

A Contribution to Catholic Education in the Salford Diocese 1852 — 1973

Adelphi House

The sad condition of the poor in the 18th century was the cause of great concern to many noble people who strove to alleviate their poverty and to provide some education for them. One of these was Marie Madeleine Victoire d'Houet, a French widow, who founded a Society of Religious for this purpose.

She established the first convent of her Society in France in the year 1820. Ten years later she was offered a house and school in London near Euston Station. There a small community of nuns settled in Somers Town and taught in the school given them by a French émigré priest, Père Nérinckz. In 1837 the Holy See approved of the Society's Constitution; and by 1858, the year of her death, the Foundress had the satisfaction of seeing convents of FCJs in several countries all engaged in the task of educating the young. To-day the Society has 21 houses in the United Kingdom, three of them in the diocese of Salford.

1852 was the year of the birth of Adelphi as an F.C.J. foundation. Bishop Turner, the first Bishop of Salford, heard of the work done in London and Liverpool by the Sisters and he invited Marie Madeleine Victoire to send nuns to take over the Cathedral Elementary School which had been rebuilt in Upper Cleminson Street five years earlier and which had hitherto been in the care of a Community of French sisters.

These had recently returned to France leaving their convent to be the first home of the FCJs in Salford. Here, in addition to teaching in the Elementary School, a "Middle School" was opened and pupils admitted for a modest fee. This school grew so rapidly that Adelphi House, one of ten Georgian Houses on Adelphi Terrace, was purchased from the Leeming family. (Dec. 1852). The nuns came into residence and opened a Boarding School in the following year. The Middle School pupils became day-pupils; and for over thirty years the two schools progressed happily under one roof.

Simultaneously with the growth of the Secondary School went the extension of the work in parochial schools—St. John's, St. Peter's Greengate, St. James's Pendleton, Mount Carmel, St. Anne's Silk Street, St. Anne's Stretford and St. Joseph's Salford, all coming under the care of the FCJs.

In all the parishes, evening classes were held for women and girls; mothers were helped to prepare their children for the Sacraments and to further their own general education. Bishop Turner wrote, "Evening classes for women are popular and flourishing; they have developed into what is known as the Christian Mothers' Sodality. If anyone wishes to see for himself the reality of the work done by the FCJs, let him visit the parishes of Salford and he will find Christian education carried on with energy and activity. He will see night-schools frequented by hundreds of young persons, day-schools with thousands of children, Sunday schools for adults, Sodalities of Our Lady and classes for the waifs and strays of this great town. All these works are in a flourishing condition among Protestant surroundings where difficulties abound".

This good friend died in 1872 and was succeeded by Dr. Herbert, later Cardinal Vaughan. In 1885 the Bishop asked the Sisters to undertake the education and training of pupil-teachers for Catholic elementary school children of the area. Thus Adelphi became the site of three

establishments—a boarding school, a day school, and a pupil-teachers' centre. At the end of Queen Victoria's reign there were eighty-four pupil-teachers in training. In 1903 it was decided to open a Teachers' Training College in Adelphi. The first students numbered only three, the second set 42, and so in 1904 the property of Sedgley House was acquired. The next year, 1905, the Training College was removed to Sedgley Park, where it still continues its work as the College of Education.

More accommodation being needed at Adelphi to meet rapid expansion of the School, this was achieved by the acquisition of the other houses along Silk Street, and by the addition of further storeys, until to-day the school is able to offer adequate and up-to-date accommodation for over 700 pupils who travel from a wide area to benefit from the amenities offered by a modern education.

As the facilities for the training of Catholic teachers increased, so did the supply of teachers available for the Parish Schools, and gradually the Sisters were able to relinquish some of these schools to their secular colleagues and concentrate on the growing needs of Catholic Education in the Grammar School and in the Parishes of St. John's and St. James's Pendleton.

In 1967 a new modern Infant School replaced the old building in St. James's parish. The Adelphi Preparatory School, opened at Monton House in 1929 was rehoused in a fine new building adjacent to the old school, in 1968. January 1969 saw the removal of St. John's Cathedral School from the old building to a beautiful new Primary School situated at a short distance away. The children of St. Peter's Greengate shared with St. John's the delights of the new school which now became known as St. Peter's and St. John's Junior School.

At this date, the FCJs at Adelphi are responsible for the education of some 1,700 children and while endeavouring to keep pace with the demands of modern education, they strive always to keep in sight the ultimate goal of all education—a good and happy life in this world and eternal life in the next.

LAUS DEO SEMPER

The Hollies

EARLY DAYS IN MANCHESTER

In France in the year of Our Lord 1820 Marie Madeleine Victoire founded the society of the Faithful Companions of Jesus in Amiens and here in England in the same year Father Roland Broomhead founded the mission of St. Augustine in "the meadows of the outskirts of the township of Manchester". At first these appear to be two disparate events but as the FCJs were destined to give a "century of service" to the children of St. Augustine's it is not unreasonable to think Divine Providence inspired the birth of this new order in the Church and of this new parish in the heart of industrial England in the same year.

The FCJs came to Manchester at the request of Bishop Turner. After the Presentation nuns who came to Livesey Street in 1836, they were the second order of nuns to settle in Manchester since the Reformation. At first they travelled daily from Adelphi, Salford, to "St. Augustine's Poor School", Granby Row, but in 1852 they rented a house in Brook Street. In 1853 they took charge of the Girls' Day School in part of the Granby Row building where the Xaverian Brothers were teaching the boys.

BROOK STREET 1853—1900

The Brook Street house was near the Holy Name and served by the Jesuits. The nuns started there a secondary school for girls. There were two classrooms on the ground floor and one upstairs opposite the little chapel. In a long narrow room, probably the old coach house, was the preparatory school. A separate school in the garden was known as St. Joseph's.

We are indebted to the memoirs of a former pupil who started in the preparatory department at the age of seven for an insight into the education provided at that era. She writes that much time was given to grammar, parsing, analysis, reading and letter writing—but no literature of any kind. Arithmetic was "difficult". Geography consisted of lists of countries, capes and bays. History was more interesting "in spite of the dates" because "we did learn about people". French was commenced at an early age, memorizing verb endings, but there was no conversation nor reading. However, though the syllabus might be very different from today's, human nature was much the same for the monotony of sewing stiff calico at Needlework was relieved by "rolling a reel of cotton to one another across the room". There were no organized games but drill was given by one of the nuns who "taught us to turn out our toes and bend our knees". It is recorded that some good plays were produced and examinations were taken, set by the College of Preceptors and later by the Society of Letters and Arts, South Kensington. A distribution of prizes was held annually in December.

The greatest tribute to the work of the nuns in the Brook Street School is found in the same former pupil's comment: "Of the religious influence I cannot say enough. It was not so much the religious instructions as the personal contact with the nuns that influenced us. They were all saints and led most austere lives. (They certainly lived in the basement of this house at the time). They must have been very poor though poverty was never alluded to. Devotion to the Passion, the Rosary, the nine First Fridays, Quarant Ore, the Holy Souls and Benediction made a life-long impression on our minds and hearts". It is small wonder that a newly-ordained Jesuit, come to say Mass at the "Hollies" in 1922, told the children that, under God, he owed his vocation to the early training he received from the nuns as a boy at the Brook Street Convent.

Not only on the children of their school but on very many converts was the deep spiritual influence of the nuns felt. The annals of Brook Street and of "the Hollies" down to the 1960's record the nuns' work in instructing converts, many of whose families turned against them, even to the extent of making them leave home.

Another field for the nuns' apostolic work was found by Bishop (afterwards Cardinal) Vaughan among the factory girls of the city which, it must be remembered, was one of the key centres of the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution. This remarkable and holy man was a pioneer in many fields and he frequently visited the nuns at Brook Street. He asked them for prayers for his Rescue Society and for his missionary Mill Hill Fathers. It was Bishop Vaughan who asked in 1886 that evening classes should be opened in the principal schools of the town for the factory girls of each parish. The nuns found the girls rude and undisciplined at first but they soon settled down and revealed many good dispositions. The nuns were assisted in this work by the Children of Mary of St. Augustine's of whom they themselves were in charge. The factory girls met in the school once a week. They knitted and sewed, sang hymns and songs and listened to the religious instructions with increasing interest. The Reverend Mother of Brook Street commented sorrowfully: "So many of them have wretched homes with either a drunken father or mother and sometimes both". By 1892 the factory girls were enrolled in the Guild of Our Lady of Good Counsel and 150-160 were attending every week.

When Bishop Vaughan, now Archbishop-Elect of Westminster, came to say farewell in April 1892 he enquired keenly about the number of girls attending night school and hoped that the rough ones as well as the quiet ones attended. The Bishop said he would never forget the nuns of Brook Street who had always been a comfort and consolation to him. He came back as Cardinal to visit them just a year later in April 1893. The Cardinal's successors in Salford, Bishops Bilborrow, Casartelli and Henshaw, were all friendly and frequent visitors to the nuns and the school.

FALLOWFIELD 1900 AND DIDSBURY 1961

In 1900 Reverend Mother General at her visitation expressed concern "at seeing the inconvenience both in work and health" under which the nuns laboured in Brook Street. Consequently in September 1900 the nuns and school moved to "the Hollies" at Fallowfield. There were 30 pupils attending that September but the number grew to 40 during the year. Among the great traditions transferred to the new premises from Brook Street was fervent devotion to Our Lady especially expressed in the joyous celebration of her feast on December 8th. Preparatory to that feast in 1904, the Jubilee year of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Bishop Casartelli blessed Our Lady's chapel in November, saying he was reminded of the ceremonies in "dear old Brook Street convent" where he had been a frequent visitor. After watching the pupils give a performance of some scenes from Shakespeare the Bishop said that while the standard of education had risen to meet modern educational requirements "the old spirit still prevails in the work of the sisters" whose pupils were conspicuous for "their genuinely catholic spirit".

By 1908 there were 78 pupils of whom the seniors were being prepared for the Oxford exams. This year afforded an early example of oecumenism; the nuns' protestant neighbour, Sir Edward Donner, had given Reverend Mother the key to his private garden so that the nuns could use it at any time. On the day of the Garden Party, July 17th, the Bishop, a number of clergy visitors, children and the band went to Sir Edward's garden where he and Lady Donner greeted them. Thus the leading Nonconformists of the area entertained the Bishop in his robes, several Jesuits and many catholics of the neighbourhood. Bishop Casartelli remarked that it was a considerable achievement to have won Sir Edward's goodwill as formerly he had been a bitter opponent to Catholic interests.

The work of the nuns continued to be blessed and to extend. Increasing numbers and Board of Education requirements necessitated the provision of more accommodation and in 1920, the society's centenary year, a neighbouring house "the Acorns" was purchased. At first the younger children were accommodated in the "Acorns" and the girls over 11 in "the Hollies". A new science room was built and further additions, including a corridor connecting the two houses, were made. In January 1928 Bishop Henshaw presided at the official opening of the new chapel. By Easter of that year "the Hollies" had become the school and "the Acorns" the convent. By 1935 there were 245 children at "the Hollies", including some boarders, and the need for more space led to the purchase of "Oak Bank" in 1938. The war prevented its use for school purposes but its cellars were converted into an air raid shelter for 300 children. In 1952 yet another house "Staneswood" was purchased to cope with the ever increasing numbers.

These increasing numbers are largely explained by the tremendous expansion of secondary education which followed the Butler Education Act of 1944. "The Hollies" was one of the schools given Direct Grant status under the terms of this act. By 1959 there were 58 girls in the sixth form and a £40,000 extension was planned. A period of great difficulty followed with the Corporation proposing that this extension should be permitted for only 15 years. Then Manchester University were given permission to acquire "the Hollies" by compulsory purchase. A site for two new schools, a grammar and a preparatory, was found at Mersey Bank, West Didsbury, and in September 1961, 520 girls moved into the new grammar school and 200 children into the prep. "The Evening Chronicle" described it as "the success story of a century from a few desks in a convent house to a £250,000 school of 16 classes set in its own (16 acres)". Now in 1973, with the grammar school pupils alone numbering 720, further extensions are actually under construction.

WORK OUTSIDE "THE HOLLIES"

It is easy to overlook, when reviewing the activities of "the Hollies" itself, the fact that it has been the home of nuns engaged daily and at weekends in apostolic work outside the convent. A brief reference has already been made to the work of the nuns in St. Augustine's school, starting in 1853. By 1863 over 300 girls registered in the school. The average number at Sunday School

varied from 800—1,000 and 50 teachers, nuns and seculars, accompanied 1,000 children to Mass at St. Augustine's on Sundays. Sunday school work was of tremendous importance in the days before the First World War. At St. Augustine's girls too young for the Children of Mary were enrolled by the nuns in the Congregation of the Holy Angels whose members received the Sacraments regularly, often in spite of continual bad example at home. The nuns also had charge of the Children of Mary who, in turn, helped them in their work for the factory girls.

Old parishioners of St. Augustine's speak with tremendous affection of the nuns who taught them and all have vivid memories of the December 8th altars, massed with flowers and candles. The tributes paid to the nuns and the numerous Masses offered when the parishioners heard of the deaths of their old teachers illustrate the affection and regard in which they were held. When Mother Josephine Crotty died in 1920, her name had been a household word in St. Augustine's for 40 years in the day school, the night school and the Sunday school. The hall door at "the Hollies" had to be left open on the Sunday after her death to admit the stream of mourners who came to pay their respects.

The FCJs served St. Augustine's for 107 years, 1853—1960, at Granby Row, York Street, and, after the school was bombed in 1940, in the Cavendish Street school. When they withdrew, at their own request, on re-organization in 1960 a special Mass of thanksgiving for their service was said and the parishioners presented the nuns with a set of Benediction vestments and a donation of £100 for memorial plaques to be placed in St. Augustine's church and in the chapel to be built one day at Mersey Bank.

In 1971, again following re-organization, the nuns withdrew from St. Cuthbert's, Withington where they had served from 1889. As in St. Augustine's their service was not confined to the school but they established here, too, the Congregation of the Holy Angels and worked amongst the Children of Mary besides conducting Sunday school.

The parishes of St. Joseph's, Longsight and St. Robert's Longsight also provided work for the Faithful Companions of Jesus. Father Daly of St. Joseph's writing in 1895 was very keen that all his young girls should come under the influence of nuns and well into the 1960's the nuns were still organizing the Guild of St. Agnes and the Children of Mary in that parish. In 1933 these Children of Mary of St. Joseph's presented the nuns with a handsome green altar cloth, still in use in the convent chapel. The nuns also conducted the Sunday school at St. Robert's Longsight from the early days of that parish's foundation.

Even when on holiday at Pwllheli in 1927 the nuns could not escape the work of religious instructions. There the parish priest asked them to take his Sunday school which was attended not only by the parish children but by the gypsies of the neighbourhood

Sedgley Park College of Education

"May God fill those who here teach and learn, with knowledge, wisdom and reverence". This prayer used at the blessing of the college extension which was completed in 1963 when Sedgley celebrated its diamond jubilee could not express more aptly what had been the purpose and wish of the founders some sixty years before. The year 1963 offers a suitable point from which, first to look back at lowly beginnings and then forward to the more complex and challenging situation in which the college finds itself to-day.

The idea of training young women to teach in Catholic schools was one that was dear to the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus and to Canon Richardson of the Salford diocese towards the turn of the century. It materialised, not without a chain of disappointment, frustration and delay, not at

all unusual at the initial stages of worthwhile enterprises in the year 1903 when the first three students representing England, Scotland and Ireland, settled down to their course of training at Adelphi House School. It was imperative that the new establishment should seek a home of its own and so in 1905 the Jacobean mansion of Sedgley House was purchased to accommodate the steadily increasing number of students. A perusal of the college chronicle during the early years brings to life the earnestness, industry and extraordinary lightheartedness of the students who, although spartan-like compared to our modern way of living, obviously enjoyed and benefited from the security of a close-knit, strictly disciplined community. The setting of the college, "an agreeable region of seven to eight acres of well-timbered land was quite rural, with the front windows facing a green valley grazing milch cows". To-day in 1973 a first year science student investigates in Sedgley Park village, the subject of air pollution, and designs with the help of her tutor a meter to measure the sulphur-dioxide in the atmosphere! The contrast, whether in surroundings, teaching methods or student habits between the first and seventh decades of the century may be sharp. However the evolution of the work and life of the college is on the whole fairly smooth with each generation of staff and students alert to the signs of the times and gradually adapting to its needs.

By the time the college celebrated its sixty years some 5,000 students had been trained at Sedgley. In 1960 the teacher-supply situation, coupled with the decision to lengthen the initial training course from two to three years had led the Government to authorise a major expansion of the colleges. It was this policy that accounted for the numbers at Sedgley rising rapidly in the mid-sixties from 250 to over 500 students. Its present student population is 600. In this same period an intensive building programme provided the additional teaching accommodation that was needed. Fairly recent recommendations have resulted in the establishment of a four-year course of study leading to the award of the Bachelor of Education degree. The number of Sedgley students availing themselves of the degree course is rapidly increasing.

After the dramatic expansion of the 1960's Sedgley is coming to grips with quite a new challenge which will undoubtedly be characteristic of this decade. Following the Government policy to reduce quite drastically the number of teachers in training, comes the need for the college to contribute in the widest possible way to the provision of higher education for an increasing number of school leavers. How the college will be reorganised in view of current needs is now the subject of serious consideration within the college. Sedgley sees itself maintaining its commitment to the education and training of teachers, and at the same time making a substantial contribution to other forms of higher education. With the demand for in-service courses becoming greater, the college effort in this direction will be a generous one. Nor will the specific needs of the Catholic schools be neglected. Fortunate in having the Diocesan Religious Education Centre on the college campus, the college staff welcomes the opportunity of collaboration with the staff of the Centre in providing the variety of courses best suited to the needs of serving teachers. While the activity and scope of Sedgley increases, its prayer and wish remains unchanged. "May God fill those who here teach and learn, with knowledge, wisdom and reverence".