

**ADDRESS AT THE DEDICATION OF THE MEMORIAL
TO PIONEER PRIESTS AT NUDGEES ON 10 JANUARY 2002**

Fr Tom Boland

All cultures, primitive or developed, have their own ways of dealing with death and grief. Death is the ultimate challenge. If Death is victor, what is the point of life? So, in Christian faith, death is the last enemy destroyed by Christ. Dying he destroyed our death; rising he restored our life.

Our funeral practices are our statement that our family, our friends are not annihilated. Their lives, their qualities, their achievements cannot be allowed to be obliterated. So, their remains, their monuments must be preserved as long as possible. Time may pass, a long time, but we cannot bring ourselves to say: we may wipe this person from memory. If so, death would have won, and this person has no value, no claim to be remembered.

As times change, so does the use of land. Authorities may find new and important uses for a cemetery; but they usually go to great lengths to transfer the remains and memorials. This happened in Brisbane.

From at least 1838 thousands of the earliest citizens of our city were buried in what was known as the Paddington Cemeteries. Each Church had its own plot. By 1875 the city had expanded so much that a new site was necessary. Paddington (Milton) fell into neglect. A 1914 document described it as “overgrown with lantana and other noxious weeds, littered with broken memorial stones ... a harbour for the goats of the neighbourhood.” In 1911 Parliament legislated for another use of the land. Part became a park and children’s playground.



On his departure from Ireland, Father William Bowe was presented with the above chalice which is now in the church at Rathdowney (Beaudesert parish)

The inscription reads:

Presented by his fellow curates to the Rev. William Bowe on the occasion of his departure for Queensland

The Society raised funds to erect this monument, at Nudgee Cemetery, in memory of the three priests buried at Lang Park.

The first priest to be buried at Lang Park was Rev. William Bowe.



Among the first priests to die in Queensland
were three buried in the Catholic section of the
Paddington Cemeterios - now Lang Park.
Their remains are still there.

Brisbane Catholic Historical Society, 2001

Rev. William Bowe Rev. Patrick O'Grady, C.M. Rev. Giuseppe Pompili
Chaplain on "Flying Cloud" Born Ireland, 23 March 1837 (also known as Pompy)
Born Durres, Ireland. Ordained 6 January 1864 Born Ferentino, Italy
Died 2 July, 1864 Died 14 March 1867 Died 8 July, 1872 aged 28.

Relatives could claim the remains and monuments of the deceased and transfer them. Of the thousands there interred only 178 were claimed. Any remaining memorials were moved to the Anglican sector, and thousands of bones were left *in situ*.

Although three to four priests were buried there, no effort to transfer them to Nudgee is recorded. Where were they buried? It seems to me, an inexpert cartographer, that the Catholic sector was under the present Suncorp Stadium. I hope their subterranean support is for their State of Origin.

When the stadium was built little objection was made; but when Hale Street was widened about ten years ago, ghosts began popping up all over the place. It began with the Anglicans, but it spread to the Catholics through the researches of the late Father Frank Douglas and Father Denis Martin. Many thought it unsuitable that these priests' ministry should be forgotten. It took the interest of the Brisbane Catholic Historical Society to do something about it; especially the energetic researches here and overseas of Michael Sullivan. A fund was started to which the bishop, clergy, religious and laity contributed generously. Special mention should be made of the Nudgee history class, who showed a practical interest in their neighbours and their past.

So today we do our best to make up for the neglect of Fathers William Bowe, Patrick O'Grady and Joseph (Giuseppe) Pompei (Pompeo). We know little of their actual ministry here. All three lived only a short time in the colony. It is plain that all three came to Brisbane with tuberculosis. This disease devastated Ireland like another plague as the combination of climate, diet and housing spread it like wildfire in convents, monasteries and seminaries. Sufferers were often sent to Australia as a last resort; a kill or cure expedient. In these three cases it was kill - in a very short time. Father Pompei was Italian, but Italian seminaries were no healthier than Irish.

All three came with other qualifications. Father Bowe was born in Newtown, Durrow, Co. Laois on 10 January 1834. He began his studies for the priesthood in St. Kieran's, Kilkenny c.1851. From there he went, probably, to Irish College, Paris. After ordination, c.1858, he joined the diocese of Down and Connor in Ulster and spent several years in the bishop's parish in Belfast. His TB was so advanced that he was sent to Brisbane in 1864 as chaplain to some of Bishop Quinn's migrants in the Flying Cloud. He was appointed to Dalby, an area considered good for TB sufferers. There was no miracle in Dalby, and by the beginning of July he was back in Brisbane, where he died on 2 July. Although few could have known him, the *Brisbane Courier* reported that 2500 people followed his coffin to Paddington Cemetery.

Patrick O'Grady, too, was Irish, from the West. He studied at Castleknock, Dublin, the predecessor of All Hallows Missionary College. He decided to join the Vincentians and studied at their head house in Paris. Ordained on 6 January 1864 - when Father Bowe was nearing Brisbane - O'Grady laboured in Cork but after a year his wasting disease was evident. He was sent to various Vincentian houses in Ireland and England; but eventually he embarked on the last resort, a journey to Australia. He travelled on the ship *Rockhampton*, where passengers found him always gentle and cheerful. Arrived, he sought his cure by the Bay, but in vain, despite the attentions of Dr Kevin Izod O'Doherty. He died at Dara, Bishop Quinn's ramshackle home. After elaborate funeral rites he was buried in Paddington Catholic Cemetery.

Joseph Pompei was Italian but the victim of the Irish disease. He was born at Ferentino in the Roman Campagna about 1844. Travelling out from this ancient land - settled before Rome itself and witness to the great events of Church and State - he sought health in another ancient, but very different, land. He arrived in September 1871 and was sent to be the first resident priest at Nanango. It did not help him to recover to find that the cows spent

the night under the sacristy where he slept. Nanango was not Lourdes and he went to Cleveland, more as a hopeful convalescent than as a curate. Despite the attentions of Dr Kevin Izod O'Doherty he died 6 July 1872. He was buried far from Ferentino in Paddington. There was another priest buried in Paddington: John Killeen Handy. He was Irish, and another alumnus of Paris, who served in California and New South Wales. There he left the active ministry and married. He had a hectic career in Queensland at the Bar and in Parliament. He never belonged to the diocese, but it is as well to remember his ministry.

Three brief lives, three brief ministries; but even in their distress all three strove to serve the people of Queensland. They deserve their monument here today