They were Fathers James J. McGahan, Thaddeus Hogan and William Walsh

Ever since the establishment of New Jersey as a separate colony in 1702, the 'garden state' has been overshadowed by the mercantile colossus on the east bank of the Hudson. The cars of today's New Jerseyans often have the bumper sticker, 'Look Before You Laugh'. This defensiveness is legendary but was especially evident in 1867, two years after the end of the American Civil War. Before shots were fired, New Jersey farmers had voiced considerable sympathy for the agricultural communities of the south. Consequently, as the war progressed, they felt an even greater need to prove their loyalty to the Union than did the other more industrialised states of the North.

When three of Brisbane's departing clergy found themselves in the new diocese of Newark, they immediately found common ground with the New Jerseyans. They too felt under pressure to demonstrate their worthiness and the absence of any remaining skerrick of rebel spirit.

The districts to which they were sent were not so unlike the Darling Downs missions they had abandoned. In 1867, New Jersey was not today's industrial wasteland. It was dotted with woods and lakes, fresh streams and prosperous farms presided over by the stately homes of patriot families. Seventy-five per cent of New Jerseyans lived in the rural counties and this included fifty-five per cent of the state's 250,000 predominantly Irish Catholics. Although parishes were well established in the Irish urban neighbourhoods, such as Newark's Ironbound

section, Jersey City's Horseshoe and Trenton's Fourth Ward, more priests were needed to serve the large numbers of Irish families who had settled in the rural districts in the course of building the Morris, Delaware and Raritan canals, and the Camden and Amboy Railroad. Most of them were the offspring of agricultural workers from Ireland's southern and western counties and had found employment in farming, dairying and logging.

Rev. James J. McGahan

Let us turn firstly to the brief priestly ministry of James J. McGahan who died in Harrison NJ, at the age of thirty-three. McGahan was a country boy who had become a country priest. He was born in 1841, the son of Michael and Kate McGahan of Lower Creggan, in rural Armagh. His call to priesthood came before Irish families had taken to giving the seminary-bound son the best place at table, the warmest corner by the hearth and exemption from soiling his hands with farm work. McGahan's expectations of parish ministry, therefore, would have been simple enough: to have his own parish, to know his people and pastor them well, to enjoy a jar and a clay pipe at the end of the day. He entered All Hallows College in 1859, did not distinguish himself at his studies which, in any event, were cut short because of his bishop's critical need for priests in Brisbane. McGahan's ordination is not recorded in the College register but happened there sometime prior to 1866 by which time he had been sent to assist Father Michael Renehan in the vast rural parish of Toowoomba.

The Darling Downs was an environment which should have suited McGahan and may have done so except for the worsening feud between his parish priest and Bishop Quinn over matters of diocesan finance which would have been beyond McGahan's experience or comprehension. One can sympathise with the young priest thrust so early in his ministry into a conflict of loyalties between his parish priest and bishop. Perhaps ill-advisedly, he opted to stand by Renehan, his fellow alumnus from All Hallows College. On 1 January 1867, McGahan added his name to the famous memorial of complaint addressed to Bishop Quinn. On 9 March of the same year, he would leave Brisbane with Renehan and four other dissidents and by the end of the month sail for England on the *Rakaia*. Quinn believed that McGahan, along with the other young renegades, William Mason Walsh, Thaddeus Hogan, Patrick Sheehan and Matthew Devitt were all 'Renehan's victims'. Nevertheless, he would not allow their youth and inexperience to excuse their conduct. 'They were only a few months from college, when they entered into their conspiracy, and they did so without the shadow of a grievance,' Quinn reported to Cardinal Cullen in Dublin. (Quinn to Cullen, 21.5.1867, Dublin Diocesan Archives)

When they arrived at All Hallows, the rector, Dr. Woodlock, prevailed on McGahan and Hogan to pen letters of regret and submission to Cardinal Barnabo at Propaganda Fide and sent them off with his testimony that, whatever about the grievance of Bishop Quinn, these priests were of the highest character. At the same time, Woodlock was being inundated with requests for priests from American bishops and dispatched his problematic graduates to the welcoming diocese of Albany and Newark. The presence of McGahan's cousins, Father O'Callaghan, in nearby Brooklyn, would doubtless have influenced Woodlock's choice.

The bishop of Newark was James Roosevelt Bayley, a scholarly former Episcopalian clergyman from a prominent New York family. His conversion in 1844 had exacted a high price socially and financially. His maternal grandfather, James Roosevelt, disinherited him of a legacy worth \$70,000. Although Bayley is a significant figure in American church history, being both the step-nephew of foundress Mother Elizabeth Seton and Archbishop Spalding's successor in Baltimore, no personal connection can be established between him and the new arrivals from Queensland. From March to October in 1867, Bayley was absent from the diocese having embarked on yet another of his many overseas trips, this time to the Holy Land. Therefore the processing and temporary placement of the Newark trio was left to his vicar general, Father George Hobart Doane.

Doane, another Episcopal convert and son of the Bishop of Burlington, had been the assistant rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Newark before following Bayley into the Catholic fold. He was also a no-nonsense military style administrator. During the Civil War, he had served as Catholic chaplain to the New Jersey Brigade in which there were 8,880 Irish volunteers and several thousand German and other European Catholics. McGahan was sent for three years to the New Jersey township of Mount Holly, the seat of historic Burlington County. A shipload of Irish immigrants had arrived in the county in 1843 with a number of families settling around Mount Holly. A church had been built there in 1852. McGahan's contribution would be to establish a school with lay teachers which would survive until 1876. Mount Holly also contained the Burlington County prison which would have kept McGahan occupied in a time when Yankee and Confederate enmities still smouldered.

The bell at Mount Holly's court house had rung loudly on the day of America's Declaration of Independence. Its citizens breathed the invigorating air of freedom. McGahan renewed his efforts to liberate himself from Bishop Quinn's tenacious grip for there could be no permanence for him in the new diocese without his former bishop's sanction. When news arrived that James Quinn would be attending the First Vatican Council in December 1869, McGahan made his move. Again

Dr Woodlock was asked to testify to his character and his letter of apology was forwarded to Quinn via Cardinal Barnabo who had agreed to see the matter settled once Quinn arrived in Rome. Both McGahan and Hogan made their way to Rome only to discover that the lifting of the suspensions would not be an automatic thing. Quinn had advised their host, Father Tobias Kirby at the Irish College:

I called their attention to the views taken by themselves and by others who knew them here and knew of their conduct. With regard to the course they have pursued I hope their eyes may be opened so that they will fully understand and repent of what they have done. Their fate is in their own hands and they will have only themselves to blame if they are to continue to be debarred from the exercise of their sacred ministry for an indefinite time. (Quinn to Kirby, 13.6.1869, Irish College Archives)

In Ireland, before his return to Australia, Quinn wrote directly to McGahan informing him of Rome's decision:

The privilege granted you by the Holy See to say Mass temporarily, has been withdrawn, and you are not in the same condition you were before.... You are under my jurisdiction as your Bishop. I am not disposed to subject you to any avoidable annoyance. You have already suffered a good deal, but it was all brought on yourself. Though you complained of the laws of my diocese, and of my public acts, you haven't, so far as I am aware, complained of having been treated unkindly by me. I am not disposed to deal with you for the future differently from the way I treated you for the past. Any obstacle that exists, or may arise in the way you are being restored to your priestly function proceeds from yourself. You have appealed to the Holy See and the Holy See has pronounced judgement so to that judgement you have to submit. If you do so promptly fully and sincerely the difficulties you have brought on yourself will soon be at an end. Call on me at Gayfield on Tuesday next at 12 O.C. and I will show you the decision of the Holy See, and point out to you what you are to do. (Quinn to McGahan, 24.5.1870, Dublin Diocesan Archives)

Quinn determined that McGahan and Hogan were to do a month's penance at Mt Melleray, the Cistercian Abbey in Waterford, and if he was then convinced of their sincere contrition, he would officially release them to their new diocese. Father Patrick Moran, vice rector of the Irish College and later Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney, was appointed to expedite the matter. Along with the twenty-six pounds

which Quinn produced to ferry the priests to their monastic penitentiary, Moran was also sent a note of eyebrow-raising self-justification:

I need scarcely tell you that I have no unfriendly feeling whatever against those poor young men now, not the slightest wish to punish, or mortify them unnecessarily. The nature of their case, however, is such that I must require of them full and unconditional submission. (Quinn to Moran 6.8.1870, Dublin Diocesan Archives)

Both priests promised Moran that they were ready to do whatever Propaganda wished and finally, after Quinn was satisfied that no irreparable damage had been done to his magisterial authority, the *exeat*s or letters of release were granted.

In May 1871 McGahan was offered a fresh start in Harrison (also known as East Newark), a small community in the western part of Hudson County, settled originally by Dutch Protestant farmers. To cater for the influx of about four hundred Irish Catholics, the diocese had purchased six lots on the corner of Jersey and Third Streets and built a two-story church school with the promise of a permanent church in the near future. James McGahan was Harrison's first resident pastor. In the folklore of that parish, there is a story that McGahan in the course of 'withdrawing from his obedience' to bishop Quinn, appealed directly to Pope Pius IX. During an audience, he promised the pope that if he was freed to return to America, the first church he built would be placed under the patronage of St Pius.

Within a few months of his arrival, McGahan's parishioners had raised the \$17,000 needed to buy more land for the new church of St Pius and also to extend the existing school building to which he introduced the Sisters of Charity. More money was found to purchase a parochial residence. McGahan established a Temperance Society whose members proudly marched in procession behind a green banner on which there was a portrait of their pastor, no doubt reminiscent of the fraternity banners McGahan had seen unfurled for commemorative marches through the streets of his native Armagh. By 28 September 1873, McGahan and the Sisters had prepared eighty Confirmation candidates for examination by Bishop Corrigan, Bayley's successor. The new bishop was also invited to bless the corner stone of the new church, an event which the papers claimed was witnessed by 25,000 people. The edifice was designed by prominent architect, Patrick C. Keely, to seat 1,850 people and was expected to cost over \$100,000. However, McGahan's magnificent vision for the parish was unrealistic and unachievable because of a deepening economic depression. Work on the church ceased abruptly with McGahan's sudden death as the result of a stroke on 7 January 1874. He was

thirty-four. McGahan's people remembered him as a very forcible and eloquent preacher. He was also kind, genial, pleasant, hospitable and accommodating. They wept openly by his coffin. Bishop Corrigan noted in his diary: 'He was a zealous priest, much beloved by the people, and had he been more careful of his health and habits, might have accomplished immense good. R.I.P.'

Among the forty priests who attended McGahan's funeral were a number of his All Hallows colleagues including fellow penitent Thaddeus Hogan who had been appointed to succeed him as pastor of Harrison.

Thaddeus Hogan

Hogan would be the longest surviving of the Brisbane priests in America and therefore became the most Americanized. His ministry in New Jersey would span that half century from the end of the Civil War to the end of the Great War. According to historian Paul Johnson, this was the period which defined America: 'huge and teeming, endlessly varied, multicoloured and multiracial, immensely materialistic and overwhelmingly idealistic, ceaselessly innovative, thrusting, grabbing, buttonholing, noisy, questioning, anxious to do the right thing, to do good, to get rich, to make everybody happy. It was an ideal time and place for a man of Hogan's many gifts and boundless energy.'

Thaddeus Hogan was born on 15 May 1842, the son of James and Catherine Hogan of Killeely, Limerick. After studies at Mt Melleray and All Hallows, he arrived in Brisbane in 1865 and was sent to Warwick which was then part of the Toowoomba parish. Although his health was not strong, Hogan soon commanded the respect of his peers for his enormous capacity for work. Writing to Michael Renehan in 1877, Robert Dunne recalled:

Many and many a time I have told about that Saturday ride of his from Allora into Warwick, thence to Maryland, and from Maryland back to say the eight and eleven o'clock masses on Sunday morning in Warwick. It is still one of the strongest duty efforts in its way that the Queensland priests tell of. (Dunne to Renehan, 17.7.1877 Brisbane Archdiocesan Archives)

Hogan and Renehan were both extremely capable priests and took an instant liking to each other. Their friendship alone would have been reason enough for Hogan to quit the diocese with his mentor in 1867.

In America Hogan could not wait idly for word of Quinn's pardon. He threw himself into the work at his temporary postings, first with Monsignor Quinn at St Peter's Church, New York City, and later with Father Byrnes at Immaculate Conception Church, Camden. After returning from Rome in October 1871, he was then appointed as the first pastor of St Mary's, Mount Holly. During the building of a new church there, the diocese came to an awareness not only of Hogan's administrative skill but of his excellent taste in church architecture. The new church spoke eloquently of God and the Irish in a district dominated by the stately colonial homes of the Yankees. Hogan had barely completed his task when he was appointed James McGahan's successor at Harrison.

His first initiative there was to change the name of the parish church. Hogan was not about to allow a name to perpetuate his best forgotten tale of defeat, papal reprimand, humiliation and submission. Hogan had discovered that there was no need to apologise for ecclesiastical ambition in the American church. He would complete McGahan's church but it would have a name which symbolised success and glorious achievement. He chose the name Holy Cross partly after Tipperary's Cistercian Abbey which, after the penal days, had become the symbol of Ireland's ancient, enduring and now resurgent Catholicism. Despite the hard times, Hogan raised money for a convent and purchased the lot where a future rectory would be built. His passion was for the future and it expressed itself in small details as well as great causes. For example, he was one of the first priests in the diocese to install a gas lite tabernacle lamp. He built a new school and formed youth clubs and zealously promoted Catholic education.

Bishop Corrigan had begun to note Hogan's accomplishments and gave him an opportunity to voice his dreams more publicly when he invited him to address Newark's Catholic Union in October 1875. This convention of clergy and laity was attended by representatives of sixty-five New Jersey parishes. Hogan took his turn at the podium with the bishop and papal knights like John McAnerney, John Keily, and John Garrick, to defend his church's role in politics and to rail against the discriminatory treatment of Catholic children in public schools and particularly in the State Reform School at Jamesburg. He also addressed the flaws in the federal Indian policy and various organised anti-Catholic movements. Hogan's rhetoric was so compelling that he soon became a much sought after platform speaker.

One of his sadder speaking assignments was that of homilist at Michael Renehan's funeral in Marcellus NY in November 1879. The occasion was even more tragic since his life long friend had finally succeeded in persuading Bishop Quinn to allow him to return to Queensland. In a letter to Quinn written in July

1877, Renehan alluded to Hogan's meteoric rise and the value of luring him back to Queensland as well. Renehan maintained that Hogan 'could do a lot' for Quinn putting him on a level with Archbishop John Hughes of New York and Bishop John England of Charleston. These prelates were among the founding fathers of American Catholicism. However, it is doubtful whether the Brisbane diocese would have been big enough to accommodate the egos both of James Quinn and Thaddeus Hogan. In any case, there is no suggestion that Hogan was about to abandon the land of opportunity.

By the time of Renehan's death, Hogan's career path had already led him from lowly Harrison to Trenton, the state capital of New Jersey. On 30 October 1878 he had been appointed pastor of St John's on the corner of Broad and Centre Streets, South Trenton. St John's was the oldest and most conservative church in Trenton but it soon learned not to oppose Hogan's new ideas. He began with the youth. By July 1879, he had replaced the Literary Union, an excuse for weekly political debates, cards and billiards in the basement of St John's with the more structured Catholic Young Men's Association. Hogan had built the CYMA hall and institute for East Newark three years earlier and had seen the immense possibilities of such an organisation. Soon St John's was offering a range of social, intellectual and athletic activities: lectures, debates, plays and musicals, as well as boxing, gymnastics and especially the new American passion - baseball. The Association Base Ball Club at St John's enjoyed city-wide prominence by the early 1880s and would lead to the formation of the Catholic Club with its own grey stone club house adjoining the church and rectory.

Hogan's obvious rapport with youth and his popularity as a speaker at College valedictory ceremonies led to his appointment as Examiner of the Clergy. This was the unenviable challenge of ensuring that the younger priests were continuing to develop their theological and pastoral knowledge. Hogan was popular with priests and in 1880 was elected President of the Trenton Priests Conference. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination, the priests presented their examiner and gracious host with a beautifully bound copy of the *Summa* of St Thomas, the text to which he had so often referred them.

It was Hogan's intention to make St John's a showpiece for the diocese. When the bishop beheld his lavish remodelling of the Orphan Asylum as a Select School in June 1880, he noted in his diary: 'Father Hogan is full of zeal but too fond of making expensive improvements'. Hogan's bricks and mortar achievements were beginning to count against him and perhaps would rob him of what he hoped for and could easily have managed, a diocese of his own. For some time priests had talked of the need for a division of the Newark diocese with Trenton being the

likely new see. The tipsters were proved right in 1881 but the mitre did not go to Hogan but to Michael O'Farrell, a frugal administrator and temperance preacher from Jersey City.

Hogan suffered another major disappointment two years later. His theological expertise being required at the New York Provincial Council, Hogan was absent from his parish when St John's suddenly erupted in flames on the night of 30 September 1883. He hurried back and, in the early hours of the following morning, stood a lonely black clad figure among the charred rubble of his church. He turned for consolation to his Roman Breviary and found the prayer: *Cor Jesu, flagrans amore nostri* (Heart of Jesus, burning with love for us, set our hearts on fire with love of Thee). In typical Hogan style, he instantly vowed that he would build a bigger and better church and dedicate it to the Sacred Heart.

Fund raising began before the last embers had died. Hogan went begging from door to door and then parish to parish until enough money had been raised for the laying of the corner stone. When it was completed, the Sacred Heart Church attracted the highest praise from the *Boston Pilot*, the Catholic voice of the east coast:

Nowhere outside of the greatest cities have we seen anything to surpass it in point of elegance and architectural beauty. It was designed by architect Keily of Brooklyn, New York, and is purely Roman in style. It is built of stone and the exterior presents an imposing appearance, with its massive walls and stately towers surmounted by handsome crosses. The interior is no less beautiful. There is a wealth of painting displayed on its walls and ceilings. There can be read, in beautiful frescoes, the most striking scenes from the life of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the greatest events in the history of the Church. The windows are likewise strikingly beautiful and in perfect harmony with their surroundings. In the sanctuary, however, the beauty centres. Three snow white altars of the purest marble delight the eyes of the beholder as he enters the portals of this beautiful edifice. They were also designed by Mr Keily and are models of art. The altar railings are also of marble with rich brass gateways. One of the most novel and striking features of the church are the polished marble square columns which look very handsome either in the sunshine or gaslight. Everything about the church and grounds is arranged with such perfect taste that the Church of the Sacred Heart and the adjoining pastoral residence (another neat stone structure) command the admiration of every beholder. (*Boston Pilot* 8.2.1890)

In January 1890, Hogan congratulated his people on having been able to pay over \$90,000 on the new church and rectory in the space of just seven years. It was an enormous sum, he said, considering that 'we are only about 700 families and comparatively poor'. However, there could be no resting on their oars since the parish was still \$50,000 in debt and there was a great deal yet to be done. He pressed on relentlessly:

when contemplating what is before us, I am sometimes prone to lose heart, and say, let others do it. But if that were so, of what use does life become? We are here to labour, not to rest. We are here to make yourself useful to God, to ourselves and to our neighbour. Therefore, let us draw inspiration from the very thought of the new year that is upon us. Let us brace ourselves up for new efforts that this new and glorious opportunity may not pass from amongst us without leaving behind in our possession some precious remembrance of good work done. This is the way to make ourselves really useful to our country; this is the true road to happiness, and the only way to happiness hereafter. (Financial Statement for 1890, 3.1.1891)

Bishop O'Farrell was appreciative of Hogan's extraordinary gift for fund raising and could rely on an annual *cathedraticum* of \$300 from Sacred Heart parish. After Trenton's first diocesan synod in December 1886, he nominated Hogan as one of the four irremovable pastors in the diocese and added to his workload by appointing him defender of the sacrament at the marriage tribunal. At the same time, Hogan was also concerning himself with the operation of Trenton's *Catholic Journal*. Also, under his personal supervision, Sacred Heart parish school emerged as one of the finest Catholic schools in the state. The standards achieved by the fourteen teaching religious guaranteed pupils a place in higher education institutes without the necessity of entrance examinations.

Bishop O'Farrell died in April 1894. Again Thaddeus Hogan was passed over with the mitre going to his long standing diocesan colleague, James McFaul. McFaul immediately provided a salve for Hogan's disappointment by arranging for his elevation to the dignity of Monsignor and ensured that Hogan continued to be prominent in diocesan affairs. In 1896 they returned to Hogan's former parish of Harrison for its silver jubilee celebrations. Hogan made a point of upstaging McFaul with the brilliance of his oratory even though he was given no opportunity to speak until the evening vespers. Hogan's golden jubilee of priesthood was another occasion for elaborate displays of gratitude and affection but there was a noticeable rift developing between McFaul and Hogan whose name suddenly disappears from the bishop's committees.

From 1900, Hogan ceased to advise the diocese of the financial state of his parish. This continued unchecked for seven years until McFaul eventually appealed to Canon Law to make his old comrade yield. He explained:

Our long patience... has had no effect on your obstinate disobedience. Therefore, that we might protect the interests of the said Church of the Sacred Heart, strengthen ecclesiastical discipline, preserve the honour of the Episcopal authority, and overcome your perverse and long continued disobedience, We, on account of the urgency of the case, which could not suffer delay, considered it necessary to deprive you temporarily of the office of rector of the said CHURCH of the Sacred Heart, and also of the treasurership and secretaryship of the said church corporation. This we did by letter dated Aug. 3rd, 1908, which was delivered to you by our secretary, Rev. James J. Powers. You have violated and ignored the provisions of this our letter, because you have exercised and de facto are so exercising, against our will, the office of rector, etc of the said CHURCH of the Sacred Heart. In order that your pertinacious disobedience may not, by remaining unpunished, cause scandal to others, lead to further violation of ecclesiastical law and episcopal Authority, thus undermining Ecclesiastical discipline, WE, in order to prevent such great dangers, employing the authority committed to us, deliver to you this Canonical Precept. (McFaul to Hogan, 15.9.1908, Trenton Diocesan Archives)

Hogan was destined to end his priestly life as he had begun it, in conflict with his bishop. Again he submitted, but only sufficiently to be reinstated as pastor. This new crisis with authority brought back memories of his youth and a re-evaluation of the truly important things in life. In April 1906, Hogan had written to the Rector of All Hallows with his usual donation of thirty pounds but also with an uncharacteristic note of self disclosure. He wrote:

scarcely one day passes during which something does not remind me of my early collegiate life, and awaken memories that have been a source of strength to me in the distressing and adverse circumstances of life.... piety, strong faith, always in evidence in the life of the priest; and real solid learning, these are the greatest essentials. The true estimate of life, the true estimate of material things, the true estimate of everything, philosophically put before men, this I believe, is the necessity of the age in which we live. (Hogan to Dr Fortune, 26.4.1906 cited in the *All Hallows Annual 1907*, p. 76)

Hogan's health and spirits were failing but he would not die until 1918. Increasingly he left the work of the parish to his two curates and retired to his

study hoping to write. The only outcome seemed to be a collection of *Sermons, Doctrinal and Moral* which appeared in 1915 and which one reviewer kindly said conferred distinction on Trenton writers. Thaddeus Hogan is buried in St John's Cemetery on Chestnut Avenue, having earned his place among the worthies of the city of Trenton. He had succeeded in making himself useful to God, to himself and his neighbour - if at times an annoyance to his bishop!

William Mason Walsh

William Walsh's time in the Newark diocese was short and unproductive. His brief association with a young Irish American Sister of Charity would cast a life-long shadow over his priestly ministry.

Walsh was born on 27 April 1842, the son of Edward and Mary Mason of Ardfinnan, County Waterford. Owing to a severe attack of pneumonia at All Hallows College, his studies had to be suspended for a year. He was finally ordained for the Brisbane diocese on 30 October 1864. Walsh served briefly in Ipswich and then at Drayton, outside Toowoomba, where he oversaw the building of a small wooden chapel. At the opening on 23 September 1866, Bishop Quinn noted with evident satisfaction that the new chapel was virtually debt free principally because of the liberal subscriptions from the Protestants on the Darling Downs but also, one suspects, because of the great popularity of the twenty-four year old Walsh. Nevertheless, within six months of the opening, Walsh would depart with Renehan's group.

In New Jersey, Walsh was sent to assist Father Aloysius Venuta at St Joseph's, Jersey City. Venuta was a quirky forty-five year old Sicilian who had arrived in New York as a political refugee twenty years earlier. As a witness to poverty, he refused to wear socks or an overcoat and therefore almost froze every winter. Despite his poor English, Venuta had made great headway among the Irish construction workers on the Eerie Railroad tunnel through Bergen Hill. Repeatedly his Mediterranean diplomacy was relied on to settle late night brawls, bloodshed and imprisonment. Clearly Vicar General Doane thought him well qualified to handle a possibly troublesome curate from the antipodes.

There were Sisters of Charity in the parish school supplied from St Elizabeth's Convent in nearby Madison. One of the newly professed, a former Rhode Island factory operative, was Sister Theresa de Chantal O'Gorman. On their first meeting, O'Gorman described Walsh as being about twenty-six, tall, graceful and dignified, handsome face, and a most fascinating and winning manner. The same Sister, at least in her recollection of events, soon found herself fighting off Walsh's

unwelcome advances, so much so that in December 1867 she claimed to have written to her superior, Mother Xavier, protesting that she had been almost driven to desperation by Walsh's importunities and ardent proposals of marriage. She begged to be removed from the terrible temptations which surrounded her. Mother Xavier did not believe her and took no action. O'Gorman left the convent on 2 February 1868. She later charged that in the convent sacristy Walsh had offered her an opiate based elixir for her cough but that his real intentions were less honourable.

When the accusations were made public, Walsh looked to James McGahan in Mount Holly for support and advice. O'Gorman's memoirs contain an extract from a letter from McGahan written in September 1868 admitting Walsh's guilt but pleading with O'Gorman to return to the convent and her religious vocation:

Dearest Sister, - I received your letter today, and really it pained me very much. O God! I fear you are falling away from the only true Catholic faith. Oh, dear girl! pray to God to drive such temptations from your mind. I would suggest that you enter upon the devotion of the 'thirty days' prayer to the Blessed Virgin', that God, through the intercession of our Blessed Lady, might free you from such temptations. Should you commence this prayer let me know the time, and I will pray for you in my Masses. I hope God will give Father Walsh grace to repent of the path he has taken in causing you so much suffering, and in bringing scandal upon the Church of God. Father Sheehan has been with me assisting me at the Triduum, and has told me that all the newspapers commented largely upon the affair. The quieter and more retired you keep yourself for the present the better. I hope you will consider the great necessity for you of again retiring into the convent, for it is your only vocation. Father Renehan has taken to his bed, and is inconsolable. Father Hogan is frantic; has written to me twice in the same day. Oh dear child! it is a blow which has withered many hearts. Write often to me, and I will send you every news, - Yours very truly, in Jesus Christ, James J. McGahann.

O'Gorman had taken refuge with her sister, Mary Gertrude, in Boston. When Walsh arrived to sort things out, the police were called and he was required to spend the evening in the Suffolk County Jail. No charges were ever laid and O'Gorman was subsequently required to publish a letter of repudiation of her allegations. However, the potential for scandal in anti-Catholic New England was great and various bishops and senior ecclesiastics volunteered to expedite O'Gorman's return to St Elizabeth's or any other convent in America or Ireland. Walsh was presented with a ticket to Buenos Aires.

Argentina and the Falkland Islands

In 1871, O’Gorman asked James McGahan of Walsh’s fate. By then she had entered on a career as an anti-Catholic crusader. McGahan informed her that their mutual friend had died at La Plata, Argentina. An outbreak of yellow fever in the River Plate region that year had claimed the life of Argentina’s best know Irish priest, Father Anthony Dominic Fahy O.P., but Walsh was well, if not particularly happy in his new ministry. Certainly, he had not died, as McGahan suggested to O’Gorman, as a result of the austere penances the Dominicans in Buenos Aires had required him to perform.

An Irish church had existed in Buenos Aires for many years and the Argentinean Irish were much better established and more prosperous than their North American cousins. In 1832, two thousand Irish had been counted among the five thousand British ex-patriates in the Argentinean capital. Many of the Irish had come by way of Spain. Others came from the USA or Canada along the lines of mercantile and passenger traffic between the northern ports and the River Plate. By 1848, this remarkable hispano-celtic catholic community had risen to about 4500, largely as a result of Father Fahy’s vigorous promotion of Irish immigration aided by his friendship with Governor Rosas. Fahy had been given a city church, St Roch of Montpellier, from which he ran his immigrant settlement agency. It was at this church, known locally as the Irish Chapel, that the refugee William Walsh presented himself towards the end of 1868. It is likely that his duties did not immediately involve chaplaincy to the community of Baggot Street Sisters of Mercy who conducted schools and a hospital in Buenos Aires and would continue that work until 1880 when a wave of incendiary anti-clericalism caused them to relocate to Australia.

Parish work was difficult not only because of the peculiarities of the Hispanic culture but also because of the feuding within the Irish community itself. In Buenos Aires, a deep rift existed between the Wexford and Westmeath©Longford immigrants. Sunday Mass times were referred to not by the hour of the day but by the county of origin of the worshippers attending. Only at the so-called ‘native’ Mass did all sections of the Irish community attend and even there ushers ensured that rival families were kept far apart.

The Argentinean Irish were not content to remain in the city. Once resistance from the indigenous peoples had lessened, they began to move north and south from the capital into the surrounding ‘campo’, and formed small Irish communities around San Vincent, Ranchos and Costumes in the south, Pilar, Camilla del Senor, San Antonio de Arco and Ramal in the north. By the time of Walsh’s arrival, Fahy, now a canon of the Cathedral, was presiding over 25,000 Irish settlers scattered

over an area of 150,000 square kilometres and divided into ten chaplaincies under twelve priests.

An accomplished horseman, Walsh was sent out to the 'campo' where the area of responsibility was so vast that a sick call might involve a week's ride. Where no Irish chapel existed, Mass was celebrated by arrangement with the local Argentinean pastor or in the home of an Irish settler. T. Murray in his *The Irish in Argentina (1912)* describes the typical congregation served by the chaplains:

Women and youngsters made up the greater part of the gathering. All the older men wore beards, some wild and shaggy, some trimmed and reduced, probably with the wool shears, whilst the young men generally cultivated no further facial adornment than the commonplace, but always becoming mustacios. The older and more fully developed men were for the most part remarkably large, rugged, sturdy, intelligent farmers, bearing... a striking resemblance to the... Boers of South Africa. The young men were tall, well formed, usually rather spare of flesh and dressed quite picturesquely and very sensibly. The shining top boots, the wide pantaloons, the short jacket, nicely knotted neckerchief and the chambergo hat, with its characteristic poise... the most remarkable thing about the women was that, although nearly all Irish-born,... they rode a horseback with such ease and security... they never approach the Communion rail wearing a hat, but rather a dark veil thrown loosely over their head.

While the Irish in the British colonies of the nineteenth century were busy strait-jacketing religious expression so as not to offend the Protestant establishment, no such restrictions applied in Latin America. In 1869, Walsh experienced his first Buenos Aires 'Carnival'. Unlike the Europeans who celebrated this pre-Lenten fiesta with music, masquerades and fireworks, the Argentineans gleefully doused each other with water. Days before the festivities, residents filled jars and buckets and placed them on the flat roofs of their homes. During the Carnival, the water was emptied on luckless passers-by. Those in the street, men and women, retaliated by producing from under their ponchos immense syringes or water bombs made from carefully emptied egg shells. Flour bombing was a variation on the same theme. By Holy Thursday, the mood of the city had become sombre. All shops were closed and both men and women dressed in black in preparation for the great Good Friday night procession of Our Lady of Sorrows (Nuestra Senora de los Dolores). Immense crowds turned out for this candle lit procession behind the statue which was dressed in deep mourning and shielded under a richly ornamented

canopy. The procession made its way across the Plaza Victoria to the Merced Church. The following day at noon, and somewhat prematurely, Christ was resurrected from the tomb. The military band which had played so mournfully during the Good Friday procession now played energetic dance tunes. Church bells rang, fireworks exploded and the crowd amused itself by burning effigies of Judas Iscariot, some of them stuffed with firecrackers. Inside the Cathedral on Easter Sunday morning, a large congregation formed itself without distinction of rank or race to observe bishop and priests in white chasubles richly ornamented with gold and silver. The rich tones of the choir soared over clouds of fragrant incense and the flickering of a thousand candles. Despite decrying the theatricality surrounding the Argentinean style Triduum, Protestant visitor, William MacCann, conceded that it was impossible to deny that the beholders were reverently impressed.

In 1872 William Walsh was transferred from the warmth and excitement of Argentina to the cold and dreary Falkland Islands, the remotest outpost of the Irish chaplaincy. As he embarked on the three week voyage south from Buenos Aires to Port Stanley, he knew that he and the chaplain of the Straits of Magellan were the only Irish priests stationed south of the Rio Negro. After the earlier failure of Father Laurence Kirwan's efforts to raise money for a Catholic church on the Falklands, Fahy had warned against appointing any priest there unless the British government or Propaganda Fide were prepared to fund the mission. It was almost impossible to live there, said Fahy. The climate was dreadful and the soil 'more barren than the bog of Allen'. Nevertheless, a two hundred strong Catholic community continued to lobby Ireland and Rome for a resident priest. By the time Walsh arrived, a concession had been won for Catholic services to be held in a government building (the present central store). A quarter acre of land, known as Pump Green, was acquired and a temporary chapel built with free government labour. Walsh began celebrating Mass there on 15 June 1873.

Governor George A.K. D'Arcy, who arrived in the Falklands in January 1870, reported that during his first twelve months, the average thermometer reading had been 6 degrees Celsius. Only the occasional 'exquisite sunsets' offset the usually wild, grey and tempestuous days. D'Arcy found the weather a refreshing and invigorating contrast to his previous thirty years in the tropics. However, Walsh was yearning more than ever for a return to sunny Queensland. He wrote letters to Bishop Quinn and Robert Dunne and to Quinn's brother, Andrew, in Dublin. His pleas must have inspired such genuine pity that even James Quinn's icy heart began to melt. He recalled Walsh to Brisbane in 1874. He would be the only one of the seven departing clergy of 1867 ever to return.

Brisbane

On the staff of St Stephen's Cathedral, Walsh was given special responsibility for the community of St Patrick's, Fortitude Valley. Local identity, Joe Kelly, recalled that the thirty-two year old Walsh was 'a splendid priest' and 'a favourite everywhere'. Soon North and South American influences became apparent. Revivalist style temperance preaching was a feature of St Patrick's five years prior to the Queensland tour of the flamboyant American Father Philip Henneberry. Brass music provided by Walsh's Boys Band, added a liveliness to parish worship in a style no doubt reminiscent of the Buenos Aires processions. In 1876, Walsh's ministry to youth was extended to include chaplaincy work at St Kilian's in Leichardt St. This was a residential college for country boys who attended Gregory Terrace or St James during the day. It was another context for Walsh to demonstrate his undoubted pastoral skills and no doubt entertain the boarders with tales of his many voyages.

Townsville

In 1878 Walsh was on the move again, this time to Townsville. It would be his final destination and the parish in which he would minister for thirty years. The story of that pastorate and especially the construction of St Patrick's Convent on the Strand and the Sacred Heart Cathedral on Castle Hill, in which Walsh is buried, would provide ample material for some future lecture. Walsh's connection with New Jersey ended finally and unhappily after he had almost completed the first of his three decades in Townsville. His nemesis, now using the name 'Edith O'Gorman' had arrived in Australasia with a new edition of her memoirs *Convent Life Unveiled* and the intention of lecturing in every town of any size in New Zealand, the eastern states and South Australia. She arrived in Townsville on 21 August 1887 with her husband and manager, the Reverend William Auffray, and their eleven year old son William. O'Gorman challenged Walsh to a public debate on the veracity of statements made in her book but Cardinal Moran had already forbidden any priest to either publicly vilify her or contradict her allegations. Orangeman J.G. Bradley, O'Gorman's host and minder, maintained that she and Father Walsh did have a bizarre chance meeting while disembarking from the S.S. *Quirang*. Walsh's bishop, John Cani, had boarded the ship in Rockhampton, the O'Gorman's in Mackay. Walsh had come to meet Cani and when O'Gorman emerged from her cabin and looked down to see bishop and priest already seated in the customs launch, she immediately grasped the arm of her husband and pointed to Walsh exclaiming, 'See, that is Father Walsh on account of whom I ran away from the convent'. According to Bradley, Walsh's face assumed a pale ashen hue, and he buried it between his hands. In his account of O'Gorman's visit for the Orangemen's *Victorian Standard*, Bradley observed: 'Father Walsh is very often

seen in the streets of Townsville, but this week he has vanished as if by magic'. (*Victorian Standard* October 1887, p.3)

Walsh was not the only one in Townsville preparing for 'cyclone Edith'. The local Protestant churches and Masonic Lodges had barred their doors to her fearing a repetition of the ugly sectarian riot which had disrupted O'Gorman's lecture and wrecked the interior of Lismore's Albert Theatre on 28 October 1886. Townsville's Wesleyan Church finally agreed to host some lectures but the press refused to cover them. On 8 September 1887, still hoping to attract media attention, O'Gorman evaded Patrick Molloy, an out of uniform policeman guarding St Joseph's Presbytery. She knocked on the door which was opened by Bishop Cani whom O'Gorman had labelled Walsh's 'watch dog'. He received her, she said, 'with more than savage rudeness, and with a real *canine* ferocity'. She claimed that she got from Cani an admission that he was aware of the incident in New Jersey, to which she then challenged: 'Yet knowing all that, you and your church condone his crime, make him a parish priest, thus giving him the direction of immortal souls and appoint him a spiritual guide over a convent of nuns!'. Cani did not care to discuss the matter with her but predicted that O'Gorman would ask God's forgiveness when she came to die. He also warned her, rather ominously, that Father Walsh could not keep his people in order for much longer. O'Gorman, the survivor of several attempts on her life in the USA, England and Scotland, decided it would be safer to move on - but not before she cursed Bishop Cani with the Matthean text: 'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness'. (Matt: 23:27)

While a number of Catholics vowed not to return to Mass until the allegations against Walsh had been answered, the vast majority demonstrated their continued support for the priest who had already done so much for them and their city. In the northern presbyterate, Walsh stood head and shoulders above his colleagues. John Cani, who had become the first bishop of the new diocese of Rockhampton in 1882, trusted Walsh more than any other, recalled Archbishop Dunne. When Cani died in 1898, Walsh was appointed administrator of the diocese. When Cani's successor, Bishop Higgins, was translated to Ballarat in 1905, Walsh was one of the nominees for the vacant post. The new bishop was the young James Duhig who had the sense to retain Walsh as his vicar general. Walsh died at the home of his sister, Mrs T. Dalton, in North Sydney on 16 February 1908. His remains were brought back to the church he had built in Townsville. James Duhig, a master of overstatement on such occasions, provided the text on Walsh's plaque in the Sacred Heart Cathedral: *Virtutum omnium sacerdotalium exemplur* (model of all the priestly virtues). A more appropriate and more human epitaph is required for Walsh

and his departing colleagues of 1867. One might look to Sergio Ubaldi's *Ho Una Vocazione* in which the contemporary Australian immigrant poet finds his true vocation only through the experience of failure and humiliation and the pain of dislocation, and new beginnings:

I have a vocation
for triumph and tears
and the peak of achievement
will be in the depths of despair.
Yet I'm at peace with myself
in the knowledge of striving
for the things I believe in.

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