John Hosie was born in Lismore NSW. Ordained a Marist priest, he taught in schools of the Marist Fathers in Victoria and NSW. After graduating with an MA Honours at Macquarie University in 1971, he was at Marist Chapel, Circular Quay, Sydney, until 1985 as pastor, specializing in counselling. He now teaches history at the Catholic Theological Union, Hunters Hill, and has been chaplain to the Solo Parent organization for the divorced and widowed since its foundation in 1978. He is National Chaplain to Solo Parents of Australia.

'John Hosie has an important and fascinating story to tell. He presents it with affection and scholarship, which are always hazardous codes for an historian to combine. But Hosie controls them in a way that expresses not only the achievement of his deceased confreres but also their humanity. They are shown as they were: men and women, imbued with a charitable resolution that strengthened but never obliterated their human frailties.

'Not the least of Hosie's manifold attainments is his evocation of the teeming life of "The Rocks" area of Sydney, the foundation site of Australia, and the beauty of the country around the western part of Sydney Harbour, where the Marists built their famous church centre, Villa Maria.'

Bede Nairn

The cover shows an 1854 painting of Villa Maria, the Marist Australian supply base for their Pacific island missions, on Tarban Creek, in the Hunters Hill–Gladesville area. The painting was one of two commissioned by Father Rocher from a visiting Italian artist whose name is given in one source as Sardis. The originals are in the Marist Generalate, Rome. The central building shown still stands as part of 'The Priory' within the grounds of Gladesville Hospital. The present Villa Maria is a few hundred metres behind where the artist placed his easel.

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The Marists in

CHALLENGE

Colonial Australia

John Hosie

One hundred and fifty years ago, the first Marists stepped ashore in Sydney Town. The huge task of these dedicated Frenchmen: to carry their universal religion to the peoples of the vast South Pacific.

The Marist Fathers chose this distant colonial outpost to be a supply base on the western rim of the Pacific. Their vision was outward, to the challenge of the endless ocean and its far-flung islands. But the Fathers were to have a profound influence on life in this colony of the British Empire. Although all the pioneering Marists were French, one was to be 'elected' an honorary Irishman, 'Father O'Rennetel'. This whimsical elevation aptly symbolises the contribution they made, serving the Irish-Australian citizenry of Sydney and its hinterland. By the 1860s, French influence on this Irish church had already made its mark, and was to spread widely throughout eastern Australia through the preaching missions of Father Joseph Monnier and the work of his successors.

In telling this story, Challenge is more than a record of the Marist Fathers' achievements in the Pacific and in eastern Australia. It becomes an intriguing addition to the general history of colonial Australia.
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The Marist Family in the Pacific
Marist Father (sm)
Marist Brothers (fms)
Marist Sisters (sm)
Marist Missionary Sisters (smsm)
Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth (csn – Bougainville)
Daughters of Mary Immaculate (dmi – Solomon Islands)
Petites Filles de Marie (pfm – New Caledonia)
Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth (soln – Fiji, Tonga, Samoa)
Marist Laity
Endpapers

The intersection of George Street North (L), Cumberland Street and Lower Fort Street (R) in the 1890s. St Michael’s presbytery is visible on the ridge, the church on the right. St Joseph’s Providence is almost completely obscured behind the building in the centre. (Courtesy of the Mitchell Library)
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My thanks go to fellow Marists in many places, Marist Brothers as well as Fathers, but in a special way Father Van Houte for help with translations, and to the other members of my own community at St Patrick's. Father Ed Clifton has translated hundreds of pages of Marist correspondence from the latter part of the century, and has generously allowed me to use them. However, I accept responsibility for translations.

A special thank goes to Sister Raphael of St Patrick's Business College, and to the Sisters of Mercy. It has been a privilege to learn what a tradition the adjoining religious houses at St Patrick’s have been heirs to.

I would like to thank Bede Nairn for his Foreword. He was the first professional historian who encouraged me when I approached him twenty years ago and asked whether the research material on the Marists would be suitable for post-graduate research, and has always found time to discuss a difficult point when I have needed judicious assistance.

My final word of appreciation is to the members of my own family, especially my brothers Stan and Bernard, both fine historians, always ready with perceptive comments.
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John Hosie has an important and fascinating story to tell. He presents it with affection and scholarship, which are always hazardous codes for an historian to combine. But Hosie controls them in a way that expresses not only the achievement of his deceased confrères but also their humanity. They are shown as they were: men and women, imbued with a charitable resolution that strengthened but never obliterated their human frailties.

This book honours the anniversary of the arrival of the Marists in Sydney 150 years ago, on 9 December 1837. But it avoids the blemishes of most celebratory histories. It is not a pious and unstructured recital of the deeds of the mighty builders of an order of Christian missionaries.

Rather it is a critical examination, suffused with sympathetic insights, of how Europeans met their self-imposed challenge of transmitting their universal religion to various groups of people in the South Pacific, who found themselves caught in the irresistible tide of Western ideas and cultural values.

Hosie does not allow this massive theme to dominate his work. It is an ever-present background to the basic drama he unfolds. The Pacific challenge was met with dedication and love, often in conditions that shattered the lives of the missionaries. Failure was an inevitable accompaniment to some of the idealistic tests of faith, will and endurance. But there was much consoling success, featured by recognition of the dignity and worth of the Pacific peoples.

If the South Pacific provides the core of the achievement of the Marists, their role in Sydney is a vital counterpoint: as a centre of supply and support for the men and women in the islands, and as a positive force in the growth of the Catholic church in that city.

All of the pioneering Marists were French, although one of them, Pierre Le Rennetel, parish priest of St Patrick’s in 1883–1904, was elected an honorary Irishman, known as ‘Father O’Rennetel’. This whimsical elevation symbolized the contribution that the Marist Fathers made in the archdiocese. They served the laity,
predominantly Irish-Australians, in one of the worst slum areas of Sydney. They also ministered to the dispersed Catholics of the Hunters Hill region.

Not the least of Hosie’s manifold attainment is his evocation of the teeming life of ‘The Rocks’ area of Sydney, the foundation site of Australia, and the beauty of the country around the western part of Sydney harbour, where the Marists built their famous church centre, Villa Maria.

He also adds an important historiographical dimension to his work. He buries the persistent myths associated with the episcopate of Archbishop John Bede Polding, Australia’s first Catholic bishop. Undoubtedly Polding was a superb and saintly missionary. But the tremendous pioneering problems confronting him in a rumbustious colonial society were not amenable to his attempt to apply virtually medieval monastic solutions.

In this aspect of his book Hosie convincingly relies on the evidence supplied by the Sydney Marists. These observant and compassionate Frenchmen provided an independent ‘third force’ between the English archbishop and Irish laity. With Gallic logic their letters and reports complement other material to make plain the administrative deficiencies of Polding. Yet Hosie’s skill and impartiality enable him to cast the archbishop in the round: the virtues as well as the warts are revealed.

This is a book to savour and ponder on.

BEDE NAIRN
Canberra
January 1987
Introduction

Marists arrived in the Pacific 150 years ago, reaching Sydney on 9 December 1837. This book commemorates that event.

The Marists were a French religious order. In charge of them was Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier, who had with him a Marist Father, and a Marist Brother, when he first set foot on this continent.

The Society of Mary is the proper title for the priests’ branch of the Marists. It was a very new religious congregation. Although the plans for the Marist beginnings can be dated from twenty years earlier, Roman approval had been granted to the priests’ branch only the previous year, 1836. It was given precisely on the basis of their acceptance of the missionary responsibility for virtually all of the islands of the south-west Pacific, apart from Australia.

Bishop Pompallier’s arrival in Sydney followed on the establishment of his first missions on two obscure islands to the north-east of Fiji. He was now on his way to New Zealand, which he had decided to make his headquarters, and the chief location of his missionary activities.

Sydney soon became a major centre of communication for those activities. In the next few years, several bands of missionaries—priests, brothers and some lay men—passed through Sydney on their way to New Zealand, or other places. Six and a half years later, in 1844, the decision was taken that a permanent base was needed in Sydney, and the two priests and a brother, who came to make that foundation, arrived in April 1845.

These pages tell the story of those events, and the chequered years that followed. The missionaries on the front line faced dramatic situations, which had to be met with heroism. Many times they faced extreme danger of death at the hands of cannibals or from the elements, or diseases. An 1859 report in the Sydney Freeman’s Journal, on the Marist missions, states that, ‘seventeen priests and eight lay brothers have already died in the missions of Oceania, either by shipwreck, by falling victims to fever, or have been murdered by savages’. When these words were written, recording the 25
Challenge

deaths, there were still fewer than 100 priests and brothers working in the missions.

Behind those on the front line were others whose work required a different kind of bravery, no less admirable: that of day-to-day battles against the problems created by isolation, slow communications and consequent difficulty of maintaining supplies, knowing that lives depended on them. A number of these were based in Sydney.

Some who figure prominently in this story loom larger than life. One such was Pierre Marie Bataillon, who became the stuff of legends. When researching this history, I came upon several such legends. In the case of Bataillon, the legends corresponded closely with the facts. In other instances, the legend overpowered some of the facts. In the latter category, some of the most fascinating legends were those surrounding Archbishop John Bede Polding, whom the two Marists and Bishop Pompallier met in Sydney, when Polding was still a bishop. The meeting was joyful, courteous and warm. As I first laboured with the tiny, difficult handwriting of the letters which the missionaries wrote back to France, telling the story of their welcome, I did not suspect, any more than the participants did, the problems which lay ahead.  

Polding was a good, sincere and even saintly man. And a totally dedicated missionary. When he himself first reached Sydney two years earlier, he was an English pastor arriving to take charge of an almost completely Irish flock. They came to love and respect him. He was a Benedictine monk, and he founded a monastery of his order, which gave promise of bringing to this new continent the broad culture, learning and contact with centuries-old traditions which were characteristic of the Benedictines and of Downside Abbey, from which he and his first monks came.

Yet so many things went badly wrong in Sydney. Along with great achievements in establishing the Catholic church in this country went a series of failures which seemed to punctuate Polding’s episcopate like the tolling of a funeral bell. All of these failures seem, from this distance, to have been avoidable, and tragically unnecessary.

Why did they happen?

When Polding died, his successor was his own choice: fellow English Benedictine Archbishop Roger Bede Vaughan. But this did not signal the triumph of Polding’s policies. One of Vaughan’s first actions was to close the Sydney foundation of the Benedictines completely. In closing its Lyndhurst academy, he described it as ‘materially, financially and morally rotten’. The closure epitomized
the failure of Polding’s dearest dream, which was a major cause of his greatest problems: his aim of making his diocese a Benedictine preserve.

Vaughan died young, and the era of the English archbishops of Sydney had ended. Ireland was already providing the majority of bishops for the rest of Australia; now Sydney itself came under the charge of an imperious Irishman, Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran. Moran became a chronicler of the events of the church in his new homeland, with his massive volume, *The History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*, published in the mid-1890s.

Admirers of Polding were appalled by the book. Polding was presented with a cool detachment, in a picture which described the failures of his episcopate as illuminating examples of how God can write straight with crooked lines.

Back in England, Downside Abbey tried to restore the balance with a thoroughly researched survey of the achievements of Polding’s ministry, in Henry Norbert Birt’s two volumes: *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, which appeared in London in 1911. It was not well received by the Irish bishops and priests in Australia. Monsignor Cornelius (Con) Duffy, former archivist of the Sydney archdiocese, used to say that Birt’s volumes were treated in certain presbyteries as if they deserved to be on the Index of Forbidden Books.

Meanwhile a new generation of priests was appearing in Australia, many from Moran’s own foundation, the Manly seminary. Their names were Irish, but they were born in Australia, and rightly regarded themselves as Australians. They also saw that they were continually by-passed, when new names were sought as bishops of Australian sees. They came to resent keenly the unknown arrivals from Cork, or Waterford, or Tipperary, or Donegal, who appeared as their new bishops. The outcome was the Manly Union. Not long after its formation, Australian priests began to be appointed as bishops to local sees: Terence Maguire, Patrick Farrelly, and Norman Gilroy. Coincidentally, all three had been priests of the diocese of Lismore, New South Wales, whose Irish Bishop John Carroll sought to advance the Australian-born.

But for a long time, many of the Australian priests continued to have negative feelings towards some of the Irish priests and bishops, who were looked upon as authoritarian, sometimes of narrow education, and occasionally even boorish and uncouth. And the legend grew.

The legend came to be enshrined in the writing of books about
Polding, and the controversies in this historiography, in the century since, have been almost as interesting as the events themselves. Debate has been continual.

There was a time, the legend said, when Australia had the possibility of being a different church: with a hierarchy capable of offering learning and breadth of culture to its people, through the English Benedictines. But all of this was lost and destroyed.

In this legend, Polding’s saintliness was emphasized, but the controversies which had occurred during his episcopate were not. Or else, responsibility for the problems was ascribed to those around him: Catholic people whose pettiness, small-mindedness and selfishness, it was suggested, could not appreciate the greatness of their pastor.

Kevin Livingston, in his study of the Australian clergy, traced a line of oral contact with the lost Benedictine tradition from when it was still living, in the last century, until the present day. It was a direct line from Polding himself, and the Benedictine Fathers Austin Sheehy and John Sheridan. The man who was moulded by them as an original aspirant to the order was a Father Phillip Cassidy, ordained eventually as a secular priest. Cassidy’s last years at Newtown brought him into contact with the young Joseph McGovern, who entered the priesthood, and maintained a lifelong interest in the history of the Catholic church in Australia. He became a monsignor and was archivist of the archdiocese for very many years. The tradition was carried on by his successor in that office, Monsignor Duffy, who maintained similar commitments.

The legend had its victims. Pioneer Irish hero Archdeacon John McEncroe was one, sometimes dismissed disparagingly as a manipulator of public opinion. McEncroe had urged in Rome that Irish Catholics in Australia should have Irish bishops. Polding’s fellow Benedictine vicar general, William Bernard Ullathorne was another, regarded as a traitor to his archbishop. Not only had he refused to serve under him after 1840, but he wrote a ‘warts and all’ portrait of him in his autobiography, published posthumously.

The legend is enshrined in Timothy Suttor’s *Hierarchy and Democracy in Australia, 1788–1870*, a book published in 1965, and dedicated to Joseph McGovern, ‘because it is very much his’. Suttor’s work still makes interesting reading: rich in historical details, vigorous in its prose, a strong, freewheeling interpretation of the events described, praising Polding and confounding any who differed from him. In Suttor’s graphic image, Polding was Julius Caesar, stabbed to death in the Capitol by Australian Catholicism. After this, he
Introduction

sadly concluded, Australian Catholicism lost its direction, and never afterwards recovered it.

Suttor's presentation of the Polding era became authoritative and predominated. Contemporary authors like Osmund Thorpe, Ronald Fogarty, Mary Shanahan, Bede Nairn and Naomi Turner, whose writings gave evidence of faults in the administration of Polding, were disregarded. Suttor's picture of the faultless archbishop was basically unchallenged by Patrick O'Farrell's history, *The Catholic Church in Australia, 1788–1967*, published in 1968.

Research into the archives of the Marists revealed a hitherto unsuspected wealth of new material about the administration of Australia's controversial first archbishop. These missionaries were neither English nor Irish, and it soon became evident that the letters they wrote back to their French headquarters did not match the Suttor picture. They saw Polding's virtues, but found his policies to be misguided, fettering the growth of the church, and seriously damaging it in a number of ways.

The Marists saw the laity as the victims of these policies. 'Who will speak to the Holy See,' one of them wrote compassionately, 'on behalf of these poor Catholics, badly led, abandoned without help?' Father Victor Poupinel was writing to his superior general during the height of the controversies between Archbishop Polding and his priests and laity, in 1859.7

In a paper read to the Australian Catholic Historical Society on 1 July 1970, '1859, Year of Crisis in the Australian Catholic church', I questioned the Suttor picture, and argued that while Polding was a good man, he was not without his faults, and that his policies had a major part in the problems which occurred during his episcopate. This may seem a very moderate statement today, but the atmosphere at the meeting was electric. Monsignor Duffy was present, and commented at the end of the paper, that he 'agreed with about a third of it'. For various reasons, the paper did not appear in print until three years later, when it was accepted as an article by the *Journal of Religious History*.8

In 1975, with the 1977 centenary of Polding's death in view, the ACHS planned a symposium on the event. I was contacted beforehand by one of the speakers, who explained that he wanted to let me know that he intended to use my article as an example of the viewpoint about Polding that he wished to attack. I greatly appreciated his courtesy, and asked would there be other speakers.

'Only Monsignor Duffy,' he told me.

In fact, when the two speakers had read their papers, no time
remained for others. However, since both of them had singled out my work for criticism, I was allowed space for a brief reply in the special number of the society *Journal* commemorating the symposium, which appeared a few months later.  

It was with a feeling that a corner had been turned that I read the pastoral letter of the Australian bishops, published in 1977 for the centenary, which paid tribute to Polding as a great pioneer of Australian Catholicism, but recognized that his episcopate has to be regarded as inadequate in many ways.

There are other legendary figures in this book, such as Father Peter Piquet, who in more than 55 years of apostolic work in the city parish of Church Hill, became the beloved ‘Father Confessor’ of Sydney. There were times when queues of penitents, waiting to attend his confessional, extended through the door of St Patrick’s church, and outside along Grosvenor Street.

But those stories belong to the pages that follow.

*John Hosie SM*

*Sydney, 1987*
The challenge of the Pacific

In the Pacific, the Roman Catholic church originally maintained the same impressive missionary record it had achieved in other places. Spanish and Portuguese ships carried their chaplains wherever they went. The Catholic church in the Philippines dates its beginnings back to the first Spanish settlements there, as it does on the western shores of the Americas. The missionary efforts of Francis Xavier in Japan were the first European penetration of that country.

But, following upon the voyages of James Cook, which brought the Pacific proper to the attention of Europe in the 1770s, there was a change. Catholic missionary endeavour was delayed, even though other Christian denominations were in the field relatively quickly: before 1800, in the case of the London Missionary Society. One reason for the unusual Catholic tardiness was the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773. More important were the disruptions caused by the French revolution and the Napoleonic years. And so, in 1825, when a second Catholic attempt was made to enter Hawaii—a first, unsuccessful attempt had been made in Spanish times, at the end of the sixteenth century—they found Protestant missionaries well entrenched. These succeeded in expelling the priests by 1833.

The chief initiatives which brought about a change did not come from Rome. Like most administrative departments of the church, the one holding responsibility for missions, the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, was in a state of chaos during the difficult Napoleonic years, when Pope Pius VII was imprisoned by Napoleon, and it recovered efficiency only slowly.¹ A major requirement was finance. The money needed for restarting missionary efforts, after they had come to a virtual halt, was assured
by a young Frenchwoman, Pauline Jaricot. She founded in Lyon, France, in the early 1820s, an association called l’Oeuvre de la Propagation de la foi. Small, regular contributions from individual Catholics were systematically collected. The large sums resulting were the ultimate source of finance for the greatest period of missionary achievement the church had known. Other initiatives came from different agents.

Similarly, the religious needs of Irish convicts in Australia were badly neglected for many years, until pressure from Ireland brought a change. Even so, the Roman decree of 1819, which placed the continent under the jurisdiction of Bishop Edward Slater, of the tiny, far distant island of Mauritius, is a fine example of an impractical decision. In 1833, Benedictine Father William Bernard Ullathorne in Sydney wrote to Slater’s successor, complaining that it was difficult even to get a letter to Mauritius.

It was another unusual lay Catholic who was influential in the first attempts to turn the attention of the Catholic church towards the Pacific. Over some years, Peter Dillon, a huge red headed Irish sea captain, made a great many approaches to various church and civil authorities promoting the idea of missionary work in the south Pacific.

It was an area Dillon knew well from his own extensive sailing through the islands, and contacts he had made in them, during more than twenty years as a trading captain. He came to Paris in 1829, now famous for having solved the mystery of the 1788 disappearance of the La Perouse expedition. This achievement earned him a decoration from the French monarch, Charles X. But Dillon had risen from nothing, and having no wealthy connections, he needed something more tangible than an honorary title. Hoping to find employment and missionaries, he met a priest who shared his interest in the Pacific, Father Henri de Solages.

Dillon worked with de Solages on missionary plans for more than a year, offering extremely practical suggestions. At the request of de Solages he wrote a lengthy memoir which the latter printed and sent to many people, including authorities in Rome. In the memoir, Dillon offered assistance with transport for missionaries who might be sent, and introductions for them to island chiefs who were his personal friends, and to many of whom he could speak in their own languages.

Using many of Dillon’s ideas, de Solages obtained promises of help from the French crown, and succeeded in moving the Roman authorities into action. He persuaded the Roman congregation to
designate a gigantic portion of the south Pacific as a prefecture, under his jurisdiction as prefect apostolic. By way of explanation, there are two main administrative arrangements for a mission region: a prefecture is that in which the area is placed under a priest, who has a number of episcopal powers; it ranks lower than a vicariate, which is ruled by a vicar apostolic, normally an ordained bishop.

The approval of the plan of de Solages for the Pacific went ahead, even though he really had no priests to undertake his vast projects. In the meantime, he himself took up a post as prefect apostolic of the island of Réunion, then known as Bourbon, in the western Indian ocean, off the coast of Africa.

When de Solages died in 1832, all his plans came to nothing. Instead of looking for a starting base nearer to the islands, such as the Philippines or South America, where the church was already established, the congregation made approaches to a man who had never shown any interest in the Pacific: the predecessor of de Solages in Réunion, Canon Jean-Louis Pastre, now retired to Lyon through ill health.

Pastre felt that his missionary days were over, but was unwilling to turn down the request with a cold refusal. He called upon the vicar general of the archdiocese of Lyon, Father Jean Cholleton, to suggest a replacement who might lead a mission to the Pacific.

Cholleton thought of a group of priests, with whom he had been in close contact since their seminary days, and for whom he had very high respect. They were seeking Roman approval to be officially recognized as a new religious congregation, and were popularly known as Marists. He approached one of their number, Father Jean-Baptiste François Pompallier, with the proposal. And so, events were in train which resulted in the nomination of Pompallier for ordination as a bishop, and vicar apostolic, over a vicariate named Western Oceania, created out of de Solages’ huge prefecture, the confiding of this vicariate to the Marists, and Roman approval for the order as the Society of Mary.

The Society of Mary today is a congregation of priests, usually called the Marist Fathers. It is one of several distinct congregations which have the name Marist, and although predominantly made up of priests, contains a number of members who are brothers—coadjutor, or lay, brothers. These men are not ordained to the ministry, but work towards the goals of the congregation in a variety of ways. A Third Order, which is not a religious congregation, but is an organization for lay people, is also associated with the Society of Mary.
Other congregations bearing the name Marist are the Marist Brothers of the Schools, and the Marist Sisters, both oriented towards teaching. A fourth congregation, the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, works chiefly in mission activities.

These congregations are today entirely separate, in their government, administration and policy formulation. But they have a common origin, tracing back to a project of a group of students for the priesthood, in the diocesan seminary at Lyon in France in 1816. In regular discussions, these seminarians analyzed the nature which a foundation might have. It would be dedicated to the name of Mary, and inspired by a Marian ideal, with wide-ranging goals. They discussed at length the needs of the day, and the best means of combating years of neglect during the Napoleonic regime, following upon the outright religious persecution of the revolutionary era. Fortunately they had the sympathy of Cholleton, who was then the young seminary professor of moral theology. Although already a priest, Cholleton was about the same age as these students, and shared their interest and enthusiasm. After 1839, he joined the Marists himself.

On 23 July 1816, the day after the members of the group received ordination to the priesthood, they prayed together at the famous, centuries-old Lyon shrine to the Blessed Virgin, at Fourvière. They then took the first public actions towards initiating their Marist project: they assisted at Mass, received the Eucharist, and publicly recited together a pledge, which they intended to be a charter of the Society of Mary. Then all signed it. The chief objective which it expressed was ‘to work together for the greater glory of God, and for the honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus’.7

As originally conceived by several of them, the new congregation would incorporate religious women and lay people, as well as priests. Marcellin Champagnat, however, had a further idea.8 He was inspired with the aim of bringing education to others, who, like himself, had suffered in childhood from lack of teachers. He was fifteen before he had his first chance of going to school. His vision of the Marists included the idea of teaching brothers, working alongside the priests towards the same objectives, and under the same administration. Gradually this view prevailed, until the total aim became the founding of a multi-branched organization of priests, brothers, sisters and dedicated lay members, the latter living at ordinary occupations in the world. All would work towards common goals under a common leadership.

By mutual consent, the task of drafting constitutions devolved upon Jean Claude Colin.9 Overcoming a very shy nature, he emerged
as spokesman and de facto leader of the entire organization, proving to have superb diplomatic and administrative gifts. He and most of his priestly colleagues worked at a variety of pastoral activities in the region. They ran parishes, taught in the minor seminary, but were most impressive in preaching the parish missions of religious revival which were a feature of the Restoration era in France. When permission was obtained from a reluctant bishop in 1829, allowing them to live in community, they slowly began to attract recruits.

In the same period, Champagnat undertook the founding of the teaching brothers. The 1820s were years of great difficulty and opposition, but after that, he began to have even greater success. An energetic leader, Jeanne Chavoin, had set up a convent for sisters. The third order for lay people was well established.

By 1835, a characteristic Marist approach had begun to be evident. The founding members had similar backgrounds: they came from the same region of France, and mostly from small villages. They had all experienced the depredations and neglect caused to Christian life by revolution, and by the years during which their country was at war. And all had seen, and sometimes been frightened at, the anti-clericalism which found expression during times of uprisings, particularly those of 1830.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the Marists placed a good deal of emphasis upon the necessity of a modesty of attitude, which did not seek public attention by a flamboyant approach, but simply worked in a practical way to achieve an objective. At the same time, this accorded well with the spirit of their name patron, Mary, the mother of Jesus. Her life was seen as a practical model of one who was helpful in a discreet, modest way. Earliest Marist writings strongly recommended her virtues of simplicity, modesty and humility. She also offered the quality of approachability, which a mother has for her family. A family spirit was considered to be one of her special qualities, as she was the pivot or centre of the family of Nazareth. Such characteristics had an obvious relevance, for a multi-branched family of priests, brothers, sisters and lay people.

But if an organization was too hidden and unobtrusive, it might have problems in achieving anything worthwhile. In fact, this risk was diminished for the Marists because of an outstanding trait of their early members, which was an extremely sensible practicality. That characteristic may, perhaps, have derived from their country upbringing.

The parish missions are a case in point. Colin took account of the fact that for years many of the villages in which the missions
were given had been without priests and the opportunity of religious practice. Peasants might not easily be persuaded to attend church services again. And so the Marists began with the children: what parents would refuse their children the opportunity of preparing for first communion? After intensive preparation, the communion Mass was celebrated with the greatest possible solemnity. Naturally, the entire family was present. The sermon was directed to the parents. When the adults heard the Marist priests, and found them to be country folk like themselves, the battle was won. The parents participated in the adult mission which followed.

Overall, the Marist approach was to establish the needs of the people, and then to try to meet those needs in a practical way. Education had been badly neglected, especially in the country regions: Champagnat’s brothers opened school after school; Chavoin’s sisters taught girls, and the priests, too, maintained a direct interest in teaching. Their adaptability not only made the Marists flexible enough to meet current needs, but ensured their relevance to future generations. As early as 1822, Colin summarized Marist goals, in the following words, in a letter to Rome:

Missions to the faithful and to pagans in whatever part of the world to which the Apostolic See might wish to send us; catechizing the uneducated and ignorant; forming youth in every way to knowledge and virtue; visiting those in prison and the sick in hospitals.  

And so, by 1835 the Marists had all the requirements for a religious order: a spirit of their own, high-minded ideals, growing membership in the branches, and challenging fields to work. The one thing lacking was final Roman recognition. It was not for want of effort. Late in 1833, Colin had made a four month visit to Rome seeking approval. In those months, he had learnt much about Vatican procedures. Unfortunately, every time it was presented, the request for recognition had, at one point or another, come before the same man: Cardinal Castruccio Castracane. He was convinced that a four-branched congregation, under a single superior, could not possibly work, and he saw to its rejection on each occasion. Gradually, Colin, and a number of other Marists—although not Champagnat—became convinced that there was no hope of the desired recognition, unless the branches became independently governed, autonomous bodies, and made separate applications for approval.

Suddenly, the entire picture changed. In this time of uncertainty about the future of the congregation, the initiatives concerning the
Pacific had reached Pastre in Lyon. Pastre consulted Cholleton, who recommended his Marist friends. Soon the dramatic news reached the Marists that Rome was offering the possibility of full approval to the priests' branch, conditionally upon their acceptance of the vast mission in the south Pacific. Castracane himself was supporting it. It appeared to be God's will.

There was no hesitation: acceptance was signified. The care of the Pacific mission vicariate of Western Oceania was officially entrusted to the priests of the Society of Mary, by Pope Gregory XVI, on 10 January 1836. The document of full approval of the new congregation was signed by him on 29 April 1836.

Rome had already named Pompallier for ordination as bishop and vicar apostolic for the new mission. This timing came to have a good deal of significance later. As a bishop, Pompallier felt that it was inappropriate for him to take vows as a member of the newly approved order, when it became possible to do so. He saw himself as an associate.

Others to accompany the new vicar apostolic were soon named. Three of them, who were selected from the volunteers, had been associated with the Marist project for some years: Claude Bret, Louis Catherin Servant and Pierre-Louis Chanel—today, St Peter Chanel. Champagnat's name had headed the volunteers, but he was refused. Three of his Marist Brothers, however, were accepted: Marie Nizier Delorme, Michel Colombon and Joseph Xavier Luzy. At the last minute, another Lyon diocesan priest, who had never been associated with the Marists, Pierre Marie Bataillon, volunteered. He was directly invited by Cholleton to join the band.

In accord with the terms of their document of approval, the Marists were authorized to elect a superior general, and to take the traditional three simple vows of religion. Although the newly ordained Bishop Pompallier did not take vows, he assisted at the profession ceremonies of the rest, on 24 September 1836. All of the priests, who were named for the Pacific, were among those admitted to vows on that day, including the newcomer, Bataillon. To his own surprise, Colin was the unanimous choice for superior general. He had sincerely believed that Cholleton was the logical candidate.

A farewell ceremony of consecration of the missionaries to the Blessed Virgin took place on 15 October 1836, and their departure was scheduled for ten days later.
South West Pacific showing Western Oceania. In 1836 Bishop Pompallier was made Prefect Apostolic of Western Oceania, including all islands shown except Tahiti and Australia.
A sea of troubles

Bishop Pompallier’s contingent arrived in the Pacific in 1837, his group already reduced in strength to six missionaries. Claude Bret had died on the voyage. But with that grave blow behind him, an even more serious long-term problem was becoming apparent. Planning had been totally inadequate.

Was it an incredible ignorance, or a sublime reliance upon divine providence to make up for human shortcomings, or something else? Whatever the cause, the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, or Propaganda, had given virtually no geographical guidelines: the invaluable information from Peter Dillon remained lying in their files. As a result, Pompallier reached Valparaiso, Chile, and delayed there for months, trying to decide where they should start, and how to get there.

From what the bishop could learn, one promising location seemed to be the island of Ponape in Micronesia, and some of the men even began to study the language. Finally, he was forced to plunge all his money into chartering a ship, and they set off. But by the time they reached Tahiti, he became undecided once more. Rather by chance than design, he shortly afterwards committed himself to a first mission, by placing Bataillon and Luzy on the tiny Polynesian island of Wallis, called Uvea by the inhabitants. It is one of an isolated minor group then called the Horn Islands, roughly halfway between Fiji and Samoa.

Some weeks later, in even more haphazard fashion, he placed two of his remaining four men, Chanel and Delorme, on the smaller neighbouring island of Futuna. With an expansive promise to the chiefs on each island that he would return in six months, he sailed westward and reached Sydney on 9 December 1837, with his two Marist companions, Servant and Colombon. He had finally taken a
firm decision to establish himself on the largest islands of his huge vicariate, New Zealand. The thought seems to have been at the back of his mind most of the time.

In Sydney, the missionaries were warmly welcomed by its Benedictine vicar apostolic, Bishop John Bede Polding. He gave them accommodation at his new seminary. When Pompallier wrote to Colin about all this, he made special mention of another priest who was particularly hospitable: Irish Father John McEncroe, who was living at the bishop's house. McEncroe volunteered to take care of some of their belongings until they sent for them from New Zealand. He also promised to mail any of their correspondence on to Europe. He wrote a letter of introduction for Pompallier, addressed to Catholics, 'and especially the Irish Catholics', of New Zealand. The following week, Polding added a footnote to McEncroe's letter, and wrote a further letter of introduction to a prominent New Zealand Catholic.¹

By now Pompallier was beginning to acquire some of the information that he could have acquired if he had been put in touch with Peter Dillon in France. He learnt that Sydney was in contact with Europe, by ships from London arriving every few weeks. Had he taken his missionaries by this route, he would have saved himself very nearly an entire year. He passed on this information to Colin. Colin had been waiting anxiously for such news for a long time in Lyon, and to hear where Pompallier had finally decided to settle. However, the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, Giacomo Filippo Fransoni, considered that Colin was making unnecessary delays, and bluntly told him to despatch reinforcements.

In 1838, therefore, before Pompallier's letter from Sydney had reached him, Colin had reluctantly despatched three priests and three brothers, by the slow and expensive Cape Horn route, to look for the bishop in Valparaiso. The one beneficial result of this time-consuming journey was that the new missionaries came via the lonely missions on Wallis and Futuna, to which they brought supplies, letters and vital encouragement.

A third missionary band set off from France the following year, led by Father Jean-Baptiste Petit-Jean. Following Pompallier's information, it went via London, and reached Sydney only four months later, in October 1839. Petit-Jean's letters to France described huge bushfires they had seen from off the coast of southern New South Wales.² Again Polding provided accommodation, with the kind hospitality which was habitual for him. Petit-Jean gives a good description of the bishop in his favourite apostolate, working among the most deprived—his unfortunate convicts.

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McEncroe was away on Norfolk Island, working as chaplain to the convicts there, but the missionaries again received more than ordinary kindness from another French-speaking Irish priest, Father John Brady. Later Brady became the stormy petrel of Perth's early Catholic years, as its first bishop. Petit-Jean got on extremely well with Brady. He found that Brady knew Pastre, the priest in retirement in Lyon, who had passed on the Roman request which had brought the Marists to the Pacific. Brady had worked under Pastre, on Bourbon or Réunion.

Late in 1840, Colin sent out a particularly large and varied group of missionaries, led by senior Marist, Father Antoine Séon. Included were students for the priesthood, to be ordained in New Zealand, and the first Catholic lay missionaries to the Pacific: an architect, an engineer and a printer. The latter came to work printing presses the bishop had requested, for printing books in the Maori language. The group reached Sydney on 7 May 1841.

By then, Polding had left for Europe, but his vicar general, Father Francis Murphy, welcomed the visitors with all the hospitality of his bishop. Séon was embarrassed at arriving in a group of twelve, and aware of the costs of feeding and lodging such numbers, he tried to reimburse Murphy. But to his greater embarrassment, the kindly Murphy refused.

After this experience, Séon wrote to Colin advising that the arrival of so many people imposed unfair expenses on their hosts, and that in future, alternative arrangements should be made. In fact, the next group, led by Father Jean Forest, left London in November 1841, and travelled directly to New Zealand. But direct voyages were rarely available.

Three Marists reached Sydney in a somewhat unusual fashion in January 1843. They were aboard a French Royal Marine corvette, the Rhin, stationed in the Pacific, which took them to Hobart Town. Father Jean Simon Bernard and his two fellow priests left the Rhin there, and obtained a passage to Sydney a week later. During their brief stay in Hobart, they were staggered at the extraordinary hospitality shown to them by pioneer Father John Joseph Therry and his flock. The missionaries had difficulty in preventing even the very poorest Irish Catholics from making gifts of food to them. Particularly moving were the requests to stay on that island, where priests were so greatly needed. In Sydney, too, they were welcomed by the vicar general, who arranged accommodation, and a solemn Mass of thanksgiving for their safe arrival. The need for some place of their own, where Marist missionaries could lodge, had long since become evident to Colin and his council.
There had, in fact, been another contact of the Marists with Sydney, six months prior to the arrival of Bernard and his companions. Petit-Jean had returned there, in 1842, to make an appeal on behalf of the New Zealand mission. Specifically, he was asking for food for the missionaries, many of whom were suffering badly from an inadequate diet, and some almost starving. Sydney Catholics were the poorest section of the community, and to make matters worse, it was a time of financial depression in the colony.

Nevertheless, Petit-Jean was welcomed, and appealed widely. The clergy and people did their utmost to assist him. Twice he addressed the monthly combined meeting of St Patrick’s Society and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. The second time, ‘he was received with loud cheers’. He told of nights ‘sleeping on bare ground’ in New Zealand, and an unrelieved diet of potatoes. Brady, now in charge of the parish of Windsor, made a personal gift of a cow and calf for the starving missionaries, and allowed Petit-Jean to make an appeal in the parish. He also suggested that the Marists would receive considerable government money if they opened a school in Sydney. However, there was no likelihood of that happening at this time, although Petit-Jean passed on all the details.

Any cash Petit-Jean raised in these appeals, he used to purchase provisions in kind. When he returned to the Bay of Islands, Forest wrote happily to France that Petit-Jean had ‘nearly filled a ship with all kinds of animals. It was like Noah’s ark’.

Another visit to Sydney by one of the missionaries already in New Zealand occurred early in 1844, highlighting a different kind of need, which a Marist Sydney agency could fulfil: the safe transmission of moneys. Urgently needed funds were sent by Colin to a New Zealand bank in Wellington, or Port Nicholson, as it was then called, intended for the mission in the Bay of Islands. Direct contact between those two regions in New Zealand was less frequent than with Sydney. It proved easier for Father Claude Baty to travel to Sydney from the Bay of Islands in the north, and bring back the money from Port Nicholson to Sydney, than to go directly between the two places.

The desperate shortage of food which brought Petit-Jean to Sydney in mid-1842 was connected with very serious differences which had arisen between Pompallier and the Society of Mary, which need to be explained.

Pompallier was a tall, impressive man with many qualities: courage, zeal, determination and ability in languages. He handled
the Polynesian chiefs in the central Pacific and New Zealand with tact and skill. He rightly saw the need to make a good impression, and demanded to be accepted as at least an equal. To this end, he wore his episcopal vestments when he met them ceremonially, and often made generous gifts, which delighted them. These openings created valuable missionary opportunities.

His first efforts in New Zealand were made in the Bay of Islands. Protestant missionaries were already well established, but the Catholic missionaries seem to have made progress among certain tribes, perhaps by way of a rivalry with the other tribes which had accepted Protestant missionaries. In 1840, the year of British annexation of New Zealand, the French missionaries began to penetrate inland, and made their first foundation on the South Island. This was at Akaroa, on Banks peninsula, where a French company had begun a land settlement scheme.

Soon, however, the character of the mission was to alter completely and permanently. The initial assumption had been that the mission was to the Maoris, and the first missionaries set to work assiduously to this task, and to learning the Maori language. But accelerating European settlement, together with the growth of towns of some size, soon brought about a situation in which the French priests were caring for Europeans rather than Maoris, and the language they needed most was English. As the century progressed, with rare exception it was only the old missionaries who could speak to Maoris in their own tongue.

But another kind of worry came from a different direction, and unfortunately this was from certain unhappy aspects of Pompallier’s character. As a manager, he had no eye for detail, he took little care of his men, and he was extremely authoritarian.

His lack of attention to detail applied both to a failure to husband his meagre resources, but also to his habit of making grandiose promises to Polynesian chiefs with long memories—promises it was quite certain he would be unable to fulfil. At one time, when chiefs were demanding a priest for their own tribe, no doubt for prestige, it was estimated that Pompallier had promised 150 priests more than he had. The shrewd Maoris became aware of this unreliability and kept reminding the missionaries of the promises their bishop had made, causing them continual embarrassment.

The bishop strove to restore his status with gifts, to the delight of the chiefs, who were well aware of what was going on. But the bishop’s gifts were made out of resources which should have gone to his own men. And quite often he had no resources at all, and went...
heavily into debt to make foolish gifts, mortgaging future grants of money from France. The men did not even have enough money to buy food, and were forced to subsist on Maori foods, mainly *kumara*, a sort of yam—the unrelieved diet of ‘potatoes’ which Petit-Jean described in Sydney. Colin was horrified to read in letters from his men that they had joined Maoris in begging for ships’ biscuits from passing vessels. Pompallier’s reaction was extreme anger that these matters had been described in letters, because such reports did not show him in a good light.

Reports of conversions were what did put him in a good light in France. And so he wrote letters making claims of huge numbers of Maori baptisms, and of even greater numbers under instruction for baptism. At best, the figures were foolishly optimistic. More probably they were mendaciously inflated, as New Zealand historian Hugh Laracy suggests. In any case, there were few Maoris who continued as Catholics after the Maori uprisings of the next few years: the ‘converts’ had all melted away.

The financial crises became worse, and Pompallier was writing more and more desperate requests for funds. Yet he took no steps to economize in his own activities: he continued to borrow money and spend it lavishly. The impression was widely held that he had unlimited funds at his disposal, or even that he was supported from the French treasury, instead of from centimes donated by poor people to *Propagation de La foi*. When his men were nearly starving, and his debts quite out of control, he bought a large schooner. The purchase price for the *Sancta Maria* was high, at 35,000 francs; but that was only the beginning: her running costs each year were about 18,000 francs.

At a time when the missionaries were without any kind of proper churches, he organized a flamboyant and pointless public relations gesture by having a group of Maori chieftains make a donation towards the building of St Patrick’s church in Sydney. He used the labour of his brothers and lay missionaries, and bought building materials, to construct a building which is still standing today at Russell, known as Pompallier House. It is an impressive building, but the same effort spent on building a church would have made much more sense.

Colin tried desperately to keep pace. Planning had become impossible, for Pompallier soon gave up waiting for money to arrive. He borrowed large sums of money at increasing rates of interest—at a time when money was lent in France at 4 per cent, he was borrowing at up to 15 per cent, with no income. On the one hand,
Colin had to try to make out some kind of report, pieced together from chance references in Pompallier's letters: Propagation de la foi required such reports, and examined them, before making new allocations. On the other, he had no idea when a bank draft would arrive, revealing another huge deficit of money already spent. Yet Pompallier could include with such drafts, long lists of requests for all kinds of supplies—and for more money.

What was more worrying was that, despite Colin's best efforts to meet these imperious demands, letters from his men made it clear that their conditions did not improve, but were getting worse. It was obvious that the bishop kept all the money himself. Pompallier became very angry about these letters from those under him, and considered that no importance should be attached to them. He met the problem by imposing a strict form of censorship, which church law in fact allowed him to do.  

— A sea of troubles —
As the 1840s began, Superior General Colin had become gravely worried about the welfare of his men, both in the small South Pacific islands of Wallis and Futuna, to all intents and purposes forgotten by their bishop, and in New Zealand. Pompallier’s censorship rules now made it difficult to know exactly what was happening. Colin wanted to obtain some kind of protection for the men, and he tried every means at his disposal, without avail.

Colin requested that the missionaries be appointed to mission stations in pairs, in order that the Marists be able to help and support one another. But he had no say in their appointments, and the bishop simply disregarded his requests. Pompallier preferred to spread them widely, to achieve maximum effect, and to come at least some way in trying to fulfil his overgenerous promises to the chiefs of the various tribes.

Colin made another move. He asked Pompallier to permit the appointment of a religious superior, or provincial, to care for the missionaries. He proposed the name of Father Jean Forest, one of his most trusted men. It was a thoughtful suggestion, since Pompallier had worked with Forest for some years in the Lyon diocese, and the two had got on well.

The move failed. When Forest arrived, the bishop ensured that he had no power of any kind. Pompallier had an irrational fear that such a step would undermine his authority, about which he was extremely jealous. A long letter of criticism, which he wrote to Colin on 17 May 1841, reveals the deep suspicion he now felt towards the superior general, because of these issues.
Colin became afraid that Pompallier was showing signs of a vindictiveness towards Marists on his mission who had written back to France, revealing the conditions they were experiencing. He feared that they might suffer from their action, perhaps for years. They could be locked in under Pompallier's jurisdiction, and the religious order unable to withdraw them.

Early in November 1841, Pompallier received word that Chanel had been clubbed to death in Futuna, and Brother Marie Nizier had escaped to Wallis. It is an indication of how impossible it was to communicate that the news had taken more than six months to reach him. There is no doubt that the evident abandonment of the priest and brother by their bishop, after his promise four years earlier to return within six months, had been a factor in the loss of respect towards them by the Futunians. Pompallier decided to sail at once.

Unfortunately, he did so without making any arrangements for the care of his men in New Zealand, who were already without resources. As the months of his absence continued, the utterly destitute missionaries decided to act on their own initiative. This was when they sent Petit-Jean to Sydney to appeal for food. But, taking their courage in their hands, they also sent Father Jean-Baptiste Epalle to Europe for more substantial aid, and to make the reports by word of mouth, which Pompallier's censorship rules forbade them to write in their letters. Colin heard Epalle's first-hand account of conditions very soberly indeed. Pompallier at first misunderstood the purpose of Epalle's voyage, and wrote a letter to him, naming him as his personal representative in France. Later he withdrew this approval.2

At the very beginning of his efforts to safeguard his men, Colin learnt that he was involved in a centuries-old dispute between the mission superior, or bishop, on the one hand, and the religious superior on the other. It was a question of law. The nineteenth century was an era when theology was at a somewhat low ebb. It was otherwise with church law. A multitude of laws stated what could be done, and what could not. But despite this extensive detail, there were many areas in which authority was not determined, and it was in these areas that the disputes in the missions arose.

The structure of the Catholic church is one of monarchical authority. Despite such modifications as have recently occurred, this remains true today. It was even more true in the nineteenth century. This structure was seen as the right and just order of things, based
on the very teachings of Christ. Perhaps it is helpful to recall that, in
the civil sphere during the same era, workers uniting to seek higher
wages were convicted of the criminal act of conspiracy, and sentenced
to prison, and even transportation. The presumption of church law
was that, unless explicit rules gave jurisdiction to another in a
particular situation, then proper authority in any dispute lay with
the one in charge. In the mission, that one was Pompallier, not
Colin.

Missions were, in a number of ways, different from the ordinary
European diocese of that time. A vicariate was not a diocese, even
though it had a bishop at its head. Most frequently, vicariates were
entrusted to the care of a religious order, which volunteered to
undertake the responsibility. Western Oceania had in this way been
entrusted to the Marists.

This procedure had become customary in order to avoid the
scandalous quarrels which sometimes occurred in previous centuries,
when two religious orders had worked in the same mission region. It
came to be ordinary procedure for the religious order to be consulted
in advance about who would be named as vicar apostolic in the
region for which it was responsible. As he would be a member of the
order itself, it was hoped that difficulties would be able to be sorted
out amicably, with some give and take on both sides. In general, this
worked reasonably well.

We have seen that Pompallier's appointment as bishop and
vicar apostolic of Western Oceania occurred before the pontifical
approval of the Society of Mary by Rome as a religious order, and as
a result that he did not formally take vows. This meant that, even
though before the approval of the institute he had worked as one of
the committed members of the group who did become its foundation
members, after 1836 Pompallier was not a Marist in the formal
sense. Technically, he became a secular vicar apostolic in charge of
religious missionaries. But this was the outcome of the unusual
circumstances of his appointment. It was not a deliberate alteration
of ordinary procedure.

There is no doubt that Pompallier was very concerned about his
own authority, and did everything possible to strengthen it. But it
was an age in which church law gave him great scope to do this. In
addition, members of a religious order, such as the Marists, are
bound by vows of poverty and obedience, in addition to celibacy. Beside
speaking as their bishop, Pompallier could call on his mission-
aries to obey on the further ground of religious obedience, and did
so. Moreover, although mission conditions almost invariably require
priests, including religious priests, to handle money for their mission station, Pompallier invoked the religious poverty of his missionaries to ensure that they had no money at all.

There were further problems in matters not set out in detail in the law. Some of these related to the question of religious priests leaving a mission vicariate. A secular priest, attached to a diocese, must have a written permission, called an exeat, to leave for other work. In practice, religious priests in a mission had to obtain an explicit permission from the bishop, even if the order wished to recall a member, for instance, to higher office in the congregation. This sometimes gave rise to great difficulty in transferring a priest from the authority of a vicar apostolic. It was the reason for Colin’s concern that his Marists, who were unpopular with Pompallier, might be locked into his vicariate.

It was because their authority in the mission was complete, and virtually no rights were granted in law to the religious order, that Pompallier, and later Bataillon, could disregard Colin’s wishes over how the missionaries were appointed. The bishops were able to do this, even though the superior general’s motive was the quite reasonable one of wanting to ensure that his men would not starve.

When he went to Rome with Epalle in mid-1842, Colin was not seeking to win a victory over Pompallier. He was prudent and realistic, and also anxious not to antagonize the bishop, with whom the Marists desired to be able to continue to work in a friendly atmosphere. Neither did he wish to become involved in the ancient dispute. He asked for a private decree, of four simple points, to regulate relations between the bishop and the order in Marist missions. To the surprise of many, Colin was granted this request, in a document signed by Cardinal Prefect Fransoni, of Propaganda, on 30 June 1842.

At the same time, Colin presented to Fransoni a plan for a far­sighted division of the south west Pacific, according to the different races and regions, which was also approved. The five areas were: 1. New Zealand; 2. Fiji, Tonga and Samoa; 3. New Caledonia and the New Hebrides; 4. New Guinea and the Solomons; and 5. Micronesia. One of the effects of this plan would be to limit Pompallier’s jurisdiction to New Zealand, immediately releasing Marists in other Pacific islands from his authority.

Fransoni approved the plan, and a new vicariate of Central Oceania was created, covering the second and third of the areas indicated, for which Bataillon was named vicar apostolic. This step
made it possible to plan for the future. Colin returned to Lyon with some feelings of hope.

The precise way in which Colin decided to respond to the appeals of the missionaries for whom Epalle was spokesman, however, was through one of the permissions in the four-point decree he had won from Fransoni: the right of the Society of Mary to set up an independent provincial house. If this was a sizeable establishment, it could safeguard food supplies for the missionaries, by having a large acreage, cultivated by brother agriculturalists from France. They would gradually convert the model farm into a training college for young Maori farmers. It would also be a place to which sick missionaries could go to recuperate. Epalle would lead a large group to found and care for this establishment. Plans for the expedition were soon well advanced, and men named.

To cover Pompallier’s enormous debts, the superior general used all his considerable influence with the councils of Propagation de la foi, and the eloquence of Epalle. This was in January 1843, when the 1842 lists had already been determined. But, through Epalle, the Marists asked for an additional grant, to save the mission from bankruptcy. The association agreed, in the exceptional circumstances, to act in a manner contrary to their statutes, and gave the persuasive young missionary a further 80,000 francs. Colin added 20,000 from Marist sources, and transferred the entire amount immediately to New Zealand. It was this money which Baty was sent to Sydney by Pompallier to collect in 1844 (see p.18 above). Colin emphasized that it must be used solely to extinguish debts. The darkness was beginning to lift somewhat.

With this extra grant, the final total Pompallier received from the Association for 1842 was 190,542 francs, the highest amount that had ever been given to any mission in the world. Colin’s 20,000 francs was additional to this sum. But, with confidence growing, and again using Epalle, who, in the meantime had been preaching very successful appeals to raise money for Propagation de la foi, Colin requested no less than 245,000 francs for 1843. At the same time, he was finalizing plans for Epalle to return to New Zealand as provincial bursar, to found the new Marist house there. He would lead a large group of twenty or more, including brother builders, who would help overcome the lack of proper buildings throughout the mission.

Feeling optimism for the first time after years of gloom, the Marists felt even greater despair when all these plans came to nothing. The first worrying development, late in 1842, was that despite Colin’s best efforts to avoid it, the ancient dispute dragged
him into itself. Other religious orders, learning of the four-point decree that the Marists had obtained, requested the same decree for their own missions. And, as the climate in Rome seemed propitious, they obtained the inclusion of a fifth point. Whereas Colin's four points had been deliberately unobtrusive, the additional one trimmed the authority of the bishop very greatly vis-à-vis the religious order.

The enlarged decree was signed by the Pope in September 1842, and made applicable to the Marists. Back in Lyon, Colin was horrified when he read the terms of the additional point, which included the requirement that all of Pompallier's correspondence to and from Rome had to pass through the hands of the superior general. He knew how the bishop would regard this, and protested to Rome, without avail. He had no desire to use the controversial additional powers, and his forebodings were later proved justified. In 1846, the protests of mission bishops everywhere to the objectionable fifth point led to the suppression of the entire document.

From another direction, a more immediate and no less devastating problem arose. In June 1843, the president of the Lyon council of Propagation de la foi received a long, angry letter from Pompallier. The bishop made it clear that, in his view, his troubles stemmed from Colin himself. He had examined the moneys listed in the council's Annales, and argued that very little of what was listed there as granted to him had, in fact, reached him. Despite the vagueness of the financial references in his letter, the implication was that Colin had been negligent in passing on the grants, and quite possibly criminally so. Pompallier also rejected Epalle, who, he believed, had betrayed him, and told him not to return to New Zealand. The embarrassed president handed the letter to Colin to answer the charges, and cancelled the exceptional allocation planned for Pompallier's mission in 1843. Those funds were reallocated.

It was the end of peaceful relations between Pompallier and the Marist administration. Without the grant to pay its fares, the large expedition could not leave. In any case, it was clear that Pompallier would prevent the establishment of the provincial house. Now, no further ways remained in which Colin could do anything to see to the proper care of his men.

As regards the charges of financial negligence, Colin, fortunately for himself, was more methodical in the handling of money than Pompallier—and more responsible. It soon became clear that the bishop read the Annales, and saw there a sum of money listed for his vicariate. He considered that he should receive that amount, in cash. He overlooked the fact that from the start, he was sending back to
France long lists of requirements to be purchased for him: books, agricultural implements, printing presses, church furnishings and equipment of all kinds. These all had to be paid for. Freight charges for transporting them to the Pacific were extremely high. Added to all those expenses were the fares for new missionaries, and the cost of their provisions and equipment. There were also the bishop’s bank drafts to be redeemed. All these costs Pompallier had quite evidently overlooked.

In his letter, Pompallier claimed that in one period of 27 months, he had received only 25,000 francs. Once all the other goods and charges were priced and included, it turned out that he had received a total of 413,000 francs in that period—well in excess of Propagation allocations. Epalle, who knew his bishop well, made the very restrained comment: ‘To save Bishop Pompallier more than one contradiction, we must say that His Lordship regards as money received, only the cash that comes to him from France.’

When the accounts had been drawn up, showing irrefutably that this was the case, Pompallier continued to argue to the contrary. Some years later in Rome, Fransoni was finally able to get him to agree that his claims related to cash received. But otherwise he refused to give any ground, and the dispute dragged on for years.

In the absence of any agreement with Pompallier which might offer realistic protection to the Marists under him, Colin had only one alternative: to send no more missionaries to him. It was the second last card in his hand. The last would be to withdraw the Marists completely from Pompallier’s mission.

R.M. Wiltgen also follows through these controversies with extensive documentation. However, he avoids all commentary, merely quoting the statements of Pompallier and Colin. The effect is unfair to Colin.

In a personal letter to the writer, Wiltgen maintained that he provides the information, and readers can judge for themselves. However, there is much information that Wiltgen does not provide. He does not address Pompallier’s mendaciousness in his vastly inflated claims of Maori conversions; nor his colossal financial mismanagement whereby in 1842 he was borrowing money at heavy interest merely to pay the unpaid interest on previous loans—a bankruptcy situation. Nor the fact that Pompallier’s accusations against Colin of virtual embezzlement were, as we have just seen, completely without foundation.

One could go beyond the scope of Wiltgen’s book, which finishes in 1850, and add that after that time, Pompallier’s problems with the
Marists were over, but his character continued to have the same effect on those under him. Secular priests whom he recruited soon left his diocese. The Franciscans served under him for a few years, and then abandoned him, demanding a canonical investigation into the state of his diocese. He was finally forced to resign, with his diocese literally bankrupt. The chaos which he left behind caused his first-named successor to resign within a few years, and the see remained vacant for another five years while those to whom it was offered refused to accept the burden.

Pompallier's letters and accusations can look quite plausible if taken at face value. By contrast, Colin was always restrained and careful in his correspondence with the bishop, having good reason to fear that if antagonized, the prelate would take out his anger on Marists under him. In Wiltgen's approach, this restraint becomes a disadvantage to Colin.

Readers have a right to know this difference between the two men. It is also very relevant for the reader to know that the church has long since moved in the direction Colin sought, and limits the virtually total authority which Pompallier, and those like him, ruthlessly exercised. Religious orders in the missions today have all the quite moderate rights Colin requested, and many more.

In the meantime, Colin redirected Marist efforts into the new vicariates being carved out of Pompallier's former territory. Bishop Guillaume Douarre, leading a group of twelve Marists, voyaged to the Pacific in 1843, sailing via Cape Horn. They came to help develop Bataillon's new vicariate, and to found the new mission in New Caledonia.

The following year, Epalle himself was ordained a bishop, for another new vicariate of Melanesia and Micronesia. Colin and Epalle agreed that it would be best for the new bishop to bring his priests and brothers on an ordinary ship from London to Sydney. There he could gather information from seamen who knew the regions around New Guinea and the Solomons, where he planned to begin, and then charter a vessel to take them from Sydney on the final stage of their journey.

The planned stay in Sydney might be used for another project. If Pompallier could travel across from New Zealand, Epalle might be able to come to negotiate an agreement directly with him, on behalf of Colin and the Marists.

Colin was not optimistic about the prospects of such a meeting, but did not want to waste what might be a final chance to negotiate
with Pompallier. In the meantime, his thoughts turned to Sydney. His aim was to give the loyal Epalle the best possible start, with the largest group of missionaries the Marists had ever sent. They might be in Sydney for some time. Unless Colin took some action, there was every possibility that he would again be imposing on the kindly Archbishop Polding for very considerable accommodation expenses. To permit that would require a complete lack of sensitivity. It was simply a question of whether to choose to take temporary measures, or to solve the problem once and for all by opening a house there to accommodate the passing missionaries.

He and his council decided to open a house in Sydney.
By 1844, it had become obvious to the Marist superior general, Jean-Claude Colin, that the Society of Mary should have an establishment in Sydney. It was by no means a mere reaction to Pompallier's refusal to the plan to open a provincial house in New Zealand, although that event affected its timing.

Colin was no longer prepared to commit men to Pompallier. But now there was a new vicariate of Central Oceania, crying out for men. Missionaries in transit to those Pacific islands would still need accommodation in Sydney. The easy availability of transport between London and Sydney, on the one hand, and from Sydney to the different Pacific islands, on the other, made it clear that the use of such a depot was going to increase, rather than disappear.

The establishment of an agency house by a religious missionary order, at a convenient place for maintaining supplies, was ordinary procedure, and had been in the minds of Marists in France from the time of Pompallier's departure in 1836. Pompallier discovered such a base of another French missionary order in Valparaiso, which doubled as a boys' college. His letters consistently returned to the theme of the location of the maison de procure, or purchasing agency, usually referred to as a 'procure house', or a 'procure', and so the man charged with responsibility for its activities for the missions was the 'procurator'.

When the bishop reached Sydney in 1837, he was in no further doubt, and he wrote to Colin that the problem was solved: the house should be in Sydney, 'the place with the most means of communication'.¹ Later arrivals such as Petit-Jean and Séon confirmed this
Challenge

assessment. The only question which they raised was whether there should be a college as well, which Brady had recommended to them as a means by which they would be able to support themselves financially. They also related the matter to the presence in Sydney of French Canadian political prisoners, among whom they administered the sacraments and said Mass. These prisoners were kept at what is still called Canada Bay, on the Parramatta river.²

There were further pressures from other directions. The Propagation de la foi officials urged Colin to centralize Marist missionary efforts. This was a reasonable comment, when Pompallier’s tropical missions had been founded more than two and a half thousand kilometres away from his New Zealand headquarters. The officials would be most happy to see a Pacific supply base in operation, through which cash could be safely transmitted. Baty’s journey to Sydney in January 1844, to collect money originally addressed to Port Nicholson, was only a further instance of a perennial problem. When Pompallier was in Valparaiso, in 1837, he wrote urgently to Colin for money. Colin sent him 8700 francs, along with a batch of mail. Half of the money reached the bishop in New Zealand in 1839; the letters and the other half arrived in 1840.³ A Sydney agency would solve this and many another problem.

In 1844, Colin was faced with the pressure of the imminent departure of the largest group of missionaries he had ever sent: Bishop Epalle and his men would travel via Sydney on their way to open another new vicariate somewhere in New Guinea. Even though a primary objective in Colin’s mind was to avoid imposing on Polding’s hospitality in the way they had previously been obliged to do, nevertheless there was a question of protocol. As well as the dictates of common courtesy, Colin was anxious to follow the procedures of church law. The law required that the foundation of a religious house should be made with the approval of the local bishop. But his long experience of corresponding with New Zealand made Colin well aware that even an urgent question was rarely answered inside twelve months, and often took much longer. He did not have that amount of time.

The only proper alternative for Colin was to discuss the matter with his own and Polding’s superiors in Rome. He did so. Cardinal Fransoni thoroughly approved, and wrote a letter to Polding supporting the project of a Sydney procure house.

Fransoni’s letter, written in Latin, and dated 5 May 1844, can still be found in the archives of the Sydney archdiocese, at St Mary’s cathedral. One can only guess at the considerable importance it had
during later events, but, in its traditional, stilted phrases, Polding is told by his chief superior, apart from the Pope himself, that it seems 'very opportune' to the sacred congregation, that this 'Society of French priests, founded at Lyon under the patronage of the Blessed Mary', should establish a Sydney procure house for its missions in Oceania. The letter asks the archbishop to welcome the priests, and encourage them 'with all your strength' to complete the establishment.

And so, on 21 August 1844, Colin himself wrote to Polding. He did so with a good deal of confidence. Not only had Polding been most hospitable to successive groups of Marists, but there had been an opportunity of returning the courtesy in a very effective way.

In 1841, Polding had made his first visit to Rome. As one would expect, the Marists to whom he had been so kind in Sydney had urged him to visit their mother house in Lyon, where he was warmly welcomed. But in addition, while there Polding was given introductions to Marist contacts in Rome, and the knowledge of Roman procedures acquired, sometimes painfully, over so many years.

Polding's visit to Rome was a virtual triumph. He was made an archbishop. And, although the news was still secret, when he wrote back joyfully to the Marists in Lyon, he had received everything he requested: approval for the appointment of three new bishops for Australia, with himself as metropolitan, and the unusual permission that he and the new bishops would be allowed to take title to properly constituted dioceses, while still retaining the special powers of vicars apostolic. This was an unparalleled decision at the time, and it should be remembered that England had still not been restored to proper dioceses. It was administered in missionary vicariates, under vicars apostolic.

Polding's letter was affectionate and enthusiastic. He expressed his gratitude for the hospitality shown him in Lyon, and for the information about Rome. He asked to be remembered to all the Marist confrères, adding, 'Why should I not say my confrères, for have we not the same Mother, and has not Divine Providence been pleased to place us in the same field of work?'

Encouraged by this warm friendliness, Colin wrote with confidence to Polding. He explained the growth in Marist vicariates, referred to the archbishop's past kindnesses, and apologized for acting without waiting for a reply. The priests making the foundation would be instructed to look upon the archbishop as their father, and not to act without his permission. Such a remark was not insincere politeness. Colin placed great emphasis for Marists upon the necessity
of acting always in closest cooperation with their local bishop. He concluded with the tactful point that items Polding had requested a Marist returning to New Zealand to purchase on his behalf—apparently chalices—were being brought out for him by the priests coming to Sydney.

Colin named three Marists for the Sydney foundation, Father Antoine Freydier-Dubreul, superior, to be assisted by Father Jean-Louis Rocher, and Brother Auguste Leblanc.

Dubreul had been a highly regarded preacher on behalf of the Propagation de la foi appeals, and now he prepared well. He visited Rome, and learnt what he could about mission countries and canon law relating to them; in Lyon, he made banking arrangements for money transfers with Guérin et fils, and in Paris, with Maison Rothschild. While in Paris, he made an invaluable contact: a French merchant thoroughly familiar with Sydney and New Zealand, Didier Numa Joubert. ‘I have seen M.Joubert,’ he wrote to Colin. ‘The information he has given me about Sydney, and the procure I am establishing, were absolutely necessary for me. If I had done nothing else in Paris than this, my journey would not have been wasted.’

The trio took ship in London on the Caledonia in November 1844. The voyage of four and a half months was not a happy one for them, and they must have been very pleased to see the massive cliffs which guard the entrance to Sydney harbour. They stepped ashore on 12 April 1845. Archbishop Polding received their letter of introduction, and gave them accommodation in his seminary.

In Sydney, Dubreul was a man in a hurry. Bishop Epalle and his large group of missionaries were expected at any time—they arrived on 22 June—and there was little time to waste. He found a cottage to rent, not far from St Mary’s cathedral, in Woolloomooloo (pronounced ‘vouloumoulou’, Rocher explained). And the three moved in. When Epalle’s group arrived, he rented a second cottage close by, and thus accommodated everyone. By the time he wrote his second letter to Colin, on 12 July, he had even acquired a large property on the Liverpool Road and Cook’s River. Its owner, Father Therry, back from Hobart, called it variously Maryborough and Maryville. In a typical act of impulsive generosity, he donated it to the Marists. The future permanent location of the procure house seemed assured.

Unfortunately, trouble was beginning to appear from a most unexpected quarter. Dubreul and Rocher had very little English when they arrived, despite their attempts to study the language in Europe,
and on the ship out, and they were dependent upon Polding's French when they spoke with him. They gained no negative impression from the initial interview. Over the next weeks, however, they became aware that his manner towards them was somewhat strained. Living, as they then were, with the Benedictine community, they found themselves obliged to put in many hours of choir singing with the monks, and were given to understand that the archbishop wanted them to wear Benedictine robes.

These things were not entirely welcome, but were only temporary problems, they believed. For Dubreul was anxious to move to their own house as quickly as he could, so that they could prepare for the imminent arrival of Epalle. When he found a suitable place to rent, he called on Polding to let him know the happy news, and to express sincere thanks for his hospitality.

With a sense of shock, Dubreul began to understand that the archbishop was quite opposed to the move. When one of the primary reasons for establishing the Marist house in Sydney had been to ensure that they were not a burden to the Benedictines, it seemed inexplicable to realize that Polding was saying quite explicitly that he would really prefer the Marists to stay right where they were, in the monastery.7

The Marists had no idea, to this point, that Polding had plans which greatly complicated his attitude to the presence of other religious orders in Sydney; plans which made his opposition to Dubreul's move from the monastery entirely logical. Had Colin known of those plans, he would certainly have abandoned the idea of a foundation in Sydney, and looked elsewhere. It is necessary, at this point, to look carefully at the Benedictine archbishop's ideas, and see their effects upon other religious congregations in Australia.

John Bede Polding is a person about whose character widely differing views have been expressed.8 The kindliness and hospitality which the Marists were shown were fundamental to the sort of person he was. Many others found the same generous hospitality. His work among convicts was quite outstanding. British colonial officials, very unsympathetic to Polding's Roman Catholicism, saw the complete change in groups of convicts to whom he preached, and gave him the fullest support and freedom to work among them.

Polding was a holy man, of most genuine sincerity. His pastoral letters urged his people, in simple language which all understood, to live good Christian lives in the land which had become theirs. He loved his people, and moved among them in a most fatherly way,
and they responded warmly to his love. His missionary journeys, often made on horseback, covered thousands of miles, for he had been entrusted with the care of an entire continent. Nothing gave him greater pleasure, depite his excellent education and fine mind, than to give the simplest catechism instructions to some unlettered settler in a remote slab hut.

It has been said that if Polding had died in the mid 1840s, he would certainly be regarded as one of the great missionaries and saints of the nineteenth century. ‘The Geelong Advertiser, of 21 October 1844, stated that all sects and classes regarded him as “the nearest approach to the perfect and blameless man”.’

And yet his entire career was marked by the tragedy of failure. The goals on which he most set his heart came to nothing. In the eloquent words of one of his successors, Cardinal Patrick Francis Moran, ‘His seminary failed, his college failed, his religious community failed, his Monastic Cathedral failed, his long cherished scheme of setting the seal of the Benedictine Order on the whole Australian Church melted away like an idle dream.’

A century later, the puzzle still remains: how did these things happen, and why? Timothy L. Suttor, Polding’s most ardent supporter in recent years, but far from being alone in his interpretations, would say that it was because of his very greatness. The man had breadth of vision far beyond the ordinary, and saw with clarity the real possibility of founding a Christian millennium. But as so often happens, Suttor’s argument continues, he was surrounded by pedestrian, petty minds. Unable to grasp what was being offered to them, they turned against the man who wanted nothing but their good, and broke and destroyed him. Like Caesar in the Capitol, Suttor dramatically concludes, Polding was stabbed to death by Australian Catholicism.

Frances O’Donoghue is much less simplistic than Suttor, in her biography of Polding, admitting that the man had his own responsibilities for problems which arose. ‘The essential cause of the upheaval of 1854,’ she writes in one instance, ‘was ... that Polding had proved that his top priority was to be a missionary rather than a bishop or an abbot.’ However, even as bishop she indicates that Polding depended almost totally on his own order, rather than on his entire diocese. ‘The very failure of other religious orders to cooperate with him in the creation of that unity and harmony which he so much desired spurred Polding to realise his old dream of relying still more on the Benedictines’. What was Polding’s ‘old dream’, his vision for the Australian church?
When John Bede Polding visited Rome in 1842, he put in a request for the church to make an unusual declaration. Two years later, he received word that his request had been approved. It was the fulfilment of one of his most cherished ambitions. Rome declared that the archdiocese of Sydney would henceforth be an abbey diocese. The concept is a complex one, but he best expressed on paper the idea he had in his mind, in a letter he wrote early in 1845:

We shall, in our Institute, come as near to the form of the Benedictine Institute, as it existed in England before the Reformation, as we can—blending as it did in perfect harmony, Episcopal authority with the Abbatial, and producing Missionaries who more zealously fulfilled their duties with the habitual renunciation of all things, the consequence of their monastic profession.¹

It is a striking concept, even if somewhat romantic: Australia evangelized by monks, their lives dedicated by monastic vows to renunciation, especially of material possessions. Such was the plan.

It is arguable that it was this plan, more than anything else—the very vision which inspired Polding—which brought about the failure of so many of his efforts. For it was more than a mere romantic idea. A very powerful effort was made to try to bring it into effect: an effort which had all the force and authority of the archbishop of his diocese, backed with Roman approval. Yet it was a
scheme which was hopelessly impractical from the outset, and without doubt, the effort to introduce it, against all the practical realities which opposed it, badly damaged the church in Australia.

It does not take the hindsight of a century to see its impractical side. When Polding arrived in Sydney in 1835, his predecessor in charge of the church in Australia, in the post of prefect apostolic, was his fellow Benedictine, William Bernard Ullathorne. Polding had great respect and affection for Ullathorne, a most able man, and made him his deputy, as vicar general. Later, he did all that he could to have Ullathorne named as a bishop for an Australian diocese. To Ullathorne as his vicar, he fully explained his Benedictine plan.

In 1838, Polding sent Ullathorne to England, to recruit the Benedictines necessary to put the idea into practice. Despite his best efforts, he was unsuccessful. Only in Ireland could he find priests. The level-headed deputy recognized the implications immediately: the plan was unworkable. ‘To do anything Benedictine in the Colony’, he wrote, the same year, ‘is now out of the question.’

Polding took no heed. He tried to do his own recruiting four years later, in 1842, with the same result: there were simply no monks available. Yet that was when he applied to Rome for the authorization to make the plan official. Ullathorne had accompanied his bishop on that trip in 1840. He said he would never return to Australia, and despite Polding’s pleading, he would not do so. In later years, in his autobiography, he quoted Polding as saying, ‘We made up a bishop between US’. Explaining this, he indicated that Polding needed someone to lean on. Although he fulfilled this deputy’s role very well, Ullathorne found it an exacting one, because of the difficulty in getting Polding to act. Often he seemed chronically incapable of making a decision, no matter how urgent. Polding also caused Ullathorne bitter disappointment for failing to give in return the kind of support he continually expected to receive.

Ullathorne’s refusal to return to Sydney was not a sudden decision. He had twice tried to resign in 1839, partly for these reasons, and partly over Polding’s mismanagement. But Polding had then been able to persuade him to stay, agreeing to surrender management of everything, including finances, into his hands.

However, Polding knew that the 1840 decision was final.

When a large group of secular priests, from All Hallows college in Ireland, arrived in Australia in 1846, Polding naively assumed that they would all take vows and become Benedictines. They were amused. But they were not amused to find that, in their view at

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least, they were treated as clergy of second rank, inferior to the monks. McEncroe urged in 1851 that Irish clergy were reluctant to volunteer for Sydney for this reason. The matter was still being raised as a major grievance at the end of the 1850s.

A more fundamental problem existed. Even supposing that there had been enough monks for missionary work, Australia was not a place for an abbey diocese. To say this is not to question the value a monastery could have had as part of an ordinary diocese there. But that was never Polding’s plan. His abbey diocese was bound to fail because of the size of the continent. The tiny groups of Catholics were so widely scattered that monks would either have had to forsake their community and live permanently outside their monastery, thus failing to observe the fundamental principle of monastic life, or else they would leave all the distant centres of population without resident priests. This criticism of the plan was made by monks within Polding’s monastery in the early 1850s.5 In practice, all parishes except the nearest were entrusted to the care of secular priests, almost all Irish, who thus became essential to the scheme, even though Polding did not acknowledge this basic flaw to his idea.

Polding never seems to have worked out the details of his scheme, particularly in its impact upon the secular clergy and on other religious orders, both of which were really anomalies in the plan. The Irish clergy were not the first to feel some kind of pressure upon them to become Benedictines. The same was felt by the other religious orders in Sydney. The loss of confidence created by such uncertainties had a bad effect upon those concerned in their relations with the archbishop.

The reason why the damaging effect of Polding’s policies was seen first among the other religious orders is that, notwithstanding the archbishop’s authority, and his strong concern for it, religious orders also have rights and rules, which are clearly delineated by church law. When Polding’s plans infringed upon those rights, it was more obvious than it was when he placed restrictions on his secular clergy or the laity.

After Ullathorne’s final departure in 1840, three broad phases may be seen in the problems of the prelate’s administration, each of which was marked by a visit to Rome. When Polding returned from his first visit to Rome in 1843, the problems were focused on the other religious orders, who had virtually all departed by 1847. His return from his second visit to Rome in 1848 was followed by
problems in his own Benedictine monastery. These problems led directly to his third visit to Rome, from which he returned in 1856. After that the focus of difficulties moved to the secular clergy and finally to the laity.\(^6\)

The first non-Benedictine religious in Australia were the Irish Sisters of Charity, who arrived with Ullathorne in 1838. All except one of the original sisters withdrew in 1846, to work under another bishop, in Hobart. They refused to return to Sydney while Polding was alive. The one who remained in Sydney in 1846, and through whom the structure of the order survived, returned to Dublin in 1859, in the midst of a most bitter controversy.

Polding brought two more religious orders back to Australia with him in 1843. One was the Irish Christian Brothers. They had a very successful beginning, opening three schools; and then they, too, walked out, going home to Ireland. The order would not return to Sydney while Polding was alive. The other order was the Passionist congregation, from Italy, brought to work among the Aborigines. They opened a very difficult mission on Stradbroke Island, off the coast of what is now southern Queensland, but returned to Sydney in 1846 and 1847, starving and in rags. They refused to remain under Polding’s jurisdiction, and went to work for another bishop, Polding’s former deputy Francis Murphy, in South Australia.\(^7\)

Although these facts have long been known, writers defending Polding’s role have argued that the problems arose from within each of these orders. And certainly there were problems, of various kinds, within each order. But there were also problems from outside, and specifically deriving from their relationship with the Benedictine administration.

The authority exercised over both the sisters and the brothers was such that they had little control over their own administration. The sisters kept being moved from one dwelling to another, from one apostolate to another.\(^8\) The brothers, like the Marist Fathers, found that they were pressured to remain within the Benedictine monastery, in conditions very unsuitable for their apostolic work, even though Polding had agreed in writing to provide them with accommodation of their own.

The brothers began to train a young man named John Larter for the brotherhood.\(^9\) According to the terms of the written contract, on the basis of which they had accepted the mission, they had the right to recruit candidates. Shortly before the archbishop left to go overseas, the brothers approached him to discuss their novice. To their amazement, he told them that it was no concern of theirs: the
young man should become a Benedictine. Novices belonged to the archbishop and his diocese, not to the order.

The Sisters of Charity lacked good leadership. But against this must be weighed the fact that the Benedictines exercised very direct authority over them, removing one superior, and appointing a replacement several times, with very little warning. This could only have a catastrophic effect on the morale of a community which was tiny, in any case. In these actions, Benedictine procedures were followed, and not those laid down in the constitutions of the sisters. The sisters were also concerned about the admission of a novice to their order. Polding’s vicar general, Henry Gregory, again disregarded their constitutions and imposed Benedictine rules.

Polding had already left for Europe when the sisters were expressing dissent from these actions. Gregory decided to silence them by producing a document which declared that their Australian foundation was independent of their mother house, and directly subject to their local bishop. The document was genuine, but the sisters in Sydney were unaware of its existence. The idea alarmed them. After seriously considering a return to Ireland, three of the four sisters remaining from the founding group withdrew to the now separated diocese of Hobart.

The brothers were afraid that they, too, might be cut off from Ireland in the same way, and fearing that Hobart was close enough to Sydney to make it possible for the archbishop, when he returned, to find some way to force them to come back to him, they gave three months’ notice to his deputy and went back to Ireland. Both of these departures took place in 1847.

The superior of the Passionists, Father Raymund Vaccari, was unsuitable, by all accounts, for his position. There were disputes between him and his men. But the problems were not as simple as this. When Vaccari arrived in Sydney, he carried a church document declaring him a prefect apostolic, whose territory was independent of Polding’s. The archbishop was shocked, and questioned the authenticity of the document, which was perfectly genuine. He was so upset that Vaccari decided, in the interests of harmony, to forgo his legitimate authority and allow his mission to be completely dependent on Polding, even financially. It was a fatal decision. Totally inadequate administration by the Benedictines brought the missionaries to the verge of starvation.

Finances of all these religious orders were closely controlled by the archbishop, to the extent that they were dependent upon the Benedictine administration for their food supplies. This would have
been difficult enough even if supplies had been efficiently maintained, but they were not. The Sisters of Charity frequently lacked sufficient food, although kindly lay people often helped them. The plight of the enclosed Benedictine nuns at Subiaco was less well known, and their sufferings were frequently more severe for this reason.

But these congregations were at least in the Sydney area, where they could make their need known. The Passionist priests were 1000 kilometres away. On barren Stradbroke, they would have had deaths from starvation if they had not been helped by the Aborigines. Ironically, Polding had forbidden the missionaries to give food to the Aborigines.

The situation of the Passionists had been made vastly more difficult because Polding explicitly refused to allow them to contact *Proposition de la foi*, source of mission finances, on their own behalf, something he had no right to prevent. Although he did not live a life of luxury, it is difficult to forgive the archbishop for creating the complete dependence of the missionaries upon himself, and then, by negligence, condemning them to endure ‘conditions that would make one weep’, as their superior general later wrote.

In practical matters of administration, Polding ordinarily acted through his vicar general, Gregory. It was Gregory on whom he leaned. Gregory, far less brilliant than Ullathorne, and less imaginative, bore the burdens of this position for many years with stoic loyalty. Inadequately trained, without experience, and with no natural facility in dealing with people, Gregory was promoted by the archbishop to be vicar general of the archdiocese, and prior of the monastery. Such promotions speak of the lack of talent available to Polding, but they put impossible demands on the young man, and are hard to justify on the part of the prelate. To compensate for his lack of gifts and his inner uncertainty, Gregory was always very withdrawn, and adopted a cold, superior ‘English’ manner, which antagonized the Irish, and most others who had to deal with him. There were very few with whom he was ever able to relax. Polding’s position, his greater warmth, and kindly demeanour, easily led people to lay the blame on Gregory for whatever was at fault in the Sydney abbey diocese. But there are good reasons for maintaining that Gregory did no more than carry out the policies of his archbishop.

The chance arrival of the Marists, a fourth non-Benedictine religious order, into the closely knit abbey diocese structure of the archdiocese created a situation of considerable historical interest. The Marists provide a useful control group, which may help assess
whether Polding’s difficulties with other orders were, as some claim, from separate problems in each instance or whether they were from difficulties directly created by his own policies, and for which he bears ultimate responsibility. In this way, a group of apostolically minded missionaries, merely seeking a base for their missions in distant lands, became a challenge to an archbishop in Australia.
On 22 June 1845, the *Bussorah Merchant* arrived in Sydney. It carried Bishop Epalle, seven priests and six brothers. Despite Dubreul’s difficulties with Archbishop Polding over leaving the monastery, he had rented the temporary procure house in Woolloomooloo some weeks earlier; he and his assistants had moved into it and the place was operating successfully. In this first major test it functioned quite well. The bishop and some of the missionaries stayed there with Dubreul, while Rocher and the remainder lived at a second rented house nearby. All came together for meals.

There was some sensitivity among certain Sydney people over this ‘French invasion’, a sensitivity which had not been present when Séon’s large group had arrived four years earlier. The difference was that, in the meantime, there had been Maori violence in New Zealand, with pillaging and destruction of the property of British settlers, but the property of the French missionaries had been spared. It was publicly suggested by Governor FitzRoy, in New Zealand, that Pompallier was guilty of inciting the Maoris, to his own advantage. Pompallier replied to the accusations, and was later exonerated by FitzRoy’s successor, Sir George Grey.¹

Polding went to the governor of New South Wales to assure him that Epalle’s expedition was exclusively missionary in its objectives. He also welcomed his fellow bishop, and invited him to stay at his house. Although Epalle declined, preferring to stay at the procure house, Polding and Gregory were helpful in every way, particularly in arranging for altars at St Mary’s and the chapel of the Sisters of Charity, for those priests to say Mass who could not do so in the room which had been dedicated as the chapel of the procure house.

Epalle began, as soon as possible, to deal with problems relating to his new mission: cargo, damaged during the voyage, needed to be repaired, or washed and aired to prevent mildew. He also made
enquiries about Melanesia, without learning very much. The islands were mainly known for massacres, and cannibalism: no Europeans lived on them.

In the midst of all these preoccupations, however, New Zealand affairs thrust themselves on his attention. He found Polding very well informed on the disputes. The archbishop urged him not to leave for Melanesia, but to wait for Pompallier, and hold talks with him. New Zealand would suffer greatly, he said, if the situation there was not restored. He was referring to Colin’s refusal to send any more Marist missionaries without being able to reach agreement on their protection. It was getting towards three years since the last group had been sent.

Pompallier and Polding, it soon became evident, were warm friends. The friendship between the two prelates had begun with their first meeting in 1837: two bishops, sharing so many of the same problems, with adjoining territories embracing hundreds of thousands of square miles. In 1838, Polding was already referring, in correspondence, to ‘my good friend, Bishop Pompallier’. He was disappointed in 1840, when he and Ullathorne called at the Bay of Islands, on their way to Europe, that Pompallier was far away on the South Island.

In August 1844, Pompallier had come to Australia. At Polding’s request he visited Stradbroke Island, to make an estimation of mission prospects for the Passionists there. He reported to Polding, with whom he stayed for the rest of the year, that Aborigines were much harder to convert than Maoris. During these months he discussed fully with his counterpart the problems he was having with his French Marists in New Zealand. When Dubreul arrived in Sydney the following April, it was not very long since Pompallier had left. Dubreul was startled and embarrassed to find that ‘the grapevine’ was active, and the ordinary clergy in Sydney were thoroughly conversant with the problems.

When talking to Epalle, Polding kept referring to Pompallier using phrases like, ‘the worthy bishop’, or ‘the holy bishop’, or even, ‘the man of genius’. Epalle did not comment, but he wondered. The Marists were far from optimistic about the talks. They knew Pompallier too well. But Epalle learnt from Polding something which suggested that Pompallier was not planning to make any concessions. In response to Colin’s refusal of more missionaries, he was not thinking of compromise: ‘During his stay in Sydney, Bishop Pompallier wrote great numbers of letters to Europe seeking men’.

Pompallier arrived back in Sydney again, on 27 August 1845. It was not only because he had received the invitation to take part in
the talks with Epalle there. He had also been given clear indications by British authorities in New Zealand that they would like him to leave, because of the ill feeling towards the French. Although he was not intimidated in the slightest over this, prudence did seem to suggest that he leave that colony for a time, to let feelings become less strained. The French consul in Sydney was of the same opinion.

Colin had hoped that the bishop would bring Forest, at least, with him to Sydney, to represent the views of the priests, and if possible, Baty too. Pompallier arrived alone. There was no need for anyone else to come, he said, because, as he repeated many times during the weeks that followed, his views represented theirs: there was complete unity among his men.  

Pompallier’s mood was far from conciliatory. He had received a letter from Fransoni, written late in 1842, humiliatingly sent via Colin, which reprimanded him for many problems in his mission. He felt sure that Colin was poisoning minds against him: Fransoni, Propagation de la foi, and Epalle as well. He had a lot of worries: too many businessmen were aware of his problems. And where once they would lend him money for short terms at a heavy 10 per cent interest, now they were refusing to lend, even at a crippling 15 per cent. They were taking it upon themselves to criticize the way money which they had previously loaned him had been frittered away. The wastage was chiefly occasioned by the purchase of the Sancta Maria, her extremely high running expenses, and the various European and Maori freeloaders, who crowded aboard the vessel for meals and even free voyages. There were the problems with his Marists, those related to the Maori uprisings, and now the pressure from the British, making him wonder whether they would soon order his mission to close.

But if these worries were on Pompallier’s mind, he certainly did not intend to discuss them with Epalle. He now saw Epalle as a traitor, who had deserted the mission in time of need, and maligned him in Rome. This was why he had written to Epalle and told him never to return. Yet the man was back. A bishop equal to himself, with droves of missionaries who should rightly have been his, with a large grant of money from Propagation de la foi which ought to have come to himself, on his way to open a mission in territory which had formerly been under his jurisdiction.

The meetings began early in September 1845. Dubreul and Rocher were seconded as secretaries, but did not attend the first two sessions.
Perhaps it was just as well. From outside the room, they could hear the angry raised voices. Even when they were present after the formal sessions began, there were some very bitter exchanges, accusation and counter-accusation. Pompallier shouted, and lost his temper very badly on several occasions. At times, Epalle and the two silent secretaries wondered whether he was out of his mind.

At the fourth session, Pompallier was in tears, ‘seeking to justify himself by statements that were completely wrong’. For some days he was absent through a maladie, and afterwards he seemed to have lost track of all that had gone before. None of the Marists gave any interpretation to these things in reports or correspondence at the time. But two years later, when Dubreul had spoken to him about their private belief, Colin suggested in a secret letter to the Pope that Pompallier had a problem with alcoholism. While others had a similar view in later years, it is also possible that the bishop’s loss of composure, during the strained meetings, was no more than rage and strong emotion.

Predictably, nothing at all emerged from the discussions. Epalle had only one real goal on Colin’s behalf: to find some way to safeguard the men. But every proposal which he brought forward was rejected by Pompallier: it would divide the mission, or it was likely to cause surprise and scandal to Catholics, or else to Protestants, or especially, it would erode his authority as bishop. He did not cease to repeat, the secretaries reported, that government and jurisdiction belonged totally to him—an accurate summary of the legal situation. Pompallier asked that young priests, preparing in France for the missions, should be especially trained to have the greatest deference to the vicar apostolic.

The prelate said that he did not object to the appointment of a provincial—but, having said that, he rejected one by one any powers which would enable the appointee to have any effective role whatever. Thus, the provincial must not have any money: only the bishop could have any. Why, one of the men had a bell tower for his mission, which was better than that of the bishop!

Basically, canon law allowed the bishop to exercise this control over money. He exercised it ruthlessly over his Marists. The man with the bell tower was Father J. J. P. O’Reily, a Franciscan, his only non-Marist priest. It had not been coincidental that Petit-Jean, after his Australian appeals three years earlier, had brought no cash back to New Zealand, for Pompallier would have claimed it. Nor would Pompallier, in the discussions, allow the provincial any right of
enquiry into the conditions under which the men laboured. The most he could examine, Colin once remarked with more truth than cynicism, was whether they were saying their daily prayers.

Pompallier continually consulted Polding throughout the days of the meetings. He found support and agreement. The Marists reported that anything said to one could be taken as said to the other. At one point, with the consent of Epalle, Polding was invited to comment directly upon a set of provisional regulations, delineating an area of responsibility for the provincial. He found support and agreement. The Marists reported that anything said to one could be taken as said to the other. At one point, with the consent of Epalle, Polding was invited to comment directly upon a set of provisional regulations, delineating an area of responsibility for the provincial. He said that the proposed regulations should be rejected, because they would introduce imperium in imperio—a kingdom within a kingdom. Giving two instances, Polding stated that the regulations would allow the provincial to establish schools, and secondly that, independently of the bishop, the provincial would make an annual report on the state of the mission. None of the original texts of the proposed regulations mentions schools, and this was apparently an extrapolation Polding made, based on a reference in the document to the establishment of a regional religious house. If so, the sensitivity of the Sydney archbishop to the establishment of schools by a religious order is noteworthy. Three years earlier the Marists had been advised by Brady to consider opening a school; not many months later, the Christian Brothers considered it was impossible for them to run religious schools in the diocese, and returned to Ireland.

The painstakingly organized meeting dragged on to an unhappy, completely fruitless conclusion. An incident which seems to sum up the situation was that when a written statement of his comments was being made. Pompallier dictated the wording to Rocher, then, when it came to the point, refused to sign it. Dubreul attributed this refusal to Polding’s advice.

Pompallier had by now become extremely bitter towards the Marists. Not long after the meetings, he gave vent to his feelings in harsh words to Dubreul:

Your society is a society of babies. The plan put forward by your superior [Colin] is one of espionage. If another approach had been followed, God’s work would be much further advanced in New Zealand . . . The latest beginner, with no experience at all, believes he has a duty to criticize bishops. If you keep pursuing this course, you will close the door to all dioceses. Archbishop Polding is too kind.

By ‘espionage’ Pompallier meant Colin’s various proposals to try to find out how his men were faring under Pompallier, once the bishop imposed strict censorship.
Epalle turned from the unhappy conferences to the object of his assignment: the mission to New Guinea. He chartered a ship, the *Marian Watson*, to take his group to the Solomons. There was an enormous crowd to witness their departure from Sydney, and the atmosphere was funereal. Most of the people who farewelled them were convinced they were going to their deaths. In Epalle’s case, it was true. A few days after reaching Ysabel in the Solomons, he was axed several times in the head, and died on 19 December 1845.

As he had the previous year, Pompallier remained in Sydney with Polding until the end of 1845. His intransigence with Epalle had safeguarded his own authority, but had solved nothing. He was desperately short of men. He asked Epalle for two priests and two brothers, but was refused. His financial situation was critical, and he had torpedoed Colin’s rescue operation. A letter from Rome, indicating two successes, consoled him. A coadjutor had been named to him, and it was his own selection, Philippe Viard, the Marist priest who had consistently been close to him. He and Polding gave Viard episcopal ordination early in January 1846. The second success was that, in accord with a request he had made, Rome had temporarily restored the islands of Tonga to his jurisdiction. These achievements were some consolation as he prepared to go to Rome, as Fransoni had instructed him to do, in the same letter.

Larger problems had diverted attention from the question of the status of the Sydney procure house during the time of Epalle’s visit, but its situation was certainly not finalized in Polding’s mind. The archbishop had opposed the move of the Marists from his seminary to their own dwelling. The news that they had been given Maryville by Therry worried Polding even more, for the independent status of the order would be rendered permanent. However, when Dubreuil approached him about Maryville, he gave a reluctant consent: ‘I cannot prevent you’, he said, ‘from accepting what Father Therry has given you’.

Fransoni’s letter of support for a Marist procure house made it morally impossible for Polding to reject the procure. But the terms of its acceptance were quite another matter. His resistance to each step towards its establishment makes it evident that he was hoping to limit it to something less than an independent religious house. Polding’s resolve can only have been strengthened by the presence of Pompallier in his house for several months.

There were legal complications for Dubreuil over gaining possession of Maryville. Therry had planned to construct a church on the property four years earlier. To finance the building, he had advertised
that he would sell twenty blocks of half an acre ‘to each of twenty persons who shall respectively subscribe £25 to the building of the Church of St Anne’s, Maryborough’. He had let the plan lapse, he told Dubreul, because only a few people had offered to subscribe the required sum. Now, in 1845, he considered the offer closed.

To ascertain the legal position, Therry took Dubreul to the solicitor general, John Hubert Plunkett, the most able legal adviser in the colony. Plunkett advised that there would be no possibility of legal challenge to Marist ownership if Therry signed a deed of gift of his land to the Society of Mary, and they acted as owners. Those steps were taken. The deed had been signed on 2 July, and Dubreul went ahead with some fencing and other work.

Epalle and his men were very impressed when they visited the property on a perfect day in springtime. One wrote: ‘The position, the area, the land, everything is excellent . . . I made the journey to the song of the parakeets, and a thousand other birds, whose singing was like that of the blackbird and the nightingale in our homeland. To say it in a word, everything you hear there, what you see, or breathe, opens the heart.’ It all seemed too good to be true.

We can find a sign of Polding’s intention in a letter which he wrote in reply to Colin’s letter of introduction for Dubreul and his men. It was a carefully phrased letter, assenting to the procure house and assuring Colin of its value for the missionaries. But it emphasized that the house was to be only ‘a simple procure house’, and added, ‘a broader permission would not accord in any way with my plans’. The next remark has an added importance because of its timing: ‘I could not in any circumstance give my consent to donations made to your house, at least as long as that did not seem absolutely necessary to us for fulfilling its purpose as a procure house’. The letter was dated 11 July 1845, nine days after Therry’s deed of gift.

The first blow fell after the Marists had been in possession of the land for several months. Therry had returned to Hobart. Epalle and his missionaries had left Sydney. Polding’s vicar general, Henry Gregory, called at the procure house. It was about the Maryville property, Gregory began. Unfortunately, he went on, Father Therry, although he is a very generous man, sometimes acts beyond his powers. The land was not his to give. It does not belong to the Marists, or even to the archbishop. It belongs to the church.

Legally speaking, this was simply untrue, as Dubreul well knew. But in the face of what he could only regard as moral blackmail, what could he do? The Marists relinquished their claim, and ownership of the land reverted to Therry, who sold it in the 1850s.
Dubreul and Rocher were well aware of Pompallier’s continuing presence at Polding’s house during these problems. ‘Since the arrival of Bishop Pompallier,’ Dubreul wrote, ‘we no longer see the kindness of Archbishop Polding. Each of them wanted to have some of Bishop Epalle’s men. He did not leave them any, and they are very angry with him about that, and over other little things. But it is unfortunately on us that the weight of their unhappiness has fallen.’

‘The weight of their unhappiness’ fell on the procure again, in a second visit from Gregory. I understand, he said, that you have a chapel here, where you say Mass, and reserve the Blessed Sacrament. Unfortunately, this is only a private dwelling, and a statute of a diocesan synod forbids you from doing this.

Dubreul and Rocher were very upset. They had explicitly obtained the permission of the archbishop for their chapel, and in very many identical situations the Sisters of Charity had always been allowed a chapel in rented premises. But if the archbishop could grant the permission, he could likewise withdraw it, and so protest was useless. It was also annoying to think that nothing had been said about this while Bishop Epalle was present, for obvious enough reasons. Inconveniences resulted: the two priests had to walk some distance each morning to say Mass; Brother Auguste, and any guests or domestics, often had to miss weekday Mass, while on Sundays the entire household had to go out for Mass, ‘leaving the procure house on Sunday to the care of a stranger’.

But the inconveniences were not serious. What rendered the action more upsetting and significant was that it was another blow to the status of their foundation. Officially, not having a chapel meant that they were no longer a religious house. And there was no doubt that this was precisely what the archbishop, through his vicar general, was bringing about.

Dubreul believed that Polding wanted the Marists to close the procure house completely, and reduce their complement to a single priest, living at the Benedictine monastery. Probably he was right in this belief. Such a step would certainly have ended any threat which the Marist presence posed, in Polding’s eyes, to his Benedictine dream. It might even give him access to the Propagation de la foi grant for the establishment and administration costs of the procure. He had already ensured that the grant for the Passionist mission was channelled through his hands in this way.

From the Marist point of view, however, such a move would have been quite irrational, and would have rendered impossible most of the objectives which they had been sent from France to
achieve. They wanted to welcome missionaries at a house of their own, following the Marist, not the Benedictine rule. To members of a religious order, such an establishment is their own home. The monastery was someone else’s home. Living in the monastery, they would never be able to receive large numbers of their fellow Marist missionaries, except under compliment to the Benedictines. Nor would sick missionaries feel at home there.

Back in France, Colin agreed. His comment was terse: ‘I am not sending Marists to Sydney, for him to make them into Benedictines’.19

Indications of a hardening of Polding’s attitudes towards the Marists during the last four months of 1845, while Pompallier was with him, are important. This is not to suggest that Polding would originally have had a different opinion from that of the French bishop. There is every reason to believe that Polding supported Pompallier, not just as a friend, but because he agreed with his views about authority. In his own phrase, he opposed any measure which, in his view, would set up imperium in imperio. It is noteworthy that his statement about the Benedictine dream, already quoted (see above p.37), emphasized authority, the ‘blending’ of ‘episcopal authority’ and abbatial authority—both of them absolute, the combination incredibly powerful.

Gregory’s role, in the two actions against the Marists, is particularly noteworthy. He was simply the agent for his archbishop. Polding went to Europe in February 1846. During the eighteen months after his departure, while Gregory was in charge of the diocese, the Christian Brothers left, all of the founding Sisters of Charity left except one, and the Passionist Fathers left. Without the Marist example, it might be argued that Gregory was responsible for the policies which triggered these departures. Keeping the instance of the Marists in mind, however, there can be no doubt that Gregory, loyal and literal-minded deputy, was following Polding’s policies as faithfully as possible. It was all intended to help bring about the archbishop’s Benedictine dream.

The misgivings in the Marist Sydney community were strong enough to prompt Rocher, in February 1846, to speak to the vicar general of the now separate diocese of Hobart, Father William Hall, who was visiting Sydney. What would be the attitude of the bishop of Hobart, he asked, to the possibility of the Marists moving to his diocese? Hall considered the matter and became enthusiastic, urging Rocher to write to Bishop Robert William Willson. However, Rocher was merely sounding out the situation, and was in no position to make such a decision, although he passed on the information to France.
In Lyon, at this crucial moment for the future of the Australian foundation, Superior General Colin was cautious. He wrote advising the Sydney Marists to be prudent. As he remarked to his community, he did not intend to advise them positively, when the situation might have changed completely by the time his letter reached them, months later.

Pompallier's joy at the news that jurisdiction over Tonga had been temporarily restored to him was not shared by the Marists. He had made his request to Rome on the basis of the possibility that he would be asked by the British authorities to leave New Zealand, over the Maori uprisings. Now that his petition had been approved by Fransoni, he made plans to send Viard out to those regions to take them over again, after his own departure for Rome. In December, when Viard had not yet received his episcopal ordination, Dubreul decided that the situation was urgent enough for him to go to Bataillon, and let him know what had happened. There was also bad news from Tonga. He left for Central Oceania immediately.

Dubreul returned to Sydney six months later, with a serious decision facing him. The Marists in the Central Oceania vicariate had no wish to find themselves under Pompallier again. Yet Pompallier was going to be in Rome, and would undoubtedly claim that they would all be very happy to have him again as their bishop. Bataillon was anxious to have a representative there, who would be able to say, on first-hand knowledge, that this was not true. He had urged Dubreul to be that representative. Douarre, his coadjutor, made the same request. There was the tragic news of the death of Epalle in the Solomons, where the shocked missionaries were trying to make a new beginning at Makira bay on San Cristobal. They were totally dependent on the Sydney procure for their survival, and to close it would put their lives at grave risk. In the meantime, Polding had unexpectedly left for Europe. He would strongly support Pompallier's version of the meetings with Epalle, and would likewise give his own version of the story of the Sydney procure house Dubreul decided, in all these circumstances, that Colin would wish him to go to Europe.

But before leaving for Europe, in June 1846, Dubreul, who was an energetic, and possibly impulsive man, suddenly decided to do something about the Sydney situation. And so, without consulting Rocher, who was in bed ill, and least of all Gregory, he went out, chose a ten-acre block of land, and paid for it in cash. Almost immediately after this unexpected purchase, Dubreul took ship for Europe, leaving Rocher to sort out the details.\textsuperscript{20}
Indications given in letters by Rocher and Dubreul suggest that this land was in the vicinity of what is now Five Dock. Those indications make it clear that from the viewpoint of transport, its location was excellent: less than ten kilometres from the heart of Sydney. One boundary was the Great Western Road, the busiest road in the colony; on the other side it fronted onto an inlet of Sydney harbour. But in almost every other respect Rocher, and the other Marists whom he consulted, considered that it was unsuitable for a procure house.

When Rocher visited Gregory, shortly after Dubreul’s departure, with news of the purchase of the land, the vicar general was staggered. This was precisely the action that Polding had wished to prevent, the previous year. At one time, Gregory had tried to persuade Dubreul, without success, that it was cheaper to rent than to buy property in Sydney. While Dubreul was in the islands, the matter had come up for discussion again, and Gregory had managed to dissuade Rocher from buying anything. And now the thing had happened. But eventually he gave Rocher permission to go ahead and build on the land.

Within a few months, the Marists decided to abandon the unsuitable ten acre block, in favour of 30 acres of land and a large house, today known as Birchgrove House, near Balmain, which was far more suitable. Rocher was encouraged to take this step by a letter from Colin, written before he had heard of the restrictions imposed by Gregory’s two visits. It arrived after Dubreul had left for Europe. Colin had written, ‘We are going to send you twenty five or thirty thousand francs. Take advantage of this sum of money to make a purchase, and house yourselves suitably.’

By the time of the Birchgrove purchase, Marist Bishop Douarre had arrived in Sydney from New Caledonia, on his way to Europe. He took great interest in the selection of the site, and was quite pleased to undertake the negotiations with Gregory. Rocher was more than happy to step aside. The vicar general proved to be no match for the bishop. When Gregory tried to hedge, Douarre spoke to him quite sharply about the problems of the missions. When Douarre came home to the little procure house, after the interview, he brought good news. Gregory had given in on all points. He had even given permission for a chapel.

The Birchgrove property proved to be encumbered by an inheritance problem, which left the question of whether the transfer of title would be legally secure beyond all doubt. Rocher was able to terminate the arrangement without financial loss. In May 1847, he made
another move, which proved to be the final one. He bought a house and eighteen acres of land, close to Sydney harbour, on Tarban Creek, in the vicinity of Hunters Hill and Gladesville. Shortly before he left on a voyage to the islands, Rocher called on Gregory with the news. He received quite an affectionate welcome, with a request to let bygones by bygones. Gregory also spoke of offering to the Marists the care of the parish of Ryde, in which the new Marist procure was located. The situation looked very secure.

It was quite otherwise in Rome.

Sydney and suburbs showing places of Marist interest.
Late in 1846, the Marist superior general Jean Claude Colin, and his able secretary, Father Victor Poupinel, who was also mission procurator, were in Lyon, preparing for a journey to Rome. Colin had decided that some kind of finality about the New Zealand problems had to be reached, in one way or another. With Pompallier in Europe, this was now possible. Sydney letters also told him of Polding’s unexpected trip to Europe, and so Colin addressed a cordial letter to the archbishop, in care of his London agent, expressing a respectful welcome. Polding replied that he was sure they would be able to reach an understanding, but he did not wish to go into matters on paper. He did not reach Lyon, however, until after Colin had left for Rome, and so the discussion had to wait a while longer.

Before Polding arrived, Colin had received a letter from Dubreul, in South America, saying that he could be expected in Europe soon, after he had taken a little time to recover from a nightmare voyage across the Pacific. When he arrived in Lyon, he was able to explain that he had been delegated to represent the two bishops, Bataillon and Douarre, over the difficulties about the Central Oceania missions. He was also able to put Colin in the picture, as no letters could, regarding the Sydney situation as well. After hearing what Dubreul had to say, Colin told his community:

Archbishop Polding wants to interfere in our affairs, to keep everything in his own hands. He would like to dispose of the Marists in Sydney for this or that duty. He wants to establish, with himself as the centre, a material unity which would destroy
the freedom of administration of the society . . . I am not sending Marists to Sydney for him to make them into Benedictines.¹

If Dubreul was afraid that Colin would be angry with him for leaving his post in Australia, the fears were certainly allayed when he reached Lyon. Colin was very pleased to have someone who could give first-hand witness to the state of affairs in the Pacific, and the attitudes of the missionaries, and so support his case in the difficult negotiations ahead of him in Rome. He decided to leave Poupinel in Lyon, to follow on to Rome later. He himself set off with Dubreul, early in December.

Although the most painful issues and decisions facing Colin in Rome related to Pompallier, the Sydney problems were not forgotten. Dubreul wrote up the story of his experiences there, in a long Memoire, which he presented to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.² In it, he traced the events relating to the procure’s establishment and activities, and the various difficulties it had met, chiefly through relations with Polding. Finally he suggested that Sydney was ‘unquestionably the most favourable location, and perhaps the only choice, for a procure house in Western Oceania’. And he went on to ask for some specific items: that the Marists be allowed to have a procure house in Sydney, and to own its buildings; that this house be able to have its own chapel for Mass; that no external ministry be imposed by obligation upon its priests. These were very moderate requests. Two points referred to the Maryville property: one obliquely, by asking for the right to be allowed to receive gifts, and then a direct request to be allowed to pursue the matter of the ownership of the property.

A very important element in the negotiations was the block of land Dubreul had hastily bought just prior to his departure. Polding only heard about this purchase in Rome. Back in Sydney, as we have seen, Rocher had long since sold that particular block, but Dubreul and Colin believed that the procure was committed to the site. ‘Perhaps this very day,’ wrote Dubreul in the Memoire, ‘the construction of a procure house is commencing.’

This belief made the situation distinctly different, during the negotiations between Colin and Polding, from that which would have applied if Dubreul had left Australia with no firmer commitment to Sydney than a rented house in Woolloomooloo. It may, indeed, have been a vital factor in the continuation of a Marist presence in Sydney.

Finally, a meeting took place between the archbishop and the
superior general. Polding began by protesting vehemently that he was very upset at Dubreul's Memoire. Colin at once promised to withdraw it. But this gesture gained no concessions. Polding refused, for instance, to put anything in writing expressing his conditions regarding the procure. But orally he stated, as a first point, that the property should be jointly owned by the diocese and the Marists. Colin politely asked was he proposing to pay a share in the cost of buying the property? There was a silence. No such thought had been in Polding's mind. He made no offer to pay anything, and went on to other issues.

Whether Colin was aware of it or not, Polding was not attentive to detail about money matters, and in several instances, he was very careless with the finances of others. Both the Sisters of Charity, and his own Benedictine nuns, suffered from this failing of his, but the worst instance related to the Passionist missionaries on Stradbroke Island. Polding refused to allow them to make direct contact with Propagation de la foi, took over their grant, which brought a considerable increase to his finances, but used most of the money for other purposes, and through carelessness in arranging despatches of supplies, left the Passionists to starve. Not long after Polding had left for Rome, three of these priests had arrived at the Marist Sydney procure, in rags. Gregory refused to help them, mainly because they would not agree to return to the island. Rocher gave them money to buy clothes. Colin could well have been in contact with the Passionists in Rome.

Polding proposed other conditions if the procure was to continue in his archdiocese: that its priests be compulsorily required to be available for parish work, and that the Marists undertake a mission to the Aborigines. Neither point was accepted by Colin. He had no desire to increase his involvement, in any unnecessary way, with a bishop who saw eye to eye with Pompallier. And Marists were already committed in the south Pacific, as missionaries, to far greater numbers of pagans than was Polding. As regards parish work in Sydney, the Marists had always been available, and would continue to be, even though Colin refused to accept this as an obligation.

And so, the Rome meeting brought no greater understanding. Apart from the withdrawal of the Memoire, which had probably served its purpose already, only one matter was easily solved. Polding expressed dissatisfaction with Dubreul. Colin immediately promised that Dubreul would not be reappointed to Sydney. He did not explain that the latter had already asked not to be sent back. Dubreul
Confrontation in Rome

returned to the Pacific missions, deliberately avoiding passage through Sydney. He travelled to Samoa via Cape Horn.

The archbishop clearly blamed the impulsive little priest for much of what had happened. Although this simple view enabled Polding to overlook the effect of his own actions, there is no doubt that Dubreul could be too abrasive. Father Stephen Chaurain had come back to Sydney to tell of Epalle’s death, and remained working at the procure. He wrote, a few weeks after Dubreul’s departure, that the Sydney shipping agents, Joubert and Murphy, said that they did not like dealing with Dubreul, as he became too angry, and no progress could be made. Vicar General Gregory remarked, ‘So Father Dubreul has left for France. Then he would do well to stay there’. On another occasion, Gregory wondered at Dubreul’s bustling activity, ‘Whenever does he get time to think?’ On the other hand, his energy and efficiency had been highly regarded by Propagation de la foi in France. It may be doubted whether a more conciliatory person would have achieved any more in Polding’s abbey diocese.

The 1847 meeting between Polding and Colin in Rome was a stalemate. Having failed to reach any concrete agreement with the archbishop, Colin seriously considered transferring the procure from Sydney. The following August, Dubreul wrote from Lyon to Fransoni, requesting a letter of introduction to the ecclesiastical authorities of the town of Concepcion in Chile:

The difficulties which our Sydney procure house is encountering from the church authorities there . . . make us consider this establishment to be very much at risk. They are of such a kind as to put restrictions on the work the procurators do on behalf of the missions, and even to divert that work from its purpose. Fransoni wrote back to Colin requesting further information, but more bad news from New Caledonia and the Solomon islands caused Colin not to reply. The Sydney foundation was providing services which had become so crucial that any immediate transfer of the procure was quite out of the question.

Polding’s attitudes towards other religious orders are considerably clarified by the Marist experience. T.L.Sutter suggested that the departures of the Christian Brothers, and of the Passionists, and of most of the Sisters of Charity, were their own fault, arising from oversensitiveness, and a false idea that every wrong was attributable to Benedictization. As noted above, O’Donoghue sees a failure on
the part of other religious orders to cooperate with Polding. But the simultaneous Marist experience weighs against these interpretations. Except for a series of crises in the Pacific, unrelated to Sydney, there could well have been a fourth departure of a religious order from the abbey diocese, with that decision taken, not by a panic-stricken local superior, but by a superior general, dealing directly with the archbishop in person.

This last factor sheds further light on the controverted question, mentioned previously, of the relative responsibility of Polding and Gregory for the troubles of other religious orders under the Benedictine administration in Sydney. Because Polding himself was absent in Europe during 1846 and 1847, when the other orders departed, it would seem easy to charge that his vicar general was the person responsible. But in the case of the Marists, a reverse situation applied: all of Gregory’s actions against them took place while Polding was in Sydney, telling him what to do. Once Gregory was in charge of the diocese, the atmosphere improved: a chapel was permitted, and care of the Ryde parish was offered. At the same time in Rome, Polding’s meeting with Colin brought the strain close to breaking point. And when he returned to Sydney in 1848, the offer of the Ryde parish was withdrawn.

This is not to say that Gregory had a different view from his archbishop. There is clear evidence from many sources that Gregory thoroughly agreed with a very authoritarian stand on most issues, and that his advice was invariably in that direction. By the late 1850s his support to Polding’s very autocratic inclinations and encouragement of an uncompromising attitude had very unfortunate effects upon the diocese.

When Colin had asked Polding to put in writing his conditions for the existence of the procure in his diocese, Polding refused. However, for another purpose, he had just done so, only a few days earlier. What he then wrote sheds interesting light on his views on the possible role non-Benedictine religious priests could have in his abbey diocese. He was writing specifically about the Marists, in a letter addressed to Propaganda in response to the Dubreuil Mémoire. ‘The only question,’ Polding wrote, ‘is whether the procurators were to be subject like the other clergy of the diocese, or exempt, from episcopal jurisdiction.’ Only one of the archbishop’s subsequent points reveals what he meant by the significant phrase, ‘subject like the other clergy of the diocese’. He went on to say: ‘All the members of other regular orders are subject to the archbishop, among whom are professed members of the Benedictines, the Franciscans and Augustinians etc.’
There were, indeed, members of these three orders—and Polding could have added at least one more, the Cistercians—on the Australian mission. Excepting the special case of Polding's own Benedictines, the others were individual priests who had lost all contact with their own orders, and were no different from secular clergy. Undoubtedly, this was the way in which Polding intended the condition he proposed, which Colin did not accept, that the Marists at the procure would be compulsorily required to undertake parish work. In another point of his letter, Polding urged that his proposals would help concentrate Australian missionary efforts. It seems not to have occurred to him that any superior general would view this absorption of members of the order into the administrative structure of the diocese, for which the order had no specific responsibility, as eroding its members, and as a loss of identity of the order.

A further confirmation that these were, indeed, Polding's views comes from an addition he made to a petition which he presented a few weeks later, at his audience with the Pope. The petition itself requested that he be authorized to establish in Australia other Benedictine monasteries of men and women, 'in such a way that he may be the regular superior'. This is not an unusual request, and supposes several monasteries under the same abbot. But he added, 'He also asks the same faculty in regard to all other religious orders that he will consider it opportune to establish there, and that such a concession be valid for all his successors'. The request was answered affirmatively, in all respects.9

Polding, in this petition, spelt out his attitudes quite clearly: he was asking for more authority over other religious orders in his diocese than to be their bishop. He wished to be their religious superior as well. He wanted even greater authority than the very authoritarian rules of his day normally permitted a bishop to have.

Polding's desire for unusual additional authority was by no means limited to the religious orders in his abbey diocese. It extended in every direction. When Polding returned to Sydney in 1848, he consecrated Augustinian James Alipius Goold as bishop of the new diocese of Melbourne. Goold discovered that Polding had arranged for all appointments of clergy, in the diocese he had yet to take charge of, to be sanctioned by Sydney, all correspondence with the government to pass through Sydney, and as a neat corollary, all government finance for Melbourne, including stipends for his clergy, would also be given through Sydney. And he was receiving none.

Goold applied direct to London to have these arrangements altered. When Polding heard, he was distressed and asked Goold to withdraw the application. He indicated that there was a want of
Challenge

respect towards himself, undoubtedly unintentional. He urged that his 'spiritual jurisdiction' as metropolitan bishop gave him these powers.

To Polding's regret, Goold did not withdraw, and his request was successful. Rightly or wrongly, Goold attributed these actions on Polding's part to Gregory's influence. Bishop Willson of Hobart would have agreed. He confided to Goold later that Gregory wrote to him in the same year, 1848, asking him 'to take off the mitre' i.e. to resign.

Bishop Charles Davis, Polding's choice as coadjutor, a fellow Benedictine and former pupil, arrived in Sydney in 1848. Being entrusted with care of the monastery, he set about toning down 'a strong hankering after the absolutism of the Abbot' which, he said, was in 'both the Archbishop and Dr Gregory'.

Pompallier's visit to Rome enabled Colin to bring the unhappy association of the Marists with him to its sad but inevitable conclusion. All of Colin's efforts to reach some kind of agreement with the bishop had proved fruitless. Because of this, after the three Marist priests sent out in 1842 had reached New Zealand, Colin had refused to send any more. Following on the failure of his own attempts of 1842 and 1843 to achieve anything positive, and then the failure in 1845 of Epalle in Sydney, Colin did not have any hopes that a meeting between himself and Pompallier would be any different in its outcome.

In Rome, Pompallier visited widely, presented a grandiose report to Propaganda, and blamed all his troubles on a lack of cooperation from Colin and from his own men. But not all went smoothly. A number of church leaders advised him to resign. He did so. Then he changed his mind, and begged for his resignation not to be accepted. He ranged from moods of despair to elated optimism. Once he threw himself on his knees before a cardinal and wept. At another time he put forward a grand scheme of ordaining a dozen new bishops for Western Oceania, who would be under him. In a low-key comment, Colin asked Propaganda not to nominate any Marists to these positions, if the scheme came to be implemented.

Colin did not seek a confrontation, nor did he attempt to reopen negotiations yet again. He no longer trusted Pompallier at all, and now considered that even if he were to reach an agreement with him, the bishop could not be relied on to keep his word. There would be no point in leaving his men under such a man; he simply wished to arrange the Marist withdrawal.
It may seem curious that Colin opposed Pompallier in such a limited way in Rome in 1847. Surprising that he did not make an all-out attack on the excesses of the bishop’s administration, with a strong presentation of the opposing case, on behalf of the religious order in the missions, and urge Pompallier’s removal. Certainly, Pompallier’s lengthy presentation to Propaganda was very much in terms of the traditional argument, from the viewpoint of the vicar apostolic. In its preparation, he had taken a great deal of advice, and it argued that the religious priests, in a mission vicariate, should be regarded as equivalently secular priests.

Was Colin’s restraint merely based on an awareness that the tide in Rome had turned in favour of the bishop? That to make such a stand would be fruitless, and possibly damaging?

There may have been some such elements in his mind. But the important point, apart from his desire not to destroy the public reputation of the bishop irreparably, is that he was in no sense anti-authority; never the revolutionary who wishes to destroy the system. The political troubles which climaxed in the 1848 revolutions in France, and elsewhere in Europe, depressed him exceedingly. He wanted peace, not war. If the law could not assure him of reasonable security for his men in the Pacific, he would turn back to France, and, under friendly bishops, establish houses ‘which will permit us to be in peace, and compensate us amply for the innumerable difficulties we have met, until the present time, in the foreign missions’.

Only when written accusations were made by Pompallier against the Marist missionaries under him, and against Colin, did the latter consider that further silence would be harmful, and that a response had to be made. Even then, he did so in a letter which he wished to be completely private. He addressed it sub sigillo secreto (under secret seal), to the Pope himself. He raised the charge that Pompallier was an alcoholic, and, to balance what he saw as a very one-sided view of the mission presented by Pompallier’s report, he included fifteen letters from men who had served as missionaries under the bishop, presenting views which differed notably from those of Pompallier.

Alcoholism would provide a plausible explanation for much of Pompallier’s behaviour: the mood swings, the grandiose schemes, the abundant generosity with Maori guests and the banquets, which squandered his resources while his own missionaries in other places were almost totally neglected. However, Colin’s charge cannot be regarded as completely proven, and remains only a possibility.

Rome did not remove Pompallier, and so, since the Marists would not continue to work under him, the decision was that the
missionaries would be removed instead. An agreement was made that the Marists would be withdrawn only gradually over some years. They would move to a new diocese of Wellington, under the new bishop, the pious but colourless Viard. It was far from being a happy solution. For one thing, Viard was Pompallier’s trusted ally. But, from having a gigantic vicariate, Pompallier was reduced to being bishop of the smallest diocese in that part of the world.

The news of the Marist withdrawal from the Auckland diocese was received with deep sadness by the people among whom they had been working for many years. As the withdrawals began, Colin pointed out to Fransoni, in what were strong terms for him, the effects they were having. He went on to make it clear that he was convinced that Rome could easily have granted reasonable guarantees, without which it was imprudent for the Marists to place their men in the distant Pacific. In these words Colin revealed that the termination of Marist missionary endeavour in the Auckland diocese was a measure intended to bring home to Propaganda, perhaps more than anyone else, that it was within their power to introduce the necessary changes which would make the situation tolerable:

We will be able to provide missionaries to vicars apostolic who are ready to give us guarantees of peace and security. But the experience we have acquired, in fourteen years in which we have worked in the foreign missions, has convinced us that it was neither wise nor expedient for a simple congregation to accumulate so many missionaries in a place like Oceania, especially with the measures adopted and imposed up till the present.

Having rid himself of Colin and the Marists, the sources of his troubles, in his own eyes, Pompallier’s problems multiplied instead of decreasing. Priests would not volunteer to work with him. His inability to recruit priests made him decide to visit seminaries, and try to inspire students for the priesthood to join him, and be ordained priests in New Zealand. He did recruit two priests, who came with him on the ship from Europe, but one of them would not remain with him past Sydney. The second went on to Auckland with him, but left him and returned to Sydney a few months later. Even those students whom he recruited and ordained left in great numbers, after short periods as priests in his diocese.

Pompallier returned to Europe to recruit again in 1859. He found more volunteers, and similar departures followed. He also arranged for the Italian Franciscans to come to the Auckland diocese.

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They worked there for a time, and then left in the early 1860s, demanding a canonical investigation into the bishop’s administration. Propaganda granted one, and then rendered it useless, by entrusting it to Pompallier’s good friend Viard, who proved quite ineffectual. In 1868, the situation of his diocese bordered on total confusion. Pompallier was at risk of being declared bankrupt, and the laity would no longer tolerate his incompetence. He left for Europe, and resigned, in 1869. To salve his feelings, Rome made him an archbishop. It proved almost impossible to obtain a successor to face the chaos he had created in Auckland. The first bishop named to the task resigned within five years. For the next five years, the see remained vacant, while those to whom it was offered refused to take it on.

These events were to affect the Catholic church in Australia in different ways; not the least was the steady flow into Australian dioceses, of priests who had abandoned Pompallier. But in the late 1840s, those events lay in the future.
The inability of Marist Superior General Colin and Archbishop Polding to come to agreement in Rome in 1847, about conditions under which the Marist procure house could operate in the abbey diocese, left the status of the foundation quite precarious. But because of crises in the missions, no serious consideration could be given to thoughts of moving from Sydney. The disaster of Epalle’s death, and the continuing dangers being faced by his men, meant that an evacuation from that mission might have to be made at any moment.

A further disaster occurred in New Caledonia in 1847, and suddenly its entire complement of thirteen priests and brothers had to be withdrawn to Australia. Within weeks of the purchase of the new Sydney procure house on Tarban Creek, it was crammed with men. There was no way in which Colin could have moved the Marist house, nor could Polding have expected him to do so. And so it survived. But with no agreement about its existence, it was in a kind of vacuum. Colin briefly reminded Rocher that authority belonged to the bishop, and said to live in the best possible harmony with him.¹

In Sydney, the improvement in relations during Polding’s absence, which had occurred under Gregory’s administration, disappeared immediately when the archbishop returned in 1848. Quite apart from his confrontation with Colin, the entire atmosphere of his visit to Rome was different from that of five years earlier, and it is not at all surprising if he wondered whether some of the change could be attributed to the Passionists and the Dubreul Memoire.

Rocher, at the procure, received no information from Lyon
about the details of the Rome meeting for some considerable time, and he was completely mystified by the coldness with which he was received by Polding. He also wondered why the archbishop did not take up an invitation to come and see their new dwelling, even though it was repeated. No further mention was made of Gregory’s suggestion that the Marists take care of the Ryde parish, in which their new house was located.

Polding’s refusal to the Marists of that local apostolate at Ryde may not seem to be a restriction of particular importance, but in fact it was significant. The requirement of church law is that when care of a parish is entrusted to a religious order, a particular agreement is made between the bishop and the order. In other words, there is recognition of the presence of the order in the diocese in an official way. It is clear that, despite the departures of members of three orders in eighteen months from his abbey diocese, Polding was very far from allowing such recognition to the independent existence of any order, apart from his own, within his jurisdiction.

When one of the Marists asked Polding for news of Lyon, knowing that he had been there, the archbishop frigidly replied that he did not meddle in other people’s affairs. The Marists realized that something was seriously amiss. Then Gregory began saying darkly to some of the diocesan priests, ‘Beware of the French priests. We know all that they have written to Rome against us’.  

Eventually, Rocher sought an interview with the vicar general. The warmth of the earlier visit had completely evaporated. Gregory vaguely described Dubreul’s Memoire, and then began a diatribe against the procure: what did they do all day? Nothing. Priests should be saving souls, and one day Rocher would be called by God to render an account.

It is fortunate that Rocher was not as fiery in an argument as Dubreul, but he argued that their work in the missions contributed towards saving souls there. And if Gregory thought they wasted their spare time, what about allowing them to undertake teaching in a college?

Never! replied Gregory.

Then do not say that the Marists are doing nothing for souls, countered Rocher, since you yourself are preventing it.

Harking back to the Memoire, Gregory claimed that ‘Your superior [general] has had his nose put out of joint’ and Rocher added ‘Here the gesture accompanied the words’, and had been forced to withdraw it, getting nothing that he asked for. Gregory then went on to explain that it was for this reason that neither he nor
the archbishop would visit the Marists, or have anything to do with
them. However, he added largely, ‘You can come to our monastery
as often as you like. The door is open to you, as always’.

The terms were clear. If not a cold war, it was at best a very
cold peace. Still, the terms were not immutable, and in his report to
France, Rocher added that one of them had been broken already:
Gregory had said that he would never again ask for their assistance,
yet the Marists were still saying Mass at his request every Sunday—
although never in conveniently nearby Ryde.

Other remarks made at the cathedral showed that suspicions
towards the Marists persisted. An Italian Passionist priest Peter
Magganotto, who was attached to the Benedictine seminary staff,
expressed a wish to leave and join his three confreres from the
Stradbroke mission, who were now in the Adelaide diocese. Gregory
commented, ‘We suspected it, ever since we knew you were seeing
those French priests . . .’. Concluding his description of these mel-
ancholy differences, Rocher wrote to Colin, in November 1848:

From all this, I think one must conclude that we weigh very
heavily on the shoulders of the archbishop and Dr Gregory. In
fact, our presence here disturbs them to an extraordinary
degree. The greatest pleasure we could give them would be to
fold our tent and go somewhere else.

Only Benedictines are wanted in Sydney. No other order
will be allowed to establish itself there, before the Benedictines
have thrown down deep roots. It is Archbishop Polding who has
so pronounced.

When Rocher wrote this letter to him, Colin had still not written to
Sydney about what had happened in Rome the previous year. His
letter giving the detail of those events reached Rocher late in 1849, in
response to this evident embarrassment in Sydney.

By the latter part of 1848, more deaths had occurred among missio-
naries in the Solomons and nearer New Guinea. Epalle’s young
successor, Bishop Jean Georges Collomb, was suffering from fre-
quent bouts of the fever which would soon end his life, off the New
Guinea coast, at the age of thirty-two. The whole future of the
Melanesian mission was becoming increasingly uncertain, and Colin
was asking Rome for permission to close it.

The procure house was already overcrowded with the New
Caledonian missionaries, and to have more men arrive from New
Guinea would have created an impossible accommodation problem.
Rocher decided, in 1849, to make use of the extra hands available. A group of brothers and priests built another four-room building, in wood and brick. This intelligent action earned Rocher criticism from Colin, for acting without obtaining the requisite permission. While this reprimand shows a complete lack of appreciation on Colin's part for the conditions in which the Marists in Sydney were living, it also reveals the continued uncertainty in Lyon about the future of the procure. And the reason given for the reprimand was: 'the establishment at Sydney is only precarious'.

Rocher, on the other hand, was sensing an improved atmosphere in Sydney. Relations with the cathedral had changed somewhat for the better, at the personal level. The parish work continued to be requested on Sundays, and Rocher referred in one letter to Polding's personal kindness. But he remained sceptical about any proposals the archbishop might make, and warned Colin, 'Les Benedictins avant tout'—the Benedictines before all.

In 1853 Polding did make a proposition: he again suggested that the Marists might undertake a mission to the Aborigines, on Curtis Island off the north-east coast of Australia. At this time, the nearby area of Gladstone was experiencing a boom. Colin offered Polding his deepest respects, but refused. The offer was repeated in 1856, but again without success.

Rocher continued to keep Colin informed of land values in Sydney, in case he should want to sell the procure. But there was no reaction. Later in 1853, with commendable courage, and no permission, Rocher purchased a block of eighteen acres of land, offering the equivalent of 4000 francs. The unimproved land was a few hundred metres from their existing house, but in a much more impressive position. It is interesting to note that the date of purchase was 19 July 1853, and the matter was not mentioned in a letter until early the following year, when Rocher was sending his balance sheet. He went to some pains to point out that the block was a real bargain, and could easily be resold at a profit. The purchase was preceded by Rocher's naturalization, a step long recommended by Archdeacon McEncroe.

At this time in Australia, the French were unable to own land in their own name, with unchallengeable title. When buying the procure house and land, after taking legal advice, Rocher got around this problem by using three nominees, including McEncroe. He then had the nominees sign a document binding them not to sell the property, or use it in any way, without his consent. McEncroe was now thinking seriously of leaving Polding's diocese and returning to
America. Since Rocher, in writing to Lyon of these events, said that he regarded the archdeacon as 'the sole protector in Sydney' of the Marists, he was finally persuaded to take out naturalization. McEncroe and the other nominees then transferred title of the procure house and its land to him, and Rocher purchased the new block in his own name. It is indicative of the improvement in relations which Rocher had noticed, that Polding made no objection to the land purchase. In fact McEncroe quoted him as saying that Rocher had done well, and had made a good bargain. The archbishop could afford to be magnanimous about Marist land transactions, but Rocher had, indeed, been fortunate, as the site was far superior to his original block.

But Polding soon had little time to think about a 'Marist anomaly' in his Benedictine dream. The whole idea was coming apart. The monastery was in ferment, and some of the monks presented a petition to Rome criticizing the entire abbey diocese concept, and asking for Gregory's removal from the position of prior of the monastery.

Polding was very shaken by these events, which he regarded as a rebellion. He decided to leave for Rome in March 1854 to answer the charges, taking Gregory with him. He now had a Benedictine coadjutor, the gentle and popular Bishop Charles Davis, to whom he left the care of the diocese. Tragically, Davis died a few weeks after Polding had left, and McEncroe was left in charge. It was unlikely that the procure would suffer while its 'sole protector' was in authority.

If Polding regarded his 1847 visit to Rome as less than satisfactory, he saw that of 1854 as nothing short of a disaster. He left Australia with the firm intention of handing in his resignation, following the clear signs of trouble deep in his beloved monastery. In Rome, all his efforts failed to solve the problems as he wanted. Setback followed setback. He had an interview with the new Pope in which everything seemed to go wrong, and Pius IX became very angry, especially with Gregory. This anger subsequently had fatal effects on Polding's attempts to have Gregory made a bishop. When Polding talked to Fransoni at Propaganda, it appeared to him that the cardinal had paid far too much attention to the critics within the monastery—the very people, as he saw it, who had caused all the trouble. The outcome was a great blow. His dearly loved abbey diocese experiment was officially terminated.
Jean-Claude Colin, founder of the Society of Mary, or Marist Fathers, and first Superior General 1836–1854.

Marcellin Champagnat (now declared Blessed). Founder of the Marist Brothers of the Schools and co-founder of the Marist Fathers, Champagnat always forbade any likeness of himself to be made. Immediately after he died in 1840, the brothers shaved and washed him, dressed him in priestly vestments and seated him in a chair, profession cross in hand. An artist was brought in the same day to make this portrait.
Jean-Baptiste Francois Pompallier, Vicar Apostolic of Western Oceania from 1836 (see map p.14). Bishop Pompallier placed his first Marist missionaries on Wallis and Futuna and reached Sydney before the end of 1837 en route to New Zealand. Colin was unable to arrange proper care for Marists under Pompallier, and ended the association of the order with the bishop, whose area of jurisdiction after 1848 was the diocese of Auckland.

St Peter Chanel. On the island of Futuna with Brother Marie Nizier Delorme, Pierre-Louis Chanel became known as 'the man with the kind heart', but angry opponents axed him to death in 1841. Later the entire population asked for baptism, including the murderer. No portrait of Chanel could be found in France, and paintings were made based on memory and on his known resemblance to his sister. Using those early portraits, Tito Ridolfi made this painting in 1954, when Chanel was declared a saint.
John Joseph Therry was one of the first two priests to work permanently in Australia from 1820. The abrasive Irishman antagonized colonial authorities, fought fellow-priests and bishops, but was deeply loved by his flock. He generously donated land in Sydney to the Marists, which Archbishop Polding soon forced them to relinquish. (Courtesy of Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, St Mary's Cathedral)

William Bernard Ullathorne was Prefect Apostolic of Australia 1833–34. His youthful appearance made pioneer Father Therry initially hesitant to recognise the authority of the young English Benedictine. When Bishop Polding arrived in 1835, Ullathorne became his vicar general but found difficulty with his policies, and left Australia permanently in 1840. (Courtesy of Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, St Mary’s Cathedral)
John McEncroe was an Irish pioneer who arrived in Sydney in 1832. He was a very caring and level-headed leader of his fellow-priests. He gave immediate, practical help to Pompallier and his Marists in 1837. On his deathbed in 1868, he requested that Marists succeed him in the parish of St Patrick’s, Church Hill.

Antoine Freydier-Dubreul, Superior of the first Marist foundation in Sydney in 1845. Benedictine Archbishop Polding made difficulties for the Marists, as he did for other orders. The impulsive Dubreul went back to Europe in 1846—when this photograph was taken—and finally presented a case against Polding in Rome. He never returned to Australia, and served as a missionary in Samoa, where he died in 1867.
Henry Gregory, Benedictine vicar general of the archdiocese of Sydney from 1843. Gregory came to Australia as a sub-deacon with Polding, who ordained him to the priesthood. The prelate put impossible demands on him by promoting him when he was too young. Gregory became extremely unpopular, although faithfully following his archbishop’s wishes. Polding was broken-hearted when Rome ordered his return to England in 1861. (Courtesy of Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, St Mary’s Cathedral)

Jean-Louis Rocher took charge of the Marists when fellow-founder Dubreul left Australia. Rocher worked quietly and methodically until he finally left Australia in 1861. He purchased the first Villa Maria at Hunters Hill in 1847, and in 1853 bought the land on which the present Villa Maria stands. Polding made him parish priest of Ryde in 1856.
Above: The first Villa Maria on Tarban Creek, Hunters Hill. This 19th century ink drawing was based on the 1854 painting depicted on the jacket. It shows the former home of Thomas Stubbs before L-shaped extensions were added to left and right. The separate building on the right was a chapel which no longer exists. The Marists sold the property in 1874 to Thomas Salter. Forty years later it was bought by its present owners, Gladesville hospital. Below: A modern photograph from the same vantage point. The former Marist buildings are now known as ‘the Priory’.
Top: The Priory today. The older stone on the left indicates the section that was part of the Thomas Stubbs home. The roof of the two-storey wing is visible above. After the Marists transferred to the present Villa Maria in 1864, the building became a convent for a few years. Bottom: The Priory, showing the attractive two-storey wing which was added by Rocher in 1857 at a right angle to the original building. It was designed by architects Weaver and Kemp. (Photos: Douglas Baglin)
Stephen Chaurain saved the mortally wounded Bishop Epalle from cannibals at Ysabel in the Solomons in 1845. Chaurain remained in Sydney for five years, and transferred the Marist procure house from Woolloomooloo to Hunters Hill, where he planted the first vineyard. He was appointed in 1850 to London's East End slums, to help found St Anne's, Whitechapel, and soon became parish priest, a post he held for many years.

Pierre Marie Bataillon was a pioneer Marist Pacific missionary with Brother Joseph Xavier Luzy who landed at Wallis in 1837. Overcoming severe privations and strong opposition, he converted all the Wallisians, who were afraid of his *mana*—spiritual power. In 1843 at the age of 33, he was ordained a bishop and vicar apostolic of Central Oceania. This portrait, made during an 1857 visit to Europe, shows him at the height of his powers, the completely self-confident autocrat.
The problems between Polding and the non-Benedictine religious orders had largely stemmed from this experiment. Once it was ended, the Marist Sydney procure needed only one sign to show that their house could be regarded as a permanent foundation: an indication of a change in Polding's attitude towards it. This was given when the archbishop returned from Rome in 1856. He received Rocher with the greatest affection. On Rocher's next visit, Polding offered him the care of the Ryde parish, together with the government salary. Rocher commenced caring for the parish on 1 April 1856. But if Polding's problems with other religious orders had begun to abate, his problems in other directions had barely begun.
The first Villa Maria

The founding superior of the Sydney procure, Dubreul, did not return to Australia after he left for Europe in mid-1846. But his sudden purchase of a block of land, just before his departure, had radically changed the situation of the Sydney Marists.

After selling Dubreul’s unsuitable block, his deputy Rocher, with the advice of other Marists, bought a house and eighteen acres of land on Tarban Creek, the home of Thomas Stubbs, in 1847. Villa Maria was the name they gave to the establishment. Writing in 1858, Victor Poupinel stated that the name was in use from 1847. However, I have found no written use of the name, prior to Poupinel’s letter. Within weeks of its purchase, it had become a haven for the missionaries evacuated from New Caledonia.

In the uncertainty which followed the meeting with Polding in Rome, Colin did not appoint a new superior to Sydney, and Rocher continued as acting superior for several years. He wrote to France a number of times, asking for a new superior to be appointed. But it was not until 1850 that Colin finally named Claude Baty. This was the period when Marists were withdrawing from Pompallier’s diocese, which made it possible for Colin to name someone from there. Colin had a high opinion of Baty, and had proposed his name as a coadjutor to Pompallier, though Viard, nominated by the bishop, was accepted. It seems that Colin intended that, in Sydney, Baty should have wider powers than a local superior. The thought had been in his mind for some time, and during this time of crises in New Caledonia and the Solomons, important decisions were likely to be needed about the future of those missions, and possible transfers of men.

However, the arrangement did not last long. Baty had been
The first Villa Maria

debilitated by his years in the mission, and arrived in Sydney seriously ill with lung problems. He made a recovery, but in 1851 had a relapse. It was thought that the milder climate of Ile de Pins, New Caledonia, might be beneficial, but he died there, shortly after his arrival.

No new superior from outside was named after Baty’s death, and Colin confirmed Rocher in the position he had been acting in for so long. He was given no special powers. The policy he was to follow was the one that Colin had delineated after the Rome talks with Polding: be available for priestly work as requested, as long as there is no detriment to the work on behalf of the missionaries; do nothing without the archbishop’s consent, and try to live harmoniously with him.

Although Rocher’s appointment had been more or less forced upon Colin, he knew that Rocher’s character ensured that there would be no fireworks in the relationships of the Marists with the local church authorities. In the meantime, Rocher was very methodical and thorough in his work for the missionaries. This is not to say that he was never criticized for his actions. Once, in 1847, the pious French sea captain, Auguste Marceau, invited Rocher to visit all the missions, as a chaplain aboard his ship, the Arche de l’Alliance. Unfortunately, the New Caledonia evacuation occurred during Rocher’s ten-month absence from Sydney. Upset over this event, Colin wrote severely to Rocher about leaving only a single priest, Chaurain, in charge of the procure for so long. A result was that, during the crisis in the Melanesian mission, in 1850, when Rocher thought he ought really to go to Murua, to be able to report personally on the difficulties there, he reluctantly decided not to do so. He must have felt chagrined when Colin replied, ‘I am upset that you hesitated to visit Woodlark [Murua] at the end of last year, for the missionaries there could find themselves in a critical position’.

Rocher’s extensive file of correspondence, from Sydney to the Marist general administration, clearly indicates his methodical thoroughness. He is also quite insightful in his occasional comments concerning the church scene in Sydney, but reticent about himself. Only twice does a word of reminiscence about his own background appear.

One of the priests who had been in Melanesia was appointed as Rocher’s assistant in the 1850s. In the second year of his residence at Villa Maria, Pierre Trapenard put on paper some of his thoughts about his superior. He considered that Rocher’s chief failures were at
the personal level: there was something in his character which kept a
distance between himself and the other staff. He found Rocher too
disinclined to ease the yoke of religious life, too stiff, serious and
unable to relax easily. It seems probable that the comments were
accurate enough. Nevertheless, compared with what Trapenard says
in the same letter about certain mission superiors, the comments
about Rocher are mild.  

Regarding business matters, Trapenard believed that Rocher
was the right man in the right place. ‘He is the man [the procure]
needs. He knows the world. He is prudent. He knows how to win the
esteem of strangers.’ Considering the advantageous position of
Sydney, however, ‘the gathering point of all places in this part of the
world’, Trapenard thought that Rocher was failing to use opportu­
nities at the local level, and was bogged down in the way of acting
which he had been following for many years. He thought that now
was the time for the Marists to branch out locally, and that there
was every hope that good could now be done by them. Polding’s
Benedictine plans, said Trapenard, were crumbling away, ‘as if by
enchantment’. It was the time for action.

Although Trapenard’s comments are very helpful to us today,
for another view of Rocher and of the Marist presence in Sydney, the
man himself was of little use there. He was very reluctant to leave
Villa Maria, and made no elTort to learn to speak English.

In fact, before 1857, only one of the many priests who passed
through Villa Maria was of any great assistance to Rocher. The
reason for this is not hard to find. For understandable reasons, the
missionary bishops did not want to lose talented priests. They were
inclined to agree to release to the procure only a man who was less
able, or with whom they did not get on well. Few of these priests
were of much help, and generally they did not remain in Sydney for
long.

Stephen Chaurain was an exception. He had been one of Epalle’s
priests. His photo, taken some years later, shows a tall and very
strongly built man, of impressive appearance. In 1845, during the
months of their stay in Sydney, he made quick progress in English;
so much so that Polding was anxious to retain him, and asked Epalle
to leave him in Sydney.

At Ysabel, during the tragic attack on Epalle, Chaurain was one
of the tiny group with the bishop. In his own description of the
event, Chaurain states that, after the assault felled Epalle, he stood
over the unconscious man—he must have towered over the
Melanesians. He says that he held the assailants at bay 'par sa contenance' which may be loosely translated as 'by his fierce expression', until at the shore, one of the sailors fired a gun, and frightened away the attackers.5

A family tradition, quoted in a statement by a priest from Chaurain's home parish, attests that he possessed great physical strength. At all events, he scooped up and carried the body of the dying Epalle down to the boat. Afterwards, having the best English, he was the natural choice to bring the story back to Sydney. He was twenty-six. Once at Villa Maria, Dubreul nominated him to assist Rocher, upon his own departure for Europe.

Chaurain retained his position for nearly five years. At the very beginning, from May 1847, when Rocher was absent for ten months, Chaurain was fully responsible for the procure. This carried the immediate task of moving from Woolloomooloo and taking possession of the new house at Tarban Creek. Chaurain effected the transfer with the help of Auguste Leblanc and two islanders. He also made a long-term contribution to the new property. He called on his childhood skills, and planted the first vineyard. Soon afterwards he was faced with a real challenge by the influx of missionaries evacuated from New Caledonia. He seems to have handled the situation quite competently. His letters have a confident tone to them, and this seems to have been his character.

When Polding returned from Rome, he continued to be impressed with the young priest. Chaurain’s speedy improvement in English now helped considerably to maintain friendly relations with St Mary’s cathedral. Soon he became the first of the Marists to preach at his own Sunday Masses. It must be remembered that the Latin Mass meant that the French priests could celebrate Mass on Sunday with no knowledge of English, if another priest preached. Chaurain became very acceptable for saying these Masses in other parishes, and despite the strained atmosphere when Polding returned, this assistance was still being requested. But never for the nearby parish of Ryde, as Rocher’s letters continued to complain. Gregory asked Rocher to send Chaurain to Balmain—nearly 32 kilometres by road. Chaurain reduced the journey to only six kilometres, however, by setting off in the small hours in the morning in the procure’s little boat, and returning for dinner.

Chaurain’s knowledge of English, and his various outings, enabled him to make a number of friendships, to the extent that Rocher expressed some doubts about his social success—a comment which also serves to reveal Rocher’s own attitudes on this subject.
Five years after Chaurain had come to Sydney, Colin wisely decided to use his abilities. He named him as assistant to the work of founding the first Marist establishment in the British Isles, the parish of St Anne’s, Spitalfields, in London’s East End slums. He brought great energy and enthusiasm to the post, and was soon named superior. For many years he was an invaluable help to the Sydney procure as its London agent. He dealt with shipments of goods, or helped missionaries on their way to the Pacific. As it happened, when Rocher left Australia permanently in 1864, he was appointed, after a period of recuperation in France, to the same parish.

Brothers were essential to the work of the procure house, as indeed they were to the entire missionary endeavour of the Marists in the Pacific. In the early years, no special distinction was made between Champagnat’s teaching brothers—today the Marist Brothers of the Schools—and coadjutor, or lay brothers of the Society of Mary. The beginnings of a distinction may be traced to the time when Champagnat accepted candidates to be trained as brothers, not for teaching, but for other work. They were called, for a time, Brothers of St Joseph. The earliest brothers who worked in the Pacific were volunteers from the teaching brothers, such as Joseph Xavier Luzy and Marie Nizier. A little later there were separate coadjutor brothers, such as Auguste Leblanc. In the missions, the brothers were official catechists.

Missionary life was hard for the priests, but it was even harder for the brothers. There were far fewer of them, and hence loneliness was aggravated. A further element was that a greater line of distinction was then drawn between priests and brothers in religious community life. In a house where there were several brothers, this did not matter so greatly, and almost always the line was less obvious in the conditions of the island missions. Sometimes, however, there were to be found severe priests who made a strict division, and the life became correspondingly harder for the brothers. Bishop Bataillon’s reserved attitude towards the brothers was several times remarked on in letters. Rocher maintained that, when staying at Villa Maria, Bataillon, and his close associate Father Charles Mathieu, spoke to the brothers ‘just as the English speak to servants’. He added that, while at the procure, the bishop had never been into a sick brother’s room.6

Perhaps the surprising thing is not that some brothers left the missions, and sometimes the religious life as well, but rather that so
few left. One who returned to France and lived out his life as a brother there left the Melanesian mission after one of the superiors had been imposing an incredibly rigid regime at Murua. At one time, the entire community was ordered, as a penance, to eat nothing but bananas for ten days. Another, sought his escape when ‘enamoured of some young girls’ [he] was tempted to become a beachcomber.7

Auguste Leblanc, one of the three Sydney founders, experienced a different kind of temptation. He wished to work in the missions, and was transferred to the New Caledonia mission. There he met Brother Jean Taragnat. In 1849, Leblanc had to be withdrawn, because of malaria. But two years later, although long recovered from malaria, he was feeling another very prevalent fever in Sydney: he wanted to go off to dig for gold. Early the following year, Taragnat decided to join him at the Bathurst diggings. Later, the two moved to the richer Victorian fields. When Auguste finally left for France, in 1855, ‘he carried with him at least 20,000 francs, if not more’. It was quite enough money to give Auguste a very solid start to a new career.8

A few years later, Polding wrote about the impact of the gold rushes on the Benedictine monastery. He believed that the labour shortage caused by the gold rushes made a ‘fearful temptation’ for the lay brothers to leave the monastery, as highly paid jobs were so plentiful. In the meantime, they were assured by disaffected priests within the community that their vows were invalid. ‘So Benedict Casey, Aemilian Fitzpatrick, Francis Larter and Anthony Hunt have . . . entered the world.’9 The prelate’s explanation overlooks the fact that a serious loss of confidence had occurred within the Sydney Benedictine community, and the departures were linked with that depressed mood, as well as with the labour shortage, which made the return to employment so easy.

Famous among the brothers who spent a long time at Villa Maria was Joseph Xavier Luzy. He had worked with Bataillon to establish the first Marist mission in the Pacific, on Wallis, beginning in November 1837. In 1851 his health was seriously affected, and he was sent to Villa Maria suffering from elephantiasis. Even when recovered from this he continued to suffer from arthritic pains in the back, which periodically became almost unbearable.

As with many missionaries in later years, Luzy’s superiors thought that, after his years in the tropics, a winter climate any colder than that of Sydney would be too severe for him. He remained
at Villa Maria until his death in 1873. A letter written by Claude Joly after Luzy's death gives an interesting picture of the activities of a brother at Villa Maria. After speaking of his devoted, almost motherly care of sick missionaries, Joly went on to speak of Luzy's other duties.

He had the care of the sacristy and the church, the house linen, the preparing of rooms for [missionaries] passing through, and for strangers. He had charge of the cellar, of preparing and bottling the Mass wine which was to be sent to the missions . . . in which he had especial opportunity of rendering real services to all the missions. He was in charge of the depot, where we keep a store of all the requirements for chapels, and other things sent to us from France, which are sent on, according to opportunity and need, to different missions. He had to open the cases when they arrived, put the different things in order, check to see that they did not deteriorate in storage, and pack them up again for despatch when the time came. 10

The first of those brothers who spent longer years at Villa Maria was the first English-speaking vocation to the Marists, anywhere in the world. John Jabez Larter was born at Danham in Suffolk, England, on 12 January 1822, and came to Australia when fourteen or fifteen. He and his brother Francis converted to Catholicism, and Francis was one of those mentioned by Polding as having left the Benedic­tines, where he had been a brother monk for some years.

In the mid-1840s, John applied to join the Christian Brothers, while they were in Sydney. He was a novice approaching religious profession, when he became the object of differences between the brothers and Polding. Although their agreement allowed them to train candidates for the brotherhood, the archbishop indicated that they were to have no say in whether the novice was to be admitted to vows or not, and said that he should become a Benedictine. These were the differences which led the brothers to determine to withdraw from Sydney.

Larter's application to Rocher, in 1849, for admission as a brother at Villa Maria, posed problems in the delicate state of Marist relations with the cathedral, but he was accepted in June of that year, and admitted to vows on 14 September 1851. He had good will, but was described as not having great mental capacity, which might have been a problem if he had become a teaching brother. As a Marist, it limited the commissions in the city which could be entrusted to him, and for which he was so suitable in other ways,
being able to ride a horse well, to drive a carriage, and having English as his own language.

In 1866, Larter had been at Villa Maria for seventeen years, and was aged forty-four. He had always been regarded by the French community as something of an original—different—but had become rather unhappy in more recent times. With a good deal of vacillation, and against the advice of Francis, now married, and the proprietor of an 'Old Curiosity Shop', he finally decided to leave the order. He regretted the decision quickly, and applied for readmission. After a long delay, he was allowed to be received back, but by his old superior, Rocher, and therefore in London, back in the land of his birth. He did not like London, and, whether for this reason or some other, he left again, and returned to the Pacific. In May 1870, he was 'waxing boots in Auckland, and begging Father Reignier to receive him back' into the Marists in New Zealand. However, he was not allowed a third attempt, either there or at Villa Maria, where he also applied again later in the same year. He had to accept lay life, but remained close to the Marists. In 1872 he had a job with the Marists at St Patrick's, Church Hill, as a servant. After that he worked at St Vincent's hospital.

Many differences between Australia and their native France posed problems for the early Marists in Sydney. One such difference was that they had come from their largely Catholic homeland to a country controlled by a Protestant majority. The sectarian differences and bigotry between the various Christian churches which they saw in Australia were accompanied by an awareness that the Catholic church was far less significant politically and socially in this new country than in France. There were also growing attacks on all religious belief by secularists, which were succeeding in achieving a gradually increasing secularism in law and government.

Another tradition meant that their isolation from the ordinary community was greater than it would be today, and that they were less understood by ordinary Protestant Australians. All religious orders, founded in the Latin church, derived part of their inspiration from a set of attitudes dating back at least as far as the founder of western monasticism, St Benedict. Even though such congregations as the Marists were founded for an active apostolate, instead of the enclosed contemplative life to which Benedict's followers aspired, the active orders retained an attitude that the world was more or less evil in itself. Although their work took place in it, they saw the world as godless, and their religious house as a refuge from it. Seclusion...
became an important ideal. ‘At the house ... we never have visitors; our solitude is complete,’ wrote Trapenard, in an exaggerated re-
mark, in 1854. But such a foreign religious house as Villa Maria then was would have seemed strange and mysterious to many out-
siders, and especially non-Catholics.

The lives of those at Villa Maria were shaped by these monastic ideals. The community rose very early, around 4.30 a.m. This was its own form of daylight saving—the first morning light was used, while retiring early in the evening cut down on the need to burn candles or oil. Morning prayer was recited in common for five minutes or so, followed by a time of silent meditation—a half hour for the brothers, an hour for the fathers. The priests said Mass individually, so that those not scheduled for the community Mass went to small altars, where each was usually served by a brother. The brothers went on to various household chores until breakfast. Outsiders might attend a morning Mass on a weekday. On holydays and Sundays, the small chapel was crammed for a public Mass for the Catholic neighbours.

Meals at Villa Maria were completely French in style, sometimes prepared by a brother (or later a sister), but there was often an employed cook. An Irishman with this responsibility, referred to in correspondence of the 1850s, would undoubtedly have been taught to serve up meals as the community expected. Meals were usually eaten in silence, while one person read from a spiritual book. The morning reading was brief, so that the community ate the simple food—a bread roll and jam or honey—usually soaking bread in a bowl of milk coffee, after which each could leave as soon as he finished. The midday and evening meals began and ended for all at the same time. Permission to talk at the meal might be given on special days, while a better quality wine would be served at the midday meal, and very occasionally, a glass of liqueur. Sundays and feasts such as those of the Blessed Virgin would be celebrated in this way.

On ordinary days, each brother had responsibility for different tasks, partly determined by the community needs and partly by his individual skills, as indicated by the examples quoted of Luzy and Larter. In the 1950s, an elderly Hunters Hill resident told of the brother who looked after the vineyard, which was maintained until the 1890s. He was very protective of the grapes as they ripened, and used to put piles of small stones at strategic points in the vineyard to repel small boys like himself, tempted by the luscious bunches. ‘Brother threw to kill,’ he concluded with a laugh.
Of the priests, only Rocher was consistently required to leave the monastery in the 1850s. As procurator, he had to go into the city frequently, and he organized the purchase of supplies, often assisted by John Larter. When he became parish priest of Ryde in 1856, he was responsible for the Mass each morning at St Charles’, while on Sundays he said two or three Masses personally there or at locations like Ermington. He had to visit his sick parishioners with holy communion, baptize babies and perform marriages.

Late in the morning, members of the community returned from their different jobs and went to the chapel for the particular examination of conscience, and then took the main meal of the day. Afterwards there was a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament, followed by recreation in common. Often the conversations took place while the community members walked backwards and forwards along the drive. Then came siesta time, perhaps taken in an easy chair. Afternoon work time followed, and then the evening meal. After the meal, there might be more time walking on the drive, or a game of boules—bowls tossed or pitched across the rough grass towards the jack.

At different times during the day, the priests read from the breviary, to say the divine office in private. In total, this might take something over an hour. The brothers said the little office of the Blessed Virgin, usually in common, taking something like a quarter of an hour. The rosary was also recited in private.

Community recitation of evening prayers brought the prescribed events of the day to a conclusion. The ‘grand silence’ followed, when only a minimum of necessary conversation took place, in quiet voices. Lights were expected to be extinguished within a half hour or so, and the day ended.

On Sundays and the special feast days referred to, there was quite an amount of free time given. Special concessions were made for the sick and the convalescents. Some priests were needed for outside Masses, or to hear confessions when their knowledge of the English language permitted, but otherwise the community largely lived to itself. The program described was basically followed at Villa Maria for a century.

All of this typically monastic religious life resulted in considerable isolation, which was added to by language and cultural differences. The increased animosity towards the French which the Marists met in 1845, stirred by the New Zealand problems, was only another example of a long-standing suspicion which the English had towards them as Frenchmen. For ages, England and France had been rivals, and had fought as enemies in wars. Such traditions do
not die easily. It is said that the British general, Lord Raglan, found this at Crimea in 1854. His French allies would stiffen noticeably when, out of habit, he kept referring to the Russian enemy as ‘the French’.

Most early Marists left France with no knowledge of the English language. Rocher recorded that, on board the Caledonia in 1844, they came to suspect that they were often being spoken about by their fellow passengers. Only after Dubreul had listened very carefully, and then checked in his dictionary, did he discover how they were the butt of everyone’s amusement.

Originally those Marists who ventured out visiting in Sydney were limited, by their lack of English, to social contact with other French people, or with locals who had a good knowledge of the French language. This may have been a higher proportion of educated people than would be the case today. But in the early years contacts between the Marists and the ordinary Australian people were few and formal. The purchase of Villa Maria, in 1847, brought an inevitable, but gradual, change. They were now committed to a particular place and area, in a way that had to be very different from their situation in a rented dwelling in Woolloomooloo. And improving ability in English among Marists stationed in Sydney made them more and more part of the local community.

No statement from Rocher has survived to indicate why he chose the Hunters Hill—Gladesville area for the Marist headquarters. It is likely that he was advised by the French merchant Didier Numa Joubert, who also bought land in the region in the same year. But it seems certain that the Marists moved to live in the area before Joubert: the house which they purchased was already built, and they moved into it immediately, in May 1847. By contrast, Joubert built his own home on the block he had purchased. At that time there was very little settlement in the region, apart from what was then called the Lunatic Asylum, at Tarban Creek.

The Joubert family came originally from Angoulême, near Bordeaux. Didier came to the Pacific in 1837, and began island trading, especially in New Zealand, where he was one of the merchants to whom Bishop Pompallier came to be in debt. His shipping agency, at one time operating as Joubert and Murphy, was prominent in Sydney in the 1840s and 1850s, and he imported goods from France, including French wines. The Marists and the Jouberts—Didier’s brother Jules also came to Hunters Hill—were followed by more French settlers during the next ten years, including Comte
The first Villa Maria

Gabriel de Milhau, Charles D'Apice, Etienne Bordier and many others. Soon the area was known as 'the French village'.

French names still dot the street map of the district: Jeanneret, Viret, D'Aram, Bonnefin. And the French have left more than their names on the peninsula. Their homes, built in the solid Hawkesbury sandstone found locally, and in many other quarries around Sydney, and decorated with sweeping wrought iron verandahs, are among the most charming to be found gathered in any single area in Australia. 'Within view of the Parramatta River,' wrote the Sydney Morning Herald,

several dwellings of French residents may be seen. The mansion of the French consul, M.Sentsis, had the tricolor waving. The neat style in which the houses are built, and the taste which marks the first improvements of the grounds around them, denote the existence of a community... From the circumstances, Hunters Hill is looked upon as almost a French Settlement, whilst on the land opposite is located a society of French clergymen devoted to the French missions.\textsuperscript{13}

The presence of the Marists in Hunters Hill obviously helped in no small way to add to the French character of this 'French village'. There is every likelihood, too, that their presence contributed to the decision of other French families to settle in the same area.

The French consul mentioned in the Herald report, Louis François Sentis, was appointed to Sydney in this capacity in 1842, and held the post for many years. All of the early missionary bands carried letters of introduction to French government representatives, butSentis quickly came to be more than an official contact. His reports on the problems in New Zealand, relating to Pompallier and anti-French feeling, and on the visit of Epalle to Sydney, and his subsequent death, are valuable sources of information about those events.

At a more personal level, Sentis turned to the priests at different times of family concern. One of these was in 1859, when his daughter fell in love with 'Mr E.', a regular visitor to Villa Maria—almost certainly Sydney barrister Eyre Goulburn Ellis. Sentis greatly admired the young lawyer, but, for whatever reason, there was apparently no serious thought of marriage on Ellis's part, and the consul had to write to the Marists to seek help in tactfully overcoming the infatuation.\textsuperscript{14}

Ellis visited the Marists regularly for more than 30 years. In 1855, when he was a young man of twenty, he had many pleasant
outings with a sixteen-year-old visitor passing through Sydney from New Zealand, on his way to completing his education at St Chamond, a Marist Fathers’ school in France. Francis Redwood later became archbishop of Wellington. Redwood’s memoirs relate that the two youths spent their time tramping through the bush, or shooting at targets. An active young man, Ellis went digging for gold on the Turon, at the age of sixteen. Although he never married, Ellis was close to marriage in 1862, and bought twelve acres at Hunters Hill.15

The Marists were officially asked, in 1853, by the colonial secretary, Deas Thomson, to provide religious instruction at the mental hospital.16 They came to have a very friendly relationship with the physician in charge there, Dr Francis Campbell. Campbell volunteered to assist any sick Marists at Villa Maria—no small offer, considering the responsibility of the procure to be a place of recuperation for sick missionaries.

Such contacts with people who were not French serve to indicate the growth of the French Marist involvement with the local area. The process was accelerated from 1856, when the local Ryde parish was entrusted to Rocher.

Jabez King Heydon was a notable contact from that time, specifically arising from Rochers’ parish responsibilities. Heydon lived at Ermington, about ten kilometres west of the centre of Ryde, and as Rocher desired to have a Mass centre at that end of the parish, Heydon’s offer of a place for the Mass was gratefully accepted. For at least eighteen months, this Mass was celebrated at Heydon’s, and Rocher was able to share a meal with the family after Mass and the long eucharistic fast.

Heydon was born in England in 1815, and, as a young man worked as a compositor in a printery owned by his uncle.17 In other words, his association with the printing industry began early. He married before he was twenty, and emigrated to Australia in 1838. Although he actively pursued a range of business interests, one which was of special importance was his work with the Scot, William Augustine Duncan, a convert to Catholicism, on the Australasian Chronicle, from 1839 to 1843. The two became close friends, and shared a strong interest in the Oxford Movement. In 1845, Heydon also converted to the Catholic faith. Unlike Duncan, who was fluent in the language, Heydon could speak no French. The friendship with Heydon shows that Rocher, by the later 1850s, had cast off much of the feeling of suspicion towards ‘the English’ which, on the Marist side, helped maintain a barrier occasionally evident in early letters.
The first Villa Maria was a stone building, still standing today in a fine state of preservation. It now lies within the grounds of the Gladesville Mental Hospital, and is officially known as 'the Priory'. As with many old buildings, sections were built at different times. Fortunately, however, some drawings were made in 1854 by an Italian artist named Sardis, one of the Missioni estere di Milano (Foreign Missionaries of Milan), who were staying at Villa Maria. These paintings are still preserved. One of these views of the property is reproduced on the jacket of the present volume.

One view, from the east, looks towards the procure from the waters of Tarban Creek, showing the little wharf, and a stretch of shallow water, since reclaimed. The jacket painting shows the buildings in greater detail from a vantage point on the opposite, northern slope. Besides the main stone building, still recognizable today, it shows the gardens, orchard and vineyard, which, along with the temporary buildings, have long since disappeared. Among these, the most important was a chapel, marked by crosses on the roof.

The small size of the available dwellings, and the large numbers of people sometimes accommodated there, made some kind of expansion at the procure essential. Rocher had urged this in letters, and in 1856, with a new superior general, Julien Favre, in charge of the order, Rocher took the opportunity of Bishop Bataillon's trip to Europe to have him press for permission to build. There was sandstone on the property which could be quarried, and Brother Gennade Rolland, an able stonemason and worker in iron, would be able to ensure important economies. The permission was granted.

Planning was entrusted to Sydney architects Weaver and Kemp, and the result was a very fine two-storey extension, at right angles from the original stone cottage. A temporary structure of four rooms, which had become uninhabitable in wet weather, was demolished, and the beautiful new addition gave them ten rooms, five on each side of a central cedar staircase.

At the time when this building was under construction, Rocher's other duties were quite formidable. His constant responsibilities on behalf of the missions continued, and he had begun, the previous year, to care for the parish of Ryde. Its large size, 24 kilometres in length and up to nineteen in width, with a scattered population, necessitated spending a lot of time on horseback. Rocher estimated that he had 400 Catholics in 1856, about twice the number he had quoted as the total, nine years earlier, when Gregory had spoken of
the Marists looking after the parish. Some idea of the subsequent growth of the parish may be gained by quoting the general census statistics of the district.\textsuperscript{19}

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<td>479</td>
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\textit{Note:} In 1890 a new division was made of the Catholic parish, the Marists retaining the east, comprising Hunters Hill, Woolwich and Gladesville. The west, including Rydalmere and Ermington, as well as Ryde, became a secular parish. Further divisions followed.

When Rocher took charge, there was no church or school in the parish. He said his first Sunday Mass in 'a poor miserable wooden hut' worse than any he had used in the islands. His first task was therefore to build a church, which was long overdue. A site had been donated as long ago as 1841, for what was then going to be called the church of St Teresa, Kissing Point.\textsuperscript{20} Later, the dedication was to be to St Joseph. It was Polding who decided to place the church under the patronage of St Charles Borromeo, the name saint of his late coadjutor, Bishop Charles Davis. Polding set the foundations in 1851, but despite the opening of subscription lists, and a government grant of £1500 (37500 francs) the building languished. When Rocher took charge, the walls of St Charles’ church were only a few feet above the ground.\textsuperscript{21}

Rocher pursued the task with energy. Despite his other building program, the extensions under construction at the same time at Villa Maria, he managed to have the church completed by late 1857. Coincidentally, while the church was under construction, the priests of the Foreign Missionaries of Milan were guests at Villa Maria, after the failure of their mission to Melanesia. Polding did everything possible to retain them for the Sydney diocese after the failure of the Melanesian mission, and one of them, Father Angelo Ambrosoli, did remain. To recognize the Marist hospitality, the Italian priests pro-
Right: Guillaume Dourre in 1843 led a group of Marists to help Bataillon establish the new vicariate of Central Oceania. He began the dangerous mission in New Caledonia where warlike Melanesians forced two evacuations. He died in 1853, aged 42.

Left: Joseph Xavier Luzy. Broken in health by the privations he had suffered with Bataillon as catechist at Wallis, Luzy retired to Villa Maria in 1851, where he continued working for the island missions until his death in 1873. Despite constant arthritic pain he was particularly remembered for his tender care of the sick.

Right: Julien Favre succeeded Colin in 1854 to become second superior general of the Marists. Helped by Colin, he reached an agreement with Bataillon to enable Marist Pacific missionary work to continue, and sent Victor Poupinel to negotiate on behalf of the men.
Victor Poupinel was an outstanding 19th century churchman. From 1857 until 1870 Poupinel consolidated Marist work in the Pacific islands, New Zealand and Australia from the Sydney base. He constructed the present Villa Maria, accepted the offer of St Patrick's, Church Hill, and sponsored the coming of the Marist Brothers to Australia.

Xavier Montrouzier was a missionary in the Solomons and New Guinea. He was interested in science, and he spoke on his observations at the Elizabeth Bay home of Alexander Macleay. He was to have been on the teaching staff of a Marist Fathers' college planned for Sydney in 1859, but Polding refused to approve the project.
Tarban Creek today. ‘The Priory’ is in the left background. Villa Maria is on the skyline on the right. The timbered land on the right of the priory and the visible houses were all part of the Marist property in the 1860s. Ships owned by Bataillon used to anchor in the waters in the foreground. (Photo: Douglas Baglin)
The hexagonal Chapel was originally a wooden structure and was the first building erected on the land Rocher bought in 1853. The four crosses and the marble stone commemorate Marists originally buried at St Charles', Ryde.

Bottom: Detail of the commemorative stone. (Photos: Douglas Baglin)
Top: Villa Maria Church, Hunters Hill. Holy Name of Mary church in the 1890s before the central nave was extended in 1904. Bottom: The same church in 1987. Its architecture is typical of rural churches around Lyon, France. (Photo: Douglas Baglin)
The vineyard in the grounds of Villa Maria. For nearly half a century, the brothers produced a light red table wine of the Beaujolais type, as well as an altar wine. After phylloxera destroyed the vines in the 1890s they were not replanted.

Marie Francoise Perroton arrived as a lay missionary at Wallis in 1845, without permission, because she knew it would have been refused. Other women were inspired by her story and two religious orders derive from her example. When Marist tertiary sisters arrived in 1857 to reinforce her, she took the vows of religion and the religious habit as shown.
Clydesdale, Bataillon’s ill-fated college which from 1859 to 1871 aimed to bring Pacific islanders to the priesthood, and to produce grain and wine for the missions. Dogged by unusually bad weather and many floods, the venture suffered from more fundamental problems, and no priests resulted from this expensive effort. Originally 1000 acres, the property lies west of Sydney on South Creek, halfway between Blacktown and Richmond.

Sydney’s two Benedictine archbishops, Archbishop John Bede Polding (first bishop of Sydney), and his successor, Roger Bede Vaughan. The photo is a composite which hung for many years at St Columba’s college, Springwood.
Soakimi Gatafahefa was the first Pacific islander ordained to the priesthood. A Tongan, born in Fiji and educated at Futuna, Villa Maria and Rome, this rare photo (left) shows the young priest around the time of his ordination by Cardinal Patrizzi at the Lateran basilica, Rome, in 1864. Right: Gatafahefa in his later years at Meaee seminary, New Zealand, where he lived as a brother, laicized after his failure to observe celibacy. The pain and suffering of his tragic life are clearly visible in his face.

Joseph Monnier was the first priest to preach home missions in Australia from 1866. In 1868 he was named first Marist parish priest at St Patrick's, Church Hill, but continued to be in wide demand as a preacher. He welcomed the Marist Brothers to Australia in 1872. When Polding divided his small parish in 1874 he was deeply distressed. He died suddenly a few weeks later.
mised, at the opening of St Charles', to obtain a large relic of St Charles Borromeo, the sixteenth-century bishop of their native Milan.

The date of the official opening was Sunday, 8 November 1857. Polding had intended to preside, but withdrew at the last moment because of the death of a young Benedictine. Archdeacon McEncroe opened and blessed the new church. After the ceremony, the Marists invited distinguished guests to Villa Maria for dinner. Those named included the French consul, L.F.Sentis, D.N.Joubert, Eyre Ellis, Baron de Milhau, J.K.Heydon and W.Dolman. Only four months earlier, Joubert had donated land for a Church of England for Hunters Hill, and his brother Jules collected donations. Rocher passed that news on to France without comment.

Almost immediately upon completing the church, Rocher proceeded to the task of erecting a parish school. In this, too, he was notably successful. He began with a parish appeal in May 1858, which raised £45 (1125 francs). Six months later the school was in use. It was a praiseworthy achievement. The total cost was £250 (6250 francs), of which the government contributed a little less than half. McEncroe, head of diocesan primary education, had helped greatly.

By 1858, largely through the work of Jean Louis Rocher, the Marists had already become well established in the work of the Catholic church in Sydney.
By the end of 1845, there were four separate areas of Marist interest in the Pacific, two in Polynesian regions: New Zealand and Central Oceania, and two in Melanesia: New Caledonia and New Guinea.

New Zealand had been a logical choice by Pompallier for the headquarters of his vicariate, and the major effort was directed there. However, the problems between Pompallier and the Marist administration, already described, resulted in the 1848 decision to end the association. Within a few years, the Marist missionaries withdrew completely from Pompallier’s diocese of Auckland, and moved into the rest of New Zealand, under Bishop Philippe Viard, who became the first bishop of Wellington, a diocese which included the whole of the South Island.

Central Oceania was cut off from Pompallier’s jurisdiction on 23 August 1842, by the creation of a new vicariate with this name. Before this, however, it had been the scene of the first Marist missionary endeavours on Wallis and Futuna, from 1837. Late in 1841, Pompallier heard the news of the death of Chanel. He set off with some men and supplies, visited each mission, and established some new ones. He left his trusted Viard, and named him his vicar general, despite Bataillon’s obvious claims. As a result of this visit, when the region was cut off from Pompallier, the new vicariate was in a much better state than it would otherwise have been. It was immediately given two bishops, Bataillon, in charge, and Guillaume Douarre, coadjutor, to be especially responsible for New Caledonia, and thus provide a base for another new vicariate later.
Bataillon had already shown himself as a very effective missionary. Whereas Pompallier’s claimed conversions to Christianity in New Zealand proved to be illusory, Bataillon already had a thousand baptized Christians on Wallis when Pompallier returned at the end of 1841, and another two and a half thousand ready for baptism. The island was then almost totally Christian, and remained so. Meanwhile, the two priests placed on Futuna had complete success, as if to compensate for the total failure of Chanel. And in a short time, this entire island also became completely Christian, even to the man who had struck the death blow on Chanel.

And so, when he became vicar apostolic, Bataillon had two small islands completely Catholic, a priest and brother on Tonga, and a catechist on one of the smaller Fijian islands, Lakemba. Convinced that he had to establish missions on all the major island groups immediately, he made a new attempt to begin on Fiji in 1844, and the following year set up two new missions in Samoa. As a result, in 1845, his vicariate consisted of only twelve men, all extremely isolated from one another, but strategic beginnings had been made on all the island groups mentioned.

These achievements were not without cost. Missionaries faced the problems not only of isolation and loneliness but also of strong opposition from missionaries of other Christian denominations. In Fiji such opposition from Wesleyans, and other problems, made necessary what amounted to completely new attempts in 1851, and again in 1855.

Bataillon was also unable to provide supplies, and consequently the missionaries were obliged to eat the same food as the islanders. Since he had lived for years in this way, Bataillon expected his men to do the same. But many were physically incapable of this. Before the end of 1845, Father Philippe Calinon arrived in Sydney telling of near starvation in Tonga. Wesleyan missionaries were ordering the Tongans, contrary to local custom, to refuse food to the Catholic missionaries. As a result, they were only getting a barely adequate meal about once in three days. When Dubreul made his visit to that region, he carried supplies on a chartered ship. When he reached Tonga he found one of the priests so badly affected in health that he had to be withdrawn to Sydney.

Pompallier, however, provided a new crisis. Bitter at losing those regions by the 1842 decree, he wrote to Rome, citing the anti-French feeling among the British in New Zealand, and the possibility that he might be asked to leave, and therefore petitioning that Tonga should be restored to him. Surprisingly, perhaps, he was successful.
A decree, dated 7 February 1845, approved the temporary restoration of Tonga ‘and the nearby islands’ to the petitioner. Never one for half measures, Pompallier argued that geographically, Wallis and Futuna were to be regarded as part of Tonga.

Bataillon was shocked. In his eyes, Pompallier, by taking Tonga, was taking the heart out of his vicariate. But worse than that: Pompallier was claiming the very island which Bataillon had personally converted, Wallis. For the Marists, too, it was a great blow. The news came just after the breakdown of the Sydney talks between Epalle and Pompallier. A decision to separate from Pompallier in New Zealand was now inevitable, and this decree put more of their men back under his jurisdiction. Colin became afraid to send men to Tonga, in case he later had trouble withdrawing them from Pompallier.  

Pompallier, moreover, was moving with alacrity to reestablish his authority over the territory restored to him. He overlooked Fransoni’s concern for New Zealand, expressed in an order that Pompallier should not to leave for Rome until he had completed the episcopal ordination of Viard, so that New Zealand could continue to be cared for by Viard in his absence. Disregarding this, and despite his lack of funds, Pompallier chartered a vessel, the Providence, and arranged that Viard would make only the briefest of visits to New Zealand. He would then make a pastoral tour of the newly reacquired Pacific missions. Rocher recorded without comment that, to encourage the Marists in those islands, Pompallier was sending to each one ‘a pretty little folding writing table’.

Armed with the writing tables, Viard sailed from New Zealand on 18 March 1846. The missionaries in Tonga had been visited by Dubreul not long before, and their conditions had been much improved. The dispute over jurisdiction was far beyond them, and they accordingly adopted a sensible, neutral stance between the rival claims. Materially they derived some benefit from the dispute, because of additional supplies Viard left them.

The call of the Providence at Wallis was very delicate, and the atmosphere was frosty. Afterwards, Viard wrote to Pompallier in Europe, and indicated how strained the visit was. Viard said that Bataillon was quite certain that Wallis and Futuna were not geographically part of Tonga. Viard wryly commented that, in the doubtful situation, Melior est conditio possidentis—the old legal maxim which means that the one in possession has a better case. Moreover, nothing conclusive could come out of the very long discussion between the two, since Bataillon was appealing against the entire decision. In
the event, Bataillon's appeal was successful, and the earlier decree was reversed by one dated 27 August 1847.

Douarre began the mission in New Caledonia in 1843. Knowing nothing about the area, he may have assumed that the inhabitants spoke Polynesian, and he had persuaded Bataillon to let Viard accompany him from Wallis. Viard's knowledge of Polynesian now included both Maori and Wallisian. To their great joy, the missionaries found a colony of Wallisians already living on New Caledonia — though it is possible that the people on Wallis had already been able to tell them of this. Viard made contact immediately and helped Douarre, Pierre Rougeyron and the others begin learning the local language.

This was the first Marist mission in Melanesia, and they found it very different from Polynesia. The inhabitants had no common language, as had the Polynesians: there were different languages everywhere. The people were blacker, much shorter and more warlike and suspicious. It was difficult to gain their confidence. In Polynesia, the missionaries found it very easy to deal with the local chief or prince who sometimes controlled large territory. They could make presents to him, and negotiate conditions for entry. Here there was no such system, and tribes controlled only their own area, which was often small.

Viard's return to Sydney, for episcopal ordination, left Douarre with only a single priest and two brothers. Once reinforcements reached him the following year, Douarre decided to return to Europe to appeal for support. Church authorities in Rome took the opportunity of this visit to go ahead with the erection of New Caledonia as a separate vicariate, constituted on 13 July 1847.

Ironically, that very month, back on the island, the first missionary effort ended. For weeks before, the besieged missionaries had been kept under constant pressure and fear by islanders seeking plunder. From moment to moment they were expecting to hear the sounds heralding the final attack, and their own violent deaths. Brother Blaise Marmoiton had already died of wounds. Suddenly a sail appeared in the bay. It turned out to be a French man-of-war. After further terrifying experiences, and some heroic deeds, they were saved. They were evacuated to the newly opened Villa Maria in Sydney.

When he returned to the Pacific from Europe, in 1848, Douarre was saddened to meet his men in Sydney and hear the bad news. But they were not disheartened: they were eager to join him in the
new attempt he decided to make. This time he had success on the small Ile de Pins—the Isle of Pines, south of the main island—but on the main island itself, the situation remained precarious. The massacre of the crew of the Cutter, in July of that year, made it evident that threats by some cannibals, that they intended to eat the missionaries, were not to be dismissed lightly. After very narrow escapes at two missions, Douarre felt obliged to evacuate the main island a second time, on 4 January 1850. Some of the converts asked to accompany the missionaries, and were taken to the Isle of Pines.

Only eleven months later there was another massacre, when twelve crew members of the French warship Alcène were killed and three eaten. But the political consequences of this massacre made the French authorities decide to subjugate New Caledonia, and in the resulting peace, the third missionary beginning was successful.

Although New Caledonia is also part of Melanesia, the mission vicariate of Melanesia consisted of New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and islands further north. This region was entrusted to Epalle in 1844, after the split with Pompallier. Epalle’s jurisdiction also included Micronesia, and it was intended that a further vicariate division would follow. In fact, Marists never entered Micronesia. A second Marist in the group, Georges Collomb, had already been nominated as coadjutor bishop for the huge area. At the suggestion of Colin, made before the party left France, the nomination of Collomb, a young man of 29, would remain confidential for the moment.

After a disastrous beginning on Ysabel, with Epalle axed to death within a few days, the shocked missionaries moved to San Cristobal at Makira Bay. There, during the next eighteen months, the death toll rose to five, with three more killed and another succumbing to fever. The missionaries now realized that part of the danger came from intertribal rivalries, which multiplied the risks of violence. Collomb received episcopal ordination, and decided in September 1847 that to avoid the problem of intertribal rivalries he would abandon Cristobal and move the mission to a very small island, with only a single tribe. He selected Murua, or Woodlark, as Europeans always called it, midway between Bougainville and New Guinea. An attempt to open another mission on Umboi, or Rook to the missionaries, in the straits between New Guinea and New Britain, was abandoned after two more Marists died of disease, one of them Collomb himself, aged thirty-two.
The massive problems which were appearing in every Marist mission in the Pacific made the late 1840s a most depressing time for Colin and the Lyon administration of the order. The problems in New Zealand with Pompallier had become insoluble, and there was the worry over his attempt to take over Tonga. There was the near starvation of the men in Tonga, and the severe damage to their health. There had been the abandonment of New Caledonia, after what could easily have been a total massacre of the missionaries. There were the problems in New Guinea: malaria and other diseases were even more dangerous than the axes of the tribesmen.

From this time, Colin decided that the only prudent course was to abandon the Melanesian mission. He began to urge Propaganda to allow him to withdraw the Marists. But the Roman congregation asked him to continue until another religious order could be found to undertake the work. After several years another order was found, and the mission was taken over, for an even briefer period, by the Foreign Missionaries of Milan. These Italian missionaries were given full use of the procure at Villa Maria, both for accommodation on arrival in Sydney from Europe, and for maintenance of supplies once they had moved to the island. Some Marists remained at Murua during the transition. After three years, however, the new missionaries came to the same decision to withdraw, and this first era of the New Guinea mission ended in 1855.

But the worries over Bataillon’s policies were no less perplexing. It came as a shock to discover that, when things were at their worst in Tonga, Bataillon had additional men and supplies available to him. He used them, not to provide relief there, but to make an attempt to open another mission in Fiji. Again, the following year, he made another new founding venture on the island of Rotuma. Both new efforts failed, and in addition, in 1847, the two men on the existing station in Fiji were in an intolerable situation.

Colin wrote to Bataillon, referring to the sufferings of the men in Fiji, and suggesting that these islands be entrusted to another missionary congregation. He urged him, for the love of God, to take greater care of the men, and keep them together.

Bataillon replied that he could do nothing unless Colin sent men to ease the pressure. Although convinced of the need to slow down the Marist commitment in the Pacific, Colin sent ten new men to Bataillon in two years, insisting that there be consolidation, rather than expansion. He continued to urge Bataillon to invite another congregation to send priests to Fiji. The 1849 missionaries had not
yet reached the bishop when letters were sent to Colin from Sydney to say that Bataillon was planning new attempts in Fiji. These were begun in 1851 at Taveuni and Levuka.

Colin must have had a feeling of déjà vu: he was back in a situation which was hardly different from that he had faced with Pompallier. He wanted to save his men from starving. Once again, in the continued absence of support from Rome, he could do nothing, save with the cooperation of the bishop, and Bataillon was not cooperating. As before, Colin had only one area in which his control was absolute: the supply of missionaries. He spelt this out with unaccustomed clarity, in his letter to Bataillon protesting that the bishop had totally disregarded his wishes by placing more Marists in Fiji. ‘Your Lordship knows that you can put your workers anywhere you please. On the other hand, the society is completely free to accept or refuse the requests for men for the foreign missions, that their Lordships, the bishops, may in their benevolence, address to it.’ Bataillon took no notice whatever, and went ahead with his plans to make further new attempts, not only in Fiji, but also in Rotuma.

But Colin meant what he said. After 1849, despite considerable debate within the Marists, he sent no more missionaries to the Pacific while he remained superior general.

Was Colin too hard on the vicars apostolic? Too protective of his men? His ten-year conflict with Pompallier, resulting in the withdrawal of Marists from the Auckland diocese, had been a hard lesson. It had not ended when his struggle with Bataillon began, and led to his complete refusal to send any more reinforcements to the Pacific. His battle was not ultimately with missionary bishops, but with Propaganda in Rome, which, despite the excesses of Pompallier’s regime, had still not allowed the religious order any real power to safeguard its men in the mission fields.

What lay behind Colin’s stand was the extremely high cost to the Marists in every sense, but especially in lives, or permanent damage to health, of their Pacific missionary effort. A summary of the overall situation in Marist missions is made in a report published in Sydney in 1859. It gives some idea of what he faced: a death rate which still continued at more than one in five. When Colin had made his decision ten years earlier, it had been higher than one in four. ‘Sixty two priests and thirty four catechists, or lay brothers, are at present devoted to this important work [in the Pacific missions] . . . Seventeen priests and eight lay brothers have already died in the
missions of Oceania, either by shipwreck, by falling victims to fever,
or have been murdered by savages.9

The 96 living Marists were widely spread through the south­
west Pacific in 1859: in Tonga, Samoa and Fiji, consolidating in New
Caledonia, or striking into the far south of New Zealand. The report
referred only to deaths. It did not speak of men prematurely aged by
privations and disease, men like Servant, the first Marist priest to
visit Australia in 1837, pioneer with Pompallier in New Zealand
from 1838, who had reaped the fruit of Chanel’s life and death by
converting Futuna. He was now deaf, suffering from elephantiasis
and almost crippled. There was Chevron, ‘the apostle of Tonga’,
who would continue heavily arthritic for over 25 painful years. The
deaths said enough: 25 lives lost, most of them under 40, none as old
as 50 years of age.

It was the 96 living Marists who were the reasons why Colin
took the drastic decision he did.
The procure at work in the Pacific

The original objectives of the procure house in Sydney included caring for the missionaries by ensuring supplies, and various other responsibilities, such as arranging a more stable relationship between the missions and their headquarters in France, and the provision of accommodation, as needed. Prior to the establishment of the Sydney base, starting and maintaining missionary work had been difficult; without it the Melanesian mission would have been quite impossible, and would have collapsed within months.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the New Zealand problems, for Colin, had been trying to ascertain exactly what was happening. This was made worse by Pompallier’s censorship of mail, but even so there was serious need for methodical gathering of accurate information. The reliable transmission of mail to and from the missionaries became an important task, but hardly less important were the reports written by the Sydney procurators themselves.

The volatile and ever active Dubreul had not been good at writing reports. The founding group arrived in Sydney at the beginning of April 1845, and Dubreul wrote at once to Colin. But three and a half months went by before he wrote his second letter on 12 July. Ships were usually available at least every three weeks. Rocher, who took over the task in December of that year, was much more reliable, and month after month his reports tell of his own activities, the comings and goings of missionaries, local events, and any information about particular missions which might be available in Sydney in one way or another.

Sydney proved an ideal location for retransmission of island...
mail. Almost all island shipping called there. Rocher soon learnt to scrutinize carefully the shipping information columns of the local papers, to see the movements of the different island traders, sandalwood vessels, and other ships. If the ship had been to Tonga, Samoa, New Caledonia, Fiji or New Zealand, there might be packets of mail for him. Even the whaling ships could possibly have been used, if a missionary had no other alternative. If the ship was about to leave for such a destination, or for Europe, he might have mail to forward, or crates and cases of goods for the Pacific.

One of Rocher’s various financial record books has survived. It tells of his purchases on behalf of Central Oceania. The goods range from clothing to pots and pans, timber, nails and ironmongery, food supplies—flour, sugar and tea, and once or twice, coal.¹

Rocher sometimes passed on requests for clothing, shoes and hats to Europe, where they were much cheaper. But the delay of over a year made the more expensive Sydney goods very appealing. Religious items were constantly needed: vestments for Mass and other liturgical ceremonies, sacred vessels, crucifixes, holy cards, rosaries, medals and statues. Much of this material was brought out to the Pacific by missionaries as part of their own baggage, whether for themselves or to fulfil the requests of others. In general, the more primitive the area, the more totally its needs had to be supplied. New Zealand was the most self-sufficient, and New Guinea the most primitive area of all. One interesting reference tells how in 1847 Bishop Collomb had Brother Jean Taragnat construct in Sydney two prefabricated houses, for Murua.

Anxieties over safe transferral of money were greatly reduced by the existence of the Sydney house. Since the sums involved were substantial, this had been a serious worry. In Lyon, Father Victor Poupinel normally had credit transfers made in triplicate. The original was posted immediately to Rocher, and the duplicate, a fortnight later, while the triplicate was retained. After the 1840 crash of the London bank, in which substantial Marist funds for Séon’s band were lost, the ordinary practice came to be to divide money between different banks, as many as four or five. Rocher also followed this practice in Sydney. Thus, in 1848 he held over 125,000 francs in seven accounts.

Pompallier’s attraction to bank drafts, at heavy discounts, caused Colin serious worries. Although Colin had arranged that Dubreul would be able to draw an advance to meet an emergency, the second time it happened he reacted emphatically. ‘To borrow on behalf of missions, or ... to make drafts on Lyon ... is absolutely
The letter went on to point out that money was sent on immediately it was received from Propagation de la foi. If money had just been sent, and a draft arrived, no money would be available, and the draft would have to be dishonoured. This had almost happened when Poupinel was on the point of sending 28,000 francs. Drafts arrived from Dubreul, in Sydney, drawing a total of 17,500 francs. Even a few days delay would have created a serious financial embarrassment. If a bishop sent instructions or commissions to purchase on his behalf, and had no money in his vicariate account, Rocher was instructed to pray for the mission concerned. All missionaries received the same statement and explanation. Colin made the point that mission collections were down because of the recent political disturbances in France. This was late in 1847.

From December 1845, until early 1859, Rocher exercised scrupulous care in keeping the large sums he was handling. From 1851 this involved accounts for five separate vicariates, in addition to the procure itself. Something of the man, as well as his method, is revealed in a letter he wrote to Poupinel, dated 11 October 1856.

I think I told you already, that no confrère, not even my socius [assistant] knows what each mission holds in cash at the procure. Each vicariate has its own books, and when a vicar apostolic, or someone he authorizes, wants to see the accounts, I give him the books of his vicariate, and no more.

As for the banks, they do not know if the money I deposit with them belongs to New Caledonia, or to Central Oceania. All the money is in my name. If I die suddenly, my will is made and notarized. I have named two heirs: i. Father Trapenard [Rocher’s socius]; ii. Father Forest. As far as possible, every evening before I go to bed, my accounts are in order, in such a fashion that my successors, on looking at the books, will see what belongs to each mission superior.

Rocher’s confidentiality was to prevent any bishop from knowing that there were unspent sums in the account of another vicariate, and trying to claim them.

The necessary funding to run the procure itself was chiefly provided by a direct annual grant from Propagation de la foi, which supported two similar procures in the Pacific, at Macao and Valparaíso. The grants for the first two years of the Sydney procure, to help establishment costs, came to over 75,000 francs. This figure, like the allocations to the mission vicariates, was published by the Association in its Annales. It was therefore known to Polding, for instance.
The procure at work in the Pacific

Providing accommodation, one of the original purposes of the procure, was a continuing function, and an important part of its running costs. The most dramatic instance of this task came with the sudden arrival of the evacuated New Caledonia missionaries at Villa Maria, shortly after it opened in 1847. In its first five years, numbers ranged as low as three or four, and reached a peak, during 1852, of 29: Bataillon, seven priests, three brothers, two lay Italians, fourteen islanders, a gardener and the cook. This was after the arrival of the Italian missionaries who had come to replace the Marists in Melanesia. Bishop Bataillon had brought the islanders.

At any given time, throughout its existence, there were also likely to be, at Villa Maria, missionaries who were in ill health. Medical facilities in the mid-nineteenth century were obviously limited, but those in Sydney, the largest city of the south Pacific, were the best available, short of returning to Europe. More important than the doctors, regularly called to the seriously ill, were the mild climate, good food and rest, which often restored health in a way which was far beyond the medical skills of those times. Malaria, elephantiasis, forms of pneumonia and tuberculosis are among the most serious of the recorded ills.

Pacific islanders were also frequently among the personnel at the mission house. Bataillon, on the occasion referred to above, had with him nine newly baptized Polynesians to whom he gave first communion, in a public ceremony in St Mary’s cathedral. Accompanying them, according to a press report, were ‘three, chiefs we understand, from the Feejee islands. The latter are under instruction, but are as yet unbaptized’. Most of the islanders, during that visit, travelled to the Pyrmont stone quarry each day to cut sandstone for churches on Wallis and Samoa.

This was not the first larger group of islanders brought to Villa Maria. In August 1851, Father Xavier Montrouzier grew tired of the way in which the Muruans continually scoffed at the stories told by the missionaries about their world. He brought a group to Sydney, where they were wide-eyed at the horses and carriages, and shops filled with goods. However, upon their return to Murua, the experiment did not have the effect of bringing about the conversions which the Marists hoped for. A very temporary increase in interest in the religious instructions given by the priests occurred, but it seems to have been based on an idea that this might help to bring Sydney to Murua—a very early instance of cargo cult.

Besides the larger groups, islanders frequently reached Sydney
in ones and twos. Sometimes they came with a missionary, and might stay at the procure for long periods. Others came as crew on trading ships, and became stranded in Sydney. There were some instances where these men were Christians, and Rocher found them transport to their home islands. One should not automatically assume that the sea captains concerned deserve to be despised in the same way as the blackbirders (slavers) of a later period. A Marist at Lifu, in the Loyalty Islands, wrote, ‘The Lifus are the real Savoyards of New Caledonia; from the age of 12 to 16, they have to go to Sidini’.

Transport was one of the most costly items of expenditure for the Pacific island missions. Every opportunity was taken to obtain the cheapest that could be found. Apart from rare, special occasions, the cheapest means usually turned out to be regular shipping. Most of the missionaries from Europe travelled on ships running regularly between London and Sydney. From Sydney, there were trading vessels which sailed to the Pacific islands, carrying various consumer items which would sell easily. They returned with cargoes of copra, sandalwood, bêche-de-mer and other island products. Quite often, Rocher was able to arrange passage for missionaries on these vessels, or for transport of crates of goods he wished to send. Originally he dealt mainly through the firm of Joubert and Murphy, as agents. Later he himself became experienced in negotiating directly with sea captains, who were almost always happy to get extra business.

Among the special occasions referred to, an outstanding one was that, until 1848 and the fall of the July monarchy in France, the Marists were greatly helped on a number of occasions by free passages on warships of the French navy. No fewer than five bands of missionaries travelled from Europe in this way in the 1840s, without which Pompallier’s astronomical expenses would have been even higher.

The French government, during the 1840s, regarded these activities not merely as a Christian task, but also as a means of working towards obtaining a share in the Pacific. It was felt that French Catholic missionaries gave the same scope and legitimacy to the French government, as the activities of the London Missionary Society and the Wesleyans were considered to have provided for their rivals across the Channel. A French land settlement scheme went into operation at Akaroa, on New Zealand’s South Island, just too late, after British interests moved to take definitive possession of the entire country. Nevertheless, a French naval base continued there for some years, and frequently helped the Marists. The New
Caledonia mission would probably have been wiped out, but for the unexpected arrival of a French warship. Pompallier’s return to Futuna, after the death of Chanel, was made with much less fear of the islanders, because the missionaries were aboard a French naval vessel. In Tonga, the warrior chief King George Tupou I, known as the Napoleon of the Pacific, was twice encouraged by shows of force to leave the Marist priests alone, when otherwise he would have driven them out in favour of his adopted Wesleyanism.

Overall, it would be correct to say that New Caledonia, and some of the other areas where Marists worked, were acquired by France at least partly because the first Europeans to establish missions in them were the French Marists. This is not to say that the missionaries always welcomed these takeovers. When the French acquisition of Wallis was reported to him, Colin drily remarked, ‘Just as we convert these poor people, here come the Europeans to pervert them’.9

The most unusual scheme which provided transport for the missionaries was, to all intents and purposes, a commercial company, the Société Française de l'Océanie.10 It was incorporated on 20 June 1845, on achievement of the required target of one-quarter of the announced capital: one million francs. The idea for something of the kind has been attributed to Colin in 1842. Its implementation began from a conversation a year later, between Douarre, and a devout Le Havre ship owner, Victor Marziou.

The idea owed something to the inspiration of the London Missionary Society voyage of the Duff, in 1797. The plan was that the new company would trade in the Pacific islands, selling European products, and buying copra, native artifacts and shell, which were then in great demand. A string of depots would be established in the islands. At the same time, missionaries could receive free transport. With the wealthy Marziou supporting it, the plan took wings. It was an appealing scheme: it offered conversion of the heathen, and a return for the investment as well.

Enter the hero. Auguste Marceau was the nephew of a famous general in the republican army. He became a naval officer, and lived life to the full. Suddenly converted to the practice of his religion, he provided just the touch of glamour needed for the first captain of a company ship. Support followed, right up to ministerial levels.

A large ship of 313 tons was purchased while under construction, late in 1844, and set sail as the Arche d’Alliance, on 15 December 1845. Marceau even wished for the whole organization to become a
religious congregation, bound by the vows of the church. Even though this plan was not accepted by Rome, he tried to run the ship along such lines.

[He was their] Father Abbot, sacristan, bellman. At dawn, and well before, he hurried from cabins to crew’s quarters waking people up. There he was, leading the prayer in person, serving the Masses, setting out the chapel requirements. Woe betide anyone who missed his meditation! Then the rest of the day would be punctuated by pious gatherings. Dogmatic theology conferences for the pilot’s apprentices; catechism for the cabin boys; for everyone: sermons, rosaries, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, devotions for the month of Mary, the month of St Joseph, the Sacred Heart . . . choir singing of the Magnificat.

Smile as one may, at the thought of sailors aroused from their hammocks to attend meditation, Marceau was quite an able captain. He sailed the Arche around the Pacific for three years, running into serious trouble only once, during a fierce tropical cyclone near Murua (Rocher was on board with him). Unfortunately, his deficiencies lay in other areas: in the commercial and business fields, which proved disastrous for the entire venture. He had not made the wisest of choices for the Pacific ‘agents’ for the company: a confidence trickster whom he found beachcombing in Tahiti, to whom Marceau gave a sloop and a good deal of equipment, and two native chiefs who were delighted to receive the cargo he left them. The Marists had invested a considerable sum in the company, and so the transport provided was by no means free to them. Still, until the commercial collapse of the company, largely through Marceau’s accumulated debts, the Arche and three smaller brigs sailed thousands upon thousands of miles. And they brought solace to many an isolated missionary, as well as providing transport for many bishops, priests, brothers and nuns to distant parts of the world. For example, it was aboard the Arche that Bataillon first inspected his vast vicariate.

Chartering ships was another means of moving men and material. It was highly convenient and highly expensive. Because he first arrived at Valparaiso in the eastern Pacific, and his vicariate was in the west, Pompallier had to charter a ship, in 1837, to reach his own territory, thus using up almost all his money. Epalle chartered the Marian Watson to reach his New Guinea vicariate. Not many weeks later, Dubreul hired a much smaller vessel for five months to make a tour of Central Oceania. Two weeks after that, Pompallier made
another open contract for Viard's voyage, which was intended to reclaim islands from Bataillon.

But these were not what came to be the typical charters. The more usual arrangement was to charter a vessel for a voyage to nominated islands, and the entire voyage, based on an estimated travelling time, such as two months, was charged at a flat rate. Option was sometimes left for the missionaries to be able to extend the charter at a specified rate.\(^1\)\(^2\)

Most of the voyages chartered by Rocher were for the Melanesian mission, because of its remoteness from the ordinary shipping lanes. Several of those voyages made use of ships of the Société de l’Océanie, particularly the Anonyme. But it was much harder to get ordinary captains to agree to go there. Rocher complained that after massacres in those regions, only an ‘exorbitant sum’ would give the captains enough courage to make the voyage. Despite Rocher’s irony, one can feel sympathy for the captains, whose crews were unwilling to risk their lives. It is easy to think of the advantage in these clashes as lying with the Europeans, because of ‘modern weapons’. But onshore, with single-shot guns which were hard to reload, the advantage did not lie with the heavily outnumbered Europeans, and the islanders knew it.\(^1\)\(^3\)

As well as this, ship losses were all too common in sailing vessels, which could so easily find themselves at the mercy of a wind change, blowing directly onto a coral reef. Twice, in 1846, ships carrying goods for Marists lost all the deck cargo, which usually included livestock, during fierce storms. More serious, in 1855, was the loss of a ship under charter to Rocher, the Spec [Speculator], in a cyclone off New Caledonia. Seven lives were lost, though no Marists, as well as the goods which Rocher had purchased on behalf of Bataillon’s mission, to a value of 8000 francs, and uninsured. When news of the disaster reached Sydney, an appeal was launched in the Catholic newspaper, the Freeman’s Journal, to which donations were sent, covering more than half the amount lost. Rocher was very careful about this appeal, which he did not initiate. He was afraid of repercussions when Polding returned from Europe.\(^1\)\(^4\)

Later in the same year, 1855, Rocher chartered the Gazelle, on behalf of the Italian missionaries on Murua. It reached the island, where a violent storm wrecked it on a reef. With the vessel lying helpless, the islanders launched their canoes, came out to the ship and slaughtered all on board, including one of the Italian priests, Giovanni Mazzucconi. The Muruans had decided that they wanted nothing further to do with Europeans. Tragically, the ship need
never have been sent. Many weeks earlier, the mission superior at Murua had decided to abandon the mission, and he and his men reached Sydney only five days after the *Gazelle* had left.¹⁵

Although sometimes it was the only option, ship-chartering was a very severe drain on mission finances. In May 1851, the discovery of gold in New South Wales brought about massive desertions of ships’ crews. Those who remained demanded double wages to sail. This inflation caused serious problems to the missionaries in all kinds of ways.

Outright purchase of a vessel offered the greatest convenience of all—but at the greatest risk. Some of the strongest of the many criticisms of Pompallier’s extravagance with money concerned his purchase of the *Sancta Maria*, in 1841, when some of his men were almost starving. Each year of its operation, the amount needed for maintenance, and to pay the crew, was equal to half of its purchase price. In 1846, Bataillon bought a schooner of 63 tons, called the *Clara*, with a most able captain, John Dalmagne.¹⁶ Once again it was at a time when his missionaries in Tonga were nearly starving. It was totally wrecked on a reef at Samoa during a cyclone in 1850, and only $37 was obtained in salvage. Another ship of 140 tons, the *Etoile du Matin* (Morning Star) was bought jointly, in 1851, by Douarre and Bataillon. Joint ownership carried problems since both vicariats might wish to use the ship at the one time. This happened, and Bataillon withdrew from the partnership the following year. A few months later, the *Etoile*, too, was lost at sea, either just before or after picking up three missionaries from the island of Tikopia, in the Santa Cruz group.¹⁷ Although a sum of 37,500 francs was received in insurance, there were losses of life, and heavy financial losses, not covered by the insurance, as well.

The high risk of owning these commercially sized vessels was obvious. The only economic answer was that of Father Jean Baptiste Bréhéret, in 1863. The son of a Breton fisherman, he bought the smallest, cheapest vessel of oceangoing size he could find. He sewed canvas for the sails; the hand on the tiller was his own. For more than 30 years, on a succession of craft, he logged thousands of miles around the scattered islands of Fiji. When he was an old man, he was still sewing his own sails. An enthusiastic young confrère once urged him to write his memoirs. ‘They are already written,’ said Bréhéret. ‘In the waters of the Pacific. My tiller is my pen.’
Pierre Marie Bataillon was cast in the heroic mould. His photograph, taken during his visit to Europe in 1857, shows a man at the height of his powers. He looks unflinchingly at the camera, with the sure gaze of one who has complete confidence in himself. The military tone to his name is entirely appropriate.

In many ways, Bataillon’s remarkable achievements are not clearly seen in these pages. This is because the main focus of this book is on his men, and also on Australia. As related to Bataillon, those themes are most affected by a ruthlessness in his character, which enabled him to pursue his goals, virtually without considering their cost on others. Nevertheless, he was far-sighted, and very often correct in his judgements, even though he had no time whatever for opinions which differed from his own. He preferred to consult with people who, he knew, shared his views. Time and again, he thought up schemes which caused difficult reassessments for Marist superiors, and as often as not he presented the schemes as accomplished facts. He ruled like an autocrat, bulldozed his way through difficult situations by terrorizing more timid souls, disregarding regulations, invoking his episcopal authority, or any other means which would work.

Yet there was an essential greatness about him, and whatever the qualities needed for being a successful pioneering missionary in those days, he had them to a high degree.

His first years on Wallis, with only Joseph Xavier Luzy as a companion, were extraordinarily difficult. He was totally dependent on his own resources. He knew hunger, and had to adapt completely to the local food. He was ostracized by the Wallisian leaders, and
overcame their opposition almost by the sheer force of his personality. If they were cunning, he could be more cunning. If they thought up a clever scheme, he outwitted them. He showed a complete lack of fear of physical force, until they became superstitiously afraid that his *mana*—spiritual power—was too strong for them. And it was. He learnt the language quickly, and in a few years converted every inhabitant of his island.

Although Peter Chanel started at the same time, his years on the smaller, nearby island of Futuna were a complete contrast. In almost identical situations, he experienced near total failure. He had no success in learning the language. Although known as ‘the man with the kind heart’—there is no record that any Wallisian ever used such words to describe Bataillon—Chanel made no converts at all for several years.

What must have been complete humiliation for Chanel, and the final proof that he was an abject failure, came when Bataillon was able to visit his island. He could only watch helplessly as Bataillon preached to the Futunians in their own language, impressed them with his words, and prepared hymns for them to sing. In characteristic fashion, he won over the island chief by the gift of a frock coat, and wrung from the flattered man permission to hold a grand bonfire of the *atuau muti*, the objects the islanders regarded as sacred to the spirits—a real auto-da-fé. Not to lose any opportunity, Bataillon staged the burning, with all appropriate drama, the very next day. Frightened Futunians watched from a safe distance to see the missionaries destroyed by vengeful spirits. Bataillon took the opportunity to preach.

Bataillon’s successes made him the natural choice for bishop when, on 23 August 1842, Rome cut up Pompallier’s overlarge vicariate. His coadjutor, Douarre, arrived at Wallis to find him in rags, barefoot and hatless. He ordained him bishop on 3 December 1843. He was thirty-three. His episcopal title, which he used a great deal, was Bishop of Enos. Missionaries today, in those areas, relate that he is still referred to by Wallisians as ‘Enossi’.

The problems have already been noted which arose between the new bishop and Colin, who was concerned, as always, for the welfare of his men. Bataillon’s view was that he did not ask his men to undergo any difficulties, deprivations or loneliness that he had not experienced himself, more severely than most. But where his iron constitution could bear the conditions and diet, where his fierce will could withstand and defeat the most determined opposition, others were quite broken, either physically or mentally, by loneliness and fear.
The dispute over Fiji was typical. Bataillon saw it as a key part of his vicariate. He believed, and time proved him right, that opportunities existed then, which would soon disappear forever. And so his chief concern was to establish the Catholic church in as many regions as possible, before Protestantism was triumphant and, as he would have regarded it, perverted the inhabitants permanently. Bataillon’s zeal, however, was not just for the spread of Catholic Christianity. He sought to remain in control personally. Colin had urged him to allow another religious congregation to undertake the Fiji mission.

When Bataillon came to Villa Maria, in 1852, he met the Foreign Missionaries of Milan, and their superior, Father Paolo Reina. In a wise move, Rome had not simply ordered Reina to take over from the Marists in Melanesia, and continue the mission there. Reina had been empowered to make a choice, after taking advice, on whether to try to continue in New Guinea, or to take over Fiji instead, or else to start in Micronesia. But the people Reina was to consult were Rocher and, ‘if possible’, Bataillon. Rocher was always cautious, but on this occasion, well aware of Bataillon’s presence and attitude, he was very circumspect indeed. All he could do, he said in reply to Reina’s enquiry, was to say what he knew, and leave it to Reina. Reina listened carefully, and then approached Bataillon. Later he reported to Rocher that the bishop ‘froze’ him.

And so the Italian missionaries bowed out of the chance of Fiji, and decided to continue the mission on Murua, for what turned out to be another three useless years, added to the seven already spent in those areas by the Marists, and the additional death of Mazzucconi. Bataillon retained Fiji.

From the time he became a bishop in 1843, Bataillon made great use of native catechists. These well-instructed converts could expound the truths of Christianity much more fluently to their own people, and every mission priest used them. The Protestant ministers were already doing this everywhere, with great effectiveness. But in their churches, many of the islanders soon went on to become ministers themselves. Bataillon longed to have his first priests, but that was a much longer project in the Catholic church. Meanwhile, in using catechists, he often transported them from one island to another. Wallis and Futuna were a valuable resource in this way; Wallisian catechists helped preach in Tonga, Fiji and Samoa.

Wallis and Futuna, being completely Catholic, were a resource in another way. Converts from other islands, who showed promise,
were sometimes brought to live there for a time, to gain more education in Christianity and to learn from being in a Catholic atmosphere. After the second closure of the New Caledonia mission in 1850, the missionaries and a number of the new Christians were withdrawn from the main island to Ile de Pins. Partly because resources were limited on the tiny island, Pierre Rougeyron led a group of New Caledonians to Futuna, at the beginning of April of that year, and returned in August. The change in the members of the group was so marked that Douarre decided to repeat the program, for an even longer period.²

But Bataillon wanted more than catechists: he wanted priests from among the Pacific islanders. By 1845, he was planning ‘to establish a college at Wallis, for the education of the youth of the different points of his vicariate; in this way to form catechists, and perhaps later, priests.’³ The chiefs of Wallis agreed to give him land for the project. This was at Matala, a long narrow peninsula, which makes a south-westerly point of Wallis, on high land, overlooking a small bay. In June of that year, he wrote to Colin to ask for a priest to run it. ‘It is the future of our mission,’ he wrote. ‘What a consolation it would be for your fatherly heart if, before dying, I had the happiness of ordaining a Polynesian to the priesthood.’⁴ Not long afterwards, he decided that Matala was unsuitable, and selected another Wallisian site at Lano. There, his college-seminary began in 1847, with twelve students. At the same time he set up a preparatory school on Futuna to feed into it.

But after seven years, Bataillon had to regard the experiment as unsuccessful. There was too much pull from the customs and traditions of the local environment. He decided that the only way was to have the training somewhere further away. His thoughts turned to Sydney, and to Villa Maria: that would be ideal!

During his 1852 visit to Sydney, collecting sandstone for island churches, Bataillon casually told Rocher, in a vague way, that he had plans for the procure house, which he would probably talk over with the superior general, when he made a trip to Europe ‘in five or six month’s time’. In fact, his plans were anything but vague, and he had already written to Propaganda on the subject. But he did not go to Europe at this time.⁵

Rocher made enquiries, and soon learnt what Bataillon had in mind. He wrote to Colin about the project. Colin wrote to the bishop, pointing out that there would be need to consult with the other island bishops before any action could be taken. Bataillon was not interested in consultation. He had made up his mind already.
What followed illustrates well the problem over jurisdiction which plagued the early years of the Pacific missions. By March 1855, despite Rocher’s opposition, and without even informing him, Bataillon sent Father Ferdinand Junillon and four island students to Villa Maria. He instructed Junillon to deny to Rocher that he was running a college: he was told to say only that he was in Sydney for the sake of his health. To add insult to injury, the bishop sent a letter to Rocher, telling him to charter a ship to come to Wallis for him—and, as Rocher well knew, bring more staff for the college to Sydney.

Rocher’s position was intolerable. If Junillon was recuperating, he asked in a letter to France, why was he taking classes? inspecting land sites? enquiring about building costs? Junillon, who was an unassuming person, found his position extremely embarrassing, and before Bataillon arrived, he took the opportunity to return to Wallis with his students. The bishop arrived back in Sydney with the students in July 1855.

The long months of the presence of the bishop and his college were extremely difficult for Rocher. Bataillon continued to pretend that there was no college; he talked vaguely about his trip to Europe. He made Rocher feel quite desperate when he spoke of an idea he had: of living permanently in the procure, and making a tour of his mission stations perhaps once every three to five years. It is no wonder that Rocher submitted his resignation several times during this period.

The matter had gone far beyond the capacity of a local superior. It was time for higher superiors to take action.

Colin resigned as superior general in 1854. He had sent no new Marists to the islands since 1849, when his attempt to persuade Bataillon to use reinforcements only for consolidation was ignored. However, when his successor, Julien Favre, took over, Colin fully supported him in offering to resume sending men, in return for opening negotiations. They were first in contact with Fransoni, asking for a declaration or rule (règlement) to be drawn up between Bataillon and the Society of Mary, in which points of agreement would be put into writing. The cardinal was quite supportive of the proposal.

The bishop, however, was hostile. Why was he especially singled out in this way? Why not an agreement at the same time with New Zealand and New Caledonia? Perhaps it was, suggested Rocher quietly, because the society knew about Bataillon’s moves to sever his Marists completely from the order. Bataillon was taken aback. At
first he was going to deny it, Rocher reported, but when I pressed him with facts which he did not realize were known, he tried to make light of the matter. 6

Bataillon’s Marists saw the matter as anything but light. Various probings by the bishop, to see whether they would agree to separation from the order, caused a group of them, meeting in Samoa in 1853, to decide to write to the superior general. They chose a Father Xavier Vachon to record their protests and deliberations. Vachon passed the document on to Dubreul, formerly of Sydney, to transmit to Lyon. For some reason—was it a scruple of conscience? did the bishop chance to see the document and demand to read it?—Dubreul gave it to Bataillon to read. The result may be imagined. Recognizing Vachon’s handwriting, Bataillon immediately transferred him to a lonely, isolated post. As he put Vachon on the boat, Rocher graphically adds, the bishop ‘made a gesture which showed all present that his Lordship was very pleased to be rid of him’. Betrayed and forgotten, the unfortunate Vachon found consolation in alcohol, and had to be evacuated to Sydney. 7 He made a recovery and was allowed another attempt in New Caledonia. However, there was another relapse, and ultimately he was returned to France.

Bataillon still held back from the idea of negotiating a formal agreement. But Favre was in contact again with Rome, and also wrote to the bishop again. Advised by his faithful supporter, Mathieu, that it would not be accepted, Bataillon sent in his resignation.

The outcome was a letter from Propaganda summoning the bishop to Rome. Bataillon acceded to this. He had a number of projects in mind. He could raise money. There was his college. And he wanted another ship. He was thinking of expanding his jurisdiction by asking to take over New Caledonia again, left without a bishop since Douarre’s death in April 1853. He thought of doing this, and ruling Central Oceania through a coadjutor. If he had his way, that coadjutor was right beside him: he brought Mathieu with him to Sydney, and intended taking him to Rome to submit his name to be his coadjutor. It was not to be. Mathieu contracted typhoid fever, and died a week after Bataillon sailed.

The bishop travelled to Europe with a priest and brother, and three of the four Polynesian students for the priesthood, who had been studying at Villa Maria. Bataillon wanted them as living proof, to boost his arguments for using Villa Maria as an Australian seminary for the Pacific. He stuck to his views on this point throughout the negotiations in Europe for the formal agreement with the Marists, and although Favre likewise made no concessions on this
precise point, Bataillon returned to Sydney and tried to take over the procure, and sell it. It was with difficulty that these plans were opposed.\footnote{8}

Why were the Marists so adamant in resisting Bataillon on this issue?

One point was that the house belonged to all of the mission vicariates, and not just to Bataillon. When Bataillon had originally sought approval for his 1852 plan to take over the procure, he was asked by Colin to consult with other vicariates. He made no attempt to do so. He knew quite well that they would not have agreed: it would not have been in their interests to do so. For one thing, Bataillon would have gained effective control of the procure, and its men and equipment, and possibly access to the *Propagation de la foi* annual grant for its upkeep as well. That would have been no help to other vicariates in any way.

But the more fundamental reason for the Marist stand was connected with the larger questions about jurisdiction over its men, which had plagued the order since it first sent missionaries to Oceania. Villa Maria was the only house in the Pacific which belonged to the Marist Fathers, rather than to a mission superior. Although established for, and on behalf of, the missions, it also, without prejudice to those responsibilities, discreetly provided the one place to which the religious in the missions could turn for help, should any problems arise in their relationship with their bishop.

Colin made this point some years earlier, along with other objections to Bataillon’s 1852 plans to take over the procure house, when consulted by the Roman congregation on the matter. Analyzing where jurisdiction lay, his letter began by pointing out that the Sydney procurators depended on the local archbishop regarding their spiritual administration of the sacraments. ‘In other respects,’ Colin continued, ‘they depend directly upon the Superior General ... Perhaps Bishop Bataillon has not reflected that the procure house, being outside his vicariate, was likewise, in a sense, outside his jurisdiction.’\footnote{9}

Favre, who consulted with Colin throughout, maintained the same stand. It was perfectly clear that, no matter what agreements or conditions were laid down for its administration, if Bataillon lived at the procure, it would no longer be independent: he would control it. The effect on any priest who incurred his anger, as Vachon had, would not be pleasant.

The agreements made in the *règlement*, regarding Bataillon’s plans for the use of Villa Maria as a college, were inconclusive.\footnote{10} But other
issues were dealt with. Some greater responsibility was given to individual missionaries in the handling of finances. A mission procurator could be appointed by the bishop or mission superior, to handle the finances of each mission. Likewise, a council could be named to administer vicariate moneys. These ideas had been suggested by Bataillon on different occasions before his trip to Europe, and are not unlike the more developed ways in which some of these matters are dealt with today.

But there were two agreements which directly related to Villa Maria. The first was to expand its resources greatly. This, too, had been suggested by Bataillon: more abundant stores of goods needed for the missions, and perhaps brother tailors who could make clothes, and other brothers who could perform similar useful work.

The second was the appointment of a person to be visitor general (and procurator general) at Sydney. A study of the réglement reveals that neither this, nor any of the other protective clauses in the document, carried much force. Even as regards protection of the men, the powers of the vicar apostolic were not really curtailed at all. The visitor general, on the other hand, had very restricted powers. But the fact that there was now to be a separate representative of the order in the Pacific, who was a higher superior, at last gave the individual missionary another who could speak on his behalf, as distinct from the bishop. This was a major advance. And even if the post had little real power, the superior general wanted to do his utmost to make it work. He could do this by naming the very best man he had.

He named Victor Poupinel.
An influential early governor of Australia was once described as 'a splendid second-rater'. In a very small community, a second-rater can stand out like a beacon. But, by any standards, Victor Poupinel was a first-rate churchman in the nineteenth century. His appointment to Sydney was brought about entirely by problems which had occurred in the south Pacific. But he came at a most important moment in the history of Catholicism within Australia, as well as outside it.

None of Poupinel's previous experience in Europe could have ensured his or anyone’s success in the responsible new role with which he had now been entrusted. But he had given clear indications of more than ordinary ability in his previous appointments. He became secretary to Colin shortly after ordination in 1840, and at the same time procurator for the missions. He had the main responsibility for preparing the detailed reports to Propagation de la foi necessary before new money could be granted to Pompallier, and later, giving the accurate figures needed to answer Pompallier’s sweeping charges that Colin was mishandling finances. He had the necessary tact, patience and skill needed for negotiations. In Paris, he dealt with the French government ministers, and went to Rome with Colin, for talks with Propaganda. He helped prepare for Epalle’s meetings with Pompallier in Sydney in 1845, and for Colin’s 1847 meetings with Polding and Pompallier in Rome.

Favre entered the Society of Mary at around the same time as Poupinel, and the two worked together well. When succeeding Colin as superior general, Favre had no hesitation in retaining the mission.
challenge

procurator in his post. The thorough reports made to Propaganda in 1855 by Favre, reopening negotiations over Bataillon, and the 1857 réglement which was their result, all reveal the skilful hand of his assistant. When the réglement created an opening for a top man in the Pacific, there was no doubt in Favre’s mind about whom to send there. And after the appointment, when Poupinel was in Sydney, the letters which Favre wrote to him reveal, by their affectionate, sometimes bantering tone, that the appointment had cost him the presence of a close personal friend.

The expansion of the functions of Villa Maria, agreed upon in the réglement, had already begun before Poupinel arrived in Sydney on 24 September 1857. He had written ahead, with Favre’s prior approval, recalling his own former assistant in Lyon, Claude Marie Joly from Samoa, for his Sydney staff. Joly was not enthusiastic at the recall, after little more than a year in Samoa, but he was, in fact, in ill health when the news reached him. He was one of three highly talented priests in the second group of Marist missionaries despatched by Favre. He came to Central Oceania in 1856, with Louis Elloy, later bishop of Samoa, and Joseph Monnier, the first Marist pastor of St Patrick’s in Sydney.

Poupinel knew Joly’s abilities well, from their years together in France. He appointed Joly, in Sydney, to assist Rocher, both in the procure and in the Ryde parish. Parish work did not come easily to him, but he worked at it very hard, and prepared his instructions carefully, although he had little liking for preaching. Even so, Poupinel once wrote about him, ‘he has rare qualities for a position like ours’. Joly’s talents included an unexpected ability as an architect, which he later used in a notable way.

Poupinel soon recognized the impossible load Rocher had been shouldering for so many years. With characteristic thoughtfulness, he was soon writing confidentially to Favre, urging that the deserving man be allowed to return to France for a break. He wrote, in 1858:

Father Rocher has conducted himself with rare prudence in this country. The situation was a very delicate one, and he had a thousand opportunities of taking a false step, as far as the cathedral authorities were concerned. His days have not been filled with sunshine. Yet he is esteemed and loved by those with whom he has dealings. He is highly regarded by the Protestants of his parish. Everywhere he is very well received.

In line with the proposed development of the procure, Poupinel brought with him another brother for the permanent staff. In his
first major report after arrival, he asked for two more brothers, a tailor and a shoemaker, and he outlined a system of supplying clothing and other needs of the missionaries from stores kept at Villa Maria.

Approval for Rocher's home leave was given, and when he left for France, in April 1859, Joly's name was submitted to the government as his replacement in the post of pastor of Ryde. His name was accepted, even though this was the period when withdrawal of government salaries to the clergy had become inevitable. When Rocher returned, in January 1861, Joly continued as pastor, a position he held for many years.

Poupinel's Pacific mission responsibilities frequently took him to the islands. He left Sydney for New Caledonia within two weeks of his arrival. Thereafter, his visits to the different island groups continued over the years of his appointment. Between visits, and during them, he wrote his reports. His writings are of an impressively consistent standard. Line after neat line, page after page, despite the odd places from which he wrote and the snatched time, they have an air of cool, unhurried composition. They outline a subject, introduce people, or explain situations in a thorough, judicious fashion. Almost all were methodically copied into a record book, by a nineteenth century process which was somewhat like making a carbon copy. The original letter was moistened, and then, while the ink was wet, placed against a page of a book with very thin, blank sheets. Some of the remoistened ink marked the page with a mirror copy, which could be read normally from the other side through the thin paper. In later letters, using his copy for reference, he was able to make precise quotation of points previously made, either to emphasize, augment or modify what he had then written.

The most difficult task, for Poupinel, was the one for which he had originally been appointed: dealing with Bataillon. Despite his impressive title, visitor general, he had no real authority over the men in the missions. He found Bataillon no less difficult than had others. He wrote to Favre in 1859, about having the bishop living in the house all the time:

Let me say, just between ourselves, mon père, that his Lordship is too much the prelate. If I was willing to kiss his ring at every interview, bow and scrape, do certain little honours and have others do them, I would make his Lordship feel very satisfied. I would do that willingly for a bishop who did not stay more than a few days in our house. But when one has to live together, and en famille [as a family], it is rather different.
One of Poupinel’s tasks was to give careful consideration to Villa Maria itself, in the light of the planned expansion of its functions. A matter which gave him concern was the location of the property, and especially the limitations on future development imposed by the deficiencies of the site and buildings. Despite Rocher’s newly completed wing, there were inadequacies in the kitchen, chapel and the living quarters of the brothers. And it was questionable whether it would be wise to spend more on the existing site. Villa Maria was also difficult to reach by road from Sydney, and because it lacked a deepwater wharf, transport of goods by water was also a problem. All of these considerations gave weight to the idea of finding a new location on the Sydney side of the Parramatta river.

A lengthy report, which Poupinel had Joly prepare in 1859, gives an interesting and detailed analysis of the pros and cons of such a move. Reasons urged in favour of a move included the poor soil on the property, the lack of access to a suitable wharf and the long distance inland which had to be travelled with heavy goods, to reach the first bridge across the river. While a depot in the city itself would be useful, rents there were excessive. However, the proposal was rejected in Lyon at this time.

The situation altered the following January, 1860, when a house and three acres of land in Hunters Hill came up for sale. It adjoined the eighteen acres which Rocher had purchased in 1853, extending along the northern shore of Tarban Creek, and included a deepwater wharf. Poupinel asked Joly to prepare a new report, but without waiting, went ahead and bought the property. In May 1860, ten more acres of nearby land became available, and with their purchase, the entire land area owned came to 50 acres, 32 on the northern side of Tarban Creek.

The move was approved, and by November 1862, Poupinel wrote of an attempt to sell the first Villa Maria to the government for the mental hospital, which failed. It was an interesting effort, because the property was eventually sold to the state for this purpose many years later, and not by the Marists. They retained the property for some years, and for a time it was a convent. Finally they sold it in 1874, when Thomas Salter bought it rather cheaply. Salter gave it the name ‘the Priory’, as the name Villa Maria was transferred to the new property.

Responsibility for the next move fell on Joly’s shoulders, and he was the architect for a large new building erected on the northern side of Tarban Creek. He achieved great economies through the work of the
Block A 11 June 1847: in 2 lots, 10 acres and 8 acres of improved land and house; south side Tarban Creek (Thomas Stubbs grant); bought from Thomas and Ann Stubbs, £1100. The first Villa Maria. Sold 18 August 1874 to Thomas Salter; £2000. Block B 19 July 1853: 18 acres unimproved land; north side Tarban Creek (William Burnett grant); bought from Thomas and Michael Woolley, £160. Present Villa Maria. Block C 21 January 1860: 3 acres, 1 rood, 20 perches; a house and a right of way of De Milhau Road, with access to deep water wharf, adjoining block B (Susanna Nash grant); bought from Walter Bagot, £900. Present day St Joseph’s College rowing sheds are on part of land. Block D 16 May 1860: in 3 lots, 2 acres, 2 acres, and 6 acres 3 perches adjoining blocks B and C (Susanna Nash grant), bought from Gabriel De Milhau, £474.6.0. Portion of property sold to Sisters of St Joseph, 1922. Block E 3 January 1867: in 2 lots, 1 acre 1 rood 17 perches, and 1 acre 3 roods 17 perches, adjoining blocks B and D, crown land to shoreline of Tarban Creek released, £51.8.0.

(St Joseph’s College is on the northern side of Gladesville Road.)
brothers on all stages, by doing his own design work, letting contracts, and acting as his own clerk of works. Stone, quarried on the original property, was supplied from mid-1863. Contractors dug the foundations and began erecting the walls from late June. Carpentry, joinery and roofing work were done by the brothers, aided by islanders. In Joly’s design, a major section at the western end of the building provided a temporary chapel. Openings left in the walls of this section allowed for later conversion into smaller rooms. By now, the chapel on the old site was seriously inadequate, and its roof leaked badly.

In addition to Joly’s achievements throughout this work, he was also obliged to maintain the responsibilities of the parish, unassisted. Poupinel was absent in Europe, and Rocher was completely occupied as his vicar.

When Poupinel returned, in March 1864, Rocher’s health was giving serious concern. It was found necessary to return him to Europe permanently, the following month. He had been one of the founders of the first Marist house in Australia, had bought the first Villa Maria, as well as the land on which the present building was nearing completion. He had survived times of the greatest uncertainty in the relationship with the diocesan authorities, and had earned their complete respect, to the point where the parish of Ryde was entrusted to him. His departure was the end of an era.

Five years earlier, on 19 April 1859, when Rocher had left Sydney on his vacation, one of three boys who accompanied him on the Walter Hood was George Heydon, the fifteen-year-old eldest son of J.K.Heydon, destined for the completion of his schooling at the Marist Fathers’ school at St Chamond, in France. About a year after his return to Australia, George decided that he wished to join the religious order which his father admired. And so, when Rocher left Sydney for the last time, on 28 April 1864, on the Liberator, he was again accompanied by George.

George Heydon was the first Australian who entered the Marists to study for the priesthood. He progressed well in his studies, which were continued at Dundalk, in Ireland. Unfortunately, his health was deteriorating in 1866, and it was decided to transfer him to a milder climate in France. In London, en route, he fell seriously ill with what proved to be typhoid fever, and died there in the presence of Rocher, the first Marist he had known.7

Rocher’s departure began some of Joly’s most difficult months. He was now officially named mission procurator. His parish responsibilities hardly diminished, with a new assistant, Father Zépherin
Felicien Muraire, who could not yet speak any English. And the new building required the most careful supervision, at the stage of interior plastering and carpentry work.

But eventually the task was complete, and the rooms in the new house became progressively ready to occupy from the middle of 1864. For a sum of less than 50,000 francs, the Marists had a building with twenty-four rooms, including the large interior chapel, and sixteen bedrooms, twelve with a fireplace. Building stone had also been prepared for a smaller wing, containing rooms for the brothers, and more working space. Although that and other tasks would continue for several years, the cost was extraordinarily low for a building which served the Pacific islands well for more than a century, and continues today as Villa Maria seminary.

No great opening ceremony was organized. A simple blessing, by Bishop-elect Louis Elloy, took place on 24 April 1864.

Twenty years of missionary work in the Pacific by the Society of Mary had been completed when Poupinel began as visitor general. Even though his powers were so limited in his negotiations with Bataillon and the other bishops, the value of his work was inestimable. The success of the move shows what Pompallier’s intransigence had prevented in the 1840s, when he refused to allow a similar appointment. Poupinel was continually on the move, and between his departure from France in 1857, and his final return in 1870, it would perhaps be difficult to find anyone, outside the ranks of professional seamen, who notched up more miles of voyaging.

Reports and surveys he wrote, at an average of better than one a week, gave a picture of contrasts: much to praise, tactful corrections to be made, serious difficulties to be sorted out. There were men needing to be transferred to other missions, or requesting to return to France. In addition to the 96 men working in the mission fields in 1859, and the 25 who had died, those who returned to Europe were, in varying ways, part of the cost. Some of them, like Chaurain, were doing good work back in Europe for the Marists, and some had returned to the active secular priesthood. But some were broken in health or in spirit. Others had left the priesthood or the religious brotherhood.

Favre gave Poupinel, from 1859, additional discretionary powers from the Marist side, to enable him to handle problems on the spot. For instance, he authorized him to receive vows, and to dispense from vows. He could decide if a man was to return to France. Favre also gave him the right to decide to which vicariate new missionaries
would go. When making appointments in France, the superior general was at a disadvantage, for by the time the missionary reached the Pacific, the information on which he was appointed was more than a year out of date. He therefore wrote suggestions to Poupinel, and said something about the personal abilities of the individual, leaving the final decision on the placement of both priests and brothers to him.

Favre did not promulgate the fact that he had authorized Poupinel to make these appointments, and advised him not to publish it, either. This was in order to protect him from the pressure which would have been placed on him by Bataillon and others, for their own vicariates, if they had realized that he was making such allocation of men.

In the case of the brothers, there had been in Europe, by this time, the separation from the fathers which put the brothers under their own superior general. But Brother General Louis-Marie (Gabriel Rivat) also entrusted the care of his men in the Pacific to Poupinel. He wrote, on 17 January 1859: ‘I unite, as far as I am able, with your zeal and charity. I send [to the mission brothers] letters and circulars, and recommend them to follow your salutary advice, and conform to your wise direction’.

The possibility of Poupinel’s ordination as a bishop soon began to occur to many minds. His letters were eagerly published in its Annales by the Propagation de la foi. Correspondence from France began to alarm Poupinel that what had seemed an idle suggestion might become a reality. Cardinal de Bonald of Lyon was expressing interest in him. Bataillon was speaking of him as a possible candidate for Fiji. Within Australia, his name is to be found on the shortlist of three nominated for bishop of the newly created diocese of Brisbane, which cut off Queensland from Polding’s jurisdiction. The post went finally to James Quinn of Ireland. Poupinel wrote to Favre and reminded him of the promise made at his departure, that he would not be asked to be a bishop. Favre reassured him, and took steps to end the possibility.8

Poupinel’s initial appointment to the Pacific was for a term of five years. After that time he returned to France to make his reports, but there was a unanimous outcry from the missionaries requesting his return, as well as from the bishops. Bataillon wrote an earnest letter to Favre praising Poupinel, and asking that he continue as visitor general.9

The second term was granted, and Poupinel remained in the Pacific until 1870.
Polding's return to Sydney with Gregory, in 1856, after the trip to Rome over the problems within the Benedictine monastery, began a crucial period in the history of Sydney archdiocese. Unrest was simmering. The archdiocese then still covered all of the present states of New South Wales and Queensland; in other words it was almost half the size of Europe.

Internal dissensions within St Mary's Benedictine monastery had begun the events which climaxed in Polding's sudden resignation and visit to Rome in 1854. The outcome of the visit was that the two appeals made by the dissident monks were rejected: the appeal, that is to say, against Gregory as superior, and the questioning of the validity of the solemn vows of the monks. But Rome terminated the abbey diocese experiment.

Polding was saddened when Rome officially ended the abbey diocese, but he chose to ignore the decree, and continue his Benedictine-centred policies as if nothing had changed. He drew consolation from the fact that by another decree, dated 4 April 1855, the monastery was formally constituted as an abbey. However, the monastery itself had been torn apart by the discord which led to the appeals to Rome. A string of defections took place over several years, which made the failure of the Benedictine establishment highly likely, short of a massive effort to achieve a restoration of confidence. No such effort was forthcoming.

It was not only within the monastery that there was ill feeling towards Gregory. Animosity towards him was widespread, largely caused by his attitude of superiority and his authoritarian ways.
Undoubtedly, such behaviour was affected by inner problems from being promoted over many churchmen much older than he was, and became habitual.

Yet, on his return, Polding showed no sensitivity to these feelings towards his deputy and favourite, even though so many priests, lay people, and indeed bishops, were in agreement about them. On the contrary, as if signs of his approval could somehow compensate, he added to Gregory’s burdens by heaping more powers on him. He named Gregory to a new post of cathedral prior, and also appointed him to carry out the administrative functions of the monastery, cathedral and diocese, with the astonishing addition that he had carte blanche to reverse decisions made during his absence, ‘even if they worked well’.¹ The following year, 1857, Gregory was also given the personal title of Father Abbot, although Polding continued to hold the official position for the monastery.

The authority to reverse decisions was a hit at Archdeacon McEncroe, who had been in charge of the diocese during Polding’s two years in Europe. It was well known that McEncroe, for whom all had the highest respect, was overlooked by the archbishop and disliked by Gregory. Even lay people, for instance, were aware that while McEncroe was in charge of the diocese, the foundation of St Vincent’s hospital was hurried forward by the lay committee led by John Hubert Plunkett, so as to have the project in operation before Polding and Gregory returned. Otherwise they would prevent its establishment. One priest wrote in 1856:

During the absence of Dr Polding in Europe 1854—55, the affairs of the Sydney archdiocese were managed by the Venerable Archdeacon McEncroe, and I do unhesitatingly say, with great benefit to Religion, but as soon as Dr Polding arrived, his Vicar-General, Dr Gregory, who accompanied His Grace, set about undoing everything that was done by the Archdeacon, in order to make it appear that he was unfit to govern the Archdiocese in their absence.²

There was a growing group of educated laity who were dissatisfied with this state of affairs, and the many other signs of mismanagement. The expression of dissatisfaction was chiefly in the columns of the Catholic newspaper in Sydney, the Freeman’s Journal. The Freeman, as it was popularly known, was the lineal descendant of the Chronicle, the first Australian Catholic newspaper, which, under three slightly different names, ran more or less continuously from 1839 to 1848. Both the Chronicle and the Freeman maintained quite a high standard of journalism on the whole, and articles written for...
them, or reproduced from overseas' journals, cover an interesting and varied range, and compare well with those of other colonial papers.

The *Freeman* took the title of a well-known contemporary Dublin newspaper, perhaps suggesting a more openly Irish Catholicism than its predecessor had expressed, in a diocese where the English Benedictine influence had been in the ascendancy. The major influence in establishing the *Freeman* in 1850 was the Irish McEncroe, whose years in the United States convinced him that a Catholic newspaper was a necessity.

When the *Chronicle* was being founded, McEncroe had been away from Sydney for some time, on the convict settlement of Norfolk Island. But, on his return, he had been closely associated with it, edited it for a period, and lost a good deal of money on it, as he did on the *Freeman*. Despite Polding’s indifference, for the archbishop was not persuaded of the need to inform, McEncroe always remained convinced that the effort was worthwhile. T.L. Suttor is generally suspicious of McEncroe’s efforts ‘to control public opinion’, as he describes them. 3 But the argument can be reversed, and McEncroe seen as more correct in his understanding of the need for an informed laity.

In 1856, after the *Freeman* had been appearing for a few years, McEncroe allowed control of it to pass into the hands of his nephew, Michael D’Arcy. A few months later, D’Arcy took on as editor Joseph Sheridan Moore, formerly a monk, who had not long left the Benedictine monastery. Both D’Arcy and Moore disliked Polding, and the paper began to express critical comments about the Benedictine administration.

Soon, the archbishop disowned the journal in the columns of the *Empire*, a paper well known for anti-Catholic views, controlled by Henry Parkes. To its list of criticisms of the administration, the *Freeman* now added the choice Polding had made of a paper in which to publish his statement. But for obvious reasons, the archbishop continued to avoid using the *Freeman*. Later he chose the *Sydney Morning Herald* on most occasions when he wished to publish a statement. At length, McEncroe was induced by his archbishop to undertake a difficult lawsuit. As a result, he managed to regain control of the paper from his nephew in 1857. He then sold it to J.K. Heydon.

Heydon seemed an excellent and neutral choice. He had been associated with W.A. Duncan on the *Chronicle*, and had other previous experience in publishing. He had never been in trouble with the
archbishop. He was English, not Irish, as D’Arcy and Moore had been. And he was a fervent convert to Catholicism.

Not long after Heydon had taken control of the Freeman, he contacted his old friend and mentor, Duncan, and asked him to write a series of articles analyzing the Catholic church in Australia. Journalistically, it was a brilliant move. The series triggered a strong response in which many lay people expressed strong views about the diocesan administration, many criticizing, and some defending it. Polding and Gregory reacted almost violently. They regarded the criticisms as unwarranted, slanderous, and viciously destructive. They believed that the laity had no right even to discuss such matters, which they considered were totally outside lay competence.

These views took no notice of the fact that the whole nature of the Australian community had changed. It had been deeply affected by the gold rushes of 1851 onwards. An enormous influx of people, including a great many Irish, had arrived and made the new land their home. The political climate had changed rapidly, with the granting of self-government to the former colonies. A strong egalitarianism had laughed into ridicule an attempt to establish a hereditary aristocracy and House of Lords in New South Wales. Irish Catholic politician Daniel Henry Deniehy had made a devastatingly witty speech in parliament.

In the late 1850s, the government offered the major churches the opportunity to have colleges of their own denomination on the campus of the University of Sydney, each to be administered by a board of fellows. With considerable political naivety, Polding and Gregory submitted a list of names for the board of the Catholic college, and assumed that these would be approved. The resentment and anger which resulted was not because those named were unsuitable. It was triggered by the casual assumption that lay people need not be consulted about such a matter. The Freeman challenged the move in its columns, and was successful. In June 1858, as a result of its campaign, an election was held. Some prominent critics of the ecclesiastical administration were elected as fellows of St John’s College, along with a number of Polding’s nominees.

The Benedictine administration made a series of attempts to muzzle the paper. There were appeals to Rome for official denunciations. Polding called together a meeting with Bishops Goold of Melbourne and Willson of Hobart, to discuss the newspaper. Together, in July, they released a pastoral letter, Monitum Pastorale, which appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald, and condemned lay discussion of virtually anything to do with ‘faith, discipline, authority and ecclesiastical individuals’. McEncroe was pressured by his
archbishop to take further legal proceedings against the paper, or condemn it publicly. All the attempts failed. McEncroe knew that the legal victory against D’Arcy could not be repeated, as Heydon’s ownership had been clarified by the previous lawsuit. Moreover, he was not personally convinced that the *Freeman* was wrong in all its criticisms. He did write letters correcting what he himself knew or believed to be errors.5

It was not enough for the archbishop. Polding charged McEncroe with ‘at least indirectly countenancing some communications in the journal, such as the letter signed “Isadore”’. Most of the letters published in the paper were signed with pseudonyms, and ‘Isadore’ was a name used by Duncan.

When McEncroe published ‘An Open Letter to the Subscribers of the *Freeman’s Journal*’, dissociating himself from opinions expressed in the paper, but not going on to make the unqualified condemnation Polding sought, the archbishop considered the letter ‘nothing less than an exhortation to the people to continue their support of the paper’.6 McEncroe was depressed by all this, and seriously considered turning a planned trip to Europe into a permanent departure from Australia.

It was an impasse. The archbishop, and Gregory, his only trusted adviser, considered that there was only one valid course for a Catholic: unequivocal submission, and the complete silencing of the critics.

Heydon, Duncan, and an ever-growing band among the educated laity thought differently. They believed in the tenets of their faith, including that of submission to lawful authority. But they also believed that some areas pertaining to their religion existed which were validly within their competence as laymen, as well as the areas outside their competence. They did not consider that loyalty required silence in their own areas of interest. They thought that there were signs of serious diocesan mismanagement in some of the areas within their competence, and that they had a duty to speak out on such matters, a duty hitherto neglected.7

In general, it would be true to say, McEncroe agreed with these sentiments, and with many of the criticisms expressed. Where he did not agree, he believed it was enough to make his views known.

For Polding and Gregory, such attitudes amounted to betrayal. The motives behind them could only be evil. There was no effort on their part to see whether there were any grains of truth in the criticisms: they were simply an Irish attempt to strike out at themselves for being English.8 Once again, Suttor has taken a very negative attitude towards McEncroe and the lay critics. He is hardly
ready to concede even a possibility that their motives were sincere. For him, their actions were simply Irish against English, if not inspired by more evil motives, as Polding thought.

Yet, no less than Polding and Gregory, the two converts, Heydon and Duncan, who led the lay response—neither of them Irish—sincerely desired the betterment of the Catholic church in Australia. Their interest and ability, given the right kind of leadership, could have brought great benefits to the church. Unfortunately, no such leadership was given. Instead, Polding’s inflexibility, and his failure to see this lay interest as anything but a threat, pushed the opposition into more extreme positions, from which damage could follow.

Polding’s attitude towards McEncroe was equivocal: on the one hand he mistrusted the man’s democratic ideas, his nationalist Irish attitudes, and his failure to condemn the Freeman. On the other, he wrote an honest approval of the priest, in a letter of introduction for him, on his visit to Europe in 1858. This angered Bishop Goold of Melbourne, who had become distrustful of McEncroe. In return, McEncroe was loyal and open in his relations with Polding. Where his views differed, as with the lay critics, he quite frankly made avowal of this. 9

It would be difficult to imagine Polding falling into the same troubles in his diocese, had the more balanced McEncroe been his vicar general and trusted adviser, instead of the unbending Henry Gregory. So much of what was being said by McEncroe, Heydon, Duncan, Richard O’Connor and others was basically sound, that it is tragic that an intransigent refusal by their church leaders to listen to them contributed to the clashes of the year 1859.

Yet the sad truth is that Polding did not want to hear the ideas of people like McEncroe. He trusted Gregory, because Gregory expressed views which supported his own.

There is evidence that Polding made some beginnings, early in 1858, to pay attention to the clear signs of growing dissatisfaction in his diocese. There exists a list of ‘Assertions of the Catholic Laymen’ in the handwriting of his secretary, Thomas Makinson, probably culled from the Freeman. It is dated 26 February 1858, and contains five points: 1. the wealth of the archdiocese, which has ‘no fruits’; 2. the departure of ‘all priests displaying any learning and ability’; 3. the ‘pitiable condition’ of Catholic schools, and almost complete lack of higher education; 4. unjust treatment of the secular clergy; 5. Polding’s ‘unjust and arbitrary’ administration, and Gregory’s ‘capricious tyranny’. 10

The departure of worthwhile priests was not merely that of
those like Ullathorne, who had left already. Others spoke of possibly doing the same. Depressed by his treatment by Polding and Gregory after their return to Sydney in 1856, McEncroe planned an overseas trip, and spoke to many people about leaving Australia permanently. In fact, he did not do so. He set off in September 1858, and while overseas, devoted all his energy to recruiting priests and obtaining teachers for Australia.

In what was possibly an attempt to respond to these criticisms, the archbishop invited the laity to systematize their grievances and submit them to him through Father J.J. Therry. Seven lay spokesmen were elected, and met on 26 July. They drew up a list of suggestions and gave them to the Freeman to publish.

Polding took exception to this, and made no response to their submissions, thereby losing a golden opportunity. A month later, a conference of the clergy met at Campbelltown, and made a number of recommendations, about which, according to McEncroe, 'a remarkable unanimity' was achieved. This time the results were withheld from the paper, but it made no difference. Once again, there was no response from the archbishop who had convened them.

There was agreement, by the two conferences of laity and clergy, upon a number of major issues. These included:

1 The introduction, upon equal terms, of clergy of all orders, secular and religious.
2 The introduction of religious sisterhoods and of religious brothers and competent lay teachers.
3 The establishment of primary and grammar schools.
4 Subdivision of the colony into bishoprics, and appointment of resident bishops.
   And most controversially,
5 That the laity should help with the management of the temporalities of churches.

The first point sprang from the widespread conviction that, despite the official ending of the abbey diocese, the secular clergy were still inferior in status to the Benedictines. Likewise, it was considered that other orders of religious priests ought to be admitted. Therry, for instance, had a special regard for the Society of Jesus, and left money in his will to assist their entry into Australia. The widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of education available lay behind the second and third points. I have argued elsewhere that
this feeling of dissatisfaction was a major element underlying the crises in Polding's archdiocese in 1859. The fourth point related to the fact that, in 1858, Polding was still the sole bishop for the whole of eastern Australia, north of Victoria, despite the rapid increase of population.

The fifth point disturbed Polding most of all. Later, when he wrote of l'esprit presbyteryen, it was this idea which he was attacking. More than any other, this point was the undoubted reason why Polding totally ignored the two reports publicly, apart from telling Dean O'Connell to admonish the laymen.

These serious attempts by his clergy and laity to express their thoughts about the state of affairs were their response to Polding's own invitation. Whatever prompted him to issue it, this invitation had the potential of being a very intelligent move, and the basis of some kind of promises of programs of gradual change, even of a mild kind. His failure to respond to those attempts in any public way whatever, puzzled supporters, of whom there were many, and made them feel more distanced from him. The sincere and influential lay people who had accepted their archbishop's invitation, and given up their time to hold the meeting, were naturally expecting the politeness of a reply. Ignoring their submissions seemed like one kind of reply anyway: expressing contempt.

Apart from the archbishop's rigid view of his own authority, which left no need to listen to the views of others, he was always very poor in what may be described as public relations. Ullathorne refers to his inability to explain himself thoroughly. When he was Polding's vicar general, Ullathorne was constantly letting people know what was happening, answering criticisms in the columns of newspapers and even in the courts. Now Ullathorne was long absent, and in his place, Gregory: imperious, reserved, and if anything, even less ready to explain himself or answer criticism than was Polding.

There ought to have been less hesitation about these submissions. Except for the last, there seems to be nothing in the others which even Polding could not have supported, now that the Benedictine abbey diocese was officially terminated. At his meeting with Goold and Willson, earlier in 1858, the three bishops agreed about the need to introduce teaching religious. Yet in 1859, Polding vetoed a move by laymen to invite the Marist Fathers to open a boys' school immediately. Unfortunately, it seems that he was trying to be loyal to the Benedictine school at Lyndhurst, and that this inhibited him from acting, despite the serious education problems underlined in the submissions. McEncroe's attempts to bring back religious brothers from Europe at this time were also brought to nothing.
It is sadly ironic that 1859 was the year in which Polding chose to issue a pastoral letter stating that education was 'the question of our age and of this, our country'. When it came to the point, the archbishop's principles were a long way from his practice in this matter.

The blow-up occurred early in 1859. It related to the Catholic orphan school at Parramatta. One of the members of the board which governed it resigned. He was the prominent Catholic John Hubert Plunkett. Without consultation, Gregory nominated a Protestant surgeon, Dr Bassett, to succeed to the position. To him, and to Polding, the matter was quite uncomplicated. Those properly in authority in the church made the appointment, which was a simple expression of their authority. The opposition which followed was a deliberate challenge to that authority, and part of a worldwide rejection of authority in religion.

To the laity, who had been expressing hope to be allowed a legitimate area of action in non-spiritual Catholic affairs, the case seemed a perfect opportunity for such consultation. Gregory's action appeared like a reply to those aspirations, and the long-awaited reply to the submissions of the previous year—a reply in the form of a calculated insult to the entire community.

It might appear to us today that the situation had elements of ecumenism, and the appointment of a non-Catholic doctor to a Catholic board might seem to indicate a positive ecumenical spirit. A Catholic laity at that time saw it as a clear sign of distrust towards them on the part of their own church leaders. As Gregory saw it, Bassett was to be no more than a medical officer. Catholic concern for the welfare of the orphans was served by his own presence on the board. The laity were unimpressed.

The board had originally been constituted by a letter from the colonial secretary, dated 11 March 1845. It consisted of Gregory, J.H. Plunkett, and Dr Hill—a Protestant medical officer. The letter was brought to public attention on 12 March 1859 by Richard O'Connor, in a letter to the Freeman. It seems that in 1859, four people made up the board: Gregory, Plunkett, McEncroe and another well known Catholic, Roger Therry. Gregory's nomination of Bassett, in place of Plunkett, meant that with McEncroe in Europe, and Roger Therry about to leave Australia permanently, Plunkett's resignation left Gregory in sole control. The simple attitude of the lay critics was: was there no Catholic layman in the colony worthy to take Plunkett's place?

The climax to the crisis came with a public meeting in the
Challenge

Victoria Theatre, Sydney, on 26 February 1859. Despite voices urging moderation, a clamorous gathering was roused by a fiery speech from Daniel Deniehy, and passed an overwhelming vote of no confidence in the Catholic administration. A seven-man provisional committee was appointed by the meeting to act on its behalf in making future political nominations of Catholics to the government. Polding responded with threats of excommunication to the seven unless they retracted. Six of the seven submitted, but five did so under an expressed determination to appeal to Rome. Sentis, the French consul, submitted, but did not join in the appeal to Rome. Deniehy did not submit. Gregory’s final nomination to the vacant position was Richard O’Connor, one of the seven, and in fact first signatory of the appeal to Rome. If this was intended to mollify the critics, it failed to do so.

The appeal to Rome brought a reply from Cardinal Barnabo, which pointed out that the appeal was in incorrect form. However, its words of praise for the spirit of submission shown by the laymen were significant enough, and the five were jubilant, as they had reason to be.

In the meantime, in May 1859, another incident occurred when a Catholic priest, Father Patrick Kenyon, removed some Protestant books from a ward of St Vincent’s hospital. The books had been placed there for the use of Protestant patients. Even though the books were quickly returned, the resulting troubles led to the dismissal of the rectress of the hospital, Sister de Lacy. She was the last of the founding band of Irish Sisters of Charity remaining in Sydney, and one in whose vocation Polding had played a part, as he had personally introduced her to the foundress of the order. Now she withdrew to Ireland. Upon the outcry which followed, Rome ordered Gregory’s removal from the diocese. All regarded this as a major criticism of the Sydney administration. Polding called it ‘a triumph which Heydon and Co., can scarcely believe to be real’.

Did the Marists play a part in all this?

All the evidence which I have found suggests that, before 1856, when they began to care for the Ryde parish, the Marists kept a very low profile in Sydney. After that, with Victor Poupinel in charge, they were extremely cautious. With good reason. Nearly fifteen years later, a visiting Jesuit described their position in the diocese as ‘precarious’ still, and decided not to introduce his order to Sydney, despite the incentives of Fr Therry’s will. Before 1856, Marist lay
friendships were almost solely with French families who lived in their area. One exception was barrister Eyre Goulburn Ellis. Ellis had no part in the problems of Polding’s archdiocese.

As another example, the name of W.A. Duncan never occurs in Marist correspondence before he left Sydney in 1861, to work in Queensland. In other words, for the period up till that time there is no evidence that I know of, from any source, supporting the remark of Polding’s biographer, O’Donoghue, when she describes Duncan’s problems with Polding in the 1840s, most of which occurred before the Marists arrived in Sydney, and she then says, ‘Like most other laymen out of countenance with the Archbishop, he gravitated towards the Marist Fathers, who, representing French Catholicism, were within the Church but outside the range of Polding’s centralizing influence’. As many previous pages have shown, the Marists were well within the range of Polding’s centralizing influence. Later Duncan became a great admirer of Marist Father Joseph Monnier.

The French consul, L.F. Sentis, lived in the Hunters Hill area. The Marists had been friendly with him since 1845. Sentis was deeply and unwisely involved in the 1859 problems.

Once Rocher took over care of the Ryde parish, he met J.K. Heydon, and a close friendship began. As editor of the Freeman, Heydon was probably the most important influence, with Duncan, on the troubles which occurred in Catholic Sydney in the late 1850s.

The first person who learnt of the Bassett appointment was Sentis. He passed the news on to Heydon. He was later persuaded to chair the preliminary meeting, and was one of those whom it nominated to approach Colonial Secretary Cowper, asking his cooperation in halting the appointment. He also addressed the protest meeting. The friendship between the French consul and his Marist fellow countrymen was well known.

Heydon’s part in the protest itself was crucial. He was the most active person in arousing opposition to the nomination of Bassett. He helped organize the preliminary meeting: he approached Cowper unofficially to sound out the situation, and was then in the deputed delegation, asking for the appointment to be suspended. He made an important speech to the protest meeting, and published all the details of the proceedings in the Freeman’s Journal. Heydon was also well known to be a close personal friend of the Marists.

Sentis provides a major key to determining the extent of Marist involvement. He also turns out to be quite an interesting figure in the entire controversy, of unsuspected importance. Although the...
consul had long been a Sydney resident, ordinary protocol required one in his position to abstain with scrupulous care from such controversy. Why did he transgress this perennial rule to such an extent on this occasion?

A letter from the Marist visitor general, Victor Poupinel, provides the answer. Sentis told Poupinel that Bassett was married to a Catholic, but that ‘contrary to his promise’ (made before marrying), he had demanded that all the children be brought up Protestant. This piece of gossip came to Sentis from a lay woman who was matron at the orphanage. She believed that Gregory wanted to get rid of her. Poupinel wrote,

It was the French consul who discovered this [Bassett] nomination, the aim of which is to make the Doctor [Gregory] sole master of the orphanage, where he wants to put sisters of the kind he likes, in place of the lay woman. Our French consul made the mistake of getting involved in this affair in which he has material interests, because the lady in question, a widow with four children, owes him money.22

Poupinel clearly disapproved of Sentis’ involvement, which was undoubtedly a serious breach of diplomatic protocol. The critical tone in which he wrote of the Victoria Theatre meeting in the same letter does not suggest that the Marists were directing these events and protests from behind the scenes. His letter was a private one to his superior general. Another consideration was that the Marists, at this time, were hoping to be allowed to open a college in Sydney. Fomenting rebellions against those whose approval was needed would make little sense.

Poupinel was a humane, compassionate observer of all these events. His words, written so soon after they occurred, give us an extremely valuable comment on what was happening. His sympathies are evident, and admittedly his position cannot be described as completely objective, but he could be detached about the Sydney events in a way in which few others who then wrote about them were. He wrote, one month later:

What strange and distressing things, I could relate to you about the sad ecclesiastical affairs in this unfortunate diocese, if time allowed me. You will be able to question Father Rocher. But if Rome, properly enlightened, does not bring a serious remedy to the evil which is gnawing at this land, I fear there will be misfortunes and defections from our holy Catholic church. We [Marists] are in an exceedingly difficult position. They have the
greatest mistrust of us. They would be very happy to implicate us. Our presence here vexes certain people. Who will speak to the Holy See on behalf of these poor Catholics, badly led, abandoned without help? These sad quarrels have distressed me very deeply.

Although sympathetic to him, Poupinel believed that ‘undoubtedly Mr Sentis has been mistaken in getting himself involved in this affair’. And he went on: ‘But after all, in submitting himself to the monitum of His Grace the Archbishop, [Sentis] has done much more than they had the right to require. It is said that they wanted to push him to the limit by making new demands. There is a pride and an obstinacy among these people which defies all description.’

Poupinel’s reaction to suspicions of Rocher was simple amusement, as his bantering references indicated on another occasion. In a letter to Rocher, he referred to how Rocher was supposed to be troubling the peace of Polding’s sleep. The tone of the remarks indicates how absurd he found such suspicion to be. But, he added, ‘I know that the archbishop was delighted at your departure’. This comment seems to indicate that Polding did indeed suspect Rocher. However, Rocher was soon gone, but Polding’s troubles remained.

The friendship of J.K. Heydon with the Marists, and particularly with Rocher, would have been a major part of the reason for Polding’s suspicion. When Rocher set off for his home leave, about seven weeks after the Victoria Theatre meeting, not only did Heydon’s eldest son George accompany him, but Heydon wrote up Rocher in the Freeman. Under the headline, ‘Father Rocher’s Departure’, he extolled the work which ‘for upwards of fourteen years’ had been quietly carried out by Rocher and his order. Heydon’s choice of a Marist Fathers’ college in France for the completion of George’s education was also a slight to the Benedictine college, Lyndhurst, which Polding was promoting.

Heydon was very satisfied with the education received by his son. After George’s studies had begun, he revealed his pride in him by publishing in his newspaper several of George’s long letters, written from St Chamond, describing the journey to Europe, and life at the college. He also wrote an editorial on ‘The Marist Fathers as Educators’, in which he published in full the curriculum of the college.

But despite Polding’s suspicions, it is consistent with the evidence that exists to say that there is no way in which the Marists appear to
have been involved in the events which led up to the protest meeting. Undoubtedly, like everyone else who was interested, they closely followed what was happening. Sydney was a city of only some 90,000 people at the time.

At a certain point, the Marists did become involved. The occasion was when the threats of excommunication were served on Sentis and Heydon. The two approached Poupinel, and asked his advice. Poupinel advised them to submit. He wrote to Favre, 'We persuaded the consul and Mr Heydon, our parishioner, to submit. We have brought all the pressure we could upon the others.'

On the same day as Poupinel wrote these words, 9 March 1859, Heydon's published statement of submission appeared in the Freeman's Journal, in the following terms: 'Mr Heydon [feels] perfectly convinced, after seeking the best possible advice, that the best possible course of all to follow is to submit, and to seek redress afterwards from the Holy See'. There seems a strong likelihood that Poupinel also helped frame the appeal.

Submission, and then making an appeal, was, without doubt, the 'best possible course' in the circumstances. In broader terms of the general good of the archdiocese, it reduced the explosive pressures which had burst out at the Victoria Theatre meeting. Even in the terms of narrow political tactics, it prevented the 'ultimate weapon' of excommunication from nullifying the effectiveness of the laymen. Defiance would have had the result of making the excommunications operative. Rome would never have given serious attention to appeals from men under this sentence for rebellion against lawful authority.

In these same narrow political terms, it was Polding who should have reappraised his position at this point. He would have been far wiser to negotiate in some manner, to ease the tensions, and prevent, if possible, the appeals from proceeding. Poupinel approached the archbishop twice, 'but I did not find any conciliatory ideas'. Polding's emotions were now deeply involved. The comments on those making the appeal which he sent to Rome were grossly inaccurate, describing the editor of the Freeman as an apostate monk. Heydon, a happily married convert to Catholicism, had been editing the paper for nearly three years.

Appeals to Rome by lay people against their bishop had an extremely poor record in the nineteenth century. This one, only a few years before the condemnations of the famous 'Syllabus of Errors' of Pius IX, came at a time when democrats were posing serious threats to the temporal power of the church in Italy. Yet this appeal from Sydney was not rejected or condemned. Barnabo's reply praised
the writers for their spirit of submission, but postponed the matter on technical grounds—probably in the hope that cooler feelings would prevail. The words which Polding had written in his commentary on those making the appeal show how much, once again, he was hoping for the unqualified condemnation he did not get.

Did the Marists exercise a Gallican influence upon Sydney’s lay Catholics? An oral tradition to this effect was attested to by the former archivist of the Sydney archdiocese, C.J. Duffy, in personal conversations. Earlier archivist J.J. McGovern also conjectured about Marist influence.27 McGovern’s written output about the Catholic church in Australia after 1845, when the Marists became part of the diocese, was slight, but his oral opinions exercised great influence. Suttor acknowledges a major debt of this kind to him, and also refers to Marist influence.28 M. Shanahan says explicitly about the French Marist Fathers, when writing about Heydon, ‘His education had been continued under their tutelage, and the French influence with its Gallican tendencies was strong in the writings of the Freeman’s Journal.’29

The assertion has never been evidenced, as far as I can discover, unless one accepts a rather dubious proposition that because Gallicanism was a French thing, all Frenchmen were probably Gallicans. The proposition hardly bears scrutiny, and the assertion seems based on a misapprehension of what Gallicanism was. This movement was not that of a laity turning against their bishops.30 It was rather an effort to sever relations between the French church, including many bishops, and Rome. At the time of the French Revolution, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy may be regarded as an attempt to create this separation. It would have turned the clergy into civil servants, and demanded of them an oath of allegiance to the state, which seemed scarcely compatible with the concept of a universal church and the spiritual authority of the Pope.

Jean Claude Colin, founder of the Marists, had his youth blighted by the French Revolution, which robbed him of his father. Like other loyal Catholics, his father rejected the clergy who had taken the oath of allegiance. Colin senior accepted only the priests who remained loyal to Rome. Jean Claude was deeply influenced by his father’s attitude.

Colin’s influence on the Marists was far from neutral in this matter.31 It was strongly anti-Gallican and pro-Roman. He had no time for the revolutionary spirit, and was depressed by the civil disturbances of 1830 and 1848. He constantly urged his followers to rely upon Rome, which represented universal Catholic traditions,
and wrote the point emphatically into the constitutions of the order. Quite certainly the Marists were ultramontanist rather than Gallican. In the Pacific, too, there is no question that the adherence of the Marists to the authority of Rome was unimpeachable. It was almost their only resource against the abuse of authority by bishops like Pompallier.

As regards the element in Gallicanism which tends to adhere to civil authority rather than the church, the charge is quite meaningless if made about the French Marists in Sydney. In fact, in this regard, those in the church who exhibited the closest links with civil authorities were undoubtedly Polding and Gregory. They were salaried civil servants, and in 1859, Polding had been receiving a government stipend for 25 years. Those Catholics who were advocating the abolition of state aid to religion greatly mistrusted this association of church and state.

If this question of Gallicanism has any relevance at all to the Australian scene, which is very doubtful, it is to Polding and Gregory that it applies, at least in regard to this close association with civil authorities. Perhaps the best indication of the absurdity of the charge of Gallicanism against the Marists is that the only event of the 1859 crises, in which they were unquestionably involved, was in advising the laity under threat of excommunication to submit to the archbishop and appeal the matter to Rome. This is the opposite of Gallicanism.
Poldings’s reaction: a contemporary account

It had been Polding’s hope that his Benedictine monastery would be a kind of spiritual powerhouse for Australian Catholics. Unfortunately, the problems inside the monastery, the resulting departures of monks, without any new vocations entering, and a growing negative attitude among the laity and the secular clergy towards the Benedictines, in the 1850s, almost neutralized its effectiveness.

Villa Maria was the only other house of religious priests in eastern Australia, which made its possible contribution all the more important. Such a house can have a kind of influence which is somewhat different from that of an individual priest, working alone in a parish, even though he may be sincere, hard working and holy. It is valued not only by lay people, but no less by other priests. The priests appreciate the sharing of ideas with fellow priests, of information on current theological or spiritual thought, and perhaps the opportunity of some time of personal reflection.

There was great need for many such places in the country at that time. The population explosion resulting from the gold rushes had thrust Australia forward rapidly, in every material sense, after 1851. There were thousands of people, who, in their homelands, would have been condemned by poverty, and rigid class distinctions, to a life of uninspiring sameness. In the new land, while many remained very poor, others grasped the chance for economic and social advancement. New horizons were opening. But spiritual growth was needed to accompany and complete the material prosperity. Religious orders would normally have been an important part of this development. Through Polding’s policies, and the loss of effectiveness of St Mary’s monastery, there was only one: the Society of Mary.
Several times, the Sydney clergy were taken to Villa Maria to make retreats, especially by McEncroe. Polding himself wrote to Poupinel in 1860, and referred to the lack, in the diocese, of any house where priests might make a retreat.¹

Lay people would, on the whole, have failed to notice such a lack. What they did notice was the absence of good schools. All parents who wish the best for their children give consideration to the choices available in education. In 1859, there was only one Catholic school in the Sydney archdiocese offering advanced education to university entrance level: the Lyndhurst Academy, run by the Benedictines. It need not have been so, as people knew.

The Irish Christian Brothers had in 1843 opened three schools in Sydney. They were a total contrast to the predominantly shabby, inadequate schools which went by the name Catholic until that time. The departure of the brothers, three years later, because of their fear of Polding’s Benedictinizing policies, deprived New South Wales of the first such teachers of quality the colony had known. But the people had not forgotten.

As soon as Victor Poupinel arrived in Sydney, he learnt of public interest in a Marist school. ‘Very many lay people want us to establish a college here,’ he wrote shortly after he arrived. He went on to conjecture about the staffing of a school. In Xavier Montrouzier he had available a priest whose reputation for his knowledge of the natural sciences was extremely high in Sydney. Montrouzier had been invited to the home of Alexander Macleay to lecture on the observations he had made of the natural history of the different islands of Melanesia, where he had been stationed. These were rare examples of such observations made by a member of the very first party of Europeans to live on such islands. Benoît Forestier was another who was highly esteemed. Add a good layman to teach English, and the venture would be well on its way.²

Both of the meetings mentioned in the previous chapter, of laymen and clergy, convened at Polding’s invitation in July and August 1858, made suggestions about introducing into the archdiocese religious clergy and teachers, and the establishment of schools. McEncroe left Australia soon afterwards, determined to act upon these initiatives, and carrying, he believed, diocesan approval to do so. The archdeacon was officially responsible for primary education in the Sydney archdiocese. He was not alone in his belief that approval had been given. Father John Paul Roche, the Benedictine parish priest of Campbelltown, announced that the Christian Brothers were to be reintroduced, as a result of a decision which had
been taken by the clergy of the archdiocese in conference there. He declared that a subscription would be called for that purpose.\textsuperscript{3}

In addition, the bishops themselves had made a similar decision. When Polding met with Goold and Willson, to issue their \textit{Monitum Pastorale}, ‘They decided,’ reported Poupinel, ‘that it was necessary to admit to their dioceses, and encourage, religious congregations of both sexes, especially for the christian education of youth’.\textsuperscript{4} All the signs seemed propitious.

The first direct approach came to the Marists from their controversial admirer, J.K. Heydon. He wrote to Poupinel asking if the Marists would be ready to establish a college. He wrote in his capacity as a fellow of St John’s College, on the basis that the university required matriculated entrants. Poupinel said that he made a non-committal reply. But he felt a surge of optimism as he reported it to his superior general. They would not have much difficulty, he went on in the letter just quoted, in matching up to the standard of schools in the diocese: ‘The only house of instruction which exists in the diocese is the little house of studies [Lyndhurst], as wretched as can be’. But despite the diocesan need suggested by this opinion, no action was taken by the Benedictine authorities.

In Europe, Favre was approached by McEncroe personally, while the latter was visiting Lyon, in February 1859. The archdeacon volunteered to assist the language problem for the French priests by arranging Irish vocations to the Marists. These would go to help the Marist college in Sydney.

It was not a time when Irish bishops were very ready to accede to requests for the opening of houses of foreign congregations, but in Ireland, McEncroe was persuasive, and as a result of his negotiations, a Marist house opened the same year at Dundalk, a coastal town north of Dublin. In August, Chaurain announced in London that he was completing the signing of the document of purchase of the Dundalk property. It was finally signed, after a delay, on 22 October. Chaurain wrote, ‘It is thanks to Archdeacon McEncroe that we succeeded. Irish bishops, and especially the parish priests, are not very enthusiastic about having religious communities close to them, particularly communities which are active’.\textsuperscript{5}

Favre notified Poupinel officially, in October 1859, that he was prepared to found a college in Sydney, provided Polding agreed, and said that he would prefer to delay opening the Irish novitiate for a year or two, so as to begin the Sydney college as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{6}

McEncroe’s success in Ireland was such that he was soon
addressing all the bishops of the country in a circular, asking them for good priests and teachers for Australia, either via 'the Marist society at Dundalk, or to enter the Missionary colleges of All Hallows and Carlow'. The sequel in Australia, whereby the archdeacon's efforts were brought to a halt for another ten years or more, has hitherto been somewhat obscured by the lack of documentation. It will be valuable, then, to follow the events in a contemporary account, from a letter of Victor Poupinel, written on 8 September 1859, to Rocher in France.

The festivities at Sydney University in July, Poupinel began, had focused everyone's attention again on the need for secondary schools. He went on:

The question had taken a step forward since last year. Our eloquent and learned Benedictines had [finally] agreed that Lyndhurst was not giving all the satisfaction which could be desired, and that something more was still needed, for the legitimate requirements of the Catholic community to be met. A meeting of the Fellows of St John's College was therefore held, as I told you in my previous letter. We were not told a word about this gathering until after it had taken place, and if I had known that they were going to talk about us, I would have taken steps beforehand to keep our name out of the discussion.

Everyone was in agreement on the question of the need for secondary schools. Mr Heydon, of course, put forward the Marists, and stated as an unchallengeable fact that our Sydney Benedictines were unsatisfactory. He spoke too strongly, I have no doubt. There were so many interruptions, especially by [Benedictine] Father Corish, that, in spite of encouragement from the opposing party, he decided to finish. Mr Plunkett was no more successful. He found it hard to bring his discourse to an end.

The refrain from the St Mary's party was constantly this: give the money to His Grace, send your boys to Lyndhurst, have confidence in our word, and all will be well. The reply, as you can guess, was this: as for money, we won't give you any, our confidence you can have [?].

The outcome of the meeting was to name a committee whose mission was to have an interview with the archbishop, so as to get his consent for an official approach to be made to us, to seek the founding of a college. Mr Butler, one of the more moderate members, who had had the good sense not to get involved in the sad affair of Dr Bassett, was given the responsibility for making the request to his Grace. He was to be refused, as you will have guessed. But, since Mr Butler insisted
on knowing why, His Lordship finished by saying that the Marists were not competent, that in any case, their purpose was only to teach the catechism, to teach children reading and writing, and finally, that the Pope had forbidden him from receiving into his diocese an unsuitable congregation and so on. The discussion was warm, they said, and the prelate showed himself inflexible and imperious as you know him. The sequel to all this was that Dr Gregory, to occupy his overlong leisure time, set about repeating that we were foolish and proud to want to found a college in Sydney, that... and that... So much so, that Mr Faucett, and others after him, repeated ‘Nonsense!’ ‘That’s absurd’. Naturally, these statements hardly tickled my ears.

In the meantime, the circular letter of Fr McEncroe to the bishops of Ireland has been reproduced by the papers, and the common opinion here is that this letter, and the activities of the venerable and little-loved archdeacon, were not pleasing at all to St Mary’s. You would think we had had something to do with it, as also with the course of action of Mr Butler and his Fellows.

So, I set off for St Mary’s, but no one was at home. The Very Reverend, and Right Reverend Doctors were at Subiaco. Four days later, I found only Dr Gregory there. I had a long conference with him. I made all my explanations to him. I assured him that we would not try to have a college against the wish of the archbishop, that this would be foolish, and so on... I explained how our name came to be mixed up in this affair. I added that, nevertheless, I could not allow errors about the purpose of our society to be spread abroad, and that therefore, I was going to take measures to reestablish the truth.

The doctor repeated to me many times that it was not out of jealousy that we were not wanted, that they would be happy to welcome our presence some time in the future, but that for the moment they had to save Lyndhurst, which was heavily in debt, and not give the victory to the demagogues... [long section omitted]

Dr Gregory told me, and anyway, it has been said to plenty of others, that this request of Mr Butler, like the meeting about Dr Bassett and its sequels, were simply a war of the Irish against the archbishop and his vicar general, because they were English. I also learnt from this same fount of wisdom that the Irish are not capable of running a college. When one has only Lyndhurst to show, one ought to be a little more modest.

You could talk for a long time about Lyndhurst, if you didn’t mind wasting your time. Subiaco is no longer on the increase. Along with the two sisters who are dead, and the other
that Fr Chanel is not willing to cure, I now have to tell you that Miss Philips, on the point of taking the habit, after two years' postulancy, has just returned to her family, and is waiting for the Sisters of Mercy [to arrive in Australia], to ask to be received into their convent. A novice and a postulant are going to leave for England, to seek out another community there. It would not be difficult, I assure you, to start a revolution at Subiaco. The number of pupils is decreasing, too. Miss Therry has taken the habit. You will read the archbishop's circular in the Freeman of the day before yesterday. It seems very odd to several people. St Mary's is thirsty for money.

Will Fr McEnroe bring back any Marist Brothers? We know nothing at all, except what the papers say. If they come, they will be well received by the people, I am quite sure. As you know, there is an enormous amount of good to be done among the youth of this great city. If the diocesan administration sincerely supports them, encourages them, and directs them with zeal, I will be very astonished.

Regarded with jealousy and suspected as we are, we will hardly be in a situation of being very useful. Yet, if they wished, we could do them very great good.

It is important, should the brothers be sent, that the superior general gives me advice, and suggests the course to follow.

If we were given charge of a parish in [the city of] Sydney, provided that it was independent of St Mary's, we would do a lot of good in it very easily, since, just as is the case with Lyndhurst, there is no competition whatever to fear. We would be useful to other parishes, and we could be a very great help to the brothers. If I was their Superior General, I would not give any to Sydney, except with this as a stipulated condition. I say that, because it seems to me that in this country we ought to be the natural and devoted protectors of the Marist Brothers.

Please speak about this with Father General, and as you know the places and people, tell him what your thoughts are on this subject.

For us to have a church in Sydney, it would be necessary for us to be forced upon the archbishop, but it would be a good thing if it happened, both in his own interest, and in the interest of his people. Give us some prior notice, and with a priest who already knows English, this would not be all that difficult a task.

Poupinel allowed his thoughts and his pen to ramble on somewhat here, but the letter conveys well the general depressed state of the church in Sydney under the ailing Benedictine administration, and
how frustratingly easy it would have been for a surge of energy to have infused the entire structure. It is also interesting that nine years later the Marist Fathers were offered a parish in central Sydney, and that the Marist Brothers came first to that parish, although originally requested to begin elsewhere.

Poupinel accepted Gregory's explanations, and declared that he was quite satisfied. But he insisted on one point: there would have to be a reply to the errors spread against the Society of Mary by Gregory's remarks. The Freeman's Journal carried his reply on the Saturday after the interview, 27 August 1859. It consisted of a leading article entitled, 'The Society of Mary', in which he outlined Marist origins and their priestly works: parishes, missions and, discreetly emphasized, schools. Four weeks later, further reinforcement of the last item was made in a follow-up article, ‘The Society of the Petits Freres de Marie, or Teaching Brothers’.

And so justice was done, at least in regard to Marist determination to have their good name restored in the public forum. But justice was not done to Sydney parents, who had only the unhappy Lyndhurst for a Catholic boys' college. The first Marist school, if Polding had merely said the word, could have been in operation before the end of 1859. It is ironical that, following on the death of Polding in 1877, his successor, Archbishop Vaughan, asked the Marist Fathers to establish a college for boys at Villa Maria. He intended to close Lyndhurst, he said, which he described as 'materially, financially and morally rotten'. Joly cabled the request to Lyon, and received the refusal on 25 July 1877. Two years before that, and about fifteen years after Polding refused to invite the priests to open a secondary school in Sydney, the Marist Brothers opened the diocese's first secondary school for boys after Lyndhurst, at St Patrick's, Church Hill.

Overseas, McEncroe saw all his extremely successful negotiations and planned improvements for Catholic primary and secondary education in Sydney brought to nothing, if not by the Benedictine dream, at least in order to protect one of its relics.

It is easy to believe, although only Marist sources say it, that Polding was suspicious of the French priests. In the letter just quoted, Poupinel also wrote, 'The archbishop has said that this affair was stirred up by the Marists, who were wanting to pursue their own purposes'. However, at this time, Polding was ready to suspect everyone. It is clear that the Marists themselves believed that the archbishop's suspicion that they were stirring up trouble was unfounded.
By the following year, Abbot Gregory had been ordered by Rome to return to England. The major crises over the Bassett affair and the Victoria Theatre meeting, and especially the dismissal of Sister de Lacy, were undoubtedly among the reasons. Despite, or more probably because of Polding's intense efforts to discover who was ultimately responsible, a good deal of mystery shrouded this order for Gregory's removal at the time. The archbishop was completely shattered by the loss of the one who was more or less his only unquestioning supporter. For years, he exerted intense efforts to find out the cause of the order, and to have it reversed. We now know that an enquiry took place in Rome, and Ullathorne was chief among those consulted over the Sydney problems. The original intention of Barnabo had been to send Ullathorne to Sydney as the delegate of the Holy See, to hold an enquiry into the affairs of Polding's diocese. But Ullathorne strenuously opposed this, and was finally successful. He urged, among other arguments, that it would cause Polding to fall into a state of depression.\(^{11}\)

But only Polding was surprised at Gregory's removal. The other bishops in Australia had no time for him, and believed he should be removed. Goold was especially of this opinion, and undoubtedly had an influence on the decision. As far as the authorities in Rome were concerned, the important point was that half a dozen different disputes surrounding the Benedictine administration in Sydney had been taken to Rome in the past fifteen years. Some of them were extremely bitter, such as that over how the Passionist missionaries were treated on Stradbroke Island, and the one which took place inside the Sydney monastery. That an obscure diocese, at the furthest end of the globe, had been the subject of so much controversy suggested that action should be taken. Roman authorities formed their own opinions about Polding. Barnabo once described him as a despot.\(^{12}\) Short of removing Polding himself, the next best thing seemed to be to remove the chief target of popular dislike, Gregory.

The second step was to do what had been done to Pompallier in 1843, and trim severely the size of Polding's area of responsibility. The creation of new dioceses was something which McEncroe had long urged, well aware that people in Rome had only the vaguest idea of the gigantic distances in Australia. Between 1859 and 1865, Rome took this course. In those few years, the dioceses of Brisbane —comprising the entire colony of Queensland—Goulburn, Bathurst, Maitland and Armidale were removed. The next major alteration in the Sydney archdiocesan boundaries did not take place for another 86 years, until 1951, when Wollongong was cut off.
Gregory's virtue was not called into question by his removal, whatever might have been implied about his tact and judgement. Therefore, Polding's long fight to have him reinstated was like a fight against a fog. The removal seemed the best thing for the general good, but because of the implied insult to a good man, no one was anxious to admit responsibility to Polding. The archbishop could find no clear target to attack.

The effect of all of this upon Polding is perhaps best illustrated from a remarkable visit to Villa Maria, which took place on 14 May 1860, graphically described in the following letter from Poupinel.¹³

Villa Maria, 31 May 1860.

Dear Father [Rocher],

The assurance which Father General kindly gave me, that it would not be long before you leave la belle France again, to return to your land of adoption, has given me great joy. You will be welcomed with open arms, I assure you. Today I will say nothing at all about the plans for our new property, nor of anything to do with it. We are waiting for the plans which Father General promised me. Then in the course of the month which is about to begin, we will be able to study the question, and will communicate our ideas in our letter of July. We will make certain of our proper boundaries.

Today, I am going to let you know about a mysterious, unexpected visit, with which Villa Maria has been honoured. Some background will lead into my story.

Around 20 April, a devout Irishman came to us, armed with a note from Father McEncroe. This is his story. The climate of Ireland did not suit him, so he set out for Australia. A storm and a shipwreck stranded him first at Capetown, then at Mauritius, where he spent four years.

Learning that there were Benedictines at Perth, he went there to offer himself to them. But it appeared that in Perth, as in other places, they are not going as well as could be desired. After he stayed there for a time, serving a church and a priest, our friend came on to Sydney, to offer himself to the English Benedictines. He was rather mystified, on his arrival, to learn that the Benedictines, at least the brothers, are all finished, excepting Brother Jerome. Our poor fellow was penniless. Being very coldly received by His Grace, he called on Father McEncroe, who sent him to us.

I sent him off again the same day, with a few shillings, but Father McEncroe, who had come to spend two and a half days with us, asked us to accept him, assuring us that he was well
recommen...d that he might be useful to us, especially in New Zealand. So Lawrence has been with us since the beginning of this month. He is a very pious man, of delicate health it is true, but Brother Gennade is very satisfied with him. As he lived in Mauritius, he knows French well enough, and can understand what is said to him.

On the 14th of this month, I was in Sydney to make my farewells to Mr de Daisset[?]. Father Joly and Brother John were also in the city. But towards midday, Mr Murphy arrived at Villa Maria, accompanied by Rev. Doctor Hayes, Dean of Geelong, Victoria. This was the gentleman who received, accompanied, etc., Bishop Bataillon to Melbourne. Brother Joseph received these gentlemen as well as he was able. They asked to see the work we are doing on the new property, and Brother Gennade introduced Mr Murphy to our Brother Lawrence.

Mr Murphy is Irish, as you know. He began with a great eulogy of His Grace the Archbishop. Lawrence replied, ‘I am glad to hear that there are people who speak well of the archbishop, because I have heard a lot of people who speak badly about him in Sydney.’

The eulogies began again, with more emphasis. ‘If anyone speaks badly of His Grace’, replied Lawrence, putting it the way the Irish think, ‘it is not surprising: he is an Englishman.’

Lawrence recounted his conversation to Brother Gennade, who said to him, ‘You made a mistake’. Father Joly and I knew nothing of this. But on with my story.

The day after the Ascension, shortly after 10 o’clock, I was having a glance at the Herald. Our dogs began barking loudly for a moment. I hurry out to see the cause of the barking, and beneath the verandah I find ... guess who? You are right. His Grace the Archbishop. He was accompanied by the Rev. Dr Powell of Melbourne, and Mr Murphy.

With military precision, I made my genuflexion, and kissed the episcopal ring. Brother Joseph, brushing his hair with a cabbage [sic], put on his coat and came into the sitting room, to find out if this noble company was going to honour our dinner table with its presence. His Grace replied to me that this was impossible, as he had an appointment in Sydney at one o’clock. I tried to find out if they were on their way back from Subiaco, or were going there. The replies were evasive, but the coachman told the brothers that His Grace had come from Sydney, and was returning to Sydney. What had happened? To come expressly to us is quite serious. Here is the reason stated for the visitation.
‘I have come to have an interview in your presence with the Irishman newly arrived at your place. He spoke badly about me.’

I gave the instructions, and instantly the brothers and the domestics said, ‘Poor fellow. He has been caught’. I have mentioned that I knew nothing. Our man enters, quite silent, after having armed himself with a good sign of the cross, and the hearing begins. Mr Murphy was present.

‘You said of me: “He is an Englishman”. These three words contain a kind of calumny, and you have committed an exceedingly grievous sin, for which you should confess and do penance.’

Interiorly, I shrug my shoulders with pity, and say to myself, ‘Ah! How hard they are!’

Our poor Lawrence did not lose his head, and replied that he had not intended to speak evil of His Grace. And then, speaking to Mr Murphy, he said:

‘You have not acted as a gentleman, and one day you could well find yourself on the street, without anyone to take pity on you.’

Our man withdrew, and His Lordship had not left, before our Irishmen were already told about this strange hardness of the archbishop. The latter wanted me not to keep Lawrence. My reply was, “Videbitur infra” [roughly, “We’ll see”].

Later, however, when I learnt that this statement had been made at Villa Maria, I let Mr Murphy and Dr Gregory know, in order that it would go higher, that I was astonished at the conduct of Mr Murphy, that it was to me that he had been wanting in respect. I said that I was surprised that His Grace had put himself out so much in order to reprimand a poor man, whom we had received through charity; that if the reprimand made to him was actually intended for me, I was not accepting it; that we had nothing whatever to reproach ourselves about. Father Ambrosoli was my intermediary. The Doctor replied to me, through the same agent, that His Grace had not come to Villa Maria because of Lawrence, but over the other matter. I was well aware of it, but I wanted to get him to say it.

Here then is the other matter. Messrs Powell and Murphy had left me alone with His Grace. Father Joly was away in Sydney. His Grace, taking a letter out of his pocket, said to me:

‘I did not think I would run into you, so I wrote something down which I wish to communicate to you. I am going to read it to you’.

‘Tiens,’ I said to myself. ‘Is it a new monitum?’

The letter was five large pages long, with writing which was quite small for an Englishman. The object was to warn me
that Mr Heydon was a Catholic in name only. That he was an infidel, a disciple of Voltaire, that he had done so much damage to religion, that he would have to do one—or several—centuries of penance, before earning a pardon. That the contacts between Father Joly and Heydon were a scandal. And that they were in fact causing scandal on the Sydney ferry steamer.

The reading of the memorial being over, His Lordship, to my great regret, put the letter back into his pocket. Then he was going to leave without hearing my reply.

Here is a short résumé of my reply:

‘First, I am happy to have this opportunity of saying to Your Grace that, in spite of the affairs of the Sydney diocese which were pending in Rome, our superior general could not refuse Father Rocher the consolation of going to visit the tombs of the apostles. But he gave him a formal command not to give any information about these affairs to anyone, and not to talk about them. Father Rocher avoided seeing the numerous English bishops who were in Rome, particularly Dr Ullathorne. Cardinal Barnabo, at the very beginning of the first interview, asked for information from Father, who apologized for saying nothing. And then the cardinal informed him that Dr Gregory would be obliged to leave Sydney. I also learnt the news from three other sources.

‘Did Father Rocher tell you why the Lord Abbot has to leave?’

‘No, Your Grace. He only told me the news, and did not make the slightest observation to me.’

At Sydney, they act out lies so impudently, that it gave me a lot of satisfaction to make His Grace aware, that if we were silent, it was because we chose to be. I added that the action taken by the Holy See had astonished me, that Rome does not decide easily to take such measures.

Then, as I was closing the door of his carriage, I had the audacity to ask in a coaxing tone: ‘Will the Doctor leave soon?’ The answer would have done honour to a Norman.* He neither said yes nor no.

Let us return to the Voltairian, Heydon. I said to the archbishop that personally I had had extremely few contacts with this wretched man. That several times I had someone urge [?] him to avoid in his newspaper all untoward discussion. That I thought that, in a long time, there had been few things worthy of reproach in the Freeman. That Father Joly had been united

* Poupinel himself was from Normandy.
with me: that for several months our efforts had been directed towards inducing Mr Heydon to leave his newspaper. That this would happen soon, but that material interests were tied up in it, and it took time. I went on:

'Mr Heydon has made mistakes, and this is not surprising. I think he made them through ignorance. But good could be achieved through him. As for Father Joly, he has contacts with Mr Heydon as rarely as possible, but some of them are necessary, and some are convenient. He is the most influential, the most regular and the most generous of the parishioners. He has his supporters, and prudence forbids Father from creating a split in the parish. He sees him on the ferry steamer, but cannot avoid this. He has several times, for this reason, changed the day he travels to Sydney. He does what he can to keep by himself, and always takes a book.'

I promised to make another observation to Father Joly, and we parted.

There was another matter about which neither of us spoke. I mean the archbishop and I. It is the subscription for Dr Gregory. There was not one reference to it. Alas! Our silence, and especially our abstention are painful to them. Do not forget this recent statement of Alexander Dumas: at the bottom of all in England, there is a speculation.*

Father Dupont once told me, that in his youth, there were at Conde, two lawyers. Each of them pleaded for what he lacked: one for honour, the other for money. Those of whom I am speaking are making their collection for both esteem and money at the same time. What is happening here is very sad, I assure you. In all the ecclesiastical affairs of this country, there are always priests who are prompt to take Easter and Christmas dues, and are very unconcerned about the ritual destitution in which the population groans.

To get back to the visit of 18 May. If I had two more conferences like that with His Grace, I would soon get bold, and if it were not for my position I would be ready to let them know what I really think. Anyway, we hardly see anyone, and we do not discuss what happens at all. They will offer us little thanks for this reserve. The Freeman is sold. Mr Heydon leaves it the day after tomorrow. I am happy about it for him and for us. Dolman is the purchaser. In other words, the paper is now in

* Poupinel's English has let him down here, but from the context it is clear that by 'speculation', he means the desire for money.
the hands of the archbishop. I congratulate them both. Already, for a long time, the *Freeman* has been saying nothing against Dr Gregory. Or at least, it is only making war on him by silence. But the *Empire*, and even the *Herald* are publishing letters which must be very upsetting to these gentlemen, if they have any feelings at all.

It is fairly likely that it was Mr Gerald Philips who, without intending to, spoke of the contacts between Father Joly and Mr Heydon, and who was the cause of the visitation. He has been given the task of making the collection for Dr Gregory, which he does very discreetly. He approached Mr Joubert. Here is a résumé of the reply:

‘No, for three reasons. I have had great losses this year, and I have no money to spare. I am not upset about it at all—Dr Gregory is not lacking for anything. It is a testimonial of esteem: I have not the slightest esteem for him. Two guineas or two pence, he will get nothing from me.’

Mr Joubert seems very pleased with the conferences of Father Felix. He is enjoying reading them. He came to thank me the very day I sent them to him. Mr Ellis also seems to have been pleased with the two dictionaries of Bouillet. Mr Joubert seems to be mellowing with religious ideas, and the other day, talking to a devout Protestant, he said to him after a discussion: ‘You will become a Catholic. Because there is no half-way house between Catholicism and Deism.’

Enough for now.

All yours in J.M.J.

V.Poupinel

The behaviour of Polding over Lawrence’s remark, ‘He is an Englishman’, and the archbishop’s exaggerated castigating of the unfortunate Irishman, suggest that the pressure of events had affected his mind. The moody, suspicious way he behaved over such a trifling comment, even though it was only the pretext of his visit, make it appear that the shock of Gregory’s removal, which culminated years of stoicism in the face of public criticism and opposition, had brought him close to the point of mental breakdown. The only energy he had was for the relentless campaign which he undertook to find out who was responsible for the order for Gregory to return, and to have it reversed.

Were the Marists involved in Gregory’s removal? There is no evidence, except from Marist sources, to suggest that they were
involved at all in any of these events. Their reasons for avoiding such involvement were clear. Rocher's visit to Lyon and Rome occurred while McEncroe's negotiations for a Marist school in Sydney still seemed to Favre likely to succeed. Favre was well aware of the delicate Sydney situation from the first-hand accounts of McEncroe and Rocher. Moreover, he did not wish to place Villa Maria in any jeopardy. Hence Rocher had been explicitly forbidden to discuss the Sydney matters in Rome. One can only conclude that they were not directly involved in Gregory's removal.

This is not to say that the Marists did not contribute in any indirect way to the Roman decision to remove Gregory. McEncroe may well have quoted them to Barnabo, or to his friends at the Irish college. Poupinel, in his correspondence with Favre, made no secret of his view that Gregory was a big factor in the Sydney troubles. 'Our poor Catholics of Sydney,' Poupinel wrote in one such letter, 'are greatly upset, and no one can tell where it will all end. How unfortunate, for a people who are so good, to have a vicar general who is so odd, lacking in good sense, lacking judgement, leading the archbishop.' Then, having related the events concerning the Bassett affair and Sentis, he concluded:

I saw the archbishop twice, but I did not find any conciliatory ideas. The government is rubbing its hands with delight. The Protestants are rejoicing.

Will not the Holy See come to the rescue of this unfortunate diocese? Everything is wasting away through the fault of the administration, which is really blind. We must use the greatest prudence not to become involved. If, then, there was someone who could take in hand in Rome the Sydney affair, and get rid of Dr Gregory, what a great benefit it would be!

It is not possible to know what part such remarks might have had in the decision to remove Gregory. But Barnabo wrote to Polding, 'Men prudent and worthy of trust have several times placed before this Holy Congregation the necessity of recalling home the praiseworthy and religious man.' It is not difficult to suppose that Marist views had reached Barnabo in some way. However, there is no record of any contact.

The tragedy of the events of 1859, in Polding's archdiocese, is that those concerned were indeed well meaning, and sincerely desired the good of the church as they saw it. The simplistic view of these events, adopted by a few writers, who would wish to exonerate Polding from
all responsibility and blame, for these scandals of public charge and counter charge, does scant justice to so many lay people, religious and clergy, who found the administration of the diocese high-handed and unbearably authoritarian, even in an authoritarian day. The obvious disdain with which quite balanced criticisms were received by Polding and Gregory aroused stronger feelings and increased opposition.

The situation of the Marists in relation to these events was extremely delicate, but it seems that Polding was wrong in suspecting that they, or Rocher in particular, sided actively with the opposition. Some of the active critics of Polding were indeed friends—and parishioners—of the Marists. But others, equally active, were not. I have found no record of any contact at all between Rocher and Daniel Deniehy or Richard O'Connor, both strong critics of the Catholic administration, and extremely influential men. It is also true that some of the educated Catholics, who did not get involved against Polding in any way, such as Eyre Ellis and Thomas Makinson, were close friends of the Marists.

When directly approached for advice by those threatened with excommunication, it was perfectly proper that the Marists advised them of their rights. The recommendation to submit is hardly subversive, and anyone has the right to appeal to Rome. Marist involvement in the question of founding a college was not due to their own initiative, but it would hardly seem to matter if it had been. Sydney's population had more than doubled since their arrival, to more than 90,000, and its need for better facilities for Catholic education was obvious to all. In these circumstances, the apparent opportunity, which he had in no way sought, was not one towards which Poupinel ought to have been more coy than he was. He knew well that, given permission, his order could have contributed greatly to the education of the Catholic youth of Sydney.

Polding's extremely defensive tactics to the approach of the lay committee, and his disparaging remarks about Marist educational capability, do him little credit. As Poupinel commented about similar disparaging references by Gregory concerning Irish educationalists, 'When one has only Lyndhurst to show, one ought to be a little more modest'.

The decision by Polding to reject this opportunity, whether using the Marists or not, is hard to justify in terms of the needs of his people. It seems that 'to save Lyndhurst ... and not to give the victory to the demagogues' the archbishop sacrificed something which would have been to the real good of his diocese. One can only
conjecture what would have been the effect upon the later Catholic education situation had these initiatives of the Catholic laity and clergy not been stifled by a tragic use of episcopal authority.

Even more sad is the fact that Polding also brought to nothing McEnroe’s negotiations in France and Ireland. These had not merely been aimed at founding another boys’ college taught by religious, but at something more: the establishment of a proper training school for teachers. A fifteen-year start could have been gained towards a solidly based Catholic education system. This would have placed the Catholic community in a very different situation, in the controversies over state funding for private schools, in the 1870s.

Once again, it seems quite clear that Polding must bear most of the responsibility for his refusal to the proposal by the fellows of St John’s College. The full story of this event, only revealed by Poupinel’s letter, is further graphic proof, if any were needed, that Gregory cannot be made bear the blame for the inadequacies of Polding’s administration. It was the archbishop himself, not his vicar general, who received the deputation. His pique was directed first against the fellows themselves, who had been elected over many of his nominees, although some of his nominees were among them. It was undoubtedly directed in a very special way against J.K.Heydon. And it was also directed against the Marists. But he gave no permission for an invitation to be extended to any alternative religious order. More years were to pass before he allowed his lieutenants to begin new moves to invite religious orders of men into his diocese. As we shall see, all those who were initially approached, refused.
The successes achieved by the Marist sisterhood in the education of girls in Lyon and surrounding areas did not encourage Colin or Pompallier to think about how much might be able to be achieved by dedicated women, working among girls of New Zealand and the Pacific islands. Some Marists soon did, but they were men of their time. To them, the Pacific was unknown, but they had no doubt that it would be a place of high risk of death for the missionaries, whether from cannibals or unknown disease. They did not dream of involving women in such risks by inviting them to take part immediately: some future role awaited them.

One woman was soon thinking differently, and was prepared to do something about it. She knew the risks, but believed that taking risks was something which she was entitled to do on her own account. Marie-Françoise Perroton wanted to go to the Pacific.

Born at St Nizier, Lyon, on 6 February 1796, Perroton worked actively in the 1820s for Pauline Jaricot’s Propagation de la foi. The mission-centred activities of this organization kept the needs of the apostolate before people’s minds. There was regular preaching about the missions, which accompanied appeals for contributions, and there was also the publication of the Annales of the association. In the pages of this journal, Françoise read the letters of the first Pacific missionaries. They inspired and excited her in a way which no other correspondence published in the periodical had ever done. She determined that she was going to work in the Pacific islands. But getting there would not be easy.

Among the obstacles, one was the attitude of the Catholic
Church. Even in civil society, the status of women in the mid-nineteenth century was so subordinate that we recognize with admiration certain exceptional individuals who overcame barriers, and did impressive social work, as Florence Nightingale in nursing, and Caroline Chisholm in assisting migrants.

The Catholic church was even further behind in its attitudes towards women. Church law could be said, not unfairly, to regard women with suspicion, and to relegate them to an inferior social position. Pauline Jaricot achieved incredible things for the missions, but the church did not have to change any laws to be able to channel towards the missions the moneys her ideas and organizational brilliance gathered. In the missions, only religious orders of women were given any recognition, but few were then working in really primitive areas. There were very few male lay workers in the Marist missions when Perroton decided that she was going to work in the Pacific.

Judging by letters she later wrote, two Marists who did advise and encourage her were Pierre Julian Eymard, the Marist provincial, who later left the order to found the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, and Victor Poupinel. On their advice, she took great care not to approach Colin, in order not to put him in an embarrassing position, as it was unlikely that he would have encouraged her. He did not meet her, and was not told about her before she had gone.

An unbelievable opportunity occurred. Perroton had no means of paying her own way to the Pacific, and there was no chance of obtaining money from Propagation de la foi, or the Marists. But suddenly the opportunity of a passage occurred with the newly formed Société de l'Océanie. She approached Auguste Marceau and requested a place aboard the Arche de l'Alliance, offering to work her passage as a servant. Marceau accepted her. And so in 1845, at the age of 49, she left the gentle world in which she had lived all her life, and set sail for the unknown.

To say that Perroton was not welcomed at Wallis is an understatement. Bataillon was shocked. What in Heaven's name did she think she was doing here? He and his men had no time to look after her, and as far as he was concerned, she could turn right around and go back home! Perroton did not cower before this man who had put fear into so many hearts. Not showing her perturbation, she asked very little. She did not intend to be a nuisance to the missionaries in any way. All she requested was to be allowed to receive holy communion, and nothing beyond that.

Despite the bravery of her words and attitude, the conditions must have been shockingly difficult for the lone European woman
during her first eight years on Wallis, and also afterwards on Futuna. Yet, lacking any resources which might be regarded as minimal, her success was striking. She made her apostolate among the Polynesian women. Even obtuse males could see the inestimable value of her work among the hitherto neglected young girls. The conclusion was inescapable, and soon recognized by Bataillon: there was undoubtedly a place for dedicated women in the missions. However, he asked that no more be sent unless he requested them.4

Once again, it was in the pages of the Annales de la Propagation de la foi that the story of her lonely apostolate was first told. Then, when Bishop Bataillon returned to France in 1856, accompanied by his three Polynesian students for the priesthood, an immense impression was made on devout Catholics, during the months he travelled around making appeals for donations. The need for companions for Perroton was obvious, and Bataillon agreed with other Marists that more women religious should be sent. Favre said the volunteers were to be referred to Father François Yardin.

The situation was anything but simple. No precedents existed which indicated the best way to arrange for preparation of the would-be missionaries. Nevertheless, Yardin prepared some sort of program, and a first group of three of these volunteers left France in November 1857. Nothing had been finalized. Decisions would be made based on experience. They were not officially religious, and no title had been given to the group. Bataillon referred to them as Dames de Charité, a name which was adopted.5 They reached Sydney on 3 March 1858. They were housed with the Irish Sisters of Charity for three months, but once a week they had a day at Villa Maria. They left for Futuna on 30 May on a specially chartered ship, the Louis et Miriam. Poupinel, who travelled with them, took it directly to Futuna, so that no adverse reaction from Protestant missionaries in other places might be aroused.6

In the absence of any legal establishment, the relationship of the volunteers with the Marists was secured by letting them be members of the Third Order of Mary. The personal religious name, ordinarily adopted at the time of profession in the third order by new members, was used by each of them as her name, and they wore a simple religious habit. A provisional rule had been drafted for them by Poupinel at Favre’s request. It was revised, after some months of practical experience, and issued at Futuna on 24 August 1858. It was addressed ‘To the Sisters of Charity of the Third Order of Mary’.
Thirteen years after she first arrived, Françoise Perrotton welcomed the first reinforcements she had received, made her own profession, and adopted the religious name Sister Marie du Mont Carmel. One sister remained with her on Futuna, and the other two went to Wallis.

The New Caledonia mission was anxious to provide help for their Melanesian girls. The second group of sisters reached Sydney on 30 October 1858, and were briefly given accommodation with a Catholic lady living near the Ryde church, and then stayed with the Benedictine sisters at Subiaco. They left for New Caledonia on 18 November 1858, to make a beginning there.

Difficulties abounded. Despite Poupinel’s presence and help, and the numerous letters he exchanged with Yardin over questions concerning the sisters, their training, suitable materials for habits in the tropics, and so on, progress was by trial and error. Physical discomforts were great. In New Caledonia upon arrival, Sister de la Croix developed painful infections on arms and legs from bites of mosquitoes and midges. They had to become skilful in killing fleas. And there were all the problems of white skin in tropical sunlight and heat. These problems, which the priests took for granted as regards themselves, seem to have been more embarrassing to them because they were happening to women, and the priests felt responsible.

But the physical problems were the lighter part of the sisters’ difficulties. Loneliness was far more difficult to bear. There were reassuring contacts with the priests and brothers. But the lives of women were much more restricted, and there were so few European women that they were thrown back upon one another’s company even more than were the men. The result was to increase the abrasive effect of personal idiosyncrasies, which had not been tempered by prior experience of religious community life.

Villa Maria became, for the sisters in the islands, the same place of support which it was for the priests and brothers. Sister Esperance came back to Sydney to St Vincent’s hospital, late in 1861. When she was discharged the following April, she was allowed to reside in a small building at Villa Maria, which she called her hermitage. She recuperated there for some eighteen months, and was the first religious woman to live on the grounds of the procure. She was joined after a few weeks by Sister Augustin, suffering from severe depression. When she arrived she could hardly stop weeping for days. She
had to be repatriated to Europe. There were problems arranging transport for only one sister. A respectable married couple had to be found, with whom she could make the voyage.

By early 1861, there were eleven sisters in the Pacific. From the very first, questions of their canonical status greatly occupied Yardin and Poupinel, but nothing was able to be finalized. The sisters therefore simply went to work in the mission field. There was much concern, however, that when these questions were determined, it would be in such a way as to safeguard their best interests. The likelihood was that, like the priests and brothers, they would find themselves subject to the vicar apostolic with almost no rules protecting them. On 18 September 1859, Yardin wrote to Poupinel with uncharacteristic vehemence: ‘To deliver them into the control of the vicars apostolic, with no guarantees, is to sacrifice them.’ Favre considered that he was unable to take ultimate responsibility, and so the status of the sisters remained unresolved for a considerable period.

Although the reluctance of the superior general to become involved was understandable, in fact he was involved, whether he liked it or not. These sisters had volunteered in Lyon. Marists there had acted as their agents, and they were now working in missions staffed by the Marists. Whatever the uncertainties of canon law, they were a Marist responsibility. Poupinel pointed this out to Favre, with a shrewd reminder that the man likely to have all the church authority over most of them was Bataillon. ‘I sincerely pity the poor sisters,’ wrote Poupinel, ‘if they remain totally dependent on His Lordship [Bataillon], and cannot rely on you and your representatives; rely, I mean, on the society. At least until they are organized to have superiors, apart from the mission superior [the bishop].’

Bataillon had no idea how to encourage the sisters, Poupinel went on. They were all afraid of him, and relied on the society. Warming to his theme, Poupinel went on with the confidence of one writing to an old friend:

The society has responsibility for these sisters in the public mind, and as far as their families are concerned. If I were in their shoes, I would very much wish that it had [this responsibility] in reality. For my part, I will be very greatly upset if I find that they are in unfortunate circumstances through the hardness of the bishop, or because he does not know what sensitivity one must have towards women.

Poupinel gave an instance of Bataillon’s attitude. The third group of sisters reached Sydney, and went straight into the cloistered seclusion
of Subiaco for three months. Bataillon was in Sydney, and virtually took charge of them, as they were for his vicariate. It did not occur to him that the sisters might be sick of isolation, and would appreciate some outings. He gave them no money at all. Poupinel thoughtfully arranged a day’s outing for them by the Parramatta river ferry steamer to see Sydney, making a call at Villa Maria on the way home. When he organized a similar treat some time later, the bishop took him to task for usurping his authority.

The points Poupinel was making to Favre were well taken, and there was no real alternative for the superior general to pursue, except to try to give the sisters whatever protection the law would allow. Yardin passed on his reply: ‘Continue your good care of the sisters. The Father General will apply himself to their situation, and will draw up some regulations which he will have the vicars apostolic agree to.’ There were many problems, and the letters that passed between the islands and Sydney, and from Sydney to France, seem to contain a lot of trivia. In one instance Favre was writing to Poupinel in mid-1859 about separating two sisters in New Caledonia who found it impossible to live together.

But in a sense, such long discussions were part of the price paid for not having brought in an established congregation, where trained superiors would have dealt with such matters themselves, instead of having to pass them back to the priests. The members of such a congregation would have been prepared for community life. Undoubtedly, there would also have been something like a legal contract and a narrower, more carefully delineated responsibility: a school here, a hospital there.

Instead, the missionary sisters were part of the mission complement in a manner which would have been impossible for members of a properly constituted congregation at the time. They had a flexibility which enabled them to undertake any tasks which seemed appropriate, and this greatly broadened the scope of their contribution to the welfare of the missions.

This situation continued, more or less as described, until about the mid-1860s. It was altered as a result of efforts made to begin offering some kind of preparation to the volunteers in France. Until late 1861, none of the members of the little congregation that was building up in the Pacific had even lived together in France. And then a new volunteer arrived in Lyon, who was already a fully trained and professed sister in another congregation.

Euphrasie Barbier was born in Normandy on 4 January 1829. As she grew up, she developed a personal spirituality of severe austerity,
rigorous adherence to the rule, a deep appreciation of contemplative life, and a strong wish to do something positive towards the active missionary apostolate. These somewhat varying principles had not been satisfied by the French order which she originally joined, which had moved to London. And so, after some battles, she was officially permitted to transfer her obedience, leave London with a young English novice as a travelling companion, and come to Lyon.

It seemed a providential opportunity. Favre invited her to take charge of training a group of the volunteers, in a convent which he opened for the purpose. To signal this new step in her life, she took a new name in religion, Mother Marie du Coeur de Jesus.11 Some time later, she also renamed the congregation Religieuses de Notre Dame des Missions. She began rewriting the constitutions which Poupinel had drawn up.

It is difficult not to see some irony in what happened. Barbier was a woman of deep and sincere convictions, devoted to penance and prayer. Many who met her through the years were impressed by her saintliness. At the same time, she had an inexorable determination to carry out God’s will as she understood it. In the rule she was constantly working on, Barbier was determined to avoid the uncertainty which seemed to her to be the main characteristic of the institute until that time. She could rightly draw attention to the inadequate preparation of those already in the islands, vividly illustrated by the inability to some of them to live together. In her hands, the rule began to take a fundamental change of direction.

But there had been a positive side to the previous situation: the rule followed so far had been based on practical experience. The sisters already in the missions now had up to five years’ experience of what was required there. Perroton had been in the islands for eighteen years. Barbier had no personal experience of the islands, and did not call on others who had, in any observable way. Undoubtedly, priests who had been in the Pacific spoke to her. Poupinel met her many times when he was back in France from August 1862, until January 1864. But there is no evidence that his views or those of other Marists had any influence on her whatever. Least of all if they conflicted with her own views. She wrote her rule, and then sent it to the Pacific islands, to be put into practice.

The precise form of the severity which Barbier wrote into the rule was to make the order ‘semi-enclosed’. This hybrid system is no longer permitted by canon law, as it attempted to unite elements of the enclosed contemplative life and of the active life. It is seen as neither one thing nor the other. Barbier’s was a more restrictive
version of semi-enclosure, requiring the sharing of personal clothing, prescribed fasting, discipline, silence at meals, the use of a grille, and great limitations on the occasions when the sister could leave the convent. Such prescriptions, in combination, are those of a few strictly enclosed orders.

In an enclosed order, use of the grille means that a visitor may only speak to a nun with the two in separate rooms with no connecting door, but an opening between, covered with an iron grille. In addition, the grille was covered with a heavy curtain, so that the sister could not even be seen by the visitor. However, the curtain could be opened for certain visitors, such as family. The inconsistency, in practice, of the grille for semi-enclosed sisters was that, if a parent with a child in a school taught by them wished to speak to the child’s teacher, but did not wish to go through the procedure of speaking through the grille, the easy alternative was to talk to the sister in the schoolyard, face to face.

The general severity of the rule, and the grille in particular, became a major issue. Barbier always stoutly maintained that the grille had been Favre’s idea. Although the Marists were no longer in Auckland, embarrassing stories of a scandal were circulating in Lyon at that time, concerning Pompallier and his niece, who was in a convent there. Perhaps it seemed to Favre that a grille would offer a safeguard. There is no evidence from Marist sources to indicate that Favre first made the suggestion, but there seems no doubt that he agreed to it. If he did suggest it, even hesitantly, Barbier agreed with alacrity.

The introduction of semi-enclosure and the grille were by no means the only important changes Barbier made to the character of the little congregation which had begun to form before she joined it. She was an excellent organiser, and her training was thoroughly spiritual, theological and practical as a preparation for religious community life. She read canon law carefully, and wrote its requirements into her rule. When the avalanche of protests about the rule’s severity, and especially about the grille, poured in from the Pacific, her letters appealed to principles religious find it hard to answer: it was in the rule; obedience to the rule was obedience to almighty God. There was no discussion about the fact that she had written the rule, and could rewrite it. And to the Marists, she declared that the grille was Favre’s idea.

When the anciennes, as the sisters already in the islands came to be called, found her rule impractical, and far too severe, Barbier lost enthusiasm for admitting them into what was now becoming her
congregation. The exception was Perroton, whose life had inspired her, and whom she always wanted to have as a member. Her response to criticisms which came from the Pacific sisters, from priests like Forest at Napier, New Zealand, and from Poupinel, was to say that a softening of the rule could be permitted. But in practice, that softening merely meant that the entire rule did not have to be brought into effect at once.

Poupinel tried to support the rule which Barbier had sent out. But he made his views known. For instance, he wrote in 1865: ‘I believe that the superior general is on the wrong track; or if it is the track God wants her to follow, I will bow before it, but then this congregation is lost for our missions’. Soon Poupinel’s position became quite invidious. When Barbier had met him on his return to France in 1862, she knew how much confidence Favre and Yardin had in him. He was the one who travelled with the first groups of sisters from Sydney to their destinations, and was the only person who had visited them all. She invited him to act as visitor to the sisters as he was to the fathers and brothers.

But Barbier’s confidence in Poupinel went in only one direction: insofar as he supported her rule. In the same letter in which she invited him to act as visitor, she took him severely to task. He had encouraged her sisters leaving Sydney for Napier to follow the same practice as all other religious sisters in the region did, including the strictly enclosed Benedictines, and wear cloaks over their habits, and also very large brimmed hats, when travelling. But Barbier would allow no concession to differences on the other side of the globe to be made. The new, voluminous and heavy habit was itself a problem. Designed by Barbier, it no doubt suited the climates of Europe. In the long summers of Australia and New Zealand, it was proving unbearably hot. How it would be in the tropics can only be imagined.

Differences crystallized in Sydney itself. There had long been a plan to open a house for the sisters there. Sisters had been staying in one of the small Villa Maria buildings, since Sister Esperance had come to recuperate. Something more was needed: a proper dwelling, which would also be able to accommodate the bands of missionary sisters. The fact that the first Villa Maria had not been sold solved one need, and made the foundation so much easier. But when serious troubles were reported by Forest in the foundation of the sisters in Napier, New Zealand, Poupinel became hesitant about opening a Sydney house for the sisters, and almost cancelled the request. But in the end, they came as scheduled, arriving 9 April 1867.

The superior, Mother Mary St Wilfrid, was English. In fact, she was the young novice who had accompanied Barbier from London to
Lyon, in 1861. Still only 22 years of age, she was very immature. Certainly she lacked self-confidence. She was afraid, or unwilling, to act without explicit directives from Barbier.

Joly believed that St Wilfrid treated Poupinel as an adversary from her very arrival. But in one sense, her youthful inadequacies as a superior may have merely hastened an inevitable process. She opposed the opening of a school in the Ryde parish, which the fathers requested, until Barbier explicitly authorized it. When it was open, she found great difficulty in reconciling the school responsibilities with the rule. Probably this was less her difficulty, than it was an inbuilt problem of semi-enclosure.

Health problems seriously affected the new foundation. St Wilfrid herself had indifferent health. Her travelling companion, Sister de Sales, was ill from her very arrival. Not recovering properly, she had to be sent back to France in January 1868. But while she was ill in Sydney, one of the anciennes, who was originally a missionary in Samoa, Sister Marie de la Merci, was recuperating at Villa Maria. She had suffered greatly from Bataillon's harshness. She was appointed by St Wilfrid to care for the sick nun.

De la Merci was a motherly person who loved caring for the sick, but a little later St Wilfrid accused her, in a letter to Barbier, of a 'particular friendship' with the patient. In religious communities, there was always a very strong fear of homosexuality. The word itself was never mentioned, but there were frequent, powerful condemnations of 'the danger of particular friendships'. The charge was a very serious one, even though it did not necessarily imply that the friendship had been expressed sexually. Poupinel believed that this accusation was unfounded, and strongly defended de la Merci, but without convincing Barbier.

The grille issue dragged on unhappily. Joly complained that St Wilfrid had no idea of costs. Whatever she wanted had to be done immediately. A grille was erected to her specifications. She changed her mind, and wanted it reconstructed. When this was not done immediately, she protested strongly.¹⁴

St Wilfrid's own health was not good. In October 1867, Barbier wrote to Poupinel in response to his own letters and other reports, and said that St Wilfrid was to be relieved of material responsibilities, in order to devote herself to the school, and she should be helped conquer her timidity and gain self confidence. In the meantime, in words recalling her previous request that he act as visitor to the sisters, Barbier asked Poupinel to be 'both father and mother' to the little community.¹⁵

Barbier's suggestion that St Wilfrid be given time to become
more confident was not enough for Poupinel, who believed that St Wilfrid was completely inadequate as a superior. What was the use of his informing Barbier about the situation, if in practice she did not take any notice of what he said? The only time anyone said that St Wilfrid had assurance was when Joly spoke of her assurance in telling lies: 'It is easy,' he went on, 'to see what her letters would be like.'

Along with the problems of the sisters in Sydney, the problems in the only other house of the order, at Napier in New Zealand, had not been resolved. When sisters arrived at Villa Maria on their way to open a third house of the order at Christchurch, Poupinel decided that strong action was needed and that he had been authorized to make it. The only solution seemed to be to make transfers. With these limited alternatives, he proposed several transfers, and rearrangements of appointments of the new sisters. The most delicate was his decision to appoint St Wilfrid to New Zealand.

But St Wilfrid refused to go. She would not go anywhere, she declared, except back to France, 'if the Doctor says I cannot become climatized in Sydney', to use her own words. Not long afterwards, a letter arrived from Barbier, written with no knowledge of these confrontations, of course, authorizing Poupinel to return St Wilfrid to France, for her health. Poupinel decided that it offered the only solution, and he asked St Wilfrid to return. Again she refused. Finally, he invoked holy obedience. She left Sydney on 11 May 1868.

Her departure left only de la Merci and two Futunian postulants at Villa Maria, and both Poupinel and Joly wrote that peace and calm had returned. It was quite otherwise in France. Barbier heard St Wilfrid's story, and decided that transfers of personnel were quite outside Poupinel's authority. On this matter, Poupinel was at Barbier's mercy. By Favre's appointment, she was actually in charge of the sisters, although technically Yardin was still superior. Poupinel acted as her agent. Her letters giving him authority gave him the right to act just as far as she was prepared to support him. And this was not very far. It was useless to say that, as visitor to the fathers, he had authority to transfer them. She could simply reply that in asking him to be visitor to the sisters, she did not intend him to have that power.

Barbier argued that Poupinel constantly overstepped the bounds of reasonable authority, and she succeeded in getting Favre and Yardin to write and point out to him the strict limits of his powers.

But it was the beginning of a serious rift with the Marists. Yardin resigned as superior of the sisters over the affair. It seems that
Barbier made a verbal offer to Favre to resign also. Favre did not accept, but he took the firm stand that Barbier ought to agree to Poupinel’s offer to put the past behind, and confirm the status quo, as a basis on which the Sydney foundation could continue. She would not accept this, and when she found that she could no longer bring Favre to accede to her wishes, she decided to go over his head. Barbier appealed to Cardinal de Bonald, Archbishop of Lyon. He respected her, but he had a high regard for Poupinel. He did not wish to adjudicate such a delicate matter, and therefore notified Favre that he would put the entire case to Rome. It was the first moment that Favre knew of Barbier’s appeal, and he was shocked. But he agreed to make a written statement of his views of the case, for inclusion with de Bonald’s report.

Favre does not seem to have understood the change that had now taken place. Marist involvement still continued in the missions and in Lyon. Volunteers were still being directed by Marists to Barbier. Favre had appointed Yardin to be director, bursar and priest advisor to the sisters. So much so, that friends referred jokingly to the sisters as the ‘Yardinettes’. Marists still had commitments to the financial support of the sisters, exercised through Yardin. Favre had appointed Barbier to her position, and he was grateful to her for her efficiency. To make her task easier, he had supported her in virtually every decision she made. But the little congregation begun in 1857, with the departure of the first Dames de Charité to the Pacific, was now Barbier’s.

The major disagreement brought the issue to a head. There is a note recorded by an assistant of Barbier, saying that Favre had an interview with her at this time, and when they could not reach common ground, he warned, ‘I can destroy you’. If he thought this, Favre was wrong.

In his report to Rome, Favre for the first time committed to writing his views of the nun he had supported at every step of the way. He praised her ‘marvellous qualities’, faith, piety and zeal, her good intentions, intelligence and efficiency. But Favre made other points.

She has the defects of her qualities. Although much given to bodily mortification (which is ruining her health), she does not bring the same enthusiasm to the practice of humility. She trusts too much in her own insights, sticks too firmly to her own ideas, and is over-ardent, over-hasty in her zeal. She sometimes fails in tact and judgement, and unwittingly wounds those who have the warmest interest in her congregation.
What is even more trying, since it shuts the door to remedies which would come from wise directors, she has unfortunately (unconsciously perhaps because of her problems in the past with the London Oratorians) an almost instinctive fear of priestly influence, even that of her superior, and to be freed from it she aspires to autonomy and independence in the government of the community. As a result of all this, she tends to think that she alone can judge or decide everything. An equally confident masculine assessment was made of her eight years later, by Archbishop Redwood.

I believe that Reverend Mother [Barbier] is a saintly person, extremely austere in her life, and wholly dedicated to the glory of God. But I also have grave reasons to believe that she is quite absolute in her authority, self-confident in her judgement, taking little account of the suggestions even of bishops, and that, not perhaps in intention, but certainly in practice, she eludes the authority of the priest by appealing to the bishop, and that of the bishop by appealing to the Pope and to Canon Law, which she quotes at every turn.

Favre did not make the journey to Rome over the matter, as Barbier did, but perhaps to his surprise, the nun won the dispute over authority with ease. Rome solved the matter with the simplest of procedures. The issue would not exist if jurisdiction were not divided. An important step towards autonomy was therefore given to the institute, which lacked none of the basic requirements: it was operating successfully according to approved constitutions, written for a semi-enclosed institute. A decree of praise was soon granted.

When Favre read the decree, he was surprised to find that there was no mention of the role played by the Marists in the foundation of the congregation. Even with its greater autonomy, Barbier’s institute was still required to have ecclesiastical support and guidance, but he was convinced that others should provide it: a complete separation from the Marists was essential. By December 1869, all Marist responsibility for the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, including financial, had ended.

Rome did not go into the Sydney problems, but insisted that they be solved quickly. Barbier soon agreed to close the house as a foundation of her congregation. De la Merci chose to remain there as a tertiary, with the two Futunian sisters.

When Poupinel heard the decision, he wrote a typically generous letter to Barbier congratulating her that the congregation was fully
approved. He was pleased, he said, that the issue regarding authority was settled. 'I like clear, well defined positions, so that everyone knows exactly his duties and his rights'. Poupinel concluded:

What I wanted was not to force my ideas on you, but to make them known. There were points I did not approve, not because I thought them bad in themselves, but because I was convinced that the young congregation was being given a character which rendered it unfit for our Pacific missions. Now more than ever, I think it little adapted to do good in those missions, (except, of course, those in New Zealand, who are among a white population).

I have said over and over: the arrangements that have been adopted may perhaps be in line with God's plans. But if so, in my opinion, this means that he does not wish to give us the help of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions in our work in the Pacific. That is my opinion, and I still hold it. But I am very relieved that a conclusion has now been reached, and one which I agree with.22

While generously accepting defeat, and grateful that his own responsibilities in the matter were over, Poupinel strongly refused to change his views. Unfortunately, there was a painful road ahead before his prophecy was fulfilled, and the sad conclusion reached that, under her rules, Barbier's congregation was unsuitable for the very work for which it had been founded.

Barbier did not agree. But despite foundations of her own sisters in Samoa and Tonga in 1870, and her personal visit to the Pacific in 1872, she made no adaptations of her rule—she continued to require that her convents have a grille—and disputes went on. One issue was closely connected with the problem of enclosure. A fence was erected around the convent in Samoa to a height of five feet, and not to the seven feet specified by Barbier's chapter. Even the five-foot fence had been an extremely expensive construction, and the timber for it had to be obtained from Sydney.23

Within a few years, Bishop Elloy asked her to remove her sisters. A diocesan congregation was formed in Samoa, called Our Lady of Oceania. The anciennes were given a choice of moving out, with Barbier's congregation, but almost all chose to stay in the islands.

It was the end of the work of the sisters of Our Lady of the Missions in the Pacific missions, in Barbier's lifetime. But they continued to be an important force in the work of the Catholic church in New Zealand, as Poupinel had predicted.
From 1877, new French lay women volunteered to come to the Pacific, once again as members of the Third Order of Mary. Two groups left that year for New Caledonia. In 1879 it was decided at Lyon to form the Third Order Regular of Mary (TORM) for the island missions. Their care was entrusted to Marist Father Jean Claude Méchin. For many years they were the main group of religious women working in the Marist Pacific missions. In the 1920s they were reconstituted, and the procedures were set in motion which enabled them to become a congregation of pontifical status. In the process their name was changed to *Sorores Missionarii Societatis Mariæ* (SMSM): the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary.
When Bataillon returned from his trip to Europe, early in 1859, he was determined to continue his efforts to establish a college in Sydney, where island students would be educated, if possible through to the priesthood. In Europe he had made strenuous efforts to persuade Favre to agree to his taking over the procure house, Villa Maria, for this purpose. Favre had not agreed, yet the bishop went right ahead with his usual tactic of bluff, and trying to bulldoze his way to what he wanted. As Poupinel was away, he told Rocher that the procure would shortly be sold, and outlined his plans.

What Bataillon had in mind was to combine the function of the procure with his college. He would sell Villa Maria, buy a large property in the country for his college, and open a small house-cum-depot in the city. At the college he planned to cultivate extensive vineyards, and also grow wheat and other cereals. Even without the benefit of hindsight, and with a better knowledge than Bataillon had of the climate of the Cumberland plain on which Sydney stands, we can say that wheat was a poor choice. While vines are still grown quite successfully in the area, wheat was already recognized, in Bataillon's time, to be a risk crop. Moreover, the extension of railways had just opened the way to the genuine wheat country of the Bathurst plains, which quickly became the granary of Sydney.

Poupinel, on his return, soon summed up the situation, and, to the bishop's assurance that all had been agreed to for the sale, replied that he would refer the matter to Favre. There would really have been no problem in combining the functions of the procure with another establishment, and at the very time, Poupinel was
seriously considering the possibility of uniting it with a school. The problem was Bataillon. Wherever he was, he took complete control. Poupinel wrote to Favre,

You know that for a long time, Bishop Bataillon’s idea, his aim, has been to make use of the procure as his thing . . . In spite of the new réglement, the prelate has scarcely altered his ideas and ways. If we let it happen, in a very short time he would be absolute master here . . . On his return from Europe, he said quite clearly that the procure was for his poor missions in the tropics, that the missions of New Zealand and New Caledonia had no need of it.2

What Poupinel referred to in the last quoted sentence was a second aspect of the problem. If Bataillon was given half a chance, he would take over the procure completely for his own area of responsibility: other missions would receive nothing from it. Poupinel believed that an important aim of the bishop was to obtain control of the personnel and matériel of the procure. In addition, there was the annual grant from Propagation de la foi which he would also have been able to divert to his own vicariate.

When Bataillon was exerting pressure on Poupinel to let him take over the procure, the bishop had already bought his property. It was called Clydesdale. It was a large piece of land, a thousand acres in area (4046 hectares), and located about 48 kilometres west of Sydney, on South Creek, a tributary of the Hawkesbury river. It lies midway between Blacktown and Richmond. From the portion which runs along the bank of South Creek, the land gradually rises to a low ridge, on the highest point of which stands the large two-storeyed dwelling which first attracted Bataillon’s eye.

Today the building is set back some 800 metres from the road. Four majestic palm trees in front of it seem to be the only indication of a former tie with the islands of the south Pacific, and with the Polynesians who once worked its fields.

Bataillon chose the property himself. He did consult a number of Sydney people, but according to Poupinel he wasted so much of their time, taking no notice of their advice anyway, that they became reluctant to deal with him, and avoided meeting him. Poupinel went on to say that the bishop had a poor reputation in Sydney as a businessman, and spoke of his indecision, fickleness and delaying.3 Yardin, in France, wrote about Bataillon at almost the same time: ‘You know how much he swings about, how hesitant he is in projects’.

As recorded in the Villa Maria books, the purchase price was
115,000 francs. It was no bargain. Using an old ploy of the trade, the vendor managed to pressure the bishop into believing that he needed to act quickly, or another interested party would buy the property. Five years later, the truth came out—the ‘interested party’ had refused to pay the equivalent of 50,000 francs for it.4

Unfortunately, the purchase was not the last of Bataillon’s business activities for 1859. During his time in France, he had made extensive appeals for mission finances and they were not all spent. One aspect of those appeals was that supposedly they had been made for all the missions, but Bataillon kept the entire proceeds himself. The second purchase he made in 1859 was a ship.

For an amount equal to 30,000 francs, Bataillon bought an old schooner of 165 tons, called the Vulture. He shrewdly renamed it the Caroline to honour Madame la Comtesse Caroline de la Grandville, ‘who provided the money necessary for this purchase’.5 Poupinel
wryly noted that ‘the mischievous are calling it the Crinoline’. But despite the light remark, he was seriously afraid that the repairs and other running costs would make this a very expensive venture. He had remained silent during the purchase of Clydesdale, as there were uncertainties about such a project, but the risks of ship-buying had been clear for many years, and he spoke to the bishop with unusual vehemence, urging the needs of the vicariate, which were likely to be neglected: proper dwellings, churches, literature printed in the local languages and the like. ‘I said to him, “My lord, you are mortgaging the future. You are tying your hands”. No! The prelate is convinced that his ship will not be a burden. Amen.’ But before the end of 1859, the outlay on the ship had reached 46,000 francs. There were bad losses in the next two years, and when ruinous costs forced its sale, exactly three years after its purchase, it realized only 18,000 francs. The saga of the Caroline was painful and expensive, but at least it was brief. After only one year Bataillon had to see his mistake, and was looking for a way out. But, when the ship had been sold, the story of Clydesdale had barely begun.

Bataillon’s next move to establish his college, after failing to take over Villa Maria, was to approach every brother on the staff there, and ask him to join the Clydesdale staff. He did not consult Poupinel until all was over, and one of the brothers, no longer happy to be a tailor, had agreed to join the bishop. Poupinel had been angry at the recruiting campaign, but protest was useless. To the unenviable role of first superior, Bataillon named the inoffensive Junillon, who had been so unpleasantly caught in the middle in 1855, during his earlier bid to take over Villa Maria. Junillon moved to Clydesdale in July 1859. Arrangements pressed forward. The house had been solidly constructed in the 1820s, but needed many repairs, and had also to be adapted for its new functions. This work began in September, at the same time as the first farm work: planting some orange trees. In mid-December, Bataillon arrived on the Caroline, with twelve Polynesians. His plan was now to live in Sydney, and visit his vicariate from time to time in his new boat. He and the students took up residence shortly before Christmas 1859. Two months later, Junillon was surprised to report a flood which had covered some lower flats alongside the creek, and made travel to Parramatta very difficult. For that valley, it was a minor flood. A few months later, they experienced a major flood. This covered the entire property, and came within two metres of the house. ‘They say that in sixty years, the waters have not reached this height,’ wrote Junillon. Not
too much damage was done, because the wheat they had sown was still too young to be hurt.\textsuperscript{7}

By now it was obvious that the size of the property was far too great for the staff to farm, even with the labour of the islanders. Bataillon reduced the section for themselves to 150 acres, leasing the remainder to an Irish family in return for a half-share in the produce. Another flood in August, with incessant rain, ended any chance of a grain harvest for the year, and yet another in November cost them the better part of the corn crop. The half-grown potatoes were dug up to prevent rotting, and most of the other vegetables were badly affected.\textsuperscript{8}

At the end of 1861, the seminary work increased with the arrival of six more Polynesian students. Unfortunately, the catalogue of natural disasters did not cease. The year 1862, for instance, saw Bataillon making a massive effort to plant vineyards: nearly 7000 metres of vines, and 500 orchard trees. The spring rains failed, and after a ten-month drought, despite valiant efforts to carry water, every last tree and vine was dead. In God's good time the drought ended. Corn was sown with the first summer rain in December. A few months later a new arrival, Father Hippolyte Mondon, was writing on 20 April 1863: 'Three months of almost continual rain prevented us, until Easter, from thinking of sowing anything. A fortnight of fine weather gave us some hope of being able to sow the prepared land. But here is the rain again ... These last showers, more cold than usual, have just caused at least a third of our future harvest to perish'. Conditions improved. Then in October 1863, another newcomer, Louis Elloy, wrote to Poupinel of yet another disaster: 'We had hopes of quite a good harvest of wheat, grapes and hay. But the day before yesterday there was a hail storm, which damaged our roofs, and broke about 7 panes of glass in our windows. It cut up our fruit trees, our vines and our harvest. We are going to mow the wheat to obtain at least a little fodder ... 50 fowls were killed ... a total of 3 or 4 thousand francs [damage]'.

21 June 1864. Joly writing to Yardin: 'On our rocky hills [at Villa Maria], we are in paradise compared to Clydesdale. They have just had two floods in 8 days, but the last, in particular, was equal to four. Their misfortune is shared by plenty of people in the country. The oldest cannot recall having seen the waters rise so high.' Joly went on to refer to Bataillon's 'dear Clydesdale'. A month later Joly wrote again to say that the farm had just been flooded for the third time in less than two months.

There was a further flood before 1864 was out. Elloy sent
thirteen of the Polynesians back to their home islands to ease the burden on the establishment. There were also floods in 1867 and 1869. Even for a valley which is well known for floods, the 1860s was an exceptional decade.

These natural disasters were all the more depressing because of the enormous amount of hard work which was being expended at Clydesdale. Bataillon himself had an amazing capacity for physical labour, and a rugged constitution. One is inclined to wonder if much of the work would have been completed without his driving determination. In many Pacific islands, such labour was traditionally left to women. But with Bataillon on the property, and sometimes in the fields himself, working 'comme un voleur' (like a thief) as Joly put it on one occasion, the islanders laboured with more than ordinary zeal, under his eagle eye. Joly wrote that comment during the year when the attempt was being made to establish the vineyard. The reasoning was admirable: floods would not do so much damage to vines, orange and other fruit trees. Unfortunately, that was the year when there was a drought.

Financial problems were multiplying. The bishop continued to insist that he had raised the entire money for his extensive purchases in his appeals in France, and that the Caroline was entirely paid for by the separate donation from the Comtesse. However, Poupinel and Joly's accounts showed them that he was enlarging on the facts. Even setting aside the fact that he had made the appeals on behalf of all the Marist missions, and that none of the others received any of the proceeds at all, there were big discrepancies. The gross sum he raised was 100,000 francs: 15,000 francs short of the cost of Clydesdale alone. And doing another small sleight of hand with the figures, he was counting one sum of money twice: 'You are aware,' wrote Poupinel to Favre on 2 May 1859, 'that the sum he received for the name of Caroline, is included in the 100,000 francs which are in France'. It also turned out that an additional 18,000 francs of that sum was not raised by Bataillon at all, but was part of a normal Propagation de la foi allocation to his vicariate for the years 1857–59; an amount covering stipends for Masses offered by the missionaries. When Clydesdale and the expenditure in the islands of his vicariate were added to the costs of the Caroline, Bataillon spent a total of 223,550 francs in 1859 alone.9

It was a difficult situation for Favre, with Bataillon soon putting heavy pressure on him for more funds. Favre did not like to see other vicariates suffer neglect, merely because Bataillon was cunning and
overspent. On the other hand, he had to try to ensure that the vast missions under Bataillon did not suffer too greatly. As a persuading argument, the bishop was soon recalling the extraordinarily large grant which had been obtained for Pompallier. It was not a reminder which would have brought a warm glow to the heart of the superior general. But despite some comparisons which come to mind between the two, Bataillon was completely different in financial matters from his former superior. There was never the sense that spending was chaotically out of control, in the way it had been in Pompallier’s time.

One means open to Favre, to try to ensure that the island missions did not suffer too greatly from the bishop’s heavy spending in Sydney, was by the very step which had brought episcopal ordination to Bataillon himself: detaching sections from his jurisdiction. Fiji was an immediate focus of Favre’s concern. After nearly two decades of effort and difficulties, real progress was at last being made there by 1861. Although Bataillon was not happy about the decision, the area was detached in 1863 and Father Jean Baptiste Bréhéret was named prefect apostolic of Fiji: a post which avoided creating a new bishop.

At about the same time, Rome appointed a coadjutor bishop to Bataillon, with the twofold aim of providing someone of rank who could remain in the vicariate while Bataillon lived in Sydney, and then take charge of another portion to be detached—in this instance, Samoa. The one named was Bataillon’s own choice, Louis Elloy, actually in charge of Clydesdale when word of his nomination came through. Although Elloy had been named by Bataillon as a possible future bishop, it had not been his intention at all that the nomination should come through as quickly as it did. This was the work of Poupinel, who was in Europe in 1863.

The Marists, despite their misgivings, had initially been cautious about the purchase of Clydesdale, and refrained from criticism. But no misgivings remained by 1863. In addition to the natural disasters, and the heavy cost of running the establishment, the men Bataillon appointed to it were unanimous in their dislike of the place. All, without exception, were unhappy at being there, and begged to be transferred. Some asked quickly; others tried to submit for a time, looking on the appointment as a painful expression of God’s will, and because they did not like to make trouble.

Junillon was one such. ‘I am the kind of person who cannot bring pain to anyone,’ he wrote to Poupinel, after he had been at
Clydesdale for a year. ‘Plenty of others, in my position ... would have already gone.’ As time passed, he became more depressed and hopeless, and the letters are heartrending to read even now, more than a century later. ‘I am here like a dog on a chain,’ he wrote in a later moment of desperation. It must have been painfully frustrating for the kind-hearted Poupinel to receive a succession of such letters crying out for help, and be able to do nothing. After Junillon’s years in the tropics, he found the winters bitterly cold, as many returned missionaries still do today. Like most of those appointed to Clydesdale, brothers as well as priests, Junillon’s health was not good.

The first appointment of a priest in sound health was in 1863, and it was Louis Elloy. Bataillon, saw it as an important test. Reports from those who had been to Clydesdale previously had now spread throughout his vicariate. The bishop had therefore filled Elloy’s mind with what Poupinel called ‘his own wrong ideas about the procure and about Clydesdale’. Elloy had been an extremely successful missionary in Samoa, and arrived with zeal and determination to make something of the place. Inside two months, Poupinel went on, Elloy was disabused of these ideas, and had come ‘to the point of view we had in 1860’. Elloy was soon writing about his hope that his successor would come quickly, and allow him to return to Samoa. Instead, he was working one day with the students in the fields at Clydesdale, when he saw Joly hurrying towards him. Joly would say little, but asked Elloy to come away from the curious Polynesians. In a nearby hut, Elloy nervously broke open the impressive seals on the package Joly had brought. The papal letters had arrived telling him of his nomination to be a bishop.

To the excited Joly, and the other Marists at Villa Maria, Elloy’s nomination to be a bishop seemed a heaven-sent opportunity. ‘[Bishop-elect Elloy’s] new dignity will perhaps give him some influence on Bishop Bataillon to persuade him to adopt some other form of a school for the natives. He intends to do all he can, about that.’ There were several possibilities, Joly believed, if Bataillon would negotiate. It might be worthwhile to retain a training school in Australia, not for priests, but for brothers, and run by Marists from all the Pacific vicariates.

Poupinel reveals the outcome of Elloy’s intervention with Bataillon. ‘He wrote along these lines to Bishop Bataillon. It was a very moderate letter. The blow for Bishop Bataillon was a terrible one.’ He lost all confidence in Elloy. Month after month went by, and Bataillon took no step towards ordaining his newly appointed
coadjutor as a bishop, or even to contact him. ‘In resumé,’ concluded Poupinel, ‘I have no difficulty in believing that he [Bataillon] would prefer not to have a coadjutor.’ Bataillon never forgave Elloy. Even though the episcopal ordination did eventually take place, Bataillon left his coadjutor with practically nothing to do. Finally Elloy took the opportunity of a visit to Rome in 1868, to raise the problem. The Roman solution was to make him vicar apostolic of an independent vicariate of Samoa.

Quite clearly, Bataillon gave the highest priority to Clydesdale, and was not prepared to negotiate over it.

The important point about Clydesdale was its purpose, namely the preparation of island students for the priesthood. How successful was it in this objective? Unfortunately, it was a total failure. Not one alumnus of the college was ordained to the priesthood. There were several of its students who took vows as lay brothers, and dedicated at least some years of their lives as catechists. It may be assumed that others were invited to serve as catechists on their return to their home islands, but those are the only tangible benefits that can be identified now.

In order to follow this ultimate test of Bataillon’s venture, it is necessary to look at it, as far as possible, from the viewpoint of the students themselves. For us, this is the most intriguing part of the story of a remarkable place. Unfortunately, it can be followed only indirectly: no surviving records give any first hand information about their views.

It seems that all of the students were Polynesian. Wallisian was the main language used. Any Melanesians would have to have come from Fiji. In the light of language differences, such a fact would seem certain to have received mention in correspondence, and it does not. No lists of students have survived, but casual references to the islands of origin, made in letters, include Wallis and Futuna, Samoa and Tonga. One student from the Tokelau is also mentioned. He is described as the son of a chief. He was evidently living in Wallis when he was recruited.

The first students arrived towards the end of 1859, and soon the number rose to twenty. A program of studies was begun. In March 1863, three students, found unsuitable, were repatriated by Bataillon, and he went recruiting again. By the following October, there were twenty-seven. At that time, Elloy wrote that eleven students made the vow of obedience for a two-year period, but were going to be brothers at the mission. Only two or three might be considered for anything further. The highest number recorded was twenty-eight.
students, in 1864. After the four floods of that year, it was necessary to reduce the numbers, and thirteen were returned to the islands. From then on, the numbers were smaller.

The daily timetable was initially related to the requirements of the farm—too much so, and this situation continued for some years. In 1863, in response to criticisms by his assistant, the superior, Father Jean Baptiste Rolland, was allowed to reorganize the timetable.

In the new, easier timetable, the day began between 4 and 4.30 am. Morning prayer, Mass and breakfast were completed by 6. There was class or study between 6 and 8 am. Morning manual labour followed. At 11 or 11.15 classes began again, until midday. There was more manual work in the afternoon, followed by a late afternoon class around 5 or 5.15 before the evening meal at 6 pm, with a last session from 7.30 to 8.45. Prior to this revised program, the students were in the fields, and 'sweated blood from 8 in the morning until nearly 6 o'clock in the evening', according to Father Mondon.16

The curriculum included classes in Latin, reading, chant and writing. Vocabulary was recited aloud in the Wallisian language, Latin and French. The most successful efforts, by the musically gifted Polynesians, were in the chant classes. Many visitors praised their singing.

Outings for the students were infrequent. The most frequent place they visited was Villa Maria, but there were occasional visits to other places. The convent of the Benedictine nuns at Subiaco was visited annually, where the students sang Mass. It was a place where the Marist priests regularly helped with confessions. Their good friend Father Angelo Ambrosoli was chaplain there until 1866. A jubilee of priestly ordination of the parish priest of Penrith, Father Michael Brennan, was an occasion for a similar sung Mass. There were undoubtedly some other places visited, but not very many.

In addition to the infrequency of visits to other places, the isolation of Clydesdale must be remembered, to understand the effect on the island students. On the day I first visited it, in 1969, the wife of an employee working there remarked, 'It's terribly lonely out here'. Living in days of motor cars, sealed roads, telephones, and home entertainment provided by radio and television, she still found the place lonely. A century previously, none of those reassurances existed. In 1863, Joly described a nightmare journey, after heavy rain had badly rutted the road. Two fellow passengers suffered broken noses from the jolting of the coach.
The effect of this loneliness and isolation on normally gregarious and easy-going Polynesians can be imagined. They were earnest young men, who had sincerely embraced Christianity, and desired to take a further step of dedication to Christ, even if one assumes that they were somewhat vague about the details of this step. To have come such an unimaginable distance from their small home islands was already a strain. They had also entered a continent where the 50 kilometres they had travelled inland was further than most of them had ever gone overland in their lives. Add to these problems the monastic discipline then regarded as essential for the education of priests, lengthy times of required silence, extremely long hours of classes in obscure sciences, tiring manual work, with night study by candle light, and a penetrating winter cold never experienced in their islands. The combined effect was extremely depressing.

Illnesses took their toll. An epidemic of influenza in the first winter brought down the entire community except Bataillon and Brother Emery. In 1861, two of the ‘tamas’, as they are frequently called in correspondence, from the Wallisian word for a boy, became seriously ill. Niseto recovered but Selipeleto died. It is not even possible to guess at what were the complications of illness: the ‘fever’ may have been an outcome of an infection like measles.

In mid-1862 Aloysio, a Samoan, ran away. He came to Villa Maria and asked for protection, but declared that on no account would he agree to return to Clydesdale. If he could not be accepted, he would go to Sydney. The students did not hold their passports. Bataillon viewed the situation gravely, but did not come seeking Aloysio for fear of frightening him into running away again. He sent Mondon.

The outcome was shabby. The bishop promised Aloysio, through Mondon, that if he returned, he could leave for Samoa in two months. It would appear that Aloysio was not confident in the bishop’s word, because he told Joly that when the time was up, he would run away again. Bataillon did not keep his promise, and Joly next recorded that Aloysio was ‘trapped like a rat in a cage’. 17

Bataillon was determined to make an example, and he succeeded. There were no more mentions of escapes. But the presence of someone in Aloysio’s frame of mind, even though he was later repatriated, much have had a bad effect on the other students. In fact, at almost the same time, Rocher received word from the islands: ‘At Samoa, the reputation of Clydesdale is finished. The natives who have returned from there have painted a picture of it, which will certainly not encourage emigration’. 18 In 1867, Elloy wrote from Samoa that
the impression was widespread that the islanders were brought to Clydesdale to be slaves.

One cannot help wondering at the iron determination of Bataillon which kept the establishment going. But he felt that he still had grounds for optimism in one encouraging prospect. It was the coming ordination of the first Polynesian. This was not an alumnus of Clydesdale.

Soakimi Gatafahefa, sometimes called Joachim Gata, was one of the four students who had studied in 1855 at Villa Maria, when Bataillon had tried to take over the procure. Gatafahefa and two others had gone to Europe with the bishop in 1856, to complete their studies at Propaganda college, Rome. Bataillon had taken them with him around France on many of his appeals for the support of the missions.

One of the trio, a Wallisian named Matesito, died in Rome soon after they arrived. A second, a Rotuman named Lafaele, withdrew, and returned to the Pacific. But Gatafahefa persevered in his studies. His earlier letters were signed J.Gata, but on 23 March 1868, while in Tonga, he wrote to Poupinel a note in simple French saying that he formerly wrote Gata for brevity, but his uncle had corrected him. The letter was signed, J.Gatafahefa.19

Gatafahefa was born in 1838, at Lakemba in Fiji, of Tongan parents, and his father was converted to Christianity. In 1845, his mother being dead, his father took Soakimi to Futuna, where he was brought up. He went on to Wallis where he began studies for the priesthood.

Performing satisfactorily in his studies in Rome, Gatafahefa was ordained to the priesthood in the Lateran basilica, by Cardinal Patrizzi, on 10 June 1865. He had not become a Marist, and was a secular priest. Late in 1866, he and four Marists from France embarked for the Pacific. They reached Sydney on 9 April 1867. Great celebrations marked this historic occasion. The Clydesdale community joined that of Villa Maria for a solemn Mass, celebrated by Gatafahefa, with Poupinel, deacon, and Father Joseph Monnier, subdeacon. Monnier had assisted Soakimi’s father at his death in Tonga. At the banquet, Poupinel proposed the toast, and the Clydesdale students were staggered when Soakimi replied in smooth Latin.

It was the last major celebration for the Clydesdale community. The problems continued. Early the following year, 1868, Father Philippe Calinon, the priest in charge, was approached by three students who asked for their passports. When he said that he could not afford to pay their passage home, they said that they would work
their way on a ship. When Calinon consulted him, Poupinel offered to pay their passages, even though Calinon assured him that the three had been misbehaving deliberately in order to be expelled.

Upon their departure, the situation at the college deteriorated badly. Calinon reported to Poupinel: ‘The rest seem to be to be in a completely demoralized state’. They were like automatons, he went on. They disappeared by day and by night, and he did not know where they were. They absented themselves from class, and especially from work.

Somehow, the college continued to function, after a fashion. Towards the end of winter, another blow fell when three students became seriously ill. One of them, Veterino, had a cerebral affliction which made him delirious for some days. He died on 12 August 1868.

On 28 April 1869, Father Amand Lamaze wrote to Poupinel from Tonga, and described strong opposition there to the recruiting of any more candidates for Clydesdale. Only the details of closing the college remained to be determined. A skeleton staff was maintained for the last year or two of its existence. It was sold at the end of 1871 for 75,000 francs (£3000 sterling). This was 40,000 francs below the purchase price, and Joly estimated that an equal sum had been spent on improvements. However, it will be recalled that Bataillon had been taken down badly on the original purchase. The Villa Maria Marists thought it was a good sale price, and that Bataillon had been lucky to find a buyer at all. He did not. He considered that they had persuaded him to set his reserve price too low.

Gatafahefa’s career in the missions began auspiciously, with enthusiastic receptions from the different islands visited. There was even a presentation to King George Tupou I of Tonga, a distant relative. He was an ardent Wesleyan, but was nevertheless impressed. But problems had already appeared. Although Gatafahefa was Tongan, the priests and the local Catholics did not want him to remain there. There were fierce criticisms from the Wesleyan catechists. In his own letter he wrote about Tonga, ‘Les Catechistes protestants parlaient mal contre moi’: the Protestant catechists spoke ill of me.

There is no detail about the criticisms, but most probably they referred to Gatafahefa’s lack of knowledge of Tongan customs. As elsewhere in the Pacific, this knowledge is extremely important in Tonga. Despite his Tongan blood, Gatafahefa had never lived in Tonga. He was born in Fiji, and educated in Futuna and Wallis,
Sydney and Rome. There was little reply he could make to criticism from his own people, that he was no true Tongan, and did not know how to act *faka Tonga*—according to Tongan traditions. Towards the end of the year his dwelling was burnt down. Wesleyans helped in saving the contents. Not long afterwards, he was called by the bishop to Samoa. A few months there were no happier, and he was transferred to Futuna, where he had been brought up.

Futunians gave ‘Pere Soakimi’ a great welcome, and Bataillon tried to show confidence in him by putting him in charge of two parishes, with his old teacher, Junillon, as his ‘assistant’.

It was more a gesture than a reality, and Junillon was doubtful of its wisdom, despite Gatafahefa’s kindness and gentleness. The new parish priest was reasonably successful in a number of ways, and this was certainly the happiest time of his career.

Problems occurred in regard to celibacy, which he found too difficult to observe. When Bataillon sent word that he was transferred, he went to see the bishop in Samoa, to try to obtain permission to be left in Futuna. It seems that he then tried to raise a revolt of the Futunians against the European clergy, maintaining that he owed allegiance only to the Pope, and Cardinal Barnabo. A small indication of this may appear in his correspondence at this time, when he began to write the letters AI.C.U.P.F. after his signature. This probably meant Alumnus Collegii, de Urbe, de Propaganda Fidei: Alumnus of the College of the Propagation of the Faith, in the City [Rome]. However, when all the other priests were Marists, who could write S.M. [Society of Mary], after their signature, it was probably an assertion of his own value, through his Roman background, which they lacked.

A transfer to Wallis followed but problems continued. Not long before, Bataillon had finally accepted the inevitability of closing Clydesdale. He decided, in 1872, to reopen Lano, in Wallis, designating Gatafahefa as its superior. He never took office. Shortly after the appointment, as a result of further troubles, Gatafahefa was asked to transfer to far distant Rotuma. He formally refused. By now, the French priests wrote that he was ‘among the natives, living as a native’. He dressed in Polynesian clothes and spent hours out on the reef, fishing.

It was Elloy who, after further scandals, imposed on him suspension from saying Mass. Finally, and with deep personal sadness, Bataillon reduced Gatafahefa to the lay state, and banished him to New Zealand, in about 1875. He lived there for twenty years, as a lay brother, his priestly status a secret known only to a few. He
A very early view of St Patrick’s, Church Hill, and Sydney Cove, in the days of the tall ships. (Courtesy of the Mitchell Library)

Claude-Marie Joly had been in Samoa only two years when he was recalled to Sydney by Poupinel in 1858 to be his secretary. Joly designed and supervised construction of the present Villa Maria. After Poupinel’s 1870 departure, he became chiefly responsible for Marists in Australia, and from 1884 in the Pacific, until his death in 1892.
Above: St Patrick’s (1870) two years after the Marists undertook the care of the parish. The priests then lived in the building partly visible on the lower right. Below: St Patrick’s in 1987 from the same angle. (Photo: Douglas Baglin)
St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill, a century ago. The brothers moved their novitiate from St Patrick's to Hunters Hill in 1877. A boarding school begun at St Patrick's in 1879 made the same move in 1882, when this enormous construction was undertaken.
Above: An early view of Villa Maria. In 1894, Cardinal Moral visited St Joseph’s and ascended the tower (see previous photograph). This panorama showing Villa Maria and the vineyard in the middle distance was one of four photographs presented to him. Below: The same view in 1987. Kieran O’Brien of Gulgong and Shaun Rae of Penrith with the Australian flag on St Joseph’s. (Photo: Douglas Baglin)
A very early photo of Villa Maria from the Tarban Creek side.

The central building seen from the Mary Street side.
Villa Maria Brothers. Long-term residents of Villa Maria, taken about 1900. Some had helped build the procure and the church. Standing Pierre Janneau, Patrick Collins. Seated Florentin (Jean-Louis) Françon (1838), Louis Meyronin (1857), Jean Rodier (1860), Auguste (Jean-Louis) Chiroussel (1857), André Rougé (1856). The year indicates when each came to the Pacific. The baptismal Christian name is given in parentheses, where the name in religion was different. Brother Gennade Rolland had died in 1898.
The former convent at Villa Maria. Brother Kevin Jackson SM and workmen rebuilding the stone wall along the Mary Street side of the former convent building, now part of the Catholic Theological Union. (Photo: Douglas Baglin)

Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran, third archbishop of Sydney. (Courtesy of Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, St Mary’s Cathedral)
Above: An 1890s photograph looking across Grosvenor Street and down Har­rington Street, showing St Patrick’s church and the newly-constructed convent and presbytery. Below: A 1987 photograph from the Qantas centre at a similar angle. The St Patrick’s Business College now stands between the convent and presbytery. St Patrick’s Hall adjoins the presbytery on the further side. (Photo: Douglas Baglin)
became very highly esteemed for the tender and loving care with which he looked after the sick, especially an elderly priest who was in a state of total dependence through debility from illness and age. It was upon Gatafahefa’s death, when the body was being prepared for burial in priestly vestments, that it became generally known who ‘Brother Joe’ really was.

The tragic career of Gatafahefa symbolizes all too clearly the impossibility of Bataillon’s plan to raise a native clergy in the Pacific islands at this time. The fault was not the bishop’s, far less was it the fault of the man himself who became the first priest in the Pacific. Gatafahefa was the victim of a clash between cultures, and found his position intolerable. In terms of the church laws as they stood then, and for more than another century, there was no chance of the kind of accommodation to the Polynesian culture which would have been required for there to be any hope for a first-generation Christian like Gatafahefa as a Catholic priest. Celibacy was part of the problem. That requirement of Latin church discipline had no counterpart in Pacific traditions. In the alien environments of Sydney and Rome, its observance had not been difficult. Among affectionate people of his own race, the problems of the uncertain and unhappy young man must have been overwhelming.

But having stated this, one must add that celibacy was not the real problem, even if the current attitudes emphasized it as the major failure. The more fundamental difficulty was that Gatafahefa was lost between cultures. It may seem to smack of modern jargon to say that he suffered an identity crisis. But how better express his plight? He was not Futunian, because born in Fiji of Tongan parents; not Tongan—and harshly rejected by Tongans—because he had never been there; alien even to the Pacific, because he represented that strange status, the Catholic priesthood, not properly a priest like all the others, because his skin was of a different colour, and he was not French like them, and not even a Marist like them.

Christianity came to the Pacific inextricably intertwined with western European culture, and the priesthood represented this mingling in a unique degree. In Tonga, Father Joseph Chevron once criticized Gata for preaching too much like the Wesleyans, ‘making a lot of noise and saying nothing’. To a European, Polynesian oratory often sounds this way. At another time Chevron expressed the belief that Soakimi would make a good brother, because he did so much manual work, but Catholics were ashamed of his instructions. Possibly Chevron was attributing his own feelings of dissatisfaction to

— Clydesdale and an islander priesthood —
the Christians. But certainly Tongan Catholics felt keenly the criticisms of Gatafahefa by the Wesleyans: that he was no true Tongan. Chevron’s unhappiness at Soakimi’s inadequacies give some indication of the high Western cultural requirements to being a priest.

This is near the heart of the problems which faced the nineteenth-century missionaries in their efforts to establish an indigenous clergy. Catholic Christianity was so wrapped up with Western cultural elements that the two were in many ways indistinguishable from one another. This was what made the transfer of the seminary from Lano to Clydesdale, on the one hand necessary, and on the other, an inevitable failure. It is generally speaking impossible, and also undesirable, as we would now recognize, to escape completely from one’s own cultural heritage, and acquire another. If a rare person like Gatafahefa succeeded in reaching the goal of priestly ordination within one generation from paganism, the problems were only beginning when he returned to the islands.

These difficulties lay far outside the control of even an imaginative thinker like Bataillon. They were the product of policies adopted in the middle of the previous century, when the Roman Curia, not Propaganda, in the name of Pope Benedict XIV, officially put an end to the radically perceptive cultural adaptations in their missionary approach, initiated by the Jesuits Roberto de Nobili in India, and Matteo Ricci in China. As J.L. McKenzie put it, ‘Historians now generally agree that if the Roman Curia had permitted the Gospel to be preached in China in the eighteenth century with certain adaptations to Chinese culture, the country would have become substantially Catholic’. It would not be correct to see Bataillon as another Ricci or de Nobili. The questions raised by those men appeared to have been finally resolved long before. His determination to make Christianity something native to the Pacific, especially by creating an indigenous clergy, was not an attempt to go beyond the structures which the church prescribed. But those structures proved to be a barrier which remained insurmountable in Bataillon’s lifetime.

Clydesdale’s failure was not the result of the incredible series of natural extremes and disasters which it experienced in the 1860s, nor of the impossibility of finding priests and brothers who were happy to be appointed to the teaching staff. Nor was it the necessity of the manual work, so gruelling that it made the islanders justifiably feel that they were treated as slaves. These things merely added to the inevitability of failure, as did the lonely isolation, and the climate at the edge of a continent, so different from that of the islands. The
choice of Clydesdale was partly influenced by the monastic ideal, where isolation from the world was seen as the best preparation for the priesthood. That ideal prevailed for another century.

The figure of Bataillon towers through this story. In another age, one has no difficulty visualizing him leading troops into battle, like a Pope Julius II. But despite his dictatorial leadership, he had incredible drive and determination. Without him, the Marist missionary endeavour might have been brought to stagnation and defeat by the shattering dispute with Pompallier in New Zealand, by the crushing failure of the heroic efforts in the Solomons and near New Guinea, and by the near disasters in New Caledonia.

The failure of Clydesdale and the tragedy of Gatafahefa must have been colossal blows to Bataillon. They seemed to spell the complete defeat of what he had set as his primary goal as a bishop. It is a clue to his essential greatness that he did not give in. He decided to reopen Lano, which effectively occurred in 1874. Four Wallisian students, who began studies there in that same year, all reached ordination to the priesthood in 1886. But the tough old warrior did not live to see this success. He had died in 1877. Despite Clydesdale, and what happened to Gatafahefa, Bataillon’s far-sighted vision of the Catholic church, self-supporting and indigenous to the Pacific, was the only basis on which it would survive in the long term.

If Bataillon’s total dedication to the task, during 34 years as a bishop, seems premature, the outcome should be borne in mind. Following the ordination of Gatafahefa in 1867, and of the four Wallisians from Lano in 1886, a steady stream of Polynesian candidates aspired to the goal of the priesthood, and many reached it. It can hardly be that Polynesians find it easier to adapt to the cultural requirements of the Catholic priesthood. Maoris are also Polynesian, and no Maori candidate reached the priesthood until the 1940s. Apart from Bataillon’s former vicariate, the first Pacific priestly ordination outside the Philippines took place when an Indonesian was ordained in Java, 49 years after Bataillon’s death.
Victor Poupinel was sent to Sydney primarily to help Marists in the missions. The Marists stationed at Villa Maria quickly came to appreciate his presence, and in time he became well known in wider Australian circles. Priests, in particular, sought him out. He was greatly needed.

In the early 1830s there were only half a dozen priests on the entire continent of Australia. The population explosion which took place in the next 30 years brought very many settlers from Ireland. An almost insatiable need for more priests resulted, but they were not easy to find. Ullathorne, Polding, McEncroe and others went to Europe searching for priests, but had difficulty finding any. Among the reasons for this was the bond to a particular diocese, or religious order, which follows from the canonical requirement of a 'title' for ordination to the priesthood. The effect was that a priest could not decide, merely of his own volition, to leave and go to a new country. He needed permission from an ecclesiastical or religious superior. This superior was often reluctant to release an applicant, being all too well aware of the needs on the home front.

One result was that the superior would be more likely to refuse to release a priest whom he valued, but might free one with whom he had some kind of trouble. A strong proportion of those priests recruited for countries like Australia and New Zealand were misfits of one kind or another. Thus, Polding drew up a list of 35 priests who left Australia, describing some as drunkards, or incontinent, or adulterers. This is not to say that those named were all men of no reputation. The name at the head of Polding's list was 'W.B.
Ullathorne’. McEncroe came very close to deciding to leave Australia more than once. The chief reason why priests left, in Polding’s view, was their unwillingness to submit to authority.¹

A major improvement to the quality of priests available began with the founding of the two great missionary colleges in Ireland, at Carlow, and All Hallows, Dublin. There, students applying for the priesthood could be sponsored by a bishop in Australia or elsewhere, and be aggregated to that diocese from before ordination. Chiefly by this means, Ireland came to be the source of vast numbers of priests who staffed parishes in many parts of the new world. This was, historically, among the greatest achievements of the secular clergy. For centuries it had almost always been religious orders who spearheaded the church’s task to preach the gospel in new areas.

Even so, there was the factor that many of the volunteers were second choice candidates, who had originally applied, without success, for a home diocese in Ireland. They were also, in general, from a poorer, less well educated background, and were sometimes criticized for boorishness. ‘They were very ignorant of polite education and good manners,’ wrote a fellow Irish priest about the products of All Hallows.²

In a special category, among priests in Australia and New Zealand, were those who were not merely misfits, but had been in some kind of trouble. There was no such thing as an honourable discharge from the Catholic priesthood until very recent times. Laicization was regarded as a disgrace. Irish attitudes extended this opprobrium even to students who left the seminary without reaching the priesthood, who were known as ‘spoiled priests’. If they decided to leave, those who had been ordained as deacon were asked to choose between lifelong celibacy and continuing to say the divine office in Latin daily, for the rest of their lives. To say the divine office privately took something over an hour each day. Such deacons were never permitted to take any liturgical role in public worship.

Laicization of priests, which was itself rare, always included the requirement of lifelong celibacy. In a full statement reiterating this point in 1936, a Roman congregation pointed out that, historically speaking, dispensation from this law requiring continued celibacy had virtually never been granted for priests, ‘even at the time of death, to validate their attempted marriages’.³

Despite the multitude of possible causes of breakdown, or of serious depression of spirit, the external manifestation of these problems most often came down to one of two things, excessive indulgence in alcohol, or contraventions of celibacy. This often led to an
oversimplification which may still be heard occasionally, expressed in the remark, 'There are only two problems for priests, punch or Judy'.

Homosexual problems are hardly ever mentioned in correspondence. An incident like that reported in the *Empire* on 22 September 1869, of a priest convicted of this charge in Melbourne, and excommunicated by Bishop Goold, is a very rare exception. Without doubt, many problems of different kinds were able to be hushed up on the grounds of causing scandal.

In practice, in the nineteenth century, where a man gave up the priesthood, he most often simply disappeared from sight, created a new life for himself in another area, perhaps with a different name, and married, disregarding these draconian laws. But if he wished to continue as a priest, and especially where the manifestation of the problem was overuse of alcohol, a first solution was sought by a church-arranged transfer to some place where he was unknown. The same step was sometimes taken where transgressions of celibacy had taken place.

Bishops have always found themselves in a difficult dilemma with such problems, especially over alcohol. Charity to a fellow priest inclines them to give the unfortunate man another chance; responsibility towards the people under their charge makes them hesitate to do so, through fear of the scandals which an alcoholic can so easily create, even in public worship itself. After a number of failures, they would often give the priest an exeat from the diocese: a document of permission to transfer, and a letter of modified recommendation, perhaps discreetly omitting to indicate the problem with alcohol.

Countries distant from Europe, like Australia and New Zealand, acquired many priests with particular problems. The greatest of them was John McEncroe, who battled alcoholism. It is difficult to say to what extent alcohol was involved in his return to Ireland from his first mission in the United States, and his coming to Australia. But he had the problem when he arrived. The tragic picture of McEncroe and alcohol in the early 1830s was graphically described by Ullathorne, in a well-known passage of his autobiography. McEncroe won the battle, and did not afterwards drink alcohol during more than 30 years. He laboured among his fellow countrymen with the problem, as a most devoted apostle of the Total Abstinence League, which helped so many to recover. A special instance of his frequent appearances at temperance meetings occurred on 6 March 1859, when Chaurain in his London parish had McEncroe found a branch there among Irish immigrants.
Alcohol was not, of course, the only problem which decreased the effectiveness of priests working in Australia. Another was the facility with which they could amass wealth, often with little zeal for their priestly duties while they devoted themselves to this goal.

Victor Poupinel, a very compassionate man, did outstanding work in helping priests rehabilitate themselves after some kind of failure. In a private letter to his superior general, Favre, written in 1858, Poupinel commented sadly on the general state of priestly ministry in Australia:

In every place, there is a shortage of priests. With some rare exceptions, there is little zeal among them, and yet you find very good dispositions in the people. Drunkenness, avarice and women, especially the first two, are the downfall of a great number of priests. It is very sad. With a people as generous as the Irish are, it is singularly easy for a priest to make a quick fortune.

[They] gulp down staggering draughts of brandy, port wine and sherry, and scandals in this regard are not uncommon.

Ten years later, he had not changed his opinion: ‘The priests of Sydney’, Poupinel then wrote, ‘outwardly very well off, are far from assiduous in the functions of the ministry’.

The frequency of difficulties over alcohol was partly caused, in Poupinel’s view, by Australian attitudes. Doctors prescribed brandy, he said in the 1858 letter, even for young children. Many wines and liqueurs were heavily adulterated, and often positively dangerous to health. Whenever you went visiting, he reported, you had to have a drink, and everyone believed that the climate made brandy and fortified wines a necessity. ‘I am not of this opinion at all,’ he went on, ‘and I think that very little need be used.’

The drinking habits of the clergy had a corollary which caused serious concern to the French Marists, no strangers to wine, when they went out to parishes to say Mass. In the same letter, Poupinel wrote: ‘Father Rocher had serious suspicions, that, in several churches, the wine being used for Mass was mixed with a very substantial amount of brandy. He spoke about it with the archbishop, who finally directed that colonial wine is to be used. Our fine priests maintain that this wine is too weak, and gives them stomach ache’. One objective of the Marist vineyards at Villa Maria was to provide reliable, unadulterated Mass wine for missionaries in the islands.

Poupinel’s warm sympathy and understanding for those with
problems quickly widened his reputation. Hundreds of letters, pre­served in Villa Maria for a century, and now housed in Rome, reveal the positive feelings of the writers towards him, both in the range of private problems which they raise, and by the affection which they express. There are letters from priests and lay people, Catholics and Protestants, men and women, the young and the old.

One letter was written from Melbourne ‘on behalf of a priest’ whom the writer had come across in the goldfields. Receiving an encouraging reply, the priest, who had really written the letter himself, unexpectedly arrived at Villa Maria, and asked for help. He gave the name Montigny, but his real name may have been Bertrand. He had no papers to prove his status, and Poupinel began from that point: writing to his home diocese, from which he obtained an exeat, and a guarded letter from its bishop. All of the documents were sent to the vicar general.

Gregory’s reply was that policy agreed on by Australia’s bishops required that such letters should be of recommendation. Since approba­tion had not been expressed, Gregory said that the priest would not be acceptable for the Sydney archdiocese. Poupinel then wrote to other bishops, not only in Australia, but also to Viard in New Zealand. Whether he was successful on the priest’s behalf is not recorded.7

This process is typical of the procedure by which Poupinel tried to help rehabilitate many priests. One cannot blame the bishops for their reluctance to accept these priests and former priests. The shortage of priests for the Australian mission made them anxious to obtain help when they could. But many of those accepted let the bishops down. It was only right for the bishops to adopt such defensive measures as were available. Often that was no more than a close scrutiny of the terms of the letter from the previous bishop. One is often unable to know most of the reasons why many priests changed from one diocese to another, but Catholic directories show that some priests were in more than half a dozen different dioceses in Australia and New Zealand.8

The stories of some of the priests whose problem was alcoholism make very sad reading. However, bishops soon recognized and utilized the apostolic work of rehabilitation being carried out at Villa Maria. Polding and many of the other bishops directed priests there at different times.

In 1866, Bishop Matthew Quinn of Bathurst sent a Father John O’Connell to Villa Maria. O’Connell had apparently come to Quinn
from the Sydney diocese, on the recommendation of McEncroe, with a drinking problem. He sent him to Poupinel to do a month's penance, and said that O'Connell would not be acceptable back in the Bathurst diocese. Poupinel obtained an exeat for O'Connell, and a letter from Quinn stating the problem explicitly. He then tried to help him obtain a place in the Adelaide diocese. A despondent letter from O'Connell, written in Melbourne, states that the bishop of Adelaide read the correspondence, and then refused to accept him. Undeterred, Poupinel next approached Quinn's brother, Bishop James Quinn of Brisbane, who agreed to accept O'Connell on probation.

An optimistic letter came from O'Connell, in Maryborough, where Quinn had appointed him, and requested that Poupinel supply him with vestments from the procure store. But a few months later, Quinn found that, contrary to his promise, O'Connell was 'taking each day some ale or porter', and after a public failure, through drunkenness, to perform duties in Maryborough, he sent him back to Villa Maria for further penance. Some indication of Quinn's opinion of Poupinel's work is revealed by his concluding request: 'Taking all this into consideration, decide whether or not you ought to recommend him to me for another trial. I shall act on your recommendation.' In such circumstances, Poupinel would try to help the priest concerned. If he felt that there were signs of an effective change, and real determination, he would recommend the man to a bishop, stating the case frankly, and where he felt it appropriate, indicating his own hopes that another chance would be successful.

With problems over alcohol, there was often a good deal of sympathy from the bishops, recognizing common human frailty, and sometimes common nationality. According to Poupinel, contravention of celibacy was not as common a problem, but it could receive very harsh treatment.

The most fully documented instance of this concerns a Benedictine priest, Father Jean Gourbeillon, a member of the Sydney community of St Mary's monastery. He was regarded as the stormy petrel of the monastery, and was a sculptor. Gourbeillon was responsible for many of the statues which adorned the old St Mary's, which were destroyed in the 1865 fire. Examples of his work have survived, however, in some of the oldest churches in the city.

Gourbeillon was French, and it is not surprising that he contacted his fellow countrymen at Villa Maria, and became friendly with them. Early in 1859, he had taken his sculpting tools to the procure, where Brother Joseph was making a toolbox for him. Only
a few weeks later, a scandal was revealed at the Benedictine monas­tery. A woman’s voice was thought to have been heard in one of the private rooms at night time, and believing she was discovered, a woman went to Polding and admitted that for some time she had been visiting Gourbeillon’s room at night. Some of the story appeared in a Sydney newspaper which specialized in scandals. Afterwards Polding wrote in a letter that she was of low moral character, and had seduced the monk.  

She was apparently a French prostitute, and two years later demanded blackmail money, threatening that otherwise she would tell the whole story to the newspapers. By then, Gourbeillon was back in Europe, but in Sydney there were wild rumours through the community, including newspaper speculation that he was in some kind of church prison in Sydney. Her story would have been eagerly bought. And so she was paid off, and moved to New Caledonia in 1862, where she became a ‘madame’ with her own bordello.

When he was denounced, in 1859, Gourbeillon’s life crumpled about him. It was decided that he had to be removed immediately, to prevent scandal. He was spirited aboard a ship for England, but not before Polding had sought and obtained certain admissions from him, in writing. The archbishop wrote, in the same letter, ‘I have reason to know that he [Gourbeillon] has been one of the chief suppliers to the Journal of the calumnies against the V.G.[Gregory].’ Polding obtained the admissions to safeguard ‘his high reputation’, as Gourbeillon expressed it bitterly in a letter to Poupinel from La Trappe, the famous Cistercian monastery in France, often used as a house of penance for priests and religious in serious trouble. But even in the highly agitated state evident in his letter, Gourbeillon would not accept responsibility for the statements attributed to him about spreading stories about Polding’s problems. He strongly maintained his ground on this point right throughout. Later on, after referring to meeting Bishop James Quinn in Paris, he wrote: ‘I have not said a word about His Lordship of Sydney’s troubles, as he falsely accused me of doing in Sydney’.  

Gourbeillon’s letters to Poupinel help us to piece together the rest of the story. After he had been denounced to Polding, he was kept hidden, and then made to dress in lay clothes. Mr Murphy put him aboard the Viscount Canning, where he was booked as ‘Mr Hubert’. Murphy promised to bring him money, and his sculpting equipment from Villa Maria before the boat sailed, but did not reappear. The monk found a few clothes waiting for him on the ship,
with little in the way of changes of personal linen, no warm coat—the voyage was via Cape Horn—no shoes, and no money.

How my heart sank [Gourbeillon wrote from La Trappe], when I saw the hills of Woolloomooloo and St Mary's disappear. When I saw myself separated from a country for which I had sacrificed everything, even my soul. Departing without being able to exchange even a syllable with true friends who, perhaps even today, still do not understand my false position, and consider I am not worthy of a thought.13

It chanced that Gourbeillon had 30 shillings in his pocket when he was put on the ship 'like a sack of dirty linen'. Otherwise, he was destitute—'My only reward for twelve years' slavery', he called it in the same letter. Using his skills as a sculptor, he earned a few shillings, during the months of the voyage, by making small likenesses of the captain and one or two passengers. When he wrote to Poupinel, he was at pains to explain that before leaving, he had given Gregory money to cover all his debts for work in progress. This conflicts with Polding's comments about large debts he left behind.

When Gourbeillon arrived in London, penniless, he was met by Chaurain, who found him in a very agitated state. Afraid of scandalizing young religious, if he brought him to the parish presbytery, Chaurain booked him into a hotel, and paid his accommodation. For some months, Gourbeillon remained in the hotel, and almost starved. His future was extremely uncertain. His original monastery of Solesmes in France was unwilling to have anything to do with him.

The plight of Gourbeillon in London illustrates the mode of application of the severe penal laws of the church in the nineteenth century to the individual who had transgressed celibacy. Canon law, in its penal provisions, derived from current continental secular state codes, and was quite different from Anglo-Saxon law. For instance, no charges were laid against Gourbeillon, and he was never accused of anything precise. His abbot of Solesmes, he said, had quoted to him a letter from Polding, which he never saw, stating that he had espoused and married a Sydney woman. It is very doubtful that Polding wrote such a statement. Nor was there any sentence, properly so called. 'You asked me to tell you,' he wrote to Poupinel, 'what was the nature of the sentence carried against me. I know of none.'

Chaurain's letters indicate that Gourbeillon, in London, was in a state bordering on complete nervous collapse. Writing later from France, Gourbeillon apologized for not having replied from London
to Poupinel's letter. He said that his hand was shaking so much that he was unable to write.

Despite his state of mind, the monk was faced with a critical decision. He must choose either to abandon his religious and priestly life, or try to continue. We would perhaps think that abandonment would have been the better alternative: there might be some protection to his dignity. It would undoubtedly have been welcomed by some of his spiritual superiors in the church, as removing a worrying problem. But unfortunately, in that circumstance, Gourbeillon would be considered an apostate from religious life, unless a dispensation and rare laicization was obtained. In any event, he would be obliged to lifelong celibacy, under pain of grave sin, and threat of a double excommunication. If he should 'attempt' marriage, as the law put it, his eternal salvation was gravely imperilled, and his children would be in a special category of illegitimacy.14

Gourbeillon wanted to continue in the priesthood and religious life, and was therefore ready to undertake whatever penance should be prescribed. But he found difficulty in obtaining any indication from higher superiors of how to proceed. As he felt completely abandoned, Chaurain undertook to pursue his interests. Financial help was finally obtained from the Solesmes abbot, from Gourbeillon's personal friends in Paris, and a small sum from Polding's London agent, Heptonstall. This enabled the monk to go to La Trappe monastery for a term of compulsory penance.

Afterwards his abbot of Solesmes still refused to receive him back, but at least offered him a celebret, or permission to say Mass each day, which he greatly appreciated. However, the vicar general of Paris heard of this, and cancelled the permission. Unwelcome on every side, the monk lived unhappily in Paris, until he met the newly appointed bishop of Brisbane, James Quinn, who took an interest in his case. He was favourably impressed by the sincerity of the unfortunate penitent, and negotiated a permanent solution. He arranged his transfer to a German monastery of the Benedictine order in Munich, where he settled in peace.15

The most significant single group of priests who were helped by the Marists in Sydney were whose who had been recruited by Pompallier for his Auckland diocese and found it impossible to work with him. Very many of them had responded to the appeal of the bishop in 1848, while still seminarians in Europe, after he could not get enough ordained priests to volunteer to join him. In the original
research on which the present book was based, I was able to trace six from this group, who had been ordained to the priesthood in New Zealand by Pompallier and later left him. In the late 1850s he recruited a second group.

Father Joseph Garavel was one of the former group. After ordination, he worked among the Maoris east of Auckland with great success. Early in the 1860s, Pompallier erroneously became convinced that Garavel had made a report to Rome against him. Later, such a report really was made, but by the Italian Franciscans, who also found it impossible to work under the difficult bishop. They asked for a canonical investigation into the affairs of the diocese. The bishop also accused Garavel of aspiring to a coadjutorship. He gave him an exeat, and Garavel left for Sydney. There was, at first, discussion about his joining the Wellington diocese, and Viard was prepared to appoint him to Taranaki, where his knowledge of the Maori language could have been utilized. But Garavel was not really interested. He was accepted for the Sydney diocese, and worked there for many years.

Another, Emmanuel Royer, was in a similar situation on leaving Pompallier, but was not accepted for Sydney. With some difficulty in this instance, Poupinel succeeded in obtaining a position for him with Viard, after an initial refusal. Two other priests joined Goold’s diocese of Melbourne. At least one went to Queensland under James Quinn, without, as far as I know, making arrangements through the priests at Villa Maria. There were one or two who seem to have left the priesthood.

Lay people as well as priests found the Sydney Marists and Victor Poupinel in particular, to be a great help. This help was quite frequently based on Poupinel’s familiarity with the processes of church law. It is as true of canon law as it is of civil law that many people fail to make use of it, even when it would be to their advantage to do so, because they are unfamiliar with its processes. A century and more ago, this was true even of many bishops. In addition, many processes of canon law can be undertaken only if the case is initiated by a priest. And many priests, through the same ignorance, or simply through inertia, were loath to begin such work.

Although little could be done at that time for former priests who had left the ministry, the same was not true of those who had been under vows as religious brothers or sisters. Poupinel was ready to try to help such people obtain the appropriate dispensation.

One group of such former religious had been monks in Polding’s
Benedictine monastery. Ultimately, it was necessary that applications for dispensation from vows in Sydney would pass through the chancery of Polding’s administration. And so, it is easy to understand that the ex-monks, who had left in an odour of disapproval, would find it extremely disagreeable to make application directly to their former religious superior. The neutrality of a religious house like Villa Maria, and a representative with status, like Poupinel, provided a very necessary go-between. A number of these men had left the monastery shortly after the 1854 petition to Rome failed to have their vows declared invalid. They included Francis Larter, brother of John, the first vocation in Australia to the Marists, and to the Christian Brothers, and also Benedict Casey, Anthony Hunt and Aemilian Fitzpatrick, as well as John Oswald Connery and Joseph Sheridan Moore.

Both Larter and Casey married quickly, after leaving the monastery. Casey had a son, and his wife died. He remarried in Melbourne. Perhaps both Larter and Casey married on the sincere conviction that their vows were invalid. Polding states that they had been given this assurance before they left the monastery, by priests there. But, given the Roman decision in favour of validity, they were still seen as being under solemn vows when they left. Therefore they were invalidly married in the eyes of the church, apostates from religious life, and possibly excommunicated. Simple vows of religion do not have all these effects, as they do not invalidate marriage.

Poupinel knew that, despite these obstacles, Rome would be prepared to give dispensations, and in 1863, while he was in Rome, he discussed the matter fully on behalf of Francis Larter. Gradually the machinery took its ponderous way, hampered by bureaucratic processes in Rome, inexperience in Sydney and the seemingly interminable delays of the post, waiting for replies to requests for further information. Eventually, Larter’s dispensation was received, and indications were given by Barnabo in Rome, that the three others named would be similarly dispensed.

The most famous former monk was Joseph Sheridan Moore, who became a controversial editor of the Freeman’s Journal. His talents were of a high order and, while he was still a monk, were employed by his superiors in teaching at St Mary’s. Later on, he became a schoolmaster again, at Randwick college. He asked Poupinel, in 1868, for help in righting his situation with the church, and wrote, ‘My affair is unreservedly in your hands’. He faced a complication in that, because of his well-known imbroglio with the archbishop, it was suggested that he should leave Sydney, and move to some place
where his background was unknown. This would have been a serious blow to him, financially. In the event, however, the move was not insisted upon.

A number of women also sought help at Villa Maria. Several letters in the archives are from young ladies who wished to enter the religious life, or who had left, and desired to obtain appropriate dispensations. The latter were helped as the former monks were, but with much less difficulty, since in most instances their vows were the simple vows of religion.

One unusual contact, for those days when sectarian feelings were often bitter, serves to remind us that there were also sincere Christians of different denominations who could find genuine solace and comfort from their friendships. Lacy H. Rumsey, an Anglican priest, and his wife, came to Australia on the same ship as Poupinel. He called on them in Newcastle, New South Wales, on one occasion, but the friendship survived many years of contact only by letters, which preserve it for us today.

Rumsey had volunteered for the mission, but the cultivated English couple felt an evident deprivation in Australia, especially when he was transferred in 1868 to the ‘wilds’ of Ipswich, Queensland. The letters Rumsey wrote to the friendly French priest discuss topics ranging from his deep knowledge of music, and his interest in the work of Christian missionaries, to comments on Poupinel’s voyages, or reference to his own wide-flung parish. In a twelvemonth he covered five thousand miles in the saddle.

These varied instances give some idea of the kind of work which Poupinel was able to carry out in Australia, as well as in New Zealand and the south Pacific. However, one most interesting statement expresses another point of view, coming as it does from a person who was not a wholehearted admirer of Poupinel. In 1868, while her disputes with him, described in a previous chapter, were at their height, Mother Mary St Wilfrid wrote a comment in a private letter to her superior in France, about Poupinel:

I value Father Poupinel as a true religious and a man very dear to God. He is too kind, far too kind. That is his weakness. He is always afraid to cause pain, and in trying to avoid doing so, he gives more pain than if he had taken a firm stand from the beginning . . .

He is a priest well able to lead people to God, but only if they have total confidence in him. Otherwise, he is helpless.

Poor Father! I like him, and I grieve to see him.
overwhelmed by so much anxiety. I am convinced that he is suffering greatly, from having been so long in a situation in which he could not give the souls entrusted to him [the sisters] the help that his sensitive and loving heart would wish.23

But the activities described in this chapter on behalf of priests, former brothers, sisters and lay people, show more than the work of one man. Seen in context, they were also an integral part of the work of the Marists Fathers at Villa Maria. Marists stationed there could have no doubt that they were meeting real needs of the Australian community. Benedictine activity was decreasing considerably. Until Polding died in 1877, there was still no other order of religious priests in the Sydney archdiocese than the Marist Fathers.

Despite this apparent opportunity, the situation of the Marists was by no means easy. Jesuit Father William Joseph Dalton visited Sydney several times from the late 1860s, investigating the possibility of making a foundation of his order in Polding’s archdiocese. He decided not to do so while the archbishop lived. His diary records an interesting and objective assessment of the situation of the Marist Fathers in 1870: ‘The Marist Fathers,’ Dalton wrote, ‘were here for 20 years, and until lately were barely tolerated at Villa Maria—seven miles from Sydney—Since Dean McEncroe’s death two years ago, they have been employed at St Patrick’s, but their position is very much hampered, and is very precarious’.24
Marist Brothers Monastery and School, Harrington Street, first foundation of the Marist Brothers in Australia. Royal Naval House is visible behind. See map p. 252.

Mater Misericordiae Home was a work of the Sisters of Mercy in the Church Hill parish in the 19th century. The Qantas centre now occupies this site.
Pierre le Rennetel was jovial and good humoured. Le Rennetel built the presbytery, convent and Federation Hall, for the parish of Church Hill. He was affectionately known as Father O’Rennetel.

An early damaged photo of St Patrick’s Presbytery built in 1889 by Le Rennetel. The building on the left was the convent until 1875. It was so dilapidated that Monnier described it as ‘the most contemptible convent in Australia’. Joly then arranged to move the sisters to the more acceptable building on the corner where the priests had resided. The priests lived in the former convent until 1889. St Patrick’s Business College now stands on the site.
Cardinal Moran, bishops and priests gathered in the courtyard between St Patrick’s church and the Convent of Mercy to celebrate the feast of Blessed Peter Chanel, 1890.
Convent of Mercy on the corner of Grosvenor and Harrington Streets, shown not long after its completion in 1892.

Federation Hall and Royal Naval House in the 1890s. These buildings are being restored today to become the Sydney Futures Exchange.
Above: St Brigid’s Church School in Kent Street, Millers Point, 1987. The ground floor sandstone level was completed in 1835, making it the oldest Catholic building in Australasia. The upper level was added in 1933. Left: A small student of St Brigid’s playing hopscotch in the tiny schoolyard where children of the school have played since 1835. (Photos: Douglas Baglin)
Cumberland Place. An 1831 Charles Rodius painting of one of Sydney's early mansions, where David Scott Mitchell, donor of the Mitchell Library, lived from infancy. On the high point of the ridge above Dawes Point, the home had a spectacular north-easterly view over Sydney Harbour towards Kirribilli Point. It was bought by Joly in 1872. (Courtesy of the Mitchell Library)

Cumberland Place became St Michael's in 1879 when Joly obtained permission from France to transfer into it the Marist procure house functions. From 1882 it was also the presbytery for a church of the same name built on adjoining land facing Lower Fort Street.
The back of St Michael's church seen from the vegetable garden in the presbytery grounds. The land on which the church stood was owned by the Sisters of St Joseph, whose Providence or orphanage was to the right of the photographer.
St Michael's Church, Lower Fort Street. It was poorly attended so the Marists were relieved when the church and presbytery were resumed by the NSW government in 1901 for later construction of Sydney Harbour Bridge. (Courtesy of the Mitchell Library)

A 1987 photograph taken from a position similar to that of the photograph on the endpapers. St Michael’s church stood on what is now Cumberland Street, between the palm trees and the hotel. The large construction on the left is part of the city approach to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. (Photo: Douglas Baglin)
The second bishop to offer work to the Marists in Australia was Bishop Goold of Melbourne. He did so in Rome. His diary entry for 15 January 1859 reads:

Paid a visit to the Superior of the Marists now in Rome; Father McEncroe was with me. The object of my visit was to see if I could come to any arrangement with him in securing the services of a few of the religious for the Chinese in Victoria, as also to obtain, for a training school in Melbourne, three from the lay institute of teachers under the Marists’ rule. He seemed to receive my proposal with delight, and said that, after consulting with the religious at Lyons, he would give me an answer.

Favre wrote from Marseille to Victor Poupinel for advice in this matter, asking for an immediate reply. At this time, Favre believed that there was a strong likelihood that a college would go ahead quickly in Sydney. Another was to follow in Dundalk, Ireland, and would be a source of English-speaking vocations for Australia.

Poupinel’s reply is interesting. Work among the Chinese would, in itself, be excellent, he said. But, he added,

The bishops of this colony seem to me to have singular ideas about authority, and their administration leaves much to be desired. I think that Bishop Goold, too, has his difficulties and eccentricities.

We have had a small revolution for some time. Things cannot remain on this footing for long. I would like to see a new order of things before dealing seriously with any one or other of
the three bishops, Polding, Goold and Wilson [Willson] . . . I would advise you to make an adjournment for some time.'

Favre followed this counsel, and no foundations in Victoria were made. It is worth remembering that Poupinel's advice was given several months earlier than Polding's refusal to approve the plan of the fellows of St John's College to ask the Marist Fathers to begin a college in Sydney.

Gradually, relations between the archbishop and the Marists in Sydney became less strained. Perhaps Polding realized that the general suspicions he felt towards them, seen in his strange visit to Villa Maria in 1860, were unfounded. But one of their parishioners could have been an important factor. Thomas Cooper Makinson, the former Anglican priest who converted to Roman Catholicism, had now been Polding's private secretary for some time. His influence on the prelate is difficult to measure, but at the time of his death one source suggested that he drafted many of Polding's pastoral letters.

There was a warm friendship between the Makinson family and the Marists, and they greatly admired Poupinel in particular. On 20 August 1862, while Poupinel was in Europe, Joly wrote to him, and mentioned the family, saying that he visited them every Sunday, and that Mrs Makinson was quite determined that Poupinel would return to Sydney as a bishop, and a bishop in Australia. 'She has some influence with the archbishop,' he added wryly. Despite Mrs Makinson's failure to have Poupinel made a bishop—and, as noted earlier, his name does appear on the short list for the Brisbane see—the Makinsons may well have been important in helping Polding become aware that the Marists were not running a centre of subversion against him.

A notable interview took place the same month, between Joly and Polding. It arose because of the question of state aid to ministers of religion. A political campaign made it likely that no further grants would be made, and so existing grants had become much more important. Joly felt concern that a valuable salary might be lost to the archdiocese if his Marist superiors should wish to remove him from Sydney. After discussing the matter with Rocher, who was acting in Poupinel's position, Joly decided that it would be best to approach Polding and resign the care of the Ryde parish. The result would be that, while there was still time, the salary then coming to him could be transferred to a secular priest, who could retain it more or less indefinitely. Meantime, Joly was sure that there was now
enough work in the Hunters Hill–Gladesville portion of the Ryde parish to keep the Marists thoroughly occupied.

Joly made the appointment with Polding. He records that during the interview, the archbishop revealed that the same thought had occurred to him and that he had been embarrassed to know what steps to take, ‘but,’ [Joly quoted Polding], ‘my overture now made an arrangement easy. He thanked me very much for my generosity and disinterest. He praised me greatly for many things that it would take too long to repeat. Finally, he spoke to me with such an outpouring of kindness that he began to weep. I thought to myself, “How times have changed!”’ Polding expressed doubt about whether the legislation would be passed by the colonial upper house, but stating that he wished to retain Joly’s services in any case, he declared that, if necessary, he would nominate a young priest as holder of the office in the eyes of the government, and Joly could continue in the duties, receiving the salary. This was a very generous offer.

Times had indeed changed. A few months later, a very old matter was cleared up, with Makinson directly involved. Sixteen years earlier, after the death of Bishop Epalle, the Marists had donated the huge sum of £100 to a fund for a monument. It was never built. In December 1862, a cheque for that exact sum was sent to them by the diocese as reimbursement, the conditions not having been fulfilled.

In February 1864, Polding made a visit to the Marist church of St Charles, Ryde, which was the scene of a wedding between Makinson’s daughter, Edith, and John Michael Murphy, listed in the marriage register as a ‘Squatter’. The archbishop was the celebrant. The Makinos continued to be part of the Marist parish for many years. The wedding register for Hunters Hill parish also records another Makinson wedding, some years later. Daughter Miriam Josephine, a ‘Lady’, was married to a son of another family close to the Marists: Charles Gilbert Heydon, barrister son of J.K. Heydon.4

During 1864, Polding entrusted quite an important duty to a Marist from New Caledonia. A mischance saw the archbishop in the embarrassing situation of having to explain in Rome that a projected set of rules for Australia had been falsely presented at Propaganda as the decrees of a synod. He delegated the making of explanations in his defence to ‘un très estimable prêtre, le Rev.P.Forestier, Mariste,’ [a very esteemed priest, Rev.Father Forestier, a Marist].5
The most important opportunity offered to the Marist Fathers in Australia by Polding occurred in 1868. In response, as we shall see later, to a request made by McEncroe shortly before his death, Polding’s vicar general, fellow-Benedictine Austin Sheehy, offered to the Marists the care of McEncroe’s parish, St Patrick’s, Church Hill. The church was regarded as a Catholic shrine of prime importance. Poupinel accepted the offer made by Sheehy, knowing that he had available the right priest to undertake such an important responsibility. He had Joseph Monnier.

Education problems in the archdiocese may have been part of the reason for the offer of the parish. By 1868, it was no longer possible for the archbishop to believe that the languishing Lyndhurst Academy was capable of meeting the needs of the boys of the diocese. The Benedictine nuns continued their work at Subiaco for girls. That task was now shared in a number of other places where there were schools run by the Sisters of Charity, the Good Samaritan Sisters, and the Sisters of Mercy. The first two congregations had been intended for other works, but had entered education by default, so to speak, because it was so neglected. This was despite McEncroe’s intense efforts to advance it.

While these congregations of religious women were able to offer a good education to girls and very young boys, the needs of older boys were quite badly neglected. The Benedictine school at Lyndhurst had deteriorated badly, and would continue only a few more years. And there were still no other male religious in Polding’s diocese, except the Marists. The only other Catholic schools for boys were mostly of doubtful quality, and were run by lay people. Around 1868, the Christian Brothers had accepted invitations by Goold and Quinn to the dioceses of Melbourne and Brisbane, but they refused a similar invitation to return to Sydney while Polding was archbishop.

Early in 1868, growing secularist action by the New South Wales government was causing concern to many Catholics. In February, a meeting of the Catholic Association was told by Sheehy that Polding had approached the heads of several religious orders in England, Ireland and Belgium, but all had refused to make teachers available to him. Sheehy went to to say that ‘arrangements had been completed that very day, and before the archbishop left Sydney [for the Vatican Council], for a body of religious teachers who would open training schools to renovate the ranks of Catholic teachers’. He said that it was the Marist Fathers who had consented, and arrangements had been entered into, with Father Poupinel, to provide a number of Marist teachers, chiefly from the Irish Marist house of
Dundalk. Archdeacon McEncroe had offered to pay the passage money for four fathers, and maintain them for a year.

Whether Poupinel had originally seen the plan as one for schools run by the Marist Fathers is not certain. It may be that Sheehy was not quite clear about the distinction between the two Marist congregations. In any case, when Sheehy wrote his letter requesting Marist teachers, it was addressed, on Poupinel’s advice, not to Favre, but to the superior general of the Marist Brothers, Brother Louis-Marie. The request for a Sydney school, strongly supported by Poupinel, was given priority over many similar requests. Even so, it was not until 1872 that McEncroe’s efforts over so many years provided posthumously for Sydney what Polding’s protective attitude on behalf of his own order had for so long denied: a congregation of male religious teachers. McEncroe’s will paid passage and a year’s accommodation for four Marist Brothers. They established St Patrick’s boys’ school in that year, in the Marist Fathers’ parish of Church Hill.

The coming of the Marist Brothers was probably the most important Marist contribution to the Catholic church in Australia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The extremely rapid spread of their schools gives some clue to the need for such an order of teachers, and again highlights the cost to his archdiocese of Polding’s Benedictine policies, with the loss of the Christian Brothers in the 1840s, and his refusal to allow a Marist Fathers’ school to open in the late 1850s. The story of the brothers’ schools has been fully detailed by Ronald Fogarty and Alban Doyle.

The major new contributions of the Marist Fathers themselves to the work of the Sydney archdiocese in the last third of the nineteenth century were taking charge of the city parish of St Patrick’s and the undertaking of home missions, for the first time in Australia. Both of these works began with Joseph Monnier. Monnier was posted from Tonga to Sydney by Bataillon in July 1864, for the staff of Clydesdale. He and Elloy seem to have been the only two priests appointed to the school in reasonably good health. Monnier is also one of the few whose letters from there do not enlarge unhappily about the school, its loneliness, and the hope of returning to the islands as quickly as possible. In Monnier’s case, this was greatly helped by the fact that his stay was relatively short, and he was soon engaged in apostolic work outside.

As it happened just then, Father Louis Rondel was fulfilling the responsibilities of caring for Clydesdale well, and Monnier had some
freedom to undertake priestly work away from the college. As the long-suffering Junillon wrote when he heard what Monnier was doing, ‘So Father Monnier has left Clydesdale to work for the diocese of Sydney. Had I been capable of preaching in English, I would have done the same thing.’

Monnier was not the first Marist from Clydesdale to help neighbouring parishes with Sunday Masses, but like Chaurain in the 1840s, he became proficient in English, and was soon able to preach at his own Masses. There were very many Irish settlers in the nearby Hawkesbury river valley, and the priests in the surrounding parishes would try to arrange Masses for different areas within their jurisdiction, once or twice a month. This made extra priests very welcome. Clydesdale lay within the parish of Windsor, and the Marists sometimes assisted at the local parish, at Penrith, the new Richmond parish, the township of St Mary’s, and the town of Blacktown.

Bataillon soon heard that Monnier was not required at Clydesdale, and in 1865 ‘told him positively, that if [Poupinel] had gone, he was to take the first available ship’ to return to Central Oceania, to Wallis. Joly urged Monnier to wait for Poupinel’s return. During that month, Brennan, the parish priest of Penrith, died, and Polding requested Monnier to care for the parish, during what became quite a long interregnum, before the new appointee arrived. This was followed, for Monnier, by a term of three months at Campbelltown.

As a newly ordained priest in France, in the 1850s, Monnier had worked for five years as a missioner and preacher of retreats. Brilliant in his studies, his preaching was described as being characterized by simplicity and clarity, rather than the devices of rhetoric practised at that time. The effect was all the deeper on the hearers for that, and for his evident sincerity, as well as the asceticism of his personal life.

It was ‘Dillon of Balmain’, Father George Francis Dillon, a great friend of the Marists over many years, who provided the opportunity for Monnier’s return to this work of preaching, after a ten-year interval, using a new language, and at the other end of the world. It began while Monnier was at Campbelltown. Each Sunday, he completed his Masses there, and then took the train to Sydney, 48 kilometres away, in order to preach the evening sermon at St Augustine’s, Balmain. Coincidentally, that was the church in which Chaurain had frequently preached in the 1840s.

Gradually, the old sureness of touch returned. In June 1866, the same Dillon invited Monnier to preach the Forty Hours, a devotion introduced by Polding a few years previously. It consisted of two
days of continual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the church, attended day and night by the people, and punctuated by Masses, sermons, and public recitation of prayers.

Monnier was joined for the occasion by Father Bréhéret, now prefect apostolic of Fiji, and on his first trip away from those islands in 22 years. The program began as a brief revival of spiritual fervour, but Dillon was so impressed with the effects that he prolonged it to a week of parish renewal. Then he extended Monnier's stay, to include a separate retreat for prisoners and free inhabitants of Cockatoo Island, where a convict prison was located on a harbour island, not far from Balmain's Birchgrove peninsula.

From that beginning, Monnier's work extended in a remarkable way. He inaugurated in Australia the preaching of parish missions of spiritual revival. In over two years he rarely paused, and there were few parishes where his voice was not heard in the dioceses of Sydney, Bathurst, up and down the Hunter valley, in north central New South Wales, as well as over hundreds of miles in Queensland, then one vast diocese. Each new place where he preached brought invitations to go on afterwards to somewhere else nearby. Each departure brought earnest requests to return.

Monnier's letters, during this period, provide an incidental but valuable picture of the Catholic church in New South Wales and Queensland in the 1860s: the church in O'Connell's Plains with no windows, where he celebrated Mass, while icy winter winds made his hands feel frozen, in a way that must have reminded him of his native Jura mountains; the parish picnic in Brisbane to raise funds for a Catholic school, with its games, cakes, 'loleys', apples, oranges, lemonade, a game in which children were blindfolded and had to find a pot of sweets suspended by a cord; impressions of the Irish.\(^1\)

Monnier's success was certainly increased because of his deep affection for the Irish. 'It is true that I am a friend of the Irish,' he wrote one day from Singleton on the Hunter river. They were days when the Irish question was being hotly debated in Australia. The madman O'Farrell had shot at the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Alfred, earlier in the month, and the colony was in uproar. Monnier summed up his impressions with a very French observation: 'I do not like the English when they admire Garibaldi, and then condemn the Fenians.'\(^2\)

And Monnier added a few impressions of his latest mission:

My mission at Singleton is completed . . . I am happy enough with Singleton. For as long as I have been on the missions I have never seen so many men among the people coming to the
holy table [communion]. At confession, two out of every three were men, and I heard that at least three quarters of those who took part in the mission [were men]. Some men came ten, fifteen or twenty miles.

Monnier had travelled to Singleton on a steamer, a pleasant opportunity of getting some thoughts on paper. It contrasted strongly with the more usual mode of transport in the inland. In days of fast, comfortable modern transport, one can easily overlook the seemingly interminable journeys Monnier would have travelled, in horsedrawn coaches over rough tracks. He never spared himself, and some idea of his activity can be gauged from an outline he sent to Poupinel of his program during a two-month period in Queensland in 1867.

7 to 16 July Retreat to sisters (Brisbane)
18 to 30 July Mission at Maryborough;
1 to 4 August Ipswich, then Toowoomba (then back to Brisbane).
5 to 10 August Retreat to priests (Brisbane);
11 to 18 August Retreat to priests of St Patrick’s (The Valley) Brisbane;
19 to 28 August Retreat at Cathedral;
29 August to 2 September Retreat to convent school pupils.

‘Since 3 September I have been waiting for a boat . . . I will arrive in the course of next week.’

Unfortunately, such records as these which outline Monnier’s activities, are of the most superficial kind. They consist of his brief letters to Villa Maria indicating what he was doing only in broad terms, fleeting impressions and thoughts, jotted down as opportunity offered, in what was obviously a very crowded day, perhaps by fitful candlelight, at the end of the evening, in time stolen from sleep. The more important effects remain largely untraceable: lives altered, hearts touched, people returning to the sacraments and the practice of their faith. Somehow these Irish people, adapting to the harsh, practical life of a new land, found comfort and help in the sermons of the French priest who seemed to have an instinctive understanding of their needs. Perhaps his accented English was sometimes hard to grasp. No matter. The burning sincerity with which the words were uttered was appreciated immediately.

Lonely and isolated priests especially appreciated such visits. Out would come the stories of recent incidents which had lightened or saddened their work. Candles burned late as they laughed together,
or told of the tragedies. Perhaps these Irish priests were rough. Certainly they were no strangers to the saddle. They had to be ready to undertake the hard tasks their work demanded. The French priest was not only an interesting conversationalist, he was a good listener. No doubt he needed to be. Bishops were well able to appreciate how much solace their priests in the more isolated places derived from Monnier’s visits for missions in their parishes. They knew, too, that at some moment, perhaps at the end of the evening, the host would offer the missionary a confessional stole and quietly ask, ‘Father, will you hear my confession?’

At this time, James Quinn had several French priests working in his diocese, including Paul Tissot at Maryborough, Pierre Marie Bucas then in Brisbane, and later in Mackay, who had been ordained by Pompallier in New Zealand, Henri Brun at Ipswich and Charles Murlay at Rockhampton, who later became a Marist. Undoubtedly they were delighted to receive visits from their fellow countryman.

An interesting by-product of Monnier’s wide-ranging apostolate was a spread of the French spirituality of the Marists in this fundamentally Irish Australian church. Pious objects, holy cards and medals with French inscriptions dating to that period of the last century are still occasionally found between the pages of old books and elsewhere. One source, from which many of these were circulated, was Villa Maria. They were originally brought out from France for the island missionaries, and held in storage at the procure. Similarly stored for the islands were numerous objects used in churches, and not readily available in Australia: Mass vestments made in French convents, chalices and other sacred vessels, altar candlesticks and statues.

Requests for such items appear in many of the letters addressed to Villa Maria by bishops and priests in many areas. It was not a very lucrative trade; too many of the parishes were poor, and at least very dilatory in making payments. One of the defaulters was Robert Dunne, parish priest of Darra in Brisbane, Bishop Quinn’s vicar general and eventual successor. Monnier wrote to Poupinel urging him not to press Dunne for payment. A curate there, Father James Conway, had told him that in three months’ residence, Dunne had been able to give him a total of £1 sterling—perhaps equivalent to $30. Conway had had to obtain money from Sydney to maintain himself. However, the Marists continued the trade by deliberate policy, as something of a contribution to the work of the church in all these places.

Bishops James and Matthew Quinn and Murray wrote numbers
of letters to Poupinel at Villa Maria requesting that Monnier preach missions and retreats for their priests, sisters and laity, or reporting on the success of those completed. They were well aware of the value of his apostolic visits to remote rural parishes, as well as the appreciation felt by their priests for the companionship of his visits. Monnier’s friendliness and warmth were matched by an unspiring zeal, and severe austerity in his personal life.

When a halt was called to this full-time apostolic work, in September 1868, the sincerity of regrets expressed, and tributes to Monnier’s work, reveal how greatly it had been valued. Typical was the comment of Robert Dunne of Darra: ‘We here are quite jealous, and think the Australian colonies at large have been unfairly treated in being deprived of his very valuable, though only occasional visits’.17

The halt to Monnier’s work on the home missions was occasioned by the death on 22 August 1868 of the great pioneer, and good friend of the Marists, John McEncroe. Since 1837, the venerable pioneer of the Australian church had been close to the French priests. The Marists had often assisted with Masses at the parish of St Patrick’s, Church Hill, in the city of Sydney. When McEncroe took charge of it, their activity there increased. For some months before August 1868, Marist Father Zéphirin Muraire, in particular, had been catechizing and hearing confessions of children in the parish schools, run since 1866 by the Sisters of Mercy, who were founded from Liverpool, England, in 1864. Muraire had, at the same time, been personal confessor to the archdeacon, who had previously confessed to Monnier or Joly.18 Muraire assisted the dying man with the last sacraments.

McEncroe’s deathbed occasioned a memorable scene in the light of the old pioneer’s place in Australian history. He had come to the colony in 1832, when it was still administered by the Catholic church, at least officially, from Mauritius. When Polding arrived in 1835, McEncroe assisted him, when the entire continent was his diocese, and they lived in the same house for many years. Poupinel described the scene as the archdeacon lay dying: ‘He who had so greatly wanted to see the vast, immense diocese of Sydney divided into dioceses, was surrounded during his final moments by six Australian bishops’.19 The number of bishops in Australia by then was nine. The Marists later discovered that McEncroe’s deathbed also had a special importance to themselves.

The funeral was one of the largest ever seen in Sydney. It was at the funeral that Austin Sheehy, Polding’s vicar general, took Poupinel
aside for a moment. Would the Marist Fathers be prepared to succeed Archdeacon McEncroe, and take care of St Patrick’s? Poupinel could hardly believe his ears. Was the offer official? Sheehy assured him that it was.

Speaking on his own behalf, Poupinel said he could assure the vicar general that he had no doubt that the order would be happy to undertake the responsibility. It would require approval by higher superiors, he said, approval which he felt sure would be given, but the acceptance could only be conditional for the moment. Hence, he asked, would the vicar general mind putting the offer in writing, so that it could be passed on to the superior general of the Society of Mary? A letter from Sheehy arrived two days later.20

Poupinel wrote his reply in French on 3 September 1868, which Joly translated into English as follows:

I cannot accept in an absolute manner a mission in the name of our Society; our Superior General alone can do it. But I consulted him last year to know what I should do in case His Grace the Archbishop were to propose to our Society a mission in Sydney; for His Grace had been pleased to communicate to Father Rocher in London some intention of the kind. From the answer of our Superior General, I have every reason to hope that he will confirm the temporary acceptance which I give today to the mission of St Patrick.21

Polding had raised the matter with Rocher in London in a personal conversation in 1866.

The proposal had most probably originally had another sponsor: McEncroe. In a letter to a Marist friend written a few days later, Poupinel said: ‘I am led to believe that Father McEncroe, before dying, requested His Grace to place us at St Patrick’s’.22 A strong tradition supports this belief, which accords well with the closeness between the archdeacon and the Marists.

Less than a year before he died, McEncroe gave warm expression to his feelings for his Marist friends, in an occasional sermon at the blessing of the foundation stone of their church at Hunters Hill. The Freeman reported him as follows:

He remembered when the first Marist missionaries arrived in Sydney, and he congratulated himself upon having always been their friend, for he knew well their untiring, able and successful devotion to the cause of religion. Their coming especially to the South Sea Islands reminded him of the coming of another
countryman of theirs, St Patrick, into Ireland, who brought, certainly from France, that faith to Ireland, which the Marist Fathers have brought to the islands scattered over the Great Pacific. 23

It would be difficult for an Irish priest to find a more telling way of expressing appreciation of fellow priests. It seems likely that at different times, McEncroe had proposed the idea that the Marists should succeed him.

The offer was seen by Poupinel as a momentous opportunity. 'Never, mon père,' he wrote to Favre, 'did I hope that His Grace the Archbishop would give us a parish like St Patrick's.' It had been something that they had prayed for, but the experience over the college, ten years earlier, made it seem hopeless. Even now, would Polding change his mind at the last moment? If he sticks to his decision, Poupinel wrote, 'on the 20th of this month [September], Father Monnier will be at St Patrick's.' 24

The vital, practical consideration, in Poupinel's view, was the availability of Monnier. His ability to preach in English, his wide experience up and down the country, all combined to assure that the right person was available. Undoubtedly, Poupinel saw his order as being on trial. He did not intend that it should fail that test, through appointing the wrong person to the key role of parish priest. If Favre was able to give them a young French priest who had trained at Dundalk, in Ireland, or a young Irish Marist, so much the better.

St Patrick's parish was already regarded as one of the most historic in Australia. It was in an area of Sydney inhabited from the earliest days, close to the place where European settlement began. From the viewpoint of Catholic tradition, it contained several locations of prime historical significance: the home of James Meehan, the most probable site on which Mass was first celebrated with official permission in the colony, in 1803; 25 and also the homes of William Davis and of James Dempsey. Both of these houses were locations in which early Irish missionary Father Jeremiah Flinn—or O’Flinn: he was somewhat erratic in his spelling—gathered Catholics and celebrated Mass, during his brief apostolate in 1817 and 1818.

O’Flinn had arrived without papers, and assured the governor that they would soon follow him. When no papers arrived from London giving him proper accreditation, an order went out for his arrest, and after a brief period in hiding, he was taken, and deported by Governor Lachlan Macquarie. Before his capture, O’Flinn observed an Irish tradition of penal days, and left the consecrated
Eucharist for the comfort of the Catholic people. This took place in what became the St Patrick's parish. The Blessed Sacrament remained, with no priest in the colony, for more than a year, and Catholics gathered to pray in its presence. Twenty years later, when William Davis donated land adjoining his home for a church, there was a clear association in all minds with the events of those early days.26

Now, in 1868, this most historic of parishes was offered to the Marists. Poupinel was aware that he had high standing in the eyes of Favre and the men of his council, and of the fact that they had almost invariably accepted his recommendations. He knew that the superior general had already, on 25 August 1867, given an assurance that if an offer of a city parish in Sydney was made, and it was really suitable, it would be accepted, unless a shortage of men prevented it. But Poupinel took care to present the case in the strongest possible terms. He did not want misapprehensions to allow the slightest possibility that Favre would instruct him to refuse the opportunity of a lifetime.27

Poupinel explained that the parish was not in the wealthy or prestige area of Sydney. Its waterfront port facilities, and the notorious Rocks area adjacent, famed at different times for razor gangs, pubs and brothels, made that certain. The Catholic population of between four and six thousand were mostly labourers and small shopkeepers. It already had a church: the one in which Commander Marceau used to spend an hour or two every day in prayer, he recalled tactfully. There were schools, a presbytery, and no heavy debts. Some improvements were needed, but no substantial ones. And Poupinel urged to Favre the value of having Monnier available, including his success among the Irish.

The Irish emphasis was not merely an academic one. St Patrick's was a focal point of Irish Catholic aspirations in Australia. Its connection with the ministry of Jeremiah O'Flinn tied it to what was sometimes being seen as the 'catacomb era' of Australian Catholic history. William Davis, donor of the land, was a patriot of the 1798 political uprisings in Ireland, sentenced to transportation for that political crime. In the celebrations marking the laying of the foundation stone in 1840, Ullathorne had, with some difficulty, dissuaded the people from carrying Irish political banners. The speedy building of the church between 1839 and 1844 was regarded by many as an Irish contrast to the tediously slow, twenty-year construction of 'English' St Mary's—English because controlled by the English Benedictines.
Shortly after it became known that the French priests were to take over this most Irish of parishes, a group of people gathered in the St Patrick’s hall with Mr John Murphy in the chair. A number signed a petition addressed to Polding opposing the appointment of ‘Foreign Missionaries’, and stating that they wanted ‘a priest of their own language and customs’. The very same day, another prominent parishioner, Joseph Spruson wrote a letter to the archbishop, vigorously protesting that ‘the meeting was a “hole and corner one” convened by whispers’, and that ‘the majority included some boys, and several persons whom I never saw before’. The last three or four signatures on the original petition, one misspelt, could easily be those of boys. Spruson identified himself as a member of the Local School Board. He lived at the corner of Charlotte Place, now Grosvenor Street, and Harrington Street, in premises adjoining, and under the same roof as, McEncroe’s presbytery. Today the site is occupied by the convent of the Sisters of Mercy.

According to Poupinel, two priests had been involved in the protest, but there had been no intention of offending either the archbishop or the Marists, for which reason, he said, a copy of the petition was sent to Villa Maria. A copy, in the same handwriting as the original, is still retained.

There is a possibility that Poupinel was making it appear to Favre that the matter was rather less important than he really believed. Certainly, the response to the petition was not allowed to remain limited to Spruson’s letter. Friends of the Marists were very active, especially Monnier’s admirer George Dillon, who persuaded Thomas McCaffery, one of the prominent objectors, to reverse his stand, and become a staunch supporter of the Marists. ‘I told him [McCaffery],’ wrote Dillon, that you would soon establish a Catholic high boys’ day school at St Patrick’s before long, so you must not make a false prophet out of me in that regard.’

The announcement by Sheehy that the Marist Fathers would open a school, in fact opened by the Marist Brothers, was made the previous February. Referring to MacCaffery, a month later in a letter to Favre, Poupinel wrote, ‘The leader in this affair has already become a friend.’ The Freeman’s Journal added its weight with a long, enthusiastic welcome to the Marists, detailing their work overseas and in Australia, in its issue of 19 September 1868, in an article ‘The Priests of the Society of Mary at St Patrick’s’.

The Marists survived the opposition. They were now well enough known, and accepted, to have numerous Irish friends willing and ready to speak on their behalf. It was reassuring to Poupinel that
Monnier had such a genuine love of the Irish, and his pastoral effectiveness, to which tributes were then pouring in, gave the best possible assurance of healing the nationalist problem. A letter which Poupinel wrote to Polding the following year reveals that he had hoped to have as assistant to Monnier a young New Zealander ordained in Ireland a few years previously, Francis Redwood. Unfortunately, the state of Redwood’s health prevented it. Another French Marist, Charles Heuzé, who had worked as a priest in New Orleans and London, was named instead.
Hunters Hill parish

The original Villa Maria had a chapel. One of the 1854 paintings of the property, by a lay Italian named Sardis, shows the chapel, clearly marked with crosses. Unfortunately, the painting gives no certitude about the construction of the building, but it appears to have been made of wood. At times there were 20 or 30 persons residing at Villa Maria, and besides serving their needs, the chapel was also attended by local Catholics in the surrounding area for Mass on Sundays and holydays. After 1856, it was also the scene for a number of baptisms and weddings. As it was only of moderate size, with each passing year there was greater need for something larger. Victor Poupinel wrote to Favre in 1864 about its limitations, "our present chapel is not only too small and inconvenient, but it is falling down, and letting in the rain". In order to improve the situation, Joly’s plans for the second Villa Maria set aside a large section at ground level on the northern end of the building, where internal walls were not constructed at the time, so that a very large room was created. This area became the chapel. Sockets were left for use when the walls were later built.

However, the rapid growth of population in the Gladesville—Hunters Hill area meant that, within a very short time, the new location was also inadequate. A proper church was needed.

Necessary Marist approvals to build a church were obtained from France by 1867. Joly’s responsibilities had increased with the departure of Rocher, and he felt unable to take on again the role which he had exercised for the building of Villa Maria. He decided to give a large share of control of the construction to one of the brothers with experience in building churches. Brother Louis Pichelin had abilities which went beyond simple building skills. Bataillon had...
Hunters Hill parish

put him in charge of constructing two churches in his vicariate, one at Wallis and the other at Apia, Samoa.

Pichelin was a moody and sometimes morose person, and despite his talents he lacked concentration and purpose, to such an extent that he found it difficult to complete a job. Several letters which refer to him, while he was in the islands, express dissatisfaction, and there was no regret when he moved on elsewhere. He did not complete either of the churches. Because of such problems, Poupinel brought him back to Sydney in 1867.

On 15 September of that year, the foundation stone for a new church in Hunters Hill was laid. The dedication was to the Holy Name of Mary. This was perhaps the most Marist of all titles which could have been chosen, and the blessing of the stone took place on this festival. But a further reason was given. Cardinal Moran’s history tells us that the day was marked out by Polding, who performed the blessing, ‘to make reparation for the blasphemous utterances of Dr [John Dunmore] Lang against our Divine Lord and the Blessed Virgin and everything most dear to the Catholic citizens’.2 Lang was the famous Scottish Presbyterian pastor of Scots church, Church Hill. Fiercely anti-Catholic, or anti-Roman, as he would have put it, he was a member of parliament, where the offending remarks had been made. However, no hint of sectarian feeling appears in the report of the ceremony in the Freeman's Journal.3 Instead, there is a long summary of the occasional sermon, preached by McEncroe. On this last occasion on which he spoke publicly about the Marists, less than a year before his death, the archdeacon gave a warm tribute of affection to the order.

A common practice in church construction then was to use building plans borrowed from elsewhere, and the architecture of the Holy Name of Mary church has a clear similarity to that of churches in rural areas around Lyon, France. Pichelin was in charge, and progress was painfully slow. The first wedding took place in 1868, in the incomplete structure, which still had no roof, but the building was still years from completion. More than two years after construction began, the opening of the first Vatican council took place in Rome on 12 December 1869. The event was commemorated four days earlier in Hunters Hill, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, by the solemn erection of the statue of St Peter, over the main entrance. By then the roof was on, but the job was not finished for two more long years.
In order to help meet the costs, it was decided early on to introduce a novel idea: a church raffle. The step was taken cautiously. The prizes were religious objects, such as holy cards, rosaries, pictures and crucifixes. The Freeman's Journal, in which it was advertised, referred to it in a leader as something new in Australia.4

Pichelin loved tinkering with machines, and had aspirations to invent a new kind of steam engine. Work on the church would be halted for long intervals while he called the workmen together, demonstrated his latest model, and staged a test. The fire would be stoked up and eventually a good head of steam would allow the machine to be tried. When it broke down, as it always did, a long post-mortem would be held on the cause of the failure. If any workers objected at all, Joly ruefully observed, there would be a fierce argument. It always seemed that Joly was away when these tests occurred, and he would arrive back to find that no work on the church had taken place for many hours. Joly reported:

Brother Louis dreams of patents, and of riches and glory. If in France you have real need of a brother like him, you should not be afraid to ask for him . . . we will let you have him as soon as possible. He will build you a little church which will be quite pretty, and one which people will be very pleased with in years to come. But in the present you will pay enough for it in money, time and patience.5

There were other problems. Stained glass windows for the church, purchased in France, went down with the Walter Hood off southern New South Wales. Heavy costs worried them, not helped by the fact that the stained glass windows had not been insured. Many costs were not revealed in estimates, even though Joly had checked Louis' figures. It was all very depressing.

Louis Pichelin left the Marists. His name does not even appear in the Freeman's account of the opening day, 12 February 1871.

The blessing of the new church was given by Bishop Elloy, and the occasional sermon preached by George Dillon. Although it was the only fine weekend in a fortnight of wet weather, the attendance was not as high as the Marists had hoped. Nevertheless, the crowd included many of their close friends, as well as distinguished guests, and these were invited to stay for the luncheon provided. The extended account in the Freeman is supplemented by Joly's description of the opening.6 Joly's letters are almost always filled with circumstance and detail, and this is no exception. The Freeman estimated that 120 gentlemen sat down at the meal. Joly adds that this took
place in the very large room which had served as a church for some years. The ladies ate outside in the dining room of the community.

Among guests listed by the Freeman were Judge Faucett, W.A.Duncan, Louis Sentis, E.G.Ellis, T. Bowden, J.Dalton (Orange), M.Fitzpatrick, MLA, Messrs Austin, Heydon, Makinson, Rubie, Hurley, d’Apice, Baron d’Emilio, Butler, Moore, Farrell and a number of others.

They were sad and emotional days for the French. A year earlier, victorious Prussian armies had overrun the French troops at Sedan, and captured Emperor Napoleon III. And now Paris had just fallen. The disastrous siege of the city, enduring for four months of senseless suffering, with the entire country already on its knees, had ended in inevitable defeat, news of which was cabled to Australia only two weeks earlier.

Faucett, in proposing the health of Elloy and his colleagues, and having referred to the ‘elegant and tasteful church reared on that very spot by the personal labour and energy of the Marist Fathers’, went on to add ‘a kindly and affectionate expression of his belief in the future of France, which though now somewhat depressed could, as he thought, never be put down’. The feeling of the gathering was expressed when ‘the room at this last sentiment rang with enthusiastic cheers’.

As the toasts continued, the minds of some must have gone back to other events, separated by the distance of twelve years, rather than of miles. The man who proposed the health of the absent archbishop and the reverend preacher was none other than J.K.Heydon. Dillon replied. The next toast was to Heydon’s former mentor and then ally of those years, W.A.Duncan. The simple words of Duncan’s response seem clearly to relate to past days: ‘Though able to write,’ Duncan said, ‘he was not a very successful speaker, but he could truthfully say that since his conversion, he had been a sincere Catholic, and at all times his head, heart and hand were at its service.’ It was an emotional moment.

Finally, ‘the health of the Reverend Père Joly was proposed and received with all honours, and thus ended a most pleasantly spent evening’s reunion’.

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Monnier’s ministry at St Patrick’s began on 20 September 1868. He cancelled a scheduled mission at Wellington, in central New South Wales, to take up the new post. With characteristic zeal, he threw himself into his new responsibilities, unsparing of himself as ever. The sermons, which had been so powerful in stirring the strong revival of religious fervour, that had always been his goal in his missions, were no less effective in the parish. He introduced to the church the stations of the way of the cross. He urged devotion to Mary, the mother of God, by word and example. Each day, before his Mass, he recited the rosary aloud before her statue. People took to arriving early for the morning Mass in order to join him. He emphasized another Marist patron, his own name saint, Joseph.

It was a time of great devotion to the saints, when French spirituality in particular placed strong emphasis on the intercession of the saints. The churches of the French Marists, St Patrick’s, and Holy Name of Mary, Villa Maria, Hunters Hill, reveal this today by the scores of statues which decorate them.

Monnier made use of his gifts as a preacher by introducing a mid-week instruction on Wednesday evenings, and a Sunday evening sermon. His gentleness in the confessional soon became legendary, and people flocked to the sacrament. An officer of the French navy in Monnier’s time remarked with amazement on the number of men attending Mass and receiving holy communion at St Patrick’s: he had never seen anything comparable in France. Ever since, St Patrick’s church has remained the chief church in Sydney for the number of confessions heard, and is still notable for the numbers of men attending the sacraments there.

The opposition referred to earlier among the Irish parishioners to French priests taking over this most Irish of Sydney churches did
Parish of Church Hill

not last long. Monnier’s qualities, and his genuine love for his people soon brought that problem to an end. By the time of the Franco-Prussian war, the Irish parishioners were strongly, and at times violently, pro-French. ‘Our Irish,’ wrote Monnier, as the devastating Prussian victories were completed, ‘are continuing to weep and fight. The women weep, and the men knock down anyone who would poke fun at our misfortunes, or stand up for Prussia . . . Michael O”Toole was brought up before the magistrate, because he had almost killed a Protestant who had said to him that France would never get over its fall.’

Another development would have mollified Irish critics, if there were any left by then. It was the arrival of an Irish Marist, Father Charles Kirk, to help at St Patrick’s: the first of the early Irish vocations to the Marists to be posted to Sydney, fulfilling McEncroe’s precise goal in arranging the establishment of the Marist house at Dundalk in Ireland. Kirk arrived in December 1871. His first problem, as one of the Sydney priests remarked, was that he left all his good teeth behind in Ireland, and those he brought with him were all rotten. He had to have practically all his teeth removed, and to have false teeth made. His health was considerably affected by all this, and he took some time to recover.

The arrival of the Marist Brothers was the most outstanding event which occurred while Monnier was parish priest of St Patrick’s, and the fulfilment of another of McEncroe’s dreams. Early in 1872, Monnier welcomed four Marist Brothers, led by Brother Ludovic Laboureya. Despite Poupinel’s sponsorship, the coming of the Marist Brothers to Australia had not been without difficulties. To all who were waiting in Sydney, it seemed to take an interminable time. In letter after letter during 1870 and 1871, perhaps forgetting how long it took to prepare brothers who could speak English, Monnier and Joly reminded their superiors of the promise to send the brothers, and urged them to hasten the day.

Some uncertainties affected preparations for the brothers’ coming. Not the least was because of Polding’s wish, expressed several times, to locate the brothers at St Mary’s; he also spoke of the Benedictine parish of St Benedict’s, Broadway, as another possibility. The uncertainty had its effect on the making of preparations at Church Hill. Might such preparations be wasted?

Monnier’s letters to Europe prior to their arrival betray this uncertainty in his approach to finding a dwelling for the brothers in
the parish, and a building suitable for a school. He went ahead and purchased two buildings in Harrington Street, one for their accommodation, and an adjoining one which he knew would be suitable as a school, because it had formerly been St Philip’s Church of England school.

But Monnier had to make these arrangements in such a way that, if the archbishop proved to be unrelenting, and insisted that the brothers go to St Mary’s, the buildings could be resold without too great a loss to the parish. The same uncertainty meant that it hardly seemed worthwhile to finalize the interior preparation of the two places, which might be entirely wasted effort. The result was that a great deal remained to be done, when the brothers arrived, to make the house habitable, and to make the school ready for classes.

When they finally arrived in Sydney, on 26 February 1872, the brothers were warmly welcomed by Monnier and Joly. Ludovic had been thoroughly prepared about the Sydney problems, and from his very first meeting with the archbishop, firmly insisted that it had been understood that their arrangement was to begin at the parish of the Marist Fathers. They had no wish to repeat the experience of the Christian Brothers, in 1843, and find themselves locked into a Benedictine community. And so the archbishop gave the permission. The vicar general, Austin Sheehy, proved a strong support for the brothers.

Because of the time needed to make their house livable, the brothers were invited to stay first at Villa Maria. There they received not only the hospitality of the fathers, but an affectionate and in some instances a tearful welcome from the missionary brothers whose religious lives had begun under Marcellin Champagnat—including Gennade, and two whose names were now legendary: Joseph Xavier Luzy, who pioneered with Bataillon, and Marie Nizier Delorme, who was with Peter Chanel.

With all that had to be done to make the school ready, Ludovic found that he could not begin classes until April 1872. Despite this late start to the school year, enrolments increased rapidly, and soon the number of students was over 300.

For some time after the brothers moved into their Harrington Street quarters, they ate their meals with their fellow Marists in the presbytery. Here they met the radical young Charles Kirk.

Kirk had been in the parish only a few months by this time. But despite Monnier’s complete sympathy for the Irish cause against English oppression in Ireland, it had already become evident to him that his new curate was wanting in good sense. Kirk was very
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outspoken in his opinions, and in expressing his political views. He began to have an influence on a number of parishioners. However, even fellow Irish priests like George Dillon considered that he lacked discretion. During a few days which Kirk spent in Bathurst with Bishop Quinn, he was so intemperate in his outspoken comments that question was raised of whether the Marists should not send Kirk away.

Two of the junior Marist Brothers were Irish, and in the day-to-day contacts over the meal table, Kirk came to have a very strong influence on them. Seemingly he encouraged disloyalty to their superior, Brother Ludovic. He also introduced them into local Irish homes, where alcohol was provided in generous quantities, and stories started to spread about Ludovic's severity. Even though the Irish were very tolerant of priests who imbibed too freely, the discipline necessary for a religious order made such behaviour quite intolerable.

Monnier's letters to France make continual references to financial problems in the parish. On the ship Walter Hood, which went down off the New South Wales south coast, there were stained glass windows for St Patrick's, as well as for the church at Villa Maria. Although much of the cargo was recovered, the windows were not, and Monnier was very upset to learn that they were uninsured. As he was unable to find the money to order a replacement set, St Patrick's windows were mostly made locally.

Monnier believed that St Mary's cathedral regarded St Patrick's as a wealthy parish, as St Mary's was, whereas his Irish were generally very poor. He found it difficult to collect the pew rents then charged, one third of which went to the cathedral. He complained that the Marists had to pay the usual fees to the cathedral, whereas they did not receive the ordinary wages which the diocesan priests were paid. Frequently, to maintain Masses and confessions, assistance was required by priests from Villa Maria. That was a charge on the Marists, and not on the parish.

Additionally, in a system which would not be permitted today, a fee of £5 had to be paid to the archbishop for most marriages, such as to obtain a dispensation from the publication of the banns of marriage. The parishioners found this sum exorbitant, and for most of them it would have been several weeks' wages. It is notoriously difficult to compare sums of money at a distance of more than a century, but in terms of the cost of a loaf of bread, £5 then would be comparable to a charge today of some hundreds of dollars. The effect was that many Catholics were unable to pay, and went to Protestant
churches to be married. A number of Monnier's letters include questions of canon law, relating to these marriages. He also let his superiors know that he was sometimes exercising his discretion, and celebrating marriages for poorer people without making the charge. This was in case he received a reprimand from Polding for acting in this way. St Mary's was in great need of money at this time, when the new cathedral was being planned, but the attitude towards these stipends seems hard to justify.

Undoubtedly the most worrying problem which Monnier faced as parish priest of St Patrick's was the fact that he and the Marists knew that they were on trial, and there were continual indications from Polding that he did not appreciate their presence. Had the Marists, perhaps, been offered the parish, only because of all the failures to obtain religious brothers for the archdiocese? Perhaps Polding had been reluctantly convinced by Sheehy that the only way to obtain any was to have the Marist Fathers sponsor a request to the Marist Brothers? The fathers might be persuaded to do so by the offer of the Church Hill parish. Now that the brothers were successfully established, in that supposition, the ordinary reluctance of the archbishop returned.

While Monnier could understand this, it was more puzzling to him that many of the Irish clergy who were normally critics of the archbishop, sided with Polding on this. They had brought with them to Australia the same negative attitudes towards the houses of religious order priests which McEncroe had faced in Ireland in helping establish the Marists at Dundalk. With notable exceptions such as McEncroe and Therry, the Marists in Sydney found that by and large, even Irish priests who were good friends said that they did not like having religious priests in such an important parish.

The signs of criticism and disapproval of the Marist Fathers' presence came despite Monnier's best efforts, and despite his generosity in fulfilling requests made by these same bishops and priests to him to preach sermons, missions or retreats for them. Neither did the fact that the St Patrick's parishioners showed complete confidence in him alter the critical attitude, because it had little or nothing to do with how successful the fathers were in their care of the parish, but with their very presence. There is no doubt that these negative views depressed him greatly.

As early as April 1871, Monnier wrote to Poupinel: 'Father Garavel has also told me that His Grace is thinking up another trick. Because he is pretty annoyed by the mistake he made in allowing us
in Sydney, he wants to have another church built on Kent Street land which belongs to the church, so as to divide the parish in two, and make difficulties for us'. Monnier went on to point out that the furthest house in Millers Point was only seven minutes from St Patrick’s, and added, ‘It is schools we need’.

Putting his belief earnestly into operation, Monnier started building a school on the land in question, which had been granted in 1856. It was at 107 Kent Street, near the corner of Agar, now High Street, almost opposite the Agar Steps. The building was a substantial one in brick which, for versatility, was designed as a hall. In addition there were two large playgrounds, and a garden, as well as ‘a good wooden house of seven rooms, not counting the kitchen and laundry’. It became known as St Bridget’s Hall. ‘The Hall is 100 feet by 27 and partitioned into two rooms. Each room can accommodate 200 children. One half of the Hall will always be sufficient for a Girls’ School.’

Towards the end of that year, Monnier reported that the archbishop still had the same scheme, and conjectured, ‘Perhaps his motive is to offend us and force us to leave. With things as they are, it is hardly possible to imagine any other reason’.

It was Polding’s new coadjutor, Archbishop Roger Bede Vaughan, who opened Monnier’s new Kent Street school, and the latter recorded happily that Vaughan ‘never suggested the idea of making it into a church’.

These were busy weeks in the parish, because the Marist Brothers were then in the late stages of preparing their school, which opened on 8 April. Six months later there were 865 children in the parish schools.
Millers Point and the Rocks

When Joseph Monnier took over the parish of Church Hill on behalf of the Marists, he found himself responsible not only for St Patrick’s church, but also for St Bridget’s. It proved to have a very interesting history.

St Brigid’s, as the spelling now is, is the oldest Catholic building in Australasia still in use for its original purpose. It is in one of the earliest settled parts of Sydney, and stands at the northern end of Kent Street, close to Argyle Street, Millers Point. The present St Brigid’s is a two-storey building, the upper storey being a not very attractive cement-plastered addition, made in 1930 to the original sandstone structure. That original structure dates back to William Bernard Ullathorne.¹

When Ullathorne arrived in Sydney, early in 1833, no completed Catholic church of a permanent construction was standing. Masses were usually celebrated in existing publicly owned buildings, such as courthouses or schools. St Mary’s Cathedral, although begun in 1821, lacked floor, windows and roof. Ullathorne made an official request ‘for ground for a Catholic school house’ on 11 June 1833.² He suggested a portion of land on Flagstaff Hill, between Fort Phillip, now the Sydney Observatory, and the nearby Military Hospital. The letter carries a departmental note, indicating that it was referred to the surveyor general.

The site nominated was a magnificent one, today occupied by a building which was originally Fort Street primary school. Why was St Brigid’s built on another site?

From other sources, it is clear that Ullathorne had already
spoken to Governor Sir Richard Bourke, prior to the date of this letter, and had been assured of a grant of land on this site. The official request, referred to the surveyor general in a letter dated 19 June, carries the added notation, ‘Present site was selected by W. Ullathorne and approved by Governor’. Bourke’s verbal approval had apparently been given some months earlier. Ullathorne wrote about it on 17 April 1833, to Bishop Morris of Mauritius, under whose jurisdiction he technically held his post of prefect apostolic. He said: ‘His Excellency [Governor Bourke] has likewise consented to grant me a piece of ground, and to build a schoolroom upon it, on the Rocks—a remote but thickly populated part of Sydney, a sort of St Giles’, which I propose to use as a chapel for that part of the Town on Sunday mornings’. However, the surveyor general, Sir Thomas Mitchell, objected to the request, and stated that the site proposed was part of the land around Fort Phillip, which ‘was required as an appendage to the Fort’.

The very unimpressive alternative piece of land which was offered to Ullathorne is now the site of St Brigid’s. He made unsuccessful attempts to obtain a more appealing position near Dawes Point, or to be granted two building allotments on the nominated site, instead of one. Finally he accepted the inevitable.

The purpose for the building, constructed at government expense, was stated to be ‘as a site for a Roman Catholic School House, to be occasionally used as a Chapel’. The grant was gazetted on 1 August 1833, a single building allotment located beside a vacant space reserved for a watch house, or police station. However, this vacant adjoining site was still empty twenty years later. It is now occupied by the Millers Point post office.

A few weeks later, Ullathorne, after advice from the colonial architect, outlined in detail what he wanted, in a valuable letter dated 10 September 1833. It accords exactly with what was constructed.

... I beg leave most respectfully to solicit of His Excellency the Governor, that His Excellency would be pleased to sanction the erection of a building, on the allotment which His Excellency has kindly granted under Fort Phillip, for the purposes of a Catholic School House to be used occasionally as a Chapel. And that His Excellency would be pleased to give direction for the erection of the proposed building; the want of which is extremely urgent.

... It is requisite, I should first observe, that the male and female children should be kept entirely separate. If then the
building ran down the middle of the Allotment, as represented on the small ground sketch, sixty feet in length, thirty feet in breadth and, suppose, eighteen feet in height, it would leave a small yard on each side, one for male another for female children: the building divided across by folding doors, would form two schools, each thirty feet square; the doors unfolded would form a temporary chapel sixty feet long and thirty wide. The building might be very plain, and erected out of the stone, which is close at hand, in the cheapest style of masonry.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
Wm Ullathorne

To the Honorable
the Colonial Secretary
Alexander McLeay, Esq.’

Ullathorne suggested that the building could be ‘very plain’. He was certainly taken at his word, if one judges by the result. The building material is the local sandstone, most probably quarried from the hill immediately behind. The blocks still carry the chiselled marks made by the convict stonemasons.

The land was authorized to Ullathorne’s possession in January 1834. Tenders were called in July, and work commenced in August 1834, at an estimated expense of £546.7.0 paid from the Colonial Treasury. The construction was completed in April 1835, as indicated by the letter from the Colonial Secretary’s Office, dated 2 May 1835, urging Ullathorne ‘to occupy the building as soon as possible, in order that no damage may occur to it’.6 The building, ‘the want of which’ Ullathorne considered to be ‘extremely urgent’, was put into use immediately. By 1836, the Kent Street North school appeared in the statistics presented by newly arrived Bishop Polding to the government for grants. There were 76 boys and 45 girls.7 The master was Mr James Hayes, and the mistress, Mrs C. Hayes.

An inspection took place in March 1839, by Judge Burton. He describes the school as ‘a large commodious stone building divided into two principal rooms, one for the instruction of boys, and the other of girls ... The Master of the Boys’ School (Mr Edward Hawkesley) and the Mistress of the Girls (Mrs Mary O’Brien) are both Roman Catholics, and the schools are under the superintendence of Clergymen of their church’.8

In March 1843, three Christian Brothers arrived in Sydney from Ireland, in what was potentially the most important advance in
Catholic education in these early years. Each of the brothers was placed in charge of a separate school, and the Kent Street North school was under Brother Francis Larkin. Since the buildings in which the other two brothers taught, in Abercrombie Street and Macquarie Street, have long since been demolished, the Christian Brothers have always rightly regarded St Brigid’s as a hallowed spot.

Under the brothers, the school became an all boys’ school. After the sad events which led to the departure of the brothers for Ireland, the school was allowed to deteriorate. Another inspection report, dated 29 December 1854, praised the regional location of the school, but criticized the tiny playground, which had resulted from the unwieldy way Ullathorne had positioned the building on the allotment. ‘The closets are too small, and are in a filthy condition,’ the report went on. ‘There is no supply of water on the premises.’

The little church-school became the responsibility of the Marists, through Monnier in 1868, as part of St Patrick’s parish, when he undertook its care.

When Victor Poupinel returned to Europe in 1870, it was the fervent hope of the Marists in Australia and the south Pacific, and of many other people, that he would be allowed to return after the general chapter of the order. His temporary replacement in charge of Villa Maria was Claude Marie Joly, who also became temporary superior of the Marist Fathers in Sydney. Not for another two years did the final word reach Sydney that Poupinel would not be returning.

Early in 1872, a large house came up for sale in Cumberland Street in the Rocks, on a very prominent position on the hill with a spectacular view over the harbour. Built around 1830, it was one of Sydney’s more famous homes, known as Cumberland Place. Besides the fifteen-room house itself, the large stables might be adapted to other purposes, and there were grounds which were quite extensive for a location so close to the city, to Circular Quay, and to the docks of Walsh Bay.

The asking price was rather high, at £2500, and months went by without an offer. An auction was arranged, without success. Although he had no approval from France, Joly decided to make an offer. After some negotiations, the owner agreed to a price of £1820. The deal was completed on 17 July 1872. Joly’s solicitor was Eyre Goulburn Ellis. The vendor was David Scott Mitchell, the benefactor responsible for establishing Sydney’s famous Mitchell Library. Only after the purchase did Joly write to his superiors in France.
Joly's chief motives in making this purchase can only be conjectured. The place was in St Patrick's parish. The Marist hold at St Patrick's could still be described as only tenuous. They had no document assuring their possession of the parish. They did not own the land. There had been talk for several years of a division of the parish. In 1871 alone, Monnier referred three times to reports of such plans by Polding. He wrote once more of a possible division of the parish in his letter reporting, and supporting, the purchase.12

Joly had also, for many years, spoken of a city base for operations of the mission procure: close to the ships and the agents with whom there were frequent dealings on behalf of the missions. Nevertheless, the first use which Joly proposed for the house was that it could become a primary school, run by the Benedictine nuns. This would seem to imply that a major purpose had been speculation, that he bought it because it was a bargain.

Even though it had been impossible for Joly to have obtained permission from France for the purchase in advance, his report on the matter had to be phrased tactfully, and with care. He addressed the letter to his long-term superior, Victor Poupinel. He could feel he had the advantage of writing to a friend, even if the matter was somewhat delicate. 'I don't know whether,' wrote Joly, 'when going to Mrs Lett's at the end of Cumberland Street, you ever noticed a house on the other side of the street, surrounded by large trees, and raised above the level of the road by a retaining wall surmounted by an iron railing. That is the house I am talking about.'13

Joly went on to give details of the purchase, emphasizing what a bargain it was. The size of the establishment, with so many rooms, would make it a possible house for religious sisters, and the stables could easily become classrooms for a school. In fact, he went on, he had broached the matter with the Benedictine nuns at Subiaco, and they were interested in a day school in the city.

Joly's purchase did not receive the commendation he hoped for. Quite the reverse: Poupinel wrote back to say that Favre was far from pleased. The reply went on to ask a string a practical questions. Why had Joly not consulted his Marist advisers (his council at Villa Maria)? Was the place too near St Patrick's? How would the Sisters of Mercy feel, as they were already teaching primary school girls in the parish, if another order came in to teach so near?

The questions were quite valid. Another school was not, in fact, greatly needed at this time in the parish. The original St Bridget's functioned as a small school. The Sisters of Mercy had been running St Patrick's school, which was in the crypt under the church, since
The Church School at 14 Kent Street has used the spelling St. Brigids since 1930. The awkward positioning of the building in the centre of the allotment was intended by Ullathorne to create separate playgrounds for girls and boys.

Agar Street near St. Bridget's Hall, 114 Kent Street is today known as High Street.

Section 93 Sydney 1888 showing St Bridget's Church School (1835) and St Bridget's Hall (1872—1889). (Based on a map supplied by the Mitchell Library, NSW State Library.)

before Monnier arrived. In addition, Monnier had completed building another school, St Bridget's Hall, in March 1872, a few hundred metres from the original St Bridget's, on the opposite side of the street. The Marist Brothers had opened their school in Harrington Street in April. Joly bought the Cumberland Street property in May.

Poupinel also told the unhappy recipient of his letter that it was quite certain that the council assistants to the superior general would have unequivocally condemned Joly's action. But to protect his name, the general had decided that the matter would not be raised in council. The minutes of the council do not, in fact, make mention of the matter in 1872. Joly was naturally upset at this severe repri-
mand. However, he accepted it philosophically and was comforted by the fact that he had already received an offer which would allow him a profit of £500 on the entire transaction.

But even as Joly moved to obey orders, and put the house onto the market, fate took a hand. There were as yet incomplete discussions with the Benedictine nuns, who were very interested. In addition, Polding showed an extraordinarily positive attitude towards the idea of the Marists retaining the property. Joly wrote:

I went to see the archbishop, whom I found as friendly as possible. He took me at once in his carriage to visit the area. He was delighted and showed himself willing to do everything and agree with everything. He thanked me greatly for the interest I was showing in Subiaco, and he showed more confidence in me and more affection on that day, than I have had from him in the 15 years I have known him. He seemed to me to be even too interested, for after dropping me at St Patrick’s, he went straight round to the architect’s and sent him at once to see the house, and to talk to me about the repairs.14

The idea of a school for the Benedictine nuns did not eventuate, but largely as a result of Polding’s interest, the house was ultimately withdrawn from sale. The Marists retained ownership, and Joly leased it to tenants.

Two years later, the entire situation of the Marists at Church Hill changed dramatically. One day, Father Monnier was told by parishioners that a priest had appeared in the area, and had informed them that he was their new parish priest. As a temporary presbytery, he said, he would live in St Bridget’s Hall, which Monnier had only just completed building.

Unfortunately, by the kind of oversight which can sometimes occur, in which the person most concerned is not informed of an important change, the priest had visited his new area of responsibility some days before a letter from coadjutor Archbishop Vaughan reached Monnier, in August 1874, informing him of the plan.15

It was not, as the rumours first made it sound, that Monnier had been dismissed as parish priest. But the reality did not seem much better: the parish was to be divided. Monnier was deeply upset at what he took to be a severe vote of no confidence in his administration.

With the division of St Patrick’s parish, more than half of the
parishioners would belong to the new parish, to be called St Bridget's. The southern boundary of the new parish was King Street, and it crossed Charlotte Place (Grosvenor Street) at a point which was only a few metres from St Patrick’s church itself. From there, the new parish was on the western side of a boundary along the ridge, upon which now runs the approach to the harbour bridge, as far as the Argyle Cut, and then down to Circular Quay. It included most of the Rocks and Millers Point. A tiny parish by any standards, which left the original parish even tinier, at least in the number of parishioners.¹⁶

It was carved out of St Patrick’s parish, and was given to the new parish priest, William Riordan, to reward him for services rendered to the diocese.

Riordan was highly esteemed for the success of his efforts in preaching the appeal for a new St Mary’s Cathedral. He started in the goldfields. ‘Beginning with Cooma, where he scraped together the amazing sum of £280, he traversed in that first year of 1873, the length and breadth of the diocese from Twofold Bay to Lithgow, and from Berrima to Balmain, devoting to each district or parish at least one hectic week, packed with sermons, lectures and house to house visitations.’¹⁷

Monnier, however, had given himself totally to his responsibilities. He knew that Polding’s negative feelings had persisted about the idea of the Marists in a city parish, and that for several years he had been talking of dividing the parish. But Monnier hoped that his own total dedication to his work might, in time, allay the archbishop’s negative attitude. He also hoped that Vaughan’s arrival might signal a different approach. Now he interpreted the action as an indication that, in the opinion of church leaders, he had failed. And through his failure, his religious congregation had also failed, for the Marist Fathers had been on trial as well. He wrote to Vaughan asking to be told where he had failed.

Monnier’s interpretation was not exaggerated. Shortly afterwards, the priests at St Patrick’s heard the matter summed up quite explicitly by a guest at their own table. Dr Murray, bishop of Maitland, was personally quite friendly with the Marists, and with Monnier in particular, who had preached a number of missions in his diocese with the greatest success. But when dining with them one day, on a visit to Sydney, Murray stated baldly that the Marists had no right to be in St Patrick’s. He said that it was a good thing that their parish had been reduced in size. He was of the opinion that no
bishop should admit a body of religious men into his diocese. His attitude is borne out by the experience of the Patrician Brothers, who came to Maitland in 1883. They found it impossible to live under Murray, and left the diocese in 1888.

Murray was one of the twelve Irish bishops appointed to Australia who were protégés of Cardinal Paul Cullen. Others were Matthew Quinn of Bathurst, and his brother James Quinn of Brisbane. Later in the century, the Brisbane diocese was instructed by Rome to invite religious priests there.

Letters from Joly and Monnier make it clear that Murray's opinion was shared by the vast majority of the Irish clergy whom they knew, not excepting their friend, George Dillon. A rare exception was Austin Sheehy, the ex-vicar general, always their supporter, and himself a religious. He was the only one to express his sympathy over what had happened. Joly considered that the division would never have happened if Sheehy had still been vicar general.

The parish division came into effect before the end of August, with the opening ceremony for St Bridget's, announced in the papers and from the pulpits. It was attended by Archbishops Polding and Vaughan and numerous clergy. Vaughan preached the occasional sermon. With unstated but evident satisfaction, Monnier reported to France that the laity were less than enthusiastic, and only a small number were present. If contributions from clergy and well-known outsiders were excepted, the collection was quite moderate. Worse still for Riordan, the new parish priest, was the fact that most of his parishioners continued to attend their old church. Within days, influential lay parishioners wrote 24 petitions to Vaughan protesting the division of their parish.

Vaughan began to realize that the action was being interpreted as an insult to Monnier, one of the best priests in the archdiocese. He wrote a reply to Monnier's letter and tried to reassure him. While criticizing some of Monnier's confrères as lacking in religious spirit, he praised Monnier personally, and said that the division of the parish was in no way a reflection on Monnier's administration, and that the idea had not been Vaughan's. It had been the wish of 'the old man' (Polding). He himself, wrote Vaughan, held the fathers at St Patrick's in highest esteem. He even invited Monnier to take tea with him. The French priests seemed to find this very British invitation rather amusing.

Despite the compliments to himself, Monnier was very upset by the criticisms of his confrères in Vaughan's letter. He held onto it for
Monnier had been living and working at a furious pace over the previous twelve months, but very many people thought, and a number were prepared to say, that the untimely death was due to the shock associated with the division of the parish.

That this was an oversimplification is obvious. Monnier had been crowding more and more into his schedule. Never able to refuse the requests for his preaching, which continued to pour in unabated, he reached a point where, besides his work at St Patrick’s, he was maintaining an almost unbelievable program. In the last six months of his life, apart from regular parish duties, he undertook a mission in Camden, retreats in three Sydney parishes, a clergy retreat in Maitland, daily May sermons at St Patrick’s, a nuns’ retreat in Bathurst and another in Maitland. At the request of Archbishop Vaughan, he assisted at the Sydney clergy retreat as confessor to the priests. In addition, he was weekly confessor to the sisters at St Vincent’s hospital, and the community at St Vincent’s convent, Potts Point.

Perhaps there was some physical disability which he had kept to himself. Once or twice, his letters refer to his own poor health, without explaining what the problem was. There was despondency over his apparent failure to build up good relations with the Benedictine authorities. Undoubtedly Monnier had pushed himself too hard for too long. He was only 49 when he died. The official diagnosis was ‘malignant angina of a very contagious character’.22

People were warned that there was high danger of contagion. Restrictions were imposed on their visits to the priest’s body, but with little effect. After the funeral, attended by 40,000 people, the priests returned to the presbytery to find that ardent admirers had stripped the dead man’s room of any personal belongings which could be kept as mementos. His rosary and a few holy cards from his breviary were all that could be salvaged, to return as keepsakes to his family in France.

The repercussions of Monnier’s death were widely felt. The Marists were badly shaken. For what appears to have been the first time, Joly went to the expense of sending the news to France by cable. Even before the death, Joly, as Marist superior in Australia, was concerned about the extensive range of voluntary additional work which his priests were undertaking, and had become reluctant
to accept new requests. Perhaps his feelings had been sharpened by the remarks of Bishop Murray at the St Patrick’s dining table. Bishops were required by canon law to provide priests to go regularly to convents to hear confessions, a duty which some priests undertook with little enthusiasm. Notwithstanding the lack of appreciation for the work of religious priests apparent in Murray’s words, the Marists had been generous in undertaking such extra duties, for Murray as well as others.

Vaughan’s criticism, in his letter to Monnier, of certain Marists as ‘lacking in religious spirit’ were regarded by Joly as directed towards himself. This proved to be a misinterpretation, as Joly discovered later, when Vaughan spoke to him about Kirk. At the time, however, Joly rather understandably decided that it related to the fact that he had no available Marist priest to take over the widespread activities of Monnier as chaplain to convents. Joly did not have any desire to undertake additional optional work himself, or impose it on any of his other men, who were already too committed, and so he felt there was nothing he could do about the criticism.

Joly saw the Marist situation at St Patrick’s at this time as continuing to be very precarious. One problem was the structure of the Sydney archdiocese, which was still not organized in the conventional framework of parishes, each with a degree of independence. Instead, the much more authoritarian structure still applied whereby, technically speaking, the entire diocese was a single parish, and the bishop was the only parish priest. The divisions were merely called ‘districts’ and ‘missions’, instead of parishes, and the priests were called ‘missionaries’. Monnier’s amazing dedication, and phenomenal success with his parishioners, had apparently not impressed the elderly Polding. The division of the parish without any consultation, or even warning, except by hearsay and rumour, had starkly underlined the insecurity of Marist tenure.

For some time, Joly had been reporting in detail on all of these events to his superiors in France. In his cable reporting Monnier’s death, in September 1874, he queried the whole future of St Patrick’s, and waited for a reply.

Meanwhile, barely installed in his new parish of St Bridget’s, William Riordan found that the effect of Monnier’s death was to change resentful feelings towards him, felt by many parishioners, into outright hostility. Soon, the strain was too great. Tragically, he had an alcohol problem, and this probably had a part in the fact that on a
Sunday not long after his arrival, he launched into a tirade from the pulpit of St Bridget’s. He denounced the parishioners who had continued attending St Patrick’s. They were traitors, and he did not want to see any of them again.

Shortly afterwards, ending what had been a residence of only weeks in the parish, he left. He was given a posting on the south coast, well away from Sydney, but the alcohol problem recurred, and finally he had to leave the archdiocese. He was eventually allowed a place in Geraldton, Western Australia, where he died.

Father Eugene Luckie was appointed to St Bridget’s to succeed Riordan. He arrived to find the same hostility. After unsuccessfully urging people to cease attending St Patrick’s, he, too, resigned and left the parish a few weeks after arriving. Before the year ended, the third pastor to be appointed in four months arrived, Belgian Father Pierre Jonghe.23

If the people wanted the French Marists, they could at least be given a priest who spoke with a French accent. However, Jonghe always signed his name as Peter Young while parish priest of St Bridget’s. Despite continued opposition, the new parish priest did not give up, and for four and a half years eked out a lonely existence in what he described as ‘St Bridget’s Hermitage’—a leaky, temporary wooden building leaning against St Bridget’s.24
Early in 1875, Joly received a reply from France to his cable about the death of Monnier, in which he had asked about the whole future of St Patrick’s. Immediately on receiving the letter from the general administration, he sought an interview with Vaughan. Having consulted with his superiors, Joly began, he had come to raise with Vaughan the question of whether the Marists should offer to withdraw from St Patrick’s. He went on to make his explanations.

Vaughan was perplexed and very cautious. At first glance Joly seemed simply to be offering a resignation by the Marists. But Vaughan soon saw that it was rather more subtle. Joly’s delicately phrased opening was really saying, ‘If your recent action of halving the size of our parish means that you want us to leave, come out into the open: just say so, and we will go’. Vaughan hedged, making what Joly described as ‘evasive replies’ several times. Finally he said, ‘I would be upset to see you leave St Patrick’s; I would not have wanted to ask you to leave. But since you yourself propose it, that is your affair’.1

Joly’s letter reporting the interview says that he next raised with the archbishop the project he had in mind ‘in the case that we do leave St Patrick’s’. It was to set up the Cumberland Street house as a procure and residence for missionaries. Vaughan strongly approved. But when Joly spoke to him about having a chapel there, open to the public, Vaughan dismissed the idea as absurd.

The attitude of the archbishop on the chapel proposal is not difficult to understand. Such a chapel would make a third Mass centre, within 800 metres of St Patrick’s. At the end of the interview, Vaughan asked Joly to put everything in writing, and to allow time for the matters to be considered. Joly had the letter in Vaughan’s hands the following day.
Reporting all of this to his superiors in Europe, Joly went on to another subject. He indicated that he was near to removing the difficult Charles Kirk from Sydney. He had written to Bishop Redwood in New Zealand, whose Dundalk connections in Ireland gave him some background, and was able to report that Redwood had agreed to accept Kirk into the Wellington diocese.

When the St Bridget’s parish was separated, Kirk had been angry about the division of the St Patrick’s parish, but by the time of Monnier’s death he had been very disloyal. Just how disloyal was revealed to Joly by Vaughan himself at their next interview. In February 1875, Joly wrote:

[Archbishop Vaughan] told me that Fr Kirk had done us a great deal of harm: that we should move him as soon as possible. He then told me of the dealings Fr Kirk had had with him. [Kirk] had gone to see him several times in order to complain about us, about the wretched treatment he had to put up with, etc. Finally, he had gone to him to ask to become a secular, and be received among his priests. It was then that his eyes were really opened to the true worth of this little man and his accusations against us.

[Vaughan] told him that he wanted nothing to do with him; that if he had reasons for leaving his Order, he should see his Superiors, but that he would not have him in his diocese.

He repeated several times that we should get Fr Kirk out of St Patrick’s as quickly as possible. However, Kirk himself remained convinced that Vaughan would change his mind about accepting him, and continued his scheming. Aware of the rumours that the Marists might be leaving St Patrick’s, he decided that their departure was a foregone conclusion, that their successor would be George Dillon, and that Dillon’s assistant ought to be Kirk himself. He wrote to Dillon, and even wrote a letter to Vaughan making these proposals.

Vaughan’s advice to remove Kirk as quickly as possible persuaded Joly that it was time to act. He decided to send Kirk to New Zealand without further ado. He already had authority from France to do this. Bearing in mind that trouble might come from Kirk’s supporters over his removal, Joly knew that he had to proceed cautiously. The main time when Kirk could stir up parishioners would be on a Sunday. ‘I was convinced,’ wrote Joly,

that he could still do a lot of harm in a short time. So I waited for the arrival of the steam ship that would take the Fathers [missionaries for New Zealand], and also to learn which precise
day it would leave. Above all I did not want to have him spending Sunday in the parish after being warned.

It is true that the final Sunday was a little too close to the time of departure, which was Tuesday 2nd February [1875] at 6 p.m. But on Monday morning I went to him more politely than usual, asking him how he was, and whether he was happy and so on. When his answer was very negative, I suggested New Zealand for him, and he refused, as forcefully as possible. Gradually I got round to the instructions we have from Lyon and from the archbishop, etc. But it was useless. I showed him that he would be putting himself in the wrong; that whatever happened, he was going to be replaced at St Patrick’s; that if he rebelled I was able to put him in retirement, and so on.

I told him too that I knew all the steps he had taken with Dr Vaughan, and to get out of the Society. It seemed to me that nothing was making any impression on him.

I had just left him to go to Villa, when I met Fr Dillon, who had come as a result of a letter from Fr Kirk in which he had announced our departure from St Patrick’s, the practical certainty that Fr Dillon would be called on to take our place, and the fact that Fr Kirk wanted to be his curate after leaving our Society, and so forth. He was urging Fr Dillon to act promptly, so as not to let others take his place.

Fr Dillon said he was indignant at [Kirk’s] conduct. I told him what I had done, and what the situation was, and he promised to help me and get him to leave.

Fr Kirk had already gone one step further. He had written to the Coadjutor [Vaughan] to assure him again that he had decided to leave us, and requesting that Fr Dillon and he be put in our place at St Patrick’s on a transitional basis. He showed a copy of the letter to Fr Dillon, who had started talking to him on the excuse that he wanted to look into the question seriously.

When Fr Dillon saw that his own name was on it, he told him what he thought about all this: that Fr Kirk was lost in the eyes of the archbishop and his own Superiors, and that his only way of getting out of his impossible situation was to leave at once for New Zealand, and accept Bishop Redwood’s invitation.

He frightened him so successfully, that he appeared to have made up his mind to go. But next day everything seemed to be starting all over again. Fr Kirk wrote me a long letter giving reasons why it was impossible for him to leave for a month, more or less. Since his reasons were false, I insisted, and for hours the same things were being repeated.

In the end he finished by accepting the argument that, since he had never committed mortal sin in his life, he would not want to start now. And, when I said that he would be
seriously disobedient if he did not go, he agreed to do so, not having realized before the truth of this.

From the evening before, while swearing that he did not want to go, he had already warned his friends either directly or indirectly, and painted his going in the blackest colours on our part, and especially on mine.

They did, in fact, try to make some demonstration on his behalf. But, because everything was done so hurriedly, and because there were others leaving at the same time, there was not even time or opportunity for them to get things organized.

There was even misunderstanding about the ship. Many thought it was the *Hero*, which was leaving for Auckland on the same day and at the same time, and not the *Easby*, which was at a different quay. So the number of his followers who were there was not very great. But the small number he had collected were so angry that they would willingly have thrown me into the water.

From all this, Joly concluded that 'the ill will of the archbishop, of some priests, and of many parishioners of St Patrick’s is largely the result of his indiscretions and calumnies of every kind. He did much harm to the Brothers, too'. ³

Kirk’s ‘indiscretions and calumnies’ towards the brothers had been mainly directed against Brother Ludovic, the superior. Although Kirk was not the only person who circulated rumours, the indications are that he and his friends had been the source of many of the stories which gained credence. One suggestion was that Ludovic was not only a tyrant, but that he lived in personal luxury, ‘with a well-waxed floor, fine carpets, an expensive bed with damask hangings, mahogany furniture’ for himself, while his brothers and novices were in conditions that would have been more suited to a prison.⁴

Eventually, Vaughan had taken action by interviewing Ludovic, submitting the terms of the contract with the brothers to careful scrutiny, and then making what is called a canonical visitation of their dwelling. Such a visitation is made by a strict formula, according to prescriptions of the Council of Trent. During the visitation, which took place on 8 December 1874, these provisions were precisely followed by Vaughan, and the decree itself was ‘affixed to the door of the chapel and would not be removed before the end of the visit under penalty of ex-communication’.⁵

Despite this solemn and rather intimidating approach, Vaughan found that the gossip was completely unfounded. He was pleased, on the one hand, with the monastic bareness of Ludovic’s room, and on
— A question of survival —

the other, with the happy group of young men who were pursuing their vocations. He made amends during a ceremony of vesture of postulants, at St Patrick’s, at which he presided shortly afterwards, by giving high praise to the brothers in his sermon. During the sermon, Kirk walked out. 6

Vaughan still remained suspicious ‘about large sums of money supposedly sent to France by Br Ludovic’ 7 and when the Marist Brothers’ provincial, Brother John Dullea, arrived on 9 January 1876, Vaughan questioned him closely about the matter. There were no such sums. It is impossible to know whether this piece of gossip was spread by Kirk.

Vaughan’s reply to Joly’s question about the future of the Marists and St Patrick’s was given at an interview on 26 January 1875, at St John’s College, Sydney University, where the coadjutor resided.

Vaughan had looked into the matter thoroughly. He had consulted widely among the laity and priests, even travelling to Windsor to see Austin Sheehy, the former vicar general. He had found many of the clergy opposed to the presence of a religious order, but told Joly that he knew their motives. He said he needed the Marists as religious in the city, and thought it would be best for him and for the Marist Fathers if they remained at St Patrick’s. As Vaughan saw it, none of the critics could blame him for putting the Marists there, but he was glad they were. They should consider the division of the parish as an accident. It had not been Vaughan’s own idea, but Polding’s, and Archbishop Polding would not live forever. 8

Notwithstanding the painful uncertainty caused by the division of the parish, and despite the added problems of Monnier’s death, the Kirk episode, and the questions about the Marists leaving St Patrick’s, this undertaking given by Vaughan put the congregation in a somewhat more secure position. In many different ways, after this time, he gave indications of his confidence in the fathers.

One of these was a request, made initially in confidence, in 1875, asking the Marists to undertake a theological college for the diocese. ‘During our conversation,’ wrote Joly, ‘he said some very flattering things about our Society. But of course, that needs to be taken with a great deal of salt. It is quite well known that he does not like the Jesuits.’ 9

However, Joly clearly still had many concerns. His priests who continued to maintain the work of St Patrick’s were not in good health. From 1869, Charles Heuze had been seriously ill for a long time, and at one stage was not expected to live. Heuze’s early years
were interesting and varied, and he was in the United States when ordained, as a secular priest. He suffered great hardships during the siege of Vicksburg, in the American War between the States, which seriously undermined his health. He joined the Society of Mary in New Orleans, and after a period in his native France, his knowledge of English was used by appointments to Dundalk in Ireland, and St Anne’s, Spitalfields, in London, before he was appointed to Sydney. After his most severe health problems, he improved somewhat, but he was not confirmed as parish priest until 1877.

In the meantime, although putting a priest with the rather formidable name of Théophile Le Menant des Chesnais (he signed his name T. Lemenant) in charge in the parish, Joly himself carried overall responsibility as superior, an appointment made during Monnier’s term.

The accommodation of the Sisters of Mercy was another of Joly’s concerns. It was badly substandard. Monnier described it, in an 1872 letter to Poupinel, as a ‘wretched house’ with tiny cells, and said that the building was ‘the most contemptible convent in Australia’. But almost as important, it seems, in Joly’s eyes, was the fact that the sisters had to walk past the priests in the sacristy in order to get into the church. The building was located at 139 Harrington Street, about where the St Patrick’s Business College stands today. The priests lived on the corner, quite some distance from the sacristy.

When Vaughan came to visit, Joly suggested that a number of problems could be solved if the priests and the sisters could swap houses. At first Vaughan was amused at the idea, but when Joly pursued the suggestion, he looked into the matter more seriously, and gave permission. The change took place in June 1875. Unfortunately for Joly, and Marist finances, the cost of some repairs to make the former ‘contemptible convent’ more livable fell upon Villa Maria.

Joly’s letters refer, in a number of places, to differences with Brother Ludovic, which were originally between Ludovic and Monnier. Ludovic’s journal traces the differences back to a time when he disappointed Monnier greatly by refusing Monnier’s request to allow the brothers to take part in a parish picnic.

Ludovic also believed that Monnier was very unhappy that the brothers’ community attended the opening ceremony for the new parish of St Bridget’s, and the installation of the new parish priest. A letter from Joly to Poupinel in France bears out that view of the
presence of Ludovic and his brothers at the ceremony: ‘Since most people here,’ wrote Joly, ‘think that the Brothers and ourselves make up one Society, especially because of the name, people were somewhat astonished to see him there’. No doubt Joly was correct in what he said. However, in defence of the position of Ludovic and the brothers, it must be recognized that, despite the common name Marist, and no matter what the people thought, the two organizations were distinct, even though connected. There were clearly going to be times, and Ludovic judged this to be one of them, when the differences in their interests would require such separate decisions.

Unfortunately, there were also difficulties over money. Not surprisingly, Ludovic saw his own position in the matters as fairly blameless: any faults lay with Monnier and Joly. It is equally unsurprising that Joly interpreted these events very differently. Joly wrote:

I have had some difficulties recently with Bro. Ludovic, first with regard to the accounts. In spite of his claim that he had paid us, and that instead, we owe him £28, it is still clear to us that he owes us £121, or thereabouts. He has already acknowledged part of that amount, because he has not been able to prove by his cheque book or other bank documents, as he tried to, that he had paid us. Fortunately, since 1 July 1873, all our business has been done by cheque, and he knows perfectly well that he cannot argue with that.

So, since he did not find things as he expected to during that period of time, he has wanted to go right back to the beginning. Well, yesterday I let him have copies of all the accounts, telling him to examine them, and that he had to finish before the mail goes. Bear in mind that we have always let him have his accounts every 6 months, and that he has been first to query them and argue about them. Now he is maintaining that he never examined them, but took it for granted that they were correct.

Other factors deserve mention. Ludovic’s positive attitude towards requests for expansion, and the opening of new schools, put him under intense financial pressure, and make his quibbles over accounts at that time very understandable.

When one considers that there were four founding brothers, two of whom—those influenced by Kirk—left the order, and one had to be sent away fairly quickly to New Caledonia for the sake of his health, Ludovic’s achievement is amazing. These losses meant that for a time, apart from his novices, the Sydney foundation consisted
only of himself and one new brother from France with extremely poor English. To help them out, Brother Marie Nizier came in from Villa Maria. By undertaking the cooking, he was able to relieve a brother for teaching. Yet by 1876, four years after they had arrived in Sydney, mainly through the novitiate, and with minimal help from France, the brothers had opened not only the original parish primary school at St Patrick’s, but also the novitiate and a high school there, and three schools in other places: St Benedict’s in Sydney, one at Parramatta, and a third at Apia in Samoa. In 1879 they began a boarding school at St Patrick’s, which moved to Hunters Hill in 1882 and became St Joseph’s College, a colossal commitment in every sense.

When new schools were opened, most of the costs were borne by the local parish. But there were inevitably costs which were not met. More importantly, the running costs of the novitiate, which had made all this expansion possible, had to be paid for by the order. These were some of the greatest financial pressures on Ludovic. The pending arrival of a provincial superior early in 1875 would have added to Ludovic’s anxiety to have his account books looking as healthy as possible.

Ludovic was only 28 years of age when he was appointed. He was an emotional man, capable of warm friendliness or of flaring up heatedly. ‘Br Ludovic apparently built up a reputation at St Genis-Laval [the brothers’ administrative headquarters in France] for acting precipitately, for rushing things without sufficient preparation, for acting contrary to directions received.’ For all that, Ludovic was the key person responsible for one of the most remarkable establishments of any religious order in Australia.
When Polding approved so heartily of the house and land which Joly had bought in May 1872, in Cumberland Street in the Rocks, and showed such interest in it, Joly ended his attempt to sell it. It is difficult to know why the archbishop was so enthusiastic. Possibly he envisaged that the Marists might resign from St Patrick's when he went ahead with his plan to divide the parish, and they would be able to withdraw to the new house.

By the middle of 1876, Joly was explaining, in correspondence with Lyon, that the lease on the Cumberland Street house was due to run out in another six months. Although the tenants paid their rent regularly, they were not taking good care of the house and land, which were being allowed to deteriorate. He did not intend, therefore, to renew the lease.

The following year Archbishop Polding died. Just one week later, Vaughan contacted Joly over a matter which he first raised two years previously. It was to ask the Marist Fathers to establish a college at Villa Maria, which, Joly recalled, he had asked for, ‘as soon as circumstances permit. The principal circumstance turned out to be the death of Dr Polding’.

Joly was greatly taken with the idea, and considered who might be on the staff. The famous Marist educationalist, Father Pierre Pestre, would be able to teach the theology class. Implicit in the plan, as far as Joly was concerned, was that the entire procure activities could be transferred to Cumberland Street. According to Joly, Vaughan had indicated to him that he would maintain the college run by the Benedictines at Lyndhurst until the Marists were ready to open theirs. However, he soon closed Lyndhurst, describing it to Joly as ‘materially, financially and morally rotten’. Despite Joly’s enthusiasm, the Marist superiors were not in favour, and no Marist Fathers’ college was begun in Sydney.
On 24 June 1879, Joly’s plan to move the procure to the Cumberland Street house, now being called St Michael’s, was finally approved by the Marist authorities. A happy Joly reported that the transfer was effected on 29 July, ‘at 9 in the morning’.3

By coincidence, in the same letter in which he reported these events, Joly had news of St Bridget’s. ‘As for the parish of St Brigitte [sic] I think I already told you that the archbishop asked us to take charge of it on 1 September. Regarding the arrangements, he said we could do as we wished, i.e. to reunite it with St Patrick’s, or leave it distinct ... ’ In practice, Joly went on, there was no real choice, because St Patrick’s was such a small parish. An early Mass would be said on Sundays at St Bridget’s, and at least one at St Michael’s. Confessions could be heard on Saturday evening at St Bridget’s, and in other respects, the two parishes could be reunited.

Despite these sentiments, the Marists did not, in practice, effect the reunification at that time, and continued to administer St Bridget’s as a separate, but now Marist, parish for another thirteen years. The reason was the development of St Michael’s as a centre.

Ten months after the Marists returned to St Bridget’s, in June 1880, the St Bridget’s school acquired new teachers, the Sisters of St Joseph. Their search for a convent ended in 1881, when Cheshunt House, at 3 Cumberland Street, became available. It was the former home of Dr James Mitchell, MLC, father of the D.S. Mitchell, from whom the Marists had bought Cumberland Place, the adjoining house, which became St Michael’s. The sisters’ property also fronted onto Lower Fort Street. Under the sisters, Cheshunt House became a Providence, or orphanage.4

Joly was now pushing ahead with the St Michael’s project, and planned to complete it with a church. He must still have felt insecure in the Marist tenure of St Patrick’s, even though a contract was drawn up by Vaughan.5 Joly’s aim with the St Michael’s project seems to have been that the Marists would own a church, instead of having one of which they could suddenly be deprived by the kind of whim which had apparently been behind the partitioning of the St Patrick’s parish.

In the light of these considerations, Joly’s next step is almost incomprehensible. On the land owned by the Marists, there was no suitable position on which a church could be built. But their new next-door neighbours, the sisters, had an unused corner of their land which would be ideal. There is no record that I can find of Joly attempting to buy the portion. Instead, he came to the surprising
Section 86 (portion) Sydney 1888 showing St Michael's presbytery and the church, shown as R.C. school and chapel, with St Joseph’s Providence. These buildings were all demolished when the Sydney Harbour Bridge was built. (Based on a map supplied by the Mitchell Library, NSW State Library.)

arrangement with the sisters, through their superiors, that the Marists would build a church at their own expense, on the land owned by the sisters. Relations between the two religious orders were excellent, but Joly’s action remains completely puzzling.

Only at the insistence of the foundress of the Sisters of St Joseph, Mother Mary MacKillop, does it appear that any agreement relating to ownership was reached. It was to the effect that if either wished to leave, that party would relinquish title, and both land and
Challenge

church would go to the party which remained. More methodical in this instance than Joly, MacKillop requested that the unusual agreement be put in writing. A copy in Joly’s hand, and signed by him and by ‘Mother Mary of the Cross (Mary MacKillop)’ is retained in the archives of the Sisters of St Joseph. It is dated 28 April 1883, when the church was already built.

St Michael’s spacious church was completed and officially opened on 22 October 1882. It was a little larger than St Patrick’s, and became the main church of the Marist St Bridget’s parish. As noted, the separation from St Patrick’s parish was retained for practical purposes. Not without problems. Father Peter Piquet, who was caring for it in 1882, and living at St Michael’s, gives us a valuable description of the problems.

Piquet suggested that the priests at St Patrick’s, although fellow Marists, were still uneasy at their too-near neighbour. And the people from the Rocks and Millers Point were no better at attending Mass at St Bridget’s than they had been previously. ‘There is nothing there to attract the faithful,’ wrote Piquet. ‘No choir for singing and no fine ceremonies . . . Fr Le Menant who has responsibility for all the schools and runs the weekday services at St Bridget’s is dying of boredom.’

In the mid-1880s, Joly was appointed to the post of visitor general to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific missions of the Marist Fathers. In 1885 and 1886 he made visitation of all regions of his responsibility, and it was his duty to make a report on all the Marist houses in those regions. This included his own St Michael’s. His comments are generally admirably objective in summing up houses, or churches and their problems. When it came to St Michael’s, however, his notes are far less critical than were those of his successor, Father Augustin Aubry, seven years later.

Having described the fine house and grounds, Joly’s report pointed out that the place served two purposes, to be a procure house for the missions and, with its new church, to be in charge of the small parish. Joly referred to the church as on land ‘adjoining our property’. He omitted to make explicit reference to the fact that the Marists did not own the land, which was to be a source of trouble before too long. He did point out that the location of St Patrick’s, nearer the city, made it a church which could maintain itself financially, whereas the isolation of St Michael’s meant that it could hardly meet its expenses, even though its value as a procure house was great. The priests in the two presbyteries assisted one
another, said Joly, and since St Patrick’s had such poor living quarters, it was helpful to its priests to be able to go to St Michael’s for relaxation or a quiet place to work.

Joly’s successor as visitor general was Augustin Aubry, who had strong feelings about St Michael’s. Under his administration he set up a council, later to become the provincial council for the Society of Mary in Sydney. Its first decision, moved by Aubry, was that St Michael’s should cease to be a separate parish, and become a chapel of ease for the parish of Church Hill.

In his report on all the houses under his responsibility, dated 6 July 1893, Aubry was quite trenchant about the foundation. He wrote that St Michael’s was still a house with expenses and no revenue. Aubry was not especially happy with other aspects of St Michael’s, even in its role as mission procure. There continued to be a dependence upon Villa Maria, and difficulty for the priest who divided his time between the two places.

But it was St Michael’s church which earned most of Aubry’s wrath. Neither of his reports found anything favourable to say about it. He wrote about preaching there to empty pews, with a few people scattered about. The sisters and girls from the orphanage occasionally occupied the side aisles. Any church can have such a situation some of the time, said Aubry, but at St Michael’s it was like that all the time.

The accession of Cardinal Patrick Francis Moran in 1883 brought to an end the Benedictine administration of Sydney. Early in 1895, three years after Joly’s death, Moran solved one problem which had always concerned the Marist administrator. He formally completed the official documents in Rome whereby the two Marist parishes in Sydney of St Patrick’s, Church Hill, and Holy Name of Mary, Hunters Hill, were given to the care of the Marist Fathers. The documents were dated 17 March 1895.

While this helped the situation of the St Patrick’s parish, it did little to help St Michael’s, where problems compounded. The Sisters of St Joseph were in financial difficulties. They had mortgaged their land on which the church stood. Shortly after Joly’s death, they approached the Marists with a view to having them pay a good share of the mortgage interest repayments. Aubry and his council agreed that the Marists should buy the land. However, there were difficulties over price. They considered that, if they were to do so, they ought to be asked to pay only for its unimproved value, since they were the ones who had paid for the improvement on it: St
Michael’s church. Because of their financial straits, the sisters hoped to obtain more. Moran agreed that the anomalous situation should be corrected.

It is not surprising that Aubry’s was only one of many voices suggesting that St Michael’s was too great a problem.

Relief for these problems came quite unexpectedly. In 1900, one of the most dreaded of all diseases broke out in Sydney: bubonic plague, commonly called the Black Death. In the Middle Ages it had killed perhaps a third of the population of Europe. All of the confirmed cases in Sydney occurred in the Rocks area in Marist parish territory.10

The government of New South Wales began to act decisively. It resumed land for demolition of buildings and transferred a great many residents to other areas. The hope was to transform the area by razing buildings, widening streets and making a bridge across Sydney harbour. The aim was to clear the area of rats, carriers of the disease. These transfers greatly decreased the population of the St Patrick’s parish, making a third church, at St Michael’s even less necessary.

The planned bridge caused more land resumptions. Such a bridge would link the main city with the now well populated north shore. The prominent ridge and headland on which the Sydney base for the huge structure would have to be built included the entire St Michael’s property, as well as the church and the Providence of the Sisters of St Joseph. On 31 July 1900, Aubry wrote that if the bill passed both houses of parliament, its result would mean that the number of parishioners in the St Patrick’s parish would be halved, and not a stone of St Michael’s would remain. A final postscript to this letter stated that the bill was passed on 9 August 1900. St Michael’s was abandoned ‘without regret’ on 19 March 1901.11

St Bridget’s returned in its unobtrusive role as part of the parish of St Patrick’s. The Sisters of St Joseph moved their Providence to Lane Cove and Kincumber. The Sisters of Mercy were invited to take over the school at St Bridget’s from the end of January, 1901.
A serious problem for the St Patrick’s parish, which was later to cause controversy, occurred over a house and block of land on the corner of Charlotte Place (now Grosvenor Street) and Harrington Street. Later, Federation Hall was built on the site. The property adjoined the brothers’ house and school, and they desired it partly in case of possible expansion, and also to ensure that the buildings on it were not used in ways which the school found objectionable. Apparently it had been used as a brothel. At Ludovic’s request, the parish purchased the property on his behalf in 1873. Poupinel had advised him to buy it, Ludovic said, before he left France.

The subsequent controversy is a very complex one. The details of Ludovic’s version of what happened in those early years, as revealed in his diaries and letters, are given in Alban Doyle’s excellent and sometimes whimsical study of the Marist Brothers referred to already. His version differs considerably from that of Joly.

Thus, Ludovic maintained that Monnier had been ‘just as anxious to acquire it’ as Ludovic himself was, and they were supported by a public meeting of parishioners. By contrast, Joly gave a different summary of early events, in an 1875 letter to the Marist Fathers’ General administration: ‘That house was bought at his [Ludovic’s] request so as to have later the possibility of extending the Brother’s establishment . . .’. And Joly goes on to declare that ‘the parishioners had not wanted to be mixed up with the purchase, and [Ludovic] had had to look for trustees outside the parish’.

Doyle commented, accepting Ludovic’s report, that ‘after many efforts’ Monnier could not find any parishioners to act as trustees for
Marist Brothers’ school (recently demolished) and the Federation Hall property. In 1962 the brothers transferred the school to Dundas. St Patrick’s Girls’ High School used the building until 1979.

the property. Joly, by contrast, suggests that Monnier did not even try to find any, because he and his parish advisers were not anxious to buy the land at all. Joly then asserts that:

[More recently, Ludovic] seemed to have lost the concern he used to have in this purchase, and advised that it should be resold. This was also the opinion of the parishioners, the trustees and ourselves. But when all the arrangements had been made to do that, he changed his mind, and sent a letter to the chairman in which he declared that he would never give consent to the sale, that only his higher superiors could authorize it, and that the parish should be consulted at a general meeting, and so on . . .
These quotations are given simply to illustrate the intensity of feelings over the issue. Joly was angry in 1875, because the brothers had not been using the property, and he and a group of parishioners believed it should be sold. In Joly’s mind, Ludovic had agreed to the sale, or even asked for it, and then suddenly withdrew his agreement, and claimed that he had never agreed to the sale.

However, while Doyle’s summaries of the disagreements basically follow Ludovic’s reports, there seems no point in simply going over the same events once more from Joly’s point of view, and in effect, holding the same debate a century later. It seems preferable to recognize that each protagonist was quite sincere, but had differing viewpoints about the main issues. In the reports which they wrote for higher superiors in France, each undoubtedly tries to give the best picture to justify his own actions. It seems impossible to believe, a priori, that one side was always correct and proper, whereas the other was always in the wrong.

Since an accurate final judgement on these matters is hardly able to be reached, one can only hope to clarify where possible, and refer to some general considerations which seem relevant. The Charlotte Place property is a subject which occupies many pages of Doyle’s book, in three or four different places. It is first mentioned on page 73 and is laid to rest uneasily on page 320. It covers events which began in 1873 and finished in 1889.

When the Marist Fathers were hoping to sell the property on behalf of the parish in 1875, a confrontation took place between Ludovic and Joly, in which Joly says that he found Ludovic so ‘lacking in frankness’ that he became very direct, and said to Ludovic, ‘Then why did you ask that the place be sold, and push me into making the preliminary steps?’ Ludovic replied that ‘he had never wanted it. Yet,’ insists Joly, ‘as well as I myself, the St Patrick’s Fathers, several parishioners, the trustees and Mr Ellis [the lawyer], are all witnesses that he did want that, and asked for it.’ In other words, the explanations given by Joly regarding the purchase of the Charlotte Place property in 1873, and its proposed sale in 1875, are quite at variance with those of Ludovic.

Ludovic’s last point is quite true: that he had no right to take such actions on his own authority. However, this hardly proves that he did not act in this way. Both Joly himself, and Rocher before him, had been in situations like that of Ludovic, and had acted without obtaining necessary permissions from France. Both were severely reprimanded for doing so. If Ludovic had in fact spoken as Joly claims that he did, first in urging the purchase, and later in agreeing
to the sale, or even asking for it, he was acting outside his authority. It would be no surprise that ‘by the time all the arrangements had been made’ for the sale, as Joly put it, and especially now that Brother John Dullea, his provincial and major superior was in Sydney, he wished to backtrack, and in his letter to the chairman, sheltered behind the authority of his superiors, to ‘prove’ that he could not possibly have made such a request.

As indicated in the previous chapter, Doyle states that Ludovic was seen by his superiors in St Genis-Laval as a person capable of acting in a very independent fashion, where he should really have relied on them. John Dullea certainly thought so, and complained rather bitterly a few years later that while he was away Ludovic had rushed through several major commitments of the province about which Dullea was very critical of important details. It is equally possible, however, that Joly and his witnesses intensely wanted the sale, and some remarks by Ludovic of a non-committal kind were interpreted as an agreement which Ludovic did not intend.

Ludovic took the dispute over the Charlotte Place property to Vaughan, who sent Fr Gillett to investigate. The outcome was very satisfactory to Joly.

It would seem that Dr Vaughan is of the opinion that we should be paid our £300, or at least the interest on it; and that the property should be left in trust for a more general purpose than that of the brothers, as the property of the parish; so that later it could be used for them either completely or partially if necessary, or for an entirely different use. This is precisely the aim we had in buying it ... So I said to Fr Gillet that we would agree very happily with that.

Joly summed up his own view of the purchase in the following words to Poupinel:

I am telling you this so that if Br Ludovic takes it to his Superiors, you will know what you are dealing with. We, the priests of St Patrick’s have indeed been the true purchasers, those really responsible to the parish. And if by accident there had been some loss, it would certainly have been we who would have suffered from it. The trustees chosen by Br Ludovic himself would not have accepted that loss for themselves.

Why then does he want to organize everything as to how the property be used, the decision on whether it be sold or not, and an advance claim on any profit, while we still have practically £3000 to pay on the house and present schools of the Brothers?
These arguments, which took place in 1875, show that the issue was a cloudy one from the very beginning, and the claims of the different parties were not easy to distinguish.

The matters came up again in 1878. By now the methodical John Dullea was the main person responsible for the brothers, and, perhaps acknowledging the correctness of Joly's position in 1875, as borne out by Vaughan's statement, Dullea acted to buy the property legally on behalf of the brothers, taking over the entire 1873 purchase price, plus interest. Following on that event, Vaughan wrote a letter recognizing the brothers' rights. The brothers used some of the buildings and property for their juniorate, until its transfer in 1883, after which they leased it to a tenant.

Further disagreements occurred in 1886. Many of the people involved had changed: Cardinal Moran was in charge of the archdiocese, Ludovic had gone back to Europe, the parish priest was now Pierre Le Rennetel. Since the property was not being used by the brothers, the parish wished to purchase it. However, the price offered, £6000, was rejected by the brothers as too low. In 1887 the brothers had been leasing the property to tenants for four years, and their possible need for it further decreased with the transfer of the high school, that year, to St Mary's Cathedral.

The issue dragged on into 1889. St Bridget's Hall had now been sold, and the money from the sale enabled the parish to build a new presbytery and school. According to Doyle, the pressure from the parish had relaxed, and it was the cardinal who continued to pursue the matter.

Moran set up one more commission to look into the dispute. It was generally agreed that the brothers had the rights to the property, and disagreement continued about the price, if it should be sold. Real estate values had risen dramatically since the place was originally purchased in 1873, but they had been falling since 1887. One of the commissioners appointed by Moran to examine the dispute was Dean McCarthy. He said that the cardinal had put a ceiling of £5000 on the property. From the brothers' point of view, if they sold, they should be able to do so at the full market price.

Although the new commission, like the previous one, recognized the rights of the brothers, Moran decided in favour of the parish, and would not alter his ceiling of £5000. Many of his statements in his final declaration were only partly supported by the findings of the commission: the major basis of the cardinal's conclusion was that by the original purchase, in 1873, the parishioners 'acquired a right to that property and a lien upon it, which have at no time, since said...
purchase, been forfeited or surrendered’. He minimized the legal rights which the brothers obtained when they purchased the property, by emphasizing the continuing interest of the parish.

Under some duress, the brothers relinquished the property to the parish for the ‘compensation’, as Moran called it, of £5000, ‘in addition to the sum of £879 already received by the Brothers’. To ram home the decision, the imperious Moran added a final clause, which perhaps implicitly recognizes the legal title of the brothers to the property, by saying that if the brothers held onto the property, then ‘the said Brothers shall not be entitled at any future time, for accruing interest or under any other pretext whatsoever, to claim for said property any sum further than the £5000 aforesaid’.

Understandably, the brothers were very annoyed. By their purchase of the property, they should have been recognized as having all legal rights to it. It is of little help to recall that there are innumerable instances in the church where properties pass from one Catholic group to another, at prices below market value. The brothers had not paid current market prices when they purchased it in 1878, they had paid an 1873 price, plus interest. But they had no more say in the disposal of their property than if it had been resumed by the government at its own valuation. Nor did it help that those representing the parish interests, and opposing their own, were fellow Marists. It was like squabbles between members of the same family, which can cause more intense feeling, if not long-term bitterness.

In the late 1880s, the brothers were heavily committed financially to completion of the building of St Joseph’s College. Huge sums of money were needed, and the desire for something closer to market value for their Charlotte Place property made complete sense, even if the parish did have an interest in it. Another relevant factor is that the parish was a diocesan responsibility, and the brothers’ schools were much less so. Property owned by the parish of Church Hill was ultimately owned by the diocese, even though administered by the Marist Fathers. Part of the unhappiness of the brothers with the final decision was that, in finding for the parish, Moran was in a sense, finding for himself.

So ended the saga of the Charlotte Place property, at least at the official level. However, the feelings which had been stirred up over it persisted for many years. Federation Hall, which was built by the parish on the block, stood as a symbol of the resentment felt by
The Federation Hall property

many brothers about the loss of their property. Some of that resentment focused inevitably on the parish.

But it was Cardinal Moran who took the ultimate decision, and nominated the amount paid, however unjust. One of the problems, at this distance, is to know what would have been a more adequate compensation. That the amount of £5879, to use the cardinal’s figure, was inadequate is indicated by the fact that the brothers had refused an offer of £6000 from the parish two years earlier.

Whether or not the Charlotte Place dispute had anything to do with it, the relations between the prelate and the brothers deteriorated badly in his later years. Ultimately, in the same imperious way, he forced the Marist Brothers to withdraw from St Mary’s High School, putting them under what is called an interdict to do so. This is something like a suspension of the rights of the religious order, and a refusal to permit ecclesiastical ceremonies: an extremely severe penalty, comparable to excommunication of an individual. When the Christian Brothers were reluctant to replace the Marists, having many prior commitments to the opening of new schools in other places, Moran put them, too, under threat of interdict, unless they came to St Mary’s.
After Dubreul, Rocher and Brother Auguste arrived in Sydney to found a house for the Marist Fathers in Australia, it was rare for any Marist to be appointed directly to Australia from Europe. Australia was not high on the list of priorities of the Marist General Administration. Those who held office in Sydney, who were in need of an assistant, usually had to try to retain someone from the islands who was in Australia for reasons of health, or, like Monnier, because chance enabled him to remain after Bataillon had brought him to work at Clydesdale.

It was an exceptional situation when Victor Poupinel was appointed by Superior General Favre, to deal with the very difficult Bataillon. The status of Sydney was upgraded, and Poupinel was able to handpick an assistant immediately: Claude Marie Joly, his eventual successor.

When Poupinel returned to Europe permanently, in 1870, Joly took charge of Villa Maria. He did not have the standing of Poupinel, nor, for many years, the same appointment. But his task was made a little easier because of Poupinel's continuing support from Lyon, where he became assistant to Favre.

Joly had many good qualities, and Poupinel, who knew him so well, praised 'his good judgement, his prudence, his perceptiveness and his discretion'. Archbishop Vaughan came to have a high respect for Joly, and in 1878, put forward his name to Rome to be Bishop of Armidale. But Joly lacked the humanity and warmth of his predecessor, and, in the same letter, Poupinel described him as 'too cold, too uncommunicative, too reserved'. This side of his character
undoubtedly affected Joly’s position as a superior of a religious community, and accounts for the lack of enthusiasm his leadership inspired in those under him.

In the mid-1880s, Joly became visitor general to Marist houses in the south Pacific—the position which Poupinel had held.

Joly remained in charge of Sydney from 1870 until his death, on 5 March 1892. In other words, for 22 years he was primarily responsible for what happened to the Marist Fathers in Australia. Despite his talents and prudence, this may have been too long for the good of the Sydney houses. Decisions were taken which were of questionable worth; opportunities were lost. Joly did recognize the importance of the Marist city parish at Church Hill. He was appointed as the superior there during Joseph Monnier’s term as parish priest. This increased Joly’s authority, and the totality of his responsibility.

Establishing St Michael’s was virtually a unilateral decision by Joly. It was his brainchild. Some of his reasons for developing it derived from his continued pessimism and fears about the long-term Marist prospects at St Patrick’s. It is fairly easy for us to exercise the perfect vision of hindsight, and say that his pessimism was unwarranted, and that the church he built at St Michael’s was too near St Patrick’s to be viable in its own right, and too much further from the city centre. Things could have gone differently, and Joly’s fears have been realized. However, it is hard to excuse Joly’s extraordinary failure to obtain title to the land for St Michael’s church before going ahead with the building.

At no time during its existence could St Michael’s be described as a success, but in one respect its development brought a blessing. Both Lemenant, who was very temporarily in charge of the parish upon Monnier’s death, and Heuze, who took charge in 1877, wrote letters to France in which they spoke of the need for more priests.² This need was a theme Joly had referred to a number of times. It became greater with the projected opening of St Michael’s, and so, from 1879, a halcyon period for Sydney began. No fewer than three valuable priests were appointed in three years. Pierre Le Rennetel arrived in Sydney in 1879, Pierre Piquet in 1880, and Augustin Ginisty in 1881. All three came specifically for Sydney. They were to have a profound effect on Catholic Sydney in the years ahead. In the case of Piquet, it was for almost 56 years, until his death in 1936.

During the period when these reinforcements were arriving, Heuzé was also assisted at St Patrick’s by Lemenant, Jean-Baptiste
Coué, and, until mid-1880, James Foley. When necessary, he could call on Joseph Ecuyer from Villa Maria, and Joly himself. Zéphérin Muraire was in charge of the Ryde parish, and later, Hunters Hill, when it became a separate parish.

With the rare situation of having all this priestpower available, it was suggested in 1882 that there were too many Marist priests in Sydney. Joly asked to send Ginisty somewhere else, so that he could do 'serious work'. Ginisty was not transferred because the situation soon altered. Heuzé died on 26 August 1883, and Ecuyer in October. Le Rennetel was appointed to succeed Heuzé at St Patrick's.

One important idea seems never to have occurred to Joly: to seek Australian vocations to the Society of Mary. The contrast with the Marist Brothers was startling. The fathers had been in Sydney for 28 years in 1873, when Ludovic opened the brothers' novitiate, the year after they arrived. The possibilities were never better expressed than by Piquet, who wrote quite strongly on the subject in 1882:

Remember Australia a little. The field here is vast, too, and appears to promise well. The spirit of our Catholics is good, loyal and generous. If the program were once started, we could have priests and novices for the Society. Vocations are not wanting, and I think it is time to find them and bring them in. Several dioceses have been started or have grown since you were in Villa Maria, and yet our Society is established in only one of them, and in only one corner of that one.

Unfortunately, no notice was taken of this suggestion. It was addressed to Poupinel. Back in 1870, when he left Australia, the situation had been very much less promising, with Polding still alive. Now Polding was dead five years. Vaughan was in charge, and Piquet's suggestion made a lot of sense. However, when Piquet wrote these words, he was still a relative newcomer whose ideas on such an unusual suggestion did not need to be taken very seriously. Poupinel did not have long to live when he received this letter. He died on 10 July 1884. In any case, probably only Joly could have brought about a change of policy. And, although he wrote thousands of pages on every kind of subject, it seems that Joly never referred to the idea of recruiting Australian vocations to the Society of Mary.

In fact, few of the French Marists in Sydney seem to have taken the matter seriously. In the 1950s, when the present writer was a student at Marist Fathers' seminary, Toongabbie, New South Wales, French Marist missionary Léon Chaize came across from Villa Maria
to attend a function. He looked at the crowd of more than 40 Australian students, and said, ‘I was first in Sydney in 1911, on my way to the islands. We looked at the Australian boys and said, “What is in their minds except sport, sport, sport? There is no hope of vocations from them”.’ He shook his head wryly, and concluded, ‘We made the big mistake’.

The first positive move towards recruitment of Australian vocations was a decision made by the council under Aubry, in 1895, soon after Joly’s death, in response to a vote of a general chapter urging promotion of vocations. ‘The Council was unanimous in recognizing that it is in Villa Maria that the work should be started and developed.’ Some kind of apostolic school was in existence at Villa Maria by the middle of 1896, but after their classical studies, the volunteers were directed to the New Zealand Marist scholasticate at Meanee.

While the idea of local recruitment had been given approval by these decisions, many of the French Marists remained very negative about it. Of the Australians who were ordained to the priesthood as Marists in the twentieth century, one of the earliest was John James Monaghan. Born in the Rocks, in the St Patrick’s parish, his family and he himself were well known to the priests. He would therefore seem an ideal candidate. In his later years he often told the story of how he went more than once to the French priests at St Patrick’s and expressed his wish to become a Marist. He was refused, he recalled, and it was explained to him that St Patrick’s was a French church, and always would be. It was only his persistence, and the change in policy under Aubry, which gained him admission to novitiate in New Zealand.

Monaghan wrote feelingly on the subject in 1919:

I have heard it said again and again: ‘Where can we put these young Australian Marists who will soon be coming back from New Zealand: they cannot be put in Villa Maria or St Patrick’s, because they are for the French Fathers’. It was said to myself: ‘You need not expect ever to be put in charge at St Patrick’s’.

Well! dear Father, I do not aspire to that honour; but I do not see why I should be kept from St Patrick’s, or any other House of the Society, simply because I am an Australian and am not French; I cannot see this argument of nationality at all . . . It is a thing that I have felt very much; one feels like an outcast in the Society.’

At the time he wrote these words, in 1919, Monaghan had been
working in Sydney for eight years, but not at Villa Maria or St Patrick’s.

Some of the earlier Australian vocations bear out Monaghan’s experience. Setting aside George Heydon, the first Australian vocation to the Marist priesthood, who died in London when part-way through his studies, the first to reach ordination was Matthew O’Sullivan. He took a very indirect route to the priesthood, in that he started as a Marist Brother, in the first band of vocations to Ludovic’s novitiate. He made religious profession as Brother Bartholomew. He was one of the three Marist Brothers sent to open a school in Apia, Samoa, and is almost certainly the first Australian religious to work in the foreign missions. When the Apia school proved to be premature, it was closed down for some years, and the brothers were withdrawn.

O’Sullivan was sad at this decision and in 1879, when sub-director of St Joseph’s College, Hunters Hill, he decided to leave the brothers. He volunteered to return to Samoa as a lay missionary—probably another first in Australia. In time, however, he wished to try his vocation in the Society of Mary, and went to New Zealand, where he was ordained in 1893. Both O’Sullivan, and the next Australian to be ordained as a Marist Father, Herbert Joseph, worked in New Zealand for many years. The latter, who changed his name to Joseph Herbert, worked in New Zealand until his death. In 1924, O’Sullivan returned to Australia, where he remained. His return coincided with the change in administrative arrangements, in which the Australian houses became part of the New Zealand province. When he died in 1936, he was chaplain to the Marist Brothers.

From Monaghan’s remarks, one can only conclude that it was not accidental that these earliest Australian Marist Fathers were not given appointments in Sydney.

Why were Joly and so many of the French Marists unable to think seriously of the spread of the Society of Mary in Australia?

They were in a unique position to become strongly established. When the Benedictine monastery closed in Sydney, they became the religious order of men with the longest history in Australia. Ludovic’s successful novitiate acted like a signal, and other religious orders, such as the Christian Brothers in Melbourne, quickly followed suit, and opened their own houses of formation. Vaughan’s accession, and the arrival of other orders of religious priests to Australian dioceses in the 1870s and 1880s, were rapidly followed by the same recruitment of vocations locally. Jesuits, Sacred Heart Fathers, Redemptorists, all made the move, with excellent results.
It is not always possible, in later years, to work out why certain decisions were taken. In the instance of recruiting Australian vocations, no decision was taken by the Marists prior to 1895: it seems that the matter was not even discussed. But some of the following considerations would probably have applied.

Polding's opposition undoubtedly created a way of thinking. The departure of the Christian Brothers in 1846 had been a direct result of their attempt to establish the training of recruits. There seemed no point in even thinking about it.

Whether he was aware of it or not, Ludovic's move to start a novitiate in 1873 came from a position of strength. The failure of the Sydney archdiocese to obtain male religious teachers from anywhere in the 1860s, despite numerous attempts in several countries, had been a sobering experience. Even if Polding had misgivings about Ludovic's move, the earlier problems with the Christian Brothers over this very issue, and their refusal to return to Sydney while he was alive, would have made him hesitate to oppose Ludovic on a point which once again was explicitly written into the brothers' contract. He was an old man now, and his coadjutor was soon to arrive. Under Polding, the Marist Fathers were not in this position of strength.

But Vaughan was very different, and had positive attitudes towards the Marists, and towards Joly personally. There is no doubt that, when he became archbishop in his own right, he would have been equally supportive of their development as he was of other orders. Perhaps Joly had been under Polding for too many years to realize that the situation had greatly changed.

Another element was that the Marists saw their presence in Australia as something of a sideshow. Their attention was directed towards the areas entrusted to them by Propaganda: New Zealand and the Pacific islands. And so it was considered right and appropriate that a seminary had already begun in New Zealand at Old Meanee, near Napier, on the North Island. But although they were active in Sydney in the 1880s, in Church Hill, Millers Point, the Rocks and Hunters Hill, these activities were regarded as peripheral. It was exceptional for someone like Piquet to discuss Australian development.

Monaghan considered that during his youth—the 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century—there was a further element. This was a belief that St Patrick's and Holy Name of Mary, Villa Maria, were French churches, and had to maintain that character. Australian vocations would have threatened that role.

The experiences of the two Irish Marists stationed at St Patrick's
may perhaps bear this out. Charles Kirk considered that St Patrick’s was too French. His very real disloyalty does not disprove his contention that it was difficult for him in the French religious house. The next Irish priest to be appointed for any considerable time was James Foley, in 1876. He, too, became very unhappy at St Patrick’s, and over the next four years wrote a succession of letters pleading to be removed. If possible, he asked to be appointed to London.9

Foley received a transfer to New Zealand, which did not appeal to him, and so he took the law into his own hands. He visited Dr Laure, regular physician to the Marists, who ‘advised a sea-voyage, with the hope that through a complete suspension of anxiety arising from attendance to duty ... I should gradually recoup strength’.10 Thereupon he caught the steamship *Lusitania* to London, and returned to Ireland. However, after a time he accepted the appointment to New Zealand, and, like Kirk, worked there for many years.

Foley was the last Irish Marist appointed to Australia. For the next 40 and more years, St Patrick’s retained its completely French character. The next priest appointed to there, whose native language was not French, was Daniel Hurley from New Zealand. He loved to recall that a parishioner heard him preach from the St Patrick’s pulpit, and congratulated him on speaking English with no French accent.
Peter le Rennetel's term as parish priest of St Patrick's was a high point in the work of the Marist Fathers in Sydney. Over most of his years he was assisted by Augustin Ginisty and Peter Piquet. The priests were very greatly respected not only among the local parishioners, a good many of them Irish, with an ever-growing proportion of Irish Australians. They had a high reputation in Sydney generally. The Irish gave these three Frenchmen the ultimate accolade of accepting them as honorary Irishmen. The three were sometimes referred to as the French Shamrock of St Patrick's, and Le Rennetel in particular was called 'Father O'Rennetel' on more than one public occasion by an ardent Irish parishioner.

Le Rennetel had completed his studies for the priesthood in Ireland at Dundalk, and was ordained at Armagh in 1877. The dedication of all three to their priestly work was legendary, and there are still people today, 50 years after the death of Piquet, who speak of it.

The parish had many areas with a very unsavoury reputation. The Rocks Push today makes a suitable name for a restaurant. In the 1890s it was the name of one of the most feared of many gangs of hooligans, or larrikins as they were usually called, who terrorized people who made the mistake of walking alone, in the more dangerous streets after dark, or when the worse for drink. As many as 30 or 40 of them, wearing distinctive styles of clothes and hats, which indicated their membership of a particular gang, would set upon the unfortunate victim, beat him senseless, and relieve him of his money.

Sailors were frequent targets for these attacks. Ships berthed at the many wharves around the shores of the harbour, which meant that there were always sailors ashore looking for entertainment. Numerous hotels helped them slake the thirst from their weeks at
Challenge

sea, and professional ladies provided one kind of female companion­ship, and did their share to assist in spending shore leave pay. The gangs often did the rest. There was great rivalry between different gangs, and wars were fought mostly by pelting rocks, or using wooden clubs, broken bottles and knives as the usual weapons. Unless the police were present in numbers, they were liable to be set upon themselves if they tried to intervene.

Within short distances were the worst kinds of slums, and mansions like that of David Scott Mitchell. But as the slums worsened and spread in the last 30 years of the century, the mansions were vacated and sold, often at great loss. George Street North had a Chinese quarter, but the population of most parts of the Rocks and Millers Point included people from all over the world.

The priests of St Patrick’s moved among all these people without fear. Their reputation was such, among the many extremely poor people of the parish, that no larrikins ever threatened them. Poverty was an ever-present problem, and it is no coincidence that the first foundation of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Australia resulted from an 1881 meeting in the parish of St Patricks, with Piquet present.

The depression of the 1890s hit the parish very hard, and there were no pensions to help the unemployed and the destitute. Husbands left their families to go in search of work, and sometimes never returned, leaving wife and children to survive as best they could. Besides the organized assistance of the St Vincent de Paul society, the personal generosity of the priests was almost ceaselessly tested with requests for help from individuals and families in need. Le Rennetel was later to say that while he knew a number of wealthy people of Sydney, there was not one poor man or woman in his parish whom he did not know, and that he had never knowingly refused alms to the poor. He also said that there was hardly a Chinese in the district who was not a friend of his. Both the presbytery and the convent still receive regular knocks on the door from those asking for food or money.

During Le Rennetel’s time as parish priest, a considerable building program took place. In 1875, when Joly arranged the exchange of dwellings for the Sisters of Mercy with the priests, the former convent became home for the priests. They spent some money to make the place more habitable. But, even with these repairs, what had been described as ‘the most contemptible convent in Australia’ was still far from adequate. There was barely room for the priests on the staff.
themselves, and none for visitors, who had to be accommodated at St Michael’s, in Cumberland Street.

In 1889, after the sale of St Bridget’s Hall, Le Rennetel completed a new presbytery alongside the previous building, in a much more commodious style. The new building had extra accommodation for visitors, as well as offices, a parish meeting room, reception rooms, an ample dining room, and on the middle floor a museum and library. The top floor was for priests’ rooms. There was a carefully separated section of the building for live-in domestic staff. After the closure of St Michael’s, the new island province, established in 1898, used rooms for the city office of the provincial bursar.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the dispute over the Charlotte Place property, and of its resolution, the parish took over the property after Cardinal Moran’s intervention, for the sum he had nominated. The reason that the parish wanted the land was to build a parish hall, and this became Le Rennetel’s next building project. In April 1891 Federation Hall stood on the site. The building was then of two storeys, the ground floor consisting of shops, and the upper floor was
the location of the hall. The parish debt remained high, as a result of this venture, for many years, but its construction removed the likelihood of a hotel being constructed, right beside the school and opposite the convent. The shops provided revenue which paid interest on the loan, and the parish had a hall of quality available.

The sisters also needed better accommodation. The 1875 exchange of dwellings gave the sisters a better home, but within a few years, something more was needed. In 1892 Le Rennetel helped them build a new convent in the same position, on the corner of Harrington Street, where McEncroe had once lived, and William Davis before him. Rooms below street level were preserved in the construction of the new convent, which were very probably beneath the original Davis cottage.

Le Rennetel was a graceful and witty speaker. In 1892, opening the appeal for a new convent, he informed his audience that problems had arisen for the sisters with certain tenants who shared the convent with them. Not only were these tenants very objectionable, and impossible to evict, but they paid no rent at all. He hastened to add that the tenants were white ants, which had taken over the building.

Le Rennetel was highly regarded as a wise counsellor. Moran valued him greatly, had sought to appoint him as the president of St John’s College at Sydney university, and nominated him as a bishop. Le Rennetel resisted both attempts but remained on the archdiocesan senate of priests, and was described as its most influential member. It was said of him, in 1899, that he was ‘always a keen worker and a zealous missionary with a lot of influence everywhere; so that he is consulted by the Cardinal and the Premier, as well as by poor women and unemployed workers’.

Marist superiors also took close note of Le Rennetel’s advice. On Joly’s death, on 5 March 1892, Le Rennetel wrote to Lyon,

What I should like to write about is a few words, in all simplicity and without ulterior motives, about the choice of his successor. In my opinion we have no one in Sydney who could take his place . . . But in New Zealand there is Rev. Father Aug. Aubry, who has all the qualities needed to succeed here. In New Zealand he has little to do, and I should not be surprised if he would be very pleased to come to Sydney. If he had not sufficient work as Visitor, he could take charge of St Patrick’s where there is too much work for three.

This advice was followed precisely, and Aubry became the new visitor general. His lengthy reports give us some of the clearest descriptions we have of each of the Sydney houses in the 1890s, their potential and their problem.
A step towards modernity took place on 23 September 1897, when it was decided that 'the telephone will be installed in our 3 [Sydney] houses'.

A major administrative change occurred in 1898. The different Pacific island vicariates for which the Marists were responsible became the province of Oceania. Aubry was named the first provincial, based at Villa Maria. The Sydney houses continued as part of that administrative arrangement. New Zealand had been an independent province since 1889.

Aubry made a thorough report on St Patrick’s in 1899. Like Father Jean Leterrier, who had made a similar visitation in 1893, Aubry expressed some concern for the ‘Religious spirit’ of the priests. Typical were his comments about Piquet:

Health good: activity insatiable. Fr Piquet is the universal confessor in Sydney: he is called everywhere, and every day he is on the road from one end of town to the other. His zeal seems to me to be a little excessive and self-centred, but it is commonly thought that he is doing enormous good. He might do this with less trouble and fuss, but after all, he does do it. With it all, he is a good religious in the way of poverty and piety: very stubborn in the way of obedience and regularity. No one can remember when he was last on time for a meal. Just at that time there is always a sick person to be visited ...

Aubry returned to the subject of confessions again, saying that,

As a mission, St Patrick’s church covers all Sydney, from where most of the work comes. Penitents come from all over; and every Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and every day before feasts and before Conference Reunions, the three confrères are in the confessional from 3 in the afternoon, until half past ten or eleven. I have a confessional there myself, and on more than one occasion I have seen the work lasting until midnight with four confessors—and one needed to work quickly.

It is clear that the French Marist spirituality had permeated Catholic life in a remarkable way by this time. There was no longer any feeling that the Marists were in a ‘precarious’ situation. The final sign of that change was given in 1895, when Cardinal Moran organized the documents with Rome, giving them tenure of the parishes of St Patrick’s and Hunters Hill. The latter had been separated from the old Ryde parish in 1889.

But it was more than that. Perhaps Jansenism, that severe product of continental Europe, had survived in Irish seminaries long after those of the Marists, at least, had returned to a Christianity
more compassionate and forgiving of human frailty. While one cannot precisely put a finger on the difference which the St Patrick’s parish offered to the archdiocese, there is no doubt that the ordinary Catholics of Sydney showed their appreciation for it in a striking way. They ‘voted with their feet’, and made it clear that they trusted these confessors with their deepest problems. Priests, too, sought out the Marists as confessors. Each archbishop after Polding gave clear recognition to the added dimension which this Marist parish offered to his care for the flock entrusted to him.

In his report, Aubry neatly reminded his superiors of the privilege which the Marists enjoyed in being in charge of St Patrick’s: ‘Lastly, in spite of everything, we still need to thank God for the place in which we have the honour to work. Thanks to St Patrick’s, the Society is well looked on in Australia. And the Fathers, even though French, are esteemed both by clergy and people.’
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Augustinians of the Assumption</td>
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<td>ACHS</td>
<td>Australian Catholic Historical Society</td>
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<td>ACHSJ</td>
<td><em>Journal of the ACHS</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ACPF</td>
<td>Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Rome</td>
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<td>ACPF CO</td>
<td>The Congressi Oceania (Pacific Ocean) file of ACPF</td>
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<td>ACR</td>
<td><em>The Australasian Catholic Record</em>, Manly</td>
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<td>Acta SM</td>
<td><em>Acta Societatis Mariae</em>, via Alessandro Poerio, 63, Rome</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td><em>The Australian Dictionary of Biography</em>, Melbourne and Canberra</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMFA</td>
<td>Archives of the Marist Fathers, Australia</td>
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<td>AMO</td>
<td><em>Annales des Missions de l'Oceanie</em>, Lyon</td>
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<td>APF</td>
<td><em>Annales de la Propagation de la foi</em>, Lyon</td>
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<tr>
<td>APM</td>
<td>Archivio Padri Maristi (Archives of the Marist Fathers), Rome</td>
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<td>APM Mayet</td>
<td>The Mayet Memoires, APM</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Colonial Secretary’s Office</td>
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<td>DA</td>
<td>Downside Monastery archives</td>
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<td>FJ</td>
<td><em>Freemans Journal</em></td>
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<td>FMS</td>
<td>Marist Brothers of the Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPH</td>
<td><em>Journal of Pacific History</em>, Canberra</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRH</td>
<td><em>Journal of Religious History</em>, Sydney</td>
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<tr>
<td>mf</td>
<td>microfilm</td>
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<td>ML</td>
<td>The Mitchell Library, Sydney</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCE</td>
<td><em>New Catholic Encyclopedia</em>, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZJH</td>
<td><em>New Zealand Journal of History</em>, Auckland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>no date</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSA</td>
<td>Order of St Augustine</td>
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<td>OSB</td>
<td>Order of St Benedict</td>
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- Challenge -

PF  Association pour l'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la foi, Lyon
PIME Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions, formerly the Foreign Missionaries of Milan
SA State Archives
SAA Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, St Mary's Cathedral
SM Society of Mary
SMSM Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary
SMH Sydney Morning Herald
SVD Society of the Divine Word
TOM Third Order of Mary
TORM Third Order of Mary Regular
VM Villa Maria, Hunters Hill, Sydney
Notes

Introduction
1 *FJ* 27 August 1859. The article is unattributed, but was written by Marist Father Victor Poupinel. See Poupinel to Rocher, 8 September 1859, APM.
2 The period between 1837 and 1874 was originally researched for a university thesis: J. Hosie 1971.
3 Vaughan quoted, Joly to Poupinel, 26 July 1877, APM; see below p.245.
5 Interestingly, a censored version of his autobiography appeared in print in the 1890s, not long after Ullathorne died, with those passages more critical of Polding omitted. The original manuscript was not printed in full until nearly 50 years later, with a Foreword by Shane Leslie, under the title, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop, the Autobiography of Archbishop Ullathorne*, see Ullathorne 1941.
6 Suttor 1965 p.11.
7 Poupinel was a senior Marist, and visitor general to the Pacific. See below, p.000.
9 ACHSJ 4,4, 1975.

1 The challenge of the Pacific
1 It was then called the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fidei*, or ‘Propaganda’.
2 Literally, ‘the work of the Propagation of the Faith’. The activities of the association are well summarized by Roach 1969 pp.74–83. To avoid confusion with the Roman congregation Propaganda, the French association is referred to hereafter as *Propagation de la foi*.
3 Ullathorne to Bishop Morris, 10 July 1833.
4 Biography of Dillon, see Davidson 1975. See also S.W. Hosie 1967 p.167ff, and Wiltgen 1979.
6 Biography of Pompallier, Keys 1957. This work suffers from a rather
pious approach, and borders on hagiography. It needs to be balanced by a study such as that of Roach 1963. For another view of Pompallier, see Simmons 1984.

7 Quoted in translation, S.W.Hosie 1967 p.43.
10 Quoted, OM I pp.261—2. Translation. (Hereafter, letters and documents in French or Latin, quoted in English, have been translated by the writer, unless otherwise stated.)

2 A sea of troubles
2 Petit-Jean to Paillasson, 21 October 1839.
3 Séon to Colin, en voyage, 1841 (sent from Sydney, c.22 May).
4 Australasian Chronicle, (hereafter, in its various editions, and slightly different names, cited as Chronicle), 17 January 1843. See also Bernard to Colin, 19 February 1843.
5 Chronicle 5 July and 9 August 1842. See also Petit-Jean to Colin, 28 July 1842.
6 Forest to Epalle, 9 November 1842. Translation. Quoted AMO I p.545.
7 Five chiefs are named. See Catholic Magazine February 1841.
8 Roach 1969 p.413. See also Keys 1957 p.203.

3 Bishops and religious missionaries
1 For further detail on Colin’s efforts, see S.W.Hosie 1967 pp.172 ff.
2 Keys 1957 p.193, erroneously states that it was Pompallier who sent Epalle to Europe. For full details, see Roach 1963 pp.247—64.
3 Dated Lyon, 26 May 1842: ‘A General View of the Islands of Western Oceania, for the setting of boundaries to new missions which could be established there’. Copy APM.
4 De Jessé (President PF, Lyon) to Colin, 4 February 1843.
5 Roach 1969 p.78, lists the increasing amounts Colin negotiated from PF from 1838 to 1842. See also APF.
6 Pompallier to de Jessé, 6 November 1842, copy APM.
7 Quoted in translation, S.W.Hosie 1967 p.179.
8 Wiltgen 1979 pp.247—66.

4 Marists, Sydney and Polding
1 Pompallier to Colin, 23 December 1837, translation.
2 Séon to Colin, en voyage, 1841; Petit-Jean to Colin, 27 July 1842. See also, Beatty 1970.
3 Pompallier to Colin, 14 May 1840.
4 Polding (Rome) to Cholleton, 3 March 1842, emphasis original. Cholleton became a Marist in 1839. The document here translated is in French, but marked 'traduction' from Polding's original English letter, no longer extant.

5 Dubreul to Colin, 8 September 1844. Wiltgen 1979 notes that Dubreul’s name was one of those proposed to Rome by Colin in April 1844, as a possible coadjutor bishop to Epalle for the vicariate of Melanesia, pp. 298–9.

6 For further detail on this property, see J. Hosie 1969; copy of deed of gift from Therry to Marists, ACPF CO III 510r.

7 Dubreul to Colin, 20 April, 12 July, 1 September 1845; APM Mayet iv, 667–8.

8 See J. Hosie 1973, where the different interpretations of historians are summarized. Criticisms of this article and a reply by the writer, see ACHS/J 5, 1977 p.2. For Polding, an excellent brief biography, see Nairn ADB 2, 1967, s.v. 'Polding'. Full biography, O'Donoghue 1982.

9 Cited, O'Donoghue 1982 p.75.


11 Suttor 1965 p.11. This work greatly influenced O'Farrell 1968 in his interpretation of Polding. But in his revised work, O'Farrell 1977 took a different view. C.J. Duffy, archivist of SAA for many years, and an influential historian, unreservedly accepts Suttor. See his lengthy review article of Suttor 1965 in Duffy 1966.


13 ibid., p.91.

5 The Benedictine dream and other religious orders

1 Polding to Leigh, 7 January 1845, quoted Thorpe 1950 pp.193–94.

2 Ullathorne to Brown, 11 July 1838, quoted Birt 1911, I, p.371.

3 Ullathorne 1941 p.187; see also p.156.

4 Ullathorne to Brown, 18 October 1839, quoted Birt 1911, I, p.440. In one clash at this time, Ullathorne required Polding to ask two priests living at his house, with whom the bishop was friendly, to move out. O'Donoghue says that this was because of jealousy. See O'Donoghue 1982 p.58.

5 e.g. Farelly to Sheridan Moore, 12 December 1851, ML

6 See J. Hosie 1973, for a summary of these events.

7 Thorpe 1950, fully documents the tragic story of this mission.

8 EJ leader, 21 April 1858.

9 The brothers' archives did not record the name of this novice, but two years after they left Sydney, John Larter applied to join the Marists, and told them the story. See p. 78.

12 This is also the view of Gregory’s biographer, see Shanahan 1970 pp.xiv, 73–8, 178.

6 Bishops in check
1 See Keys 1957 pp.238–46. Sydney reaction, Chronicle 4 October 1845. Polding’s action, see Polding to Brunelli, 8 February 1847, ACPF CO III 519v.
2 Polding to Heptonstall, 28 December 1838, quoted Birt 1911, I p.341.
3 Epalle to Colin, 27 August 1845.
4 Epalle to Colin, 27 August 1845, emphasis original.
5 The full report of the talks: Epalle, Dubreul and Rocher to Colin, 16 October 1845. See also Faramond to Guizot, 15 June 1845, Correspondence Commerciale, Sydney I 1842–47; see Roach 1963 pp.398–420.
6 Epalle to Colin, 6 September 1845; re maladie, see full report.
7 Colin to Pius IX, ‘sub sigillo secreto’ (under secret seal), 8 June 1847, ACPF CO III 571, mf copy ML.
8 Dubreul to Colin, 10 November 1845.
9 Polding quoted, Dubreul to Colin, 28 October 1845.
10 Pompallier quoted, Dubreul to Colin, 10 November 1845.
11 Decree, 7 February 1845; a copy witnessed by Polding, dated 10 January 1846, APM.
12 A full report on this property, and other matters re procure was made in a Dubreul Memoire, presented to Propaganda early in 1847, ACPF CO III 512v–518r, mf copy, ML; quoted words, 513v.
13 Chronicle, 7 September 1841; see O’Brien 1922, II, p.259.
14 Frémont to Colin, 22 October 1845.
15 Polding to Colin, in French, translation; emphasis original in each instance.
16 Details, J. Hosie 1968.
17 Dubreul to Colin, 10 November 1845.
18 Dubreul Memoire 514v.
19 Colin, quoted APM Mayet iv p.668.
21 Colin to Dubreul, 26 March 1846.
22 Rocher to Colin, 22 June 1847.

7 Confrontation in Rome
1 Colin speaking to his community, November 1846, quoted APM Mayet iv pp.667–68.
2 Dubreul Memoire, ACPF CO III 512v–518r, from which subsequent details and quotations are taken.
4 Polding’s allocation for 1844 was 24,000 francs, for 1845 it almost
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trebled to 70,000 because of the opening of the Passionist mission. See J. Hosie 1973 p.351. The tragic story of this mission is well and fully told in Thorpe 1950. For Passionists and Marist procure, see Rocher to Colin, 5 September 1846.
5 Gregory quoted, Chaurain to Colin, 12 July 1846.
6 Dubreul to Fransoni, 31 August 1846, ACPF CO III 776r.
8 Polding to Brunelli, 8 February 1847, ACPF CO III 519–20.
11 Willson to Goold, 30 January 1858, Melbourne Historical Archives, cited O'Donoghue 1982 p.106.
12 Davis to Prior Wilson, Downside, 28 February 1849, DA Cited O'Donoghue 1982 p.95.
13 The Pompallier mémoire is in three parts, Pompallier’s history of the mission, sets of statistics, and the bishop’s justification of his actions. For this third part, see ACPF CO III vol.210, folios 300–325 pp.1–50. See esp. pp. 27–33. Re Pompallier in Rome, see V. Poupinel, APM Mayet vii pp.157–70.
14 Colin to Lagniet, 10 February 1847.
15 Colin to Theiner, 15 August 1848, Archivio Vaticano, Theiner.
16 Colin to Theiner, 12 June 1850.
17 Colin to Fransoni, 25 September 1850, ACPF CO IV 524.
18 Colin to Barnabo, 23 April 1850.

8 The end of the abbey diocese
1 Colin quoted, Poupinel to Rocher, 14 January 1848.
2 Gregory quoted, Rocher to Colin, 1 July 1848. The interview fully described, Rocher to Colin, 2 November 1848.
3 Colin quoted, Poupinel to Rocher, 12 July 1850.
4 Rocher to Colin, 23 August 1851.
5 Colin to Rocher, 5 June 1853.
6 Rocher to Colin, 25 January 1854.
8 The salary was £250 a year (6,250 francs) Deas Thomson to Gregory, 8 April and 23 April 1856, SAA

9 The first Villa Maria
1 Poupinel to Morcel, 18 January 1858. For a full study of the purchase of Villa Maria, and maps, see J. Hosie 1971 pp.420–22.
2 Colin to Rocher, 13 June 1850; see also, Baty to Colin, 22 October 1850.
3 Colin to Rocher, 13 June 1850.
4 Trapenard to Colin, 20 September 1854, from which subsequent information and quotations are taken.
5 Personal file, Chaurain, APM, where the following reminiscence is also recorded.
6 Rocher to Favre, 18 July 1855.
8 Rocher to Poupinel, 6 April 1855.
9 Polding to Kirby (rector, Irish college, Rome) 10 February 1858; archives of Irish college, mf copy, SAA.
10 Joly to Favre, 20 February 1873.
11 Joly to Poupinel, 16 May 1870; see also Larter correspondence, AMFA.
12 Trapenard to Colin, 23 May 1854. Re the wide influence of the monastic ideal, see Chenu 1957 pp.223–73.
13 SMH 2 January 1858. The name of the consul appears spelt Sentes.
14 Sentis to unnamed Marist, 23 September 1859.
15 SMH 17 October 1851, records that Ellis had obtained gold to the value of £32/4/- . Joly to Poupinel, 21 September 1862; Rocher to Poupinel, 21 November 1862. See also, Redwood 1922.
16 Deas Thomson to Polding, 31 May 1853. SAA. Re contact with the Marists, see Campbell to Poupinel, 18 July 1859, AMFA.
17 ADB 1 1966, s.v. 'Heydon'.
18 Founded in 1850, the Missioni Estere di Milano was renamed in 1926, Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere (PIME)—Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions.
19 Census records for NSW, quoted Jervis 1959.
20 Chronicle 8 July 1841. Dedication to St Joseph, FJ 8 January 1852.
21 See FJ 11 December 1851, re foundations. Government grant, CSO to Polding, 13 June 1851, SAA.
22 FJ 14 November 1857; Rocher to Favre, 10 November 1857; gift of relic, Rocher to Bataillon, 17 July 1857.
23 Poupinel to Favre, 8 November 1858.

10 Challenge to the Marists
1 For an excellent summary of the Tongan mission, see Laracy 1977 pp.114–53.
2 Colin to Bataillon, 1 October 1847.
3 Rocher to Colin, 1 April 1846.
4 Viard (Bay of Islands) to Pompallier, 2 June 1846. ACPF CO III 187–88. Keys, who does not refer to the dispute, says, ‘It was a joyful meeting’. Keys 1968 p.55. For another description of the tense confrontation, see Bataillon to Fransoni, 19 February 1846. ACPF CO III 199–200.
5 Re PIME, see above, Chap 9, n.18. See Laracy 1969 pp.15–59.
6 Colin to Bataillon, 1 October 1847.
7 Rocher to Colin, 16 October 1849.
8 Colin to Bataillon, 17 May 1851.
Notes

9 FJ 27 August 1859. The article is unattributed, but was written by Victor Poupinel. See Poupinel to Rocher, 8 September 1859.

11 The procure at work in the Pacific
1 'Mission de Centre', APM.
2 Colin quoted, Dubreul (Lyon) to Chaurain, 21 December 1847, emphasis original.
3 Colin to missionaries, 21 December 1847.
4 Rocher to Poupinel, 20 August 1852.
5 e.g. Rocher to Colin, 28 November 1850, re Baty.
6 FJ 3 June 1852.
7 Montrouzier to Poupinel, 12 September 1851; Rocher to Colin, 8 August 1852. See Laracy 1969 p.53.
8 Gaide (Lifu) to Poupinel, 22 January 1873. Gaide made this remark after telling of the unfortunate effects of blackbirding—virtual slave labour for working the Queensland sugar cane plantations. More than 30 Lifu Catholics were kidnapped, he said, for work 'near Brisbane'.
10 The major study of this scheme is by O'Reilly 1930 pp.227–62, from which most of this summary is taken.
11 O'Reilly 1930 p.242.
12 See J.Hosie 1971 p.413, for a sample charter party; a list of ships chartered by Marists, and other relevant information, see pp.414–18.
14 Rocher to Favre, 1 June 1855. FJ 5 May, 12 May 1855; Bataillon's letter of thanks, FJ 28 July 1855.
15 SMH 14 June 1856.
16 The spelling of the captain's surname varies in different sources, but what appears to be his signature to a health certificate is 'John Dalmagne', Shipping Reports, ML.
17 Laracy 1969A pp.105–9 examines the loss of the Etoile and the disappearance of the missionaries.

12 Bataillon, bishop and autocrat
2 Verguet 1854 pp.272–3 re first visit; p.276 second visit.
3 Mathieu (Wallis) to his brother, 20 June 1845, AMO 1, p.503.
5 Rocher to Colin, 30 August 1852. Bataillon’s submission of this proposal to Propaganda, Jeantin 1895–98 II 1 pp.356–57.
6 Rocher to Favre, 8 September 1855.
7 Rocher to Favre, 20 May 1856. Poupinel to Favre, 7 January 1858.
8 Rocher to Poupinel, 26 January 1859; Rocher to Yardin, 29 January 1859.

10 Règlement soumis à l’approbation officieuse de la S.C. de la Propagation, et adopté par la Société de Marie pour les missions de l’Océanie. Lyon, 1857. Copy APM.

13 Victor Poupinel to the Pacific
1 Poupinel to Favre, 19 February 1868.
2 Poupinel to Favre, 7 January 1858.
3 Poupinel to Favre, 20 January 1858: Poupinel’s report on Villa Maria and its personnel.
4 Notification of acceptance of Joly’s nomination, CSO to Gregory, 3 June 1859, SAA. New salary grants to clergy ceased in 1862; see Turner 1972.
5 Poupinel to Favre, 2 May 1859.
6 There were two reports on the question of changing the location of the procure: a) 1859, beginning with the words, ‘Exposé des raisons’; see Poupinel to Favre, 11 April 1859; b) 1860, headed ‘Changements projetés à la Procure de Sydney’, Joly handwriting, but signed, V. Poupinel, and dated 13 January 1860.
7 The circumstances in which he learnt the news are told simply and movingly by J.K. Heydon in a letter to his son Louis, 17 July 1866, Heydon Correspondence.
8 Favre to Poupinel, 18 May 1859. See also Yardin to Poupinel, 13 May 1859, and Lagniet to Poupinel, 16 May 1859 (re de Bonald).
9 See Favre’s reply, Favre to Bataillon, 26 May 1862.

14 Challenge to an archbishop
2 P. O’Farrell to Cullen, 14 May 1856, Dublin Archdiocesan Archives. Cited ibid. p.120.
3 Suttor 1965 p.27.
4 Monitum Pastorale, SMH 2 July 1858.
5 FJ 19 June 1858. McEncroe explained that this was the purpose of his letters to the FJ signed ‘An Old Colonist’. See FJ 6 February, 21 April, 9 June 1858. McEncroe wrote another letter on 26 May, signed ‘Candidus’.
6 ‘Isadore’ was one of the pseudonyms used by W.A. Duncan. McEncroe in FJ 19 June 1858, also quoting Polding’s accusations. See Wynne 1956 pp. 25–6.
7 See FJ leader, 30 January 1858.
8 See Gregory quoted, Poupinel to Rocher, 8 September 1859. For modern writers, see e.g. Suttor 1965 pp. 176–80.
Notes

9 Nairn *ADB* 2 1967, s.v. Polding.
10 Makinson quoted, O'Donoghue 1982 p.114.
11 Reports on these two meetings, *FJ* 31 July, 15 September 1858, from which the following summary is taken.
12 See O'Brien 1922, p.217; Therry's will and O'Brien's comment, pp. 280–6.
14 Ullathorne 1941 p.187.
16 See Poupinel to Favre, 9 March 1859.
17 *FJ* 9 March 1859, see Heydon's submission. The first published announcement of Gregory's appointing of Bassett occurred in a famous editorial, *FJ* 23 February 1859, entitled 'Treason'. Although its title is printed in *FJ* in the type always used, Suttor 1965 p.186, wrongly states that a rare use was made of the banner headline. O'Farrell 1969, I p.163, repeats the inaccuracy, by printing the editorial with a heading in disproportionately large type, and adding a gratuitous heavy underlining. Nothing in the original justifies this emphasis.
18 Suttor 1965 p.193, followed by O'Farrell 1968 p.89, claims that the reply was intended as a rebuff, and was misconstrued by the laymen. Polding did not interpret the reply in this way, and there are no grounds for this interpretation in the text of Barnabo's letter. Roman legal procedures have always placed extremely high emphasis upon correct form in appeals, even when the content is regarded sympathetically. Roman rebuffs are usually unmistakeable. For further detail, see J.Hosie 1973.
19 Polding to a bishop, 21 April? undated. SAA
20 O'Donoghue 1982 p.86.
21 Shanahan 1970 p.133, places the beginning of this friendship at the Marist arrival in 1845, but without any evidence that I have seen. As Heydon could not speak French, it seems unlikely.
22 Poupinel to Favre, 9 March 1859.
23 Poupinel to Favre, 11 April 1859.
24 Poupinel to Rocher, 8 September 1859.
26 Poupinel to Favre, 9 March 1859.
27 McGovern, 'The Campbelltown Conference', p.8, unfinished ACHS paper, SAA.
28 Suttor 1965 pp.12–13, see also page v; re Marists, see p.167; re Sentis, p.187.
29 Shanahan 1970 p.133.
15 Polding's reaction: a contemporary account

1 Polding to Poupinel, 15 November 1860. Re McEncroe's clergy retreats at Villa Maria, see Rocher to Favre, 10 February 1858.

2 Poupinel to Favre, 7 January 1858.

3 FJ 15 September 1858.

4 Poupinel to Favre, 8 November 1858.

5 Chaurain to Poupinel, 10 November 1859. O'Donoghue 1982 p.121, mistakenly states that Dundalk was a Marist Brothers' foundation, rather than one by the Marist Fathers. While it is true that McEncroe, at Lyon, negotiated to obtain brothers, O'Donoghue’s confusion here is an instance of a general confusion in her book between the two congregations. All references to the Marist Fathers are indexed under 'Marist Brothers', even though the brothers' congregation had no foundation in Sydney until 1872.

6 Favre quoted, Rocher (Lyon) to Poupinel, 15 October 1859.

7 McEncroe to the archbishops and bishops of Ireland, 24 May 1859, quoted Birt 1911, II p.253.

8 The original of this letter is not extant, and the text followed is a nineteenth-century equivalent of a carbon copy, sometimes difficult to decipher. As elsewhere, the sign [?] indicates that the preceding words are almost illegible in the original. The entire letter from which the two sections, here quoted, are taken, is to be found in J.Hosie 1971 pp.425–38. The most important omission is the full text of Poupinel's letter to Edward Butler and the Fellows of St John's college, 31 August 1859, replying to Butler’s letter of 29 August.

9 Prayers had been offered for this sick nun through the intercession of the Marist missionary martyred in 1841, Peter Chanel.

10 Vaughan quoted, see Joly to Poupinel, 26 July 1877.


13 Poupinel to Rocher, 31 May 1860. Again translated from the equivalent of a carbon copy. Question marks in brackets indicate textual uncertainty. In such instances as newspaper titles, emphasis has been added. Otherwise, emphasis is original, usually of words Poupinel wrote in English.

14 Poupinel to Favre, 9 March 1859.


16 Women in the Pacific missions

1 Copy of birth certificate in the archives of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary. Sister Marie Cecile de Mijolla, SMSM, to whom I am greatly indebted for comments, supplied me with much information. See de Mijolla 1984.
— Notes —

2 Memoires VI pp.192–3, APM Mayet.
5 de Mijolla 1984 p.50, citing Yardin to Poupinel, 15 October 1857. See Rocher to Favre, 10 February 1858.
6 Poupinel to Favre, 22 January 1858.
7 Rocher to Favre, 29 January 1859. See also Yardin to Poupinel, 15 February and 13 May 1859.
8 Poupinel to Favre, 2 May 1859.
9 Yardin to Poupinel, 18 September 1859.
10 Biography of Barbier: Couturier 1966.
11 Mother Mary of the Heart of Jesus. Her biographer says that she was Sister Marie, but was always known as Sister Maria during her time with her original congregation. However, he says that there is a possibility that she had the name du Coeur de Jesus from the beginning, ibid. p.324. The English name of the congregation became Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions.
12 Poupinel to Yardin, 20 June 1865; see also Poupinel to Barbier, 16 March 1866. Cited de Mijolla 1984 p.108.
13 Barbier to Poupinel, 23 March 1865, see Couturier 1966 p.70. Perroton’s profession, p.114.
14 For further detail, see Joly to Yardin, 18 May 1868, and Joly to Favre, 14 June 1868. Re school, see Couturier 1966 pp.86–8.
15 Barbier to Poupinel, 26 October 1867, quoted in translation, Couturier 1966 pp.86–7.
16 Joly to Favre, 14 June 1868. For Poupinel, see letters to Yardin, 1 February, and 26 February 1868. See de Mijolla 1984 p.118.
17 St Wildrid to Poupinel, 16 January 1868. Written as quoted in English, her own language.
18 Barbier to Poupinel, 25 November 1867, Couturier 1966 p.93.
20 Favre to Barnabo, 14 February 1869. Quoted in translation, Couturier 1966 p.104.
21 Quoted, Couturier 1966 p.241.
22 Poupinel to Barbier, 7 October 1869, quoted in translation, Couturier 1966 p.114.

17 Clydesdale and an islander priesthood
1 Rocher to Poupinel, 26 January 1859; Rocher to Yardin, 29 January 1859.
2 Poupinel to Favre, 2 May 1859, emphasis original.
3 ibid. See Yardin to Poupinel, 15 April 1859.
4 Poupinel to Favre, 16 April 1864. Poupinel says that this was told to Elloy. Cash sums were usually quoted in francs, but occasionally, as here, quoted in sterling. For consistency they are given in francs.

5 Mangeret 1884 II p.220. Mangeret's life of Bataillon was closely based on material which Bataillon had gathered, and comes near to autobiography at times.

6 Poupinel to Favre, 2 May 1859. All of the financial details on this vessel are taken from a cashbook, marked 'Mission de Centre', entries under the heading, 'Compte du brick Caroline'. APM

7 Junillon to Poupinel, 6 May 1860.

8 Junillon to Poupinel, 22 November 1860.

9 Note in Poupinel's handwriting, re Clydesdale, for 1859, 'Mission de Centre' cashbook, from which subsequent financial details are taken.

10 AMO II p.102; see also Bataillon to Favre, 12 May 1860.

11 Junillon to Poupinel, 23 December 1860.

12 Poupinel to Favre, 16 April 1864.

13 Joly to Poupinel, 18 November 1863.

14 Poupinel to Favre, 16 April 1864.

15 La Croix dans les Îles du Pacifique, 1932. This work is an anonymously reedited version of Mangeret 1884, with extensive excisions and much additional material. The new editor was, in fact, Guy de Bigault, SM

16 Mondon to Favre, 20 April 1863.

17 Joly to Poupinel, 21 September 1862; see also letter of 20 August 1862.

18 Rocher to Poupinel, 20 December 1862.

19 Compare with Gatafahefa (Tonga) to Poupinel, 29 September 1867, signed J.Gata.

20 Calinon to Poupinel, 22 January 1868; see also letter of 13 January 1868.

21 Lamaze (Tonga) to Poupinel, 5 September 1867; see also Gatafahefa to Poupinel, 18 July 1867.

22 Gatafahefa (Samoa) to Poupinel, March 1868; see also Chevron to Poupinel, 18 July 1867.

23 Gatafahefa (Futuna) to Poupinel, 12 July 1868; Junillon to Poupinel, same date.

24 Mériaia (Wallis) to Joly, 5 October 1872. Mériaia adds that Gatafahefa said Mass until 14 July.


18 Poupinel and Marist ministry

1 See Polding to Heptonstall, 24 October 1848, DA; cited O'Donoghue 1982 p.124. The stories of some of the great pioneers have been told by 'John O'Brien', see O'Brien 1975. See also Livingston 1977.

2 Quoted by O'Farrell 1968, who makes this point, pp.83–84.

Notes

4 FJ, 18 May 1859. For the autobiography description, see Ullathorne 1941 pp.123–24.
5 Poupinel to Favre (confidentielle), 7 January 1858.
6 Poupinel to Favre, 5 September 1868.
7 Gregory’s emphasis. Gregory refers to ‘Montigny or Bertrand’ in a letter he wrote to Poupinel, 23 August 1859. SAA; see also Montigny file.
8 J.Hosie 1971; see editions of Australasian Catholic Directory for various years of the nineteenth century. SAA
9 James Quinn to Poupinel, 11 January 1868. Re O’Connell and McEncroe, see Birchley 1986, p.229.
10 J.Hosie 1976, ‘The Letters of Jean Gourbeillon’ from which quotations from his letters are made; Polding to Geoghegan, 9 July 1859, SAA; Bell’s Life in Sydney, 2, 9 and 16 July 1859; Suttor 1965 p.187; Livingston 1977 p.49.
11 Polding to Geoghegan, 9 July 1859, SAA; newspaper reports, see Bell’s Life in Sydney, loc.cit.; see also Poupinel to Rocher, 8 September 1859; move to New Caledonia, see Joly to Poupinel, 20 August 1862.
12 Gourbeillon (Paris) to Poupinel, 21 June 1860, AMFA.
13 Gourbeillon (La Trappe) to Poupinel, 25 March 1860, AMFA.
15 Gourbeillon (Munich) to Poupinel, 20 August 1860, AMFA. This solution had been mooted while Gourbeillon was still in London, see Chaurain to Poupinel, 10 November 1859.
16 For detail on Garavel, see Keys 1968 p.172. See also, Rocher to Poupinel, 21 May 1863, and Joly to Poupinel, 15 March 1865. For Royer, see Keys 1968 pp.171, 223; Poupinel to Rocher, 1 June 1864; Joly to Favre, 20 July 1864.
17 Names quoted in Polding to Kirby, 10 February 1858. Archives of Irish college, Rome; mf copy SAA.
18 apostata a religione, see Woywod 1948 I, p.323. Polding described them in these terms, Polding to Cardinal Prefect, 18 December 1863, SAA. O’Donoghue 1982 says that those ‘who left the Order won Polding’s worst term of reprobation—“apostates”’ p.169. O’Farrell wrote in similar terms. On the contrary, however, Polding was simply using the ordinary term of canon law. Regarding excommunication, in the Codex Juris Canonici 1918, at least, and possibly previously, the excommunication is incurred only when the offence is committed with full knowledge of the law. See Woywod 1948 II p.568.
19 Barnabo to Polding, 1 August 1864, SAA.
20 Moore to Poupinel, 7 September 1868, emphasis original. See also Makinson (Polding’s secretary) to Poupinel, 19 November 1868, where John Oswald Connery, another ex-Benedictine is also mentioned.
21 File on religious sisters, APM.
22 See Rumsey file, AMFA
23 St Wilfrid to Barbier, 26 March 1868, quoted Couturier 1966 p.94.
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19 Joseph Monnier and St Patrick's
2 Poupinel to Favre, 9 May 1859.
3 Joly to Poupinel, 21 September 1862; See also letter of 20 August.
4 Marriage registers, St Charles' Ryde, Holy Name of Mary, Villa Maria.
5 Polding to Card Prefect of Propaganda (copy), 22 September 1864 SAA.
6 Sheehy's speech, The Empire 7 February 1868. Poupinel's name is spelt 'Popin'.
9 Brief biography, see ADB 6 1977, s.v. Monnier; see also Memoir of the late Reverend Joseph Monnier, S.M. Anon. Translated from the French by W.A.D(uncan), Sydney 1876. Numerous details suggest that Poupinel had a major part in writing this booklet.
10 Junillon to Poupinel, 24 January 1867.
11 Joly to Poupinel (Fiji), 22 June 1865.
12 See Memoir 1876 pp. 29-30. Details which follow are mostly from this source.
13 Brief biography of Dillon, Wynne 1950. For further details on Monnier's work at this time, see FJ, 21 September 1867.
14 See e.g. Monnier to Poupinel, 12 August 1867.
15 Monnier to Poupinel, 27 March 1868; see comments on this mission by Bishop Murray to Poupinel, 28 April 1868.
16 Monnier (Brisbane) to Poupinel, 6 September 1867.
17 Dunne (Darra) to Poupinel, 26 September 1868. Dunne, later an archbishop, was ordained as Brisbane's second bishop in 1882.
18 Poupinel to Forestier, 9 September 1868; see also Poupinel to Favre, 5 September 1868.
19 Poupinel to Favre, 5 September 1868.
20 Sheehy to Poupinel, 26 September 1868. Brief biography of Sheehy, see Cashman 1982.
21 Poupinel to Sheehy, 3 September 1868. Two rough drafts are preserved, one in Poupinel's hand, in French, and an English translation by Joly, here quoted.
22 Poupinel to Forestier, 9 September 1868.
23 FJ, 21 February 1867.
24 Poupinel to Forestier, 9 September 1868.
26 There is controversy about where O'Flinn left the Sacrament. Before 1865, all extant references which locate the incident state that the place was the home of William Davis, adjoining the land upon which St
Patrick’s church stands. McEncroe, Ullathorne, Polding, Murphy and Gregory are among those who can be quoted in support of this tradition. It is also noteworthy that O’Flinn’s pyx, the small silver container in which the Eucharist was preserved, was retained by the Davis family, and, through Sister Gertrude Davis, came into the possession of the Sisters of Charity at St Vincent’s, Potts Point, where it can still be seen.

However, another tradition appeared in print in the Goulburn Argus in 1865, where Columbus Fitzpatrick maintained that the house was that of James Dempsey, in Kent Street, near Erskine Street. Fitzpatrick stated that he had been present at gatherings for prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, in Dempsey’s home, after O’Flinn’s deportation. Fitzpatrick was about eight years of age in 1817. Later testimony by Fitzpatrick’s brother, Ambrose, who was four years younger, has dubious value.

While it is impossible to be conclusive, both homes lie in the St Patrick’s parish, and there is no doubt that the church was intended to commemorate the event.

27 Poupinel to Favre, 5 September 1868.
28 Petition to Polding, 6 September 1868, SAA
29 Spruson to Polding, 6 September 1868, SAA
30 Dillon to Poupinel, 8 September 1868.

20 Hunters Hill parish
1 Poupinel to Favre, 16 April 1864.
3 FJ 21 September 1867.
4 FJ 31 October 1868. See also, Poupinel to Yardin, 20 January 1869.
5 Joly to Yardin, 14 June 1870.
6 FJ 18 February 1871, from which subsequent quotations are taken. See also Joly to Favre, 22 February 1871.

21 Parish of Church Hill
1 Monnier to Poupinel, 18 April 1871. As elsewhere, Monnier underlined the words he wrote in English.
2 Doyle 1972, see also ADB 5, 1974, s.v. Laboureyas.
3 Monnier to Poupinel, 18 April 1871.
5 32 metres by 8. See Memorandum, St Bridget’s School, Kent Street North, 16 June 1880. Archives of Sisters of St Joseph, North Sydney.
6 Monnier to Poupinel, 28 December 1871.
7 Monnier to Poupinel, 22 March 1872.

22 Millers Point and the Rocks
1 J.Hosie 1979. This article was updated but much abbreviated from an earlier version, which contained fuller quotes from all the relevant
documents concerning the land grant, and construction of the building. See J.Hosie 1978.
2 Ullathorne to colonial secretary, CSO Register of letters received, NSW SA, Sydney.
3 Harrington to surveyor general, 19 June 1833, note. NSW SA
4 Quoted Birt 1911 I, p.162.
5 Harrington to Ullathorne, 9 July 1833, CSO NSW SA
6 Harrington to Ullathorne, 35/89.
7 See Moran n.d.1895? p.190. See also, The N.S.W. Calendar and Directory, 1836, p.326. NSW SA.
8 Burton 1840.
10 Mullen 1975.
11 Report from the Select Committee on Education, 4 December 1855. Copy, McArthur Papers, vol. 84. ML.
12 Monnier to Poupinel, 14 May 1872.
13 Joly to Poupinel, 16 May 1872.
14 Joly to Poupinel, 4 October 1872.
15 Monnier to Poupinel, 28 August 1874.
16 There are differences in the way the new parish boundaries are quoted in a ‘State of the Mission’ report, for St Bridget’s, dated 1877, (SAA) and a letter from Vaughan to Joly (undated, but written in late August 1874 according to Joly’s note). APM
17 Wynne 1970, p.207.
18 Murray quoted, Joly to Germain, 28 August 1874.
19 See Le Rennetel to Martin? 15 March 1892. Re Cullen, see Linane, Abel to Zandolovich, 2, s.v. Cullen.
20 Monnier to Poupinel, 28 August 1874. For Joly’s view, see Joly to Favre, 4 September 1874.
21 Joly to Poupinel, 28 August 1874; see also Joly to Favre, 30 September 1874.
23 Joly to Poupinel, 23 December 1874.
24 State of the Mission, St Bridget’s, 1874. SAA

23 A question of survival
1 Vaughan quoted, Joly to Poupinel, 22 January 1875.
2 Joly to Poupinel, 18 February 1875.
3 ibid.
4 Doyle 1972 p.92.
5 ibid. p.93.
6 ibid. p.94. The author chose not to name Kirk, but says that the priest
who walked out was ‘one of the principal calumniators of the Brothers’, and wanted to supplant the Marist Fathers, and that he was forced out of Sydney a short time later.loc. cit.

7 Doyle 1972 p.121; see also p.140.
8 Joly to Poupinel, 18 February 1875.
9 Joly to Poupinel, 29 September 1875.
10 Monnier to Poupinel, 29 January 1872.
11 Joly to Poupinel, 8 June 1875.
12 Joly to Poupinel, 28 August 1874.
13 The emphasized words ‘ou à peu près’ (emphasis added), are interlinear, and in a different hand: almost certainly that of Poupinel. There are a few other words which have been been overwritten in the same different hand, to clarify obscure words in Joly’s habitually poor handwriting. It is very likely that the clarifications were to make for easy reference to the pages in financial discussions with the brothers’ headquarters at St Genis-Laval.
14 Joly to Poupinel, 29 September 1875, from which subsequent translation and summaries are taken.
15 Doyle 1972 p.98.

24 St Michael’s
1 Joly to Favre, 29 May 1877.
2 Vaughan quoted, see Joly to Poupinel, 26 July 1877.
3 Joly to Poupinel, 3 August 1879. Approval by general administration, Procès Verbaux, 1879, p.169.
5 Copy, undated, APM
6 Piquet to unnamed correspondent, 28 February 1882.
7 Minutes, I, p.1, 13 February 1893, copy AMFA
8 Aubry to Martin, 6 July 1893.
9 Copy APM.
10 Aubry to Martin, 22 March 1900.
11 Guillemin to Martin, 12 March 1901.

25 The Federation Hall property
1 Doyle 1972, pp.73-4.
2 Joly to Poupinel, 29 September 1875.
3 Doyle 1972, p.75.
4 Joly to Poupinel, 29 September 1875.
6 Joly to Poupinel, 29 September 1875, from which the following quotation is also cited.
7 Doyle 1972, p.318. In reading Doyle, the reader needs to notice that the
original monetary sums in pounds sterling have been doubled, and quoted as dollars. Brief biography of Moran, see Cahill entry in ADB 10, 1986.
8 Doyle 1972, p.319.
9 Doyle disputes this statement of the Dean, saying it was ‘based on a wrong interpretation’, *loc. cit.*
10 Document headed ‘Decree’, in Moran’s handwriting, dated 16 July 1889, and signed by him. SAA. See also Charlotte Place folder, for the commission’s findings. SAA.
11 Moran Decree, *loc. cit.*

26 *Joly and the Marist Fathers in Sydney*
1 Poupinel to Favre, 10 July 1866. Re Joly and Armidale, see Heuzé to unnamed correspondent, 1 July 1878.
2 Lemenant to Poupinel, 3 January 1877; Heuzé to unnamed correspondent, 7 March 1878.
3 Ginisty to unnamed correspondent, 10 April 1882.
4 Piquet to Poupinel, 21 November 1882.
5 Minutes of Council meetings, 23 December 1895.
6 *ibid.* 26 May 1896.
7 Monaghan to Superior General Raffin, 8 September 1919, written in English.
8 For details see John Hosie, ‘First Australian Marist’, copy AMFA. As there noted, an Irish Marist, James Moran, was born in Beechworth, Victoria, during gold rush days. He left Australia at the age of four, and was brought up in Ireland, where he joined the Marists and became a priest in 1885.
9 *e.g.* Foley to Poupinel, 10 July 1877, 1 September 1879, 12 March 1880.
10 Foley to Poupinel, 19 August 1880, written in English.

27 *The French shamrock*
1 Brief biography, see J. Hosie, ADB 10, 1986, s.v. Le Rennetel.
3 See p.256.
4 Report by Aubry, 12 November 1899.
5 Le Rennetel to Martin, 15 March 1892.
6 Provincial Council minutes, 23 September 1897.
7 Aubry report, 12 November 1899.
8 *ibid.*
Note: While extensive lists are not very interesting to the general reader, some may wish to know that the original thesis 'The French Mission', 1971, contains names and information on the Marist missionaries who came to the Pacific in the nineteenth century, details culled from the APF telling of their passages from Europe, and much information on the ships which were chartered in Sydney for Marist missionary purposes.

The thesis is available at Macquarie University, North Ryde; at the Colin Library, Hunters Hill; at the Diocesan Historical Commission, Melbourne; at the Marist Seminary, Greenmeadows, Taradale, New Zealand; at the Marist Provincial House, Suva, Fiji; and at the Marist Generalate, Padri Maristi, via Alessandro Poerio, 63, Rome, Italy.

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- Challenge -


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Note: The Marist Brothers were originally named Petits Frères de Marie (PFM), and became Marist Brothers of the Schools (FMS) only during the present century. To avoid confusion, however, the early brothers are also listed as FMS, including those who spent their later years as coadjutor brothers SM.

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