

Never See a Need

The Sisters of St Joseph
in South Australia 1866-2010



Maria Therese Foale rsj

Never See a Need



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978-1-925486-32-2 Paperback

978-1-925486-33-9 Hardback

978-1-925486-34-6 epub

978-1-925486-35-3 Kindle

978-1-925486-36-0 pdf

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Author: Foale, Marie Therese rsj

Title: Never See a Need: The Sisters of St Joseph in South Australia 1866-2010 Notes: Includes bibliographical references and index

Subjects: MacKillop, Mary, Saint 1842-1909.

Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart--History.

Catholic Church--South Australia--History.

Dewey Number: 271.97609423

Except where stated, all the photographs are used with permission of the Trustees of the Sisters of St Joseph.

Previous publications:

Ain Karin: Twenty-five Years, 1984-2009 (2009)

Providence: 125 Years of Aged Care, 1868-1993 (1993)

The Josephite Story: The Sisters of St Joseph, their Foundation and Early History, 1866-1895 (1989)

The Josephites Go West: The Sisters of St Joseph in Western Australia, 1887-1920 (1995)

Think of the Ravens: The Sisters of St Joseph and Social Welfare (2001)

Foale, Marie T & Toohey, Denis, *In Joyful Hope: The Story of Siena College, 1971-2001* (2004)

Cover design by Sandy Leaitua

Layout by Astrid Sengkey

Text Minion Pro Size 10 & 11

Published by:



An imprint of ATF Theology part of the ATF Press Publishing Group.

ATF (Australia) Ltd.

PO Box 504

Hindmarsh, SA 5007

ABN 90 116 359 963

www.atfpress.com

Making a lasting impact

Never See a Need
The Sisters of St Joseph in
South Australia
1866–2010
Marie Therese Foale rsj



ATF Theology
Adelaide
2016

*This book is dedicated to
the many hundreds of
Sisters of St Joseph who have been part of
the South Australian story
and who have remained true
to the vision and spirit of their founders,
St Mary MacKillop
and
Julian Tenison Woods.*

Foreword

This book comes at an apt time as we celebrate the 150 years since the founding of the Sisters of St Joseph in 1866. It tells the story of the faithful living of hundreds of women who dedicated themselves to following in the footsteps of St Mary MacKillop and Fr Julian Woods from the beginning until the present day. Their contribution to the development of the Church and society in Australia and beyond cannot be underestimated. This history is a rich addition to the many historical works authored by Marie Foale rsj.

Inside these pages is the story of the founding of a new Religious Congregation—the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. It tells of its humble and heroic beginnings in the colony of South Australia. In the founding years from 1866–1871, many women, inspired by Mary MacKillop and Julian Woods’ passion for God and God’s mission, joined in the endeavour of pioneering new ways of living the Gospel in this land. It is the story of dedicated women living in scattered towns across South Australia, bringing life and hope to people as they lived among them in the towns and communities that shaped life in this part of the world. In many cases, these women were the living face of the Catholic Church as they brought faith, education and works of charity and social service to the isolated, the disadvantaged and the marginalised. Like the people whom they served, they went to places without regular access to the Mass and Sacraments.

This writing captures the courage of women who left the familiar to take the work of the Institute beyond South Australia. It is a story of endurance as women lived through the experience of the excommunication of their leader, betrayal by a bishop whom

they looked upon as a friend and the loss of their first mother house at Kensington. It is also a story of hope, for these women held steadfastly to the dream that took roots in their hearts as they dedicated their lives to their 'good' God.

It tells an ongoing story of women 'listening to the whisperings of God in their own heart' (Mary MacKillop, 1868) as they opened and closed schools in changing circumstances, and established works of charity and outreach to those most in need in their time. Down through the decades they remained ever in tune with this movement of God as they established the motor missions, responded to the new needs of the post-war migrants, provided secondary schooling and brought life and culture to many a community through their musical talent and their prowess on the sporting field. It is a story of joys and sorrows embraced lovingly. It tells of women acting innovatively and choosing life in the inside-out and upside-down moments of life. Their practical, down-to-earth way of life and common sense approach to living as well as their sense of humour are told in these pages.

It is also a story of the Sisters of our time, who continue to embrace newly emerging possibilities: they stand alongside our Indigenous brothers and sisters in the movement towards reconciliation, become a voice for refugees, minister to the frail aged, and live in isolated situations. They are often the compassionate face of the Church, constantly looking for the new edge in the familiar and less familiar areas of mission, challenging the status quo in matters of justice, and assisting people to find the meaning of life in the spirituality of all that underpins our lives.

May you who read the story of these women who 'never see a need' without responding, be encouraged by their tenacity and wisdom, their love of life and capacity to find the light in the most trying situations. May their passionate hearts engage the passion within you so that you too are inspired to 'never see a need without doing something about it'.

Sr Monica Cavanagh
Congregational Leader
March 2016

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Abbreviations

NOTE:

Unless otherwise indicated, archival material cited in this text is from the collection held by the Sisters of St Joseph in their archives at St Joseph's Convent, Mount Street, North Sydney, and/or St Joseph's Convent, Kensington, South Australia.

ACA	Adelaide Catholic Archdiocesan Archives
ADB	Australian Dictionary of Biography
ACD	Australasian Catholic Directory
AHC	All Hallows College, Dublin, Ireland
ASSJ	Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph, Kensington, SA, and/or North Sydney
CCD	Confraternity of Christian Doctrine
CCES	Catholic Church Endowment Society
CEC	Catholic Education Council
CEO	Catholic Education Office
CP	Congregation of the Passion/Passionist Fathers
CSC	Chaplet and Southern Cross
GRG	Government Record Group, State Records of South Australia
IBVM	Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary/ Loreto Sisters
ICA	Archives of the Irish College, Rome
ITIM	Inter-Church Trade and Industry Mission
IH	Irish Harp
MATs	Metropolitan Adelaide Transport Study
MDA	Maitland Diocesan Archives, Maitland, NSW
MG	Mother General
MM	Mary MacKillop

MUP	Melbourne University Press
OP	Order of Preachers: Dominican sister or friar
OSA	Old Scholars Association
PEB	Public Examinations Board
PRO	Public Record Office
QC	Qualifying Certificate
RE	Religious Education
RI	Religious Instruction
rsm	Sister/Sisters of Mercy
rsj	Sister/Sisters of St Joseph
SA	South Australia
SACCS	South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools
SAGG	South Australian Government Gazette
SAGHS	South Australian Genealogy and Heraldry Society
SAPP	South Australian Parliamentary Papers
SC	Southern Cross
SCC	State Children's Council
SCCH	Southern Cross and Catholic Herald
SGS	Sister of the Good Samaritan/Good Samaritan Sisters
SJ	Society of Jesus/Jesuit Fathers
SOCG	Scritti Originali, Congregazione Generale, that is, letters from the Archives of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, Rome
Sr	Sister
SRCO	An Archival Series in the Vatican Archives, which contains correspondence between the Vatican and bishops, clergy and lay people based in Oceania
VG	Vicar General
YCS	Young Catholic Students

Introduction

‘Never See a Need’

Two remarkable people met at Penola in the Diocese of Adelaide, South Australia in the 1860s: colonial-born Mary MacKillop and Father Julian Edmund Tenison Woods, originally from London. On 19 March 1866, the feast of St Joseph, they founded (at Penola), the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart.¹ Between its inauguration and the year 2010, when Mary was canonised a saint by the Catholic Church, many hundreds of women joined the Congregation. This book tells something of its foundation and of the many Sisters who lived and worked in South Australia between then and 2010.

The beginnings of the Congregation were small. Its founders aimed to meet specific pastoral needs. Penola, a small township almost 400 kilometres southeast of Adelaide, was part of a vast mission district, where Julian Woods was the only priest. Like most priests in rural Australia in the 1860s, he was regarded as a missionary.² His intention at the time was to do one thing only: to fulfil the mandate of the Bishop of Adelaide, Patrick Geoghegan, that all Catholic children

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1. When Mary and Woods founded the Sisters of St Joseph the term used to describe it was ‘Institute’. In modern times, the commonest term used in this context is ‘Congregation’, which describes a religious order whose members engage in teaching, nursing, or social welfare work outside their convents. Members of ‘Religious Orders’, properly so called, live cloistered lives and, as a rule, do not move outside their convents or monasteries. In the interests of consistency, the term ‘Congregation’ has been used throughout this work to describe the body of which the Sisters of St Joseph are members.
 2. Prior to 1885, when the Australian bishops set up the parish structure that persists in Australia to the time of writing, (2014), priests were regarded as missionaries and had charge of missions or mission districts.

should have access to a sound education ‘in accordance with the Faith and practices of [their] Holy Religion’ [sic].³ The bishop had written:

Wherever there is a Pastor and a Flock, we implore you to make a commencement of a Catholic School. Let each do what he can. Give from your scanty means . . . Exert yourselves for the work . . . Persevere . . . in united prayer for success, and the Father of Jesus Christ and his little ones will grant your supplication.⁴

The bishop’s message weighed heavily upon Julian Woods and, after much prayer and many setbacks, he came up with the novel idea of establishing a new religious order of women whose way of life was suited to Australian conditions, and especially to those encountered in the Penola region.⁵

He dreamed that the members of his new Sisterhood would enable their pupils to ‘learn as Roman Catholic children’ in classrooms where they were ‘constantly breathing the atmosphere of their religion.’⁶ To achieve this end he planned to recruit the daughters of local families, to send them in groups of two or three to isolated settlements where a priest seldom visited, and to house them in buildings similar to those occupied by the people of the area.⁷ In addition, he anticipated that these Sisters would be alert to the needs of members of the wider community and be ready to intervene where those needs were great.

For her part, Mary MacKillop, who was born in Melbourne in 1842, had desired since childhood to commit her life to the service

3. Osmund Thorpe, ‘Geoghegan, Patrick Bonaventure (1805–1864)’ (Canberra: ADB, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1972). <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/geoghegan-patrick-bonaventure-3602/text5589>.

4. Patrick Geoghegan, *Pastoral Letter of Patrick Bonaventure, by Divine Grace and Favour of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Adelaide, to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese, on the Education of Catholic Children* (Adelaide, 1860), 3 & 16. Patrick Bonaventure Geoghegan, of the Order of St Francis, (OFM), was bishop of Adelaide from 1859 until his death on 9 May 1864.

5. For further details regarding the background to the foundation of the Sisters of St Joseph, see Marie T Foale, *The Josephite Story* (Sydney: St Joseph’s Generalate, 1989), chapters 1 & 2.

6. JET Woods, *Directory, and Order of Discipline* (Adelaide, ca. 1870), 84–86. Geoghegan, *Pastoral Letter* (1860), 8.

7. JET Woods, *Rules of the Institute of St Joseph for the Catholic Education of Poor Children*, approved by Bishop Sheil of Adelaide (Adelaide: 1868), article 1.

of God as a religious Sister by ministering to the poor, especially in isolated country districts or city slums. She was prepared to do what she could for people with no one to fight their battles. The story of her growing up in Victoria, her meeting with Julian Woods at Penola,⁸ and her decision to accept his invitation to become one of the first members of his religious order is well documented.⁹

It is also well known that, following her move to Adelaide, numerous young women joined her as Sisters of St Joseph, and priests from many different mission areas invited them to take charge of their schools. Less well known are the stories of those individual women, the details of their struggles and their fidelity as they learned to be Sisters—with few guidelines to help them. This account of how they remained faithful to their commitment to their religious vows and how, over the years, they worked in wide ranging ministries among the people, makes great reading.

When the Congregation was founded, Catholics comprised between twelve and fifteen per cent of the white population of South Australia. While most were Irish immigrants and their Australian born children, there was also a significant sprinkling of English, Scottish and German Catholics among them. Few had received any formal education. Most were employed as labourers on farms and in factories, with limited prospects of improving their standard of living or their position in society. Many had large families. There were few priests and most mission areas comprised vast, thinly populated areas where Catholics lived in scattered settlements many miles apart. Most of the clergy welcomed Sisters who were willing to go to the outposts of their mission areas where, besides teaching the children in the schools, they instructed the adults in their Catholic faith.

8. Margaret Press RSJ, *Julian Tenison Woods: Father Founder* (Sydney: St Paul's Publications, 2004), and Mary MacKillop, *Julian Tenison Woods: A Life*, introduced and annotated by Margaret Press, RSJ (Melbourne: Harper Collins Victoria, 1997), are both well researched and readable biographies of Julian Woods.

9. Mary MacKillop [hereafter MM] to Bishop Sheil, 10 September 1871, in *Resource Material from the Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph*, Issue no. 4 (North Sydney: ASSJ, 1980), 46. She wrote: "The way in which he described their wants [the neglected poor children of SA] so completely agreed with all my previous desires that when he asked me whether (provided he got the Bishop's consent to commence the Institute to meet these wants) I would remain and become one of his first children in the work, I joyfully consented."

In May 1867, as Mary MacKillop and a companion prepared to leave Penola for Adelaide, Father Woods presented them with a copy of his newly drafted *Rules for the Institute of St Joseph*. In its opening paragraph he stated that their new Religious Congregation was being established for 'the pious education of children whose parents [were] in humble circumstances'.¹⁰ In Article 13 he added that the Sisters were bound to:

do all the good they [could] and never see an evil without trying how they [might] remedy it, and thus to take a most lively interest in every external work of charity in the gaols, poor houses, and hospitals, so as to leave nothing untried, no matter how difficult, provided it [might] advance the glory of God, the good of souls, and the prevention of sin in the world.

He went on:

This is their mission, for though the Institute has its peculiar [particular] duties, yet the religious must do any good that they can, and make their charity all embracing.¹¹

Mary MacKillop adopted those rules and her whole life was a testament to how seriously she took them. She impressed their importance upon all trainee Sisters of St Joseph, and those who have joined the Congregation since then have also endeavoured to live by them. They were strong women, who were prepared to live like and among the people of cities, suburbs or country towns.

In the late 1860s, the education of children from poorer suburban areas and country settlements was the first task to which they put their minds. Consequently, before many years had elapsed, Catholic people were taking it for granted that there would be Catholic schools managed by the Sisters of St Joseph in their local areas.

As the Sisters settled into life in Adelaide, they came to realise that there were many needy people whom they could not reach through the school system. True to Article 13 of the *Rules of the Institute*, they stepped out in faith, visiting people in their homes and establishing

10. Woods: *Rules of the Institute*, December 1868, Article 1.

11. Woods: *Rules of the Institute*, December 1868, Article 1

charitable institutions with a view to relieving suffering and bringing hope to those concerned.

On 16 June 1868, just one year after Mary MacKillop's arrival in Adelaide, Father Woods and the Sisters welcomed their first guest at St Joseph's House of Providence on West Terrace, Adelaide. Their intention was that this place be a home that offered shelter to unemployed, homeless, widowed, abused, or abandoned women, all the while giving special consideration to the destitute and the frail aged. Before the Sisters undertook this work they had set up a House of Refuge for prostitutes, unmarried mothers and women newly released from gaol, and had become fully responsible for the management of the local Catholic orphanage.¹²

This Josephite tradition of being on the alert for the needs of those around them was so ingrained into the Sisters' minds and hearts,¹³ that they undertook the giving of religious instruction to Catholic children detained in Industrial Schools and Reformatories. Subsequently they and the Jesuit Fathers from Norwood became involved in the setting up of a Royal Commission into the administration of such institutions.¹⁴ This, in turn, led to their long term participation in the care and reformation of Catholic detainees in such institutions.¹⁵

The growth of the new Congregation was remarkable. Records indicate that by the end of 1871 as many as 130 young women had volunteered to become Sisters of St Joseph. While most of these were from South Australia, there were also several from Victoria, including Mary MacKillop herself, and at least three from Queensland, and

12. See: Marie T Foale, *Providence: 125 Years of Aged Care, 1868–1993* (Sisters of St Joseph Aged Care Services, Adelaide, 1993); and *Think of the Ravens, The Sisters of St Joseph and Social Welfare* (Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, Adelaide, 2001), for a fuller account of these institutions.

13. The term 'Josephite' may be used as a noun or as an adjective. For example: 'She is a Josephite', that is, a Sister of St Joseph; 'This is a Josephite school', that is, one operating in the spirit of the Sisters of St Joseph.

14. Jesuits are priests and brothers who belong to a Catholic Religious Order, the Society of Jesus. A number of Jesuit priests from Austria, Germany and Poland migrated to South Australia between 1848 and 1901. They settled at Sevenhill to the north of Adelaide and later took charge of the mission district of Norwood in the Adelaide metropolitan area. They contributed much to the life of the Catholic Church in South Australia and were always supportive of the Sisters of St Joseph

15. *SAPP, 1883–1884*, 'First Report of the Destitute Commission'; *SAPP, 1885*, no. 228, Appendix EE.

all proved their willingness to go wherever they were sent and do whatever they were called to do. What is even more remarkable than the increase in the membership of the Congregation is the way in which so many of its first members grasped the meaning of the religious life and persevered in it for their entire lives.

Most of these young women were members of Irish immigrant families and had been either born or raised in the colonies. Their parents had instilled the faith in them but, given their situations in the colonies, they had had only minimal contact with the Church. Most would have had few opportunities to attend Mass or receive the Sacraments. Very few would have heard of religious sisters and how they lived and worked in Ireland or Europe. Yet, when Father Woods or Sister Mary suggested that they might like to become Sisters, they came willingly. One might ask whether many, or even any of them would have dreamed of joining a religious order in other circumstances.

They were keen to do what was right, little realising that their leaders were still working out how to be Sisters of St Joseph and that they, too, had a part to play in finding the answer to that question. As they lived into the Josephite way of life, they encountered many hurdles. They made mistakes. From time to time, there were personal tensions and resentments among them. Some found the Josephite way of life too hard and left the group. All endured many painful experiences and suffered much.

Those who persevered as Sisters built their own traditions without the guidance of wise elders. Just over twenty years after the initial foundation at Penola, church officials in Rome decided that theirs was an authentic way of life, and gave them formal approval as a centrally governed Congregation of Pontifical Right. In other words, it was a Religious Congregation where all the members were governed by a general superior based in a central Mother House even when there were communities in a number of different dioceses.

Over the years, the Congregation has continued in the same spirit. Much has changed and today, 150 years after its foundation, there are fewer Sisters of St Joseph. Nevertheless, they still visit homes, hospitals, gaols, and detention centres and fight for the rights of the underprivileged. Few are engaged directly in the schools but they continue the work of education in other ways. Some are social

workers or nurses or spiritual directors. These Sisters continue to go wherever they are called in the performance of their ministries and, when their services are no longer required, they move on. It is in this spirit that, since 1866, members of the Congregation have taught in at least 140 different schools and lived in at least 145 residences as they have ministered in widely separated parts of South Australia.

In some instances, the Sisters followed the people from one settlement to another. In others, they closed schools because of changes in local circumstances. Some small settlements had sprung up to cater for the families of the men building roads and railways. These people moved on as the railheads advanced across the countryside and the Sisters followed them. On other occasions, they handed over well-established schools to Sisters from other Religious Congregations so as to be free to go to the margins of settlement. In fact, in South Australia, and especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were truly 'a people on the move'.¹⁶

At all times, they strove to meet the needs of as many disadvantaged children and adults as possible. Where necessary they accompanied parish priests on their visits to outstations for Sunday Mass and provided religious instruction for the local children. They also ran summer or vacation schools for the religious instruction of children with no access to Catholic schooling and prepared them for their first Sacraments. In the 1950s, they pioneered the Motor Mission movement founded by Archbishop Matthew Beovich of Adelaide.

The 1960s and 1970s were times of extraordinary change in both the Church and society, and the Sisters responded accordingly. During this era, governments began providing financial assistance to schools and charitable institutions so that they could reach and maintain the required standards of the day.

The years that followed the 'Second Vatican Council', also known as 'Vatican II', with its call for the renewal of religious life, were a time of great excitement and sometimes of great frustration as Sisters strove to rediscover the charism of their founders and interpret it for a different time.¹⁷

16. Marie T Foale, 'A People on the Move', in *Come Out Magazine* (Education Department of South Australia, 1980).

17. The Second Vatican Council, 1962–65 (also known as 'Vatican II') was a gathering of all the bishops of the entire Catholic Church at the Vatican in Rome, where

The years since Vatican II have been marked by continuous change. There are fewer Sisters, but they continue to live by the maxims laid down by their founders as they keep alert to the needs of the people of the twenty-first century. These women do not wear the habit designed by Mary and her first companions but they are no less Josephite than the brown clad women who walked Adelaide's streets and fanned out across the countryside between the 1860s and the 1970s.

Thanks to the development of modern technology, Sisters and others have gained easy access to the writings of Julian Woods, Mary MacKillop, and the wider group of founding Sisters. In more recent times, especially during the years leading up to Mary's beatification in 1995 and her canonisation in 2010, much has been written about her, and many of her own writings have been published.¹⁸

This book tells a tale of courage and resilience in the difficult circumstances of the foundation years and of a steady, somewhat quieter, but equally courageous perseverance in the years that followed.¹⁹ Part I, which covers the years 1866–1909, is an account of the founding Sisters,²⁰ their works, their struggles and their determination to remain part of the centrally governed Congregation they had joined. Part II relates the events of the years between Mary's death in 1909 and Vatican II, during which time the Sisters worked to retain her spirit by living according to the traditions and practices established during the foundress's lifetime. Part III describes some of the events that occurred between 1970 and 2010, the year when Mary was declared a saint for the Universal Church.

The researching and writing of this book has been a great challenge and a great joy. For the period of Mary MacKillop's lifetime there was a plethora of material—the difficulty has been to decide what to

they discussed Church teachings and life in great detail. During this Council and at its end the Council Fathers proclaimed several major Constitutions and other documents which have had a profound effect on the lives of Catholics worldwide

18. Beatification is a step along the road towards the canonisation of a holy person by the Catholic Church. Mary was beatified on 19 January 1995 and canonised, or declared a saint, on 17 October 2010.

19. See Appendix One for a comprehensive listing of Josephite foundations and ministries in South Australia, 1866–2010.

20. In this work, the term 'founding Sisters' has been used to designate those women who joined the Congregation during the years 1866–1871, when they received instruction from both Mary MacKillop and Julian Woods.

include and what to omit. For many later years, the opposite has been the case. Fewer records were preserved, and the finding of relevant information was more difficult. One outcome of this problem has been that, while all South Australian foundations are named, some have been given more space than others. Much more could have been written, but limitations of time and space rendered that impossible.²¹ What has become clear is that many local histories await the writing.

The reader may note some overlap in the information contained in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. Events, foundations and so on that occurred in the early 1880s are described in Chapter Two where they appeared to fit naturally, thus allowing Chapter Three to deal more fully with the significant events of the 1880s.

Unless otherwise indicated, the information in this history was sourced in the Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph in either Adelaide or Sydney.

This book could not have been written without the support and encouragement of many people: those who helped with research, those who read the text, those who enabled its writer to allocate many hours to this work. It is impossible to name all these people, and I apologise to anyone who has been omitted. Among those who stand out in my memory are Sisters Christine Rowan who commissioned the work ever so long ago and Marion Gambin who, while in South Australia, strongly encouraged one very easily side-tracked writer. Then came Srs Mary Reardon, Maryellen Thomas, Ann Leesue, Mary Ryan, Marie White, Margaret McKenna and many others who read all or part of various drafts and were consistent with their assistance.

What can be said about Mary and the late Barry Lemm, and their team of patient researchers, who spent many hours in front of microfilm readers in the State Library going through 'The Southern Cross' and noting/printing off any references to Josephite Sisters that they could find? Then there were my historian colleagues, David Hilliard and Robert Fitzsimons who so painstakingly cast their eyes

21. Much of the founding story, especially regarding the difficulties faced by Mary MacKillop, Julian Woods and the Church leaders of the time has already been dealt with in Marie T Foale, *The Josephite Story*. Hence, while some of this has been retold here, it could be helpful to read that volume in conjunction with Part I of this work. It relates the story of the institution itself. In this one, the emphasis is on its members, their lives and works.

over this work. Finally, there comes Sandy Leaitua who, with great skill and patience, has designed the book's lovely cover.

Like Tiny Tim from Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol', all this writer can say is 'God bless everyone.'

DORSETTA TERRACE, FLINDERS STREET, ADELAIDE



'Dorsetta Terrace, Flinders Street, Adelaide, south side, in March 1922. This building was erected by Emmanuel Solomon in the 1850s.' (Davies and Wooldridge, architects, March 24, 1922, no. 34257.)

The units set back from the street are where the Sisters stayed from October 1871–March 1872.



Where it all began. The stable school at Penola.

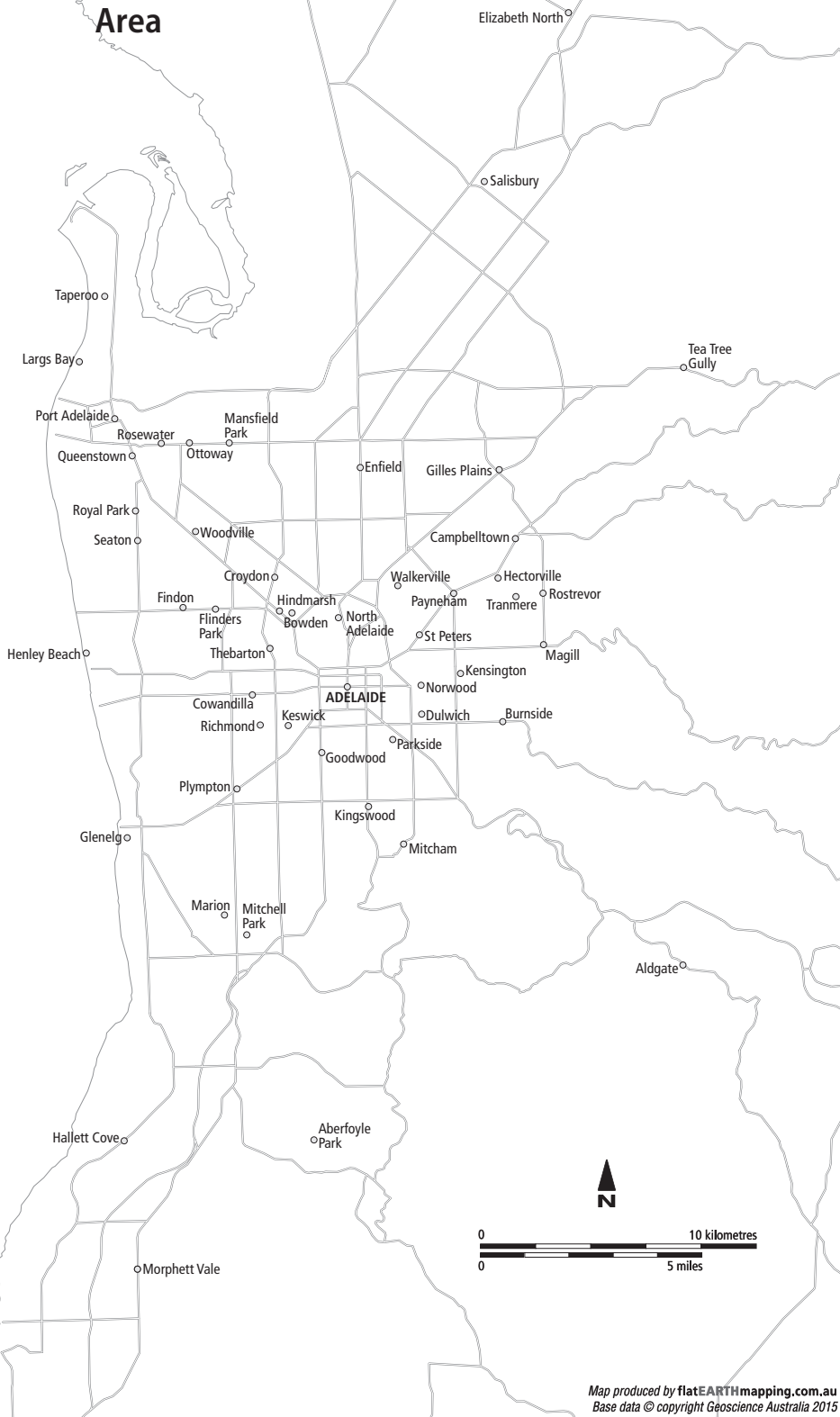


*Bishop Patrick Geoghegan.
1859–1864*

Part 1
The Years
Of The Founders



Adelaide Metropolitan Area



Chapter One

The Foundation Years: 1866–1872

Mary MacKillop first visited South Australia in 1860 when she went to Penola to be governess to her cousins, the Cameron children.¹ She remained there for almost two years and during that time, became acquainted with Father Julian Woods.² She heard his pleas for assistance in setting up Catholic schools in his mission area, as required by Bishop Geoghegan, and told him that, while she was willing to help him, her personal circumstances were such that she could not do so immediately. In fact, by late 1861 she had to leave Penola to help support her family at Portland in Victoria.

Before leaving Penola, she confided to Woods her desire to serve God as a member of a Religious Order. Subsequently, he became her spiritual guide, a position he held for the next several years. During that time, his dream of providing Catholic schools for the local children gradually evolved into the founding of the Sisters of St Joseph, a Religious Congregation of Sisters to manage these schools in different parts of his far-flung mission district.

At last, in January 1866, Mary was free to leave her family and return to Penola to take charge of Woods' school. Matters moved quickly for her after that and,

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1. Alexander MacKillop's sister, Margaret, was married to Alexander Cameron, owner of Penola Station. They invited their niece, eighteen-year-old Mary, to be governess to their children, knowing that the wages they paid her would go to the support of her mother and family in Victoria.
 2. Julian Edmund Tenison Woods (1832–1889) was an Englishman. Before migrating to Australia in 1854, he had tried his vocation with the Passionists in England and the Marist Fathers in France. He was ordained a diocesan priest in Adelaide in January 1857.

when he asked [her] whether [she] would remain and become one of his first children in the flock, [she] joyfully consented.³

Consequently, on 19 March, the feast of St Joseph in that same year, she became the first Sister of St Joseph, and began wearing black as a symbol of her dedication. Under her leadership, the Penola School flourished and, thanks to Woods' enthusiasm for their new Religious Congregation, several local women accepted his invitation to join it. The first to come was Blanche Amsinck (Sister Francis Xavier) who arrived at some time in late 1866.⁴ In April 1867 Rose Cunningham (Sister Rose) joined Mary at Penola.⁴ Within a short time Woods sent her to assist Blanche in St Teresa's Catholic School at Mount Gambier leaving Mary to manage his school at Penola with the able assistance of her two younger sisters, Annie and Lexie MacKillop.

Others to become members of this little group were several women from Western Victoria: Mary Wright (Sister Clare) a young schoolteacher from Cape Bridgewater near Portland; her younger sister, Julia (Sister Gertrude); Grace Walsh (Sister, and later, Mother Bernard) and Anna Phillips (Sister Monica), all from the town of Portland itself. Others included Julia Fitzgerald (Sister Francis of the Five Wounds) from Mullagh Station, near Harrow, and Margaret Nolan (Sister Agatha) from Glenmire Station, near Casterton. Some time later, two very young girls, Jane Britt (Sister Jane Frances) from Penola, and Ellen Hudson (Sister Celestine) from Mount Gambier also volunteered to become Josephites.⁵ Woods became spiritual director to all these women and helped them understand the meaning of Josephite Religious Life.⁶

3. MM to Sheil, from the steamer 'Kangaroo', 10 September 1871.

4. Rose Cunningham (Sr Rose) was born in County Westmeath, Ireland, on 24 June 1845. She migrated to Australia as a young woman, joined the Congregation on 3 May 1867, was professed on 24 May 1868, suffered a long and debilitating mental illness, and died in the Parkside Mental Hospital in South Australia on 2 October 1918. Little else is known of her.

5. See Appendix Two for further details regarding these women.

6. Spiritual direction is a way of leading a person to come closer to God. Father Woods filled the role of director for the first Sisters as they entered into the Josephite way of life or, as Mary herself put it, gave them 'certain rules for [their] spiritual guiding.' (MM to Monsignor Kirby, Irish College, Rome, Ascension Thursday, 22 May, 1873.)

What Woods did not know at the time was that, before long, the way he was dealing with the question of Catholic education in his mission region would be the proximate cause of a dramatic change to his own situation. Bishop Geoghegan died in May 1864 while on a visit to Ireland. His successor, Lawrence Bonaventure Sheil, OSF, Archdeacon of Ballarat, was consecrated Bishop of Adelaide in St Francis' Church, Melbourne, on 15 August 1866.⁷ Sheil inherited a vast diocese comprising the entire colony of South Australia, which then extended from the Southern Ocean to Palmerston (Darwin) on the Timor Sea.⁸ Woods attended Sheil's consecration in Melbourne and, while there, informed his new bishop of his ideas regarding education and his plans to bring them to fruition. What followed far exceeded his wildest hopes and dreams.

In fact, Sheil was so impressed with the young priest's enthusiasm that he gave tacit approval to the sisterhood, even though his ideas as to its organisation differed 'to some extent' from those held by Woods.⁹ In addition, he appointed Woods to the newly-created position of Director General of Catholic Education and Inspector of Schools, and asked him to accompany him to Adelaide as his private secretary and personal chaplain. Woods could only rejoice at the position in which he so unexpectedly found himself. That the bishop should give his blessing to his new Religious Congregation had been as much as Woods had dared to hope for. The ways and means of realising his dream of providing Catholic schooling for all the Catholic children of the colony were now within his reach!¹⁰

7. Bishop Sheil OSF was a member of the Order of St Francis, that is, a Franciscan priest. Ian J Bickerton, 'Sheil, Laurence Bonaventure (1815–1872)', *ADB* (National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1976) <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sheil-laurence-bonaventure-4568/text7497>.

8. Australia became a nation on 1 January 1901, when six British colonies united to form the Commonwealth of Australia. Prior to this, it was a collection of six British colonies which were partly self-governing, but under the lawmaking power of the British Parliament. These colonies resembled six separate countries, each with its own government and laws, its own defence force and its own postage stamps. Each one collected tariffs on goods that crossed its borders. In this work, the term 'colony' is used when describing events which occurred before the year 1901. For further information see <http://www.peo.gov.au/learning/closer-look/federation-cl.html>

9. Woods to MM, 30 August 1866

10. Woods to MM from Melbourne, 30 August, 12 & 19 September 1866.

This appointment required that Woods move to Adelaide in January 1867 to undertake his new duties, one of which was that he travel throughout the length and breadth of the 'settled areas' of the colony to visit and assess existing schools.¹¹ He left Penola with high hopes for the future, only to find that it was not to be as bright as he had imagined. When he reached the city, eager to start work, he discovered that few of the clergy shared his passion for it. In fact, the Vicar General, Father John Smyth, feared that his enthusiasms were no more than 'fires of straw', and threw 'deluges of cold water' upon them, while many others of his colleagues openly ridiculed his ideas regarding the schools and the Institute of St Joseph.¹²

When he announced that the Sisters of St Joseph would form the backbone of his education system, they threw up their hands in horror. 'What', they asked, 'can you expect from colonial girls, without any knowledge of a religious life, and no one to train them?'¹³ Woods was undeterred by such opposition. In fact, even though it was hard to bear, it seemed to augment rather than to quell the blaze of his enthusiasm. He regarded crosses (the term he used to describe any difficulties he encountered in the course of his ministry) as sure signs of divine approval, and hence as encouragement to press on with increased determination to succeed.

He soon discovered that most of the twenty-three Catholic schools in the diocese were functioning with untrained teachers, poor equipment and few facilities. He scarcely knew which way to turn, and decided that he needed Mary MacKillop's expert assistance. She was a skilful, Victorian trained teacher with a strong commitment to the ideals of a universal Catholic education where the religious and the secular were integrated into the curriculum and daily timetable. Therefore, she was well suited for the task at hand.¹⁴ What more could he ask for?

11. 'Settled areas' was a term used until at least the mid-twentieth century to describe the limits of agricultural settlement in South Australia. They included Eyre Peninsula and most of the country south of a west-east line from Port Augusta to Renmark.

12. Woods to MM, 10 April 1867.

13. Woods to MM, 12 June 1867.

14. See Marie T Foale, *The Josephite Story*, Chapter 3 and Appendix 3 for further details re Mary's system of teaching.

In June 1867, when he invited Mary to join him, she and Sister Rose left their schools at Penola and Mount Gambier respectively, and travelled to Adelaide, where they arrived on Sunday 23 June. Their first convent was the small Grote Street house being rented by Miss Ellen McMullen, the head teacher of St Francis Xavier's Cathedral Hall School, which stood beside the cathedral in Wakefield Street, Adelaide. During the following week, the three women made a retreat under Woods' guidance and at its end, Mary and Rose donned their Josephite religious habits for the first time.¹⁵ On the next day, 2 July 1867, they made their first public appearance, looking very nun-like in the black habits and veils they had made during the retreat.¹⁶

Sisters Mary and Rose began their Adelaide ministry as teachers in what had been Ellen McMullen's school beside the cathedral. Ellen, who had spent some time in the novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy in Melbourne and had left there voluntarily, felt drawn to join Mary and Rose as a Sister of St Joseph. She took part in their retreat and, when they donned their new religious habits, she dressed in a simple black dress and became known as 'Sister Josephine'. She, too, was a trained teacher and, with time, proved her worth in the classroom and as a leader among the Sisters.

After lessons finished on that first day, the three Sisters, two in their black habits and veils, and Sister Josephine in the black dress of a postulant, set out to lead the schoolchildren to their homes in the back streets of the city.¹⁷ (This practice proved impractical and ceased within a few weeks, because the number of children was too great and they came from many different parts of the city).

15. 'Retreat' is a term used to describe a time when Sisters withdraw from their usual activities, and recharge their spiritual lives by spending six to eight days in quiet prayer and reflection. Usually they engage a priest, in this case Father Woods, to guide them through the retreat programme. Colloquially, 'making a retreat' is how participants describe this activity. Most Religious Sisters take time out for a retreat every year.

16. The first Josephite habits were black, but when Mary and the Sisters went to purchase more habit material they discovered that a particular dark brown fabric was much cheaper and so they opted for it instead.

17. A person at the beginning of her training to become a Sister wore a black dress and was known as a 'postulant', that is, someone asking to join the Congregation. A religious habit was the distinctive dress worn by all Religious Sisters until the 1970s.

In March 1891, as Mary MacKillop and the Sisters celebrated the silver jubilee of her decision to become the first Sister of St Joseph, she wrote:

Little did either of us [a reference to Father Woods] then
dream of what was to spring from so small a beginning.¹⁸

The same was certainly true of the people of Adelaide in the mid-winter of 1867. Little did they dream that they had become involved in the birth of a new Religious Congregation and a new, organised system of Catholic education, both of which would spread across the entire Australian continent and beyond, and would survive into the twenty-first century.

Penola marked the beginning. The Cathedral Hall School in Adelaide was a significant move forward, and the results that Mary and the trainee Sisters achieved there indicated that they knew how to teach and could manage a school well. According to the *South Australian Register*, the general public was impressed with the way they inculcated neatness and cleanliness in the children, so that even the poorest had 'a general look of tidiness and freshness about them that [was] very pleasing'. The people also noted that the new Sisters maintained good order and discipline in spite of the large numbers of children present, made singing an integral and enjoyable part of each day's work, and had an appealing system of rewards for good conduct and application.¹⁹

Within a matter of weeks, even the Sisters' sharpest critics, most notably Archdeacon Patrick Russell (the priest in charge of the Adelaide mission), were commending them for the quality of their work.²⁰ Parents showed their satisfaction by enrolling their children and ensuring that they attended school regularly.

Thus, sixty children arrived on the Sisters' first day at the Hall School. After six weeks, the number of children had more than

18. MM to the Sisters, 4 March 1891.

19. All details in this paragraph are from the leading article, 'Roman Catholic Education', *South Australian Register*, 7 March 1868.

20. Russell to Cardinal Alessandro Barnabo, 28 August 1867, SRCO (Rome) vol 8, ff. 907–908. Barnabo (1801–1874) was Prefect of the Roman Congregation Propaganda Fide, which arranged and supervised the Church's missionary works across the world.

doubled and, by the end of the year, it had passed the 200 mark. Several other factors contributed towards the parental satisfaction noted above. The most important of these were that Mary helped them clothe their children, did not demand fees from those who were unable to pay, and treated everyone equally, whether they paid or not.²¹

That public opinion was changing in their favour was probably the least of the Sisters' concerns during the latter half of 1867. They were so busy that they scarcely had time to worry about such matters. From 5 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night, their days were mapped out with set times for religious exercises and devotions, household chores, school duties, study and lesson preparation, as well as for the visitation of the sick and schoolchildren's families.²²

Further, since all of them, including Mary herself, were beginners in the religious life, they had to devote a great deal of time and energy to learning how to think and behave as members of a Religious Congregation. This proved particularly difficult because they were adapting the religious life to suit colonial conditions, something not always understood by immigrant priests, bishops or lay people. In addition, they had no established traditions and customs to fall back upon in cases of doubt, and no elders 'to distil for them the matured wisdom of the past'.²³

When Mary MacKillop arrived in Adelaide in June 1867, Woods informed her that she was to be headmistress of the Cathedral Hall School and that all new recruits were to spend some time working with her as pupil teachers. He considered it important that they not go out to other schools until they had mastered the principles and practice of teaching. In reality, this did not happen because, as the membership of the Congregation increased at a rate that neither he

21. *South Australian Advertiser*, 15 August 1867, Report of meeting of the Catholic Education Council; *SCCH*, 20 September 1870, 9, 'An Appeal'; 20 January 1868, 64.

22. Woods, *Rules*, article 5, 'Of Employments', Article 6: 'Of the daily Duties', Article 8: 'Of the Meals'; Woods, *Directory and Order of Discipline of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart* (Adelaide, ca. 1870), passim; Woods, *A Book of Instructions for the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart* (Adelaide, 1870), passim.

23. Douglas Pike, 'A Society without Grandparents', in *Melbourne Studies in Education, 1957-1958*, edited by EL French (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1958), 57.

nor Mary had anticipated, Woods found himself under pressure from his fellow clergy to provide Sisters for their schools.

The continuous demands for help, and his anxiety to fill all requests as quickly as possible, gave rise to some serious problems for the Congregation. That its members were still struggling to understand the meaning of the religious life they had embraced, to master the art of teaching, and to ensure that their pupils attained the required standards seemed not to worry him at all. In fact, so great was his enthusiasm that he was unable to see that his haste had serious potential for disaster.

For their part, these young Josephite novices began with great enthusiasm, confident in the guidance of their charismatic Father Director.²⁴ As their numbers increased, they willingly undertook new works. In fact, by the end of 1867 (just six months after Mary's arrival in Adelaide), she and nine other trainee Sisters had charge of three schools: the Cathedral Hall and Bowden in the Adelaide metropolitan area and Yankalilla, seventy-two kilometres away at the southern end of the Mount Lofty Ranges. In addition, two of these Sisters were assisting with the supervision of a Refuge or halfway house for women recently released from gaol or in need of protection.

Expansion began in late August 1867. There were five Sisters and so Woods agreed that they should undertake the management of the Catholic school at inner suburban Bowden. He chose Sisters Josephine McMullen and Clare Wright to replace the lay teacher who had been working there in far from ideal conditions.²⁵ Neither Clare nor Josephine had been Josephites for more than a few weeks.

Woods was keen to have Sisters at Bowden because, as he reported in *The Southern Cross and Catholic Herald* of October 1867:

This is the poorest district in the colony and is inhabited by Catholics to a large extent. No poor quarter of any colonial city could vie with it in poverty and its usual accompaniments. The Sisters of St Joseph have a school in a room literally worse than a stable. The inconveniences and squalid misery

24. A novice is a person who is going through a period of probation before pronouncing her vows as a member of a Religious Congregation. The term novitiate is used to describe the probationary period and also the place where it occurs.

25. *SCCH*, 20 March 1869, 290; *IH*, 6 April 1872, 4.

of the place where ninety children are congregated could hardly be believed.

He followed this statement with what proved to be a successful appeal for £300 to build a new church-school in the area.²⁶ This building was ready for occupation by the beginning of the 1868 school year.

Josephine and Clare resided in community with Mary MacKillop and the other Sisters in their little cottage convent in Grote Street, and travelled to and from Bowden each day by train or (when weather permitted) on foot. The Bowden Sisters' journey became a little shorter when, in early 1868, a much larger house on a Church owned block at the western end of Franklin Street became available and all the Adelaide Sisters moved in there.

The first to move away from that initial community and set up a new one (at Yankalilla) were Sisters Clare Wright (a novice) and Francis Fitzgerald (a postulant). Having arrived in Adelaide on 4 October, Francis scarcely had time to find her feet in Adelaide before Woods sent her and Clare to this distant foundation. In so doing, he had to find a replacement for Clare at Bowden. Thus began his practice of moving Sisters like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle every time he accepted a new foundation, an arrangement that did not augur well for the success of his education system.

Even so, despite some initial difficulties, what happened at Yankalilla was the beginning of a remarkable experiment in female religious life. Two Sisters, with only a few weeks' experience of convent living, were based in a small, isolated settlement where there was no resident priest. They were without daily Mass which was considered at the time to be an absolute necessity for religious Sisters. In those days before the invention of the telephone, they had only limited means of communication with the Sisters in Adelaide. They had with them, however, copies of their daily timetable, their Josephite 'Rule of Life', and their school timetable and curriculum.²⁷

26. A church-school was a building, which served as a church on weekends and as one or more classrooms during the week. It usually fell upon the Sisters and their pupils to rearrange the furniture for Mass at the end of classes on Fridays and then make it ready for school on Monday mornings.

27. See Appendices Four A and Four B for details of the Sisters' daily timetable and prayer schedule.

They sent Woods and Mary regular written reports regarding their management of the school and their community living. Thus, in January 1868, Sister Francis Fitzgerald reported to Mary that they had attended Sunday Mass at St Peter's Church, Normanville, approximately eight kilometres away (there has never been a Catholic church in Yankalilla), and had visited a sick woman.

She went on to say that the local school board was raising funds for a new schoolroom, that she was doing well with her study, that there were thirty children in the school, and that the little ones were not very advanced. In fact, she claimed that she was so busy that, by the time she came home from the school and prepared dinner, it was already 6.30 in the evening. She added another reason for her lateness: she no longer had the domestic help to which she was accustomed. She had to tidy the classroom and make the fire in the house herself!²⁸

For Francis, the youngest daughter of a wealthy Irish family, and sister to the owner of a prosperous station property in Western Victoria, the need to do her own tidying up and to set her own fire came as a shock. Nevertheless, she persevered as a Sister and, along with those who joined the Congregation at this time, laid a firm foundation for its future. Even at this early stage, she and her companions had taken to heart that line of their Rule, which read:

[The Sisters are bound] to do all the good they can and never to see an evil without trying how they may remedy it.²⁹

The success of the Yankalilla foundation proved that the founders' aim to reach all Catholic children in the colony was a realistic one. They were confident that they could go ahead and establish houses in other country areas, regardless of their distance from the larger towns where there were resident priests. For their part, the clergy watched developments with growing interest. Those who were satisfied that these new Sisters could teach, and that they cost less than lay teachers to maintain, asked Woods for Josephite communities. Consequently, in January 1868, three Sisters went to the copper mining town of Kapunda (some eighty kilometres to the north of Adelaide), where enrolments soon exceeded one hundred.

28. Sr Francis Fitzgerald to MM, 2 January 1868.

29. Woods, *Rules of the Institute*, December 1868, Article 13.

Next came Gawler, forty kilometres from the city, where they made a foundation in April. In early May, two Sisters went to Penola and another two took up residence in the St Vincent de Paul's Orphanage in Adelaide. In June, the village of Macclesfield in the Adelaide Hills welcomed two Sisters. In July, three others moved to Port Adelaide to manage the school there. Willunga (in the Southern Vales) and suburban Queenstown (which was close to Port Adelaide) followed soon afterwards. All communities except those in Adelaide, Port Adelaide/Queenstown, Gawler and Kapunda comprised two Sisters only. Such expansion was possible only because there was a constant stream of new recruits presenting themselves at the convent door.

When Sisters moved away from their city Mother House, Mary insisted that they write to her regularly, reporting on their community living and prayer life, their teaching, and their visitation of the sick and needy outside of school hours. For her part, she was always ready to help them prepare their lessons in Arithmetic and English Grammar. Sister Aloysius O'Leary wrote from Macclesfield:

Dear Sister, I cannot think of anything to write about, except if you would be so kind as to send a parsing lesson. I would be so thankful.³⁰

The provision of suitable schoolbooks for the use of the Sisters and the children had exercised Woods' mind ever since he had become Inspector of Catholic Schools. In fact, as early as September 1867, he had invested between £300 and £400 of his own money for the purchase of the 'cheapest and most serviceable books for both secular and religious instruction' that he could obtain.³¹ These included texts from the Catholic Council of Education in London.

Less than twelve months later, he was discussing the possibility of his writing and having printed cheaply a geography text and a grammar for the use of the teachers. By September 1868, the geography was on sale at the Catholic Book Depot and the grammar was almost ready for printing. He had published a Catechism before the end of 1869.³²

30. Sr Aloysius O'Leary to MM, 2 November 1868.

31. Woods, 'Report of Meeting of the Central Council of Catholic Education', *SCCH*, 20 September 1867.

32. Woods, *SCCH*, 20 May, 12 July and 29 September 1868 & 20 June 1869.

The situation regarding the schools changed so rapidly that, by early 1868, Mary found it necessary to abandon the classroom teaching she loved, and travel to the schools and convents to assist the Sisters with their work and to instruct them in the religious life. Surviving evidence suggests that, thanks to Mary's tuition and the texts that Woods imported or produced himself, most of the founding Sisters could hold their own in front of classes of children at the level for which they had been trained.

These women knew that the primary aim of the Congregation was the education of poor children. Its members also lived by their maxim that they should do all the good they could. Therefore, they did everything within their power to improve the quality of life of the disadvantaged residents of the city of Adelaide and beyond. Thus, in 1867, besides running their schools they took responsibility for the Refuge, as already mentioned, and made regular visits to the homes of the children attending their schools. They also visited the Adelaide Gaol, the Adelaide Hospital, the Adelaide Destitute Asylum, and similar institutions in country areas.³³

But that was not all. In June 1868, just twelve months after Mary's arrival in the city, they undertook the management of two more charitable institutions. The first was the St Vincent de Paul's Orphanage where some sixty children were housed. The second was a House of Providence, which was large enough to house at least ten disadvantaged people at any one time and in which the Sisters accommodated needy women of all ages, especially the frail aged.

Mary and Woods showed good judgment when they appointed to the Providence one of their most recently arrived postulants, Susan Etheridge (Sister Elizabeth). At eighteen years of age, colonial born Susan was barely literate. It seems, however, that this young woman had a natural gift for understanding and caring for frail aged women. She became the first Josephite aged care nurse and faithfully served the elderly residents at the Providence for the next forty years.³⁴

33. See Marie T Foale, *Think of the Ravens* (Adelaide: Sisters of St Joseph, 2001), for further details regarding the Josephites' social welfare work between 1867 and 1980.

34. Sr Elizabeth Etheridge was born at Port Adelaide on 15 April 1850. She joined the Josephites on 24 May 1868, made her religious profession on 24 June 1869, and spent the rest of her active life ministering at the Providence. She died at Kensington on 9 March 1912, aged sixty-two years.

By late December 1868, the Congregation had forty-eight members, only eight of whom had made their religious profession. The remainder were either novices or postulants. None had more than eighteen months' experience of the religious life and only a handful had prior training or experience as teachers.³⁵ These were exciting times indeed and, for their part, the new Sisters willingly followed Woods' instructions, adhered to their daily timetable with its balance of work and prayer, and fulfilled the duties allotted to them to the best of their abilities. Most Catholic parents were delighted that their children could attend a Catholic school, and enrolments in every school increased with time.

Trouble was brewing in some quarters, however, for in his haste and enthusiasm for the work, Woods admitted a number of women who were unsuited to the religious life. In fact, seventeen of those who joined the Congregation during 1868 had left it by 1880. The first of those to move out was nineteen-year-old Priscilla Giles, whose convent career lasted for six months and who caused quite a stir in Adelaide circles when she alleged that her family had needed to rescue her from it by force. It seems that in September 1868 Miss Giles, a recent convert to catholicism, left home to become a Sister without her parents' blessing. Her time as a Josephite was uneventful, but the Adelaide secular press made the most of her 'escape' from the convent, much to the embarrassment of the local Catholics, and especially of the bishop and clergy.

The various conflicting accounts of this so called 'Convent Case' that appeared in local papers make it impossible to reconstruct accurately the events surrounding it.³⁶ Priscilla herself appears to have had so little knowledge of convents, religious orders, or Catholic schools, that her most serious allegations against them concerned their supposed mistreatment of non-Catholic children attending a school run by the Dominican Sisters in Franklin Street.³⁷

35. See Appendix Three, which shows how the new foundations followed hard upon the heels of the arrival of new recruits in the convent.

36. Woods' account of events, as reported in the *Register*, and the *SCCH*, 20 April 1869, 301–302, differs significantly from Giles'. Further accounts confuse the issue even more. See 'The Adelaide Convent Case', *South Australian Register*, 23 March 1869; also the leading article, *Register*, 27 March 1869, and 'Open Column', *Register*, 9 & 13 April 1869.

37. Helen Northey OP, *Living the Truth: The Dominican Sisters in South Australia*,

Beyond the Sisters' alleged refusal to allow her free access to her family, she made no other accusations against them. This is remarkable, given the nature of the case and the fact that the local papers were on the alert for any scandal involving Catholics. The inspection of convents, with a view to rescuing helpless young women locked up there against their will, became an issue for a time, but, after several weeks, the affair faded from public memory.³⁸

Woods himself could have avoided this unfortunate incident by using greater care when inviting potential members into the Congregation.

On the whole, while this event upset the bishop and some of the clergy it did not interfere with the general running of Josephite affairs and, in particular, with Mary's efforts to ensure that all Sisters could manage their duties in the schools. In fact, as soon as she was free of her obligations at the Cathedral Hall School, she began what was to become for her a lifelong practice, namely, that of going with Sisters to new foundations wherever and whenever possible, and staying with them until they had settled into their new homes and routines. Her first such journey was to Kapunda,³⁹ and over succeeding months she accompanied newly appointed communities to Clare, Macclesfield,⁴⁰ Willunga and Penola.⁴¹

1868–1968 (Adelaide: Holy Cross Congregation of Dominican Sisters, 1999), recounts the story of the arrival of the Dominican Sisters in December 1868 and their settlement in a convent and school adjacent to the Josephite convent on Franklin Street. Their fee-paying students came from the better off Catholic families in Adelaide. The school referred to above opened in February 1869.

38. Priscilla Giles (Sr Nicholas) was born on 24 March 1849 to Edward Giles and Elizabeth Anna Hole of Noarlunga, SA, Adelaide Registry Office, book 2, no. 127. She was baptised a Catholic by Woods on 3 January 1868, Adelaide Baptismal Register H, Register of Converts. *Register*, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 & 30 March 1869, and 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10 & 15 April, Open Column; 27 March, leading article, 'The Convent Detention Case', 23 April, leading article, 'The Late Convent Case'. *The Advertiser* carried similar material but was less generous with editorial space. *The Northern Argus*, 26 March 1869, devoted a short article to it, while *Pasquin*, 3 April 1869, 109 and *Adelaide Punch*, 25 March 1869, 81, refused to take the affair seriously. *Punch* announced that he had just heard that the editor of the *Register* had been forcibly detained in a convent at North Adelaide. *Punch*, 88. Woods to MM, 2 & 20 April 1869.

39. Sr Clare Wright to MM, 15 February 1868.

40. Sr Monica Phillips to MM, 9 June 1868.

41. Sr Mechtilde Woods, 'History', 6, mentions that MM had accompanied the Sisters

In late April 1868, she travelled to Penola with Sisters Teresa McDonald and Agnes Smith. As usual, she stayed for a while. Then, at some point on her homeward journey by overland coach, the horses bolted. The driver and his passengers had a good shaking, but, to everyone's relief, all escaped unhurt.⁴²

Thirty-four new Sisters arrived during 1869, thus making possible the foundation of convents and schools in the copper mining towns of Wallaroo and Kadina, some 160 kilometres northwest of Adelaide, St Johns near Kapunda, Mount Barker in the Adelaide Hills and Clare in the Mid-North, as well as in suburban North Adelaide, Thebarton, Glenelg, Marion and Le Fevre Peninsula (near Port Adelaide). Among the new arrivals were several who were to play significant roles in the life of the developing Congregation. These included Sisters Laurence O'Brien (a future Mother General), Mechtilde Woods (Julian Woods' niece), Andrea and Calasanctius Howley (whose names will appear frequently throughout this history), Casimir Meskill (a future general councillor and Novice Mistress), and Raymond Smyth (future leader of the New Zealand foundation and Provincial there for many years).

During this year, the Sisters also took charge of what was known as the Poor School adjacent to their Mother House, and a small institution called the 'Solitude of Mary'. Woods established the Solitude as a secluded home for any women from the Refuge who expressed a desire to 'make reparation for their former misdemeanours'. In 1869, these women, acting under Woods' guidance, formed a religious society (not a religious congregation) known as 'Magdalens of the Compassionate Heart of Mary'. They promised to follow a rule of life whereby they lived almost as religious Sisters: in community, sharing all that they possessed in common and giving strict obedience to one of their number, who was known as the 'Mother Magdalen'. The house they occupied was called the 'Solitude of Mary' and there, under the supervision of the

to Macclesfield and Willunga. On page 11, she notes that MM also went to Clare when that convent and school opened in July 1869. Woods to MM, 28 April 1868, indicates that she had accompanied Teresa and Agnes to Penola for the same reason.

42. Sr Teresa McDonald to MM, 13 May 1868.

Sisters, they received and cared for sick and frail aged women who could afford to pay for their keep.

Few records of the Solitude have survived, but it appears that there were four Magdalens and possibly several more. At different times, they occupied houses at Glenelg, St Johns, or Queen Street, Norwood, this last being distinct from the Refuge, which was in Queen Street from 1872 until 1901. Over a period of nine years the Magdalens cared for at least five needy women and possibly many more. The Solitude closed in 1877 and those in residence transferred to the Providence. Almost nothing is known of its effectiveness as a reforming agency or of its usefulness as a nursing home.⁴³

During 1870, another thirty women joined the Congregation, bringing its total membership to 111. This increase in numbers enabled Woods to respond to requests for Sisters to open eleven more convents and schools, mainly in the city and the Lower North region of the colony. The country foundations were at Burra, Moonta, Greenock, Marrabel, Tarlee and Rhynie in the north, and in suburban Glen Osmond, Mitcham, Hectorville, Morphett Vale and Lower North Adelaide.⁴⁴

Late 1869, too, the Congregation made its first foundation outside South Australia. Bishop Sheil's enthusiasm for this new religious congregation in his diocese made such an impression on Bishop James Quinn of Brisbane that he asked Sheil if he could have some of these Sisters to do similar work in the poorer areas of Brisbane and the widely scattered settlements along the Queensland coast. Sheil agreed at once and decided that Mary MacKillop herself should lead this little group. Soon afterwards, he set out from Adelaide on a lengthy journey to Europe and Ireland, leaving his Vicar General, Father John Smyth, in charge at home. He was away from his diocese from December 1869 until February 1871.

43. Letters having reference to the Sisters of St Joseph, 1876–1878, 50–61, ASSJ, Kensington. MM to Woods, 29 November 1869 & 9 October 1875; Woods to MM, 28 November 1869.

44. The Tarlee foundation was sometimes known as Gilbert and was located in or near the present township of Tarlee, some seventy-four kilometres north of Adelaide. Navan was a few kilometres further to the north and there is no evidence to suggest that the Sisters were there after the time of Mary's excommunication in September 1871.

At the same time, Mary set out with a group of four Sisters to make a Josephite foundation in Queensland. Before her departure Woods appointed Sister Teresa McDonald as Provincial, that is, as Mary's deputy, in South Australia.⁴⁵ Everyone expected that Mary would be home within a short time, but she did not reappear until April 1871.

The Sisters chosen for Brisbane were Clare Wright (aged almost twenty-six years), Augustine Keogh (aged twenty-four), Francis de Sales Sullivan (aged twenty), and a twenty-three year old novice, Teresa Maginess. Mary herself was not yet twenty-eight. She and Clare became the first Sisters to make their final profession as Josephites, which they did on the eve of their departure for Brisbane.

Another group comprising one professed Sister, namely Helena Hartney, (aged twenty years), and three novices, Mary Francis Bartolsmeier, (aged twenty-three), Francesca O'Brien (aged eighteen) and sixteen year old Vincent Smith, went to Brisbane from Adelaide in January 1871, and soon after their arrival, three new recruits joined their little group as postulants. By September 1871, the eleven Josephites in Queensland were managing four schools, three in Brisbane and one in the coastal port of Maryborough (some 255 kilometres to the north).⁴⁶ In South Australia, 112 Sisters were managing thirty-seven schools and four charitable institutions.

While Mary was in Queensland she maintained a prolific correspondence with Woods and the Sisters at home in Adelaide. As time passed, she received reports indicating that all was not well among the Sisters there. It seems likely that Woods was suffering from what is known today as 'burnout', for he was making unwise decisions regarding the training and deployment of young Sisters and at times behaving erratically. His refusal to take Mary's advice or allow her to return home troubled her and gave her cause for serious concern about what was happening among the Adelaide Sisters.

45. Sr Teresa (Margaret McDonald) was born in Inverness Shire, Scotland, in 1838. She was professed on Christmas Day 1868, and died at Bathurst on 13 January 1876. Mary's journey to Queensland proved to be the first of the many times when she was absent from South Australia on Congregational business. See Appendix Nine for details of the different times when she was away from and was present in South Australia.

46. For a full explanation of developments in Queensland, see Margaret McKenna, *With Grateful Hearts! Mary MacKillop and the Sisters of St Joseph in Queensland, 1870–1970* (North Sydney: The Trustees of the Sisters of St Joseph, 2009).

Some of her correspondents complained that a fractious spirit had developed in the Mother House community. In August 1870, Sister Teresa McDonald wrote that one Sister, whom she did not name, was 'eating egg (sic) and having butter and milk while the other Sisters were having dripping and no milk.'⁴⁷ Soon afterwards Sister Aloysius O'Leary informed Mary that she could not bear to go to the Mother House because 'everything seem[ed] so cold and cheerless.'⁴⁸

Why was this? First, there was tension between Teresa and the Sisters on the one hand and Woods on the other, because he had taken over the roles of General Superior and Provincial, as defined in the *Rules of the Institute of St Joseph*. At the same time he had reached a point where he believed that he held these offices by divine appointment and defended his conduct on the ground that he was 'the exponent of the will of God, their superior . . . and the priest appointed to direct them and therefore, that he could not be mistaken in his dealings with them.'⁴⁹

Consequently he regulated their affairs without due reference to Sister Teresa. Instead, he sent her to reside at the Refuge, which was near the church on the corner of Maitland Street and St Michael's Road in the village of Mitcham, and at some distance from the city.⁵⁰ While there she was little more than a figurehead, for the real power lay in the hands of twenty-four year old Sister Ignatius (Mary Jane O'Brien),⁵¹ the Little Sister, or local superior of the Mother House and one of Woods' particular favourites.⁵²

47. Sr Teresa McDonald to MM, 28 August 1870.

48. Sr Aloysius O'Leary to MM, from Gawler, 28 August 1870.

49. Woods to MM, 14 August 1870.

50. Woods to MM, 12 July, 14 August and 27 September 1870. MM to Woods, 3 December 1871. Teresa to MM, 11 July 1870.

51. Mary Jane O'Brien (Sr Ignatius) was born in Sydney in July 1846 and came to Adelaide with her family in 1848. She joined the Congregation in February 1868, was professed in March 1869, and left it in July 1872. For an account of her subsequent career, see Cunneen, Chris, 'Abbott, Gertrude, 1846–1934', *ADB*, vol 7. (National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1979.) <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/abbott-gertrude-4960/text8227>.

52. 'Little Sister' was the term that Woods and Mary used to denote the superior or leader of a Josephite community. Mary MacKillop wrote that the Little Sister 'should so govern as to show that she considers herself the loving servant of all', *Rules for the General Guidance of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart* (Sydney, 1883), 22.

The Sisters were annoyed and confused. Many of them disliked and mistrusted Ignatius and did not know where to turn. Teresa was involved in the management of the Refuge and so could give them only limited attention. She did not know where she stood in her role as Provincial or her dealings with Ignatius. This Sister's close friendship with Woods did not help matters, and before long, the relationship between herself and Teresa was strained indeed.⁵³

On the one side was Teresa, the gentle Scotswoman with her two feet planted firmly on the ground and, like Mary, of a practical turn of mind. On the other was colonial born Ignatius, who leaned towards the extraordinary and the unusual in her living out of her vocation to the religious life. She claimed that she was the recipient of remarkable spiritual and mystical favours from God and quickly attracted Woods' attention to herself.⁵⁴ He was more than delighted to think that she and several others, especially the seventeen year old Mistress of Novices, Sister Angela (Catherine Carroll), were so favoured by God, and felt certain that these Sisters were well on the way to high sanctity.⁵⁵

When Ignatius, Angela, or any of their little coterie of 'visionaries', as they came to be called, confided to him messages allegedly emanating from the Blessed Virgin or some other heavenly source, or details of horrifying visitations from evil spirits, he applied the only tests he knew. In his view, these Sisters were interested in nothing but holiness—many saints in the past

53. Sr Teresa to MM, 12 June & 18 August 1870. Sr Josephine McMullen to MM, 25 June, 5 August & 29 November 1870. Sr Rose Cunningham to MM, 2 August 1870. Sr Maria Healy to MM, 28 August 1870. Sr Bernard Walsh to MM, 18 August & 24 November 1870. Woods to MM, 23 August 1870. Sr Francis Xavier Amsinck to MM, 15 August 1870.

54. Sr Teresa to MM, 13 February & 28 August 1870. MM to Woods, February 1871. Sr Teresa, evidence to Apostolic Commission, 3 June 1872. Woods to MM, 5 October 1868, 20 January 1869, 2 April 1869, 7 November 1869, 12 & 28 March 1870.

55. Catherine Carroll (Sr Angela) was born in Ireland in the September of 1850 or 1853. (Marriage certificate, SAGHS, gives 1853) came to SA with her family, and lived with them at Kapunda until she joined the Congregation in July 1868. She was professed in August 1869, left the Congregation in 1872, married Thomas Donohue at Kapunda in July 1877, had two sons and died at the Providence in December 1924.

had had similar experiences. He was convinced, therefore, that their experiences were genuine and worthy of credence.

It did not occur to him that such an apparent desire for holiness could be deceptive and superficial or be suspect in its attention seeking qualities. Instead, he was so delighted that such marvels were taking place in their midst that he failed to notice just how far these Sisters' behaviour was disrupting the harmony of their community life, disturbing their neighbourhood, and contravening the Rules of the Institute that they professed to follow.

Woods treated the two principal visionaries, Sisters Ignatius O'Brien and Angela Carroll, with the greatest deference, respect, trust and sympathy, and gave them responsible posts in the hope that they would lead the rest of the community along the path to high holiness. He also granted them certain privileges, and thus unwittingly placed them in a difficult position when, as beginning religious, they should have been treated with firmness and trained to self-discipline as they learned to live according to their Rule of Life.

As a result, these young Sisters found themselves at the centre of an admiring crowd and were subject to the adulation and envy that such a position can entail. Unsure of themselves in their recently acquired status as Sisters, they were unable or unwilling to face the consequences of an honest acknowledgment of the deception they were perpetrating. They and their credulous director seem to have been caught in a vicious circle of their own making and, in order to keep up appearances, they resorted to subterfuge and deceit.

They advanced from visions of saints or demons, which were necessarily highly personal and private experiences, to allegedly preternatural or supernatural happenings, which could be observed by, and sometimes affected, other members of the community and even outsiders as well. Over time, some of their behaviours became bizarre. Thus, they set the house on fire and threw oil, logs of wood, or other objects at each other, apparently without any thought of possible outcomes. At night, they rang bells, turned on taps, and generally disturbed the neighbourhood. They created supposedly supernatural fragrances by eating oranges or splashing scent around unobserved and used various means to create self-inflicted stigmata.⁵⁶

56. Woods to MM, 16 January, 12 & 28 March, 11 & 19 April, 20 May 1870.