

200 Years

Bi-centennial Celebration of the Church in Southern Africa



The first Catholic Church in South Africa (Harrington Street, Cape Town), circa 1830

*Remember the past with gratitude, live the
present with enthusiasm and look to the future
with confidence (St John Paul II)*

A BRIEF HISTORY

IN JUNE 2018 Catholics in Southern Africa will celebrate the bi-centenary of the establishment of the Catholic Church in the region of Southern Africa.

From the time of the discovery of the Cape, ecclesiastical jurisdiction over it belonged to the Portuguese mission under the authority of the king of Portugal. After the establishment of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape in 1652, the practice of the Catholic religion was *de facto* prohibited. It was only in 1804 that Jacob Abraham de Mist, the Commissioner-General of the Cape Colony, decided that “all religious societies which for the furtherance of virtue and good morals worship an Almighty Being, are to enjoy in this Colony equal protection from the laws” and in 1805 three Dutch priests arrived to minister to the Catholics of the Cape. One of them, Fr Johannes Lansink, was appointed Prefect Apostolic. The following year, however, the British colonial authorities, which had taken over the Colony in the meantime, ordered them to leave the region.

On 7 June 1818, Pope Pius VII erected the Vicariate Apostolic of the Cape of Good Hope and adjacent territories. Subsequently the Island of Mauritius was added, and so were New Holland and Van Diemen’s Land (effectively, modern day Australia). In 1820 the first Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Bede Slater OSB, stopped at Cape Town for three weeks on his way to Mauritius where he was to reside, leaving be-



Bishop Patrick Griffith OP
1st resident Vicar Apostolic



Bishop Bede Slater OSB
1st Vicar Apostolic



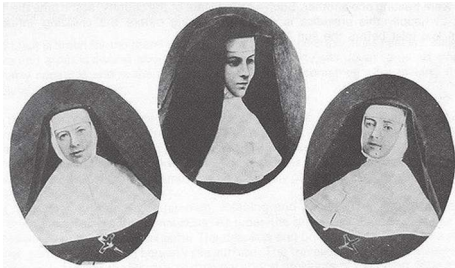
Pope Pius XII – Pontificate
(1939–58), under whom most
of the Dioceses in Southern
Africa were established.



Missionary Sisters of the Assumption were the first Sisters to be missioned to South Africa at the request of Bishop Aidan Devereux of the Eastern Cape Vicariate, arriving at Algoa Bay (Port Elizabeth) on 3 December 1849.



Holy Family Sisters arrived in South Africa in 1864 and proceeded to Lesotho in 1865.



First Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto Sisters) in South Africa 1878.



On 9th June 1883 the Abbot of Mariannhill, Franz Pfanner, left Southampton for South Africa, bringing with him the first five Holy Cross Sisters. They arrived in Durban on 12 July 1883. After an exhausting trek by ox-wagon they arrived in Umtata (Mthatha) at midnight 24 July 1883.



Sisters of Mercy
In 1897, the community of the Sisters of Mercy of Strabane, Ireland, acceding to the request of Bishop Anthony Gaughren OMI, Vicar Apostolic in Kimberley, South Africa, arrived in Cape Town on 17th October 1897.



The death of Mother Margaret Mary (Celine Jolivet), foundress and Superior of the first Loreto Convent in South Africa. She died on 15th January 1881 at Pretoria.

hind Fr Patrick Hurst Scully as chaplain to the local Catholic Community. By then, religious tolerance had made some progress. Fr Scully was succeeded by Fr Theodorus Wagener who was later joined by Fr Thomas Rishton OSB. Bishop Slater was succeeded by Bishop William Placid Morris OSB, who also resided at Mauritius. On 6 June 1837, Pope Gregory XVI constituted the Cape of Good Hope (i.e. the entire region of southern Africa) a separate vicariate and appointed Bishop Patrick Raymund Griffith OP as the first resident vicar apostolic.

On 14 April 1838 (Holy Saturday) Bishop Griffith stepped ashore at Cape Town. While initially interested in evangelizing black people, he essentially ministered, quite successfully, to white settlers. He can be considered as the founder of the Catholic Church of South Africa.

In 1847, the Vicariate of the Cape of Good Hope was divided into the Vicariates of the Western District and the Eastern District of the Cape of Good Hope, of which Fr Aidan Devereux became the first Vicar Apostolic. It was he who invited, in 1849, the first group of religious sisters to South Africa. In 1852 the first four Oblates of Mary Immaculate arrived to establish a mission in Natal. They later set out to evangelise Lesotho. On 24 May 1872, the Prefecture of the Central District of the Cape of Good Hope was detached from the Western Vicariate. Further subdivisions took place in subsequent years. It was not until the 1880s that the first



Bishop Charles-Constant Jolivet, O.M.I.
First Vicar Apostolic of Natal, South Africa - 15 September 1874



Abbot Franz Pfanner CMM – The Trappist Prior, Father Francis (Wendolin) Pfanner, worked among the Zulus in the new Apostolic Vicariate of Natal. He founded a monastery during the Christmas season of 1882 in the English colony of Natal in South Africa. He called it Mary-Anne-Hill (Mariannahill).



Blessed Joseph Gerard OMI – the Apostle of Basotho left Europe in 1853 for Southern Africa and was ordained a priest by Bishop Allard in Pietermaritzburg in 1854.



Four first black priests in South Africa – Fr Edward Müller Mnganga and others – 1872



Mother Paula, Josephine Emunds CPS – Co-Foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood; arrived in South Africa on 7 October 1886 with nine other young women.



**First black Bishop of Umzimkulu – Bishop Bonaventure Dlamini.
21 February 1954
Appointed Bishop of Umzimkulu.**

southern African mission in what is today South Africa was successfully established by the Trappists. Indeed, long absent from the missionary scene, the Catholic Church's missionary thrust in southern Africa started to grow rapidly in the 20th century.

Also belatedly, but with increasing vigour, various sectors of the Church began opposing the apartheid regime in the second half of the century.

On 11 January 1951, Pope Pius XII established by Papal Bull the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in the then Union of South Africa, and set up the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Cape Town (comprising the suffragan sees of Aliwal, Oudtshoorn, Port Elizabeth, Queenstown and De Aar); Durban (comprising the suffragan sees of Mariannhill, Eshowe, Kokstad and Mthatha); Pretoria (comprising the suffragan sees of Johannesburg, Lydenburg, Swaziland and Pietersburg); and Bloemfontein (comprising the suffragan sees of Kroonstad, Bethlehem, Kimberley, Keimoes and Lesotho).

Further growth has taken place in the Church of southern Africa since then: new dioceses have been created; Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Namibia - which had been part of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference - left the Conference to establish their own Conferences in 1969, 1972 and 1996 respectively; and the ecclesiastical province of Johannesburg was created in 2007 with the diocese of Johannesburg being raised to the status of an archdiocese.

Dates of the arrival of the First Missionaries, in chronological order

1. 1838 – Bishop Patrick Griffith OP
2. 1849 – Missionaries Sisters of the Assumption
3. 1853 – Blessed Joseph Gerard OMI
4. 1864 – Holy Family Sisters
5. 1872 – First black Priest – Fr Edward Mnganga
6. 1874 – Bishop Charles Jolivet OMI
7. 1874 – Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto) Sisters
8. 1883 – Holy Cross Sisters
9. 1886 – Mother Paula Emunds CPS
10. 1897 – Sisters of Mercy
11. 1939 – 1958- Pope Pius XII under whom most of the Dioceses were established in 1951.
12. 1954 – First Bishop of Umzimkulu, Bishop Bonaventure Dlamini



St John Paul II beatified Blessed Joseph Gerard in Lesotho in November 1988.



Blessed Benedict Daswa was beatified in Venda in September 2015 by Cardinal Angelo Amato.



John Paul II visited South Africa in September 1995 and met President Nelson Mandela.



Bi-centennial Prayer

O God, sanctify us, your Church in Southern Africa and pour out the gifts of your Spirit upon us, who have been consecrated to you in baptism.

Increase our faith that we may never cease to give thanks for your infinite treasures of mercy and goodness.

Root us in your Son Jesus Christ, that with hearts burning with desire to fulfil your will, we may share the joy, peace and abundance of life he gives us.

Open our hearts to each other and remove our prejudices that the walls of injustice and division which your Son has destroyed may give way to the healing of the ethnic, racial and unjust divisions of our painful past.

Let the bright sun of hope never set on our communities of faith, as we endeavour to follow always the example of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, by consecrating our lives to the service of our brothers and sisters.

Queen assumed into heaven: Pray for us!

