

# THE SECOND VINCENTIAN BISHOP IN AUSTRALIA: RICHARD RYAN CM

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## **Introduction**

There have been two Vincentian Bishops in Australia: Michael O'Farrell CM, who was the Bishop of Bathurst from 1920 to 1928; and Richard Ryan, Bishop of Geraldton from 1923-1926, and then Bishop of Sale from 1926-1957.

This article will give a brief account of Richard Ryan covering only the years 1920 to 1926. It is an account which is far from complete; more research is needed in order to accurately assess the man and his contribution to the Church in Australia.

## **Early Apostolate in Australia**

Richard Ryan was born to James Ryan and Margaret Rush in Liverpool, England on 25 July 1879, and received into the Vincentians at Blackrock on 13 September 1901.<sup>1</sup> Following his ordination to the

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<sup>1</sup> There is a discrepancy with regard to the details of his birth; some records have 25 July 1881, but according to a letter from Fr Kevin Rafferty CM to Monsignor D. J. Stewart, dated 11 May 1990, and held in the Archives of the Diocese of Sale, the correct date of his birth is 25 July 1879. The summary in the Archives of Geraldton notes Liverpool as the place of his birth but indicates that Ryan's obituaries gave Tipperary as his birth place. D. F. Bourke CM, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia 1829-1979*, (Perth: Archdiocese of Perth, 1979), 231 gives Tipperary as the place of birth and 1881 as the year. In a later book the same author gives Liverpool as the place and 1881 as the year: see D. F. Bourke CM, *A History of the Catholic Church in Victoria*, (np 1988), 282.

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Priesthood on 25 May 1907 by Archbishop Walsh in the Pro-Cathedral of Dublin, Ryan came to Australia in 1908 and joined the mission staff at the Parish of Malvern, where he remained for the next four years. In 1912 he was transferred to the Parish of Ashfield, where once again, he was principally engaged in giving missions until his return to Malvern as Parish Priest and Superior in April 1920.

Ryan was clearly a gifted man who enjoyed the confidence of his superiors. He was considered, in 1917, for the position of Director of the Internal Seminary at Blackrock; in 1920, as the Superior of a new mission in China; and in 1921, as the Visitor of the Irish Province. In 1923 he was chosen to succeed Fr Paul Cullen CM as the Vice-Visitor of Australia. The Visitor, Fr Bennett, undertook a visitation of the houses in Australia in early 1923 on his way to visit the Irish confrères working in China, and he planned to announce Ryan's appointment in February at the conclusion of the visitation.<sup>2</sup>

However, this was not to be, for on 30 January 1923, Richard Ryan was chosen as the second Bishop of Geraldton. Oral tradition maintains that on the same day as his appointment as the Vice-Visitor was announced, the letter appointing him to Geraldton arrived and was met with wide-spread approval among the confrères. The tradition varies slightly from Fr Frank King's opinion that they received the news of Ryan's appointment to the See of Geraldton with sadness, but, aware that he would bring his many gifts to the wider Church, willingly accepted the decision of the Holy See.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> D. F. Bourke CM, *The History of the Vincentian Fathers in Australasia*, (Ashfield, NSW: Congregation of the Mission, c. 1980), 152-155.

<sup>3</sup> F. D. King CM, "Mors Excmi Richardi Ryan CM" *Vincentiana*, Vol.1 nos.11-12 (1 December 1957): 105.

## **“No vocation China”**

By his own account, Ryan did not relish the prospect of being a Bishop, telling the parishioners of Malvern, that he regarded it as cross and accepted it as such.<sup>4</sup> It may have been this same feeling of trepidation that caused him to refuse an appointment to China, proposed to him three years earlier.

Initially Ryan had agreed to go to China and for this reason, Fr Walshe, the Visitor of Ireland, wrote thus to the Superior General, Fr Verdier, on 2 September 1920:

My consultors and myself are in agreement that Fr Richard Ryan would be very suitable as superior of our section of Mgr Fabrégues' vicariate. It is only a few months since you appointed him superior of Malvern in Australia, but both before and since his appointment he expressed to me his desire to go to China. Besides he is good and intelligent and a confrère who in our opinion would later on be a worthy head of the autonomous region.<sup>5</sup>

It seems as though Ryan changed his mind about going to China when he became aware that it was not simply a matter of joining the other confrères who were already looking after the Parish of St Joseph, at Tung T'ang in Pekin but of taking on a new Vicariate which the Provincial Council had agreed to accept.<sup>6</sup> Ryan realised that going to this new Vicariate would, in all likelihood, entail taking on the responsibilities of a Vicar Apostolic.

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<sup>4</sup> Terry Synan, “Catholic Education under Bishop Richard Ryan”, *Catholic Life* [Diocesan Newspaper, Diocese of Sale], (December 2004): 13.

<sup>5</sup> Walshe to Verdier, 2 September 1920 in *Colloque*, 5(Spring 1982): 42.

<sup>6</sup> Walshe to Verdier, 28 July 1920, in *Colloque*, 5(Spring 1982): 42.

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On 4 September 1920, just two days after Fr Walshe had written to the Superior General, Fr Verdier, indicating that all was going according to plan, a cable arrived from Ryan stating bluntly: “since last cable consulted spiritual advisers decided no vocation China”. In a letter written on the same day to Fr Walshe, Ryan was at pains to explain more fully the reasons for his change of will.

I need not tell you that I am very sincerely sorry for all the trouble and inconvenience I had put you to, it has caused me a great deal of pain to come to such a conclusion. As you will have seen by my other letter I was determined to go when I got your cable, I consulted nobody before writing. When I came here<sup>7</sup> and wrote to you acknowledging your letter, I quite forget now whether I made any proposal about China. I have a recollection that I did. Anyhow in the past six weeks or so I had given up the idea ...

You can well understand that I did not like to refuse altogether, that was the reason why I sent the first cable, viz. to work only for English speakers. I was very unsettled when I sent that cable so I thought it better to consult spiritually. I spent some time in prayer and took counsel in confession with three, all decided after I explained my motives that I would not be sage to take such a step ...

Again I understood by your cable that a Superior in a new Vicariate is a kind of Vicar Apostolic. If such was your intention you have too exalted an idea of me. I can not think of agreeing to that for the simple reason that I have very poor ability and am totally unfit for such a position ... I feel anyhow that a special vocation is required for

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<sup>7</sup> i.e. to Malvern.

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China and those whom I consulted in “foro interno” did not hesitate to say that I had not such a vocation – one was an outsider whose opinion I value.<sup>8</sup>

Ryan’s assessment of himself as unfit for a position of leadership in China may have been the primary reason for his refusal, but other motives appear to have played their part. In 1923, just prior to his consecration, he wrote to the Visitor, Fr Bennett:

With regard to China, having seen the place yourself, you are in a position to be able to judge what ought to be done. If I had any control in the matter I would close it down. I believe that a Vicariate cannot be run in China without a big financial backing something in the lines of the “Irish mission” to China. It is common knowledge that you must give the Chinese not merely knowledge or religion, but money also. I believe the Congregation is not in a position to start such work yet. It would not be a humiliation in any sense to withdraw these three confrères.

Look at Australia here – Auckland is asking for a foundation and Dunedin. Tasmania has asked a course of missions. The whole matter of China was bungled in the beginning and my opinion is it is a mistake to perpetuate the bungle. In 10 or 15 years hence if the state of the Congregation justifies it, it might be possible then to start a house there. For many a year to come there will be plenty of openings available. ...<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> R. Ryan CM to J. Walshe CM, 4 September 1920. Archives of the Australian Province of the Congregation of the Mission.

<sup>9</sup> R. Ryan CM to J. Bennett CM, 4 July 1923. Archives of the Australian Province of the Congregation of the Mission.

## **Geraldton – “Refuge of Sinners”**

A delay in the arrival of the papal Briefs required for the consecration of a Bishop meant that it did not take place until 29 July 1923 in St Joseph’s Church, Malvern at the hands of Archbishop Daniel Mannix of Melbourne, assisted by Bishop John McCarthy of Sandhurst, and Bishop Michael O’Farrell CM of Bathurst. Ryan appeared to be in no hurry to get to Geraldton, remaining in Melbourne to attend to other business including the laying of the foundation stone for a new school in Burke Road.<sup>10</sup>

The priests of the Melbourne Archdiocese had collected in excess of £400 which they presented to Bishop Ryan as a farewell gift.<sup>11</sup> It was a very generous gift amounting in today’s currency to over \$23,000. Bishop Ryan arrived at the Port of Fremantle, near Perth, on 3 October 1923, aboard the SS *Karoola*.

The weather which greeted the new Bishop was wet and blustery after a voyage across the Bight which had been uncharacteristically uncomfortable: an inauspicious start to a short, unhappy reign. Dr Ryan had previously been in charge of a rich, fashionable parish in the Melbourne suburb of Malvern, and the prospect of being cut off from his erudite associates to live as the Bishop of the poorest and most isolated diocese in Australia seemed to him

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<sup>10</sup>R. Ryan CM to J. Bennett CM, 4 July 1923. Archives of the Australian Province of the Congregation of the Mission.

<sup>11</sup> R. Ryan CM to J. Bennett CM, 4 July 1923. Archives of the Australian Province of the Congregation of the Mission. Today’s dollar value is calculated by using the long-term linked series of index numbers published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

more like a banishment than the promotion he had looked for.<sup>12</sup>

It is moot whether Malvern was “rich and fashionable” or that Ryan’s associates were “erudite” as claimed above, but it is certainly true that the contrast between that which Ryan had left and the Diocese of Geraldton was enormous.

The Archdiocese of Melbourne was geographically small, whereas the Diocese of Geraldton covered an immense area larger than the combined areas of France, Spain and Portugal. In Melbourne there were more than two hundred priests serving a catholic population of two hundred thousand, and more than one thousand religious Brothers and Sisters teaching in schools.<sup>13</sup> Geraldton had a dwindling catholic population of six thousand people, eight priests, and eighty-five Sisters teaching seven hundred and twenty-four pupils.<sup>14</sup>

St Joseph’s Church at Malvern was a gracious building, set among lawns and gardens. Ryan had extended and beautified it during his time as Parish Priest. The Church also boasted a fine pipe organ, an accomplished organist and a good choir.<sup>15</sup> Geraldton possessed only the nave of a partially completed Cathedral, ill-furnished with roughly hewn wooden pews and un-machined tree trunks serving as pillars.

The Diocese of Geraldton had been created in 1898 because of the rapid growth of population in the Murchison goldfields, which appeared initially to be more promising than those at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. By 1903 the Railway had been completed to Nannine, just

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony G. Evans, *The Conscious Stone: a Biography of John C. Hawes*, (Melbourne: Polding Press, 1984), 106-107.

<sup>13</sup> Bourke, *A History of the Catholic Church in Victoria*, 228.

<sup>14</sup> Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 171, 181, 231.

<sup>15</sup> [F. D. King], *St Joseph’s Church, Malvern. Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, (Melbourne: Age, 1958), 28, 37.

south of Meekatharra.<sup>16</sup> When William Kelly, the first Bishop of Geraldton arrived in November 1998 he was proudly told:

Your diocese boasts rich resources. Its gold output is increasing month by month, its wool occupies a high place in the colony's exportations, the splendid agricultural land of the Greenough is at our back, we have lead and copper mines on the point of development, the pearl-shell fisheries of the North-west have also to be reckoned with, and the new diamond discoveries of Nullagine are said to have vast possibilities.<sup>17</sup>

The bright future, particularly for mining, attracted many: miners from Italy, and a young geologist, Herbert Hoover, (later President of the United States) who was the Superintendent of the "Sons of Gwalia" mine near Leonora. Thriving towns sprang up around new mines, only to be deserted within a few years as the gold ran out. The Murchison goldfields, at one time so promising, petered out and by 1917 only two mines, "The Sons of Gwalia" and "Great Fingal", survived.<sup>18</sup> The First World War also had its negative effects – many of the men from the Diocese never returned from the war.

The halcyon days were gone, and if the thought crossed Bishop Ryan's mind that he was, indeed, the Bishop of Little, it was not far from the reality. To make matters worse, the cohort of priests in the Diocese hardly inspired confidence. One of them, Fr John Cyril Hawes, who had been there since 1915, described his brother-priests in these unflattering words:

The diocese that I joined was a very difficult one. It was known ecclesiastically in the rest of Australia as *refugium*

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<sup>16</sup> Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 133.

<sup>17</sup> Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 170, citing *The Record*, 26 November 1898.

<sup>18</sup> Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 176-179.

*peccatorum*, for bad priests. I did not know this at the time. Dear old Bishop Kelly was desperately in need of priests and would give anyone a second chance. I found Geraldton cursed with the off-scouring and rejects of other dioceses – such were its pastors: gamblers and drunks who were fleecing the parishes. I had no time for such.<sup>19</sup>

### **John Hawes: the Priest-Architect**

John Hawes arrived in Australia in November 1915, shortly after completing his studies for ordination to the Priesthood at the Beda College in Rome. It was while he was there that Bishop Kelly had invited him to work in Geraldton diocese. Although aged thirty-nine, searcher that he was, he accepted. After working for a short period in the Murchison goldfields, he came to Geraldton to commence work on the Cathedral. It was his own design – an eclectic combination of Romanesque and Californian Spanish Mission styles. After two years of work it was sufficiently completed for the nave to be opened in August 1918.<sup>20</sup>

By any standard, John Hawes presents a character and history that is truly kaleidoscopic: architect, Anglican priest, missionary in the Bahama Islands, Franciscan tertiary, Catholic priest, builder, dog and

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<sup>19</sup> J. Hawes to Dom Michael Hanbury, 13 December 1954, cited by Evans, *The Conscious Stone*, 84. The letter was written many years after Hawes had left the Diocese and age and the passage of years may have either sweetened or soured his recollections. It is also possible that those whom Hawes criticised may have died or moved elsewhere before Ryan's arrival since there were fifteen priests when Hawes arrived in 1915, and only eight in 1923.

<sup>20</sup> A. G. Evans, "Hawes, John Cyril (1876-1956)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 229-230. For a detailed analysis of Hawes' architecture see: John J[oseph] Taylor, *Between devotion and design: the architecture of John Cyril Hawes, 1876-1956*, (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 2000).

horse breeder, jockey and hermit. Bishop O'Collins remembers him as "an architect, painter, sculptor, stonemason, decorator, poet, horse-man and horse-breeder."<sup>21</sup> His biographers paint a picture of a man in life-long search to express his faith in bricks, stone and mortar. He saw himself as an artisan who took St Joseph as a model, to whom he prayed each day, and to whom he commended his work. This was the prayer he said:

Glorious Saint Joseph,  
model of all who are devoted to labour,  
obtain for me the grace  
to work in the spirit of penance  
in expiation of my many sins;  
to work conscientiously  
by placing love of duty above my inclinations;  
to gratefully and joyously deem it an honour  
to employ and to develop by labour  
the gifts I have received from God;  
to work methodically, peacefully,  
and in moderation and patience,  
without ever shrinking from it  
through weariness or difficulty to work;  
above all, with purity of intention and unselfishness,  
having unceasingly before my eyes  
death and the account I have to render  
of time lost, talents unused, good not done,  
and vain complacency in success,  
so baneful to the work of God.  
All for Jesus, all for Mary,  
all to imitate thee, O patriarch Saint Joseph!  
This shall be my motto for life and eternity.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 236.

<sup>22</sup> The prayer was composed by Pope Pius X.

His description of building the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Mullewa – a small town one hundred kilometres east of Geraldton – gives an insight into the man and into the way in which he sought to live out the spirituality expressed in the Prayer to St Joseph.

Day after day, toiling with sore and cracked hands, tormented by flies and the scorching summer sun, and clothed in lime-covered rags, all my interests are now concentrated on this my latest church. Some of the piers and walls are now ten feet above ground. God knows how I've toiled and sweated over it, all through the sweltering days of summer. Often I have worked alone; mixing the mortar, fetching my stones, often aching with lumbago and hardly able to lift a stone without groaning. Often I've had to knock off and go indoors to lie down on my bed for a quarter of an hour and then drag myself out to work again – to face the sun and the flies. But once I get going the enthusiasm and the intoxication of the work carry me on. I become too tired to eat anything except with great effort. People remark that I am growing thin.

Thanks be to God, I never realized when I began (although even then I knew I was a fool to start on it) what I was undertaking, or the magnitude and complications of the task, otherwise I would never have had the courage to face it. Not to speak of the financial anxiety and business worries, or the stirring up of people to work on the quarry and carting stones and sand. There has also been the selfish apathy and indifference of many Catholics. However, it's a reward to contemplate some portion of a wall a little higher every day.

It's a great and noble labour, this piling of one stone upon another, semi-sacramental, one of the four primal occupations of man – that of the mason, the carpenter, the

plowman, the fisherman. As a labourer I think of all those who have been at it long before: the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Saxons, the Normans, and those giants of the thirteenth century. It's strange to think that when the Saxons were building their little "Roman" churches, England was "all bush" then, like Australia.

I thought to myself, God knows there's enough pride in my poor, fallen sin-stained soul—pride and self-seeking in all I do. Yet as to pride of that sort over the finished building, I don't think I even had it. Our Lady's Church at Mullewa has always seems to have impersonal relationship to myself. Not as though I had designed it, because I prayed to St Joseph every morning and commended the work to him. I was just *his* labourer. I always said that beautiful prayer of Pius X to St Joseph. You can see his statue in the church now, with a ten-foot rule in his hand.

I was continually altering the design and changing things as I went along. The building of it was a great adventure and a sort of a pilgrimage: it was not something made but a thing that had *grown*. All I did was to *discover* it. And so, when at long last I stood before the high altar under the dome, it never occurred to me that I myself had built it – those rough, uneven grey walls – but that I seemed to be standing in some old church built by other hands in former times.<sup>23</sup>

Hawes was a man who never felt quite at ease with himself, nor with his achievements. After completing the Church and Presbytery at Mullewa he felt uncomfortable and unsettled: "it was too comfortable

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<sup>23</sup> Peter F. Anson, *The Hermit of Cat Island: The Life of Fra Jerome Hawes*, (London: Burns and Oates, 1958), 66-67.

and un-Franciscan for me. I had grown very unsettled.”<sup>24</sup> Some years later he still felt the same. Reflecting on his work he wrote: “niceties of design and problems of building construction obtruded themselves into all my prayers and attempted meditations. I had quite forgotten that the Art which was now again my first thought and absorbing preoccupation was the idol from which Our Lord had called me as young man to go forth and serve him in some other way.”<sup>25</sup>

If a single sentence could express the challenge and the uneasiness that accompanied his insatiable search for God it might well be the inscription he placed on the main bell of the Mullewa Church: “My name is John, a voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord! Come, let us adore!”<sup>26</sup>

### **The Relationship between Ryan and Hawes**

In 1922, at the invitation of the Archbishop of Perth, Dr Clune, Hawes began drawing plans for a new Cathedral in Perth. He returned to England for a short period to arrange for the supply of material and to refine his plans in consultation with his mentor, Sir Giles Scott. Despite Clune’s support, Hawes’ design won little acclaim from others and was eventually rejected in favour of another design by M. F. Cavanagh.

Ryan arrived in Perth a few days before Hawes returned from England. Archbishop Clune, with some pride, took the opportunity to show his visitor the initial plans that Hawes had drawn for a strikingly original Romanesque design. Ryan was not impressed, coldly commenting that it resembled a Salvation Army Fortress.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Anson, *The Hermit of Cat Island*, 70.

<sup>25</sup> Anson, *The Hermit of Cat Island*, 71.

<sup>26</sup> Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 232.

<sup>27</sup> Evans, *The Conscious Stone*, 113.

It was not an auspicious beginning and relationship between Ryan and Hawes never prospered. Not only did he dislike the partially completed Cathedral at Geraldton, he also considered Hawes' churches at Mullewa and Yalgoo to be peculiar, if not indeed, the work of an eccentric. Work on the Cathedral was halted, and not re-commenced until after Bishop James O'Collins, Ryan's successor, was appointed in 1930. Hawes lamented: "I fear my good Bishop thinks I'm a cracked idiot wasting my time and that I would be far better employed in book study or writing sermons."<sup>28</sup> Ryan did not share Hawes' conviction that Art expressing Faith could be worthwhile in Geraldton: "Art! It's just wasted on these people. What do they understand of it?"<sup>29</sup>

Hawes was bitterly disappointed by Ryan's attitude, commenting:

As to my Cathedral in Geraldton, I feel more or less resigned now to the idea of having nothing more to do with it. I never go down there now, nor do I feel I want to see it any more: yet it used to mean so much to me. It still does, I suppose, but this is probably not detachment or resignation, merely chagrin and wounded artistic pride.<sup>30</sup>

Their differing views on liturgical music also caused friction. At St Joseph's Church, Malvern, where Ryan had been Parish Priest for three years prior to his appointment to Geraldton, polyphonic music was in vogue. Fr James Mullins, CM, who had served there as an assistant priest from 1917-1919, described needing, from time to time, to appease "a *prima donna in petto* whose 'execution' of the offertory piece on Sunday last had not received due recognition from the local Catholic weekly's musical critic" and of being "unable to escape the

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<sup>28</sup> J. Hawes to Charles Selby-Hall, undated, cited by Evans, *The Conscious Stone*, 112-113.

<sup>29</sup> Evans, *The Conscious Stone*, 110; Anson, *The Hermit of Cat Island*, 68.

<sup>30</sup> Anson, *The Hermit of Cat Island*, 69.

wailings of the humiliated Tetrizzinis.”<sup>31</sup> At the Geraldton Cathedral, Plain Chant was the norm. Ryan replaced it with polyphonic music. Hawes describes the success of the change: “the ladies can now warble to their hearts’ content Conconi and other such operatic Mass murderers. They never get further with the *Credo* than down to the *Incarnatus*. The so-called “High Mass” is now a Low Mass – *missa bassa con musica*.”<sup>32</sup>

It was not only over Music and Art and Architecture that they disagreed. It seems that Ryan used the practices in Melbourne as the yardstick for Liturgy as well.

What did [Fr Hawes] mean by having the *Asperges* before the *Missa Cantata* on Sunday mornings? No other priest in Melbourne did so. The Bishop went as far as to maintain that the *Asperges* was a complete novelty in Australia. He said that he had never heard of it, except in Cathedrals, and he lost no time in abolishing it at Geraldton. Father Hawes pleaded that the rite was quite common in most village churches on the continent of Europe, even in Catholic churches in England, but this did not convince Bishop Ryan. He then fell back on the argument that ‘the *Asperges* only lengthens the service.’ He could say nothing when the parish priest of Mullewa pointed out that it only took two minutes, and that even with the reading of long notices and a sermon his Mass was over in less than fifty minutes. But after a moment the Bishop remarked: ‘That’s much too quick; you ought to preach a longer sermon.’<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> James Mullins CM, *Cheerful China*, Chinese Mission Series No. 7, (Essendon, Victoria: St Columban’s Mission Society, 1925), 124-125.

<sup>32</sup> Anson, *The Hermit of Cat Island*, 69.

<sup>33</sup> Anson, *The Hermit of Cat Island*, 68.

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The picture of Ryan that one gets from this is of a man who was determined to have the last word. After all, he was the Bishop! A little story told about him when, years later, he was the Bishop of Sale could well confirm that he was quite aware of his Episcopal dignity. Terry Synan tells the story:

Bishop Ryan beautified St Mary's Cathedral and developed its surrounding grounds into a picturesque display of lawns and gardens. Some parishioners doubtless will recall their magnificence and the aged gardener responsible dressed in his blue denim boiler suit. One late spring morning a visitor came to Sale by train intending to speak to Bishop Ryan whom he did not know nor had ever seen.

Following his walk along Pearson St, from the old railway station to the Cathedral he was immediately struck by the neatness and floral beauty of the cathedral surrounds.

Next he noticed the gardener, hoe in hand, tending the Lorraine Lee roses on the trellis east of the Angelus tower. Having congratulated him on his gardening talents and skills he made enquiries as to whether the Bishop was in residence as he wished to speak with him. The gardener thought he probably was and if the gentleman would be kind enough to wait beside the front door of the Bishop's house, he would go around the back and locate "His Lordship." This he did. Some minutes later the Bishop's house front door swung open revealing to a greatly surprised visitor, the gardener regaled in clerical collar, pectoral cross and bishop's dress, enquiring as to the purpose of this visit.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Synan, "Catholic Education under Bishop Richard Ryan", 13.

It would not have cost Ryan much had he admitted that he was indeed the Bishop, and to have asked his visitor to wait while he changed out of his working clothes.

John Hawes had liked and admired Kelly, and worked constructively for nine years with Ryan's successor, O'Collins, but for a variety of reasons, never felt that he had the support of Richard Ryan. More research is needed to unearth Ryan's assessment of Hawes and to assess the extent to which Hawes' personality contributed to the lack of warmth that characterised their relationship.

They were two very distinct personalities. Hawes was a searcher, as shown by his eclectic architecture and his artistic temperament, never completely at ease with himself, with his achievements, or with the accepted ways of doing things. Ryan was far more the administrator, the enforcer of stability and the accepted ways of doing things. Ryan was predictable, Hawes was not. Evans judged Ryan to be "a cold, withdrawn man who possessed an ecclesiastical legal mind."<sup>35</sup> It is too harsh a judgement: Ryan did not set out to pester Hawes with Canon Law, he simply did not agree with him on many issues. Furthermore, he allowed Hawes more freedom than he would have had as a priest in Archdiocese of Melbourne, where Church authorities would not have permitted a priest to frequent race meetings, let alone function as a horse-trainer, horse-racer and jockey.

## **Conclusion**

Ryan was appointed as the third Bishop of Sale on 10 March 1926 and he left Geraldton within a month. His "departure was noted discreetly in the Perth Diocesan newspaper, *The Record*, with none of the eulogy that greeted his arrival."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Evans, *The Conscious Stone*, 110.

<sup>36</sup> Evans, *The Conscious Stone*, 113, with reference to *The Record*, (10 April 1926): 10.

Sale was a far more inviting diocese. It was relatively small, and on Ryan's arrival had twenty-one diocesan priests, serving a catholic population of thirteen thousand. Ninety-one religious Sisters and six Brothers were teaching in fourteen schools. Ryan was to remain in Sale until his death on 16 June 1957.<sup>37</sup>

He is remembered in Sale with as a man who knew his people well and served them conscientiously:

Those who lived in Sale at this time knew their Bishop well. He was truly their parish priest. They admired and respected him for his understanding of human nature, his sanctity, his sense of humour and gentle smile. They marvelled at the darkness of his hair. They exhibited great confidence in his priestly leadership.

On Sundays they expected and experienced again the fiery zeal of a former missionary preacher thundering against wickedness and sin. In the confessional they found a sympathetic pastor anxious to heal spiritual wounds. They came to appreciate a church leader ready to sacrifice his own comforts for the good of others.<sup>38</sup>

As a priest, Ryan was a missionary, as Bishop he remained one. When he first arrived in Geraldton, he set himself the task of travelling through his vast diocese giving missions, and his Coat of Arms gives an indication of the importance that he placed on this ministry. He retained, as his motto, the Vincentian text: *evangelizare pauperibus*

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<sup>37</sup> Bourke, *A History of the Catholic Church in Victoria*, 286.

<sup>38</sup> Synan, "Catholic Education under Bishop Richard Ryan", 13. His Vincentian confrères are said to have marvelled at the amount of time it took Ryan each week to attend to his appearance.

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*misit me*, and in the Arms, placed on the right side, – the official side – the image of Christ the Evangelizer as found on the Vincentian crest.<sup>39</sup>

John Hawes regarded him as “a good bishop” and above all “a splendid missionary.” Hawes also considered him to a “very generous man [who] gives away his money everywhere to this or that object of charity.”<sup>40</sup> Bishop Ryan remained a good friend to his Vincentian confrères, frequently visiting them at Malvern. He gave a very generous donation of £1,000 to St Vincent’s College, Bendigo at its opening, and on his death left his library and other personal effects to the same College.<sup>41</sup>

It is, however, in Mullewa where Ryan is remembered in stone. It is said that Hawes carved his likeness on one of the gargoyles of the Mullewa Church.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> After his translation to the Diocese of Sale, Ryan used two different Coats in which he retained the Vincentian motto as his own, but eliminated the figure of Christ the Evangelizer. For pictorial representations see: Michael Francis McCarthy, *An Armorial of the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Australia*, (Darlinghurst, NSW: Thylacine Press, 1998), 91, 152.

<sup>40</sup> Anson, *The Hermit of Cat Island*, 68, 69-70.

<sup>41</sup> Reginald McDonnell CM, “June 16”, *The Vincentian Journal*, (private publication of the Congregation of the Mission, c. 1963). £1,000 in today’s currency is nearly \$25,000.

<sup>42</sup> “The Sacred Architect,” *Compass*, televised by the Australian Broadcast Commission, Sunday, 11 June 2006. Transcript available at: <[www.abc.net.au/compass/s1661539.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s1661539.htm)>, 12 August 2006.