

The Archbishop at Murgon

Confirmation and Holy Name General Communion and Breakfast

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One has not to go very far from Brisbane to find that pioneering is still part of the work of the priest. The extensive parish of Murgon, 130 miles long, is entered a few miles on the Gympie side of Kilkivan, and goes on through the country of the Lower Burnett until it joins the parish of Dalby in the Toowoomba Diocese. It is 25 years since the Archbishop accompanied the first little band of Nuns – Sister of Mercy – who settled at Nanango, and have ever since been doing excellent work there.

It was 67 years before that, that Archbishop Polding from Sydney, had visited the district in the course of an extensive tour of Queensland and the northern part of New South Wales. When the Sisters of Mercy were established at Nanango through the zeal of the late Father James Bergin, there was no other town of any importance along the railway line that serves that fertile portion of the Burnett country.

Growth of the Burnett.

As the Archbishop remarked at the Communion breakfast on Sunday morning when he was addressing 150 members of the Holy Name Society, there was no Murgon when he first passed that way. To-day, after a little more than a quarter of a century, it is a thriving town handsomely laid out with beautiful brick buildings and a civic centre that would do credit to a much more pretentious place. On a gentle slope at the eastern end of the town there is an attractive group of Catholic buildings, including church, convent, school and presbytery, erected at a cost of nearly £10,000. In the meanwhile, Goomeri, Wondai, and Proston have also come into prominence. Indeed the two first-named are older than Murgon itself, but not quite so progressive, although they, too, are handsomely laid out and have impressive public buildings and business places. It is to be regretted that the value of the Burnett lands was not known when so many people from the Old Country settled on the Darling Downs in the 60's and the 70's of the last century. Those early settlers had to await the sub-division of large station properties, whereas in the Burnett there were very few such obstacles. The value of the Burnett country for close settlement, however, was not discovered until the beginning of the century, when the town of Kingaroy blossomed forth with great promise, and settlers flocked in big numbers from West Moreton and the Darling Downs.

The Parish of Kingaroy.

The Archbishop (then Bishop of Rockhampton) opened the first church in Kingaroy in 1909, the whole Lower Burnett being then in the parish of Nanango, of which the Rev. Father Mark Cosgrove was parish priest. The Sisters of the Good Samaritan have been settled for several years at Kingaroy, and four years ago the Presentation Sisters took up work at Murgon. Naturally, the Archbishop took a great pride in being able to secure such facilities for Catholic education, and he stressed this fact at Murgon on Sunday, when he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 86 candidates drawn from all parts of the

parish, including a number of aboriginal children from the Cherbourg Settlement, the work of which was last year subsidised by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

Addressing the large congregation after the Confirmation of the children, His Grace said that, on visitation of a parish, nothing gave him greater pleasure than to find a flourishing parochial school. He warmly commended the work of the Presentation Sisters since they had come to Murgon. The fruits of that work were abundantly evident. He appealed to the parents of the outer districts to send in their children for at least 12 months tuition at the convent so that they might be well grounded in their Faith. He heartily thanked Fathers Cullen and Carroll, whose incessant and strenuous work from week-end to week-end had brought about, in their extensive territory, the fine results that he was privileged to witness that day.

Holy Name Communion Breakfast.

Three Masses were celebrated in the Murgon church on Sunday morning, at 6.30, 9 o'clock, and 11.30 and the two priests before officiating at Murgon, had also celebrated Masses at Kilkivan and Wondai. Each returned to Murgon with his car full of children for Confirmation. The Holy Name men made their general Holy Communion at the 9 o'clock Mass and then assembled in the school basement for their annual Communion breakfast. Besides the men of the parish, representing four branches of the society – Murgon, Wondai, Goomeri and Kilkivan – there were delegates from Gympie, Maryborough, Bundaberg and Biggenden. In the unavoidable absence of the president of the Society at Murgon, the breakfast was presided over by the vice-president, Mr. C.W.J. Thompson. Declarations of loyalty to God and country were made by the members, and some very fine addresses were delivered.

The Archbishop, who proposed the toast of the Holy Name Society, emphasised the importance of being well equipped to take part to-day in the struggle which the Church militant was carrying on against the powers of evil. It was not sufficient to be Holy Name men once a month or once a week. The virtues which such a society demanded should be practised daily, always and everywhere. The Rev. Father Cullen thanked the men for their fidelity, and for the sacrifice they had made in coming long distances that morning. The Rev. Father Gleeson, who led the delegation from Gayndah, also spoke words of encouragement to the men. The Archbishop, after a memorable visit, left with Father Cullen by car for Brisbane on Sunday evening.

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