

CELEBRATING FEDERATION IN 1901

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On November 16, 1900, Pope Leo XIII issued a decree *urbi et orbi* expressing strong thanks for the benefits bestowed upon mankind during the expiring century, and to beg needful assistance to cope with the difficulties which the new century may present from its beginning. For this purpose he ordered the Bishops throughout the world to hold a special Mass on January 1 (including New Year's Eve).

On New Year's Eve, in the cathedral churches throughout Australia, special Midnight Masses were offered for these intentions and for the inauguration of the Commonwealth. At St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, thousands began to pour in from an early hour, so that by 10 p.m. it was found necessary to close the main doors. The Mass was celebrated by the Administrator, Very Rev. Patrick Phelan, who also preached the occasional sermon, as Archbishop Carr was in Sydney attending solemn High Mass at St Mary's Cathedral, where a distinguished gathering of prelates, clergy, ecclesiastical knights and members of the consular corps were present.

As in Melbourne, the Cathedral was full by 10 p.m. The Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Moran at midnight. Frs. Cregan and O'Gorman (St. Mary's Cathedral) acted as deacons and Fr. McCarthy of St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, sub-deacon at the throne. Archbishop Carr, of Melbourne, and Bishops Gallagher (Goulburn) and Doyle (Lismore) assisted at special places in the choir.

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Cardinal Moran presided and delivered the occasional discourse on the mission of the Catholic Church, especially with regard to social problems, and the Christian foundation of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The Cardinal concluded with an eloquent plea for national patriotism and the Christian education of youth.

At the conclusion of the Mass, Romberg's 'Te Deum' was rendered in magnificent style by the choir. The Cardinal gave Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, which was in exposition during the solemn function.

NOTE:

Bishop Byrne did not attend because of illness. He died on January 12. Moran claimed Archbishop Murphy (Hobart) and Bishop Gibney (Perth) had not been invited. John Portus, General Secretary, Commonwealth Celebrations claimed invitations had been sent and invited Moran to view the invitation list. No mention was made of Dunne (Brisbane).

Inaugural Ceremony

Sydney held carnival for Commonwealth Day in brilliant sunshine under a clear blue sky. The streets were decorated with flags and bunting for the great procession from the Domain to Centennial Park - where the inauguration ceremonies were held. Centennial Park was packed for the occasion. A large white pavilion was erected for the ceremonies, while another pavilion accommodated some seven thousand special guests. There were many bands and a massed choir of 15,000 people. The ceremonies opened with prayer, recited by the Anglican Primate, then Queen Victoria's proclamation of the Commonwealth was read.

The most surprising and unexpected feature of the historic occasion was the absence of Cardinal Moran, Archbishop of Sydney. It was all the more extraordinary since Moran had been for many years a popular and acknowledged Federation leader.

He had stood for election to be a N.S.W. delegate to the 1897-'98 Constitutional Convention. He was not elected. In October 1900, the bishops held an Australia-wide congress, in St. Mary's Hall Sydney, in preparation for Federation. Over seven hundred enrolled members attended.

Therefore, among the vast crowds lining the processional route and at Centennial Park, thousands expected to see the Cardinal, the Archbishop of Melbourne and other Catholic bishops and clergy, for the Catholic Church in Australia had, generally, supported the Federal Movement. The Catholic Hierarchy, however, took no part in the official celebrations, because, as Archbishop Carr said, '...an insult had been offered to the Catholic body.'

Bishops' Boycott

Cardinal Moran refused to attend the swearing-in of the Governor-General and the associated ceremonies. Archbishop Carr and other bishops in Sydney felt obliged to stay away in solidarity with him.

It was a question of precedence, long a contentious one in colonial history. The Colonial Office had backed out of the dispute as far back as 1867, saying no ecclesiastical dignitary had official ranking in the colonies, but that Government might accord it if local conditions made it necessary. Most of the colonies overcame the difficulty by granting priority to the dignitary longest in office in the colony. A cardinal created problems in the matter, but Moran was longer in service than Archbishop William Saumarez Smith.

Moran checked with the Premier, Sir William Lyne, who read the list to him, and he had precedence over his Anglican opposite number.

At 9 o'clock on the eve of the celebrations Sir William Lyne informed the Cardinal's secretary that the Anglican Archbishop claimed precedence and the Government did not see its way to interfere in the arrangement 'as the Committee of Management had changed their minds and given precedence to the Anglican Archbishop at this and all Government functions'. Cardinal Moran intimated that he could not, under these circumstances, take any part in the celebrations.

Cathedral Demonstration

Despite this, however, the Cardinal, the visiting bishops and clergy and the Catholic body generally entered into the spirit of Commonwealth Day with a colourful demonstration by Catholic school children, 400 strong in front of St Mary's Cathedral, as the inaugural procession passed by. Innumerable flags floated from St Mary's and in front was a profusion of flags and bunting, all symbolic of loyalty. College-street and Hyde Park were packed with sightseers, while the more venturesome found their way up to the turrets of the Cathedral. Cardinal Moran appeared in scarlet robes, accompanied by a distinguished entourage of monsignori, clergy and laity.

At 10.30 a.m., as Lord Hopetoun's carriage approached St Mary's, a halt was made in the procession to enable his Excellency to hear the singing of a special 'Federation' hymn, sung by the Catholic school children as their choral prayer for the Commonwealth:

A Song Of The Commonwealth

Hark! in the North where the Nations are,
Where their time-stained banners toss,
A word is heard and the White North Star
Smiles out on the Stars of the Cross.
Fair and strong, from the lap of time,
We have leaped to our Destiny.
Let our name go forth to every clime
And be shouted from sea to sea.

What does the future hold?
What light for the dawn-flushed face?
Lord, in Whose hand the Nations lie,
Lord, let Thy gift be Grace!

Last of the Powers of earth are we.
Youngest and fairest born;
We shall lord it over a mighty sea,
And many an Isle of Morn
Ours is the future, ours to reap
The crops that the South makes sweet,
No path of glory, or fame too steep
For the tramp of our Nation's feet.

What does the future hold?
Not tyranny, slavery, shame.
Lord, in Whose hand the Nations lie,
Lord, let Thy gift be Fame!

Hail to the Commonwealth, mighty, free;
Now beginning its march sublime,
Over a continent and a sea
Ruler until the end of time.
Dowered with beauty, with strength, with light,
Australia, girdled with sun-bright gold,
Forward, sweep on your march of might,
God's star shine on your forehead bold.

What does the future hold
For the land of the Golden Fleece?
Lord, in Whose hand the Nations lie,
Lord, let Thy gift be Peace!

At the conclusion, the children gave three hearty cheers for the Governor-General and the Commonwealth of Australia and the whole gathering joined them in singing the National Anthem. During the whole of the time the procession was passing, the bells of St Mary's Cathedral rang out joyous peals.

Moran's Prayer

Cardinal Moran composed the following prayer for use in connection with the inauguration of the Commonwealth. It is not clear if Moran had intended to recite it at the Centennial Park ceremony!

Father of Mercies! hear Thy children's prayer on this day of rejoicing. With grateful hearts we approach Thy throne, for from Thee all good and perfect gifts, from Thee all graces and blessings have come. High as the heavens we raise our voices in joyous acclaim, and from ten times ten thousand fervent hearts we fill Thy courts with anthems of thanksgiving and praise. To Thee, the Creator and Supreme Lord of all, we offer our homage of adoring love. Reject not our petition; hear our prayer.

Australia in the freshness in freedom and the vigour of youth, yet unimpaired in loyalty and undimmed in affection to the Sovereign, sets out today on her peaceful career of Empire. Through Thy blessing may our Commonwealth be ever bound to Thy throne with the adamantine links of filial piety and filial love, and may it be given to it to attain its glorious destiny.

Bless our most gracious Sovereign, who rules over the vastest colonial empire that the world has known, the most united in loyalty, the most earnest in the heroism of devotedness and affection. Bless the representative of the Sovereign in this fair land. We offer him, as he moves amongst us, our sincere fealty and heartiest greeting. May Thy blessing be with the Government on whom the duty devolves to control the destinies of our Commonwealth. Grant them the wisdom, enlightenment, and strength which ensure union and peace, that they may successfully carry on to completion the great work proposed to them. Bless our legislature, our courts of justice, our federated States, our people, the young and the old, their virtuous lives, their aspirations, their industries, their homes, that the flowers of joy and the fruits of gladness may everywhere be multiplied.

Thou dost rule the storms and holdest the ocean waves in Thy right hand, guard our shores in peace. Through Thy blessing may prosperity smile upon Australia's widespreading plains. May the energy of her people in the triumphs of industry be worthy of the traditions of our race.

May religion with its blossoms of hope, its riches of wisdom, its works of mercy abound every day more and more, till, with the accompaniment of true happiness, it shall become the heritage of every homestead throughout the length and breadth of the land. May Thou from whom all blessings flow, lead us by Thy kindly light and guide us in the paths of justice, that everywhere the pleasant fruits of piety may be found, and Australia's people rich in merits, pure in deeds, earnest in charity, and quickened by a spirit of unselfishness and sacrifice may become a model nation, a beacon to those who are in the darkness of infidelity and the shadows of death.

May our Commonwealth be a great nation not in name only but in reality and truth, encircling, in its wide domain, a happy, brave, loyal and generous people. Emblems of its greatness, may it in one hand ever wield the sceptre of Christian civilisation, and in the other may it firmly grasp the gospel of peace; and may this be the crowning mission of Australia's Commonwealth to pull down the barriers that irreligious discord and racial strife would raise, and to erect on their ruins a glorious temple of abiding concord and long-enduring peace.

Australian Hierarchy and The Commonwealth

At Government House on Friday, January 5, the following address from the Cardinal, Archbishops and Bishops of Australia was presented to his Excellency the Governor-General by his Eminence:

May it please your Excellency,- On the part of the Catholic Archbishops, bishops and clergy of Australia, it is my privilege on this auspicious occasion to present to you as representative of her Most Gracious Majesty and first Governor-General of the Australian Commonwealth, this expression of our devoted homage, and to accord you a most hearty welcome.

In the Commonwealth which you have come to inaugurate, the aspirations and fond desires of Australian patriots past and present are at length realised, and Australia, arrayed in the freshness of freedom and the vigour of youth, yet, in her loyalty to the Throne, enters on the glorious career that destiny has marked out for her.

It will be our constant prayer that, through the blessing of Divine Providence, prosperity and peace may never cease to smile upon the Australian Commonwealth, and that for ages yet to run it may uninterruptedly, pursue the pleasant paths of Christian enlightenment and genuine progress. May it ever stand erect before the world, a beacon and model to other nations, by the devotedness and energy and harmony of all classes of its citizens, the loyalty and patriotism of its sons, and the virtuous deeds of its children.

Once more we offer your Excellency a hearty welcome, and we trust and pray that your administration, by its beneficent measures and brilliant results, may assert its place as a golden page in Australian History, and that every happiness may attend you during your stay in this fair land.

In keeping with the spirit of all these events, one of the two Catholic papers in Sydney published this verse.

AUSTRALIAN HYMN

*Written for The Freeman's Journal
(one of Sydney's two Catholic papers)*

by J. E. S. Henerie

God bless our Commonwealth,
Give joy and grace and health
To one and all
True to our Austral land,
Brothers in heart and hand.
United will we stand
Whatever befall.

God of our fathers hear
In our defence be near,
To lead and aid;
Us, let no tyrant awe,
Closer together draw,
Equal before Thy law,
Strong, unafraid.

World-born or native-born,
Dyed of the dusk or morn,
Dark-hued or white,
One in the inner soul,
One in true glory's roll
One in our work and goal
Freedom and Light.

Sydney Celebrations

Sunday 5 January was declared Commonwealth Sunday.
Most churches throughout Australia seemed to mark it.

The (Sydney) Daily Telegraph of Monday 7 January reported:

Thanksgiving Services were held at St Andrews Cathedral, St James Church and the Pitt Street Congregational Church. A sermon was given by the Premier of South Australia, Mr F W Holden at the Stanmore Wesleyan Church. A united service was held in Prince Alfred Park and in Centennial Park, a demonstration was given by school children and pastors from different schools, which occupied the Pavilion. United services were also held at Petersham Park, the Wollongong Town Hall, and in Hyde Park. St Mary's Cathedral, the Wesley Church in Regent Street, the Petersham Church also held commemorations and the Salvation Army held a service in Belmore Park.

The Sydney Town Hall held 'The Ideal Commonwealth' as the official National Service. This was conducted by the Rev. John C McDonald (Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales) and also attended by His Excellency the Governor-General.

The Freeman's Journal described the ceremony in St Mary's Cathedral.

The music at St Mary's Cathedral on Commonwealth Sunday was, in every way, worthy of the dignity of the occasion. From the pompous yet joyous chorus, 'Ecce Sacerdos Magnus', which was sung as the ecclesiastical procession entered the cathedral, down to the closing strains of Handel's 'Hallelujah', it was an unbroken stream of excellence. It again proved of what we are capable in the way of church music, and drew forth the well-deserved encomiums of visitors from all parts of the world.

Melbourne Celebrations

At the Offertory the Choir sang *Salvan fac Rempublicam* (God Save the Commonwealth), a variant of the usual *Salvan fac Reginam* (God Save the Queen). Despite the Latin translation of Commonwealth, and despite Queen Victoria's unease on the issue, no

republican connotation was intended. A letter from Pope Leo XIII was read. It gave three reasons for the Mass: (1) reparation for the world crimes against religion in the past century, (2) thanks for all blessings collectively and individually, and (3) petition for further blessings, particularly for Australia. Archbishop Carr was in Sydney on the invitation of the Premier of New South Wales.

Adelaide Celebrations

Midnight Mass was celebrated in St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Adelaide, to usher in the new century.

On the morning of 1 January there was a 10.30 a.m. Mass. While still ostensibly for the same reason as in Leo XIII's decree, there was mention made of the big event of the day. The Archbishop was not present. There were 130 members of the military force in full uniform. Most of these were from the Irish Corps, a volunteer civil defence unit with little standing in the regular army.

At the end of the Mass, the celebrant, Father O'Dowling SJ, delivered an eloquent sermon on the formation of the new nation. His main point was the wonderful increase in the number of Catholic priests and people in the previous hundred years.

Brisbane

Neither the Catholic nor secular Brisbane papers report any Federation event in St. Stephen's Cathedral. Archbishop Dunne was against Federation – as were the majority in south east Queensland. Queensland joined the Commonwealth only because citizens in the North, Centre and West of the State voted differently to those in the Brisbane region. Nothing has changed!

As New Year's Day was a Holy Day of Obligation, I presume the normal Masses were celebrated – especially as the Pope had written to all bishops.

Prayer for Australia

Perhaps for the Centenary of Federation we could suggest a Prayer for Australia. I suggest it be based on the one approved by the Bishops' Papal Visit Permanent Committee (1986). It might read:

*Creator God, you sent your Son to reveal to us your love,
to guide us
and to be the source of our life.*

*You have richly blessed our land
and the people of Australia,
and we thank you for the trust you place in us.*

*We pray for the guidance of your Spirit
that we may know where you are leading us
and how we may become truly one in Christ.*

*May your Church in Australia
clearly witness to the love and compassion of Jesus.
We pledge ourselves to work with generosity and courage
to extend your Kingdom of justice, love and peace.*

We ask this through Christ our Lord
AMEN

Another Item of Interest

Prayers at the opening of the first Parliament in 1901 and the Parliament Houses in 1927 and 1988 – and the fight to have all sessions of the House of Representatives and the Senate open in prayer – is another interesting story.

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