

PART I

Chapter One

De Mortuus Nil Nisi Bonum:

Obiit IX Julii MDCCCIX

The Diocese of Maitland Farewells Its Bishop.

The morning of Monday, 12 July 1909, dawned sunny, cold and clear. On this day, Catholics and others from the Diocese of Maitland and beyond were preparing to play their part in the obsequies of the first resident Bishop of Maitland, James Murray.¹ By eleven o'clock, the faithful of the Catholic community, representatives from other denominations and holders of public office had crowded into St John the Baptist Cathedral, Maitland. Outside, hundreds of the deceased prelate's flock waited patiently and reverently. Those gathered were about to witness and participate in one of the most dramatic liturgies of the Catholic faith, a Solemn Office and Requiem Mass for a revered father of the church.

The Cathedral, stone-built in plain Gothic style, was a small and intimate building, its interior measuring 73 feet by 33, and seating about 300 people. Its simplicity contrasted starkly with the drama and solemnity of this occasion. Black and white drapes hung from the walls, the altars, the sanctuary, the bishop's throne, the pulpit, the front of the gallery and from the catafalque on which Murray's polished oak coffin rested. Shards of coloured light falling from the new stained-glass windows relieved the somewhat sombre atmosphere. Candles flickering on the altar and around the coffin focused the attention of the mourners as they sat quietly

¹ For a description of the funeral, see *Maitland Mercury*, 17 July 1909. In May 1847 Maitland was erected into a titular diocese. C. P. Dowd, 'Papal Policy Towards Conflict in the Australian Catholic Missions: The Relationship Between John Bede Polding, OSB, Archbishop of Sydney, and the Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide, 1842-1874', PhD., ANU, Canberra, 1994, p. 317. Charles Henry Davis OSB was consecrated Maitland's first bishop by Bishop Ullathorne in Bath, England, in February 1848. Davis had the added office of coadjutor bishop of Sydney where he worked for six years particularly in association with Lyndhurst College, St Mary's Seminary and Sydney University. He died in May 1854 after a long illness, never having visited the diocese of Maitland. P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia*, Melbourne, 1977, p. 88. For obituary, see *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 10 July 1909.

in the Cathedral pews. The symbols of Murray's office, his mitre and crozier, had been placed on the coffin. A silver plate gave his name and title, *Jacobus Murray, Episcopus Maitlandensis*,² a rendering which symbolized the importance of Rome even in this strange old but new 'land of contrarities'.³ Central to the celebration of Murray's life was the fact that in death he should be acclaimed '*episcopus Maitlandensis*'.

Members of the Australian Catholic hierarchy took their place in the sanctuary. Patrick Cardinal Moran, Archbishop of Sydney, occupied the bishop's throne. Other bishops present were Murray's successor, the native-born Vincent Dwyer, whom Murray had lovingly groomed for the position, and Patrick O'Connor, Bishop of Armidale. Places of honour were given to the priests of Maitland and other dioceses and to the various leaders of the religious orders of priests, the Redemptorists, the Sacred Heart Fathers, the Franciscans and the Vincentians. A choir of about fifty priests chanted the solemn office and sang the Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of the late bishop.⁴

Cardinal Moran preached the panegyric. Having paid the customary tribute to the life and labours of his brother bishop, he emphasized two constant aspects of Murray's episcopacy: his unceasing zeal in promoting the 'unity of clergy and people' and his attention to education. Moran maintained that the pursuit of these goals had, as in Ireland, accomplished much for the cause of the church in the Diocese of Maitland.⁵ These two issues, interrelated and interdependent, had certainly been the focus of Murray's endeavours. Forty-three years before, as the newly appointed Bishop of Maitland, he had prayed that the 'fruitful union' of priests and people, so evident in his native country, would prove a model for himself and for his flock in Maitland. He had hoped, too, that the Catholics of Maitland would be inspired by the 'high

² *Maitland Mercury*, 17 July 1909.

³ The phrase comes from an anonymous ballad of the 1850s, 'The Land of Contrarities', T.G. Clark, *The Land of Contrarities: British Attitudes to the Australian Colonies, 1828-1855*, Melbourne, 1977, pp. 169-170.

⁴ *Maitland Mercury*, 17 July, 1909.

⁵ *Loc . cit.*

idea' of education held by so many in Ireland.⁶ Murray had reiterated those same hopes a few months later at his solemn installation as bishop, on the Feast of All Saints, 1 November 1866. His goals for his episcopacy had always been perfectly clear.⁷ The unity of spirit obvious in the gathering of prelates, priests and people in St John's Cathedral in July 1909 epitomised the realization of Murray's life work.

Contemporary accounts of Murray's obsequies, probably the work of clerics, highlight the male-dominated priestly caste of which Murray had been part. The organist, referred to as Mrs James McGrath, was the only woman mentioned in all the records of the service.⁸ The clergy took pride of place in the Cathedral; they were the masters of the ceremony as they sought to honour their bishop and to ease his way into heaven. The Cathedral was largely their realm where they ruled supreme. With the beginning of the procession to Campbells Hill Cemetery the focus changed. As Murray's coffin left the dimly lit cathedral, emerging into the light of day and the secular world of High Street, Murray was in the domain of his people, the lay folk of Maitland. Here they were the masters. No description of Murray's funeral, nor any useful account of his life as a bishop should ignore them.

Headed by Maitland's Federal Band playing the Dead March of Saul, an overtly secular and traditional tune associated with funerals, the procession moved along High Street. Close behind came the bishop's carriage in which were seated the new Bishop of Maitland, Vincent Dwyer, Bishop O'Connor of Armidale, and the Diocesan Vicar General, Patrick Hand. Next, led by a cross-bearer carrying a large gilt cross, were about 260 members of the Catholic Benefit Societies — the Guilds and Hibernians — wearing their green and gold regalia. Then followed the hearse, drawn by four plumed black horses and accompanied by six mourning coaches carrying the clergy. After these were carriages with the Marist Brothers and five drags with the young women of the Sodality of the Children of

⁶ *Dublin Freeman's Journal*, 25 May 1866, quoted by *Maitland Mercury*, 4 August 1866.

⁷ *Maitland Mercury*, 3 November 1866.

⁸ *Maitland Mercury*, 17 July 1909.

Mary, and finally carriages with lay dignitaries and the general public.⁹ Murray's funeral cortege of 250 vehicles was the largest ever seen in Maitland. Over two miles long, it took six minutes to pass. The closure of many of Maitland's business houses for the funeral added to the crowds of people along the route.

The carefully orchestrated arrangement of the cortege serves as a metaphor for the diocese itself. The pre-eminence of prelates and priests in the procession acknowledged the superiority of the clerical state. The Australasian Holy Catholic Guild and the Hibernians who followed were Murray's vanguard in the battle with indifferentism. The position and number of the Children of Mary in the procession gave this group of young women special importance. Some were to become the mothers of the next generation and others would become the religious sisters who would instruct that generation. The religious women of the diocese were not part of the funeral procession. These women, who were so significant in the diocese, were, as usual, playing their role behind the scenes. The religious brothers, on the other hand, had their special and public place. The large attendance at Murray's funeral of clerics and laity, and the acknowledgment of religious and secular elements, were a tribute to his ecclesiastical eminence and to his standing in the community.¹⁰

Among the laity — those in the procession, those lining High Street and those gathered at the Campbells Hill Cemetery — were men actively engaged in the proceedings. They were the pall bearers and procession marshals. Prominent Catholics of the diocese, and of the town of Maitland, in particular, they came from the ranks of the Catholic Guilds and Hibernians. Among the pall bearers was Patrick Mangan of Horseshoe Bend, a prominent sportsman, and secretary of St Patrick's Day Sports.¹¹ Robert Allsop, a cabinet maker, of Mindaribba, West Maitland, was one of the foundation members of the St John's branch of the A. H. C. guild.¹² The funeral procession and crowds were marshalled by other

⁹ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁰ *Loc. cit.*

¹¹ *Maitland Mercury*, 24 January 1936.

¹² *Maitland Mercury*, 8 December 1925.

members of the guilds. Robert Dilley, of Maitland, was the warden of St John's Guild, and a member since 1873.¹³ These men and others like them had had a long association with the bishop and with the making of the Maitland Diocese.¹⁴

Great as the crowds at Murray's funeral were, they were only a small part of his flock. The *Diocesan Almanac and Family Home Journal* of July 1909, the month Murray died, records the statistical and liturgical features of the diocese. The faithful, 23,000 in all, were spread over a wide and diverse area, the diocese being then divided into twenty parishes or parochial districts from Camden Haven to Red Head along the east coast of New South Wales, westward to Wollar and Cassilis, north-west to Murrurundi and north-east to a point ten miles south of Port Macquarie.¹⁵ Eighty-one churches and 31 chapels marked the gathering places for Catholics of the diocese. Among the clergy, were 41 secular priests and eight priests belonging to a religious order. On Monday, 12 July, the Catholic faithful unable to attend the obsequies were reminded by parish priests in local churches of the goodness of their late bishop.¹⁶

Throughout the diocese a total of 4,127 children were receiving a Catholic education in three girls' boarding schools, fifteen superior day schools, forty primary schools, one orphanage and one institute for the deaf and dumb.¹⁷ These schools were staffed by three religious congregations of women, the Dominican Sisters, the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St Joseph, numbering 231 religious women altogether. Two boys' schools, at Maitland and at Hamilton, were staffed by six Marist Brothers. Children in their various schools were told by the nuns and

¹³ *Maitland Mercury*, 9 June 1924.

¹⁴ The pall bearers included B. Rooney, Patrick Mangan, Thomas Nolan, Robert Allsop, W. Walsh and J. Toohey. Other marshals included Thomas Maguire (secretary), P. McIntosh (president of the Hibernian Society) and T. A. Dolahenty (secretary). *Maitland Mercury*, 17 July 1909.

¹⁵ *Almanac of the Diocese of Maitland and Family Home Annual*, 1900, Maitland, 1900, p. 18.

¹⁶ *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 12 July 1909, p. 5.

¹⁷ *Australasian Catholic Directory*, 1908, p. 48.

brothers of their bishop's love for them and of their duty to pray for the repose of his soul.¹⁸

Thanks partly to Murray's encouragement, Catholic lay men and women within the twenty parochial districts of the diocese actively participated in their church. The baptisms and marriages recorded for the six months ending 30 June 1909 included 60 adult baptisms, 948 infant baptisms and 154 marriages.¹⁹ In West Maitland, in particular, where the Catholic population numbered three thousand, the weekly commitment of a typical Catholic was considerable. Every Sunday, apart from the morning Mass — and there were four Masses in the Cathedral and one in the Dominican Convent Chapel of Saints Mary and Laurence — Catholics were exhorted to attend Rosary, Sermon, and Benediction at 7.30 p.m. Mass was also said each weekday morning and the Rosary recited every evening. Confessions were heard in the Cathedral each Saturday from ten a.m. to twelve noon, from four p.m. to six p.m. and from seven p.m. to ten p.m. During the season of Lent Rosary and Benediction were held every night, with the Stations of the Cross being added to the devotions on Wednesdays and Fridays. In May and October, times of special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, there were Novenas, Rosary and Benediction every night.²⁰

Special feast days, scattered liberally throughout the liturgical year, involved the laity in extra visits to, and celebrations in, their churches. Throughout July, for instance, the faithful were required to meditate upon the redemptive powers of the Precious Blood, with 4 July set aside as a day of special observance. During the same month there were three feasts of the Virgin Mary and the feast days of 27 saints. These included militant heroes of the faith, Ignatius Loyola (founder of the Jesuits) and Vincent de Paul (founder of the Vincentians), and the New Testament Saints, Mary Magdalen, Martha and Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, each of whom

¹⁸ *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 12 July 1909, p. 5.

¹⁹ *Almanac of the Diocese of Maitland and Family Home Journal*, 1910, Maitland, 1910, p. 43.

²⁰ *Almanac of the Diocese of Maitland and Family Home Journal: 1909*, Maitland, 1909, p. 26.

was placed before the faithful as a model of Christian virtue.²¹ The religious practice of Maitland Catholics was regular and systematic, and reflected the popular Roman devotions of the time. Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, to the Passion of Christ, to the Sacred Heart and the Precious Blood, and of course to Mary and the Saints had been given a special place in Catholic piety during the pontificate of Pius IX. Cardinal Archbishop Paul Cullen, Primate of Ireland, had ensured that these Roman devotions were firmly stamped on the Irish Catholic mind and practised wherever Irish Catholics were dispersed throughout the world.²² Similar devotional practices had flourished in the Maitland Diocese. By the time of Murray's death, they had become entrenched in the lives of Catholics.²³

In addition to these regular, liturgical and devotional practices, Catholics throughout the diocese were involved in numerous confraternities (sodalities) and benefit societies (guilds) which both encouraged and enhanced the religious practice of their members. Men, women and children each had their special groups. The various men's confraternities, or sodalities, had their allotted Sunday of the month when members gathered for Mass and Communion. They also had their weekly meetings. For example, the Holy Family Fraternity met every Tuesday at 8.00 p.m. and assembled on the second Sunday of each month for their Mass and Communion. The St John's Catholic Young Men's Club had 90 members and came together regularly. The Women's League of the Sacred Heart had 500 members, who were expected to gather every first Friday for their monthly meeting and to come to Mass and Communion on the first Sunday of the month. Fifty young women belonged to the sodality of the Children of Mary, attending meetings every Sunday at 3.00 p.m. and celebrating their sodality Mass and Communion on the third Sunday of the month. The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, for children, had an enrolment of 165. Their Mass was held at 8.00 a.m. on

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp 17-18

²² P. Corish, *The Irish Catholic Experience*, Dublin, 1985, p. 194.

²³ D. J. Keenan, *The Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Sociological Study*, Dublin, 1983, p. 149.

the fourth Sunday of the month and they assembled on the same afternoon for their monthly meeting.²⁴

The benefit societies or guilds attracted both men and women. In West Maitland in 1909 two benefit societies were operating: the Australasian Holy Catholic Guild with 130 members, and the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society with 100 men and 38 women.²⁵ Murray had signalled the importance of the guilds at the time of his arrival in Sydney in late October 1866 and again at his installation as Bishop of Maitland a few days later. On both these occasions, the young Murray had singled out the guilds as the means to 'advance the interests of the Church' when they were conducted under ecclesiastical authority.²⁶ While the benefit societies were benefit and aid societies, they, too, had a spiritual dimension, requiring members to attend Mass and Communion on particular Sundays of the year.²⁷

For the younger generation of Catholics access to the devotional and sacramental life of the church was made all the easier by attendance at a Catholic school. At Maitland in 1909, 146 boys attended the Marist Brothers' School and the Dominican nuns had an enrolment of 125 girls and 116 infants. At their select or pay school, the Dominicans taught 38 boarders and 61 day pupils. The Dominican Convent School catered for 48 pupils. In addition Christian doctrine classes were conducted in each parish every Sunday. At West Maitland, St John's Boys' School catered for 110 pupils and St John's Girls' and Infants' School for 161. At Oakhampton 43 pupils attended classes, at Homesville 70 pupils, at East Greta 50 pupils while at Bishops Bridge a small class was held on Friday afternoons.²⁸ All the intricate and infinitely complex practices and apparatus of a Romanized diocese were thoroughly in place by 1909.

²⁴ *Almanac of the Diocese of Maitland and Family Home Journal*, 1909, Maitland, 1909, p. 26.

²⁵ *Loc. cit.*

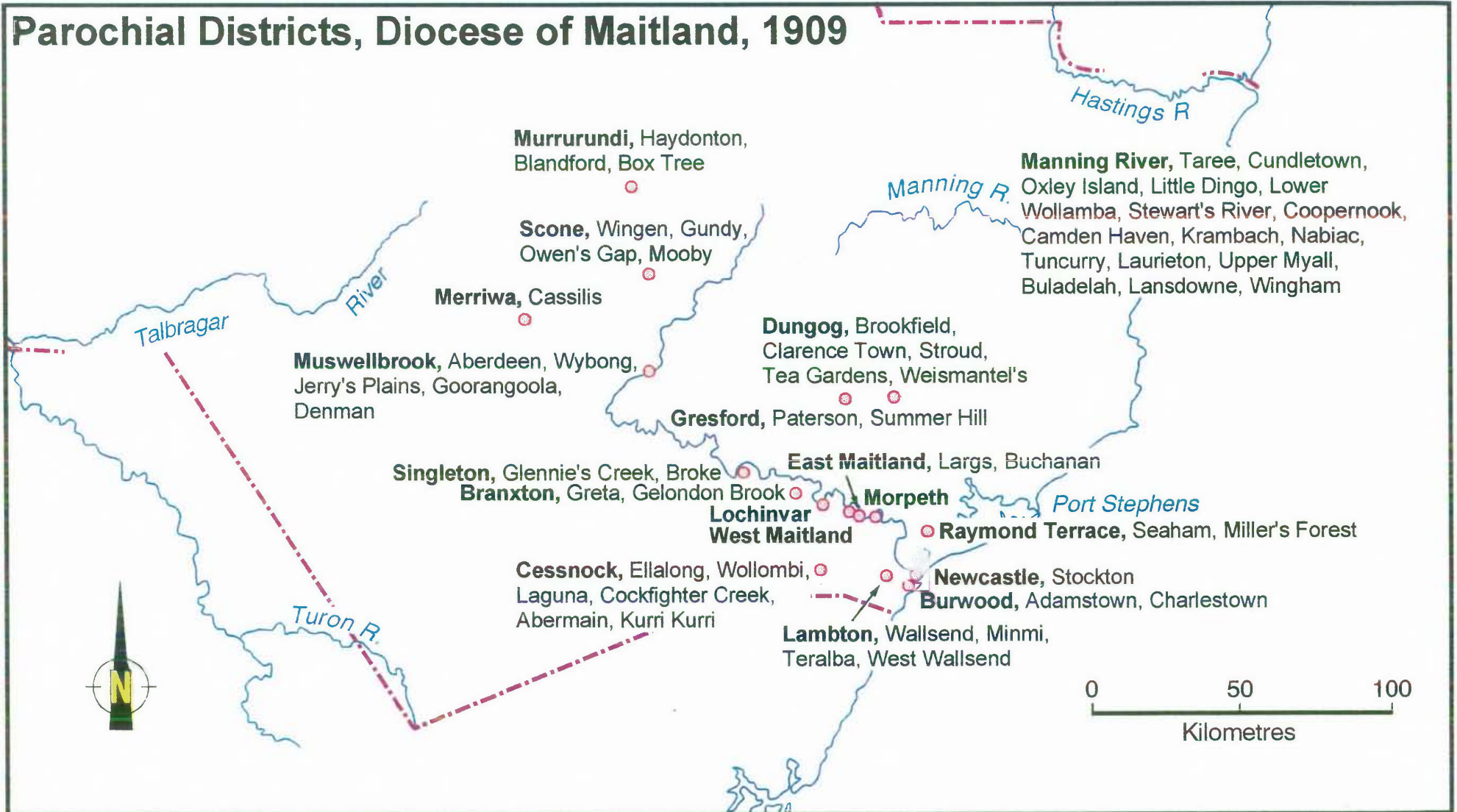
²⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 October 1866 and *Maitland Mercury*, 3 November 1866.

²⁷ P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia*, West Melbourne, 1977, pp. 153 and 201.

²⁸ *Loc. cit.*

This description of the Maitland Diocese on the day of Murray's funeral has fixed in time the results of a process which had been more than forty years in the making. Our sketch, with its broad bold strokes, shows the diocese with its prelates, priests, religious men and women, and people. Each had participated in the making of the diocese. A breakdown of the picture into its constituent colours and shapes will reveal the processes of its creation. On the 12 July 1909 the people of Maitland publicly mourned the loss of their first resident bishop, James Murray. They celebrated his life and sought God's mercy for his soul. This day was the end and culmination of his work of 43 years. The ceremony which provided the setting for his obsequies, the contribution of the clergy and laity and the singing of the Requiem Mass were the outward manifestations of his work. Not the least important part of this occasion was the fact that the town of Maitland recognized his achievements and paid tribute to his life. Having observed the ending, we begin now with the beginning, the making of Murray himself, the man and the priest.

Parochial Districts, Diocese of Maitland, 1909



James Murray, the man.



(iii) Bishop James Murray, aged 39, at the time of his consecration in Dublin, 1865.



(iv) An avuncular James Murray surrounded by family members in Co Wicklow in the 1880s.