

His Grace the Archbishop's Visit to the Parish of Murgon

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Sunday last, December 16th, was a memorable day for the Catholics of the parish of Murgon, for, on that day, His Grace the Archbishop administered the Sacrament of Confirmation for the first time in their parish church and blessed and opened the new presbytery.

The Parish of Murgon.

Murgon is one of the infant parishes of the archdiocese. It has not yet celebrated its second birthday. The parish came into being at the beginning of last year when the former parish of Nanango was divided, and new parishes were constituted with centres at Kingaroy and Murgon. The parish of Murgon embraces all the country lying on both sides of the South Burnett railway between Woolooga and Wondai – a distance of some fifty miles. Included in the parish are the towns of Murgon, Wondai, Goomeri, Kilkivan and Woolooga, in each of which a Catholic church has been erected. The church at Murgon – a picture of which is given on this page – was built to the order of the Rev. Father M. Masterson, formerly parish priest of Nanango, and was blessed and opened on the 4th August, 1918, by the Rev. Father M. O'Flynn, then Administrator of St. Patrick's parish, the Valley, acting on behalf of His Grace Archbishop Duhig, who, because of illness, was prevented from performing the ceremony.

Murgon's First Parish Priest

Father Costello, the first and the present parish priest of Murgon, was installed by His Grace the Archbishop during May of last year. On that occasion His Grace remarked that, although Father Costello was perhaps the youngest parish priest in Australia, he had great confidence in his organising ability, and, as after events have proved, this confidence was justified. The first task which presented itself to the new parish priest was not an easy one – especially when we take into consideration the resources at his disposal. He was obliged to set about raising funds with which to build a presbytery or to purchase a house suitable for conversion into such. Meanwhile, he lived in the sacristy attached to the church. After some negotiation, Father Costello succeeded in buying a house situated on property adjoining the church ground. This house was well suited to accommodate one priest. But, realising that he could not attend satisfactorily to his scattered parishioners single-handed, Father Costello asked to be given an assistant priest, and, on the arrival of the later in March of the present year, it became necessary to enlarge the presbytery. This has been done, and, on Sunday last, the finished building was blessed and opened with only £150 owing upon it, an accomplishment which of itself is no small testimony to the generosity of the Catholics of the parish.

Visit of the Archbishop.

During his visit to the parish of Murgon last week, His Grace the Archbishop spent a very busy time. On Thursday afternoon last, accompanied by Father Costello, he motored to Wondai, where, after examining the candidates for Confirmation – 33 in number – and giving them an instruction regarding the Sacrament they were about to receive, he

administered the Sacrament to them at 7.30pm. After celebrating Mass at Wondai on Friday morning, His Grace was driven by Father Costello to Kilkivan, and then, after the usual examination and instruction, he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 27 candidates on Friday evening. Throughout the ceremonies at Wondai His Grace was assisted by Father Costello and at Kilkivan by Fathers Costello and Cullen. The sponsors at Wondai were Mr. M. Ryan for the boys and Miss M. Reidy for the girls, while at Kilkivan they were Mr. J. Cogan and Miss L. Bishop respectively. After Mass at Kilkivan on Saturday morning, His Grace, in company with Fathers Costello and Cullen, proceeded to Goomeri and at 11 a.m. examined the Confirmation candidates at that centre. Later he returned to Murgon, when at 4 p.m. he examined the local candidates, as well as those from the Proxton and Cloyna districts.

Confirmation at Murgon.

On Sunday morning, the Archbishop celebrated Mass in St Joseph's Church, Murgon, at 7 o'clock, and at this Mass all those who were that day, to be confirmed, namely the candidates from Murgon, Goomeri, Proxton and Cloyna – 64 in number – received Holy Communion. Before the 11 o'clock Mass, at which the biggest congregation of Catholics ever seen in Murgon assembled, the candidates for Confirmation took up their places in the front seats of the church, the boys wearing their medals and the girls dressed in white and wearing medals and also veils. The candidates went to the altar, two by two, in order to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. On this occasion His Grace was again assisted by Fathers Costello and Cullen. Mr. W. Martin and Mrs. J.J. McEniery carried out the duties of sponsors. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Archbishop addressed the newly-confirmed and exhorted them to be faithful to the practice of their holy religion – to make use of the grace to live and die as practical Catholics given them in the Sacrament of Confirmation that morning. Turning to the parents among the congregation, His Grace had some words of advice to give them regarding the training of their children. Especially did he exhort them to keep a strict supervision over their sons and daughters in the matter of late hours and dangerous companionships.

The Luncheon.

After the Confirmation ceremony, the large congregation made its way to the Murgon School of Arts where luncheon was served by a committee of ladies comprising Mesdames Brown, Manthorpe, McEniery, Nolan, O'Driscoll, O'Hara, South and Tiernan, who were assisted by a number of willing workers. Father Costello presided and amongst those seated at the principal table with him were His Grace the Archbishop, Father Cullen, and Mr. J.B. Edwards, M.L.A. A lengthy toast list was honoured. Fr. Costello opened proceedings by proposing the toast of the "Pope and the King." The toast of the "Hierarchy and Clergy" was entrusted to Mr. D. Casey of Nanango, who stressed the important part played by the clergy in the lives of the Catholic people. He spoke of the high regard in which he held the Archbishop, and he paid a well-deserved tribute to Father Costello who he had known for several years. The Archbishop, in reply, thanked Mr. Casey for the kind thoughts to which he had given expression. Father Cullen also responded.

Mr. T. Barrow of Wondai gave the toast of "The Day We Celebrate," and his remarks were endorsed by Mr. T. Webb of Kilkivan and Mr. S. McGrath of Goomeri. The next toast "Murgon and District" was given by His Grace the Archbishop. His Grace remarked that when he first passed along the South Burnett railway line some eighteen years ago on his

way to open the Catholic Church at Kingaroy, Murgon did not exist. The progress made by the town since its foundation has been remarkable. He was pleased to learn that the dairying industry was in so flourishing a condition as to warrant extensions to the local butter factory. He was pleased, moreover, to know that early in the new year the town would be lit throughout with electric light. He hoped that the lighting plant would be thoroughly efficient. It was a foolish policy to buy small or cheap plant only to find later that it was altogether inadequate for its purpose. The development of the district, His Grace said, was due to the pluck and perseverance of the settlers and he was sure that while those qualities existed they need not despair of the country, even though its representatives lost the present series of Test matches.

Mr. J.B. Edwards, M.L.A., in response, stressed the need for all classes of the community pulling together if Queensland and the Commonwealth were to prosper as they should. Councillor Leitch also replied. He assured the Archbishop that Murgon's electric lighting plant would be a first-class one. The Council had not approved the scheme without giving considerable attention to the matter beforehand.

Other toasts honoured were "The Visitors" proposed by Mr. Jas. Tiernan, jnrl, and responded to by Mr. L. Nunan; "The Press" proposed by Mr. R. Manthorpe and responded to by Messrs. W. Osborne and G. Goodwin; and "The Chairman" proposed by Mr. L. Duff and responded to by Father Costello.

The Dedication of the Presbytery.

At 3 o'clock, in the presence of a great gathering, the ceremony of dedicating the opening the new presbytery was performed by His Grace the Archbishop, assisted by Fathers Costello, McGinley (Nanango), Rawlings (Kingaroy), and Cullen. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Fr. Costello read a financial statement regarding the presbytery. This statement showed that the original house and land was purchased for £675, while the additions, including painting, lighting and other improvements cost £575, and the furniture £300 – making a total in all of £1550. So far the amount of money raised as the result of various efforts throughout the parish was £1050. The debt therefore stood at £500. He expressed the wish that the debt would be considerably reduced if not altogether wiped out, as a result of the collection that day.

His Grace the Archbishop congratulated Father Costello upon the success he had so far achieved in reducing the debt on his presbytery and called upon Fr. McGinley to move that a subscription list be opened.

Father McGinley appealed to the people to be generous – to show their appreciation of the two priests who had lived and worked amongst them by enabling them to open their presbytery free of debt. Then, becoming reminiscent, Father McGinley recalled, much to the delight of his listeners, many famous trips made by the Archbishop and himself in the western part of the archdiocese some ten years ago.

As a result of the collection taken up £350 was realised.

Mr. J.J. McEniery proposed a vote of thanks to His Grace and Father Rawlings supported it. Father Rawlings said that within a few weeks he hoped to welcome the Archbishop to Kingaroy there to bless and open a temporary convent for the Sisters of Charity, and he had much pleasure in extending an invitation to one and all to be present.